



-- BAPTIST PRESS
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NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420.17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brennan, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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ANALYSIS

States struggle with giving plans; oppose homosexuality

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
11/19/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--The diversity -- and unity -- of Southern Baptists were apparent at annual meetings of the various state conventions and fellowships as divergent approaches to mission giving were approved while most voiced opposition to homosexuality and abortion.

And although most presidents of the 39 state conventions and fellowships are pastors, seven layman were elected, one African-American, one Hispanic, one director of associational missions and one bivocational pastor.

Somewhat surprising, only Minnesota-Wisconsin and Arizona conventions voted any action regarded as "anti-Masonic" and Louisiana and Arizona reported concerns with the recent action of the SBC Radio-TV Commission's ACTS sharing a network with the VISN network.

Only Louisiana and Illinois reported action relative to the AIDS/HIV controversy while about half voted to pray for President-elect Bill Clinton though at odds with his stance on homosexuals and abortion.

Layman were elected presidents in Florida, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin, Hawaii, Arkansas, Virginia and Mississippi. An African-American in Pennsylvania/South Jersey, a Hispanic in Utah/Idaho and a director of associational missions in Kentucky were elected presidents and a native American in Oklahoma was elected vice president. Ohio elected a director of associational missions as president.

Far and away the most complex issue, however, was how state conventions would receive and disburse mission monies. At least 23 conventions voted no change in their percentage of Cooperative Program receipts channeled to Southern Baptist Convention ministries. Nine conventions increased, slightly, their percentage forwarded to the SBC but most were pioneer or smaller states.

Four conventions decreased their SBC percentages, although it is difficult to calculate because some take out preferred items before the distribution to the SBC, some include preferred items as part of the SBC percentage and one took a percentage from both the SBC and state CP for a pastoral aid item.

But the newest wrinkle came from Virginia where, for the first time, churches can choose one of three options for the state's "World Mission" causes including one which channels no funds to Southern Baptist Convention-related causes. One of the options is the traditional SBC Cooperative Program method and a second option is a combination of SBC and other ministries.

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The third option would all go to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptists who have started their own mission program and who are critical of the current Southern Baptist Convention leadership.

Economic hard times were cited by Oklahoma in dropping 2.25 percent to 44.25 percent channeled to the SBC. In Florida, the 42.2 percent sent to the SBC is down from last year's 46 percent but a new pastoral aid preferred item of 5 percent is new in addition to 3.2 percent earmarked for the Church Annuity Plan.

New England dropped .1 percent and Ohio decreased 1.5 percent in SBC percentages.

In North Carolina, the SBC percentage was increased 3.83 percent but now includes funding the expanded Church Annuity Plan. North Carolina churches also have an option for the SBC portion in which only 12 percent would go to the SBC while the rest would go to scholarships for theological students in that state and special mission projects.

The most common thread of action among the conventions was opposition to abortion and the homosexual lifestyle, although several expressed concerns for the homosexual. Even though the actions appeared to speak to the recent election where Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, a Southern Baptist, was elected on a platform supporting homosexual rights and the right to an abortion, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Arizona, Wyoming, Indiana, Utah-Idaho and Arkansas all pledged to pray for him and other elected officials.

West Virginia voted to support action of the SBC last June in declaring churches sympathetic to homosexuality as "not in friendly cooperation" with the SBC. Louisiana messengers approved a change in the state constitution to make a church's position on homosexuality a test for convention participation, much like the SBC position.

California messengers referred a motion to their state executive board which called for the SBC Executive Committee to do business with another printer rather than the one who printed the Madonna "Sex" book.

Mississippi state paper editor Guy Henderson defended his paper's news coverage policy during a motion to deny the paper a half-million dollar Cooperative Program subsidy. The proposal would have given a portion of the money to the SBC Cooperative Program and \$315,000 to the Baptist Children's Village, a Mississippi child-care agency. The proposal failed 342-449.

Maryland/Delaware Baptists turned back an attempt to amend the constitution to allow churches to be represented based on support of the convention through channels other than the Cooperative Program while Kentucky rejected a proposal which would have allowed churches to bypass national CP giving and still qualify for up to 10 KBC messengers.

