

# **GREATER** Than Its Parts

**A Study of  
Seventh Day Baptist  
Organization and Polity**

**by Don A. Sanford**

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Polity and Organization**

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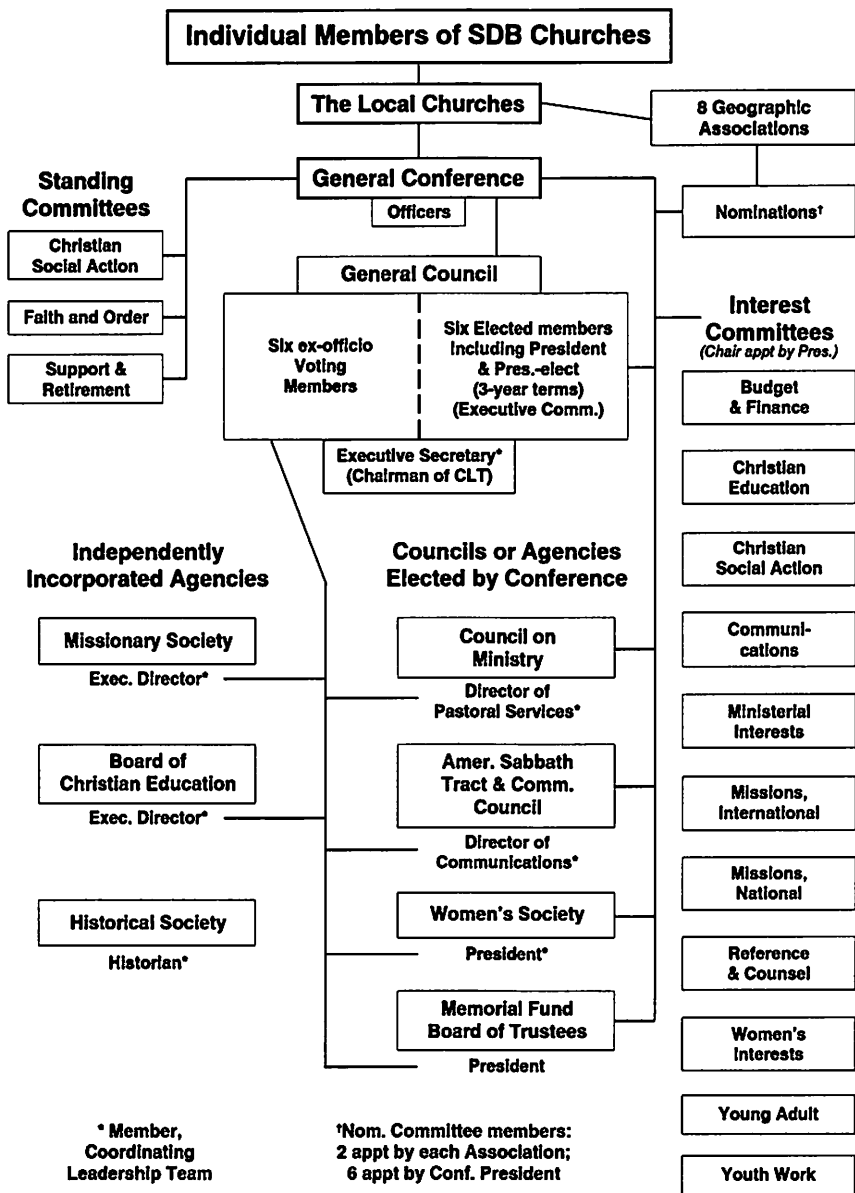
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# Denomination Organizational Chart



## Preface

In geometry there is an axiom which states that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts. Mathematics is dependent upon such truths which are always reliable. But religion is not dependent upon mathematical equations. With God, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The prophet Ezekiel recognized this in his vision of the valley of dry bones. Bones came together, muscle and flesh appeared and all were covered by skin, but there was no breath. Then the Spirit of God breathed on them and they became a mighty army.<sup>1</sup>

In the Tillamook Cheese Factory and Visitors' Center in Oregon there is a statement concerning the properties of milk. "In milk it is the way that the nutrients work together as a system which benefits the body. This is why the nutritional value of milk as a whole is greater than the sum of its individual nutrients."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in the Christian church it is the way that the individual nutrient parts work together as a system which benefits and nourishes the body of Christ.

This book is an attempt to show the interrelatedness of those nutrient parts which make up Seventh Day Baptists during the last decade of the 20th Century.

## **Chapter 1**

# **The Church, An Interrelated Body**

A denomination is more than an assembly of individuals, of churches, and of societies. Like the body, it is composed of many parts, but each part is dependent upon an interrelatedness and empowered by the Spirit of God which gives life. The Christian Church is greater than the sum of its parts.

### **Statement of Belief—the Church**

The Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief concerning the church states:

We believe that the church of God is all believers gathered by the Holy Spirit and joined into one body, of which Christ is the Head. We believe that the local church is a community of believers organized in covenant relationship for worship, fellowship and service, practicing and proclaiming common convictions, while growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We believe in the priesthood of all believers and practice the autonomy of the local congregation, as we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness.<sup>1</sup>

Three fundamental premises are recognized in this statement: (a) a covenant relationship; (b) the autonomy of the local church; and (c) an associational relationship with others. These form the basis for congregational polity.



## **A Covenant Relationship**

A church covenant has been described as "a series of written pledges based on the Bible which church members voluntarily make to God and to one another regarding their basic moral and spiritual commitments and the practice of their faith.... The basic meaning of a covenant resides in divine/human relationships in the context of church membership."<sup>2</sup>

Although the covenant remains as the foundation of the church, its significance is often neglected. Norman Maring and Winthrop Hudson have observed that in many Baptist churches today the church covenant is too often treated as a formality to be read in connection with the Lord's Supper. "Few people know the significance of the covenant idea in the history of their churches, and little attempt is made to impress upon them the significance of their words when they read this document together."<sup>3</sup> This neglect of the covenant has tended to place an over emphasis on the individual and the importance of local autonomy in the body of Christ.

## **Autonomy of the Local Church**

Seventh Day Baptists exercise local autonomy in organization, in business and in worship. Each congregation is independently incorporated and holds title to its own property. It is free to write its own covenant statement and its own constitution and by-laws by which business is conducted. A church calls its own pastor and determines the conditions of his or her employment. It can call its own members to special service, including ordination to the pastoral ministry, to the diaconate, to the chaplaincy, or to missionary service. It sets its own budget including benevolences. It is free to practice its own form of worship, select its own hymnbooks, and its own teaching materials. Each church theoretically can exist as an independent entity.

Yet experience has shown that just as a glowing ember when removed from a fire soon cools and loses its fire, so an individual church needs a living relationship with others. Thus associational relationships have long been important to Seventh Day Baptists, leading to both cooperation and corporate action.

### **Associational Relationships**

Associational relationships are based upon the premise that local churches are not regarded as isolated units, but are integral parts of the body of Christ. However, whenever one joins in association with others, whether it be as individuals, as churches or as denominations, he gives up some of his autonomy for the benefit of the whole. His own rights are tempered by the rights of others; his decisions are influenced by the decisions of others. Sometimes this creates a tension between the local church and the associational principle which Wayne Rood recognized in the 1972 *Manual of Procedures* for Seventh Day Baptist Churches.

The local Seventh Day Baptist church is dependent: its autonomy is conditioned by the associational principle. Just as individuals gather in churches to be strengthened by mutual faith, mutual concern, and mutual support, so churches gather into larger bodies for mutual benefit and strength. Just as individuals gather into churches and submit their insights to the insights of all the members, so local churches gather into larger groups and benefit from mutual discussion and correction. Just as individuals throw their efforts into congregational efforts to meet social injustice, immorality and inequality so that jointly an impact can be made, so local churches unite their efforts in those of larger

groups so that impact can be made on regional, national and world-wide problems.

Seventh Day Baptist churches are involved constantly in the search for a balance between local autonomy and the associational principle. Changing times, modern attitudes, new developments in government and education, all help to shape present thought and action; but Seventh Day Baptists are largely agreed that in a balance between the two principles is to be found the best relationship, congregation to congregation.<sup>4</sup>

In the body of Christ a Christian becomes a part of the body by joining a local church in a covenant relationship. It is here that a member finds loyalties which call for the strongest devotion and most active participation. When that church becomes a part of a denomination, it voluntarily accepts certain conditions to membership, but it also becomes responsible for influencing the decisions of the larger body. When the denomination joins in associational relations with other denominations, it loses some of its autonomy in that situation, but finds itself in a position to influence the decisions of the even larger body.

## **Levels of Associational Relationships**

Seventh Day Baptist churches participate in associational relationships with other churches on three distinct levels.

### **Denominational Relationships**

Seventh Day Baptists comprise a denominational fellowship which practices common convictions in obedience to the commands of God and faith in Christ. That fellowship has existed from the mid 17th century in

England and America. It spanned the ocean in correspondence and visits between these two early groups. It fostered the development of a General Conference in 1802, the establishment of geographically organized associations about thirty years later, and a number of societies and related agencies organized for more effective witness and work. In the past century and a half it has circled the globe with missions and in 1964 gave birth to the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation of sister conferences on six continents.

### **Relationships with other Baptists**

Seventh Day Baptists are historically and organizationally Baptists. They grew out of the separatist movement in England. Many of the first members in America were Baptists who came to the conviction of the seventh day Sabbath. As Baptists we find fraternal relationship with other Baptists in such organizations as the Baptist World Alliance, and its subsidiary, the North American Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which keeps churches abreast of political and social issues before the nation, and various other Baptist groups dealing with particular areas of Baptist life, such as men and women's fellowships, missions and education.

### **Wider Ecumenical Relationships**

Seventh Day Baptists have also found meaningful ecumenical relationship with Christian brothers and sisters of other denominations at many levels. Although Seventh Day Baptists had been charter members in several national and international bodies in the early part of the century, changes in basic philosophy, purposes and methods of operation in several of these organizations caused Seventh Day Baptists to remove

their denominational membership in the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Local churches and individual members have continued to be active in a variety of interdenominational programs and witnesses.

## Chapter 2

# General Conference and Local Autonomy

With the growing interest among Baptists in evangelism on the frontier the pastor of the Brookfield, New York church, Henry Clarke, proposed in 1801 that Seventh Day Baptist churches "unite in an institution for propagating our religion in the different parts of the United States, by sending out from the various churches in said Union missionaries on the expense of the several churches who may fall in with the proposition."<sup>1</sup> Although several of the churches indicated fear that local autonomy might be lost, eight churches agreed the next year to form such a union and a constitution was formally adopted in 1805.

That constitution recognized both the autonomy of the local church and its responsibility in associational relationships. It specified that "all things transacted in such General Conference, be done by way of advice, council or recommendation, and by no means to affect or alter the government or discipline of the churches in their individual capacity: But that each church enjoy their own mode of discipline, as to them may seem most agreeable to the word of God." Voting was by churches or its representative, and set forth the criteria for membership by stating that "no church in our union can receive into their fellowship a person, except they observe the seventh day for a Sabbath; neither such as have not been baptized by immersion."<sup>2</sup>

In spite of subsequent changes in its constitution, General Conference has retained most of the essential elements prescribed in that first constitution. It has remained essentially an advisory association of

churches; membership has been by churches; and in defining that membership, General Conference has prescribed certain limitations and expected support from the churches.

