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September 21, 1972

Crossing Barriers Characterizes SBC National Mission Strategy

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board released here its broad planning base for a national missions strategy in a document characterized by the crossing of barriers "to make disciples for Christ."

The agency's executive secretary, Arthur B. Rutledge, made the announcement to a meeting of state Baptist editors at the board's national offices.

Barriers listed in the long range planning base included cultural-religious, social-economic, geographical, and scarce resources.

The document addressed it self to ministering to people of highly secularized lifestyles, overcoming distrust and hostility, recognizing the contribution of other Christian groups, developing the promoting techniques for direct engagement in social and moral problems, as well as developing coordinated strategies and prodecures in such basic areas as church extension, metropolitan missions and evangelism.

Rutledge said the Home Mission Board, which employs 2,250 missionaries and spends more than \$15 million annually, is moving toward a stronger implementation of the development and promotion of a single, uniform missions program in the nation.

He said the over arching purpose of this program is "to assist churches, associations, and state conventions in crossing barriers to make disciples for Christ of all people in the homeland."

According to Rutledge, the concept of crossing barriers has been around for some time, but only now has it surfaced in official statements.

"The mission agency was created by the churches to cross barriers that are very difficult for a single church to cross, or sometimes all the churches in a state without a national organization," he said.

Rutledge has directed the mission agency for seven years, and before assuming its top executive position, he was director of the board's Division of Missions.

Under his leadership, the agency has moved by degrees toward the creation of an organization and the techniques which would produce a clearly defined national strategy. At the same time, he has led toward the needed correlation between the state Baptist units to implement the strategy.

When director of missions, Rutledge became the architect of formal state agreements, which eliminated duplicating mission programs in the states and placed most of the 2,250 missionaries under joint employment and under local supervision.

Later, as head of the agency he strengthened the national staff in their roles as specialists and as developers of a national strategy.

Explaining the present emphasis on a national strategy, Rutledge said Southern Baptists have just now accumulated an adequate body of experience as a nationwide organization. Only since 1963 has the denomination had some of its more than 33,000 churches in all 50 states.

"This national experience has helped us see our weaknesses and our strengths," he added. "In addition, with the growth of our programs and the number of missionaries, we realized we were not correlating our own work.

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"Sometimes we looked like four or five different agencies with programs operating independently."

The work of the agency includes evangelism, church extension, language missions, Christian social ministries, church loans, chaplaincy, associational administration, work with National Baptists, interfaith witness, rural-urban missions, and metropolitan missions.

This need for correlation brought about a major reorganization of the agency two years ago, the first in 12 years, and "that's a long time with as much change as we have in our society," he said.

The reorganization grouped the departments and divisions of the agency into three sections "all programs went into one section, all supporting services into another, and a new section came into being for planning and coordination.

It is out of this new section that the national strategy is arising. "We had to develop a plan whereby we would not be making 'of-the-cuff' decisions," he said.

The new section provides coordinators for four regions of the nation, and these coordinators work primarily with leadership in the 33 state conventions and the program leadership of the agency in long range planning.

"This has facilitated the exchange of ideas," Rutledge said. "We don't have unilateral decisions anymore. They are funneled through a planning process.

"We are moving into planning much farther in advance than in the past. Within the next 12 months we will have the board outline for the period 1973-1979.

"Then year by year we will set annual goals to move toward that ultimate objective," Rutledge said.

Realizing that long range planning keeps you from moving quickly, "We are building in enough flexibility that when an opportunity comes to our attention that needs action within 30 days we should be able to take advantage of it," he said.

Rutledge hopes to keep the flexibility and creativity which has characterized the agency within recent years and has given rise to new techniques and methods in missions in resort areas, inner-cities, and with most of the nation's ethnic groups.

Agreeing that the new planning is basically a systematic way of establishing priorities, Rutledge said that geographically the number one priority will be the northeast because of the newness of the work, the huge population, and the responsiveness evident there to Baptist efforts. However, other areas are still close behind in priorities.

With the programs, he said top priority would be given to church extension, evangelism and social ministries.

In addition, he said there is a new demand for the services of the agency in the states where Southern Baptists are more established.

"With the population turnover that in the beginning catapulted us into a national posture, our southern cities have spiritual and moral problems and need help," he said. "We will provide this assistance in staff time and sharing of techniques or taking of survey, most of which do not call for financial assistance."

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Mission Leader Announces
Convocation Of Association

9/21/72

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Staffer Loyd Corder announced plans for a national convocation on the Baptist association in late spring 1974 at Ridgecrest, N.C., the only meeting of its kind to be held in this decade.

Corder, director of the board's division of associational services, said the purpose of the convocation is to arrive at common understandings on how associations can work better in the Southern Baptist framework of church and denominational relationships.

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The national convocation is sponsored by Southern Baptist convention agencies through the inter-agency council's coordinating committee. Staff work has been assigned to the Home Mission Board's associational services division.

Invited to attend the convocation, set for May 6 through 10, 1974, will be laymen, pastors, associational workers, and state and national convention leaders concerned with the association in Southern Baptist life.

"In pursuit of the convocation's purposes and aims, there will be 50 study groups, messages by prominent Baptist leaders on the work of the association, a series of simulated experiences designed to demonstrate the problems and problem-solving methods, training sessions, and a few promotional conferences, all relating to the association," he said.

Home Mission Board staffers in the association division will meet with state directors of missions in early December of this year to plan promotion of attendance for the convocation.

The last national meeting on the Baptist association was held in 1963 at Gulfshore Baptist Assembly in Mississippi.

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Home Mission Board Raises Loan Ceiling

ATLANTA (BP)--The ceiling on loans from the Southern Baptist home Mission Board for churches throughout the denomination was raised by \$50,000, which upped the loan ceiling from \$125,000 to \$175,000.

Robert H. Kilgore of Atlanta, director of the board's division of church loans, said the increase, effective immediately, is an effort to be more available to more churches throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

The church loans division assists churches with loans for the purchase of new or existing property, building extension, and remodeling.

Limitations set on loans remain the same, such as 20-year terms and interest rates. Interest rates change during the year and are dependent upon market conditions and what the agency has to pay for money it borrows.

In addition, Kilgore, said, the division has created a church site fund to assist churches in acquiring property for new work. Loans may be made up to \$40,000, which is interest free until the church begins to use the property or for two and one-half years, whichever ever comes first.

The division makes loans to Southern Baptist Churches and missions in all areas of the United States.

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