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-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75248-1798, 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, 3906 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #584, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

November 12, 1991

91-171

**Illinois Baptists adopt
\$7.7 million 1992 budget**

By Bill Webb

DECATUR, Ill. (BP)--Illinois Baptists adopted a budget totalling \$7,728,584 and re-elected a layperson as president during their annual meeting Nov. 5-7.

The only challenge to the budget, a recommendation that \$1,200 to pay for the Associated Baptist Press news service be deleted, was turned back 278-195 after discussion.

Messengers approved a 1992 general fund budget of \$6,218,726 -- \$138,335 less than 1991 -- as well as a Baptist Children's Home budget of \$937,670 and a Baptist Student Center budget of \$572,188.

Of a Cooperative Program goal of \$4,708,840, the state convention will retain 59.75 percent and send 40.25 percent to Southern Baptist Convention causes. The goal and percentages are the same as the previous year.

Rodney Osborn, a medical doctor from Woodland Baptist Church in Peoria, was re-elected president; Charles Dampeer, pastor of First Baptist Church of Herrin, was re-elected vice-president; Dennis Blankenship, pastor of Lincoln Southern Baptist Church, was elected recording secretary; and Raynarldo Henderson, associate minister of Faith Tabernacle Baptist Church in Chicago, was elected assistant recording secretary.

Messengers approved seven resolutions, including one that called homosexuality a "perversion of divine standards and a violation of nature" but affirmed homosexuals can receive forgiveness from God, and another opposing all gambling.

The 1992 meeting of the state association will be at First Baptist Church of Herrin, Nov. 4-6.

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**Illinois messengers OK
\$1,200 for ABP subscription**

By Ferrell Foster

**Baptist Press
11/12/91**

DECATUR, Ill. (BP)--Messengers to the annual meeting of Illinois Baptist State Association gave the go ahead for IBSA to pay \$1,200 for the Associated Baptist Press news service.

The messengers did so by defeating a proposed amendment to the 1992 IBSA budget that would have deleted the money for ABP. The amendment was defeated 195 to 278 (41 percent to 59 percent).

The proposal had stirred debate in the weeks prior to the annual meeting, and that debate continued on the floor of the convention. Five people spoke for the amendment and five spoke against it before a time limit for discussion expired.

ABP is one of two news services used by the Illinois Baptist newsjournal -- the other being Baptist Press. The paper had used the ABP service at no charge for the past year, but ABP requested the \$1,200 subscription fee for 1992. Baptist Press is funded through the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

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After the meeting, Illinois Baptist editor Bill Webb said: "I'm sorry that the vote was as divided as it was. I am pleased that the recommendation and the issue got a full hearing on the floor of the convention.

"I felt as if the primary concern that many people had ... had to do with budgeting Cooperative Program funds and not necessarily the Illinois Baptist having access to Associated Baptist Press stories," the editor said.

"It may be that there is a better way to actually pay the user fee for using Associated Baptist Press. But my primary purpose in requesting budget (funds) was simply to pay for a service I believe benefits the Illinois Baptist and its readers," Webb said.

Bill Fox, pastor of Lake View Southern Church in Belleville, proposed the amendment.

It called for messengers to "delete the item, designated or undesignated, for subscriptions from the Associated Baptist Press in the amount of \$1,200" and to "instruct the editor of the Illinois Baptist and any other person who might be in any way responsible for such contractual arrangements to cease and desist from any such arrangements."

Fox, in speaking to the proposed amendment, said, "I'm more concerned about what we do with our cooperative missions money than anything else"

"I don't care where Bill Webb gets his information," Fox continued. "I don't want to pay for it I'd like to have had \$1,200, and I know some churches that are going to pull that much out of their budgets, and that's unfortunate."

ABP is not an SBC agency, and its board of directors is a self-perpetuating body. ABP was established at the behest of editors of state Baptist newspapers and others after two journalists at Baptist Press were fired.

Messengers who spoke against the amendment and in favor of paying the \$1,200 subscription fee focused primarily on freedom of the press.

"I think this amendment is about censoring a news source, and it should be defeated," John Wilkinson, pastor of University Church in Macomb, who spoke against the amendment, said. "Every messenger here would rise up if an attempt were made by a national political party to abridge the freedom of the secular press. And I assure you that the freedom of the religious press is much more precious than that of the secular press"

"I believe this amendment also inhibits and restricts the free flow of ideas and information," he continued. "And for any individual to make an informed or intelligent decision on any issue, it's absolutely essential to have a free, unbiased flow of information no matter what source we get that information from."

Some of those who spoke in favor of the amendment also voiced appreciation for the editor.

Stewart commended Webb "because I think that we have an editor that, concerning this issue, has published letters for and against, in a very balanced way, in the paper."

