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SBC Cooperative Program Gifts Increase 7.32 Per Cent in 1971

NASHVILLE (BP)--Contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget during 1971 exceeded 1970 gifts by 7.32 per cent, enough to meet the denomination's \$29.1 million operating budget and pay \$823,644 on capital needs for SBC agencies.

During 1971, Southern Baptists gave \$29,970,527 through their Cooperative Program unified budget, plus an additional \$23,791,181 in designated gifts to specific mission causes.

The grand total of \$53.7 million in mission contributions exceeded last year's \$50.2 million by more than \$3.5 million, or 7.03 per cent.

Despite the 7.32 per cent increase in Cooperative Program giving, the denomination fell short of its total budget needs by \$1.2 million, all of it in the capital needs section of the budget.

SBC leaders, however, said they were encouraged by the response.

Porter W. Routh, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee which prepares the financial reports and distributes the mission gifts to SBC agencies, called the increase in giving over 1970 levels "good news for the new year."

"This 7.32 per cent increase, compared with a 1.79 per cent increase in 1970 over 1969, shows a response to the challenge of advance on the part of Southern Baptists which is most heartening," Routh said.

He added the "good news" would bring encouragement to home and foreign missionaries, seminary professors and students, and to other SBC program leaders who "seek to help the churches in their objective of bringing men to God through Jesus Christ."

John H. Williams, financial planning secretary for the SBC executive committee, observed that while other major Protestant denominations are facing decreases in financial giving, Southern Baptists should be encouraged as a denomination as they look to 1972.

Both Williams and Routh acknowledged that while the total gifts were not sufficient to meet all the 1971 budget in the capital needs section, the contributions were sufficient to pay more on capital needs than they had anticipated earlier in the year.

Because 1970 Cooperative Program contributions increased only 1.79 per cent, the denomination was unable to pay \$932,937 on capital needs due in 1970, automatically adding that amount to the \$1,050,000 already budgeted for capital needs in 1971.

Routh said last year that in order to meet the total \$29.1 million operating budget plus the \$932,927 on capital needs due in 1970 and the \$1,050,000 on 1971 capital needs, Cooperative Program gifts for 1971 would have had to increase 11.89 per cent during 1971. When the books closed Dec. 31, the actual increase was 7.32 per cent.

The \$29.9 million given in 1971 was short of the total budget by \$1,240,282, an amount which will automatically be added on to the 1972 budget.

The increase in 1971 contributions will actually reduce the 1972 budget, since the convention in St. Louis last June approved a 1972 budget based on projections which indicated the denomination would not be able to pay anything on the 1970 and 1971 capital needs.

The 1972 budget as approved by the convention calls for the same level on operating budgets as the 1971 budget, plus the \$932,927 capital needs for 1970, the \$1,050,000 in 1971 capital needs, and \$787,500 in 1972 capital needs. Since 1971 contributions paid \$823,644 on capital needs, the 1972 budget automatically will be readjusted downward by that amount.

The budget for the nine-month period, January through September, 1972, would thus be as follows: \$21,860,162 for operating needs; \$109,282 for 1970 capital needs balance; \$1,050,000 for 1971 capital needs; and \$787,500 for 1972 capital needs.

Routh, in a letter to executive secretaries of state Baptist conventions and editors of their publications, wrote that the 7.32 per cent increase for 1971 could mean that all the 1970 and 1971 capital needs and a substantial part of the capital funds due in the first nine months of 1972 can be paid, "if Southern Baptists continue to give as God prospers them."

Routh expressed appreciation to every layman and woman, pastor, associational superintendent of missions, state secretary, editor and program leader for their roles in helping to increase the Cooperative Program gifts during the past year.

Williams attributed much of the year's increase to an "excellent" month of giving in December, 1971, with \$2,598,801 in Cooperative Program gifts during the month. The December 1971 contributions were larger than any previous December in SBC history, and increased 27.27 per cent over December 1970 gifts of \$2 million.

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Liberia Inaugurates Baptist
Minister as New President

1/4/72

MONROVIA, Liberia (BP)--William R. Tolbert, an ordained Baptist minister and former president of the Baptist World Alliance, was inaugurated formally as the president of the Republic of Liberia.

The new president included in his hour-long inaugural address a prayer that the nation would be led "forever onward and upward." After the prayer, he prostrated himself for 15 seconds on the bright red carpet as a gesture of reverence.

He promised his countrymen a program of social improvement, self-discipline in government spending, and a new role for youth.

Tolbert, age 58, became president on the death of President William V. S. Tubman in July 1971. For 19 years prior to that, Tolbert had been vice president of the country.

After his first five months in office, Tolbert was praised by much of the world press for initiating reforms to help the masses of Liberia's population and to rid the government of corruption.

An Associated Press report by Larry Heinzerling from Monrovia said Tolbert's inauguration "promises a radical break from Liberia's autocratic past," and observed that the Baptist minister has "used the presidential pulpit to reshape the destiny of Liberia's 1.6 million people with political finesse and action."

Tolbert has fired two of the "most hated officers" in the "once vigilant secret police" which has "disappeared from view," according to the AP account. He also has dismissed a cabinet undersecretary for "corruption" and abolished a forced patronage system requiring all government employees to donate one month's salary a year to the True Whig political party.

Seeking grass roots support, Tolbert recently tramped through ankle-deep mud to inspect living conditions in one of Monrovia's worst slums. He spent the night there because as he told residents, "I want you to know that I identify myself with you," according to the AP account.

Much of his political action stems from his religious convictions, according to friends in the Baptist World Alliance who know him well.

Tolbert was president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1965-70, and vice president of the alliance from 1960-65. He also has been pastor of two Baptist churches in Liberia, the Zion Praise congregation at Bensonville and the Mount Sinai Church in the Todee district. In addition,

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he was elected president of the Liberian Baptist Missionary and Education Convention in 1958, and still held the post when he became Liberia's president last July.

During his inauguration, the ceremonies began with a Sunday afternoon worship service at the historic Providence Baptist Church, established in 1821 by freed American slaves from South Carolina as they founded the new nation of Liberia.

Evangelist Billy Graham, also a Southern Baptist and a close personal friend of Tolbert's, led a service of thanksgiving and prayer at the church, saying Liberia may never become a military or economic super power, but praying that under its new leader, Liberia would become "a spiritual super power that will show nations of the world the way to peace and prosperity through the transformation of the human heart."

In addition to Graham, several Southern Baptist missionaries to Liberia, a Baptist pastor from New Orleans, and the secretary for Africa of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board attended the inauguration.

There are 39 Southern Baptist foreign missionaries serving in Liberia. Southern Baptists began missions work there in 1960. A SBC mission board official said that Tolbert was the primary instrument bringing the Baptist missionaries to Liberia.

H Cornell Goerner, secretary for Africa of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, attended the inauguration. Goerner had been decorated and honored several years ago by President Tubman. G. Avery Lee, pastor of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, accompanied the Grambling College band and choir to the inauguration.

After Tolbert took the oath of office from his brother, Senator Frank Tolbert, he bent down and kissed a large, well-worn family Bible. Thus he became the 19th president of Africa's oldest republic.



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