## **General Conference and the Local Church**

Within these guidelines General Conference has worked for nearly two centuries in making Seventh Day Baptists a distinct denomination. Its actions have nearly always come in response to the local churches and have seldom denied the autonomy or the covenant of the local church membership.

The current Articles of Incorporation dated June 13, 1984 reaffirm that same basic relationship between the local church and the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, Ltd. Its statement of purpose reads:

To provide advice and assistance to the member churches in the accomplishment of their tasks; to advise the churches and their respective members, admitted to membership, in matters pertaining to their doctrine and discipline, faith and practice; to promote divine worship, the spread and maintenance of the Christian religion, Sabbath observance, Sabbath and Bible Schools, and religious education; to provide for pensions for ministers of the Gospel and other persons engaged in denominational work; to provide for any charitable purposes pertaining to the interests of Seventh Day Baptists...<sup>3</sup>

## **Functions of General Conference**

General Conference in its organized form has served in each of these areas. It has given a recognizable identity to a people, and a voice in the larger community of Christians. Through the process of consensus it has formulated statements of belief which are valuable in teaching and outreach. It has recruited, trained and thus provided leadership. Through its corporate actions in recognition and accreditation it has helped maintain a degree of orthodoxy which grants freedom of thought while discouraging heretical and disruptive ideas. It has been able to pool resources in missions, printing and education within the denomination and beyond. It has perpetuated a fellowship and sense of belonging for children, youth and adults of all ages.



## **Chapter 3**

### **The Rise of Societies**

Very early in the history of the General Conference, some people wanted to translate the close individual relationships and intense loyalty found in the local church into specific areas of activity on a regional or national level. This gave rise to the societal organization involving individuals rather than churches. Sometimes these societies have existed within the associational principle of organization and at other times parallel to it.

Although General Conference might be considered the mother of the societies, the very composition and work of a society set it apart as a largely autonomous body. The societal form of organization had both advantages and disadvantages in comparison to the associational form. An association such as the General Conference was largely advisory. It had to get consensus or agreement from the individual churches before it could act, a process which could take several years to accomplish.

A society, on the other hand, had limited membership composed of people who already had consensus of interest. It could respond almost immediately to a need and generate support for a particular project by appealing to a latent interest. Since a society was made up of individuals who supported the work more directly, members did not feel that they were giving up their autonomy as to where and how money was to be spent. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Seventh Day Baptists developed several societies through which both individuals and churches could express their interest and carry out their work. Among these were societies for missions, for publication, for education as well as

special interest organizations for women, for youth, for the preservation and interpretation of history, and investments.

In addition to these denominational societies and agencies, many Seventh Day Baptists as individuals have belonged to such interdenominational societies as the American Bible Society, the Gideons, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Young People's Christian Endeavor Society.

### **The Effect of Societies on Denominational Life**

The proliferation of societies provided a societal movement which Ralph Winter described as the vital structure "which harvested the vital 'voluntarism' latent in Protestantism and surfaced in new mission agencies of all kinds... Almost all mission efforts in the Nineteenth Century, whether sponsored by interdenominational boards or denominational boards, were substantially the work of initiatives that were mainly independent of the ecclesiastical structures to which they were related."<sup>1</sup>

Although these societies were structurally independent of the denomination, they were in many ways very representative of the denomination. Most of the leaders in the societies were also leaders in the General Conference. Some people were members of several societies. For many years the annual sessions of the societies were held in conjunction with the annual session of General Conference.

### **Interest Created Societies— Societies Created Interest**

Throughout the process of societal organization a very noticeable shift took place. The interest of key individuals within the denomination led to the forma-

tion of societies. Often this interest was generated at sessions of General Conference and drew support from a wide spectrum of churches and individuals. Yet once a society was organized both practical matters of transportation and legal requirements for meetings localized the management in a small geographic area. The Missionary Society became identified with Rhode Island and Connecticut from which most of the members of the Board of Managers were drawn. The Tract Society became associated with the people living in New York City and New Jersey near Plainfield. The Board of Christian Education was centered in western New York near Alfred.

As a result of some of the concerns expressed in the denominational restructuring studies of the late 1970s several steps have been taken to decentralize societal functions and involve wider participation. (For further insight into the development of societies, refer to Chapter 2 in *Conscience Taken Captive*.).

## **Chapter 4**

# **Current Denominational Agencies**

Three of the agencies of General Conference, the Missionary Society, the Board of Christian Education and the Historical Society are independently incorporated with varying degree of autonomy. Four of the agencies, the American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council, the Council on Ministry, the Women's Society and the Memorial Fund Trustees are included in the corporate structure of General Conference. Because several have a Board of Directors, the term Board is sometimes applied to that which is technically a society.

### **The Missionary Society**

The Missionary Society is a membership society whose original purpose according to its first constitution in 1843 was "the dissemination of the Gospel in America."<sup>1</sup> The following year the phrase "and other parts of the world" was added,<sup>2</sup> as the mission in China was begun.

#### **Organization**

To carry out the original purposes a membership corporation was established by those with a strong interest in missions. Originally membership was granted to anyone who contributed \$1 per year; anyone contributing \$25 at one time was granted life membership. Churches and associations could become auxiliary members.

Membership is still granted to any Seventh Day Baptist upon payment of membership dues. The constitution distinguishes between voting members, non-voting members and observers. Voting members were those who were members at the effective date of the

constitution and others who had been thereafter elected by the society to membership. Any person who contributed one dollar or more annually to the funds of the society could become a non-voting member. Any church belonging to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference could send non-voting observers to the annual or special meetings of the society.<sup>3</sup> However, since 1969 the Nominating Committee of the society regularly presents the names of persons to be elected as voting members.<sup>4</sup> Members from a previous year can renew membership by payment of the voting member fee. In 1991-92 there were 51 new members from 37 churches. The total membership in 1992 was 241.

The general affairs of the society are managed by a Board of Managers, presently 30, which elects its own officers and hires such personnel as may be necessary or expedient. Beginning in 1979 a broader representation was secured when the Evangelism/Home Missions Committee was located in the North Central Association area, the Asian Interest Committee was drawn from the Southern California area and the African Interest Committee was centered in Nebraska, later to be moved to the New Jersey area. The chairman of each of these committees was added to the Board of Managers.

The chief executive officer of the Society is the Executive Director, an office which prior to 1970 was known as the Corresponding Secretary. Among the more recent executives have been Everett T. Harris who served as Corresponding Secretary from 1952 to 1970 and Leon Lawton who retired as Executive Vice President after twenty one years in the office. Kirk Looper began his term in this office in 1992.

In addition, the Missionary Society has from time to time hired such other personnel as missionaries, evan-

gelists, and extension workers. For many years the Missionary Society carried on extensive mission efforts in medical, educational and evangelistic efforts in such areas as China, Nyasaland (now Malawi), Jamaica, British Guiana (Guyana) and the Philippines. To many people the term missionary still carries the implication of a person going overseas to convert the heathen. With the rising expectations of emerging nations throughout the world, the goal of the Missionary Society has been to help train indigenous workers so that sister conferences can develop. The formation of the World Federation of Seventh Day Baptist Churches composed of 17 conferences attests to the success of this shift of emphasis.

With less emphasis on sending missionaries abroad, a bigger proportion of the Society's efforts has centered on the home or national ministries. A major thrust has been made in urban areas during the last few decades. In 1990 a Director of Extension was hired to work more directly in the home field. Some of this change is reflected in the 1989 Mission Statement of the Society.

### **Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement of the current Missionary Society divides its scope into three basic areas:

The purpose of the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society is to coordinate and carry out both national and international ministries by carrying the message of salvation through faith in Christ to all who will hear, so they may accept Him as Saviour. This will be carried out by:

#### *International Ministries*

1. Initiating, supporting and sustaining international missionary efforts which will result in strong, growing, healthy Seventh Day Baptist churches and conferences.

2. Sending missionaries to other countries and cultures with the goal of establishing Seventh Day Baptist churches and conferences with strong local and national leadership, thus eliminating the need for a missionary on that field.
3. Providing specialized training to missionaries in the form of preparation for the field.
4. Assisting existing Seventh Day Baptist conferences and conventions around the world.
5. Using schools, medical ministries and other forms of service in helping to meet human needs as a means of achieving our goals.

#### *National Ministries*

1. Teaching and consulting with pastors and churches in the area of church growth.
2. Supporting leadership in extension ministry situations.
3. Initiating and supporting church planting efforts.
4. Aiding Seventh Day Baptist associations and churches in developing strong, growing, hearty organization and ministry so that they in turn can sponsor new groups.

#### *General Ministries*

1. Encouraging individual Seventh Day Baptists to become more interested and involved in missionary endeavors.
2. Aiding individuals in coordinating and fulfilling their ministry as God calls them to work on national or international fields.
3. Receiving and handling bequests given for the missionary work of Seventh Day Baptists.
4. Being fully accountable to Seventh Day Baptists, giving regular and annual reports including audited financial statements.<sup>5</sup>

## **The Board of Christian Education**

The Seventh Day Baptist Board of Christian Education was formed in 1940 by the merger of three separate societies or boards: the Education Society, the Sabbath School Board and the Young People's Board. Its original objectives included the promotion of the cause of education in general and to carry out the work previously done by the three merging agencies in promoting "the purposes of the corporation in the church schools, camps, young people's organizations, colleges and in ministerial education."<sup>6</sup>

### **Organization**

Membership in the Corporation consists of "members of a Seventh Day Baptist Church, entitled to representation in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, but "those entitled to vote at any annual or special meeting of the corporation shall be accredited delegates to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference immediately prior to such annual or special meeting."<sup>7</sup>

The general affairs of the corporation were managed and controlled by a Board of Directors of 20 members, not less than two of whom are young people of high school and/or college age if available. In 1984, in order to get broader geographic representation the composition of the Board of Directors was altered to include twelve members from the Allegheny Association and two each from three other associations.<sup>8</sup> Initially the three other associations were the Central New York Association, the Eastern and the Southeastern, but when the responsibilities of the children's work was shifted to the west coast, the Pacific Coast Association replaced the Southeastern Association.

The three major areas of concern of the constituting agencies were continued in committees of the new



board. In time the scope of their work has been altered to meet changing conditions and circumstances. The work of the Vocational Committee of General Conference was reassigned to this board and concern for family life and evangelism have received greater emphasis. A major change occurred in 1963 when the School of Theology at Alfred was closed and the work of the Higher Education Committee was shifted to the Council on Ministry which was established at that time.

Currently the responsibilities of the Board of Christian Education are lodged in four major committees: the Children's Committee, the Sabbath School Committee, the Youth Committee and the Executive Committee.

The Children's Committee is responsible for the publication of the *Sabbath Visitor* and the *Sabbath Nurture Series*, and the development of other materials for children in areas of missions and ministry. The children's conferences at sessions of General Conference are also arranged by this committee.

The Sabbath School Committee focuses its emphasis on the Adult and Young Adult ages. It is responsible for the editing and publication of the *Helping Hand*, a Bible Study Quarterly which has had continuous publication since 1885. The committee also was responsible for publication of a book on Baptism, a Christian Education Guide and materials for Natural Evangelism Training (NET) program. Other activities include Scripture Memorization Program, NET Retreats, Sabbath School Teacher-of-the-Year Award, Rex Zwiebel Education Lecture series and workshops for the local church.

