

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 21, 1972

SBC Membership Tops 11.8 Million,
Significant Increase in Baptisms

NASHVILLE (BP)--Church membership in the Southern Baptist Convention increased to a total of 11,826,463 during 1971, the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board reported here in a presentation before the SBC Executive Committee.

Total church membership increased 196,583 more than the 1970 totals. Decreases were reported in Sunday School, Training Union and Woman's Missionary Union organization enrollments.

Statistics were based on a total of 34,441 churches affiliated with the nation's largest Protestant denomination. The number of churches was increased by 81 from the number reported last year.

An increase of 231 churches occurred in cities with 50,000 or more population. In contrast, a decrease of 567 churches was reported in open country and rural areas, the report disclosed.

The number of baptisms (conversions) reported by SBC churches was 409,659, an increase of 40,796 from the 1970 figure and third highest total ever recorded. The peak year for baptisms was 1959, when 429,063 were reported, said Martin Bradley, manager, research services department.

Sunday School enrollment dropped by 129,370 to 7,141,453. The all-time high was 7,671,165 in 1964.

The Brotherhood (men and boys' organizations) had an enrollment of 451,538, an increase of 29,011. Contributing to the change was a shift of six to eight year old boys to the Brotherhood organization from Woman's Missionary Union.

Training Union ongoing enrollment totaled 2,106,855, dropping by 121,362 from the 1970 figure.

Enrollment reported for Woman's Missionary Union (women and girls) decreased by 62,227 to a total of 1,137,586. The shift of six to eight year old boys from the WMU Sunbeam organization to the Brotherhood was a strong factor in the decrease, Bradley said.

Church music enrollment increased 64,615, reaching a new high of 1,088,980.

Giving by Southern Baptists continued to increase. Total tithes, offerings and special gifts reached a total of \$935,044,620, an increase of 77,945,931.

Contributions to missions increased \$9,632,519, for a total of \$160,546,250.

(MORE)

DARGAN-CARVER LIBRARY
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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Summary of 1971 Southern Baptist Convention Statistics

	<u>1971</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>Numerical Change</u>	<u>Per Cent Change</u>
Churches	34,441	34,360	81	0.2
Baptisms	409,659	368,863	40,796	11.1
Additions by letter	497,338	498,043	-705	-0.1
Total membership	11,826,463	11,629,880	196,583	1.7
Sunday School enrollment	7,141,453	7,270,823 ²	-129,370	-1.8
Training Union enrollment	2,106,855	2,228,217	-121,362	-5.4
Brotherhood enrollment	451,538	422,527 ³	29,011	6.9
WMU enrollment	1,137,586	1,199,813 ³	-62,227	-5.2
Church Music enrollment	1,088,980	1,024,365 ²	64,615	6.3
Total receipts ¹	\$975,272,939	\$892,255,918	\$83,017,021	9.3
Total gifts ⁴	\$935,044,620	\$857,098,689	\$77,945,931	9.1
Total mission gifts	\$160,546,250	\$150,913,731 ²	\$9,632,519	6.4
Per capita mission gifts	\$13.58	\$12.98 ²	\$0.66	5.1
Church property value	\$4,307,682,773	\$4,127,738,253	\$179,944,520	4.4

¹Includes income from fees, rentals, etc.

²Because of changes for 1971 in what comprises some totals, certain 1970 totals were adjusted to obtain figures comparable in makeup with 1971 totals (e.g., the 1970 ongoing Sunday School enrollment included Fellowship Bible Classes but the 1971 total did not). The three adjustments to the 1970 totals were: (1) for Sunday School, Fellowship Bible Classes enrollment was subtracted; (2) for Church Music, Vocal Ensembles, Band or Orchestra, Instrument Ensembles, and Handbell Ringers enrollments were subtracted; and (3) Local Mission Expenditures were added to Mission Expenditures. Per cent and numerical changes (shown above) for the three items are computed on the basis of adjusted totals.

³The decrease in WMU enrollment and increase in Brotherhood enrollment is believed to partly reflect a shift of boys 6-8 years of age from WMU "Sunbeams" to Brotherhood "Crusaders" as a result of the New Grouping/Grading Plan.

⁴Includes tithes, offerings, and special gifts other than money.

Southern Baptist Chaplain
Awarded Washington Medal

ATLANTA (BP)--Lt. James H. Rutherford, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve, was awarded the Freedoms Foundation Valley Forge Patriots Award in the armed forces essay category.

Rutherford was presented a George Washington honor medal and \$100 during special ceremonies Monday (Feb. 21) in Valley Forge, Pa. He received the award as a result of his essay, "What Is an American?"

An ordained Southern Baptist minister, Rutherford was commissioned as a chaplain in 1966. A native of Mobile, Ala., he is a graduate of Samford University, Birmingham, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a former pastor of Amanda Baptist Church in Middletown, Ohio.

After receiving his commission in the Navy in 1966, Chaplain Rutherford served in the Military Sea Transportation Service, Brooklyn, N.Y., and with the Third Marine Division Fleet Marine Force, Vietnam, where he received the Bronze Star medal. He is now stationed on the Amphibious Transport Dock USS LaSalle.

-30-

Students Pick Oranges
To Raise Library Funds

2/21/72

ABILENE, Tex. (BP)--Oranges from the lower Rio Grande Valley in South Texas are playing a vital role in the construction of a new \$1.5 million library at Hardin-Simmons University here in West Texas.

About 50 students and 10 staff members of the Baptist school here spent the weekend in Mission, Tex., about 500 miles south of Abilene, picking oranges at an orange grove owned by the school and maintained by Ralph Antilley, an area farmer and "close friend of the university."

The oranges were taken back to Abilene, and each person who pledged \$1 or more was given a bag of the fresh citrus. A person making a pledge of \$5 or more was given a 40-pound box of oranges.

In less than a week, the students raised \$9,000 for the library. Following homecoming weekend at the school, there was one box of oranges remaining, and school officials expected it to go quickly.

The students and staff members alike donned work clothes and trudged through the plowed citrus grove near Mission to pick more than 10-1/2 tons of oranges during the weekend.

Student Body President Nat Hass of Darrington, Wash., explained that the students, all volunteers, made the 500 mile trip from Abilene to Mission in a caravan of 11 vehicles. It took a 40-foot van to haul the oranges back to Abilene.

Hass said the school had no trouble in finding enough volunteers for the project. "We were going to sign up volunteers on the campus for two days, but by the end of three hours, we had too many," he said.

Many of the students had never seen a citrus tree before. "We teased some of the kids on the way down, telling them that oranges grew under the ground like peanuts," said Pam Hicks, a pretty 18-year-old sophomore from Dallas.

Hass said university officials agreed that the orange picking trip might become an annual event since the university owns the groves.

"Maybe if the students can get the library project going, the adults will see our enthusiasm and get behind the drive for funds," said Mike McKinney of Knox City, Tex., president of the Baptist Student Union on the campus.

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