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SOUTH CAROLINA--She's taking pro-life message to African American community.

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**Texas Baptists shift 2.5 percent
in funds from SBC to state causes** By Ken Camp

**Baptist Press
11/14/95**

SAN ANTONIO (BP)--By a nearly two-to-one margin, messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Nov. 13-14 in San Antonio, approved a \$42.6 million Cooperative Program unified budget that increased by 2.5 percent funds for causes within the state, doing so by cutting 2.5 percent in funds for Southern Baptist Convention causes.

The 1996 Cooperative Program unified budget includes \$1.5 million to help start 1,400 new churches by the year 2000 and \$350,000 for theological education through educational institutions related to the BGCT.

Messengers to the 110th annual Texas Baptist convention also elected as officers: president, Charles Wade, pastor of First Baptist Church, Arlington; first vice president, Ophelia Humphrey, a layperson from First Baptist Church, Amarillo; and second vice president, Noah Rodriguez, a layman from Primera Mexican Baptist Church, San Antonio. All had been endorsed by the moderate Texas Baptists Committed organization.

Wade drew 3,842 votes, compared to 2,414 for Gary Miller, pastor of Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, Fort Worth. Along with first vice president nominee Casey Perry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Malakoff, and second vice president nominee Dee Slocum, pastor of Highland Baptist Church, Amarillo, Miller had been endorsed by Southern Baptists of Texas, an organization supportive of Southern Baptist Convention leadership since 1979.

Texas Baptist convention messengers turned aside two attempts to amend the 1996 budget as proposed by the BGCT executive board. The budget calls for using 67 percent of Cooperative Program receipts in the state rather than the 64.5 percent in the 1995 budget. The '96 budget devotes 33 percent for SBC national and international missions efforts, compared to 35.3 in the '95 budget.

The 1996 budget for Texas missions causes is an increase of more than \$1.6 million over the 1995 budget. Gifts to worldwide causes through the Cooperative Program are expected to total \$22 million.

Maurice Smith of First Baptist Church, San Marcos, a 10-year veteran of foreign missions in Ghana and 15-year employee of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, spoke in favor of the budget proposal.

"Missions is not merely a matter of giving. It is a matter of strategy," said Smith, who also served 16 years as a Texas Baptist pastor and as an adjunct professor of missions at the seminary level.

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Messengers defeated 3,954 to 2,193 (64.3 percent) an amendment by Jon Crosby of First Baptist Church, Little River, that would have restored the Cooperative Program percentage for worldwide causes to its 1995 level; defunded the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and Baptist Theological Education Committee; and reduced the allocation to Baylor University by \$500,000.

Texas Baptists are funding programs that duplicate the work of Southern Baptist Convention entities, Crosby said.

"We're saying we don't trust the Southern Baptist Convention. It's a matter of trust," he said. "We need to quit duplicating work and let them do their work with their money."

Dean Dickens of Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas, speaking briefly against the amendment, said, "We have appointed the committee that has given us Texas 2000 and pointed the way for us. We need to trust the leadership of Texas Baptists that we have appointed."

On a show of ballots vote, messengers, by roughly a two-to-one margin, rejected an amendment by John Avant of Coggin Avenue Baptist Church, Brownwood, to retain at the 1995 level the percentage of Cooperative Program funds for worldwide causes.

"God's call on our convention is not to change our formula but to return to him," said Avant, a trustee of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "Let's not try political solutions when God has all the resources we need."

The budget as approved reflected the recommendations both of the BGCT/HMB Study Committee and the Theological Education Study Committee.

"Texas is a mission field," said Ed Schmeltekopf, BGCT associate executive director and chairman of the BGCT/HMB Study Committee. At least half of Texas' 18 million population is unchurched, and the population is expected to rise to 20 million by the end of the century, he noted.

Texas is "grossly under-churched" and needs 3,600 new churches by the year 2000, but 1,400 new congregations is a more achievable goal, Schmeltekopf said. When BGCT leaders met with HMB officials to present their need for more than \$600,000 in 1996 to help fund new churches, the mission board responded by offering \$101,605, he said.