Texas Baptists affirmed their continuing support for Baylor University and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs despite appeals to discontinue their funding. Kentucky, likewise, turned back attempts to remove state funding of the BJC.

Missouri turned back attempts to identify the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Baptist Fellowship of Missouri as "separate and distinctively different from the Southern Baptist and the Missouri Baptist conventions, autonomously govern and financed."

Florida's ethnic diversity was apparent when each convention session featured a period of intercessory prayer offered in English, Spanish, Creole (Indian), French-Creole (Haitian) and Chinese.

South Carolina signed an historic three-year partnership missions agreement with the predominantly black Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention. The partnership agreement concerns a three-year missions project with Baptists of Kenya, Africa.

In Alaska it was noted the state has recorded a 64 percent turnover in pastors the past two years.

Although most states did not have moderate- versus conservative-identified candidates, several were contested. Moderate candidates won in Texas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida, Alabama, Missouri and Maryland/Delaware. Conservative-backed candidates won in Georgia and South Carolina.

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Liberian Baptist leader abducted;
BWA working to meet need for food

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
11/19/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The vice president of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention Inc., A. Moses Rouhlac, has been abducted from his home in Liberia and no one knows whether he is still alive.

Word of his abduction reached the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Nov. 17 in a letter from Emile D.E. Sam-Peal, executive secretary of the Liberian convention.

"Please pray with us," wrote Sam-Peal in the letter to Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid. "Rev. A. Moses Rouhlac Jr., was abducted from his home and we don't know if he is still alive."

Baptists in Liberia are deeply concerned since Rouhlac's abduction comes shortly after the death of five American nuns in Liberia.

Reacting to news of the death of the five nuns, BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz called on Baptists in every country "to demand of their governments to work through the United Nations to bring peace to Liberia."

The latest round in Liberia's civil war started Oct. 15 with fighting between Charles Taylor's rebel group, forces from the seven-nation peacekeeping force installed two years ago by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and a third group made up of forces loyal to former Liberian President Sergeant Doe.

Giving an eyewitness account of what is currently being reported about Liberia, Sam-Peal says that Monrovia, Liberia's capital, "rages on with bullets, rockets and bombs flying over us."

Monrovia also is flooded with displaced people running to the city for refuge. There are now more than a million people in a city with a pre-war population of 250,000.

Press reports note without the United Nations, there would be no electricity, running water or food in Liberia.

Sam-Peal appealed to BWAid for help with refugees being housed in 319 registered displaced centers that include churches, public schools, buildings and private homes.

"We need urgent assistance to cope with the current crisis," Sam-Peal said. "We need food, clothing, bedding, health kits to meet those needs, especially food."

In response to the plea for help, BWAid immediately sent \$10,000 to be used by Liberian Baptists "in whatever way seems appropriate."

"We must do all we can to help you in this critical situation you now find yourselves," Montacute told Sam-Peal.

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BWAid also is working with Emmett Dunn, a Liberian and associate pastor at Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria Va., on a shipment of food for Liberia. John Peterson, senior pastor of Alfred Street Baptist, a BWA vice president, has worked on the BWA's behalf to try to bring peace to Liberia.

Dunn is working with the Firestone tire company to send containers of food supplies Dec. 15 on their boat from Baltimore. Montacute says each container of food will cost about \$2,500 to ship.

Currently, BWAid is seeking to raise \$100,000 for Liberian relief but has only received \$28,000 to date.

The BWA has historic ties to Liberian Baptists. President William Tolbert, who was toppled and killed by Doe in 1980, was BWA president of from 1965-1970.

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58 votes separate nominees for
Alabama Baptists' presidency

By Dianne Shaw Casolaro

Baptist Press
11/19/92

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--Alabama Baptists elected a new president in the closest election in recent years during their Nov. 17-18 convention at the Montgomery Civic Center.

The 2,532 registered messengers also passed resolutions on moral issues and tried to overcome problems with the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers.

C. Dewey Corder, pastor of First Baptist Church of Trussville near Birmingham, was elected president of the 3,100-church convention by a margin of 58 votes over Fred G. Lackey, pastor of First Baptist Church in Athens.

Corder has been first vice president of the convention for two years while Lackey had been second vice president.

