

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 14, 1969

FOR RELEASE AFTER NOON, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1969**SBC Membership Tops 11.3 Million;
Organizations Report Decreases**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Church membership in the Southern Baptist Convention increased to 11.3 million during 1968, the denomination's research and statistics department reported here in its annual report.

Although total church membership increased 189,503 over the 1967 membership figures, decreases were reported in Sunday School, Brotherhood (laymen's groups), and Woman's Missionary Union organization enrollments, and in the number of baptisms.

The statistics were based on reports from 34,295 churches affiliated with the nation's largest Protestant denomination. The number of churches was up 148 from the number reported last year.

The research and statistics department of the SBC Sunday School Board, which tabulated the report, estimated that churches affiliated with the SBC contain 43 per cent of the membership of all Baptist churches in the nation.

Ranked second, according to the estimate, was the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., said Martin Bradley, secretary of the department.

The number of churches increased by 148 over the 1967 report, but the increase was 50 less than the increase in 1967. A net increase was reported for cities of 10,000 or more population, but all location classifications of less than 10,000 population reported a net loss.

The number of baptisms (conversions) reported by SBC churches was 373,025. Although this is 5,912 less than the 1967 figure, it is one of the higher totals in recent years, Bradley reported.

Decreases were reported in enrollments of Sunday School, Brotherhood, and Woman's Missionary Union organizations. Music ministry enrollment increased for the third consecutive year.

Because of new reporting methods for Training Union (church training) enrollment and necessary validation of these figures, enrollment for Training Union will be reported separately at a later date, Bradley said.

Sunday School enrollment dropped by 33,690 to a new total of 7,545,513. This represents the fourth consecutive annual decrease after 22 consecutive years of increase.

Vacation Bible School enrollment totaled 3,227,705, a drop of 212,620. The decrease in the number of schools conducted was 1,872 to a total of 28,829.

The Brotherhood (men and boys' missions organization) had an enrollment of 448,738, a decrease of 9,032.

Woman's Missionary Union (missions organization for women and girls) reported an enrollment of 1,407,673, a decrease of 36,791.

Music ministry enrollment continued to increase, but not as rapidly as last year. An increase of 19,160 brought its total to 1,038,290. The amount of increase was 54,966 less than the 74,126 increase for 1967.

Giving by Southern Baptists continued upward. Total tithes, offerings, and special gifts amounted to \$761,898,138, up more than \$50 million.

Contributions to missions increased more than \$7 million to a new record of \$128,025,859.

Tithes, offerings and special gifts averaged \$67.23 per member. Missions gifts showed a total of \$11.30 per church member.

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Property value of churches increased, but construction decreased. Property value climbed to \$3,657,097,050, an increase of \$162 million.

The amount spent on construction of local churches and missions decreased by \$25 million to \$129,976,060. Local mission construction costs were \$4,268,246, a decrease of \$2 million.

More than 10,000 churches reported that their pastors have other jobs, either full or part-time, apart from their churches. Full-time employment of this type was reported as 7,320; part-time, 3,000.

The statistics reflect only those figures reported by the churches, with no adjustments made for incomplete reports, Bradley said. He added that the reports were carefully edited and requests were made to churches for verifications and correction of questionable items.

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Summary of 1968 Southern Baptist Convention Statistics

	<u>1968</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>Numerical change</u>	<u>Percent change</u>
Associations	1,196	1,187	9	.8
Churches	34,295	34,147	148	0.4
Baptisms	373,025	378,937	-5,912	-1.6
Additions by Letter	531,351	541,391	-10,040	-1.9
Total Membership	11,332,229	11,142,726	189,503	1.7
Sunday School				
Enrollment	7,545,513	7,579,203	-33,690	-0.4
Vacation Bible School				
Enrollment	3,227,705	3,439,325	-212,620	-6.2
Brotherhood Enrollment	448,738	457,770	-9,032	-2.0
Woman's Missionary Union				
Enrollment	1,407,673**	1,444,464	-36,791	-2.5
Music Ministry Enrollment	1,038,290	1,019,130	19,160	1.9
Tithes, Offerings, Special gifts	\$ 761,898,138	\$ 711,775,365	\$ 50,122,773	7.0
Mission Expenditures	\$ 128,025,859	\$ 120,454,869	\$ 7,570,990	6.3
Per Capita Tithes, Offerings, Special Gifts	\$ 67.23	\$ 63.88	\$ 3.35	5.2
Per Capita Mission Expenditures	\$ 11.30	\$ 10.81	\$.49	4.5
Church Property Value	\$3,657,097,050	\$3,495,020,717	\$162,076,333	4.6
New Construction,				
Local Church	\$ 129,976,060	\$ 155,209,065	-\$ 25,233,005	-16.3
New Construction, Local Church Mission	\$ 4,268,246	\$ 6,482,565	-\$ 2,214,319	-34.2

**Includes hospital and campus YWA's in addition to statistics for churches.

Union Prof Tells Students:
Find It, And Do Your Thing

WAKE FOREST, N. C. (BP)--"If you are a human being, you are good for something. Man, find out what it is and do your thing," a professor at Union Theological Seminary told more than 350 Baptist students here.

George Webber, author, professor and minister from New York City, urged the students attending the Student Conference on Mission and Ministry at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here:

"Take off your masks so people can love you for yourself. Get with another's burdens. Self pity is out."

Webber added that Christians should show others God's love. "There is no point in telling people what God has done unless they can see, hear, taste, smell and feel it."

A minister of the East Harlem Parish in New York City, Webber decried dehumanization in the cities.

Relating some of his experiences in a rehabilitation center for drug addicts, Webber said when he asked what they were trying to do, he was told, "We are trying to make new human beings." Then he replied, "Why, that's my ball game, and the church's."

To play this game, he gave four rules: (1) to love your neighbor, (2) to speak the truth in love, (3) to bear one another's burdens, and (4) to be true to the gospel.

In another major address, Walker L. Knight, editor of Home Missions magazine in Atlanta, said that man seems to have an insatiable desire to be more than human, seeing himself as possessing a measure of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence--qualities which man has attributed to God.

"Why have we limited our quest to be God-like to these qualities that man has ascribed to God, and not to those qualities which God gives to himself?" Knight asked.

Suggesting that Christians should follow the example of Christ's humanity, Knight said that Christ characterized God as "Father"--a father who loves, for God is love--and gave to man the example of servanthood and suffering in faithfulness to God's will.

"Let us search for God-like qualities of the spirit and character and we may achieve, not diety, but authentic humanity," the Baptist editor said.

In addition to major addresses, the conference featured lively discussion periods, refreshments and recreation, special interest seminars and conferences on missions.

A special feature was a "Christian Celebration" which included a worship service in the modern mood of electronic sounds, slogan banners, drama, confession in dialogue, guitar and drums, trumpet and organ, pantomime, and folk participation.

The 350 students attending the conference came mostly from the eastern seaboard states from Maryland to Florida.



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