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June 3, 1996

96-96

TENNESSEE--SBC Cooperative Program jumps 25 percent in May.

VIRGINIA--Jerry Rankin retraces steps of Lottie Moon in new book; photo.

NEW ORLEANS--Prayerwalk organizers say it will impact New Orleans.

ALABAMA--Missionary houses offer 'home away from home.'

TENNESSEE--Recreation program expands to add wellness services; photo.

SBC Cooperative Program
jumps 25 percent in May

Baptist Press
6/3/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program gifts for the month of May increased dramatically -- more than 25 percent -- over the previous year and pushed the SBC fiscal year's receipts up nearly 2.5 percent over the previous year, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The total for May, \$12,838,700, was \$2,575,259 more than May 1995, an increase of 25.09 percent. It was the largest single month increase since September 1994 when that month exceeded September 1993 by 27.53 percent.

Said Chapman: "The enormous increase in Cooperative Program giving for May over last year, and the year-to-date increase, I believe, is a testimony to the obedience of God's people in tithing, to the faithful preaching of God's Holy Word by Southern Baptist pastors, to the leadership of state convention leaders and to the visionary hope in the hearts of Southern Baptists as we prepare for a brand new century of telling the 'old, old story of Jesus and his love.'"

At the end of eight months of the SBC fiscal year, receipts totaled \$98,927,932, which is \$2,33,613 more than the same period a year ago of \$96,594,318, or an increase of 2.42 percent.

Designated gifts for May 1996 also showed a dramatic increase: \$17,742,912 compared to May 1995 of \$13,229,312, or a 34.11 percent increase (\$4,512,600). Year-to-date totals for designated gifts were also up, \$114,278,816 compared to \$105,783,954, or an 8.03 percent increase (\$8,494,861).

For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the May totals were 8.78 percent or \$1,036,273 above the budget requirement of \$11,802,427. For the SBC budget, year to date, the budget has been exceeded by 4.77 percent or \$4,508,514 above the required \$94,419,418 for eight months.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions and fellowships for distribution according to the 1995-96 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

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State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

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Jerry Rankin retraces steps
of Lottie Moon in new book

Baptist Press
6/3/96

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Jerry Rankin wanted to understand the life and influence of Lottie Moon, Southern Baptists' most famous missionary, more deeply.

So last year the Foreign Mission Board president and his wife, Bobbye, followed Moon's historic footsteps -- all the way from her Virginia birthplace to China, where she spent four decades serving people and spreading the gospel until her death in 1912.

Rankin finished the journey convinced no other Virginian -- including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson -- "has had such a global impact. Her influence is not limited to this nation or even this world. It has eternal significance."

How could he reach such a conclusion?

Rankin makes his case in a new book, "A Journey of Faith and Sacrifice: Retracing the Steps of Lottie Moon." He describes today's rapidly growing Chinese church, nurtured in its infancy by Moon and other missionaries and tempered by the storms of the communist era. Rankin also examines the opportunities and challenges facing Christians and missionaries worldwide as the 21st century approaches.

The book is a record in words and photographs of Rankin's trek and the insights it produced about the work of Moon -- a tiny woman who defied enormous odds to go alone to China in 1873 as an unmarried female missionary, who challenged a fledgling denomination to build one of the largest mission efforts in church history, and who continues to inspire it today.

Just released by New Hope, publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, the book will be unveiled during the Southern Baptist Convention and WMU annual meetings this month in New Orleans.

Collaborating with Rankin was award-winning FMB photographer Don Rutledge, who has covered missions in scores of countries. Rutledge produced more than 60 full-color portraits of "Lottie Moon country" in the United States and China for the hardback, coffee-table book. WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien wrote the book's foreword.

In his introduction, Rankin relates his fascination since boyhood with the legendary missionary.

"As a child in Sunbeams and later Royal Ambassadors, I was captivated by the story of Lottie Moon, told to us along with accounts of contemporary missionaries as if she were still alive," he writes. "And in a sense she is; her calling and sacrificial commitment continue to inspire hundreds of Southern Baptist missionaries who still follow in her steps."

Reflecting on his own experiences as a missionary to Indonesia and global perspective as FMB president, Rankin views Moon's life in the context of the last century of Southern Baptist missions and the next century's challenges.

In asking for more mission workers, Moon once appealed: "Please say to the missionaries that they are coming to a life of hardship, responsibility and constant self-denial If 'the joy of the Lord be their strength,' the blessedness of the work will more than compensate for its hardships."

Those words, writes Rankin, "are as true today as they were a hundred years ago. Technology may have advanced, with consumer goods and luxuries in abundance. But sacrifice and hardship continue to be the lot of a missionary who would identify with the people and discover the joy in suffering."

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Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. praised the book. It will inspire "anyone wishing to bring Lottie out of the history books and desiring to enhance the relevance of her life to what God is doing today in China and throughout the world," he said.

Rankin and Rutledge will autograph copies of the book June 11 from 3 to 4 p.m. at the Baptist Book Store during the SBC meeting in the Louisiana Superdome. It will be available in other Baptist Book Stores by late June.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet News Room.

