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Manuel Noriega baptized,
say Southern Baptists

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
11/17/92

MIAMI (BP)--Former Panamanian leader Gen. Manuel A. Noriega was baptized in Miami's federal courthouse Oct. 24, say Southern Baptists who performed the ordinance and then administered the Lord's Supper.

"It's one of those sacred moments," said Clifton Brannon, who mailed the deposed leader a soul-winner's New Testament in January 1990, leading to Noriega's profession of faith four months later. "I could feel God speaking that he was well-pleased."

After his immersion, Noriega told the six Baptists attending that he felt the Lord's presence, said Tony Ponceti, a Baptist layman who has lead the former dictator in weekly discipleship studies for more than two years.

Gaining permission to transport a fiberglass baptismal pool into the courthouse "was nothing short of a miracle," Brannon said. "You could just see God at work through everyone involved."

Ponceti and Brannon refused to discuss specifics about security during the service, but they did say enough U.S. marshals were on hand to guard a prisoner of Noriega's status.

Noriega was found guilty earlier this year on eight counts of federal drug and racketeering charges, said Jon May, lead counsel on the general's appeal. Noriega was sentenced to 40 years and currently is housed in Miami's federal courthouse, May said.

Shortly after Noriega was captured in Panama, Brannon mailed the general a Spanish soul-winner's New Testament. Brannon, an itinerant evangelist, publishes a copy of the Scriptures that outlines how to become a Christian.

According to Brannon, Noriega wrote back thanking him for the book, beginning a dialogue between the two that resulted in the general's conversion at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Miami.

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In a September 1992 letter obtained by Baptist Press, Brannon explained to U.S. District Judge William Hoeweler that Noriega wished to be baptized. While the judge did not endorse the ceremony, he said he had no objections to it, Ponceti said.

So at 3:15 p.m. on a Saturday, Brannon, Ponceti, Texas evangelist Rudy Hernandez and three others entered Miami's federal courthouse with portable baptistry and Lord's Supper equipment in tow.

After filling the pool with water, Noriega, dressed in civilian clothes, took off his jacket and shoes and got in the water.

As Brannon preached on the meaning of baptism, Hernandez interpreted the message for the general. Prayer and a reading of the account of Jesus' baptism followed the sermon, then the general was immersed.

Baptism by immersion, as defined by the Southern Baptist Faith and Message statement, is a Christian action that symbolizes a person's death to sin, burial to the old life and resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ.

After Noriega rose out of the water, "he had no words to express the joy that he sensed," Ponceti said.

Hernandez agreed. "It was a solemn look on his face like he had been very close to the Lord," he said. "It was just a beautiful sight."

Afterwards, the group observed the Lord's Supper and sang before the general had to return to his cell, Hernandez said.

Brannon, Ponceti and Hernandez say they are convinced the general's conversion is genuine and not a ploy to be used in his legal defense strategy.

Even some guards who monitor the fallen leader daily have told those ministering to him they believe Noriega is born again, Hernandez said.

"I've seen seriousness and then I've seen the lack of it," he said. "I haven't seen any dedication and seriousness that is any greater than his."

Ponceti said during a recent visit, Noriega said he spent more than six hours after his baptism reflecting on its meaning in his life. "I didn't do that when I was baptized."

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Theological study committee
named, seeks SBC input

Baptist Press
11/17/92

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Nine additional people have been appointed to the theological study committee as part of a task force created by SBC President H. Edwin Young, according to the committee's co-chairmen.

Young created a task force in September to look at "the past and study the present (Southern Baptist Convention) in order to plan, pray and dream toward the future." Young named the chairmen of the nine committees at that time and said he would name members of the committees at a later time.

Timothy George, dean of the Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, and Roy L. Honeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., were named co-chairmen.

The committee met Nov. 13-14 at Beeson and announced the remaining members: William Bell, Dallas; J. Walter Carpenter Jr., Houston; Mark Coppenger, Nashville; Stephen Cortis, Charleston, S.C.; Carl F.H. Henry, Arlington, Va.; Herschel H. Hobbs, Oklahoma City; Richard Land, Nashville; R. Albert Mohler Jr., Atlanta; and William Tolar, Fort Worth, Texas.

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The committee was instructed by Young to use as foundational documents the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement, the 1987 report and recommendations of the SBC Peace Committee and the 1978 and 1982 Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy.

"The work of our committee may result in a statement of convictions as well as specific recommendations which shall be passed along to the task force convened by Dr. Young," George told Baptist Press. "We pray for true revival and genuine reconciliation within our beloved denomination and trust that our efforts will contribute to these goals."

George said the committee voted to pursue its work in confidentiality although "we welcome and seek input from all Southern Baptists."

Future meetings are planned for Louisville and Dallas although dates were not released.

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**Fight over homosexual B&B
puts ministers in quandary**

By Marv Knox

**Baptist Press
11/17/92**

RUSSELLVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A bed-and-breakfast resort for homosexuals has stirred passions in Russellville, Ky., and put ministers in the middle of a volatile situation.

