

# Associated Baptist Press

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November 17, 1994

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## Massive heart attack kills Alabama editor

By Keith Hinson

POINT CLEAR, Ala. (ABP) -- Hudson Baggett, editor of The Alabama Baptist newspaper since 1966, died of a massive heart attack Nov. 17.

Baggett, 71, and his wife, June, were visiting Point Clear, Ala., for a day's vacation following the Nov. 15-16 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention in nearby Mobile. He had planned to return to his office in Birmingham on Nov. 18.

According to family sources, Baggett had taken a walk before breakfast and returned to his hotel room. Shortly afterward, he suffered a massive heart attack and died.

Baggett had started the previous day delivering a report to the state convention, where he commented on his 28-year editorship. "I would not have chosen it. I would not choose it again. But it's been a blessing," he said.

Baggett described a recent conversation with a pastor who volunteered he would pray for the editor because "you have to walk the chalk line." Baggett said he responded he had "been walking the chalk line for a long time." "I think I've rubbed the chalk line out," he quipped.

Baggett reminded the record crowd, assembled in part by a controversy over a Baptist university in the state, that all Alabama Baptists are not alike and that disagreements are inevitable. He said his goal as editor was to produce an Alabama Baptist that is "not a one-sided paper."

"Issues have many sides," he said, and a state paper should strive to present all arguments fairly. "The issue is not whether we disagree," he said. "That has always been the case. The crucial thing is how we handle and deal with our differences."

Mike Shaw, chairman of the newspaper's board of directors and pastor of the First Baptist Church of Pelham, said: "Hudson Baggett not only edited The Alabama Baptist, but he was Mr. Alabama Baptist. There was not a more beloved personality in Alabama Baptist life than Dr. Baggett. He will be sorely missed by all Baptists and all Christians."

Troy Morrison, executive secretary-treasurer of the state convention, said Baggett's death "leaves a numbness all across the Alabama Baptist State Convention."

Baggett's "fairness and forthrightness as editor of The Alabama Baptist endeared him to each of us," Morrison said. "There was never any question about his love for the Lord and his love for Alabama Baptists. He was a giant and a gallant Christian. He will be greatly missed. We extend our prayers to his family."

Before editing the paper, Baggett taught at Samford University from 1958 to 1966.

Baggett earned a bachelor of arts degree in 1947 at Howard College (now Samford). He earned three degrees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. -- bachelor of divinity, master of theology, and doctor of theology with a major in homiletics. Later, he served as a member of the seminary's board of trustees.

Baggett also received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Judson College, a Baptist school in Marion, Ala.

A native of Alabama, Baggett was pastor of churches in Alabama and Kentucky, including Shades Valley Baptist Church in Jefferson County, Ala.; Salem Baptist Church in Meade County, Ky.; and the First Baptist Church of Florence, Ala.

Baggett is survived by his wife, the former June Stewart of Reeltown, Ala.; three sons, Mark Baggett, a professor of English and law at Samford University, Dale Baggett and Tim Baggett, all of Birmingham; a sister, Amy Willoughby of Cullman, Ala.; a brother, William Baggett of Atlanta, Ga.; and six grandchildren.

The funeral will be at Saturday, Nov. 19, at 10 a.m. at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham. Burial will be in Elmwood Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be sent to: the Hudson Baggett Endowment Fund, c/o the Alabama Baptist, P.O. Box 59685, Birmingham, Ala., 35259.

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-- Bob Allen contributed to this story.

## **Alabama Baptists ask, but decline to force, Samford to reconsider charter change**

By Bob Allen

MOBILE, Ala. (ABP) -- Alabama Baptists asked Samford University to reconsider the recent decision taking away the right of the Alabama Baptist State Convention to elect the Birmingham school's trustees but chose -- at least for now -- to make their case by persuasion and not force.

Meeting Nov. 15-16 in Mobile, a record 3,135 messengers delivered a mild rebuke to Samford trustees, who changed their charter in September to allow them to elect members to the university's governing board. Historically, the state convention has elected trustees to oversee Samford, Alabama Baptists' flagship institution.

Messengers approved four recommendations of a Samford study committee appointed last month by state convention president Dewey Corder, brushing aside efforts to take Samford to court or withhold the \$4 million in state convention funding for the school.

