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90-74

Election, BJCPA
 top SBC issues

By Dan Martin

N-CO

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Election of a new president and the question of who will speak for Southern Baptists on religious liberty concerns top the list of issues facing messengers at the 1990 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Messengers also will hear challenges to some of the people nominated to be trustees of the 24 national entities of the 14.9-million-member denomination; consider motions, resolutions and other business; as well as listen to missions presentations, preaching and singing during the June 12-14 meeting in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

President George Bush, who initially indicated a desire to address the nation's largest non-Catholic denomination, in mid-May announced he would not speak at the convention. As with most things concerning the annual meeting, opinions differ as to whether his schedule would not permit his address or whether controversy over his inviting gay and lesbian groups to the White House caused the cancellation.

Although predictions of messenger registration have ranged upward to 70,000 -- nearly capacity for the cavernous Superdome -- SBC Registration Secretary Lee Porter of Nashville realistically expects registration to be "somewhere between 35,000 and 37,000."

If he is right, it would make the 1990 annual meeting the third-largest in the history of the 145-year-old denomination. The all-time record for participation was set in 1985 in Dallas, with 45,519 messengers. Second was Atlanta in 1986, with 40,987; third was San Antonio in 1988, with 32,727.

"The emotions as we head for New Orleans this year are just as intense as they were in 1985 but just not as broad," said one veteran convention watcher. "Therefore, there will not be as many people as we first thought."

Moderates and Conservatives have squared off politically, and each group has its standard bearer. Political activity has been intense during the past six months, with each candidate appearing in numerous places around the convention drumming up support.

Moderate Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, announced in September he would again seek the presidency. He was nominated in 1989 against incumbent Jerry Vines, but lost 8,248 to 10,754.

Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, was presented in February as the Conservatives' candidate to succeed Vines, who has served his allowed two consecutive one-year terms.

Although runningmates for Chapman have not been announced, Vestal has unveiled a full slate. Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, the recently retired executive director of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union, will be nominated for first vice president; Steve Tondera, a Huntsville, Ala., layman, for second vice president.

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In conjunction with announcing Chapman as the candidate, Conservatives also unveiled a "new coalition" to bring peace to the troubled denomination, which would include "enlarging the tent" of SBC leadership to include all who could embrace "a perfect Bible from a perfect God."

Several pastors of large churches who previously had not taken overt political stands endorsed the proposal -- presented by John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston -- and Conservatives generally promoted the "new coalition."

Moderates, however, are skeptical of Bisagno's proposal, the supposed "non-alignment" of the endorsers, and believe the "enlarged tent" does not include Moderates.

The sharpness of the division appears to continue the polarization which has afflicted the denomination for more than a decade. Each side appears to view events in a drastically different manner; each also shows little willingness to compromise; both appear to believe the political party which turns out the most votes will prevail.

As with previous conventions, rumors have circulated of efforts to buy votes, of blocks of hotel rooms, of subsidized travel and of massive busing. The rumors indicate the intensity of the feeling.

Messengers also will be asked to make a decision on who will have the primary responsibility to represent Southern Baptists' concerns on religious liberty, particularly as it relates to separation of church and state.

Controversy has swirled around the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs since 1982. The BJC, a coalition of nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada, has been Southern Baptists' primary watchdog for more than 50 years. However, the agency has been the object of at least two efforts to reduce funding and of three special SBC Executive Committee study committees.

Last year, a proposal to create a new SBC entity, the Religious Liberty Commission, was withdrawn before the convention session. Later, the Executive Committee rescinded the proposal and proposed that primary religious liberty responsibilities be given to the SBC Christian Life Commission, the denomination's moral and social concerns agency.

The proposal includes a shift in budgeted funds going to the agencies, reflecting the change in responsibilities. In the 1989-90 budget, the CLC received \$897,508; in the 1990-91 budget, it would receive \$1,262,836. In contrast, the BJC received \$391,796 in 1989-90, but would receive only \$50,000 in 1990-91.

Sixteen members of the Executive Committee disagreed with the action to shift the program assignment and revised the budget allocation, and have asked for permission to submit a minority report to the convention.

In addition, Nashville attorney Frank Ingraham, a former member of the Executive Committee, announced in an open letter he intends to challenge the proposal of the Executive Committee, both in the program assignment and in the budget allocation.

Vines caused some controversy when he ruled portions of the proposed minority report were out of order and will not be printed in the Book of Reports and the daily SBC Bulletin. The Executive Committee report, titled "Some Reasons for the Southern Baptist Convention 1990-91 Budget Allocation to Support Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State," will be printed in full.