Anger and indignation swelled in the community in September when Russellville native Jimmy Cates and his homosexual partner, Jim Turner, announced they planned to open the resort in their home, Stone Mountain Estate, just outside of town.

Local news reports have detailed a string of hateful acts directed toward the duo: anti-homosexual graffiti painted on their driveway, effigies hanged from trees on the property, death threats, obscene calls left on their telephone recorder, an attempt to run down a security guard on the property.

Meanwhile, Cates and Turner opened the resort early in October. Their clientele are homosexual men and lesbians, attracted to the secluded mansion in the woods at the crest of a hill.

The result has been further offense to the sensibilities of local people, who believe homosexuality is sinful, reported Donald Zuberer, pastor of First Baptist Church in Russellville, who is concerned anti-homosexual forces might harm someone.

"We're in the middle," Zuberer said. "We're against what is taking place out there, but we do not want any bodily harm to come to those men. We also are concerned about their souls."

A large section of the religious community -- particularly Catholics, Pentecostals, Baptists, and members of the Church of Christ and Assembly of God -- have organized to oppose the new resort but also to promote peaceful protest, Zuberer noted.

"We've formed a community prayer meeting, which meets each Tuesday morning at 6," he reported. "We pray specifically for these men and for the community. Along with it, many people pray for this to be closed down. That's what we really want -- for this to be moved out of here."

"We're also praying for the whole state of Kentucky, because what has happened in Russellville can happen anywhere in the state."

The Russellville resort opened following the Kentucky Supreme Court's decision earlier this year to overturn the state law against sodomy, Zuberer said.

Consequently, the Russellville group is circulating petitions statewide, attempting to urge the General Assembly to pass a new anti-sodomy law.

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Several ministers have talked with Cates and Turner. But Cates told an Associated Press reporter he feels persecuted by his family and the Methodist church he attended as a child.

"They're part of the persecution against me now, everybody but my real mother," he said.

Christians need to be concerned for Cates, Turner and their clients, even as they denounce their activities, Zuberer urged.

"We have understanding and compassion for these people who are homosexuals and lesbians," he said. "We have compassion and concern for their spiritual well-being. We believe as Christians we need to minister to everybody -- the alcoholic, the murderer and the thief.

"But sins of sex are a different sort," he said, citing the Apostle Paul's warning that to sleep with a prostitute is to "join Jesus Christ with a harlot. Sexual sins involve the body and have different kinds of effects on the psyche."

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Yemenis amazed Baptist nurse
survived flash flood ordeal

By Marty Groll

Baptist Press
11/17/92

JIBLA, Yemen (BP)--Local Yemenis are coming from all around town to see the Baptist nurse who tangled with a flash flood, tumbled over a 20-foot drop in a river bed and lived to talk about it.

"They've come here by the droves since this happened," said Sandy Rogers, a 38-year-old Fort Worth, Texas, native who came to work in 1983 in this primarily Muslim nation as a Southern Baptist representative.

Yemenis are saying God preserved Rogers' life for a special purpose. Scattered body parts are all they've ever found of other friends washed over that same waterfall in the churning rainwater that frequently comes crashing down from the mountains.

"The Yemenis have been very, very concerned. And they've all told me it was miraculous I made it through," Rogers said. "They've told me about others who died in half the distance."

Rogers was walking Nov. 5 to her 10 p.m. shift as a nurse supervisor at the Jibla Baptist Hospital. The foot path crosses a "wadi" (normally a dry river bed) three times as it follows it downstream. She noticed nothing out of the ordinary at the first crossing. But at the next, there was a powerful stream of rising water and she could hear the approaching roar.

Failing to discern how close the thrust of the flood was and knowing no way back except upstream, she decided to cross. "It's not like I was trying to beat the water, even though it was a stupid move on my part," she said.

The powerful calf-deep current knocked her over. The heavy, deep thrust of the flood followed. Pulled under at first, she worked her way to the top.

"At first I thought, as I was swirling down that thing, there's no way this is happening. Then I thought it had to be a dream," she said. "And a few minutes later, I thought, 'Yes, girl, this is really happening to you.'"

Flash foods are common during the rainy season. But the rainy season is over in Yemen. Though a gentle rain had fallen in Jibla that day, she had no way to know what was happening above the town.

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During the 80-minute ordeal, the flood washed Rogers more than a mile downstream. An experienced swimmer, she remembers staying on top of the water. But she doesn't recall tumbling over the 20-foot waterfall.

At one point she took hold of a huge rock. But the current washed it loose. She remembers grabbing at other things. Finally a stump of wood held fast. Shivering, she tugged herself onto it.

"I asked the Lord to take me home, because I didn't think anybody was going to rescue me," Rogers said.

She didn't know that a Yemeni hospital worker on the mountainside above, who saw her go into the water, had organized a search party. It found her battered, bruised, lacerated and suffering from hypothermia caused by being wet at 50 degrees.

Resting at the hospital for several days to recover from the effects of her ordeal and two stitchings, Rogers found some peace in how she responded to the crisis.