The recommendation included a "request" that Samford trustees reconsider their Sept. 13 action. It also asked the convention to act on a slate of nominees to Samford's board, "affirming the legal right of the convention to do so."

Citing historical precedent, the committee then asked the convention to continue funding Samford until "final disposition" of the dispute by vote of the convention. Finally, the recommendation stipulated no further action on the matter would be taken for the remainder of the convention and authorized the study committee to

seek "a satisfactory resolution" of the issue, subject to state convention approval.

The fourth recommendation superseded a motion offered earlier by David Bishop, a messenger from Maplesville, that the convention take legal action against Samford's trustees and that money earmarked for the school in the convention's budget be escrowed to cover the costs of legal action.

Study chairman Ron Madison, introducing the committee's report to messengers, discouraged talk of legal action. "We believe the Word of God to be infallible and binding upon believers," said Madison, pastor of First Baptist Church of Opelika, citing the New Testament's injunction enjoining Christians to settle their own disputes and avoid taking one another to court.

Behind the scenes, however, state convention leaders took action to keep their options open regarding legal action. Just before the convention meeting, the State Board of Missions adopted a legal agreement with Samford's trustees stating that the pledge not to sue immediately does not mean the convention waives it right to do so in the future.

Bishop came back before the convention to offer an amendment to the study committee's recommendation, calling for the convention to withhold funding for Samford should the trustees refuse to accept the slate of new trustees elected by the convention.

"I have a problem with the fact that the largest single item in the budget" is no longer under state convention control, Bishop said. In 1995, Samford is set to receive \$4 million of a total \$28.8 million Cooperative Program budget approved at the convention. Of that total, 42.3 percent will be forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention. Samford receives about a fourth of the \$16.6 million budgeted for Alabama causes. "I do not think this is good stewardship of God's money," Bishop said.

Messengers preferred compromise over confrontation, overwhelmingly rejecting Bishop's amendment and two others in a 90-minute discussion before adopting the committee's report.

In other business, Alabama Baptists elected Fred Lackey, pastor of First Baptist Church of Athens, as their president. Lackey narrowly lost a presidential bid two years ago to Corder, pastor of First Baptist Church of Trussville, in a hotly contested race.

This year's election was much more subdued, with Lackey drawing a 53 percent majority to 47 percent for Earl Potts, former executive director of the state convention and a latecomer to the presidential race.

Though backed by conservatives in the state, Lackey is regarded as a conciliator. "I will remember, I promise you, we are all family," Lackey told messengers. "I will treat the whole family of Alabama Baptists as I do my children."

Other officers elected at the convention included Leon Ballard of York, a moderate, who was picked as first vice president, and Jeff Noblit of Muscle Shoals, a conservative and the incumbent, who defeated two laymen for the office of second vice president.

Unnerved by the passion generated by the Samford issue, convention leaders repeatedly admonished messengers to exercise restraint in discussing controversial issues. "Whatever we do, let's keep in mind we're about the Lord's work," said Corder in an emotional presidential address.

Executive Director Troy Morrison sounded a similar theme in his report to the convention. "Let's not tear this convention apart over matters that will not matter a hundred years from now," he said.

One moment of drama was played out in front of the convention, as Morrison and University of Mobile President Michael Magnoli stepped forward to heal a public rift.

Early this year, Morrison challenged action by the university's board of regents establishing a center in Nicaragua without convention approval as violating convention bylaws.

After the Samford trustees' September vote, Magnoli charged favoritism, saying his school received harsher treatment from convention leaders.

In October, in an internal memo and a letter sent to churches around the state, Magnoli endorsed Lackey for president of the convention and hinted that any funds taken away from Samford might be reallocated to the convention's other two schools, the University of Mobile and Judson College in Marion.

Two weeks before the convention, Morrison said the unprecedented political involvement by an agency executive -- Magnoli -- threatened the integrity of the convention. He asked the State Board of Missions to

declare the convention in a state of emergency, to postpone the annual meeting two weeks and move it from Mobile to Huntsville.

The state's Executive Committee voted 11-7 to delay and move the convention, but the State Board of Missions shot the proposal down 44-29.

At the convention, Magnoli stepped to the podium and asked Morrison to join him. "You and I have disagreed on several things. Some might say we have been disagreeable. ... I want you to know I recognize you as my brother in Christ and I respect you as an officer of this convention," Magnoli said.