"The conclusion reached by our committee was that the Home Mission Board does not plan to increase significantly its funding for home mission work in Texas," Schmeltekopf said.

In response, the committee recommended the BGCT administrative committee recommend to the executive board sources of funds to help start 200 new churches in 1996 and 300 additional churches over the four following years.

George Gaston III, pastor of Pioneer Drive Baptist Church, Abilene, and chairman of the Theological Education Study Committee, pointed to the need for additional ministerial training opportunities closer to where students live and work.

"There is more work to be done than existing ministry programs can provide," Gaston said.

Homosexuality and abortion dominated discussion during miscellaneous business. Messengers voted to refer to their executive board a motion by Don Workman of Southcrest Baptist Church to amend the BGCT constitution "to not allow churches that have practicing homosexuals as deacons or pastors to be seated as messengers."

Speaking against referral, Roger Deerinwater, pastor of First Baptist Church, Archer City, said Texas Baptists need to make a clear statement on the ordination of homosexuals.

"By voting to refer this, we are saying we can't decide whether homosexuality is a sin or not," Deerinwater said. "I believe if we were to poll the pastor and deacons present here, we would find a nearly unanimous consensus. We do not need to refer this to anybody."

Cliff Cooper, pastor of North College Avenue Baptist Church, Snyder, agreed, saying ordination of homosexuals is "a cut-and-dried issue" not open to debate.

"I believe that it is not a committee but a convention that should speak to this issue," Cooper said.

However, Bruce Prescott, pastor of Easthaven Baptist Church, Houston, maintained the issue was not homosexuality but whether a state convention could exclude messengers on the basis of a local church's decisions.

"It is a matter of Baptist doctrine and principle -- the autonomy of the local church," Prescott said. "It is a fundamental, bedrock issue."

Bill Scarbrough of Highland Park Baptist Church, Austin, introduced an amendment that would have added a long list of other sins such as adultery, theft and greed as reasons to exclude messengers. The motion to amend was ruled out of order.

On the previous day, a messenger from Hurlwood Baptist Church, Lubbock, had asked that any messenger from University Baptist Church, Austin, be denied seating at the convention. Last month, the church was expelled from Austin Baptist Association for ordaining a homosexual as a deacon.

When Danny Souder, chairman of the credentials committee, said no messengers from University Baptist Church had asked to be seated, Workman moved that if any messenger from the church register, they should be denied seating. That motion was referred to the credentials committee.

Messengers dealt indirectly with two abortion-related motions by Phillip Brown of Manchaca Baptist Church, Austin. One stated the BGCT "adopt the policy that abortions not be performed on the premises of, or under the auspices or authority or tolerance of, any Texas Baptist medical institution or agency, except when such an abortion is necessary to save the life of the mother when her life is in imminent and immediate danger."

Ron Durham, pastor of Columbus Avenue Baptist Church, Waco, and chairman of the committee on order of business, reported legal counsel advised the motion as stated was in violation Texas law since only trustees can set policies. Durham said the matter was being referred to the BGCT Human Welfare Coordinating Board, along with a recommendation that institutions be encouraged to provide a public statement of their policies.

Brown's other motion was directing the Texas Christian Life Commission to revise its position paper, "Abortion and the Christian Life," in order to "bring it in line with mainstream pro-life ethics and terminology, and to indicate a tolerance of abortion only when the physical life of the mother is in imminent and immediate danger."

The CLC document, which was revised recently, opposes abortions in general but allows for possible exceptions in cases of rape, incest and severe fetal deformity incompatible with life, as well as when the mother's life is endangered.

"I do not believe in a situational ethic or in the moral relativism that would say the circumstances of conception dictate the personhood of the child," Brown said.

Brown's motion was ruled out of order, and an effort to appeal the decision of the chair failed.