"I always wondered how I would be in a situation like that, but I was able to pray and sense the Lord with me even as it was happening," she said. "After I made myself realize, yes, I was really in that situation, then I was able to say, 'Okay, Lord, you're with me, and I just have to trust you with it,' and then I had peace about it."

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(BP) photo (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers Nov. 16 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Missionary says medical workers
have role in reaching 'World A'

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
11/17/92

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist medical professionals now have a "fantastic opportunity" to play a key role in taking the gospel to the unevangelized world, according to a missionary physician with 15 years of service in Macao.

Bill Swan told the annual meeting of the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship Nov. 12-15 "it's a new day in missions" with the Foreign Mission Board's new focus on "World A," the board's term for that one-fourth of the world's people who never have heard the gospel.

"It's not business as usual anymore," Swan said. "It's a whole new world and a whole new way of doing things. And medical missions has the opportunity to be right on the cutting edge of that, because we can get doctors into places where you can't get anyone else in."

Plans call for Swan to become the Foreign Mission Board's medical project coordinator for World A early in 1993. He and his wife, Janet, will continue to live in Macao.

Swan stressed the importance of joining evangelism with the practice of medicine on the mission field.

"We can no longer justify going in, doing a medical project and coming back out again and feeling good about it," Swan told his audience, which included career medical missionaries as well as volunteers. "Jesus didn't say, 'We're going to do a social gospel' or 'We're going to lead people to the Lord.' He did it all. That's what we as doctors have a great opportunity to do."

Swan was one of six Southern Baptist medical missionaries to address the conference, which seeks to strengthen support of full-time overseas workers and encourage service on the mission field by short-term volunteers. The BMDF counts more than 1,700 Southern Baptist physicians and dentists as members.

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Members of the Ladakh Medical Project team, a group of 18 volunteers who saw 3,064 patients last summer in a remote region of India dominated by Sunni Muslims, also focused the conference's attention on World A.

"We showed them that Baptists love and care," said Eddie Pettit, Baptist Young Men's director for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and team leader. "Now they say, come back and share. Bring your medicine and your faith and come back to see us."

Pettit said the region, located in the Himalayan Mountains, has only about 130 Christians in a total population of 134,000. He urged the conferees to consider joining one of three such teams scheduled to serve in mid-1993.

"They have told us we can share our faith, and this time last year they would never have said that," Pettit said. "Isn't it remarkable what God can do with just a small team to open doors for future ministry?"

In other action, the fellowship chose John J. McGraw of Laurel, Miss., president for a one-year term and Raymond L. Odle of Marion, Ill., president-elect.

The next meeting of the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship is scheduled Nov. 11-14, 1993, at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham, Ala.

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Californians debate tone
of Clinton resolution

By Mark A. Wyatt

Baptist Press
11/17/92

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--A resolution urging President-elect Bill Clinton and Vice President-elect Al Gore to "rethink their positions on abortion and homosexuality" was adopted by messengers to the 1992 California Southern Baptist Convention.

The strongly worded resolution of challenge also pledged that messengers "accept our obligation to pray" for them.

Some messengers expressed concern that the resolution, which came just one week after voters elected the first all-Southern Baptist U.S. presidential ticket, was harsh and divisive.

In other votes, messengers strengthened the Cooperative Program as the method of choice for financing the convention's programs, missions and ministries -- debating, then defeating a proposal to permit designated giving as a qualification for convention membership.

Ray Reed, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atwater, had introduced the amendment at the 1991 Oakland convention. Reed said the amendment "really broadens who we are going to recognize as part of our convention."

But other messengers opposed the change. Bob Lewis, pastor of Temple Baptist Church of Fairfield, warned of "wholesale designation" if messengers approved the change.

"I believe that would almost be the deathbed in California of unrestricted, undesignated giving," Lewis declared. "If you vote (to approve) this there will be many, many churches that hadn't even thought about it" which would begin designating their gifts, he predicted.

Defeat of the amendm nt means churches still must, among other things, contribute financially to the work of the convention through the Cooperative Program to have messengers seated at convention meetings.

In debating the proposed resolution regarding Clinton's stances, Ben Sparks, pastor of Mt. Whitney Baptist Church of Lone Pine, said, "The campaign is over. I think we ought to be gracious and redemptive rather than try to divide again."

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David Page, messenger from Harvest Community Church of Palmdale, observed Clinton and Gore know Southern Baptists' stand on abortion. "I don't want to wave a red flag in their face."

Page moved to amend the resolution in part by deleting a statement criticizing Clinton and Gore for their stances on abortion and homosexual lifestyle "contrary to biblical principles."

Mike Janz, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Rosamond, opposed diluting the original language of the resolution. "I feel the resolution is weak, if anything, and that our national leaders need to know where Southern Baptists in California stand on the issue of abortion and homosexual rights," Janz said.

Robert Bratt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Loomis, noted Clinton and Gore have publicly identified themselves as Southern Baptists but they "subscribe to the liberal views of gay rights and pro-abortion activists"

Many messengers applauded when the resolution was overwhelmingly approved by a voice vote.

