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Kentucky Baptists elect president by acclamation

By Trennis Henderson and David Winfrey

WILLIAMSBURG, Ky. (ABP) -- For the first time in more than a decade, Kentucky Baptists elected a president unopposed.

Both conservative and moderate spokesmen had supported the election of Paul Badgett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Pikeville, Ky., since his nomination was announced in June.

"I really do want to be for all Kentucky Baptists. That really is my heart," Badgett said after the election. "I pray that Kentucky Baptists will be unified in trying to reach the world for Christ."

The election set the tone for a harmonious Kentucky Baptist Convention, held Nov. 12-13 at Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Ky. That is a departure from some recent conventions, where factions vied for control of convention leadership posts.

In other business, convention president Harold Greenfield ruled out of order an attempt to resurrect a motion that would have denied membership in the Kentucky convention to churches that sever ties with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The motion was introduced last year and referred to a constitution committee for study. Jerry Oakley, chairman of the panel, said Baptist associations, state conventions and the SBC are "completely separate and independent." Decisions about joining each entity, he said, are up "to the independent, individual, autonomous Southern Baptist church."

Another motion that would change the way churches qualify for messengers to the state convention's annual meeting was referred to the constitution and bylaws committee for study.

Under the current constitution, churches may qualify for additional messengers based on their giving to the Cooperative Program unified budget. A motion proposed by Bob Fox of Faith Baptist Church in Georgetown, Ky., would change the formula so that designated gifts also are counted.

In other business, the convention renamed its governing board from the "executive board" to the "mission board" of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey said he hopes the new name leads to a shift in focus. "I like to think of our Kentucky Baptist Convention staff as your missionaries," he said.

Baptists minister to storm victims

By Erin Webster and Connie Davis

CARBON HILL, Ala. (ABP) -- John Davis said he "cried like a baby" when he saw his newly purchased home in Carbon Hill, Ala., destroyed by a tornado.

"But then I realized I'm alive, my family's alive, and that's what matters," he said.

Not everyone was as fortunate. Members of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Manchester, Tenn., were among neighbors who found the body of 10-year-old Hobert Martinez amid storm debris. The boy was one of at least 36 fatalities in a line of severe thunderstorms that spawned more than 70 tornadoes across the eastern United States Nov. 10-11.

Tim Callaway, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church, said members had lingered at the church for fellowship after Sunday evening services when some children alerted them to the approaching tornado.

Everyone huddled in a hallway. "You could hear the wind and debris hitting the building," Callaway said. The storm damaged the church's roof and air-conditioning unit and broke a number of windows.

During a break in the storm, a man walked into the church bleeding. "We set the man down and wrapped up his arm to stop the bleeding," Callaway said. "Then we went out and searched for survivors."

Hobert had lived with his mother and brother in a house just behind the church that was destroyed in the storm. Pastors Larry Chatman of Chapel Hill, Tenn., and Ronnie Grooms of Eagleville, Tenn., made several visits to family members offering comfort and help. The pastors are part of a crisis-intervention team sponsored by the Tennessee Baptist Convention's disaster-relief ministry.

Chatman and Grooms also worked with another family who lost a mobile home, helping the family to find clothing and a place to live.

Callaway said some good came out of the disaster; he knew of at least five people who had accepted Christ because of the impact of the storm.

Back in Alabama, Davis praised Baptist volunteers who came to Carbon Hill to aid with cleanup. "It's a blessing," he said. "If any [disaster] happens anywhere I can drive to, I'm there with my chainsaw."

"We've not had a dissatisfied customer yet," joked Alabama Baptist volunteer Charles Burns as he "supervised" other cooks aboard a mobile kitchen owned by Tuscaloosa Baptist Association.

"We really enjoy doing this," said Burns. In disaster situations "you don't always have time to talk, so this is a good way we can witness."

According to the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, volunteers from Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi and Kentucky served more than 50,000 meals combined to victims and rescue workers.

Tommy Puckett, director of men's ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said some of the Alabama volunteers had been working disasters back-to-back since Hurricane Lili hit Louisiana in early October. Some had returned from cleaning up after a Nov. 2 tornado in Abbeville only the day before being deployed to hard-hit areas in Carbon Hill, Centre and Bremen, Ala., Nov. 11.

"They need some relief," Puckett said. He said he planned to contact the North American Mission Board about finding teams from out of state to finish cleanup.

END