Prayerwalk organizers say
it will impact New Orleans

By C. Lacy Thompson

Baptist Press
6/3/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--A "Prayerwalk" to various New Orleans sites has been set for June 7, just a few days prior to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Organizers understand the concept may be new to many Southern Baptists. But they insist it is being used by God to thrust Christians and the church into the world where they belong anyway.

"Prayerwalking is taking a walk in the neighborhood," explained Ken Mooney, discipleship development director for the Louisiana Baptist Convention. "You stroll and pray for people you see and who live along the way, for the neighborhood, for obvious needs you see.

"It's a new concept. But it is a means of preparing a neighborhood for the gospel."

While new, the concept also is simple, added Randy Sprinkle, director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board international prayer strategy office.

"It is simply the people of God walking with God," he noted. "It is the church going out where it belongs, but going not on its own power but in the power of God."

Sprinkle said the concept of prayerwalking can be traced back to the 1970s, when it began to be practiced in various locations around the world as a spontaneous response to the call of God.

"What God is doing is literally calling the prayer intercessors out of the prayer closets and out into the world. He is calling the church out of its building to be the church out in the world."

The prayerwalking effort planned for New Orleans involves three hours of training beginning in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Hardin Student Center, from 9 a.m. to noon on Friday morning.

Following lunch, Prayerwalk participants will be divided into teams of two and sent to 65 or more specific locations throughout the city.

High priority spots include the meeting sites for the June 11-13 Southern Baptist Convention and related groups, downtown hotels where convention participants will be staying, Jackson Square in the heart of the New Orleans French Quarter and the sites of Crossover evangelistic events set for the following day.

The teams will walk through the areas, praying for the convention, the evangelistic effort and needs they observe. "The term many like to use is praying on site with insight," Mooney explained.

Both Mooney and Sprinkle predict the prayerwalk will have an impact.

"Prayer can and does make a difference," Mooney said. "And if we put 65 teams out in spots where they're going to do evangelistic work the next day, I can see some very positive things coming from it."

Sprinkle added: "It is impossible for there not to be results. And you know why? Because of the character of God. I say this because of God's faithfulness and my experience as well. The results of prayerwalking are immediate and extended because it is impossible to genuinely intercede and not see God move."

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Prayerwalking introduces the light of God into an area -- and that light makes a difference, Sprinkle said.

Prayerwalking is not confrontational, however, Mooney added. It is an effort completely focused on prayer. However, he also noted that when a trial effort was held in the New Orleans area, residents in the neighborhood approached Prayerwalk participants and asked for personal prayer as well as prayer for the area. The effort also resulted in one profession of faith.

In addition, the effort is sure to result in a deeper relationship with God for participants, Sprinkle said. One of the first things that happens is that God begins identifying areas of need in a participants's life so those can be addressed, he said.

"We plan to Prayerwalk. But what we see is that prayerwalking becomes more than a one-day event. This is what God created us for in the first place. We discover our everyday lives are supposed to be our prayer walks.

"So this (prayerwalk) becomes just an introduction, a first step, a means of opening the door for us," Sprinkle said.

Training for the New Orleans Prayerwalk effort will be led by Sprinkle and Henry Blackaby, a leader in prayer and spiritual awakening matters for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Further information about the prayerwalk may be obtained by calling New Orleans Seminary's office of continuing education at 1-800-662-8701 or (504) 282-4455.

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**Missionary houses offer
'home away from home'**

By Sue Poss

**Baptist Press
6/3/96**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A missionary couple home on furlough faces the same situation as a family whose house has burned -- they are starting over.

"That's just what it is like," said Sharon McPherson, who with her husband, James, is a Southern Baptist missionary in Chad.

The advantage missionaries have, McPherson said, is that churches, individuals and other organizations across the Southern Baptist Convention offer furnished housing to furloughing families. "It can be quite expensive to set up a house with linens and dishes and furnishings if you don't get a missions house," she said.

To help furloughing missionaries find housing, Woman's Missionary Union maintains a roster of available housing, said missionary housing coordinator Cindy McMurtrey. The list is sent annually to missionaries through the Foreign Mission Board. Nearly 400 sponsors list more than 500 houses on the roster.

Missionaries contact the sponsors to make their own arrangements. "We do not assign missionaries to houses," said McMurtrey, adding WMU would like to increase the number of vacation homes, such as cabins or beach houses, that are available for short-term stays.

The McPhersons, first appointed as missionaries to the Middle East in 1973, were recently on a short two-month furlough and stayed with their families in Las Cruces, N.M. But on previous furloughs, they have stayed in missions residences.

"One of the most important things for us as missionaries is that all of the churches allowed us the freedom to come and go as we needed. They didn't give us any responsibility in the church. This made it possible for us to visit our families and to speak in other churches," McPherson said. "They all opened the homes to us and required nothing of us.

"If we didn't have this option, we would have to look for a house, spend a month furnishing it and a month dismantling it," she said.