The Youth Committee's responsibilities include all phases of denominational youth ministry from Pre-Con Retreats and youth activities at General Conference to

supervision of a youth work director either on a full time or part time basis as funds or personnel are available. The promotion of camping programs as a part of local churches or associations continues a camping tradition which the Young People's Board started over 65 years ago. The Nurture Series for both Junior and Senior High ages, Seventh Day Baptist Youth Fellowship Handbook, and the Beacon page in the *Sabbath Recorder* are the responsibility of the Youth Committee.

The Executive Committee coordinates the work of the committees and oversees the budget, investments, facilities, and personnel.

The Executive Director is employed by the Board to supervise its office, employees and contract writers, to create and develop Christian education programs and workshops to assist the local churches. Since 1985 Ernest K. Bee Jr. has served in that office. He is responsible for a monthly column in the *Sabbath Recorder* and the publication of three works, *Baptism: Ordination to Christian Vocation*, *NET: Natural Evangelism Training*, and *A Guide to Christian Education for Seventh Day Baptist Pastors*.

### **Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement of the Board of Christian Education adopted in 1986 stresses its assistance to the local churches in the following areas:

1. Spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
2. Teach acceptance and observance of the Sabbath.
3. Encourage participation and learning in Church, Sabbath School, Youth Group, Camping Program, Bible Study, and other evangelistic and educational programs.
4. Nurture persons in a Christian covenant life-style.

5. Equip lay leadership for total Christian Ministry.
6. Promote the teaching of Seventh Day Baptist distinctives.
7. Develop materials and programs to fulfill Christ's Great Commission.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Historical Society**

The Historical Society was incorporated in 1916 to carry out the work of preserving and interpreting the heritage of Seventh Day Baptists which previously had been done by the Historical Board operating as a committee of General Conference created in 1863. Since General Conference at the time was not incorporated, the committee felt it was advisable to incorporate as a legal entity when a valuable collection of primary historic artifacts and documents was purchased from Julius Sachse in 1916.

### **Organization**

Membership in the society is by payment of dues either on an annual basis or by single life membership dues. However, "only those members who are in full and regular membership and standing in some Seventh Day Baptist church which is a member of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference have power or be eligible to hold office or be entitled to vote in corporate meetings."<sup>10</sup>

When the denominational offices in Plainfield, New Jersey were moved to Janesville, Wisconsin in 1982, the Historical Society with its historical collections were included in the move and the society was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1987.

The affairs of the corporation are managed by a five member Board of Directors, elected by the Society, one each year for a five-year term. The day-to-day operations of the Society are carried out by part-time employ-

ees. From 1981 to 1992 Janet Thorngate as librarian and archivist handled the accessioning, cataloguing, indexing and organizing of the library and archival material to make them more accessible. Many of the requests from pastors or church officers preparing anniversary celebrations, from people doing research projects, or individuals searching genealogical information, were handled by the librarian assisted by volunteer or hourly clerical work in such areas as indexing of denominational periodicals and cataloguing of special collections. Other duties included teaching for the Summer Institute program of the Council on Ministry.

The historian since 1987, Don A. Sanford, has devoted most of his time and efforts in research and writing. He is responsible for a monthly column in the *Sabbath Recorder* and the publication of three books of Seventh Day Baptist history: *A Free People In Search of A Free Land* (reprinted in 1987 and 1993), *Conscience Taken Captive* (1991), and *A Choosing People: The History of Seventh Day Baptists* (1992). As the designated executive officer of the society he has assumed responsibility for the library, serves on the Coordinating Leadership Team, and represents the society and the denomination in local churches, conferences and inter-denominational activities.

With offices within the Center at Janesville the Historical Society responds to a wide variety of requests from other agencies and the general public in giving visibility and service in communicating the Seventh Day Baptist message in line with its mission statement.

### **Mission Statement**

The Historical Society's Mission Statement adopted in May of 1989 calls for providing "perspective for future planning by Seventh Day Baptists through fuller under-

standing of and appreciation for whence we have come and how and why, under God's leading in the past." To this end the Society seeks to:

1. Maintain a repository for safe-keeping of and easy access to significant artifacts, documents, writing and history of the Sabbath and Sabbath-keeping Baptists worldwide and materials relating to the development of these peoples;
2. Provide for continuing research into the roots and history of the Seventh Day Baptist movement especially in the United States and Canada;
3. Interpret the significance of the past upon the present, particularly as it relates to planning for the future;
4. Communicate through publishing books, pamphlets, circulars, directories and papers as are determined to advance our mission; and the creative use of all available media to present Seventh Day Baptist history to Seventh Day Baptists and other interested individuals and groups.<sup>11</sup>

The Historical Society is supported largely by the endowment giving of the past. It receives no direct support from the current giving to the Denominational Budget, but does receive facilities, accounting services and other benefits from the General Conference in exchange for its service to the denomination as a whole.

## **American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council**

The American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council is the successor to the American Sabbath Tract Society which was established in 1844 "to promote the observance of the Bible Sabbath and the interest of vital Godliness and sound morality, and to print and circulate

the religious literature of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination of Christians."<sup>12</sup>

### Organization

Until 1986 the Tract Society operated under charters of New York and then New Jersey as a membership corporation with management entrusted to a Board of Trustees.

In 1984 steps were taken to merge the American Sabbath Tract Society with the General Conference rather than incorporating as a separate society in Wisconsin. This resulted in the organization of a council which retained enough of the name to clearly identify it as the successor of the Society. As a council, the American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council (TCC) is an agency of the General Conference of Seventh Day Baptists of USA and Canada, Ltd. and is accountable to the General Conference for its actions, and receives funding from both the designated and undesignated giving portions of the Denominational budget.

The Council consists of ten voting members: six elected by General Conference for three year terms, two elected each year, and the chairmen of the four standing committees who serve as *ex-officio* members. At least one of the two persons elected each year is located within the core area defined as within the geographic area in proximity to the Seventh Day Baptist Center. At least two or three of the Committee chairmen are also selected from the core area to form a Core Committee of five or six members.

The Council employs a Director of Communications who directs the overall work of the Council, serves as the editor of the *Sabbath Recorder*, prepares tracts for publication and oversees much of the printing ministry

of the other agencies of General Conference. The director is a member of the General Council and the Coordinating Leadership Team, represents denominational interests in visits to local churches and participates in several interdenominational activities. The first Director of the Council was D. Scott Smith. He was succeeded by Kevin Butler in January 1989.

The Standing Committees of the Council include the Audio Visual Committee which selects, prepares, purchases, stores and distributes filmstrips, color slides, tapes and other recordings for loan or sale. It also purchases and maintains custody of necessary equipment and assists other agencies in media programs.

The Publications Committee proposes to the Council policies for the production and distribution of tracts and other literature; recommends new material for production; and maintains the supplies and devises procedures for wide distribution of published materials.

The Sabbath Promotion Committee promotes the observance of the Bible Sabbath and assists laymen, pastors, churches, associations and General Conference in such promotion by research, preparation and distribution of materials. It sponsors Sabbath reform advertising and recommendations regarding any activities which might diminish the legal, secular or worldly encroachment on the Sabbath.

The *Sabbath Recorder* Committee consults with the editor of the Sabbath Recorder, suggests themes and is responsible for official statements of editorial policy. As reflected in its policy statement the Tract and Communication Council views itself as a service arm of General Conference and its related agencies.

### **Mission Statement**

The purpose of the American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council is to:

1. Provide informational and educational materials to help local churches in their tasks of worship, education, fellowship, and missions.
2. Produce materials that represent Seventh Day Baptist life and thought to the public.
3. Promote communications among Seventh Day Baptists.

To accomplish this, the Council will:

- Publish the *Sabbath Recorder* magazine
- Produce tracts and other publications
- Provide for audio-visual resources
- Promote Sabbath-related materials.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Women's Society**

From the very beginning of denominational activity women played a vital role in the "behind the scene" activity particularly in missions and education, yet it was not until 1866 that women were listed among the delegates to General Conference. The presence of women's societies in the local churches and at the associational level led to a request on the part of the women in 1884 for a Woman's Board as a part of the General Conference. The very wording of that early proposal reflects the supportive role perceived at that time.

It shall be the duty of this Board to raise funds for our various denominational enterprises, and to enlist the women of the denomination in these enterprises, in such ways and by such means as may seem to them practical and



best, provided they do not involve this Conference in financial responsibility, and report annually their doings to this conference.<sup>14</sup>

### **Organization**

Initially the Board consisted of a core of three officers located in the Alfred, New York area and representatives from each of the four associations in existence at that time. In 1929 the size was increased to twelve members on a five year staggered basis. At that time it was recommended that "the new board be entirely free to make its own plans, and formulate its own policies at the suggestion of the President of Conference and members of the Nominating Committee."<sup>15</sup> Although elected by General Conference the women provided the Nominating Committee with names of women from which the elections could be made.

In 1941 an amendment to the General Conference By-Laws significantly changed the board to a society in name, in composition and in its work. It became the "Women's Society of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference." It defined its membership stating that "all women who are members of a recognized Seventh Day Baptist Church shall by virtue of such membership be members of this society." Its purpose was expanded beyond that of a supportive role to include initiative in program calling upon them "to enlist and direct united efforts of the women in projects of Christian service, and to stimulate interest in the various enterprises of the denomination."<sup>16</sup>

In 1952 the By-Laws were amended adding to the objectives of the Society the phrase, "to foster individual responsibility and united action in matters of Christian citizenship." The amendment also altered the term for the Board of Directors which were elected by plurality

vote of the society at its annual meeting. A paragraph was added which specified that "the duration of the board in any single locality shall be approximately ten years" suggesting that where possible the change of location be determined a year in advance to give the new officers time to familiarize themselves with the duties and program before assuming office.<sup>17</sup>

In line with this last provision, the Board of Directors moved from Salem to the Michigan churches during the 1950s, to the Southern Wisconsin churches during the 1960s, the Colorado area during the 1970s, the Southern California churches during the 1980s and the New Jersey churches during the 1990s.

Of all the agencies of General Conference, the Women's Society is the only one which has no paid personnel, but relies almost solely on voluntarism, support from a network of local societies and the designated giving of interested persons across the denomination. The annual meetings of the society are held during sessions of General Conference thus drawing a wide representation of its constituent members.

One of the most far-reaching projects of the Women's Society is the Summer Christian Service Corps (SCSC) which began in 1964. Since that time approximately 300 young men and women have served churches and the denomination through summer ministry programs tailored to fit the community into which they are sent. The intensive training sessions of Bible studies, role playing, music and crafts, and interpersonal exchanges help prepare them to teach Sabbath School or Bible School, lead music and worship, help with camps, do manual labor and other activities requested by the church. The purpose statement shows the wide scope of its ministries.

## Mission Statement

The purpose of the Seventh Day Baptist Women's Society, the agency representing all women, individually and as groups in our denomination, is to:

1. Unite all in loving concern.
2. Encourage in spiritual growth.
3. Reach out in action anywhere and everywhere for our Savior, Jesus Christ.