Vines said he ruled portions of the proposed minority report out of order because they deal with the inner workings of the Executive Committee, which the convention's parliamentary authority, Robert's Rules of Order, deems inappropriate for inclusion.

Messengers also will confront a challenge to the report of the 1990 Committee on Nominations, which nominates people to serve as trustees of the 24 entities affiliated with the SBC.

The committee annually nominates about a quarter of more than 1,000 trustees serving on the entities. About half of them are new trustees, and about half are people nominated to second terms.

This year, committee member David Montoya, pastor of First Baptist Church of Gravette, Ark., announced he would challenge some of the nominees because they are "Conservative loyalists." He later announced a list of 32 alternates.

Even if Montoya does not introduce his alternate slate, others have indicated they will challenge at least the three nominees.

They are Lee Roberts, a Marietta, Ga., businessman, who was in the spotlight with his challenge to Mercer University and its president, Kirby Godsey, in 1987, who is being nominated to the Executive Committee; Robert M. Tenery, pastor of Burkemont Baptist Church in Morganton, N.C., and editor of the conservative Southern Baptist Advocate, who is being nominated to a new term on the Sunday School Board even though he rotated off after serving eight years only one year ago; and Curtis Caine, a medical doctor from Jackson, Miss., whose remarks on Martin Luther King Jr., and apartheid caused controversy, to a second term on the Christian Life Commission.

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Home Mission Board stops
sending interns to BJCPA

By Jim Newton

N-HMB

Baptist Press
5/31/90

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has stopped sending student semester and summer missionaries to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The decision was announced by Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis following an incident in which a semester missionary of the HMB made telephone calls soliciting support for the Baptist Joint Committee.

At their May meeting, members of the HMB administrative committee expressed opposition to the student's involvement, saying they felt it was inappropriate activity for a semester missionary.

Lewis said the semester missionary had been making telephone calls to SBC pastors urging them to attend the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans and to oppose a recommendation of the SBC Executive Committee cutting budget support for the BJCPA.

Lewis added he and the administrative committee also felt that at a time when the HMB is facing budget restraints, priority should be placed on sending summer and semester missionaries to field ministry assignments, not to work at another SBC agency office.

The semester missionary, Don Chenevert of Slidell, La., was told by his HMB supervisor to discontinue such activities, but was not fired since the missionary's term ended at the conclusion of the May semester. Chenevert is a recent graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss.

Since then, Lewis said the Baptist Joint Committee withdrew its request for student missionaries to work as interns at the Washington-based agency this summer. The HMB has sent summer and semester missionaries to the Baptist Joint Committee for almost 20 years.

Oliver S. Thomas, BJCPA general counsel, said every member of the Washington agency's staff, not just the interns, have been working "to alert Southern Baptists of the danger to religious liberty and to the convention if the effort to defund the Baptist Joint Committee succeeds.

"I am certain," added Thomas, "that if the Executive Committee had proposed an 87 percent cut in the Home Mission Board's budget, its staff would be doing the same thing."

Lewis pointed out that there was no official action taken by HMB directors or its executive committee, but as president he was complying with the wishes of the administrative committee.

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The HMB appoints summer and semester missionaries to various types of service across the United States. Most are college students or recent college graduates who serve 10-week terms.

As a semester missionary, the HMB provided Chenevert with transportation expenses and a small stipend which was supplemented by the BJCPA.

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Baptist distinctives
in danger, Cothen warns

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
5/31/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptists entering ministry today serve in a denomination that has placed Baptist distinctives in "mortal peril," a retired denominational executive told Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's 165th graduating class.

Grady Cothen, president emeritus of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said "fear and intimidation masquerade as orthodoxy" within the Southern Baptist Convention. "Religious liberty is being assaulted by people bearing the same denominational name as those who died to win the freedom," he said.

"A people historically non-creedal rush headlong into a narrow creedalism that claims superior authority to holy Scripture. A bitter and vindictive anger masquerades as righteousness assaulting everyone who does not do obeisance."

Diplomas were awarded to 277 graduates during the Louisville, Ky., school's May 25 commencement. The seminary also recognized Robert Mark Driskill of Travelers Rest, S.C., as the 20,000th graduate of the 131-year-old seminary. Driskill, who earned the master of divinity degree in Christian education, recently accepted a call as pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Ky.

During a separate ceremony the same day, Boyce Bible School, a division of Southern Seminary that provides ministerial training for persons without college degrees, graduated the largest class in its 16-year history. Boyce diplomas and certificates were awarded to 62 graduates.