Otherwise, debate was rare during the 52nd annual meeting Nov. 10-11, attended by 1,122 messengers in the Riverside Convention Center.

A \$14 million budget for 1993 was passed without comment and officers were elected without opposition.

The new budget is \$154,692 less than the 1992 budget because of a different allocation of state mission offering gifts. But it holds the state Cooperative Program goal for 1993 at its current level, \$6,762,000.

Messengers also approved holding 1993 Cooperative Program budget allocations at current levels -- 28.85 percent for the Southern Baptist Convention and 16.348 percent for California Baptist College.

Scott Williamson, pastor of Rose Drive Baptist Church in Yorba Linda, was elected to a second one-year term as CSBC president. Jim Wilson, pastor of Berkeley Avenue Baptist Church in Turlock, was elected first vice president; Joe Cheney, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Long Beach, second vice president.

In other action, messengers:

-- approved a resolution recognizing the 10th anniversary of the Vietnam war memorial, then paused for prayer for veterans and current military personnel.

-- referred to the executive board for further inquiry a motion concerning Madonna's controversial book "Sex" calling for the SBC Executive Committee, which has used the same printer, to do business with another printer.

-- referred a proposed amendment to exclude from election to the executive board "any person whose compensation is paid directly or indirectly, in whole or in part" to the executive board for further study.

-- heard a report, in response to a motion made during the 1991 meeting, that the executive board had voted to discontinue financial assistance to state Pastors' Conference.

The 1993 meeting will be Nov. 16-17 in Santa Rosa's Luther Burbank Center.

Bivocational pastor elected**Kentucky convention president By Mark Wingfield & Marv Knox**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Kentucky Baptists elected a bivocational pastor president of their state convention Nov. 10-11.

The 1,726 messengers to the 155th annual Kentucky Baptist Convention also failed to rescind steps taken last year to provide funds for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. But they did vote to keep Cooperative Program giving as a test for representation at the state convention.

Charles Stewart, pastor of Rose Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Ashland, was elected KBC president. He defeated a pastor and a layman for the post.

Stewart, who worked for the Kentucky-West Virginia Gas Co. 31 years until retiring in 1985, is president of the Southern Baptist National Council on Bivocational Ministries. He has led the Ashland church 28 years.

Other nominees were Herbert Booth, a retired physician from Florence, and Greg Earwood, pastor of First Baptist Church of Murray. Stewart won a run-off with Earwood, 646-560.

Other officers elected include Bill Crosby, pastor of Erlanger Baptist Church in Erlanger, first vice president; Brad Johnson, pastor of Living Hope Baptist Church in Bowling Green, second vice president; Wilma Simmons of Ekron Baptist Church, secretary. Crosby and Johnson won races with one other nominee.

Stewart -- along with three men elected officers of the KBC Pastors' Conference -- had been promoted as conservative candidates by Terry Sammons, pastor of New Heights Baptist Church in Louisville. Sammons sent a letter to some Kentucky pastors prior to the KBC annual meeting encouraging them to send messengers to the meeting, at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, and vote for the conservative candidates.

Sammons and Mike Routt, pastor of Eastern Gate Baptist Church in Shepherdsville, Ky., attended a meeting in Memphis, Tenn., last August where leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention's conservative movement discussed strategies for influencing state conventions.

However, Stewart said after his election he was not the candidate of any one group.

"I'm not a taker-over of anything," he insisted. "I'll do what's right. But as to being a pusher of an agenda, I'm not a crusader. I'm my own man." Stewart said he accepted the nomination on behalf of all bivocational pastors, who often get little recognition.

The Baptist Joint Committee issue arose when Sammons presented a motion to rescind the vote of last year's convention to "find a way to provide funds" for the religious-liberty agency defunded by the SBC.

That motion, which passed 331-195 last year, charged the KBC executive board with devising the means of funding the BJC.

The day before this year's convention began, the executive board approved a \$200,000 special fund to provide about \$17,000 annually to the BJC. That amount roughly equals what the BJC previously received from Kentucky churches through the state convention's Cooperative Program.

Conservatives fought unsuccessfully to derail the funding plan in the executive board meeting.

Sammons told KBC messengers he opposed the funding plan because convention funds are tight and because "this action is in direct opposition to action taken by our Southern Baptist Convention."

The motion to rescind drew a 409-402 vote, failing to get the two-thirds vote needed to reverse a previous action without advance notice.

Another proposal rejected 718-705 by messengers would have allowed churches to bypass national CP giving and still qualify for up to 10 KBC messengers.

Currently, each church that is "in friendly cooperation with" and "a bona fide contributor to" the KBC's work gets two messengers to the annual meeting. One additional messenger, up to a total of 10, is added for each 250 members over the first 100 or for each \$250 contributed annually to the CP.

The change, proposed by a special CP study committee, would have allowed one additional messenger, up to 10, for each \$250 contributed "to the work of the Kentucky Baptist Convention" and/or the CP. It would not have changed the membership-based formula.