These are done through:

Robe of Achievement  
 Love Gift Offerings  
 Summer Christian Service Corps  
 Tuition Fund  
 Supporting Conference Nursery  
 Communicating via Women's Page in  
 the *Sabbath Recorder* and Newsletter  
 Pen 'N' Prayer Partners  
 Ecumenical representation<sup>18</sup>

## Council on Ministry

The Council on Ministry was a creation of General Conference in 1962 in anticipation of the closing of the School of Theology at Alfred. It took up many of the responsibilities of the Higher Education Committee of the Board of Christian Education and its predecessor, the Education Society. Its original name, Council on Ministerial Education, indicated that its primary function was for the academic training of students for the ministry. The director carried the academic title of Dean.

## Organization

The Council was composed of six members nominated by the Commission and elected by General Con-

ference for three year terms. Its purpose was basically set forth in two paragraphs:

... shall be responsible for the recruitment, licentiate training, and theological education of candidates for the ministry and promote activities and conduct programs to accomplish these activities under policies approved by the General Conference.

... shall establish a Training Center at the Seventh Day Baptist Building in Plainfield, N.J. to strengthen Sabbath appreciation and to develop denominational ties and mutual understanding among candidates for the ministry. The Council shall provide library, study facilities, and office space for the director and such housing as may be required in connection with the program.<sup>19</sup>

The premise was that students would enroll in accredited seminaries in proximity to Plainfield so that the students and their families could meet together on a regular basis, and the Dean could regularly visit the students in their campus setting. The first Dean, Rev. Victor W. Skaggs was listed as a faculty member of Crozer Theological School near Philadelphia. As students opted to attend seminaries in other parts of the country, the plan was altered to support a changed environment. A Summer Institute program covering in successive years the distinctives of Seventh Day Baptist History, Seventh Day Baptist Polity, and Sabbath Philosophy became the primary vehicle for supplementing a student's seminary training. Beginning in 1980 the two courses in history and polity were offered during one summer session, allowing students to complete their

requirements within the two intervening summers of a three year seminary course.

In 1971 the scope of the Council on Ministerial Education was broadened to reflect that in which the Dean was already involved. The Council thus become the "Council on Ministry" with responsibilities in support, recruitment, education, and pastor-church relations.<sup>20</sup>

Another significant change was made in 1982 when the Conference Interest Committee recognized the increasing need of our churches for trained leadership at a time when fewer pastoral candidates were available, and accepted the reality that leadership in many churches must come from the laity. They recommended (1) that the local churches identify and encourage potential leaders to develop their gifts, and (2) the Council on Ministry place a high priority on the development of a policy and a program for assisting local churches in the training of bivocational and/or lay pastors.<sup>21</sup> The following year Conference called upon the Council to "initiate the Lay-Pastor Training Program by Fall 1983."<sup>22</sup>

A Certificate Pastor Training Program was the initial attempt of the Council on Ministry under its Dean, Paul Green, to deal with this conference directive. In 1985, Rodney Henry was employed jointly by the Council on Ministry and the Missionary Society to develop a pastoral training program on the model of the program he had developed as a missionary in the Philippines.

College and seminary training remain the primary route to the pastoral ministry, but to train pastors and church planters who were unable to attend seminary the Training in Ministry and Extension (TIME) program was started in 1986. The basic unit of the TIME program is the training module, consisting of six weeks

of home study, a weekend seminar, followed by two weeks of an implementation project. There are twelve training modules dealing with twelve areas of ministry and theology spread out over four years.

To further reflect the changing role of the Council, the position of Dean became the Director of Pastoral Services when Rodney Henry assumed this position with the Council in January 1988. Under his direction the Council on Ministry adopted the following mission statement:

### **Mission Statement**

The purpose of the Seventh Day Baptist Council on Ministry shall be to promote, educate and sustain the ordained ministry (pastors, church planters, missionaries and the diaconate) for the Seventh Day Baptist Conference, USA and Canada, by:

1. Recruiting candidates for the ordained ministry and by developing means to promote these ministries as a calling.
2. Providing theological education to candidates for the ordained ministry through accredited seminaries and Summer Institutes, and consult with the Missionary Society in the theological education of missionaries.
3. Providing ministry training for pastors and church planters not able to attend seminary.
4. Promoting and developing continuing education opportunities for Seventh Day Baptist pastors.
5. Encouraging and counseling with pastors and churches in conflict.
6. Consulting with churches needing pastors and pastors needing churches.<sup>23</sup>

In 1993 the dual role of the Council on Ministry was recognized in a division of responsibilities. It was decided that "School of Ministry" would better reflect the

educational scope of this area of council responsibility. Such programs as Seminary Education, TIME, Training for Denominational Workers, Summer Institute, In-service Education, Pastor's Conference and Internship, would be included in this division. The Director of Pastoral Services takes on the additional title of "Dean" in order to reflect his academic responsibilities when dealing with other academic institutions.

The "Pastoral Services" function continues in the areas of pastoral search, pastoral counseling, church conflict management, ordination, accreditation and COSAR executive.<sup>24</sup>

## **The Board of Trustees for the Memorial Fund**

In 1871, as a part of the bicentennial celebration of the first Seventh Day Baptist church in America, five associations "adopted with great unanimity, a proposition and plan for raising funds for educational and other denominational purposes." General Conference unanimously accepted the plan with a target of \$100,000.<sup>25</sup>

Over the years, this fund has grown to the point that at the end of 1991 it had a book value of about \$8.5 million and market value of about \$10.5 million. The 1990 report of the Memorial Fund entitled "Partners in God's Work" showed that the previous gifts of Christians now provide income to help with needs over and above the scope of denominational giving. During 1990, \$552,000 was distributed to recipients from designated and discretionary income while during the same year \$349,000 of new endowments were received.<sup>26</sup>

## **Organization**

The Memorial Fund is administered by a nine-member Board of Trustees, three elected each year by General Conference for three year terms. The day-to-

day management is done by an employed Financial Manager, a position held since 1986 by John Vergeer. Approximately 2/3 of the income is designated by the donors or the agencies who have entrusted their investments with the Memorial Fund. The largest distribution item is for the old plan for ministerial retirement which in 1994 paid retired ministers supplemental income of \$14 per month for each year of denominational service. Younger ministers are now enrolled in individual plans under the direction of the Conference Committee on Support and Retirement but administered by the Memorial Fund Office through Covenant Life Insurance Company.

In addition to the distribution to the denominational boards and agencies, as indicated by General Conference through its budget or special projects, loans and grants are made to local churches for construction or renovation of facilities or for programs such as camping, outreach and evangelism, pastoral support for conference expenses and education. Endowments which previously were designated for colleges affiliated with the denomination are used along with other income for scholarships to qualified students.

The Memorial Fund has increased its scope in such areas as estate planning, financial planning seminars at conference time and will preparation, offering programs whereby a person may receive personal benefits while living and yet provide endowment for the future in areas of denominational interest and concern.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Trustees of the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Fund, Inc. is to invest and distribute the physical and financial gifts of past, present and



future donors, to extend the work of Seventh Day Baptists in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to today's world.

*Investment and Distribution Philosophy*

The Fund will be invested consistent with Christian values and principles to provide income and growth. The Trustees will distribute funds under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Designated funds will be distributed according to Donor wishes. Undesignated funds will be employed by the Trustees to support Seventh Day Baptists in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup>

## **Chapter 5**

# **General Conference**

In Baptist polity individuals in covenant relationship within the local church are viewed as the ultimate authority under God. Baptists thus have a variety of ways in which they can choose to work. Yet in their relationship with one another and with the world there needs to be some structure for denominational identity and recognition. For nearly two hundred years General Conference has been the embodiment of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination. Its Statement of Purpose thus includes the work of each constituent part.

### **Mission Statement**

The purpose of our Seventh Day Baptist boards, agencies and General Conference offices is to serve the churches of the Conference providing advice and assistance in the accomplishment of their task in making disciples of Christ, and coordinating the efforts of our churches in the accomplishment of common goals.

God has called Seventh Day Baptists to follow him through belief in his Son Jesus Christ and his message of love and reconciliation. Christ gave his followers the Great Commission to "go then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples..." (Matthew 28:19-20). Therefore, Seventh Day Baptist denominational leadership will:

1. Model commitment to Christ's teachings.
2. Teach the people and churches to grow in knowledge and commitment to Christ's teachings.
3. Develop and train pastoral and other leadership for the local church.
4. Facilitate the planting of new churches in our countries and around the world.

5. Strengthen the ministry of churches in developing spiritual discipline.
6. Equip disciples for evangelism and ministry.
7. Promote the blessings of Sabbathkeeping.<sup>1</sup>

## **Membership and representation**

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference was organized as an association of churches in 1802. The current bylaws adopted in 1984 defines membership as consisting of "all members in good standing of Seventh Day Baptist churches which now comprise, or may be admitted to, the voluntary association known as the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference." However, the delegates to the annual sessions are accredited by churches on a proportionate basis according to membership—"two delegates for each member church as a church and one additional delegate for each ten members of a church or major fraction of ten members."<sup>2</sup>

## **General Conference as a Corporation and General Conference in Session**

A distinction is made between the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada Ltd. as a corporation with perpetual existence in which all members of recognized churches are members, and General Conference in session in which only registered delegates chosen by churches have voting power. Most of the sessions of General Conference are conferences of individuals who may reflect the churches they represent but are not bound by that church. The by-laws recognize this stating, "Only delegates to General Conference are authorized to vote. They cast their votes on all questions as individuals, except when a vote by churches has been called."<sup>3</sup>

A vote by churches is taken when General Conference has requested it at a previous session. Churches then have the opportunity to discuss the issue and instruct their delegates. When a vote by churches is taken, each church casts the total number of votes allotted to it. Prior to 1975 this was interpreted to call for a block vote similar to the block vote in the national presidential election in which a simple majority would determine which candidate would receive the total electoral votes for each state. The General Conference bylaws were amended in 1975 to allow each church to determine whether the votes might be split.

Between 1970 and 1994, a call for a vote by churches has been used on four issues: withdrawal from the National Council of Churches (1973); withdrawal from the World Council of Churches (1976); reorganization of General Conference which created a General Council to replace the Commission (1978); and the adoption of a new Statement of Faith (1987).<sup>4</sup> At any time a church may instruct its delegates how to vote on specific questions, but on most issues delegates are free to vote as they please.

The individuality of sessions of General Conference is further affected by the selection of delegates. Some churches make careful selection of delegates and at times assist in the expenses, but in others a common motion is "all members in attendance shall be delegates up to the number allotted." Often these delegates are chosen from those who have both the time and money to go. Thus a high percentage of delegates are from the clergy who are sent, educators whose summers are freer than many in the work place, or other professionals who can schedule their own time. The delegation also reflects a strong age differential. Many retirees find General

Conference as an avenue of expressing their life-long faith in a larger community of believers as well as an opportunity to renew old acquaintances. Many of these people who are regular attendants become actively involved in the societies and other agencies of General Conference as well as their home church. They are also among the highest givers to the denominational budget.

On the other hand young people represent a large segment of the Conference delegates. As early as 1888 the desire for young people to attend Conference was a factor in changing the date for sessions from September to August.<sup>5</sup> With the introduction of the Pre-Conference Retreats in 1940, many churches have assisted the young people in attendance at both the retreat and conference. Their presence at business sessions has been a great learning experience as they have participated in democracy in action.

