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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 30, 1972

**Rutledge Optimistic About  
Future U.S. Mission Goals**

ATLANTA (BP)--The directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board meeting here approved a detailed budget of \$16 million, named two new staff members, and heard their chief executive express a new optimism for national missions and the nation.

"I feel more optimistic about the work of this agency, and of Christianity in America and the world, than I have in many years," executive secretary-treasurer Arthur B. Rutledge said. "Some of the tensions we experienced a few years ago are practically non-existent now."

Rutledge said although progress in race relations leaves room for continuing improvement, there have been great changes for good since 1968, when the Southern Baptist Convention approved the significant "Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our Nation."

"The polarization between those believing in Christian social ministries and those strongly committed to evangelism has largely dissolved," he continued, "as it has become clear that social ministries are not antithetical to Christian evangelism but furnish another avenue for sharing our faith."

Although national election years have traditionally been considered to be difficult years for churches and spiritual concerns Rutledge said 1972 seems to have been a year of spiritual progress nationally.

"The national mood seems to be changing toward a sense of need to return to values which have their root in the religious foundation of our nation. There seems to be, indeed, a hunger for meaning, for purpose, for peace, which adds up to a hunger for God. There is a wide-spread and growing openness to the gospel and to Jesus Christ."

The 1973 budget, Rutledge said, calls for an increase of \$895,000 over 1972. The board's Mission Division various departments were allotted: \$1.4 million to Christian social ministries; \$1.9 million to church extension; \$2.9 million to language missions; \$170,000 to interfaith witness; \$446,000 to special mission ministries; and \$545,000 for work with National Baptists.

Other budgeted divisions include \$1.2 million to associational services; \$220,000 to chaplaincy; \$1.9 million to church loans; \$702,000 to evangelism; \$2.2 million, business services; \$770,000, communication; and \$287,000, personnel.

The tightened budgetary situation of recent years has kept the board's missionary force, which now stands at 2,208, at approximately the same level for the past four years. Rutledge said that "improved financial support through the 1972 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the brighter outlook for 1973 give promise of some increase just ahead."

The work of the 2,208 missionaries was reinforced by a student summer mission force of 1,002 including 350 who were sponsored by Baptist Student Unions. The special mission ministries department also assisted in bringing together more than 100 youth mission groups, mostly choirs, and fields needing their service.

A new Home Mission Board musical, "Joy" based on one such choir tour, will be released in January. With lyrics by board staffer Ed Seabough, and music by Bill Cates of Nashville, the musical was premiered during Home Mission weeks at Glorieta and Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Centers.

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The position of director of evangelism remained unfilled. A successor to the position vacated by Kenneth Chafin who left the board to become pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston, will be named in March, the next meeting of the entire board.

New staffers named at the fall meeting were Orrin D. Morris, formerly secretary of the board's department of planning service, as coordinator of region III of the planning and coordination section; and Jack H. Grisham of Mississippi as assistant secretary in the Christian social ministries department.

In an evangelistic thrust, Rutledge said more than 75,000 people across the nation had participated in lay witness schools, in addition to such schools in Europe. More than 3,000 have been qualified as teachers for such schools.

The Chaplaincy Division is emphasizing "operation denomination," an effort to strengthen communication between both military and civilian chaplains, church, association, and state convention leaders. A total of 848 full-time chaplains serve around the world.

"There are signs of revival within the churches," Rutledge said. "There are increasing resources in sight with which to move forward in missionary and evangelistic endeavors. God is at work in the world, and will work through all of us who will give him right of way."

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Mid-America Bible  
Conference Scheduled

11/30/72

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 4,000 persons are expected to attend the Mid-America Bible Conference at Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., March 26-29, 1973.

The meeting, a sequel to the nation-wide conferences held early in 1972 in Denver and Richmond, is sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville.

Principal speakers for the conference will be Jack R. Taylor of San Antonio, Ray F. Robbins of New Orleans, and James B. Henry of Nashville.

Taylor, pastor of the Castle Hills Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., will present four evening messages to adults on "The Spirit-Filled Life." He is the author of Key to Triumphant Living and its sequel, Much More, published by Broadman Press.

Robbins, professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La., will present three morning messages on "The Challenge to Maturity" from the book of Hebrews.

Henry, pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., will speak to young people in four evening messages on "The Spirit-Filled Life."

"Both Lord and Christ" is the theme of the Conference. The purpose is to lead Christians toward a deeper commitment to Jesus, the Lord and Christ and to challenge Christians to express their submission to the lordship of Jesus by becoming effectively involved in God's efforts to redeem men.

Individual conferences on Old and New Testament books of the Bible also will be offered.

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Australian Baptist Church  
Sponsors Youth Sex Breakfast

11/30/72

NEW SOUTH WALES, Australia (BP)--Anybody for a sex breakfast?