Morrison responded, "I support every single entity of this convention, one hundred percent."

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## **Virginia Baptists link representation solely to support of state's budget**

By Greg Warner

SALEM, Va. (ABP) -- Virginia Baptists set a new standard Nov. 16 for membership in their statewide body -- those who pay the bills will make the decisions.

A constitutional amendment approved by the Baptist General Association of Virginia bases membership on church contributions to Virginia Baptist causes only.

Previously the state association -- and apparently all other state Baptist conventions -- also counted contributions to national causes, principally the Southern Baptist Convention, when determining which churches were eligible for membership.

"A church can give nothing to Virginia Baptist ministries and still send 15 messengers" to vote at the annual meeting under the old system, argued Roy Thomas of Crozet during debate. "This is neither right nor fair. Churches which do not support Virginia Baptist ministries should not decide the issues among us."

But opponents of the change say it targets conservatives, some of whom are diverting their missions gifts away from the moderate-dominated state association to the conservative-controlled SBC.

"This proposed action is one of exclusion and division designed to keep conservatives from participating in the BGAV," warned Terry Collier of Pound. "... It may send us on a course of division from which we will not return. One day the only ties between the BGAV and the SBC will be in our memories."

Policy changes in recent years have allowed churches to channel money to moderate ministries, including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, angering many conservatives, some of whom formed a separate organization, Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia.

The amendment passed with 72 percent of the vote, easily gaining the two-thirds margin required to amend the constitution. Similar proposals the past two years narrowly failed, drawing 62 percent approval in 1992 and 61 percent in 1993.

Most state conventions require member churches to contribute to Baptist work in the state, usually through unrestricted gifts to a combined state-SBC budget. But Virginia Baptists apparently are the first to base representation solely on funding to state causes.

Those state causes have suffered in recent years as many disgruntled conservatives bypassed the state budget in favor of the SBC. That has left the BGAV 12 percent below its budget target this year, forcing the association to adopt a 1995 budget of \$15 million that is \$500,000 less than 1994.

Even some conservatives said the constitutional change made sense, but they complained it was being proposed to punish conservatives.

Charles Fuller, conservative pastor of First Baptist in Roanoke, the state association's largest church, told messengers "there probably is a very valid reason" for basing BGAV representation on contributions; but he

added, "I do question the complete purity of motive."

But Bob Setzer of Danville said the proposal "simply requests that we practice responsible stewardship. That's it. If you wish to be here to vote, you need to have some money in the pot." The intent is not to exclude, he said, but "to define more clearly what it means to be a cooperating Virginia Baptist church."

Many observers were surprised the amendment passed so easily. Outgoing BGAV president Ron Crawford, a moderate, said, "The margin of victory means that many conservative churches do not see it as exclusionary."

Crawford predicted the change will not prompt churches to further cut funding for the state association. But conservative strategist T.C. Pinckney of Alexandria disagreed.

"This will hurt the BGAV considerably," warned Pinckney, a retired Air Force general and member of the SBC Executive Committee.

"Taken in context -- and that is important -- it is punitive and consequently divisive and can only worsen the relationships within the BGAV," he said.

"When you look at the principle in isolation, you can make a good case that those paying the bills should do the voting. But when you take it in context ... conservatives would not believe that is the primary motive of this."

Pinckney noted that Virginia Baptists relaxed their policy on mission contributions in recent years to allow churches to pick which national causes to support, including the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. "But when (conservative) churches began to exercise the right given them (by funding only the SBC), there was a reaction," he said.

The proposal passed by a wider-than-expected margin because moderates did a better job getting people motivated to come to the convention, Pinckney said, and the General Board, which brought the proposal, designed it so that small churches that contribute little to the BGAV will not lose any representation. The amendment reduces the dollar amount required to qualify for messengers -- generally from \$1,000 for each messenger to \$600.

That change made the amendment more appealing than the two previous proposals that failed, Pinckney said.

Reginald McDonough, BGAV executive director, said the change doesn't "make us any less Southern Baptist." "The issue was to adjust our system to the changing scene in the (national) denomination," he said.

But Howard Baldwin, interim executive director of the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, disagreed. "The BGAV clearly indicated it is going in a direction away from the SBC," he said.