Lackey, who had been publicly endorsed by a group of conservative pastors, announced his willingness to serve eight months ago. Corder said he decided to allow his nomination a few weeks before the convention.

The new president described himself as "theologically conservative and politically nonaligned." Both men expressed high regard for one another before and after the vote, each pledging to pray for the other.

Dick Thomassian, associate pastor for worship at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, was elected first vice president in a ballot with one other nominee. Gary Burton, pastor of Pintlala Baptist Church near Montgomery, was elected second vice president after an initial ballot with three nominees and a subsequent run-off.

The convention's 1993 Cooperative Program budget of \$28,885,000 includes 42.3 percent for SBC causes. Though the budget is \$385,000 more than last year, the SBC percentage allocation remained the same.

Messengers also passed resolutions expressing strong opposition to the federal Freedom of Choice Act; affirming Christian values; urging members to pray for the incoming U.S. administration; deploring the massacre of five American nuns and four student novices in Liberia; and opposing casino gambling in Alabama.

Also approved was a "position statement" on homosexuality which calls for parents and churches to teach children basic biblical morals, describes homosexuality as "a perversion of divine standards" and encourages people to express God's forgiveness and restoration to those who may have been involved in a "previous deviant lifestyle of immorality." The position statement was prepared and previously approved by the state board of missions.

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Much discussion during the convention centered around possible bylaw violations by the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers (ABRC), which incurred a \$5 million debt, without convention approval, for a nursing home in Dothan.

Messengers' actions on the ABRC included:

- filling vacancies on the ABRC board after the resignation of 17 of its 20 trustees. (ABRC's president, M.P. "Pat" Harrison, also has resigned.)
- recommending that the new board consider no new buildings or ministries for at least one year.
- appointing a special committee to conduct a feasibility study of ABRC's future.

The 1993 convention is scheduled for Nov. 16-17 at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville.

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South Carolina Baptists launch
missions, church growth efforts

By Ben L. McDade

Baptist Press
11/19/92

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--South Carolina Baptist Convention messengers entered into mission partnership agreements and launched a 10-year church growth strategy during their annual meeting Nov. 10-11 at Columbia's Carolina Coliseum.

Stephen M. Cloud, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in West Columbia, defeated Lonnie H. Shull Jr., pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Greer, for the presidency by a 845-799 vote margin.

James "Skip" Owens, pastor of Pinecrest Church in Charleston, was elected first vice president and Steve Hogg, pastor of First Church in Rock Hill, second vice president, both in ballots involving one other nominee.

Messengers adopted a \$23 million Cooperative Program budget, a \$1 million decrease from the 1992 budget for the 1,800-church body. The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' unified system of financial worldwide missions support. Messengers kept current-year CP allocations of 40 percent for Southern Baptist Convention causes and 60 percent for statewide causes.

Even with the budget reduction, agencies, institutions, and the ministries of the state convention's general board will receive increases in funding for 1993, due to the deletion of funding for Furman University in Greenville. During a special called convention last May 15 in Columbia, messengers voted to sever ties with Furman, its oldest institution.

Messengers also witnessed the signing of an historic three-year partnership missions agreement with the predominantly black Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina. The partnership agreement involves a three-year missions project with Baptists of Kenya, Africa.

This partnership represents the first time five distinct Baptist bodies have cooperated on a missions venture of this magnitude. In addition to the two state Baptist entities, the three-year partnership, 1993-95, includes the Baptist Convention of Kenya, comprised of Kenya nationals; the Richmond, Va.,-based Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board; and the Baptist Mission of Kenya, comprised of Southern Baptist foreign missionaries serving in Kenya.

Messengers also voted to extend and expand a three-year missions partnership with the New England Baptist Convention. The partnership was extended to 1996 and includes three additional areas in New England.

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During last year's annual meeting in Greenville, messengers approved a 10-year "Empowering Kingdom Growth" emphasis on church vision and growth. This year's convention focused on launching the EKG emphasis, which officially began Oct. 1.

In other business, messengers approved a resolution offering its prayer support for President-elect Bill Clinton and urging him "to oppose abortion on demand ... and to oppose signing a gay civil rights bill." The resolution also calls for Clinton to be "encouraged, in all deliberations and in all decisions, to be guided by prayer and by biblical principles."