Practically, the change would have allowed churches unhappy with the SBC's conservative leadership to remain fully represented in the KBC without funding the national CP.

In other business, messengers:

-- adopted an operating budget goal of \$17.34 million for the coming year, with 37.304 percent of undesignated receipts going to Southern Baptist causes and 62.969 percent going to Kentucky Baptist causes. That total and percentage split are the same as the current 1992-93 budget.

-- approved amendments to the Kentucky Baptist Foundation's articles of incorporation and covenant agreement with the KBC. The changes will allow the foundation in certain cases to handle funds given for entities outside those traditionally funded by the KBC.

-- heard the first reading on a proposed change in the covenant agreements with the convention's four colleges that would allow each of them to add up to eight trustees who are Baptists from out of state.

-- passed resolutions calling homosexual behavior "a sinful act" but not "the unpardonable sin," for prayer for elected officials and one opposing extra-curricular school activities on Sundays.

The convention's 1993 meeting will be Nov. 16-17 at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

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Wyoming Baptists tap Nebraskan
for convention's presidency

Baptist Press
11/17/92

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (BP)--A Nebraska pastor was elected president of the Wyoming Southern Baptist Convention during its annual meeting Nov. 11-12 at the North Cheyenne Baptist Church.

And a pastor who has never been elected convention president was named president emeritus for life.

Art Meirose, who was elected in a ballot with one other nominee for the convention's presidency, is pastor of Kimball (Neb.) Southern Baptist Church, a congregation long affiliated with the Wyoming convention in a town near the two states' border.

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O.R. "Benny" Delmar of Casper, who started Wyoming's first Southern Baptist church in 1951 and later served 22 years as an associational director of missions, was elected as president emeritus for life in honor of his pioneer missions work in the state. Delmar retired in 1989.

Danny Francis, pastor of the Big Horn Baptist Church in Buffalo, was elected in a two-person ballot for the convention's first presidency. Wayne Spencer, pastor of Casper's College Heights Baptist Church, was unopposed for the second vice presidency.

The convention's 111 messengers adopted a resolution expressing concern for the Democratic Party's platform planks on homosexuality and abortion but pledging prayer support for President-elect Bill Clinton.

A \$995,000 budget was adopted for 1993, which counts on some \$321,000 from Wyoming's 70 churches and 20-plus missions. Of the Wyoming Baptists' gifts, 27 percent, up .5 percent over the current year, has been designated for the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program for national and international missions and ministry.

The convention has increased its Cooperative Program giving to SBC causes by 1 or .5 percent every year since its founding in 1984, when 20 percent was designated for home and foreign missions and ministry, said executive director John Thomason.

Featured speakers during the convention were Don Kammerdiener, interim president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, and Russell Begaye, assistant director for American Indian work of the Home Mission Board's language church extension division.

The 1993 convention meet Nov. 10-11 at Casper's Boyd Avenue Baptist Church.

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New Mexico Baptists express
concerns to Clinton, Gore

Baptist Press
11/17/92

ALAMOGORDO, N.M. (BP)--New Mexico Baptists appealed to President-elect Bill Clinton and Vice President-elect Al Gore "to reconsider their stated positions related to ... abortion and 'gay rights'" in a resolution adopted during the convention's Nov. 10-12 annual meeting.

Otherwise, reported J.B. Fowler Jr., editor of the state's Baptist newspaper, convention meetings "are characterized by smoothness, congeniality and little or no controversy, and this year's convention with 410 messengers ran true to form."

Frank Zamora, pastor of Farmington's First Baptist Church, was elected president over Sam Shaw, pastor of Las Cruces' Calvary Baptist Church.

Unopposed for election were Tim Marrow, pastor of Albuquerque's Taylor Ranch Baptist Church, first vice president, and Kirby Kennedy, pastor of Roswell's Calvary Baptist Church, second vice president.

Messengers adopted a \$5.3 million budget for 1993, including an anticipated \$2.6 million in Cooperative Program giving by the state's churches and missions. Of the \$2.6 million, 30.5 percent, the same as 1992, has been designated for CP-funded international and national missions and ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The meeting was held at Alamogordo's First Baptist Church. The 1993 meeting will be Nov. 9-11 at Farmington's Emmanuel Baptist Church.

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Arizona Baptists spell out
trustee nomination process

By Elizabeth Young

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Messengers to the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting adopted an amendment to their constitution detailing the trustee nomination process.

Harvey Kimbler, chairman of the constitution committee and pastor of Mission Drive Baptist Church in Phoenix, said the amendment on trustees formalized what has been the convention's actual practice.

The amendment notes it is the Committee on Boards' responsibility to recommend people for service on a board "whose expertise, experience and interest will assist that board in carrying out the purpose assigned by the Convention." As well as receiving suggestions from any Arizona Southern Baptist, the Committee on Boards also will receive two names for each vacancy from the respective institution.