Messengers overwhelmingly approved a motion introduced by Charles Davenport, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tulia, calling for the creation of a committee to improve BGCT efficiency and maximize effectiveness.

The motion called on the convention president and chairman of the executive board to "appoint a committee to consider the best ways to assure the maximum efficiency and effectiveness of BGCT cooperative efforts in missions, evangelism, education, ethics and human services, including management of legal concerns."

Texas Baptists approved resolutions affirming First Amendment guarantees of religious liberty, opposing the legalization and expansion of gambling, and expressing concern about racism, substance abuse and dysfunctional families.

The proposed "Religious Equality Amendment" to the Constitution "would have the potential effect of destroying the establishment clause of the First Amendment," according to a resolution on religious freedom.

"The First Amendment as written provides protections for the religious liberty of all Americans," the resolution stated, urging "great caution" concerning any attempt to change it.

**She's taking pro-life message
to African American community**

By Kelli Williams

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Choice is an important issue for Shelia Massey.

"I see no other choice for me as an African American born-again believer in Jesus," said Massey, "but to speak and act positively for saving life." She and her husband, Oliver, are founders of African-Americans for Life/Save the Seed Ministries.

"Many Christians say, 'Of course, I'm pro-life,' but until something happens in the news, the abortion issue is out of sight, out of mind. God has called me to keep this issue before my people," said Massey, a member of Harbison Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.

African-Americans for Life/Save the Seed Ministries is dedicated to spreading the pro-life, pro-family message in the black community, educating and informing them about the abortion issue and teaching young African Americans about the importance of abstinence.

Massey's efforts began in 1991 after her pastor, committed pro-life activist Bob Shearer, showed the "Hard Truth" video to his multiracial congregation one Sunday morning. She was shaken by the images of broken and burned fetuses in the film, she recounted. She also noticed everyone in the video was white.

Maybe, she thought, abortion isn't a problem in the black community. But she had to find out for sure.

That same week Massey visited South Carolina Citizens for Life and Daybreak Crisis Pregnancy Center and discovered that although African Americans make up only 12 percent of the U.S. population, 44 percent of all abortions are performed on black women.

Amazed, Massey did some quick math: "By the year 2015 if we do not stop killing our babies, we will not have as many people being born as are dying."

"Oliver and I prayed and prayed about it, and God just etched this into my heart. Next, we sat down and counted the cost, because I knew this was not a message the black community has heard or wanted to hear. But the Lord has told us this is something we have to do, because he will judge the African American church for not speaking out against the shedding of innocent blood. God's Word says we are to save the innocent -- the ones who are not able to speak for themselves like widows, orphans and unborn children."

Why has this issue been etched so deeply onto Massey's heart and life? Because she knows what it's like to be vulnerable and helpless -- unable to speak up against those who would do harm. "I believe God allows things to happen in our lives to show us his grace. At an early age, I lost my mother and father. God brought people into my life who would speak up for me and take care of me as an orphan. Through those people, I knew his mercy, grace and provision. Because I know how it feels, I see no other choice for myself but to help those who cannot speak for themselves. Someone did it for me."

The pro-life, pro-family message has been a challenging issue for Massey to bring to today's black community because "choice" in any area of life holds strong significance for many African Americans. "For so long, we, as blacks, never had a choice. So that word is like a flashing light, a magnet to people," Massey said. "Anytime you're talking about taking away a black person's 'choice,' then you're talking about taking away their very freedom. The devil has turned the meaning of that word against us."

Her biggest challenge has been striving to reach African American churches. In the beginning, Massey contacted 100 black pastors in South Carolina and shared her concerns about the unusually high rate of abortions in the black community. Most agreed that abortion was wrong, but few would consent to allow African Americans for Life to bring their pro-life message to the church's congregation.

Unfortunately, Massey said, their reaction was all too typical. "It's the whole liberal mind-set that my people have been drawn into these past 30 years. Instead of being correct in the sight of God, they're trying to stay in the mainstream of what the world says is right."