The friendships made in these experiences have often lasted a lifetime and many have renewed these relationships at subsequent sessions of General Conference, often with their growing families. Some young families find it too expensive to attend with their families. Others see the travel to and from General Conference and the fellowship and programs while there including the creative programs of the children's conferences so attractive that they plan the yearly Conference as their family vacation.

Thus although the delegation may not be a true cross-section of the members in the pew, it does represent those who have a keen interest in the church. The delegates are able to carry back to the churches the benefits of attendance. By being free to vote as individuals, they have the benefit of further information and

discussion before voting. The fact that many of the same people attend year after year gives continuity and depth of understanding which is valuable.

## **Location for General Conference Sessions**

In the beginning sessions of General Conference rotated among three churches, Hopkinton, Rhode Island; Berlin, New York; and Piscataway, New Jersey. As the denomination expanded away from the Atlantic seaboard, sessions were held in other churches to get wider representation. In time the burden of entertaining became so great for local churches that a rotation involved college facilities at Alfred, New York; Salem, West Virginia; and Milton, Wisconsin. With the lessening of denominational ties with these institutions other campuses which catered to conferences were chosen. For a time the rotation was among the various associations or combinations of associations. In 1986 it was voted to adopt a three year rotation for a trial period of nine years "among the eastern, central and western geographical areas of continental USA and Canada," with the added hope that three permanent locations could be selected.<sup>6</sup> The following year this was amended to include a site in the geographic region of the Seventh Day Baptist Center every seven years beginning in 1992.<sup>7</sup> The rotation of meeting places makes it possible for a wider representation. However, even on those occasions when sessions are held in close proximity to a church, many of the members are able to attend only those sessions which do not conflict with their daily work. On the other hand, the presence of delegates sharing in the Sabbath services prior to Conference and the corporate Sabbath services of Conference is an experience that many could not have without a rotation of Conference sites.

## Organization and structure

General Conference is a non-profit corporation operating under the laws of the State of Wisconsin. Although the membership may contain all Seventh Day Baptists, the Articles of Incorporation state that "The affairs of this corporation shall be managed by a board of directors presently known as the General Council."<sup>8</sup>

### General Council

The General Council was established in 1978 as the direct result of several years of study and planning to make the mission and operation of General Conference more efficient and representative. It combined some of the features and functions of the six member Commission elected by General Conference and the Planning Committee which included the executives of the major agencies of General Conference. Six at-large members are elected, two each year for three year terms. One of those elected each year is the president-elect who remains on the Council the next year as president and normally the third year as chairman of the Council. Efforts are made to choose the other members to be representative, both in terms of geography and interest. A balance between laity and clergy is often attempted.

The other six members of the General Council are *ex officio* members, members because of their office. Currently these include the Executive Director of the Missionary Society, the Executive Director of the Board of Christian Education, the Director of Pastoral Services, the Director of Communications of the American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council, the president of the Women's Society and the president of the Memorial Fund Trustees. The inclusion of these *ex officio*

members brings the societies and other agencies more directly into the planning and provides some of the expertise needed in carrying out the total mission of the denomination.

The General Council generally meets once mid-way between sessions of Conference as well as in a series of meetings immediately preceding, during and following General Conference sessions. It prepares the budget to be acted upon by General Conference, approves the program planned by the president and prepares much of the agenda for the business of the General Conference sessions. Its members frequently visit the local churches on behalf of the total mission of the denomination. The General Council functions for the General Conference between sessions.

Within the General Council the at-large members meet as an Executive Committee in such matters as personnel and salary recommendations. The *ex officio* members work on projected budget recommendations and program planning.

### **Coordinating Leadership Team**

The executive officers of the Missionary Society, the Board of Christian Education, the Historical Society, the Council on Ministry, Tract and Communication Council and the president of the Women's Board make up a Coordinating Leadership Team (CLT) which is chaired by the Executive Secretary. Its designated duties are "to coordinate the plans, programs, and activities of all denominational organizations."<sup>9</sup> Inter-agency programs such as the More 2000 emphasis fall within the province of the CLT.

### **Executive Secretary**

The bylaws specify that the executive secretary of General Conference shall act as the non-voting secre-



tary of the General Council and work closely with the General Council in carrying out the responsibilities and duties outlined in the bylaws and shall communicate for the General Conference as he may be directed by it and that he shall chair the Coordinating Leadership Team to coordinate the denominational program. The executive secretary is appointed by the General Council with the approval of the General Conference and serves for a three year term which may be renewed.<sup>10</sup> Included in the standard operating procedure is the responsibility "for the denomination's budget promotion and other stewardship activity, communicating to the churches and members the opportunities for accomplishing the goals of the denomination through dedicated giving."<sup>11</sup>

## Chapter 6

# Committee Structure

Much of the work of General Conference is carried out by committee. The committees often reflected conditions of the time to deal with current issues, or specific needs expressed by churches or the Conference. Aside from these special or *ad hoc* committees the most consistent use of the committee structure falls into the two main categories of named committees which became a part of the General Conference bylaws in 1970: (a) the Standing Committees which operate between sessions of Conference and (b) the Interest Committees which operate chiefly during the annual sessions.

### Standing Committees of General Conference

The first listing in the bylaws of the Standing Committees named seven separate committees which later were reduced to three: (a) Committee on Christian Social Action; (b) Committee on Faith and Order; and (c) Committee on Support and Retirement (COSAR). A standing committee on obituaries was replaced in 1989 by an obituary coordinator.<sup>1</sup>

### Committee on Christian Social Action

The Council—Conference session of the General Conference in 1938 recommended the creation of a standing Committee on Christian Social Action which would: (1) study social approaches to Christian objectives; (2) make recommendations to Conference, such as endorsement of definite organizations and movements in the social field; (3) submit articles to the Editor of the *Sabbath Recorder*; (4) promote individual or group study of social problems from the Christian standpoint; (5) co-operate with similar bodies of other denomina-

tions of Christians and with the Commission on Social Service of the Federal Council of Churches.<sup>2</sup>

It was over twenty years before such a committee became a part of the General Conference structure. During the interim most of the social concerns which came to the floor of Conference were referred to an Interest Committee on Courtesies and Resolutions which did little beyond passing resolutions and forwarding them to appropriate people. In 1962 as a result of an interest committee recommendation, the Committee on Christian Social Action was established to provide a central group to consider and study social problems, formulate policies on these problems and draft statements of position on specific issues for consideration by the General Conference, suggest methods of implementing these policies into action, and present our denominational policy between annual sessions of the General Conference, as previously enacted by the General Conference, when requested or when our position should be declared.<sup>3</sup>

In 1963 this committee proposed a policy statement which summarized the general position of Seventh Day Baptists in many areas of social concerns. It recognized the historic Baptist polity of freedom of conscience, a reluctance to issue authoritative statements on specific public issues which might be considered binding upon individual members, a refusal to recognize the authority of the state over individual matters of religious principles, and an absolute separation of church and state on theological grounds rather than for practical advantage, and encouraged individual Christians to become involved personally in political office if so qualified.<sup>4</sup> It outlined topics for a 1966 issue of the *Helping Hand* devoted to a concentrated study of a Christian's involvement in selected areas of social concern.

During the following years it issued statements on such questions as racial discrimination, birth control and extramarital sexual relations, war and peace. It has made statements concerning both the physical and the moral environment. It also recommended denominational participation in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

This Committee on Christian Social Action which was established for an educational and policy defining role soon expanded its function to include response to individual and group emergency needs. In 1973 the Seventh Day Baptist United Relief Fund was established through which individuals and churches channel contributions for emergency situations. This new responsibility caused a shift in the composition of the committee to bring a majority to a single geographic area for quicker response to an emergency situation. In 1989 the core committee was moved from Florida to the West Virginia area. Other members with specific interest in social action are still retained to keep a wider focus on the issues. The Executive Director of the Missionary Society acts as its executive.

### **Committee on Faith and Order**

Both internal pressures and external needs in the early 1960s gave rise to the Committee on Faith and Order. Several churches expressed a need for stronger affirmations in the Statement of Belief, particularly as it related to the Bible. At the same time, conversations with the American Baptists were being held as to possible closer cooperation. Thus the Commission in its 1963 report to General Conference recommended the reaffirmation of our Statement of Belief, but recognized the need for "a continuous effort to clarify and communicate our faith in a changing world," and thus recommended that "a permanent committee be established for

the purpose of giving continuous study to our Statement of Belief, to consider proposed changes, and to make recommendations regarding changes according to established procedures."<sup>5</sup>

In that same report they recognized a need for a revision of the *Seventh Day Baptist Manual of Procedure*. They referred these matters to the Special Conference Committee on Theological Issues which had been appointed by the president of Conference. That committee recognized the historic function of the Statement of Belief "as a testimony rather than a test, with a guarantee of freedom of conscience which does not restrict inquiry and growth in our understanding of religious truth." Their recommendation called for the establishment of a five person Committee on Faith and Order composed of both laymen and ministers who would report regularly to Commission and Conference and be responsible to the General Conference for its actions. In setting up this committee the following purposes were listed:

1. To stimulate development of an atmosphere for the creative discussion of convictions and provide for general educational and theological dialogue.
2. To promote the continuous effort to clarify and communicate our faith in a changing world.
3. To consider any proposed change to our Statement of Belief, and to make recommendations regarding any revisions, alterations, or additions according to established procedures.
4. To give continuous study to the procedures and practices in church organization and polity, and to recommend such revisions in the *Seventh Day Baptist Manual of Procedure* as may be needed and helpful.<sup>6</sup>

One of the first reports made by the Committee on Faith and Order indicated its perception as passive rather than initiatory. It was to receive any proposals from individuals and churches, and give them thorough study. It did, however, respond to the need for a revision of the *Manual of Procedures* which was edited by Dr. Wayne Rood and published in 1972.

In 1981 General Council recommended that a study of possible revisions of the Statement of Belief be made under the guidance of the Committee on Faith and Order.<sup>7</sup> Requests were made for churches and individuals to submit to the committee any suggestions or concerns. In 1983 a suggested time-line was prepared looking forward to a reaffirmation of a Statement of Belief in August 1987, the 50th anniversary of the 1937 adoption of the Statement of Belief. This involved initial committee work, submission to Minister's Conference for input, presentation to the 1985 General Conference session, review by churches, final passage of suggested revisions at General Conference in 1986 and vote by churches in August 1987. Their painstaking work and the involvement of individuals and churches in the process led to an affirmative vote of acceptance: 513 yes, 59 no out of a possible 654 votes.

### **Committee on Support and Retirement (COSAR)**

When the Committee on Support and Retirement (COSAR) was established in 1975 they were faced with the problem of "a plan based on service which was inequitable and almost impossible to implement and fund."<sup>8</sup> For over a century, General Conference made no provision for the retirement of pastors. The Missionary Board made provisions for returning missionaries, but the pastors of the local parish were left to provide for their own welfare in retirement years.