The \$15 million BGAV budget for 1995 earmarks 62 percent of receipts for mission work in Virginia and 2 percent for "partnership missions," Virginia-sponsored mission work in Hungary, Mexico City and among Baptists in Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey.

The remaining 36 percent is sent to one of three "world mission" options chosen by the contributing church. One supports the traditional Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program. Another supports only the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. A "hybrid" option earmarks 74 percent for SBC causes and 26 for alternative moderate ministries.

In other actions:

-- Virginia Baptists elected a slate of moderate officers. The president is Margaret Wayland, a homemaker from Danville and former president of Virginia Woman's Missionary Union. She drew 72 percent of the vote over conservative candidate John Simms of Salem, a retired attorney and trustee of the SBC Foreign Mission Board.

Also elected were first vice president Kirkland Lashley of Roanoke, director of missions for the Roanoke Valley Baptist Association, and second vice president Marvin Kerby, pastor of First Baptist Church in West Point.

-- Resolutions, traditionally a source of heated debate during the annual meeting, drew almost no attention. Messengers proposed no resolutions. "I do not know why the Lord has spoken to the messengers of this General Association and asked them not to submit resolutions, but he has and I am grateful," said Elizabeth

Fogg of Richmond, chairwoman of the resolutions committee. The committee did win approval for one resolution expressing appreciation to the host city and convention organizers.

A separate resolution, presented by the religious liberty committee and adopted, praised the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee in Washington "for their effective leadership in securing passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act" and thanking "each Virginia member of Congress who voted" for the RFRA. The legislation, passed by Congress 1993, restored strong legal protections for religious practices.

The Nov. 11-12 meeting at the Salem Civic Center attracted 3,375 messengers, slightly less than in recent years. Next year's annual session will be Nov. 9-10 in Virginia Beach, Va.

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## **Georgia Baptists elect conservative in disputed contest over balloting**

By Jack Harwell

MACON, Ga. (ABP) -- Georgia Baptists elected a conservative president by a margin of only 34 votes, continuing a pattern of close elections that has prevailed in Georgia for several years.

John Yarbrough, pastor of First Baptist Church in Perry, was elected over James Ramsey, pastor of First Baptist Church in Albany. The two had announced their candidacies last spring, believed to be the earliest announcements in Georgia Baptist Convention history. Each candidate had a network of political supporters at work for many months.

Balloting in the presidential election was confusing, with uncertainty about how and where to mark ballots. Messengers had to vote twice.

Because many ballots were not clearly marked, an audit committee had to review several ballots to determine the intent of voters. The controversy deepened when two moderate Baptists on the tellers committee were refused entry into the audit room to monitor the ballot counting.

The two tellers -- David Key of Union Point and John Wyatt of Tucker -- were prepared to issue a news release calling for a "reliable and objective system for validating ballots." But after an hour-long conference with top Georgia Baptist Convention leaders, who promised to bring in outside auditors to monitor future elections, they withheld their press release.

Almost 5,400 messengers registered for the Nov. 14-16 convention in Macon.

Bitter division within Georgia Baptists ranks was also reflected in voting over four convention vice presidents. Conservatives and moderates each nominated four candidates, and a ninth person was nominated from the floor.

When the votes were counted, conservatives had elected two vice presidents -- Tim McCoy of Macon and Mike Everson of Warner Robins -- and moderates had elected two -- Bob Patterson of Warm Springs and Napp Granade of Warner Robins. All four are ministers. One woman and one layman were nominated by the moderate-conservatives, but neither was elected.

In other Georgia Baptist Convention business, a 1995 Cooperative Program budget of \$34.6 million was approved, an increase of 2.7 percent over 1994. After deduction of 10 percent in shared administrative costs, the budget is equally divided between Georgia Baptist causes and the Southern Baptist Convention, with each getting about 45 percent.

J.G. Bryson, a messenger from Carrollton, moved to revise the budget to give only 30 percent to SBC causes and keep 70 percent in Georgia.

Jerry Mahan of Cedartown argued in support of Bryson's motion. "We are going in the wrong direction," he said. "Our first responsibility is our Jerusalem -- Georgia. We need more funds to do that."

Mahan asked why Georgia Baptists should send more money to the SBC when one of the SBC's seminaries -- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. -- will receive SBC funding of \$4,000 for each student in its new undergraduate college, while Georgia Baptists will supplement ministerial students at their own colleges with only \$100 per student.