In his commencement address, Cothen told graduates they would be "confronted with intellectual violence rooted in religious arrogance and intemperance" in the SBC: "Attempts are being made to control what is written in the religious press, written by authors, taught by faculties and spoken on platforms. A handful of self-appointed guardians of the faith determine who can serve in a denomination they have seldom supported."

In addition to the denominational difficulties, Cothen stressed that ministers face a secular world which declares "greed is good, pleasure is where it's at and the commitment to spouse, child and church is unnecessary."

Despite these problems, he said contemporary ministers also stand at an "hour of great opportunity." He exhorted graduates that "if ministry under the command of the Almighty is your passion, this is your hour."

He noted mission fields abound in Eastern Europe, the Third World as well as the United States. "This is a glorious time to be in ministry," he said.

To seize such opportunities, ministers must be certain of their call, Cothen emphasized: "You will need a burning conviction that he (God) has placed his hand upon you, that he has set you apart for his purpose, in his place, in his time, in his manner and for his glory."

Ministers also must have an "educated integrity," he said: "By education I do not mean a blind adherence to a handed down indoctrination, but a biblically based, carefully reasoned and tested by the church revelational faith that can stand the examination by the minds God gave us to use. God does not expect you to abandon your mind when you become a minister."

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Cothen defined integrity as going beyond "basic honesty, sexual purity and honorable relationships." Integrity also "involves the practice of those things claimed and proclaimed," he said.

At the beginning of his address, Cothen voiced support for seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt and the seminary faculty. His statements were met with sustained ovations. Honeycutt and several faculty members came under attack by a seminary trustee in a 16-page document circulated prior to the April trustee meeting and later reprinted in the Southern Baptist Advocate, an autonomous newspaper published by SBC conservatives. During the April meeting, seminary trustees also approved resolutions critical of two faculty members.

Cothen praised Honeycutt for his service and for having "steeped your mind and your life in holy Scripture."

He told faculty members they stand in a long line of dedicated scholars at Southern Seminary and that they "do the tradition honor." He also paraphrased of a quote by John A. Broadus, an original member of the seminary faculty: "It is our prayer that you will quietly agree that the quality of instruction in this institution may die but you will die first."

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Vandals damage Seoul church,
site of kindergarten fire

N-AMB

Baptist Press
5/31/90

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--Difficulties continue to mount for Seoul Memorial Baptist Church, the site of a kindergarten fire last Oct. 16 that killed six children and left seven others critically burned.

Thugs broke into the church May 26 and vandalized the auditorium and other facilities. Nearly every pane of glass in the building was broken. Damage to furniture was extensive.

Police reportedly were slow to respond to a call for assistance because of political protest demonstrations elsewhere in the city, but took the gang leaders into custody. Later two of the vandals were released.

The next morning several people blocked the driveway of the church building, preventing worship services from being held there. Services were held outdoors on an athletic field in the area.

Han Myung Guk (David Han), pastor of the church, expressed concern for the injured children and their families. "We understand their pain and sorrow and we are doing all we can to help them," he said. "This situation has exhausted our financial resources."

Church members do not want to fight family members who are carrying out a vendetta against the church, he added, responding to allegations that families of the injured children hired the thugs.

The church has paid thousands of dollars to the families of the six children killed in the fire that swept through the church's educational building. The congregation also pays monthly hospital bills for the seven children still receiving medical care, as well as living expenses for each child's family.

The church was forced to secure bank loans to meet mounting debts related to the tragedy, although more than \$350,000 has been donated by church members, missionaries and other Korean Baptist churches. Pastor Han sold his house and moved the family into living quarters in the church.

Southern Baptist missionaries are working to secure rehabilitative surgery in the United States for the seven injured children.

Officials have yet to determine the cause of the October blaze. But church kindergarten principal Ohm Hyun Suk, pastor Han's wife, took personal responsibility for the tragedy although she was not present at the time. She was jailed for three months before being released on parole. The 150-student kindergarten has not been reopened.

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Demonstrations outside the church compound by parents of victims the days after the fire forced the congregation to temporarily move its services to a nearby school playground. Later the congregation was able to return to worship in its building.

The church has lost some members because of the tragedy, but family members of one of the injured children have become Christians and have joined the church.

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House passes bill to protect disabled from discrimination

By Kathy Palen

N-CO (BPC) Baptist Press
5/31/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--The House of Representatives has passed legislation that would extend broad anti-discrimination protections to the estimated 43 million Americans who have physical and mental disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act would give the disabled the same civil rights protections given to women and minorities under the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The House approved the bill 403 to 20. The Senate passed a similar measure last September by a 76-8 vote.