One of the first records of denominational concern for retired ministers was the bequest to the Memorial Board in 1903 of \$1000 by Sarah P. Potter. The name attached to that fund revealed the welfare attitude which was often held concerning those who would not, or could not "lay by in store" according to biblical principles. For fourteen years the name, "Sarah P. Potter Bequest for Indigent and Superannuated Ministers," was perpetuated. Even when General Conference in 1910 began a fund it was entitled "Ministerial Relief."

In 1928 General Conference voted to have the chair appoint a committee "to take under immediate advisement the matter of financial aid for our superannuated ministers."<sup>9</sup> That committee presented three recommendations which were adopted: (1) the appointment of a committee of five to investigate all cases of need, and make recommendations to the Memorial Board and to the Missionary Board for assistance from funds provided for the aid of retired ministers and their dependents; (2) greater support for the Ministerial Relief Fund; and (3) a committee "to study the advisability of organizing a system of retiring allowances for ministers, missionaries, and their dependents, which shall provide for a co-operation of churches, societies, and beneficiaries."<sup>10</sup>

In 1936 the committee reported that the Memorial Board was striving to make the ministerial relief a reward for service rendered rather than a matter of charity. Therefore they recommended an allowance of \$1 per month for each year of service up to \$40 a month. "We believe," they concluded "that any man who has spent his life in the ministry of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination on the small salaries ministers are paid is entitled to be taken care of after he reaches the age when

he can no longer serve.”<sup>11</sup> This action showed a marked shift from a matter of need to one of equitable service.

With the establishment of COSAR in 1974, a fresh look was given to the retirement program. In 1978 that committee recognized that the Fund had been administered by amateurs, “people who were sincere and dedicated, but not skilled in the fine points of pension accounts.” Benefits to retirees were based not on contributions in the name of a particular pastor but solely on years of service. When an actuarial study was done early in the 1970s it was recognized that many pastors would soon retire and that the fund might not carry them. In 1977 it was voted to ask for voluntary contributions from the churches of 16% of salary plus housing. However, since a pastor still received his retirement, even if the church he served contributed nothing toward his retirement, it did little to encourage contributions by the churches. Furthermore, a federal law declared that after 1983, the trustees of any retirement program might become personally liable for any deficiency in the fund account.

Thus a plan was developed through Presbyterian Ministers Fund whereby all contributions credited to a person’s account would be his own regardless of whether or not he leaves the denomination or serves for less than seven years. Some of the contributions continued to go into the old ministerial retirement program to take care of past liabilities. COSAR was also authorized to launch a major fund drive called Pastors’ Retirement Offering Project (PROP). As of June 30, 1993 twenty-nine ministers, fourteen widows and four unordained retirees were receiving retirement allotments of \$14.00 per month for each year of active service (widows receive  $\frac{3}{4}$  allotment). The actuarial figures project that when the last



of the "superannuated" ministers have passed from the picture, the fund will be nearly depleted. All other ministers who retire will be under the new plan with their own personal retirement policy which is now with Covenant Life Insurance Co.

In addition to retrieving the Ministerial Retirement program from the brink of bankruptcy and neglect, COSAR has worked for the present welfare of the minister and his family. It has developed salary and benefit guide lines and encouraged churches to provide for more adequate support for the ministry. It has helped with expertise on such areas as social security and income tax questions. It has also provided relief funds for financial emergencies encountered by pastors.

The Standing Committee on Support and Retirement is composed of six members, three elected by General Conference, one from the Memorial Fund Trustees, one from the Missionary Board, plus the Director of Pastoral Services who serves as its executive.

## **Interest Committees of General Conference**

The General Conference Bylaws list the Interest Committees of General Conference sessions as Special Committees with areas of concern which have been delegated by General Conference actions such as: Budget and Finance, Christian Education, Christian Social Action, Communications, Ministerial Interests, Missions International, Missions National, Nominations, Reference and Counsel, Women's Interests, and Youth Work. These are the "working committees" of General Conference which involve the delegates to the sessions.

Several were initially review committees, set up to review the reports of the various societies and agencies of General Conference. This still is an important func-

tion of these committees. However, in 1948 the term "interest" was utilized to reflect a broader scope of their consideration. They thus became a place for both referral and initiative. The General Council now uses a grid, in which various items of their report are automatically referred to the appropriate interest committee. Similarly, items of new business brought to the floor of General Conference are often referred to one of the interest committees. Any item which involves a budgetary expense is also referred to the Committee on Budget and Finance before it is voted. These interest committees were encouraged to explore ways in which General Conference and its various boards and agencies as well as churches and individuals might work more effectively. Two procedural interest committees were replaced in 1987 by a Credential Coordinator and a Courtesies Coordinator, both appointed by the Conference President.

In 1974 a distinction was made between committees with elected representatives and those with voluntary or appointed representation. It listed membership in the first category as being composed of two representatives elected or appointed from each Association and a chair appointed by the president along with six additional members appointed by the president.<sup>12</sup> At the time there were two such elected representative committees, the Committee on Nominations and the Committee on Vocations. The latter was discontinued in 1976 and the vocational interest concerns were considered by the Committee on Christian Education Interests.<sup>13</sup>

With the exception of the Nominations Committee, all of the other Special or Interest Committees are composed of voluntary or appointed members. The chairman of each committee is appointed by the presi-

dent well in advance of the Conference session, but the committee membership is drawn from those who indicate their preference at time of registration. Others are appointed by the president or a designee with attention given to numerical as well as geographic balance. Some churches may designate whom they wish to serve on certain committees, such as the treasurer on the Committee on Budget and Finance or the president of the women's organization on the Committee on Women's Interest, but most are free to attend whatever committee or committees they choose. Some delegates who attend year after year regularly attend the same interest committee while others prefer to go to different groups. This pattern gives both continuity and freshness of input.

Although the various societies, boards and agencies of General Conference maintain a great deal of autonomy, the Interest Committees provide valuable checks and balance to the denomination. Each of the annual reports is reviewed by one or more Interest Committee. The report of the General Council is scrutinized by the Committee on Reference and Counsel. Sometimes recommendations are adopted with little question, but other times they are amended or recommended for rejection. Any new business brought to the floor of Conference must be presented before Wednesday noon in order that it may be referred to a committee for consideration. In any organization which champions the right of the individual to be heard, and where local autonomy is treasured, such checks and balances are essential to avoid the imposition of minority action on the majority.

The annual sessions of General Conference bring together all of the various segments of the larger "community of believers organized in covenant relationship

for worship, fellowship and service, practicing and proclaiming common convictions, while growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."... While practicing the autonomy of the local congregation, "we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness."<sup>14</sup>

## **Chapter 7**

# **General Conference Office and SDB Center**

The annual sessions of General Conference are extremely important, but the mission of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference can not be done just one week out of a year. The day-to-day business is coordinated through the General Conference office located in the Seventh Day Baptist Center Building in Janesville, Wisconsin.

The purpose of the General Conference office is to provide executive leadership, physical facilities, and secretarial and accounting services necessary to assist or enable each board or agency in performing its leadership tasks.<sup>1</sup>

## **General Services Administrator**

In 1989 the General Council recommended a modification in the General Conference structure with the establishment of a General Services Administrator instead of a business manager at the Center. The purpose of this modification was "to remove the administrative responsibilities of the Janesville office and its budget from the executive, freeing him to coordinate, facilitate, and promote the total mission and budget of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference."<sup>2</sup>

The job description for the General Services Administrator includes supervision or responsibility in the following areas: (1) personnel and employee relations, (2) secretarial services; (3) accounting services; (4) computer system management; (5) supervision of Center physical facilities; (6) denominational budget distribution; (7) general services budget preparation; (8) mail room; (9) office support materials; (10) budgetary consultation with the Coordinating Leadership Team; (11) responsibility for coordinating arrangements for the General Conference annual sessions, in conjunction with the President and Host Committee; (12) responsibility

for coordinating arrangements for General Council and CLT meetings; (13) serve as non-voting consultant to COSAR; (14) provide assistance to General Council Chairman; and (15) Implement the policies and programs of General Conference and General Council.<sup>3</sup>

With the 1989 resignation of Dale Thorngate as the Executive Secretary effective after nine years in the post, the position remained unfilled. Thus in 1990 the General Services Administrator, Calvin Babcock, was asked to serve as Acting Executive Secretary thus adding to his responsibilities some of the promotion, budgetary and administration aspects normally assigned to the Executive Secretary.

## Services Provided by the Center

Much of the denominational mailing and financial record keeping is done from the Center. Inquiries concerning Seventh Day Baptists are often channeled through its offices. The denominational mailing list is maintained and is available for the use of churches as well as the boards and agencies. The Lead-Line is prepared and mailed to help church leaders become informed of denominational activities and programs. Housed at the Center which was purchased in 1981 after over fifty years in Plainfield, New, Jersey are a number of the offices and services which serve the entire denomination.

The American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council edits, publishes and distributes denominational materials including the *Sabbath Recorder* which goes into every Seventh Day Baptist home. Many of the publications of other boards are also handled through its offices. The Audio-Visual Committee of the Communication Council maintains a library of materials for use by the churches and assists in the production of programs for various agencies.

The annual Summer Institute is just one of the many activities of the Council on Ministry administered through its office located at the Center. Students are housed by members of the Center staff and other Seventh Day Baptist families in

the vicinity. The Director of Pastoral Services is in almost daily communication by phone or letter to pastors and churches with help in meeting their needs and encouraging their efforts.

The library, the archives and the services of the Historical Society provide research available to churches, agencies and individuals. A wide range of public relations activity is provided through books published, articles written, historical presentations given and letters, phone calls or personal inquiries answered providing heightened visibility in denominational, interdenominational and public awareness.

College students receiving financial aid, churches embarking on building projects, and every board and agency of the denomination is indebted to the services of the Memorial Fund offices for the financial assistance which it offers from the investment resources of benefactors both past and present.

The conference room at the Center is available for various denominational boards and agencies. Travel and housing is often arranged by members of the Center staff. As was the Seventh Day Baptist Building in Plainfield, the Center in Janesville is becoming a symbol of the total denominational mission. Many Seventh Day Baptists along with others stop at the Center and become better acquainted with the mission and the personnel of the denomination.

The interworking of these offices and shared responsibilities and worship time together gives validity to the statement, "The Center staff works as a family, ministering for the Lord and our larger family—Seventh Day Baptists."<sup>4</sup>

## **Chapter 8**

# **Regional Associations**

Eight regional associations have been established to foster a closer relationship among the local churches than is possible on the Conference level. The associations were originally set up as an integral part of General Conference with the intention that churches would be represented through the association, but such an intermediary step was resisted by the churches who feared a loss of local autonomy.

Although there has been little organic relationship between the associations and General Conference, there has been considerable interaction between them. For many years the reporting of statistics and activities was done through the associations. The associations at times had societies which were considered as arms of the Missionary, the Tract, the Sabbath School and the Educational Societies. The denominational Women's Society and the Memorial Fund had their origin within associations. Several academies including those at Albion, Wisconsin, Salem, West Virginia and Fouke, Arkansas were the direct result of associational interest and action.

The associations contribute directly to General Conference in a number of ways. Each association elects two members to the Nominating Committee of Conference. The associations are frequently involved in the entertainment of sessions of General Conference. Their meetings provide an opportunity for the president and other leaders of General Conference and its agencies to meet with several churches at one time. Often the theme for an association meeting is related to the Conference theme.