But the message of family and life is getting out. African-Americans for Life, mad up of community members from Mass y's church as w ll as other denominations in the area, is equipped to address many differ nt facets of the pro-life, pro-family cause. One woman counsels ther women who have had abortions. Other members do sidewalk counseling or target black teen-agers with information about abstinence as they give presentations in area schools.

Massey, who recently attended the National Right to Life convention in Nashville, Tenn., as well as other members of African-Americans for Life speak on radio stations, in churches and at pro-life organizations across the country. African-Americans for Life was active at this fall's South Carolina State Fair and is scheduled to give an upcoming presentation at the University of South Carolina.

They even have their own unique way of getting the pro-life message to the black community using the famous Tupperware party marketing method. Someone invites five or so friends to his or her home for a "life party" and to hear the African-Americans for Life message.

"We sent out the invitations. We bring all the materials. Just like a Tupperware party," Massey said. "We show a black pro-life film, called 'Vanessa's Story,' about a girl who gets pregnant and her mother tries to coerce her into getting an abortion. It has all black actors and actresses and really makes a big impact. In the life party setting, people are more open. We've found that they aren't as intimidated to ask questions. Many decide to have their own life parties."

What does the future hold for African-Americans for Life? Their current project involves placing six roadside billboards around the state which promote the pro-life message. "Here in Columbia, there is already one billboard up," said Massey. "The message so stuck in my heart that I knew we had to have more. It reads, 'Number of African-Americans killed by lynching -- 1,700. Number of African-Americans killed by abortion -- 10 million. What are you going to do about it?'"

Fight for the lives of their own innocent children -- that's what Massey prays African American Christians will do about the issue of abortion.

"Why are all these things happening within the black community? Black-on-black crime. AIDS. The decline in affirmative action. I believe, in my heart, God wants us to turn back to him," she said.

"Many blacks don't realize that God allowed us to be brought to America for a purpose. All the things that have happened to us as a people God wants to turn around and use for good. We have to make a choice to speak up. As African Americans we have to ask ourselves, 'What am I going to do about it?'"

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Williams is a free-lance writer in Raleigh, N.C.

Nilson Fanini: Don't attack
Catholics when witnessing

By Wendy Ryan

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11/14/95

TOULOUSE, France (BP)--According to Nilson do Amaral Fanini, president of the Baptist World Alliance and a successful pastor in the predominantly Catholic country of Brazil, "Never attack, never offend Roman Catholics if you are witnessing your faith to them."

Fanini, whose church is in the Rio de Janeiro area, spoke to 35 church planters from southern Europe on "Planting Churches in a Catholic Context: Cooperation or Confrontation" at a Nov. 10-13 conference in Toulouse, France, sponsored by BWA's evangelism division and organized by Jean Pierre Dassonville, general secretary of Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches in France.

Fanini said church-planting strategy in a Catholic context must be neither confrontation or cooperation.

"Given our doctrinal differences, there will always be a need for Baptists to plant churches even where there are many Catholic congregations," he said, "but never attack, never offend."

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Fanini called for "courtesy and fellowship with those who have plowed the ground before us and who believe in many Christian doctrines precious to Baptists."

During the church planting conference, Fanini called all to kneel with him and pray for the spread of the gospel in southern Europe.

The conference combined the theory and practice of church planting presented by BWA leaders with reports of church-planting methods and successes in difficult areas by pastors from France, Poland, Italy, Croatia, Portugal, Malta and Belgium.

Daniel Trusiewicz of Poland, for example, said Baptists there use tent ministries "because it gives us a high profile in town and many people will come to a tent who will not enter a church. Even the television people will come when we preach in a tent."

Robert Atkins, a missionary with the British Missionary Society, noted, "The joy for me at this conference was to meet and confer with fellow mission personnel and national church planters from nearby countries where the British Mission Society is working."

At the end of the meeting, the Baptist church planters were challenged by Tony Cupit, BWA evangelism and education director, to urge the congregations in their unions or conventions to establish at least one new congregation by the year 2000. This is one of the key parts of the Derbyshire Declaration issued at the 1992 BWA International Church Planting Conference in Swanwick, England.