That was the opening paragraph of a story published by The Australian Baptist here reporting on an Australian Baptist church in the state of Victoria which sponsored such a meeting for its youth.

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"Now, now, before you get all uptight and write off a steaming letter to the editor about pornography on page eight," continued the story, "let me give you the facts."

The Australian Baptist went on to explain that the Blackburn church in Victoria had sponsored a Saturday morning conference on "love, courtship and marriage," which the teenagers had "modestly" nicknamed a "sex breakfast."

The church's newspaper, commenting on the conference, observed that "it has been beautiful to discuss topics that are normally warped by commercial and lustful interests."

The Australian Baptist added its own editorial comment about the conference: "It is refreshing to see that at least one church is endeavouring to present positive values, instead of merely fulminating from the pulpit."

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Mississippi Pastor, Teacher  
Added to Home Missions Staff

11/30/72

ATLANTA (BP)--Jack H. Grisham, a Mississippi pastor and teacher, was named assistant secretary in the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of Christian social ministries during the board's fall meeting here.

A native of Pontotoc, Miss., Grisham will specialize in ministries related to alcoholics, drug abusers, ex-prisoners and migratory workers. He will assume the Home Mission Board post Jan. 1.

Grisham's experience in the field of mental health where he has worked for the past two years will "bring an additional dimension to the department that is needed," said Paul Adkins, secretary of the board's department of Christian social ministries.

Adkins added that Grisham's academic background will "open doors and provide advantages" in the fields of alcoholic and drug abuse programs, and will strengthen the department's work with blacks, youth and the academic community.

The 28-year-old Grisham recently completed his doctor of philosophy degree at the University of Mississippi. He also holds degrees from Mississippi College, Clinton, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Recently, he has been an instructor in adolescent psychology and counselor-consultant to the Upward Bound program at the University of Mississippi.

He also has been pastor of Shady Grove Baptist Church, Magee, Miss.; and associate pastor of the Beargrass Negro Baptist Church, Louisville. He is one of the few white men in the denomination to serve as associate pastor of a black church.

He also taught at Mississippi Negro Baptist Seminary, and was associate director of clinical pastoral services for the regional mental health center in Oxford, Miss.

In Kentucky, Grisham was assistant director at Southfields Residential Group Treatment Center in Louisville, and chaplain-counselor at Daniel Boone Boy's Center for dependent and pre-delinquent boys in Burlington, Ky.

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SBC Home Mission Board  
Names Regional Coordinator

11/30/72

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board staffer Orrin D. Morris was named coordinator of region III of the board's planning and coordination section during the board's fall meeting here.

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Morris, formerly secretary of the board's department of planning service, will assist board staffers and state convention leaders in developing a comprehensive and uniform plan for mission strategy for states in mid-western United States including Texas, New Mexico and Colorado.

Morris is one of four regional coordinators for the nation.

A Nebraska native, Morris served as planning services head since last January. Previously he was associate secretary in the board's department of survey and special studies from 1963 to 1970.

Leonard G. Irwin, executive assistant to the executive secretary-treasurer and head of the planning and coordination section, said he has worked with Morris for 12 years, nine while at the board.

"Orrin Morris has experience in associational work, the pastorate, state missions, and nine years in survey and special studies. He certainly has shown himself outstanding in an ability to relate to people, a keen awareness, and a creativity in his work," Irwin said.

As a regional coordinator, Morris will help develop budgets, field ministries and long-range plans for mission strategy, and consult on state priorities, Irwin added. He also must be familiar with social, economic, demographic and religious trends of the region.

Before coming to the board, Morris was employed by the Mississippi Baptist Convention for two years in the area of survey work. Previously, he worked in Virginia with good-will centers, and was pastor of churches in Delacroix Island, La., and D'Lo, Miss.

He attended Bluefield College (Va.) and is a graduate of University of Richmond and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He completed additional studies at Emory University, Atlanta.

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SBC President Urges  
5,000 Home Missions Force

11/30/72

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Owen Cooper challenged Southern Baptists to raise a volunteer mission force of 5,000 and increase monetary gifts to its mission forces.

In a speech to the directors and personnel of the convention's Home Mission Board here, Cooper challenged the board to reverse a trend of a slow-down in Baptist growth during recent years.

Saying that Southern Baptists have decelerated their rate of growth in recent years, Cooper pointed out that "the great momentum Southern Baptists had in the 1950's and 60's has slowed down. This is not as it should be," he said. "There is a need for Southern Baptists to 'get growing' again."

Cooper, an industrialist from Yazoo City, Miss., noted that there has been a substantial decline in the rate of organizing new churches in the SBC.

Although in the decade of 1950-60, Southern Baptists increased in churches by 18.2 per cent, in the next decade the growth rate dropped to slightly more than one-third of the 1950's, he said.

While Southern Baptists were one of the few mainline denominations that could boast an increase in the number of churches from 1970-71, the increase was only one-fourth of one per cent, he said.