Messengers debated a provision allowing an institution to request a meeting with the Committee on Boards if people other than those the institution suggested are nominated. An amendment to delete the provision was defeated.

Another constitutional amendment adopted detailed how, in the event of a vacancy, an executive director-treasurer search committee is to be appointed and how resignations from the committee will be addressed. The constitution was previously silent on these matters.

The eight-member search committee, appointed by the state convention president, will include four state executive board members, three other Arizona Southern Baptists and the president.

Meeting at North Phoenix Baptist Church Nov. 10-11, messengers unanimously adopted a \$26 million composite budget composed of the following: ASBC, \$3,439,073; Grand Canyon University, \$12,745,950; Baptist Foundation of Arizona, \$4,500,000; and Arizona Baptist Children's Services, \$5,427,285.

The Cooperative Program budget includes a basic budget of \$2 million and an advance budget of an additional \$250,000. Under the basic budget, the allocation for Southern Baptist Convention causes remains at the 1992 level of 18 percent. However, the percentage rises to 30 percent in the advance budget. Percentages for Grand Canyon University and Arizona Baptist Children's Services also increase in the advance budget.

The 1993 Cooperative Program basic budget remains unchanged from the present 1992 budget, which was revised downward during the year.

Additional sources of income in the 1993 convention operating budget are \$1,198,442 from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, \$40,516 from the Baptist Sunday School Board and revenue from ASBC-sponsored programs and the Baptist Beacon.

Messengers adopted eight resolutions, including statements which promised to support President-elect Bill Clinton in prayer but asked him to reconsider his stance on abortion and homosexuality; reaffirmed commitment to increased giving through the Cooperative Program; praised churches' participation in the record \$735,000 State Mission Offering for 1992; called for increased efforts to assist in the challenge of Bold Mission Thrust; and called for Arizona Southern Baptists to be "salt and light" in a variety of ethical issues.

Another resolution, brought to the floor by Tony Pierce, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mesa, called for the state convention to "denounce the actions of leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention aligning and joining us with false religions and cults."

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The resolution specifically mentioned Baptist leaders meeting with the Pope in a joint effort against pornography, the Christian Life Commission's joining with the United States Catholic Conference in a friend-of-the-court brief in an abortion case and the partnership of the American Christian Television System and the Vision Interfaith Satellite Network. After discussion, the resolution lost in a ballot vote, 96-260.

Berry Norwood, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Prescott, was elected president. He defeated Bob Dodridge, pastor of Sabino Road Baptist Church in Tucson, 191-137.

Other officers are Joe Place, pastor of Overgaard Baptist Church in Overgaard, elected first vice president from three nominees; Daniel Molina, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Hispana Valley Heights of Phoenix, second vice president; and Frankie Kuffel, member of North Phoenix Baptist Church, recording secretary. Molina and Kuffel were the only nominees for their posts.

Next year's convention, Nov. 9-10, will again meet at North Phoenix Baptist Church.

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Michigan Baptists mark
convention's 35th year

Baptist Press
11/17/92

LANSING, Mich. (BP)--The Baptist State Convention of Michigan celebrated its 35th anniversary Nov. 10-12 at Lansing's Bethany Baptist Church.

The convention, attended by 268 messengers, also featured a tribute to Robert Wilson, who has been a convention staff member those years, including 22 as executive director.

Messengers adopted a 1993 budget of nearly \$2.9 million, encompassing a goal of \$1.26 million from Michigan's 254 Baptist churches and 55 missions. Of the \$1.26 million, 31 percent, up 0.5 percent over 1992, is to be designated for Southern Baptist Convention national and international missions and ministries funded by the Cooperative Program.

Re-elected as convention officers were: president, Levi Parish, pastor of Flint's Eastgate Baptist Church, and first vice president, August Peters, pastor of Hillsdale (Mich.) Baptist Church.

C.E. Martin, pastor of Inkster's Middlebelt Baptist Church, a predominantly African-American congregation, won the first vice presidency in a ballot with one other nominee.

The convention also adopted a resolution of appreciation for Harold C. Bennett, who retired earlier this year as president-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The 1993 meeting will be Nov. 9-11 at Traverse City's Cherryland Baptist Church.

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Baptist church historian
Robert A. Baker dies at 81

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
11/17/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Robert A. Baker, renowned as one of the leading church historians in the Southern Baptist Convention, died at his home in Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 15. He was 81.

Funeral services for Baker will be at 2 p.m. Nov. 19 at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, where he was a member. Burial will be in Laurel Land Cemetery.

Baker joined the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1942 and taught in the school's church history department until his retirement in 1981.

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While at Southwestern, Baker distinguished himself as a church historian through his teaching and writing. His books included the 75th anniversary history of the Baptist Sunday School Board, "The Story of the Sunday School Board," published in 1966. His book "Tell the Generations Following," published in 1983, commemorated the 75th anniversary of Southwestern Seminary. He is also the author of "The Thirteenth Check: The Jubilee History of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1918-1968."