But Bryson's motion was overwhelmingly defeated.

Georgia Baptists also approved a report of a special committee, appointed in 1993, related to "harmony and cooperation with the work" of the state convention.

The committee was created when messengers objected to convention presidents and nominating committees saying they would only appoint board or committee members whose churches give at least 7 percent of their budgets to the Cooperative Program.

The committee report, approved without debate, said a church is in harmony with the Georgia convention if it is a member of a "cooperating association" or if it "makes current contributions to the causes of this convention." The report also asks the convention nominating committee to "always seek to reflect the diversity within the convention in its choice of nominees."

Supporters of the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship had sought to get the CBF specifically mentioned in the report as being an "acceptable" channel of missions support for defining "cooperating churches." But they failed. They were able to get approved a clause which sanctions "the autonomy of the local church ... (and) ... its freedom to determine God's will for that congregation's means and method of support for missions, education and benevolent causes."

Georgia messengers also approved a resolution calling on Georgia Baptists to launch a major new effort to improve relations between whites and blacks in Georgia. The resolution urged "repentance" for the fact the SBC was organized in Georgia in 1845 over the issue of slaveholders being appointed as missionaries.

The resolution grew out of an emotional message delivered by Robert White, Georgia convention executive director-treasurer, to the convention's executive committee, calling for the new effort to improve race relations in Georgia.

In other convention-related news:

-- About 250 people attended a Macon meeting of the Georgia chapter of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Georgia. They voted to organize a CBF laity group in Georgia and announced plans to build at least one Habitat for Humanity House during their annual meeting in Atlanta next spring.

-- Almost 200 people attended a special dinner promoting a new seminary or divinity school for Mercer University, which is slated to open in September 1996 if funding can be secured. Mercer President Kirby Godsey told the group: "We are in a bona fide theological crisis. ... The demise of Southern Baptist seminaries is an outrage. It is like an intellectual Berlin Wall, where ideology replaces integrity and intelligence."

The Georgia Baptist Convention will hold its 1995 meeting in Albany Nov. 13-15.

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## **Baylor fires basketball coach over new NCAA violations**

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- The head basketball coach of Baylor University was fired Nov. 16 by school officials who said the basketball program had violated NCAA and school regulations.

Darrel Johnson was terminated because "the program or those associated with the program had violated the policies and procedures of Baylor University and the rules, regulations or policies of the NCAA," said James Netherton, a Baylor vice president.

Baylor President Herbert Reynolds said he concurred with Netherton's decision to fire Johnson.

The university did not detail the allegations, but published reports suggested some basketball students had received improper credit for correspondence classes, with the assistance and knowledge of coaches.

Netherton said the university will report the violations to the National Collegiate Athletic Association, which governs college athletics. The school's basketball program already is under self-imposed sanctions for earlier violations.

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## **Oklahoma Baptists pledge, show Cooperative Program support**

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (ABP) -- Oklahoma Baptists avoided controversy in their annual state convention meeting, held Nov. 14-16 in Oklahoma City, pledging -- and demonstrating -- support for the Southern Baptist Convention.

Messengers adopted a resolution pledging "to love, live and work in harmony with all our fellow Oklahoma Baptists" through the Cooperative Program, the unified budget which funds both the state and national conventions.

Some observers had predicted a resolution, or some other action, censuring churches in Oklahoma which give to the rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate alternative missions agency, but it did not materialize.

Messengers, which numbered 1,247, adopted a Cooperative Program budget of \$17.4 million, maintaining a division of funds at 58 percent for Oklahoma missions and 42 percent to the SBC.

Early in the budgeting process, state convention leaders had proposed increasing the Oklahoma share to 60 percent to offset rising expenses and a stagnant economy. In September, however, Executive Director William Tanner reported income was up and asked state leaders to reconsider changing the split of funds.

Charles Graves, pastor of Quail Springs Baptist Church in Oklahoma City was elected president. Other officers included Wade Burleson of Enid, first vice president, and Lloyd Campbell of Sentinel, second vice president.

Other resolutions protested RU-486, the French "abortion pill" expected eventually to be available in the United States, and endorsed the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's "Here's Hope" evangelistic campaign.

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-- By Dave Parker

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