The convention's 1993 meeting will be Nov. 16-17, also in Columbia's Carolina Coliseum.

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Missionary giving thanks for
life she didn't expect to have

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
11/19/92

HENDERSON, Ky. (BP)--Kathy Lloyd and her family will celebrate a special Thanksgiving this year.

Seven months ago death loomed on the horizon, threatening to cut short the life of the 36-year-old wife, mother and missionary. Lloyd had a fast-growing bone cancer; doctors said she would die in six months to two years.

God, however, has been working a miracle, the former missionary to South Korea says. After a summer of "horrible" bone marrow transplants and a flood of prayers, tests show Lloyd's body is free of the bone cancer.

There still are some cancer cells in her blood but doctors regard those as "manageable."

"It's exciting to feel like I'm getting back to normal," said Lloyd, now 37, at her Henderson, Ky., home.

The heavy doses of chemotherapy she received in the transplants have left her with less energy than before, some nerve damage in her legs and some memory loss, but Lloyd said she feels good. "There is no pain." And she is active at church, in the community and at home.

This Thanksgiving, Lloyd is giving thanks for life itself, for the prayers she has received and for her family, including her "extended Christian family."

"I almost feel like the last year has been a dream," she stated. "It does not seem like it could have actually happened."

Lloyd likened the experience to having a baby. "After you've had a baby you remember the pain ... but it's faded. You can't remember the intensity."

The transplants she underwent at St. Louis University Medical Center hit with an intensity all their own. Vomiting and diarrhea racked Lloyd's body during both stays at the hospital.

Her husband, Skip, said Kathy "went back to the womb" during those times, curling her body into a ball and calling her mother "mommy."

"I wanted to be with Kathy because I thought I might lose her," Skip said. But Kathy "pulled real close to her 'mommy' at those times."

Betty Busch, Kathy's mother and a retired nurse, stayed at the hospital with her daughter. "It was difficult for her," Kathy said. "She's lost one daughter."

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But once Kathy began to feel better, her mother "let go," Kathy said, snapping her fingers to illustrate the quickness with which her mother adjusted to the changing situation.

Kathy attributes part of her success in battling the cancer to her personality. "I am a fighter It's part of who I am and the way I was raised."

She also benefited from the latest technology. The transplant technique used has been in use only seven years and is still somewhat experimental.

Kathy, however, sees something bigger than personality and technology at work. "It's God," she replied when asked what she thinks was the key to her recovery thus far.

"When you think of the way God has set up everything in advance for me," and she left the sentence unfinished. Kathy clicks off a series of events she believes God was at work in.

While home on furlough in 1988, she met Evelyn Tully, Woman's Missionary Union director in Illinois. That led to Kathy and Skip being invited to the 1992 Illinois WMU convention. The cancer later forced them to cancel, and that cancellation led the Illinois Baptist newspaper to interview Kathy. Various state Baptist papers carried the story. Prayers went up for Kathy around the world. Important dates in the treatment process coincided with national and Illinois WMU meetings. And more prayers were offered.

On another track, former Korea missionary Bill Patterson, now pastor of First Baptist Church in Henderson, Ky., asked Skip to join the church's staff. Kathy's physician in nearby Evansville, Ind., referred her to a St. Louis doctor. St. Louis University Medical Center had lured one of the nation's leading transplant specialists to join its staff, and he directed Kathy's treatment. While in the hospital, nearby Ellisville (Mo.) First Baptist Church, where Skip once had served on the staff, led the effort to give blood for Kathy's transplants.

Kathy describes it all as miraculous. "Any way you look at it, whether as science, my attitude or God's direct healing, it's a miracle," she insisted. "I don't believe in coincidence. I believe in miracles."

Kathy has received letters from many states as well as from foreign countries. They tell of prayers on her behalf.

In Alabama, First Baptist Church of Jacksonville opened its doors for prayer the days Kathy was undergoing the transplants. Skip served on the church's staff for three and a half years before being called to foreign missions.

Kathy has benefited from answered prayers, her life has been extended. God did not answer those prayers "for my gratification, but for his glorification," Kathy said.

"He's given me some extra time so I can glorify him," she continued. "I'm grateful for the point that he has brought me to This is a lot of responsibility on me. If he's given me this time, I have to give it to him and to others."

