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New Missouri convention meets

WINDERMERE CONFERENCE CENTER, Mo.-Messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Missouri held their first annual meeting May 2-3, electing a full-time pastor, a bivocational pastor and a laywoman to leadership.

Bill Miller, elected president of the fledgling convention, is pastor of First Baptist Church of Farmington, Mo. Jimmy Albright, elected vice president, is pastor of Wyatt Baptist Church in St. Joseph, Mo., and professor of archaeology at Missouri Western State College. Sondra Allen, elected secretary, is a member of First Baptist Church of Jefferson City, Mo.

The convention was organized last spring as an alternative to the Missouri Baptist Convention after fundamentalists gained control of the existing convention's governing boards and began enacting sweeping changes.

The BGCM's first annual meeting registered 118 voting members and 105 guests, according to a report published in the Word & Way newspaper.

The convention adopted goals for budget distribution but did not set a total dollar budget goal due to the emerging nature of the organization.

Ten percent of Cooperative Program contributions sent to the BGCM will fund BGCM ministries and missions, with the remainder distributed as follows: 3 percent each to William Jewell College, Southwest Baptist University and Hannibal-LaGrange College; 8 percent to Missouri Baptist

University; 5 percent each to the Missouri Baptist Foundation and Windermere Conference Center; 6 percent to Missouri Baptist Children's Home; 10 percent to The Baptist Home; and 11 percent to Word & Way.

An audit of the organization's finances for the period February through December 2002 showed total "revenue and support" of \$303,594.

The convention has not released names of its supporting churches or a total number of supporting churches.

Among speakers at the annual meeting was Bob Campbell, president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of Westbury Baptist Church in Houston.

The call to follow God is not a call to a life of leisure, Campbell asserted. "God didn't call you to live easy. He called you to serve him."

Like the early church apostles who faced opposition, members of the new Missouri convention will not find an easy road, he predicted. "You're going to have to stand really tall. ... Some of you will have to act as prophets."

Campbell commended to the Missourians the free press enjoyed by Texas Baptists. Missouri leaders, he said, should simply tell the truth to the people.

"Tell the truth, and let the people decide," he advised. "I believe you are a people of prayer. Leaders, tell the truth, trust the people, and God's work will get done."

Based on reporting by Vicki Brown of Word & Way

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.