The legislation will go to a House-Senate conference for resolution of the relatively minor differences between the two versions. Following that process, President Bush is expected to sign the measure into law.

The ADA bill would prohibit most employers from discriminating against any qualified individual with a disability. Employers would be required to make "reasonable accommodations" to such individuals unless those accommodations would impose an "undue hardship" on the business' operation.

The legislation, however, would allow religious organizations to exercise religious preference in hiring. It also would allow a religious organization to require all applicants and employees to conform to the organization's religious tenets.

The bill would ban discrimination against individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, such as stores, restaurants, theaters and office buildings. But the measure excludes "religious institutions or entities controlled by religious organizations, including places of worship" from the public accommodations section.

In addition, the measure would require bus, subway and commuter rail systems that purchase new vehicles to buy only vehicles that are accessible to the disabled. The bill also would require telephone companies to provide relay services for use by speech- and hearing-impaired individuals.

The ADA bill would protect people who have AIDS or the related HIV virus. It would not, however, include coverage for a wide variety of sexual practices, including homosexuality, or for current users of illegal drugs.

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High court agrees to hear abortion-counseling case

By Kathy Palen

N-CO (BPC) Baptist Press
5/31/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court has agreed to decide whether regulations that bar federally funded family planning clinics from providing any information on abortion are constitutional.

The high court will review a federal appeals court decision on federal regulations issued during the Reagan administration to implement Title X, a 1970 law that established federal funding for family planning clinics.

Title X currently provides about \$200 million each year to more than 3,900 clinics nationwide serving almost 5 million low-income women.

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The rules prohibit family planning clinics that receive federal funds from offering abortion counseling or referral. Clinic employees are barred from discussing abortion even when asked about it directly or from providing a list of abortion providers even when asked for that information.

The regulations also require that any Title X organization that uses its own money for abortion services must provide physically separate facilities for that purpose.

The American Civil Liberties Union -- which is representing a group of family planning clinics and doctors -- was joined by the city and state of New York in challenging the regulations in court. They argued the rules -- which were adopted in 1988 -- place an impermissible burden on women's constitutional right to abortion and violate the First Amendment's free speech guarantee.

The 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals in New York upheld the regulations last November.

But in March the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals struck them down on First Amendment and privacy grounds. Two district courts also have ruled against the regulations.

The Supreme Court is expected to hear the case and issue an opinion during its next term.

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Chaplains to meet
in New Orleans

N-CO

Baptist Press
5/31/90

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans will host the annual meeting of Southern Baptist chaplains and pastoral counselors prior to the Southern Baptist Convention.

All endorsed chaplains and pastoral counselors are invited to the meeting and complimentary luncheon Monday, June 11, said Huey Perry, director of chaplaincy for the Home Mission Board. The session will begin with registration at 10 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m.

Myron Madden, the hospital's director of pastoral care emeritus, will speak on the subject, "Pastoral Caregivers Face the 21st Century."

All sessions, including the luncheon, will be held in the McFarland Center of Southern Baptist Hospital, 4429 Clara St.

No advance registration is necessary, Perry said. Reservations for lunch are requested, but not required. The meeting coordinator is chaplain Gene Huffstutler, Southern Baptist Hospital, 2700 Napoleon Ave., New Orleans, La. 70175 (504) 897-5961.

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Church introduces Russian
circus performers to Jesus

By Sarah Zimmerman

N-CO
(GA.)

Baptist Press
5/31/90

ATLANTA (BP)--The ministry of a Georgia Southern Baptist church became a circus. When it befriended 128 Russian circus performers.

The troupe's two-year tour of peace and goodwill ended in Atlanta after the first two performances were not well attended. The promoters backed out, leaving the artists stranded.

Kay Bryant, director of the Care Ministry at Eastside Baptist Convention in Marietta learned of the performers' plight on the morning of May 11. By 1 p.m. she had arranged lunch for 150 people. She spent the rest of the month calling area restaurants and grocery stores to secure food for three meals a day.

Though Bryant does not know all of the details concerning the group's finances, she said, "I saw that they were without food due to circumstances beyond their control, and I don't want anyone to go hungry."

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In addition to providing food, Bryant enlisted the volunteer services of seven dentists and other medical specialists. One performer underwent a heart catheterization and now seems to be doing fine. Others have had wisdom teeth pulled, root canals done and bridges repaired.

One man who speaks minimal English has accompanied each person needing dental work. With sarcasm he said, "This is my dream: Come to America and go to the dentist every day."

