

# Missouri fundamentalists organize against their former movement

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**By Bill Webb**

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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP)—Eleven ministers who supported fundamentalists' efforts to take control of the Missouri Baptist Convention now say that the people they put in power have taken conservatism too far.

The group voiced its concerns publicly in a "Save Our Convention" information session May 15 at First Baptist Church of Harvester in St. Charles, Mo. The meeting drew about 175 people.

The ministers were among some of the most prominent in Missouri in helping implement the "Project 1000" plan devised by Roger Moran, a layman who struggled for several years before turning the formerly moderate-controlled state body sharply to the right.

The 11 have identified Moran as being most responsible for overly tight control of representation on MBC boards and excluding qualified conservatives from trustee service. The "Project 1000" name came from

Moran's strategy of getting 1,000 conservative messengers to turn out at state convention annual meetings to defeat moderate candidates for office.

The disgruntled ministers also expressed dissatisfaction with Moran's Missouri Baptist Laymen's Association, the Missouri Baptist Convention nominating committee, Missouri Baptists' Executive Board and the official convention newspaper, *The Pathway*.

Organizers urged attendees to get out the vote at the Missouri Baptist Convention annual meeting Oct. 29-31 in Osage Beach, Mo., to bring about needed changes.

They are urging others who are concerned about the convention's direction and its current elected leadership to submit names to the convention's nominating committee. They are asking for people who come from churches that are strong supporters of the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist Convention's unified budget.

They also plan to challenge the nominating committee's report at the convention meeting if it doesn't reflect a broad diversity of conservative Missouri Baptists.

Finally, they hope to elect a slate of officers for convention offices, although the officers elected by for the past several years have all had Moran's endorsement.

"If we do these ... things, it will immediately bring the convention back," David Sheppard, pastor of First Baptist Church in St. Charles, Mo., predicted.

Sheppard referred to a four-page handout that identified the group's two primary concerns with current convention leadership.

The first is the "continued power control of certain Project 1000 leaders

and the Missouri Baptist Laymen's Association that has led to the micro-management of the Missouri Baptist Convention staff and the exclusion of many fine Missouri Baptists." The laymen's association is made up of Moran and four others and purports to identify and rid out liberalism from Missouri Baptist life.

The second concern is the "spirit of legalism that refuses to cooperate with those who are not in total agreement and sets parameters that exceed the Baptist Faith & Message.

"We are concerned that these two forces—a political powerbroker machine and a spirit of legalism—will lead to the destruction of the Missouri Baptist Convention and more specifically Southwest Baptist University and Hannibal-LaGrange College," the handout summarized.

Sheppard said that many pastors and churches in the state are frustrated and are ready to walk away from the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Besides Sheppard, the ministers who organized the campaign and the St. Louis-area gathering are John Marshall, pastor, Second Baptist Church, Springfield; Mitch Jackson, pastor, Miner Baptist Church, Sikeston; Jim Breeden, director of missions, St. Louis Metro Baptist Association; Dwight Blankenship, pastor, Parkway Baptist Church, St. Louis; Kenny Qualls, pastor, First Baptist Church, Arnold; Wes Hammond, pastor, First Baptist Church, Paris; Tom Willoughby, pastor, First Church, Eldorado Springs; David McAlpin, pastor, First Baptist Church of Harvester, St. Charles; Wayne Isgriggs, pastor, First Baptist Church, Lincoln; and Lee Sanders, minister of education, First Baptist Church, O'Fallon.

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