

St. John Baptist
Schedules Revival

The annual spring revival of St. John Baptist Church at 917 Onslow St. will be held Monday through Friday.

The Rev. William Richardson, pastor of the Mr. Bright Baptist Church in Hillsborough, will be guest minister.

Services will start at 7:30 p.m. each night.

BLACK (SF)

Church takes step to leave convention

Members of St. John's Baptist react against new policy on gays

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CHARLOTTE

Another Baptist church has voted to leave the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina rather than face expulsion under a new policy to ban congregations that welcome homosexuals.

Members of St. John's Baptist Church tentatively voted Sunday to drop affiliation with the convention, three months after the state Baptists decided at its annual meeting in Greensboro to investigate and expel member churches that accept gays and lesbians.

"They probably would have (expelled the church)," the pastor, the Rev. Richard Kremer, said. "But that would be squalid. Why wait for someone to tattle on you? If that's the direction they're headed, we prefer to go in a different direction."

The vote will not be effective immediately because the church is still investigating what effect its departure from the convention would have on its tax status as a charitable organization, he said.

But the church and convention have been at odds for some time. Kremer said that the state convention has considered St. John's "apartheid" in recent years, and has "blackballed" members who sought state Baptist leadership positions.

He said that the church has sent up to \$50,000 a year to the state or-

ganization in the past but began routing the money directly to Baptist charities, such as the Baptist Retirement Homes, "when we saw the direction the convention was going."

The statement approved Sunday with an overwhelming show of hands accused the state convention of choosing "to narrow its membership to exclude churches and institutions that do not adhere to its exclusive and discriminatory view of who is welcome in its fellowship."

The convention's new policy, adopted in November, states: "Among churches not in friendly cooperation with the convention are churches which knowingly act to affirm, approve, endorse, promote, support or bless homosexual behavior."

It affects nearly 20 Baptist churches in the state that are also af-

filiated with the liberal Alliance of Baptists, based in Washington, which allows member churches to accept homosexuals.

Another Charlotte church — Park Road Baptist — voted last week to leave the state convention.

"The November vote was the last straw for us," said the Rev. Russ Dean, who is a co-pastor of Park Road Baptist with his wife, Amy.

A third local church is taking a different approach. Myers Park Baptist acknowledges that it is gay-friendly, but has publicly invited the state convention to visit the church before expelling it.

North Carolina's Baptist State Convention is the second-largest association of Baptist churches in the country, with 1.2 million members and 4,080 churches.