Another couple has a 2-year-old son who is blind. The toddler was taken to a specialist who determined that a cornea transplant is the only way to restore his sight. But that would require staying in America. The boy's mother, who didn't seem to understand everything the doctor told her, did understand that staying here would result in "many problems," including she and her husband's lack of English skills and jobs.

The Russians have already faced many problems in the United States. On May 29 the group was evicted from the motel where it had stayed for more than two weeks. Bryant said the manager was very cooperative, but when the bill reached \$10,000, he could not permit the group to continue its stay.

Proceeds from a benefit tournament and a corporate donation from a local miniature golf company will be used to pay the motel bills.

When police officers began evicting performers, Bryant received a frantic phone call. She went to the motel and helped them move across the street to another motel.

By that time, the Russians "had just about had all they could take," Bryant said. Their animals, costumes and equipment were in other locations, some as far away as New York, and the group heard varying reports on their condition. People who were used to wrestling bears and swinging from a trapeze were growing restless of sitting in a motel room and depending on donations.

By the end of the month, a contract was pending for the performers to return to the big top. If the contract is not signed, the entertainers probably will return to Russia, Bryant said.

In any case, the troupe will leave Atlanta with a knowledge of Jesus and evidence of his love. The movie "Jesus" in Russian was shown on the motel's cable channel. Bryant said most of the group watched the evangelistic film, if only to hear something in their native language.

After the movie, one man told Bryant there was "too much talk of this Jesus." Since then he has questioned her about her faith. Another person asked for a copy of the film, which Bryant was able to provide. When people asked about her faith, Bryant shared a copy of the Four Spiritual Laws tract printed in Russian and said, "This is what we believe."

The film and the tracts were donated by a Presbyterian church preparing to make a trip to Moscow. One family, whom Bryant does not know, delivered 100 New Testaments in Russian to be given to the performers.

During lunch one day, Bryant wondered how to distribute the New Testaments. One man saw the books and began reading. Soon virtually all the New Testaments were being read.

Most of the Russians have a concept of God, but they do not know about Jesus, Bryant said. "They have been able to see the love of Jesus as we share food and our time in taking them to the doctor and to our homes," she said. "They may leave without knowing Jesus personally, but at least we've introduced them to Jesus for maybe the first time."

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BP photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

New Orleans personalities
drawn from 26 states

By James H. Cox

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The names of 203 individuals appearing on the agendas of Southern Baptist convention-related annual meetings this year include some not-so-common monikers.

Among them are Junior, Buster, Leobardo (two people), Yamile, Fermin, Rafael, Miguel, Andee, Vancil, Nikki, Herbetto, Yo Yo, GiGi, Manuel, Varnard, Lino and Buryl.

The names include those scheduled to appear on the platform of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 12-14 in the Louisiana Superdome and before nine other groups June 7-11:

Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers, Hispanic Ministers' Conference, Southern Baptist Church Music Conference, Southern Baptist Church Music Conference Prelude, Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Directors of Missions, Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, Southern Baptist Religious Education Association, Southern Baptist Women in Ministry and Woman's Missionary Union.

Of 203 persons with designated program time, 42 (20.7 percent) are from Texas, more than from any other state.

Behind Texas is Tennessee, with 27 program personalities (13.3 percent).

Other states contributing heavily to program leadership: Louisiana, 19 (9.3 percent); Georgia, 13 (6.4 percent); Alabama and California, 11 each (5.4 percent); and Florida, 9 (4.4 percent).

The seven states account for roughly two-thirds of those participating on the convention and pre-convention agendas this year.

In addition to these, four states will supply seven leaders each (or another 13.8 percent combined): Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma.

Twenty-six states, the District of Columbia and two foreign nations (India and Liberia) are among the total.

Twenty-four states have no representation in the leadership of any of the 10 programs this year. Among the missing: West Virginia, all New England states, most Northern Plains states, Michigan, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Pennsylvania.

Among cities contributing heavily to program personnel:

Nashville, 22; Fort Worth, 11; Dallas, 10; New Orleans, 8; Atlanta and Louisville, 7 each; Birmingham, 6.

John McKay, of Keller, Texas, has the largest number of assignments on the New Orleans agendas. As convention music director, he is scheduled to appear before the SBC nine times.

Three individuals have drawn five assignments each:

Joann H. Goatcher, medical consultant at the Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Va., who will address all five sessions of the WMU annual meeting.

Bob Hatfield, minister of music at McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., who will direct music at all five sessions of the WMU annual meeting.

Dwight "Ike" Reighard, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ga., and chairman of the SBC Committee on Order of Business, who will address the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference once and the SBC annual meeting four times.