"Bill has been very fair in the way that he's presented this in our state paper, and I commend him for that," Rains said.

**'Share Heritage and Hope' theme
for New England Baptists**

HAMPSTEAD, N.H. (BP)--"Share Heritage and Hope: Embrace God's Word" was the theme of the ninth annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of New England when it met Nov. 7-8.

Meeting at Island Pond Baptist Church in Hampstead, N.H., 203 messengers and 102 visitors conducted business and fellowshiped together.

Messengers approved a 1992 budget of \$1,198,782, up almost \$95,000 from 1991. New England Baptists are expected to contribute \$570,024. Of the contributions by New England Baptists, 21 percent, the same as last year, will be forwarded on to the national Cooperative Program unified budget.

A \$200 allocation to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs remained in the budget after discussion and a 53-36 vote.

Ken Hale, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Hanover, N.H., was elected president of the convention. Other officers elected were: Mary Beth Caffey, Mission Service Corps church development director, Lewiston, Maine, first vice president; Richard Wright, pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Warwick, R.I., second vice president; David Jackson, church planter apprentice, Quincy, Mass., clerk; George Ellis, pastor of Nashua Baptist Church, Nashua, N.H., parliamentarian; and Merwyn Borders, director of missions, Green Mountain Baptist Association, Vermont, historian. All were elected without opposition.

Messengers approved several resolutions, including one expressing appreciation to the SBC disaster relief teams from 13 states who helped in the aftermath of August's Hurricane Bob. A resolution opposing abortion on demand and one affirming freedom of conscience in church-state matters also were approved.

The 1992 convention meeting will be Nov. 11-12 at Faith Baptist Church in Warwick, R.I.

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**Philippines missionaries
aid storm survivors**

**Baptist Press
11/12/91**

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries to the Philippines worked in the days following a deadly Nov. 5 storm to aid survivors in the devastated port city of Ormoc.

Tropical storm Thelma probably killed more than 5,000 people in the central Philippines. The storm caused floods and landslides in Leyte province that buried everything in their path and left hundreds of bodies buried under mud or lying in the streets. Ormoc, where more than 3,000 bodies have been found, suffered the most.

"At present, Southern Baptists are helping meet emergency needs of food, medicine, shelter, tarpaulins, blankets and hygiene needs," reported Manila-based missionary Sam Waldron, who spoke Nov. 11 by radio to missionaries in the storm-damaged area.

Waldron spoke to missionaries Danny Johnson, Johnny Norwood, Keith Williams and Tom and Margaret Smith. They said the Philippines government was "responding well" to the needs for food and other emergency items. Reports in the area said more than 3,100 people have been buried in mass graves. About 3,000 people were still missing Nov. 11. Many were covered by mud or washed out to sea.

"Keith Williams asked for prayer that they will have the wisdom to know how to minister and how to set up a distribution system," Waldron said. "Many people were buried without identification. Whole families died in this tragedy which struck with such force and so quickly."

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The Smiths, of Lonoke and Hickory Plains, Ark., respectively, live in Ormoc. Their home was not damaged in the storm.

Relief teams were working to prevent epidemics caused by the unburied bodies. The storm left at least 120,000 people homeless, according to the Philippine government.

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National prayer alert launch
scheduled for New Year's Eve

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
11/12/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention leaders are challenging churches to take a proactive role in the national spiritual awakening movement and commit to pray one hour a week during 1992 for its occurrence.

In a September address to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, SBC President Morris Chapman issued a call for Southern Baptist churches to become more involved in the country's spirituality. What emerged from that call is the Watchmen National Prayer Alert.

The prayer alert is an organized effort headed by the Sunday School Board and Alabama pastor Larry Thompson to enlist churches for a continuous cycle of prayer from January to December 1992.

Chapman appointed Thompson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., to become director of the Watchmen National Prayer Alert. Thompson developed a smaller-scale continuous prayer chain among members of First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Fla., where he was pastor prior to moving to Alabama.

Chapman then contacted Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. who agreed to administer and fund the Watchmen National Prayer Alert through the board's discipleship training department.

"The Sunday School Board is committed to use all its resources and energies for this prayer ministry," Draper said.

"Think of millions of Southern Baptists praying together for God to remove the obstacles he sees which hinder revival and ministry among his people. Contemplate the impact of continuous and concentrated prayer for God to restore that which is broken in our midst," Draper continued.

"Consider millions bombarding heaven with earnest prayers for God to renew our strength and commitment to taking the healing power of the gospel to a lost and hurting world. Imagine the revolutionary response of God to our prayers for him to empower us to resist the devil and demolish his strongholds," said Draper.