Despite her grave condition in April, Kathy's primary prayer request then was that others would hear God's call to foreign missions. Has her prayer request for more missionaries been answered?

"I do know," Kathy said, that at a "Jericho" missions conference this summer "50 kids responded after I spoke." They said they would dedicate their lives to missions or full-time ministry. "That's a beginning."

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As for her own situation, Kathy said, "It's very difficult sitting here. I'm a missionary. I will always be a missionary." She cannot "let go of the fact" that billions of people overseas do not know the Lord and there are not many people to go and tell them about him.

Since the remaining cancer cells in her blood will require long-term "maintenance" chemotherapy, Kathy realizes she will not be returning to Korea because medical services there are not adequate.

"We cannot go back to Korea, we know that because of the oncology care, but we will serve him anywhere," Kathy stated. "We've opened up our future to him, and it's up to him to fill it."

What are her prayer requests now?

First, "pray for Europe, the healing that needs to occur in western Europe" between the nationals and Southern Baptists and for "the opportunity in eastern Europe."

Second, pray for Somalia, Liberia and other countries in Africa where hunger and civil strife have been devastating.

Third, pray for missionaries in Korea. Several have physical problems, Kathy said.

She didn't mention herself.

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(BP) Brites

Compiled by Art Toalston

Baptist Press
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Faith abounding on Redskins team

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Washington Redskins are "the most religious" players in the National Football League, according to a Washingtonian magazine cover story, which said more than half the Redskins consider themselves born-again Christians, including coach Joe Gibbs, a member of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va. But few of them have claimed publicly that the team's evangelical zeal was a factor in their Super Bowl win last January. Many of the team's leaders, including Art Monk, Darrell Green, Charles Mann, Ernest Byner and Monte Coleman, attend weekly Bible studies in each others' homes, the article reported. "We're not here to shove (religion) down people's throats," defensive back Brad Edwards qualified. "It helps us rise above our problems."

His pro football days lasted just 3 months

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (BP)--Bryan McKenzie suffered a debilitating shoulder injury just three months after signing with the Atlanta Falcons last year. But his short pro stint helped him realize his relationship with Jesus "will always be what drives me. Some of those guys had all the money, cars and girls they could ask for, yet they were still searching for fulfillment." McKenzie now is linebacker coach for his alma mater, Georgetown College. But switching to coaching hasn't been easy, he admits. "People thought I had it all together, but I didn't. I asked why and cried for months." But: "There is a point when it is time to hang up the cleats, and all athletes need to be ready to answer the question, 'What then?'"

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94-year-old saw the light 80 years ago

CENTRALIA, Ill. (BP)--Lula Whitchurch, 94, joined Zion Hill Baptist Church near Centralia, Ill., after she saw the light during revival services 80 years ago. "I had been at the altar several nights," she recounts. "I had about decided the devil or God, neither one wanted me. I saw a light just like that. The burden I was carrying around was gone just as the light hit me. I have never forgotten it. I think the reason the Lord gave me that experience was he knew I was going to be a doubter all my life. But that's something I have never doubted. When you've got that burden and you know it's lifted then you know you are saved."

(BP) takes guff for wrong headline

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Roddy Stinson, columnist for the San Antonio Express-News, won't let Baptist Press forget a typo in an Aug. 28 headline: "16 SBC churches in Miami area malled by Hurricane Andrew." (It should have been "mauled.") Stinson milked the hurricane/shopping mall typo, writing: "Wind gusts up to 160 mph picked up Sears, J.C. Penney, The Gap, Waldenbooks, the Great American Chocolate Chip Co., a couple of food courts and several kiosks and dumped them on the sanctuaries. Sources on the scene say it may be months before Dade County Baptists dig out from under the cheap jewelry and pepperoni pizza."

He urges Christians to be like Lazarus

HERRIN, Ill. (BP)--Christians are like Lazarus -- "living evidence that God is good," said Joe Ratliff, adding that Lazarus, as evidence of Jesus' power, became a threat to Jesus' enemies. Ratliff, Bible study leader during the Illinois Baptist State Association, is pastor of Houston's Brentwood Baptist Church and president of the Southern Baptist African-American Fellowship. "There is some danger to being living evidence. Are we living evidence and are we threatening enough? ... Has our presence upset anything?"