There is also a close relationship between an association and several of the agencies and committees of General Conference. The Board of Christian Education draws heavily upon the churches of the Allegheny Association, but also has representatives from three other associations. The Missionary Board relies heavily upon the Eastern Association, but several of its working committees involve other associations. The Women's Society's Board of Directors in their rotations have looked to the associations, or groups within them for assuming responsibility for leadership. The core committee of the Tract and Communication Council is located in the North Central Association, but other committees involve people or churches located in other associations.

In addition, many of the program emphases of the denomination are implemented on an associational level. This is particularly evident among the young people where youth activities involve the association or a sub-section of an association. Not only are most of the camps owned or operated on the associational level, but week-end retreats similarly bring many of the young people together on a regional basis.

General Conference at times has recommended some realignment of the associations, but for the most part they grew out of common interests and traditions localized by geographic factors and migrations. Their names reflect the general portions of the country in which they are located: Eastern, Central New York, Allegheny, Southeastern. Southwestern, North Central, Mid-Continent and Pacific Coast. Because of the great distances encompassed by some of the associations, a number of churches have formed smaller ties to fulfill the need for closer fellowship, inspiration and encouragement.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Power to the People**

The American Sabbath Tract Society in its call for readjustment in 1914 stated a principle of organization which is sometimes forgotten. It said: "The authority and power for all our denominational work should be lodged in the churches, among the people where it belongs, that is in the General Conference; but the administration of the work should be under the superintendency of a single central committee, elected by the people through the delegates to the General Conference, responsible to the people, reporting to the people, subject to recall by the people if unworthy or inefficient."<sup>1</sup> The General Conference is in fact the only corporate body which represents both the churches and the members of the entire denomination.

Though General Conference is still recognized as an association of churches, and individual membership is dependent upon membership in a recognized Seventh Day Baptist church, its basic power remains with the people who comprise the denomination. Furthermore, the individual has many avenues through which this power can be exerted.

### **Individuals Make a Difference**

The individual Seventh Day Baptist has many access points to the work of General Conference. Any delegate has the privilege of the floor to present a concern. As a member of a church or an association, that person may enlist the support of those bodies which can present petitions or resolutions. An individual may also direct concerns to any one of several agencies, or standing committees of General Conference which are recep-

tive to suggestions. Within the framework of the sessions of General Conference the Interest Committees provide a means of access to the business of Conference or its agencies, either by direct action or by referral.

However, the relationship of the individual with the General Conference is a two way street. The organization provides a medium through which the individual can participate in the purposes and activities of the corporation. On the other hand, the General Conference is dependent upon the individual for support by action and by giving.

### **Direct Approach to the Floor of Conference.**

One of stated purposes of the General Conference as listed above is "to provide for pensions for ministers of the Gospel and other persons engaged in denominational work." In the 1989 session of General Conference a delegate from one of the California churches "presented a statement with a recommendation regarding the use of additional funds from the Sue M. McMillan Memorial fund for the Pastors' Retirement Offering Project (PROP) in order to increase the income available for pensions for pastors who retired under the old plan. This was referred to the Committee on Ministerial Interests."<sup>2</sup>

The Committee on Ministerial Interests offered a substitute recommendation "that \$150,000 be raised by PROP by the establishment of a one-year, two-to-one matching fund drive beginning November 1, 1989, in which \$2.00 would be allocated each quarter from the Sue McMillan Fund for each \$1.00 donated by individuals and churches. This fund drive is to be promoted and administered by the Committee on Support and Retirement. We believe that this plan will keep the needs of

our retired pastors and denominational workers before our people and encourage their continued participation in PROP.”<sup>3</sup> The recommendation was passed and as a result of this action prompted by one individual, the retirement allowance for retired personnel was increased by 25% within that first year and a year later was raised another 10%.

At that same session of General Conference another individual raised an issue concerning the use of the title reverend by the clergy of the denomination. This statement was also referred to the Committee on Ministerial Interests. This Committee recognized both the practical and theological ramifications and referred the matter to the Council on Ministry. Considerable dialogue was conducted during the year. A position paper was presented the following year by the Council on Ministry which gave both scriptural considerations and practical application in ministry within the larger community.<sup>4</sup>

## **Churches Influence Conference Action**

In 1933 as a result of a Sabbath School class study of basic beliefs in the church at Daytona Beach, Florida a letter was sent to the President of General Conference suggesting that the time had come for a revision of the Expose of Faith and Practice which had been drafted in 1831 and remained basically unchanged since.<sup>5</sup> This item was referred to the Committee on Religious Life which recommended that the General Conference, associations and churches give a prominent place in their program for the ensuing year. From this study came the adoption in 1937 of the Statement of Beliefs which served the denomination for the next fifty years.

General Conference in 1976 authorized the establishment of a committee to consider the feasibility of moving the denominational headquarters. In 1980 the

General Council recommended that the General Conference and its boards and agencies find a new headquarters location and be established there by 1985. This recommendation was referred back to General Conference with request that "they return with a recommendation to move including justification, needs, and impact statement for consideration by General Conference."<sup>6</sup>

During that year at least four churches: Denver, Colorado; Battle Creek, Michigan; Memphis, Tennessee; and Milton, Wisconsin prepared proposals. At Milton one person at the October quarterly business meeting moved that the Milton Church invite the General Conference to consider moving to the Milton area. A committee to investigate possible sites located a real estate office building at 3120 Kennedy Road in Janesville which had been completed in February 1979. A down-turn in real estate sales forced the owner to file for bankruptcy after only a year and a half of use.

In July 1981 the Milton Seventh Day Baptist Church presented to the General Council a detailed survey and a formal proposal for the relocation of the denominational headquarters in Janesville.<sup>7</sup> The Council recommended "that the offices of the General Conference and the Boards and Agencies located at Plainfield, New Jersey be moved to Janesville," and authorized the necessary steps be taken to effect the move. When the ballot was taken on August 6, 1982 there were 235 delegates who voted to adopt with 67 voting in opposition.<sup>8</sup> The closing papers were signed on September 30th and the Council on Ministry established its office in the new building in January of 1982 with the rest of the offices following in May.

The denomination appeared to be ready for a change. But a few individuals with the backing of a church did the ground work whereby the General Conference in session could make an informed decision.

## **Individuals Work Through Associations**

Although the associations are not a formal part of the General Conference structure, they provide a channel through which individuals can act to effect change. In 1871 it was by action of five associations that the Memorial Board was established to commemorate the bicentennial of the first Seventh Day Baptist church in America.

In 1947 Ronald Barrar was sent as a missionary to Nyasaland by the New Zealand Seventh Day Baptist churches. Two student pastors in Chicago took an active interest in what appeared to be an open door to missions at the very time when the door to China was being closed by the Communists. When one of those pastors moved to California, the Pacific Coast Association actively supported the work. Two nurses volunteered to serve in Nyasaland which further opened the opportunity of service. In 1953 the Missionary Society reported that these missionaries had "received encouragement and endorsement from the churches of the Pacific Coast Association. Upon petition of this association, the last General Conference gave recognition of their consecration to Christian work and their decision to be missionaries." As a result of this action by an association, the Missionary Board extended the call to them and the work in Nyasaland (now Malawi) took on major proportions in the mission outreach of the entire denomination.<sup>9</sup>

## **Individuals Work Through the Societies**

The Societal system had its origin as individuals united to implement ideas into programs without the process of consensus of the whole denomination. This method has continued through most of Seventh Day Baptist history. Sometimes the impetus is from leaders or other members of a society; sometimes the ideas have been generated from people outside the society.

In 1925 Ahva J. C. Bond, who was employed by the Tract Society in Sabbath Promotion, recognized the need and importance of involving youth and young adults in training for Christian living and denominational responsibilities. He conducted a series of weekend conferences. Assisted by Marjorie Burdick of the Young People's Board, a ten-day camp was held in 1926 which gave birth to the idea of having large and more permanent camps every summer.<sup>10</sup> The summer camping program has been an important part of the religious education among Seventh Day Baptists since that time.

In 1940 the Young People's Board was merged with the Sabbath School Board and the Education Society. One of the first official actions of this new Board was the sponsoring of a Pre-Conference Retreat prior to the session of General Conference that year. This Board has continued to work with General Conference in making Pre-Con Retreat an important part of the whole Conference experience. With the exception of three years during the 1940s when war-time restrictions and a polio epidemic interfered there has been a youth retreat prior to the sessions of General Conference.

In 1964 the youth field worker employed by the Board of Christian Education proposed a quartet of young people to work in the Metairie—New Orleans area

of Louisiana for eight weeks. The plan was endorsed by the Women's Society and the Summer Christian Service Corps (SCSC) was born.<sup>11</sup>

With the establishment of the Planning Committee which later became the Coordinating Leadership Team representing the boards and agencies of General Conference, many of the ideas which come from or through these parts of the denominational structure are shared, presented to the General Council and then acted upon by General Conference.

But by whatever means new ideas and programs are generated and by whatever path they are finalized, their ultimate success or failure remains the responsibility of the people in the pew.



## **Chapter 10**

### **Advice and Consent**

A term used by the United States Constitution in regard to the power of the president to make treaties, and appoint ambassadors, judges and certain other officials is "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate."<sup>1</sup> The Articles of Incorporation for General Conference carry the words, "provide advice and assistance to member churches.... to advise the churches and respective members.... to promote divine worship... Sabbath observance.. religious education..."<sup>2</sup> This is a fundamental premise of Baptist polity. It can give advice and assistance, it can promote but it cannot effectively do anything without the "consent" of the people. That consent ultimately is manifest in two areas: (1) action or inaction concerning programs and emphasis; and (2) giving or withholding necessary financial support.

### **Implementing Program**

Through much of the first century of General Conference the activities of Conference were the collective activities of the individual churches, associations, and societies. Considerable cooperation existed among these separate entities as all sought the same goals. The second century of General Conference history is marked by a series of denomination-wide programs which often resulted from the efforts to bring organizational unity amidst structural diversity. Some of these plans were suggested by societies, either separately or in cooperation; some grew out of concerns by the churches or associations; some were stimulated by individuals, particularly the denominational leaders; some were the projections of the Commission, the General Council, the

Planning Committee and its successor, the Coordinating Leadership Team; and some came through action of General Conference in session.

Nearly every one of the programs given as "advice and assistance" or given as "promotion" met with some success and some failure. For example, in the decade and a half following the Commitment to Growth emphasis, over 23 new churches were established. With a constituency so diverse as Seventh Day Baptists, not all programs were equally adaptable to every church. But one thing is evident, there was no success for these programs of emphases where they were not tried with some anticipation of success.

## **Power of the Purse**

In any organization which relies on voluntary contributions for support, the relationship between the budget and the program is very close. The "power of the purse" through the giving or withholding of funds has often been the determining factor in the execution of any proposed action. Many people feel that it is the only direct way in which they can participate in the decision making of the organization. At times even General Conference has used the budgeting power to extend its advisory role in relation to the societies.

In 1953 one of the societies reported filling an executive position which for various reasons was not completely acceptable to a sizeable number of people. From the interest committee dealing with this issue came the recommendation that the affected agency, "be requested to change its present plan for a full-time secretary and to employ a secretary on not more than a half-time basis as soon as can be amicably arranged."<sup>3</sup> The adopted budget reflected this change and the agency affected had to drastically revamp its projected program.