Avery Willis, SSB administrator for the Watchmen National Prayer Alert and manager of the adult section in the board's discipleship training department, said the project earlier had been named Watchman on the Wall National Prayer Alert, but the name was changed to better communicate its meaning.

"We don't want churches to sign up for this because they think it's a neat thing," he said. "We want churches that have sought God's will and are responding to his call to participate in a national effort to pray for spiritual awakening."

Willis said he hopes churches who volunteer to participate in the prayer ministry will launch their year of prayer on New Year's Eve 1991 "with a watch night service which culminates with one hour of prayer to usher in the new year."

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Several organizers of the Watchmen National Prayer Alert recalled New Year's Eve watch night services when they were children, Willis said.

"Church members got together on New Year's Eve and spent the evening participating in special activities, receiving spiritual challenges and praying for the new year," Willis said. "We are asking churches to take that one step further and pray one hour into the new year for spiritual awakening across the nation."

Churches wishing to volunteer to become a part of the National Prayer Alert should register with the discipleship training department. While the alert officially will begin at midnight on Jan. 1, Willis said churches may register to participate at other times during the year.

When churches register, "we will then assign them to a one-hour time period for them to pray each week." Willis said. "Whatever assignment they get, they should enlist people to pray during that time."

Churches "transfer the watch" through phone calls made by appointed contact persons, Willis said. Prayer alert organizers will coordinate continuous prayer for 24 hours a day, Willis said.

Thompson said transferring the watch will work to unite Southern Baptist churches.

"As Southern Baptists, our denomination is so large that we can lose sight of what our sister churches are doing," Thompson said. "By transferring the watch we will encourage unity. That contact can help open our hearts to the needs of our sister churches."

A monthly newsletter to participating churches from the Sunday School Board and a toll-free number at the Home Mission Board's office for prayer and spiritual awakening will alert churches about specific prayer needs, Willis said.

A prayer alert information sheet and registration forms are being distributed at several state convention meetings, Willis said. Southern Baptist churches will receive similar information through a mailing, he added.

Churches interested in becoming participants of the prayer ministry should write: Watchmen National Prayer Alert, MSN 151, 127 Ninth Ave. N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, or call: Mary Betts, Watchmen National Prayer Alert coordinator, (615) 251-5037. Churches can send their registration or prayer concerns by fax to (615) 251-5058.

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EDITORS' NOTE: State Baptist newspaper editors can access the prayer alert information sheet through SBCNet.

Hispanic conference cites
need for leadership training

By Alison Wingfield

Baptist Press
11/12/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--As a "Hispanic Awakening" sweeps the nation, the Southern Baptist Convention must awaken to the changing needs for theological education and ministry training among Hispanic Southern Baptists.

That challenge was delivered by Hispanic pastors, educators, missions leaders and seminary students at a Hispanic Leadership Conference at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in late October.

Participants from across the United States and Puerto Rico met with seminary representatives, including Hispanic faculty members and students, to discuss leadership needs of Hispanic Southern Baptists.

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The two-day conference on the Louisville, Ky., campus was part of an extensive study of the quality of Southern Baptist pastoral leadership. Southern's study is being funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Ministry training for Hispanic leaders must be responsive to the diverse needs of Hispanics and Hispanic churches, conference participants stressed.

"I am very concerned that we as seminaries, as educational agencies, and as churches minister to this segment of our society," said Bob Sena, pastor of First Hispanic Baptist Church of Metro Atlanta. Sena spoke during seminary chapel services as part of the conference (see related story).

Southern is "vitaly interested in Hispanic Baptist leaders and Hispanic churches," seminary provost Larry McSwain noted. The conference, he said, introduced seminary leadership to "a new network of creativity in evangelism, missions and local church ministry that excited us beyond anything we've had on this campus for a long time."

The tremendous diversity within the nation's fastest-growing minority group is reflected in the different styles and needs of Hispanic Baptist churches, McSwain said.

"What Hispanic leaders told us is that they are interested in multi-cultural, pluralistic models in theological education," he said. "As a national seminary interested in addressing the needs of Hispanic churches throughout the country, Southern Seminary is uniquely situated to work with Hispanic leaders in developing those creative models."

Some of the topics discussed at the conference were curriculum and study needs, cultural barriers and distinctives, and financial needs of Hispanics interested in theological education.

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Hispanic Americans
open to the gospel

By Alison Wingfield

Baptist Press
11/12/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Reaching Hispanics for Christ requires divergent strategies because of the diversity within the nation's Hispanic community, according to Bob Sena, pastor of First Hispanic Baptist Church in Metro Atlanta.

Sena addressed a chapel service at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary during a Hispanic Leadership Conference held at the Louisville, Ky., school in late October.