Cooper called for a renewed emphasis and an intensified program in organizing new churches. This, he said, can be accomplished by providing the convention's mission boards, home and foreign, with more funds to employ additional missionaries to assist in organizing new churches and provide additional pastoral support.

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"We have a total of 4,775 home and foreign missionaries," Cooper said of the SBC. "This number should soon increase to 5,000. It is my sincere belief that in five years time a properly developed and coordinated program could result in recruiting annually 5,000 additional volunteer workers to supplement the work being done by our home and foreign missionaries."

Much of the manpower force could come from the 80,000 Southern Baptists who reach retirement age each year, said Cooper, who will retire next year as president of the Mississippi and Coastal Chemical Corps. The 80,000 retirees annually include lay persons, retiring ministers, retirees from the military service, and persons who have attained financial independence, Cooper said.

He also suggested that persons should be recruited for volunteer mission work who retire from church staffs, seminaries, educational institutions, convention agencies and other related activities.

Cooper suggested that Baptists match the number of volunteer retirees, whom he estimated at around 2,400, with an equal number of student mission workers, who would work in summer months. Slightly more than 1,000 student workers presently work throughout the nation under the sponsorship of the SBC Home Mission Board.

He also urged that more consideration be given to making the student summer missionary program a "year-round" program. Summer workers have served in "year round" pilot programs in several situations throughout the nation.

Records indicate that a very small increase has come to the board, Cooper continued, from the Cooperative Program allotments during the past five years. Approximately half of the support of the board comes from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions taken in the spring.

"The most hopeful source to provide immediate increased financial assistance to the Home Mission Board for expanding its work would be through the Annie Armstrong Offering. There is no question that there is money in the pockets of the people to get the job done," Cooper said.

Southern Baptists average only one dollar per person annually, in support of home missions, about 50 cents through the Cooperative Program and 50 cents through the Annie Armstrong offering, he said. Southern Baptists are potentially able, in the span of three short years, to increase the per capita giving through the Annie Armstrong offering from 50 cents to \$1 a year. The money is available," Cooper said.

"Somehow we must find ways to take the love of God into the Ghettos, into the high rise apartments, into the pockets of poverty, the intellectual community, scatter it among the poor, sow it among the affluent and plant it in the hearts of those who do not speak English," Cooper declared.

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Fire at Baptist Home for Aging  
Claims 9 Lives, Injures 30

11/30/72

ATLANTA (BP)--Fire swept across the seventh floor of a Baptist home for the aging here, killing nine elderly residents and injuring more than 30 others.

The early morning blaze forced evacuation of more than 300 residents of the Baptist Towers in Southwest Atlanta.

Baptist Towers opened only last April under the sponsorship of a non-profit corporation formed by six Southern Baptist churches in southwest Atlanta and the suburb of East Point.

Cause of the fire was not immediately known, although Fire Marshall Jim Seagraves pinpointed the source of the blaze as room 710 of the 11-story concrete structure. There was some speculation the woman who lived in room 710, who died in the inferno, might have been smoking in bed.

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Several of the eight others who died apparently panicked or suffered smoke inhalation. Most of the nine bodies were discovered in hallways, according to an Associated Press report. Names of the dead were not immediately released.

More than 30 persons were rushed to Atlanta hospitals from injuries, mostly smoke inhalation and falls suffered when several of the elderly residents panicked.

Firemen reportedly rescued more than 50 persons trapped by the fire, not including those who escaped on their own.

Christian Index Associate Editor Robert LaFavor reported that 10 of the firemen fighting the blaze had mothers who were living in the Baptist-owned home.

At least 18 fire-fighting units rushed to the scene after a seven-alarm alert, which started at 2:15 a.m., Nov. 30.

Flames were completely confined to the seventh floor of the concrete structure. Floors above and below were filled with smoke, but there was no fire damage.

No estimate was immediately available on extent of damage financially. Initial cost of the building was estimated at \$4.5 million.

About 325 residents lived in the Baptist Towers, which had opened last April, according to George M. Snow, the manager.

Six churches formed the non-profit corporation, Baptist Towers, Inc., to build the home with federal financing. Four of the churches were in East Point, a suburb of Atlanta.

Sponsoring churches included the East Point First Baptist Church, Jefferson Avenue Baptist Church, Dogwood Hills Baptist Church, and Connally Avenue Baptist Church, all of East Point; the Beecher Hills Baptist Church of Atlanta; and the First Baptist Church, College Park.

Initial news reports on the fire prompted some to confuse the home with the Peachtree on Peachtree Inn, a home for the aging in downtown Atlanta owned by the Georgia Baptist Convention.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Baptist Press will carry a full report on extent of damage and the human pathos of the tragedy on Friday, Dec. 1. This brief initial story is for those publications with early deadlines.