His other books included "The Blossoming Desert; A Concise History of Texas Baptists;" "A Baptist Source Book, With Particular Reference to Southern Baptists;" and "The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People, 1607-1972," which was called a "definitive work of Southern Baptist life" when it was published in 1974. His 1959 book, "A Summary of Christian History," became a standard textbook for seminary and college church history courses.

Baker served on the Commission on Accreditation of the American Association of Theological Schools. He was a former president of the Texas Baptist Historical Society and was a former chairman of the SBC's Historical Commission. He was given the Historical Commission's first-ever distinguished service award in 1981.

Southwestern awarded Baker the distinguished alumnus award in 1963 and he received an honorary doctor's degree from Baylor University in 1981.

Southwestern Seminary President Russell H. Dilday called Baker a "Southern Baptist treasure."

"For those of us (who were) his students, Robert Baker was the epitome of the preacher-scholar, a man with a profound reverent faith in harmony with an enthusiastic commitment to disciplined study," Dilday said.

"He was equally at home in the pulpit proclaiming the gospel of Christ and in the doctoral seminar researching nuances of church history. He was a Southwestern treasure. We will miss him."

Born Dec. 22, 1910 to English immigrants, Baker attended elementary and high school in Kansas City, Mo. He attended business college for two years and became a clerical assistant to a lawyer. In 1932, Baker joined the U.S. Secret Service Division of the Treasury Department and served with the government for four years as a Secret Service operative in Oklahoma City. While with the Secret Service he specialized in anti-counterfeiting and received recognition for his skills with a revolver.

In 1936 he resigned from the Secret Service and was licensed to the ministry by First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City. He enrolled in Baylor University and was on staff at Bell Mead Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, where he met and married the pastor's daughter, Fredona McCaulley.

Baker earned the bachelor of arts degree from Baylor in 1939 and graduated from Southwestern Seminary with the master of theology degree in 1941 and the doctor of theology degree in 1944.

In 1947 he received the doctor of philosophy degree from Yale University, where he studied with world-famous church historians Kenneth Scott Latourette and Roland Bainton.

Friends and colleagues described Baker as someone who avoided "the spectacular."

"The spectacular is not his thing; accuracy is," wrote one colleague in a 1974 paper honoring the historian.

Speaking at Oklahoma Baptist University in 1985, Baker decried what he called a drift toward creedalism in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"We Christians must learn to be Christian in our disagreements," he said. "Some in Christian history have said, 'It doesn't matter what method you use to solve the problem; the end justifies the means.'"

In the OBU lecture, Baker said Southern Baptists can overcome their differences by focusing on unity.

"The most difficult task will be to convince both sides of the controversy that a creedalistic convention is unbaptistic and unscriptural. I firmly believe that the Southern Baptist Convention has been able to command the loyalty of millions of Southern Baptists ... only because it has been non-creedal."

Baker said Southern Baptists always have had controversies, due in part to their understanding of the gospel and the doctrine of priesthood of the believer.

"There are no first lieutenants among Baptists," he said. "They are all generals."

Baker is survived by his wife Fredona McCaulley Baker; two children, Colleen Kay Brewer of Arlington, Texas, and Robert Andrew Baker of Severna Park, Md.; a brother, Dale W. Baker of Tulsa, Okla.; and three grandchildren.

Memorials in memory of Baker may be made to the Robert A. Baker History Room at Southwestern through the seminary's Office of Development, P.O. Box 22000, Fort Worth, TX 76122.

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Wichita Falls church calls
Robert Jeffress as pastor

Baptist Press
11/17/92

WICHITA FALLS, Texas (BP)--First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas has called Robert Jeffress, 36, as pastor in a unanimous vote Nov. 15.

Jeffress will formally begin pastoral duties Dec. 13, according to a church spokesman. His election ends speculation about who would succeed Morris H. Chapman as the 25th pastor at the 8,000-member pioneer north Texas church, founded in 1883.

Chapman became president and chief executive officer of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee Oct. 1. There had been news reports Joel Gregory, recently resigned pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, was high on the church's list of potential pastors.

Jeffress has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Eastland, Texas, since 1985. A native of Dallas, Jeffress is a graduate of Baylor University, Dallas Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also is a former minister to youth and assistant pastor at First Baptist of Dallas.

Jeffress and his wife, the former Amy Lyon Renard, have two daughters, Julia, 4, and Dorothy, 10 months. Author of several books, Jeffress is a frequent writer for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"I just feel that Dr. Jeffress is an answer to prayer for First Baptist Church and that the Lord has some very exciting things for us to do under his leadership," Jeral Jackson, chairman of deacons, said. "I believe we can look forward to serving enthusiastically with him in doing God's work in our local church."

Rod Payne, minister of media at the church, said Jeffress has a "pastor's heart and is a student of God's Word." Payne said the new pastor would emphasize the teaching and pastoring aspects of that ministry.

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Baptist college honors Spurgeon
at 100th anniversary of his death By Rebecca Morrison

LIBERTY, Mo. (BP)--Charles Haddon Spurgeon was very much alive in spirit during the Spurgeon Centennial Conference Nov. 11-13 at William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo.