Prior to the adoption of a unified budget during the decades of the teens, each of the societies and agencies of the denomination was responsible for setting its own budget and raising its own funds through direct appeal. Although this had the advantage of publicizing the program of each agency, it had the disadvantage of creating competition for limited resources. After one such campaign involving special projects, W. D. Burdick reported that the year was a banner year in giving, but by far the larger part has been for specials. "We are dangerously near the point of supporting specials to the detriment of the long established lines of our work upon which the very life of the denomination depends."<sup>4</sup>

Not all giving to specials has been to the detriment of the long established lines. In 1967 a special appeal was made for "Bricks for Blantyre" to build a dwelling for missionaries in Malawi. Over \$10,000 was raised with no decrease in the giving for the normal denominational work. In 1981 when General Conference voted to purchase the office building in Janesville, Wisconsin, a special appeal was made for funding. Through the next four years, while giving for the relocation fund represented a considerable portion of the total giving, the giving for the regular denominational budget also increased.<sup>5</sup>

## **Denominational Budget**

The budget process, even in a unified budget, works to its maximum benefit only when the budget is met or exceeded. When there are shortfalls, an inequity often exists since certain fixed expenses must be met. Thus in 1981, the General Council voted that "a separate Headquarters Maintenance Budget be approved for fixed expenses such as fuel, utilities, janitor service, building

equipment maintenance, insurance and necessary supplies. One hundred percent of these budget costs will be distributed before the percentage distribution." This same provision was also granted for all other agencies who maintain offices outside the denominational building.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in 1982 the budget has been presented with three columns for current giving. In 1992 the format was changed to show the total funding from current giving and the percent which that represents of the agency's total budget including income from sales and services along with anticipated contributions from endowment.

### Current Giving

Agency	Undesignated		Designated	Total	As % of Total
	100%	Prorated			

The figures under the 100% column show the amount that each agency receives off the top from current giving. The second column shows the amount that each agency would receive from undesignated giving if the budget were fully raised. This prorated amount is used to determine the percentage of the total which each agency receives of the amount of current undesignated giving after the guaranteed 100% is subtracted. The third column lists the expected designated or ear-marked giving.

The Building Operations Fund receives 75% of its total operation funding from current giving, all from the 100% undesignated column. On the other hand, the Council on Ministry and the Ecumenical Affairs Fund receive only the prorated percentage as listed. The

Women's Society and the Historical Society receives only that which is designated. The 1992 projected budget anticipated

\$102,292	distributed for fixed expenses;
\$148,972	prorated for the agencies and fund which share in the undesignated giving.
\$ 84,767	anticipated in designated gifts

This amounts to \$336,031 or 47% of the grand total of \$710,634 which includes 49% from endowments and 4% from sales and services.

Thus can be seen that the current giving level has a direct impact on every facet of the denomination and its total mission. Not only does this have an impact financially, but spiritually as well. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

## Chapter 11

# Conclusions

The president of the General Conference in 1890 was Henry Babcock who was described as having a "genius for organization and promotion"<sup>1</sup> In his presidential address entitled "Denominational Economy," he attempted to bring some of this genius in the business world to several areas in which he thought the denomination did not practice economy. He saw a need for more uniformity in methods of work. He argued that a great deal of effort is lost on account of lack of system within the denomination. He was concerned about the lack of centralization of executive functions and a tendency toward divisiveness and separation. He was concerned about a hesitancy to change, declaring that:

"when one line of policy is followed for a fair length of time, and found to fail, or to be attended with more loss than gain, or where the gain is not commensurate with the amount of money and energy expended, the line of policy should be changed for one better adapted to secure the end desired."<sup>2</sup>

There were many other successful business men during the early part of the century who wanted to apply the principles of economic organization to the denominational structure. A few generations later, the author of this study was caught up in a similar effort. But after studying the records and reviewing the uniqueness of the denomination he came to a new perspective. Is the business world really the model for the church of Jesus Christ? Is the body of Christ similar to a corporation?

Over four millennia ago during the time of Samuel the children of Israel were discouraged over their lack of power. They envied some of the great

nations around them and asked for a king "that we may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Samuel 8:20). But the problem of Israel in the time of Samuel was not the lack of leadership, but a refusal to follow the leadership God provided. God had told Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them" (8:7).

The movement from the covenant relationship of a theocracy to the authoritarian power of a monarchy did not cure Israel's problems; it only magnified them. True, they did expand their borders and increase their treasury under Saul, David and Solomon, but the nation became divided and found too late that they were no match for some of the powers they tried to be like.

Has God called Seventh Day Baptists as a people "to be like other denominations?" They have affirmed, "We believe in the priesthood of all believers and practice the autonomy of the local congregation, as we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness."<sup>3</sup> Robert Torbet has written:

The Free Church understanding of the church's nature did not preclude authority. To be sure, this authority was not in terms of external political or ecclesiastical pressures, but of the inner leading of God within the community of faith. The congregations claimed to be governed by the Holy Spirit as He led them to understand the mind of Christ, the rightful head of the church. They sought, therefore, means by which they could arrive at a consensus as to the will of God. Through congregational Bible study, discussion, prayer and decision, the congregation

explored matters concerning their understanding of faith, morals ethics, church organization, mission and education.<sup>4</sup>

Seventh Day Baptists through the years have attempted to arrive at consensus through Bible study, discussions, prayer and the decision making process which recognizes the autonomy of the local church in covenant relationship working cooperatively within the framework of the General Conference. The dynamics of this interaction has brought some of the changes which men like Henry Babcock thought were necessary, but not always in the way in which they envisioned. The General Conference of the 1990s is far different than it was a century before. Other changes will undoubtedly occur in the future as the various parts work together.

In the preface the illustration of milk was used. "In milk it is the way the nutrients work together as a system which benefits the body. This is why the nutritional value of milk as a whole is greater than the sum of the individual nutrients."

Seventh Day Baptists, like the nutrients in milk or like the various organs of the body, are a people of many parts and many functions. They come together as individuals, as churches as societies, as committees, and as a denomination. As they work together as a system, the body benefits. In this way the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



# FOOTNOTES

## Preface

1. Ezekiel 37:1-14.
2. Copied from a sign in the Tillamook Cheese Center Tillamook, OR.

## Chapter 1: The Church an Interrelated Body

1. Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief adopted 1987.
2. Charles Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press 1990) viii.
3. Norman Maring and Winthrop Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press 1963) 72-73.
4. Wayne Rood, ed. *A Manual of Procedures for Seventh Day Baptist Churches* (Plainfield, NJ: American Sabbath Tract Society 1972) 19-20.
5. Seventh Day Baptists were charter members of the Federal Council of Churches from 1908. When the Federal Council joined with other agencies to form the National Council of Churches in 1950, Seventh Day Baptists were charter members of that organization, but withdrew in 1973. It was also a participating member of the World Conference on Faith and Order which led to membership in the World Council of Churches founded in 1948. Conference withdrew from it in 1976.

## Chapter 2: General Conference and Local Autonomy

1. Henry Clarke, Proposition given at the Yearly Meeting at Hopkinton, RI September 11, 1801, reported in Seventh Day Baptist Conference, comp.

- Corliss F. Randolph (Newark, NJ: Committee on Denominational History 1907).
2. Constitution of Sabbatarian General Conference, later called Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, cited in Henry Clarke, *A History of the Sabbatarians or Seventh Day Baptists in America*, Utica, NY: for the author 1811) p. 70-71.
  3. "The Purpose of the Corporation" Acts of Incorporation, State of Wisconsin, Department of State, Corporation Bureau, Madison, WI June 13, 1984, paragraph 3.

### **Chapter 3: The Rise of Societies**

1. Ralph Winters, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," from An Address to the All-Asia Consultation, Seoul '73 Korea 1973 (South Pasadena CA. American Society of Missiology 1974) 132-33.  
See *A Choosing People, A History of Seventh Day Baptists*, chapter 13 pages 170-172 for a fuller discussion of this topic.

### **Chapter 4: Current Denominational Agencies**

1. "Constitution of the Missionary Society" Article I adopted September 1843, *SDB Year Book* (1843) 22.
2. *SDB Year Book* (1844 ) 16.
3. Seventh Day Baptist By laws supplement *SDB Year Book* (1900) 34.
4. Minutes of the Missionary Society Annual Meeting *SDB Year Book* (1969) 69d.
5. Annual Report of Missionary Society *SDB Year*

- Book* (1989) G16. Reprinted in *Lead-line*, February 1989.
6. By-laws of the Board of Christian Education adopted May 1940, Article II, By-laws Supplement *SDB Year Book* (1990) 5.
  7. *ibid.* Article III 5.
  8. *ibid.* Article V sec. 1, p. 6.
  9. *SDB Year Book* (1989) D2.
  10. Certificate of Incorporation *SDB Year Book* (1917) p. 38.
  11. Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society, May 1989.
  12. Constitution of the American Sabbath Tract Society reprinted in the *SDB Year Book* (1985) Article I C54.
  13. Mission Statement adopted by the Tract and Communication Council reprinted in *Lead-line*, February 1989.
  14. Conference Minutes *SDB Year Book* (1884) 12-13.
  15. Conference Minutes *SDB Year Book* (1929) 67.
  16. Amendment to By-laws, Article 11 Women's Society Conference Minutes *SDB Year Book* (1941) 44.
  17. Conference Minutes *SDB Year Book* (1952) 49.
  18. *Lead-line*, February 1989.
  19. Conference Minutes *SDB Year Book* (1962) 62.
  20. Report of Commission, *SDB Year Book* (1971) 51.
  21. Report of Committee on Ministerial Interest, *SDB Year Book* (1982) 59.
  22. Conference Minutes, *SDB Year Book* (1983) 56.
  23. *Lead-line*, February 1989.
  24. *Lead-line*, February 1993.
  25. *The Sabbath Recorder* 27:2 December 1871.
  26. Report of the Memorial Fund Treasurer, Conference Minutes, *SDB Year Book* (1973) 18-19.
  27. Adopted 1990.

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3. *ibid.*
4. *SDB Year Book* (1973) 62; (1976) 35; (1978) 64; and (1987) A45.
5. Conference Minutes, *SDB Year Book* (1888) 19-20.
6. *SDB Year Book* (1986) A55-56.
7. *SDB Year Book* (1987) A35.
8. Articles of Incorporation sec., Bylaws Supplement *SDB Year Book* (1990) p. 11. Previous to the incorporation in Wisconsin in 1984, a Board of Trustees was elected which according to the New Jersey Certificate of Incorporation was invested with the legal power to hold and manage any permanent funds, endowments or property. However, since the Memorial Fund became the investment agent in fact, and the General Council and its predecessor, the Commission was recognized as being the governing body of Conference between sessions, the role of the Trustees was limited to management of the General Conference Center.
9. Article IX of General Conference Bylaws, *SDB Year Book* (1990) supplement 18.
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5. *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*, Vol. III 89.
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8. Conference Minutes, *SDB Year Book* (1981) 79, 80, 86.
9. Annual Report of the Missionary Society, Conference Minutes, *SDB Year Book* (1953), 118.
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11. The Women's Society Annual Report, Conference Minutes, *SDB Year Book* (1964) 219.

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