Robert and Barbara Crider have retired after 26 years as Southern Baptist missionaries to Spain, but through the years they spent furloughs in housing provided by First Baptist Church in Tallahassee, Fla., by the University of Mobile (Ala.), and by Samford University and Southside Baptist Church, both in Birmingham, Ala.

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"Missionaries would have a very difficult time on furlough if churches didn't have it in their hearts to provide housing and all the belongings," said Robert Crider, now pastor of Brent (Ala.) Baptist Church. "We saw evidence of a lot of love and care everywhere we stayed."

A love for missions and missionaries is what prompted Exchange Avenue Baptist Church in Oklahoma City to open a missions house 15 years ago. Families on furloughs from Singapore, the Philippines, Korea, Finland and Mexico have used the house, which is completely furnished and maintained by church members.

"We pay all of the utilities except for the telephone," said Ann Spitler, WMU director at the 865-member church. "And the WMU stocks the refrigerator every time we have a new family coming."

The problem with the missions house right now, said Spitler, is that it is being used by the church staff. A fire in February destroyed the sanctuary at Exchange Avenue and caused smoke damage to other areas. The staff moved into the missions house while renovations are being made.

"We've had to turn down a couple of requests we've had from missionaries wanting to use the house, but we hope we'll have it available again by October," Spitler said.

"All we want is to love the missionaries that come here and make them feel a part of our family," she said.

First Baptist Church, Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., has a new missions house, replacing an old parsonage that had been converted to a missions house years ago under direction of the church's WMU. "We raised \$35,000 in one Sunday to buy materials for the new house," said Martha Cook, chairman of the committee that oversees the house. Church members contributed most of the labor and the new house was ready a year ago.

"We didn't have anybody scheduled to come when it opened," Cook said, "but now we have it booked through 2000."

"We don't have any expectations for the missionaries who come here as far as our church is concerned," she said. "We want their home to be a place of relaxation with no responsibilities."

Each time a family leaves, church members take inventory to see what is needed in the house and what repairs need to be made. If a problem arises while the house is occupied, church members take care of it.

"Our church members usually become very close to the missionaries and we have gotten to know some of them very well," Cook said. "We keep up with them and we know what their needs are. We know the challenges they face. We know that they are just like us in the kinds of problems they have. Our church has been blessed. Having missionaries in our missions house helps keep missions up front in our church."

"We feel that churches providing housing for missionaries is one of the best arrangements that can be made," said Crider. "Unless you are the object of a blessing, you don't realize the impact and benefits that it has."

Concluded McPherson: "I can't say enough about churches that offer us housing, what it does for us, how it frees us. Thank you."

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Poss is a free-lance writer in Greenville, S.C.

**Recreation program expands
to add wellness services**

By Charles Willis

**Baptist Press
6/3/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists' church recreation program is enlarging its services through the addition of wellness consultation to ministers and families.

Tommy Yessick, who has led the church recreation program since 1992, will lead wellness services for LeaderCare, the Baptist Sunday School Board's strategy to assist ministers in crisis.

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"This expansion adds another dimension to the board's recreation ministry through Centrifuge and Crosspoint in the discipleship and family development division and through drama and general recreation ministries in the pastor-staff leadership department," said Mike Miller, director of the church leadership services division.

In his new role, Yessick will lead in development of wellness resources, services and events for ministers, their spouses and their families, as well as carrying general responsibilities in consulting on LeaderCare issues. Also, he will continue to work with the church recreation program in recreation ministry. Both are assigned to the pastor-staff leadership department. Because of his newly added focus on LeaderCare needs, Yessick's role as church recreation program director will be assumed by John Garner, who has been field service projects coordinator for church recreation since 1990.

Miller said in addition to the expansion into LeaderCare issues, the recreation program will increase the number of its contract consultants in various locations across the Southern Baptist Convention.

Also, in 1997, RecLab, a week of intensive recreation leadership training, will be offered in two locations -- Lake Yale, Fla., Jan. 3-9, and Glorieta, N.M., Feb. 21-27.

Yessick came to the board in 1991 as coordinator for SBC programs support in church recreation. He had been an instructor in the department of recreation and leisure at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, and earlier was minister of activities at Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala. He earned the B.S. degree in education with a major in health and physical education at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa; the M.S. degree in education with a major in exercise physiology/wellness at Baylor University, Waco; and the M.R.E. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. He earned the Ph.D. degree in recreation and leisure, with a minor emphasis in health education, from the University of Utah. He is a member of the National Recreation and Parks Association and has completed the health promotion director course at the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research.

Garner came to the board from First Baptist Church, Minden, La., where he was minister of recreation nine years. Earlier, he was minister of youth at Westside Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and minister of youth and recreation at First Baptist Church, Texas City, Texas. He holds the B.S. degree in recreation from Mississippi College, Clinton, and the M.R.E. degree with an emphasis in recreation from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. He is a member of the National Recreation and Parks Association.

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(BP) photo (color, vertical) is posted in the SBCNet News Room under filename Tommy.JPG. Cutline filename is Tommy.TXT.

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