"Hispanic Americans, even though they share a common language and cultural traits, belong to various distinct groups," said Sena, noting the following statistics:

-- The Hispanic population is the fastest-growing minority in the United States.

-- There are 23 million documented Hispanics in this country, with probably another seven million who are undocumented.

-- More than half of these Hispanics -- about 12.6 million -- are of Mexican origin. Central and South America account for 2.5 million, as does Puerto Rico, and 1.1 million are from Cuban descent. The rest come from other Hispanic origins that make up the 21 different Hispanic nationalities.

Hispanics have migrated to this country for various reasons, including economic hardship, to join family members already here and to flee communism, Sena said.

"We have to be very aware of who we're dealing with," he said. The Hispanic population is on average younger than the general population -- with a median age of 25.5 years compared to 32.5 years, Sena pointed out.

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One thing Hispanics do have in common is their openness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Sena stressed. "They are seeking and open to the gospel of Jesus Christ," he said. "This is evidenced by the thousands of Hispanics who are coming to Christ and being baptized in our Southern Baptist Hispanic churches."

The religious perspective of Hispanics also differs greatly from the population in general. Overall, 64 percent of the nation associate themselves with a Protestant church and 25 percent with the Catholic church. In the Hispanic community, those figures are reversed: only 14 percent of Hispanics affiliate themselves with Protestant churches, while 63 percent are affiliated with the Catholic church.

"Religion is a matter taken very seriously by the Hispanic community," said Sena. "The family's religious beliefs and traditions are considered the second most important element which should be preserved by Hispanics."

The most important tradition to Hispanics is keeping the Spanish language dominant, said Sena.

Growth in Hispanic and other ethnic Southern Baptist congregations has helped the denomination avoid a decline in recent years, Sena pointed out. "It's because of Hispanics reaching Hispanics that Southern Baptists have been able to maintain, if not to show a growth," he said.

"Our success as Christian Southern Baptists in evangelizing the American Hispanic population will depend on how willing we are to present the gospel in ways that are understandable, but uncompromising," concluded Sena.

Although Southern Baptist Hispanics are increasing in numbers, Sena urged more emphasis be placed on Hispanics in the Southern Baptist Convention. "We want to be a part of the system. We want to be part of the strategy" in reaching Hispanics, he said. "We don't want a handout, we want a hand."

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Humility required for
learning, relationships

By Breena Kent Paine

Baptist Press
11/12/91

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Humility is the only proper posture for Christian learning and Christian relationships, Gordon Fee told students and faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a recent chapel service.

Speaking from Philippians 2:1-13 during a Biblical Studies Special Event at the seminary, the professor of New Testament at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, said, "Apart from a genuine and deep encounter with the Holy Spirit, there is nothing a minister ... needs to learn more than humility."

"This enterprise of higher theological learning has the danger of making us arrogant," explained Fee, who holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Seattle Pacific University, and a doctorate from the University of Southern California.

"Pride is an ever-present danger among God's people -- pride in the certainty of God's ways that without compassion we condemn another," he said. "And it's such a subtle enemy, sneaking up on us at every turn.

"It is a danger in a place like this where our own learning, our own words of God, ... are taken so seriously that we take them as reality itself," Fee continued, "mistaking our own words for God's words."

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Rather than "God-talk," he continued, Christians should learn Jesus' character -- that of gentleness, "humbling one's heart before oneself and before God."

Having taught in schools in Washington, California, and Kentucky, as well as Wheaton College in Illinois, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, Fee said he has seen a breakdown of relationships in churches because of selfish ambition, an attitude which destroys unity.

"This is the kind of selfish ambition that allows faculty to bring grief on staff," he continued, "that leads a student to hog all the material in the library. ... Yet even where grades are in competition, there should be nothing that puts my own personal agenda above that of others.

"Paul says, 'In humility, consider others better than ourselves,'" Fee explained, "in our caring for them, in our putting them and their needs above our own."

To overcome selfish ambition, Fee said the Christian must model himself after Christ, who "as God, emptied himself; and as man, humbled himself."

"He didn't intend us to sit in our theology classes to discuss, 'he emptied himself of what?' He simply emptied himself. He poured himself out. That's what God's like.

"The question is not whether Jesus thought of himself as God. God-likeness does not consist of being a grasping being, taking for oneself, ... but of being (one) who gives of himself to others," Fee said. "It is self-sacrifice for the sake of others, looking out for the needs of others.

"Finally, it is not whether we can parse Greek verbs," he continued. "It is not ultimately a question of knowing more about God so we can articulate our faith more. ... But it is taking on God's character, taking on the form of servanthood. Only then can it truly be said of us that we have done theological education.

"Only as we learn humility by letting his mind and attitudes determine ours," he concluded, "can a truly Christian community happen in this place and in our churches."