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Watterson, Gene L. (1969)

Pastors of First Baptist Shelby

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### Newspaper - The Shelby Star- Nov 14 1991 - Gene Watterson

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# Moderates keep grip on Baptist State Convention

By Craig Allen  
Star Staff Writer

Moderate candidates swept elections at the Baptist State Convention in Asheville Tuesday, as they were elected as president, first and second vice-presidents and recording secretary of the convention.



Watterson

The Rev. Gene Watterson of Shelby, the outgoing president, said the convention has been marked by a widespread sense of cooperation.

"It has been said by nearly everyone that this convention is one of the most inspirational in living history," said Watterson, who is pastor of Shelby's First Baptist Church. "They (the winning candidates) are moderate, obviously. But, they are trusted people. I think even the conservatives are confident in their leadership. Of

course, they would rather have their own candidates (in office)."

The Rev. Glen Holt of Fayetteville became president after he received 2,583 votes, or 51.4 percent of the total votes cast. He defeated conservative candidate the Rev. Billy Cline of Asheville. Cline received 2,441 votes.

Moderate Dorothy "Dot" Allred of Gastonia defeated Ted Stone of Durham to become the convention's first vice-president, receiving 2,187 votes or 55.7 percent. Stone received 1,221 votes, while inde-

pendent candidate Hobert Smith received 519 votes. Ms. Allred is the first woman elected as first vice-president to the state convention.

In the race for second vice-president, Edwin Vick of Raleigh defeated conservative Henry Cook. Marian Grant of Raleigh beat conservative Brenda Hicks to become the convention's recording secretary.

Moderates and conservatives primarily are divided by their stance on the Bible. Moderates contend that the Bible is open to

interpretation, while conservatives hold that the Bible is without error and should be taken literally.

The rift between conservative and moderates is even more evident on the national level, where disputes in the Southern Baptist Convention have resulted in purges of high-ranking officials at several Baptist institutions.

Tuesday, a proposed change in a bylaw outlining the appointive powers of the president — which moderates feared would lead to purges at the state's Baptist insti-

tutions. — was soundly defeated. Had the proposed change been approved, the convention's president would have gained sole appointive powers over committees and boards, which control the convention's institutions.

Among those institutions is Gardner-Webb College.

The president had sole appointive powers before the bylaw was changed in 1989. Now, the president and both vice-presidents

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make appointments, which are subject to approval by the 100-member General Board.

Watterson said the proposal was submitted to a vote by show of hands. Even supporters of the proposed change acknowledged that a ballot vote was not needed because opposition to changing the bylaw was overwhelming.

"It was defeated so soundly that the one who proposed it stepped to the microphone and said he didn't need a ballot," Watterson said.

Watterson said the convention's delegates did not want to enable one person to enforce his or her will on the convention by giving the president sole appointive powers.

"The way it is now spreads the power," Watterson said. "It makes power-sharing mandatory. No one person can impose his will on the convention. Our people have had a taste of cooperative power and they don't want to give it up."

Today, delegates will discuss the convention's budget, Watterson said.

One of the major issues will be the recent withdrawal of funding from a Baptist seminary in Switzerland, Watterson said. The seminary's funding was cut off about two weeks ago after a professor served as a guest lecturer at another institution, Watterson said.

Watterson said the move to discontinue funding of the seminary was an example of ultra-conservative thought within the state's convention.

"Ninety percent of Baptists are cooperative," Watterson said. "And, they are all concerned by extremes on both ends."