On the 100th anniversary of the death of Victorian England's great Baptist preacher, William Jewell enjoys a strong identification with Spurgeon, housing his 5,100-volume library in a replica of his London study.

Michael K. Nicholls, pastor of historic Bromley Baptist Church in south London and former vice principal of Spurgeon's College, described Spurgeon as a man committed to the teaching of the history of the church whose writings point unflinchingly to his Savior, thus accounting for Spurgeon's ability to point to others to Christ. If there was a secret to Spurgeon's success, Nicholls added, it was his commitment to prayer -- prayer that sought to bring a blessing to every undertaking.

Nicholls recounted the beginning of Spurgeon's College, a ministers' training college near London. Spurgeon founded the college based on three principles: no one truly wanting an education would be turned down, no student would be barred from attending even if he could not afford the fees as he was doing God's work and the college would theologically align itself and promote Puritan Calvinist principles.

The growth of the college, Nicholls said, was only one of the remarkable facets of the great religious revival during Spurgeon's time: He also saw the establishment of about 200 churches started by congregation members or students.

Clyde E. Fant, dean of the chapel and the O.L. Walker professor of Christian studies at Stetson University in Florida, told conference participants, "Spurgeon's preaching, his influence, his reputation and his sermons constitute one of the true phenomena of the Christian faith."

In any one of Spurgeon's sermons, Fant said, there is a repertoire of analogies, pictures and insights nothing short of "stupendous." While critics called him boorish and common, Spurgeon relied on his ability to reach the common man with such everyday illustrations, Fant said.

With more than 60 volumes of published works, Spurgeon's message regularly crossed the ocean to the United States where his words were reproduced and distributed by the tens of thousands. Recounting Spurgeon's ability to reach the multitudes with his preaching, Fant described how the preacher led more than 24,000 worshippers in London's Crystal Palace during a single service. As Spurgeon lived in a time of great literary flowering in England, Fant pointed to the improvement in the printing press and the advent of popular literacy as factors that enhanced Spurgeon's appeal and recognition.

Examining Spurgeon's social conscience, Nelson Duke, chairman of William Jewell's religion department, said, "He, like all of us, had to wrestle with the ways in which his biblically driven moral conviction interacted with his role as a cultural insider, specifically his patriotism." As a loyal Englishman and popular pastor, he was looked upon as a bellwether of social direction.

In music and hymnody, Donald C. Brown, William Jewell's music department chairman, said Spurgeon had very definite ideas on appropriate music for the church -- and those ideas revolved around his Puritan anchorage.

Spurgeon considered the human voice superior to any instrument, Brown said, and owned some 250 hymnals, tune books, hymnal companions and histories of hymn writing and psalmody in his library. Spurgeon at one time edited a compilation of hymnals, calling it "Our Own Hymnbook" for use at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

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Morrison is a newswriter at William Jewell College.

Purchase of Spurgeon library
began with 1905 offering

By Rebecca Morrison

LIBERTY, Mo. (BP)--Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), one of the most prominent English Baptist pastors of the 19th century, is memorialized by the Spurgeon Collection, housed in a replica of his home study in William Jewell College's Charles F. Curry Library.

The 5,103-volume collection of great Christian writers, encompassing the areas of literature, theology, travel, biography, science, hymnody, history and humor, is regarded as the world's finest library of Puritan literature.

How the college obtained the collection is a matter of fortuitous timing. During the sessions of the Missouri Baptist General Association (now called the Missouri Baptist Convention) in 1905, it was announced the valuable personal library of C.H. Spurgeon was available for purchase in London for 500 pounds, or approximately \$3,500.

In less than 10 minutes, with the enthusiastic support of William Jewell President John Priest Greene, the amount was raised. Negotiations began and by March 1906 the collection was on the Liberty, Mo., college's campus.

The oldest book in the collection is a commentary on the Book of Psalms by Cardinal Juan de Torquemada (1482-1531), written in Latin and published in Rome in 1476. The collection also contains various interesting periodicals, such as the Universal Magazine, which sought to be instructive and entertaining to gentry, merchants, farmers and tradesmen. The Spurgeon Collection contains volumes 1-104, 1749-1799. It is typical of the old style of written English which uses "f" for "s." Another unique feature is copperplate illustrations.

Bound editions of "All the Year Round," edited by Charles Dickens, is a voluminous serial of original writings dating from 1859-1871. There are commentaries from John Calvin, Matthew Henry and several other Puritan writers who influenced Spurgeon's ministry. The hymns of Isaac Watts and the compilations of Samuel, John and Charles Wesley form an outstanding accumulation of hymns written between the 17th and 19th centuries.

The Spurgeon Collection is available for browsing or studying during the academic school year. Appointments may be made through the William E. Partee Center for Baptist Historical Studies, (816) 781-7700, ext. 5341.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Since we are waiting on Tennessee's and Alabama's convention stories, a wrap-up story on the state convention meetings will be available from the (BP) central office on Thursday, Nov. 19.