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(BP) Brites
Compiled by Art Toalston

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Don't underestimate a church's size or site

TORREY, Utah (BP)--"Churches in out-of-the-way places," reminds Kenneth Chadwick, director of missions for Salt Lake City and Rainbow Canyon Baptist associations, "often have an impact much larger than their size and location might at first indicate." During special services at First Baptist Church in the small town of Torrey, Utah, for example, Chadwick visited with the widow of one of the church's former pastors, Pearl Watson. She told of her late husband, John, receiving a call at 10:30 one night from a deputy sheriff saying a young man from out of state wanted to talk to a "man of God" after being injured when his truck was in an accident. The deputy called the pastor of the only evangelical church in the county -- Watson. At the clinic in Loa, Utah, Watson led the young man, Scott Bestler, in the sinner's prayer but returned home uncertain of his conversion. But doubt soon ended, as Bestler kept in touch with the Watsons, telling them of his call to the ministry, then his seminary studies and, most recently, news that he's become a missionary with All Tribes Missions.

Teacher keeps focus on students' souls

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (BP)--Brett Miller, a speech and debate teacher at Parkview High School and member of South Haven Baptist Church, Springfield, Mo., admits frustration over some students who "don't really care about anything. It goes beyond being self-centered. They don't seem to care deeply about anything -- nothing matters. It's difficult to get them to care." He admits, "I'm absolutely convinced that if I didn't see them as souls I would not be able to stand them. I wouldn't be able to come back each day. My attitude is: If I don't care and love them, who will?" Miller says he chose a career in teaching because "I wanted to focus on people instead of money ... to express ideas and be involved with people and not have to worry about making money or selling out the truth."

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Church waits word from God on a building

TITUSVILLE, Fla. (BP)--On Sunday mornings, the 35-member church meets at the KOA campground in Titusville, Fla., and on Sunday evenings, at Tom and Jerry's Pest Control Service. That's so the congregation can live up to its name, Mission Baptist Church, and its mission statement: "A great church is one that builds relationships." One-half of its offerings are devoted to missions efforts at home and abroad. Maybe someday the church, founded in 1993, will buy land and construct a building, says pastor Dennis Wilbanks, but it will need to be "multifunctional and used by the community" and the result of "God's movement."

'Brothers' bust, bend, tear -- and witness

HILLSBORO, Ill. (BP)--The "Brothers of Power" bust blazing bricks and two-by-fours, bend steel, tear telephone books in half and perform other feats of strength in schools and churches to get young people's attention. When the team helps a youth find Christ, says Matthew McNealy, "there's no feeling like it in the world." McNealy, who recently moved to Hillsboro, Ill., is one of three actual brothers in the group, along with Brian McNealy, pastor of Reno (Ill.) Baptist Church, and Chris McNealy, a member of First Baptist Church, Columbia, Ill. Group members say they are one of six Christian power teams in the country.

Layman achieves Eddie Rickenbacker honor

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP)--A 60-cent Eddie Rickenbacker stamp issued by the U.S. Post Office is the result of 13 years of Dick Hoerle's efforts for the World War I pilot to receive such recognition. Hoerle, a member of Southside Baptist Church, Columbus, Ohio, who collects memorabilia related to flight, calls Rickenbacker a man who cared. Rickenbacker, for example, ordered that the combat pilots he supervised in World War I not consume alcoholic beverages the 24 hours prior to flight. When Rickenbacker entered business making cars, he was the first to put four-wheel safety brakes on his vehicles. When his company went broke, he made sure all debts were paid. When he became president of Eastern Airlines, he again made sure all debts were paid. "Dollars and bullets are not enough," Hoerle quotes Rickenbacker as saying. "We must have spiritual rearmament as well."

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Debbie Von Behren, Bonnie Verlander and Ferrell Foster contributed to this column.

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