Plenty of good reasons for BSU

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.V. (BP)--Why have a Baptist Student Union? Here's why, according to Joan and Ken Oyerly, BSU workers at Shepherd College in West Virginia: "Students' years in college profoundly impact the rest of their lives. Most marry someone they meet in school. They often train for a lifelong vocation. Christians entering college face tremendous temptations. Incoming non-believers are often as open to the gospel as they ever will be. Each year after graduation dramatically decreases the likelihood of their accepting Christ. For many, eternity rests on these four years."

Twins were saved together,
now ministering together

By Frank Halbeck

Baptist Press
11/19/92

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (BP)--For a pair of California Southern Baptist pastors, being "brothers in Christ" is more than just an expression of fellowship.

Richard Allan "Rick" Prevost and Robert Allan "Rob" Prevost are twin brothers who grew up together, then married and went their separate ways. But now Rick and Rob are together again as fellow pastors in Kern County Southern Baptist Association.

From birth -- five minutes apart on April 4, 1954 -- Rick and Rob have done a lot of things together, or at least a lot alike.

"We have had the same direction in our lives for Jesus Christ," said Rob, who admits he is proud of being the "younger brother."

Rick has spent two periods of about three years each as pastor of what he calls an "open-country" church, Lakeview Southern Baptist in southwestern Kern County.

Rob has been pastor of Rexland Acres Southern Baptist Church in southeast Bakersfield nearly a year.

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The twins grew up in Oklahoma City where their parents, who were not Christians, permitted them to attend Nichols Baptist Church. Both remember "Miss Myrtle Siglock, an aged saint," taking them to church as small boys. By the time they were 8, they were walking the six blocks from their home to the church on their own.

Just before their 14th birthday Rick and Rob were saved in revival services. They had been under conviction and, though not sitting together in the service that Palm Sunday, both made professions of faith at the same time.

Thinking their parents would not approve, Rick and Rob were baptized together, without their father and mother present. Later, their father expressed disappointment in not having been invited.

At a state evangelism conference in Del City, Okla., at age 16, Rob says he was "touched" by a preacher's message, and a counselor there helped him realize God was calling him to special service.

Rob began praying for opportunities to preach as confirmation of this call. Soon a church in Ada, Okla., invited him to speak to a youth group. Five people made professions of faith when Rob preached his first sermon that year.

Soon after the twins graduated from high school in 1972, Rick acknowledged his call to special service: "God was calling me to preach."

At 18 the brothers were volunteer chaplains at University Hospital in Oklahoma City. Later both attended Oklahoma Baptist University, where Rick met his wife, Anita. They were married in 1978 and have three sons, Phillip Andrew, 13, Nathan James, 12, and Peter Thomas, 9.

Rob and his wife, Gay, also were married in 1978 and have three children, a son, Robbie, 6, and two daughters, Rachel, 5, and Rebekah, almost 2.

Rick worked in a Christian bookstore and gained experience as a youth minister in several Oklahoma churches. He also held pastorates in Granite and Pryor, Okla., before coming to Lakeview Southern Baptist Church in Bakersfield in 1983.

Rob also spent several years as a youth minister and pastor at churches in Oklahoma and Texas. In 1988 he began serving under Home Mission Board appointment in Wellington, Ohio. During that period Rob says he grew to appreciate Southern Baptists' methods of cooperation and missions support even more.

"As a church planter I learned the importance of the Cooperative Program and feel strong support for its growth and development," Rob said.

When Rob began his pastorate at Rexland Acres last February, it was like a reunion for the twins. Now they are together for pastor's luncheons, associational meetings and even shopping trips for church supplies. They also appreciate having no more long distance telephone expenses.

But for these Baptist brothers, togetherness is more than just proximity. "We are still closer than other people," Rob says. "There is a total acceptance one of the other."

Rick agrees. "It is a special relationship. We think alike and act alike. I can tell him things that maybe I couldn't tell anyone else. We help each other."

Continuing where his brother left off, Rob adds, "We pray for one another and we counsel and encourage one another. We share the same ambitions and drive in the ministry. We have the same spiritual mind-set."

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Halbeck is pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Bakersfield, Calif.