



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
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December 6, 1972

Most Baptisms, 12 Million Members,  
Billion Dollar Gifts Projected in SBC

**NASHVILLE (BP)**--Statistical projections from reports for 26,337 Southern Baptist Churches indicate that the denomination in 1972 will pass the 12 million mark in church membership, the one billion dollar mark in total receipts, and will set a record in number of baptisms.

Increases are expected in baptisms, church membership, Sunday School enrolment, church music enrolment, mission expenditures, and total financial receipts.

Decreases are predicted in Training Union enrolment, WMU enrolment, and Brotherhood enrolment.

The figures, according to Martin B. Bradley, secretary of the research services department for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here, should be "very close" to the final official figures which will be released in February, 1973.

Baptisms increased by 43,014, over the 1971 total. The estimated 1972 total of 452,673 is an all-time high for Southern Baptists, exceeding the previous high of 429,063 reached in 1959.

If the projections are accurate, it will mark the second year in a row that baptisms in the SBC have increased more than 40,000, making the total increase in baptisms for the last two years more than 80,000, Bradley noted.

Church membership is expected to reach the 12,051,166 mark, reflecting a gain of 224,703 members, Bradley said. The increase was seen in churches of all sizes and locations, but was greatest in towns and cities, except for the largest churches in the cities. These had the least membership gains.

In educational organizations, Sunday School gained 42,849 for a total enrolment of 7,184,302--the first gain in enrolment since 1964.

Church music enrolment continued its pattern of increase, with an 8.5 per cent rise over last year. The new enrolment for music organizations is 1,181,543, a gain of 92,563.

Training Union enrolment continued to decline, although at a slower rate than last year, Bradley said. There was a loss of 50,565 members, a 2.4 per cent loss compared with a loss of 5.4 per cent last year. Total 1972 enrolment is projected to be 2,056,290.

Woman's Missionary Union enrolment dropped 15,926, or 1.4 per cent, a smaller loss than the 5.2 per cent loss last year. Total enrolment this year is expected to be 1,121,660.

Brotherhood declined a total of 903 persons in total enrolment, to 450,635. Last year's decline was 6.9 per cent, while this year's was only 0.2 per cent.

Mission expenditures showed an increase of 9.2 per cent, to \$175,316,505, while total receipts were up 10.6 per cent, to \$1,078,651,871 mark. The total figure includes some miscellaneous income, but the total gifts from members should easily surpass the billion dollar mark, according to Bradley.

An increase in baptisms was reported for churches of all size groups in all locations.

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As a group, churches in cities (other than new churches) showed hardly any increase in Sunday School enrolment, but more churches in other categories showed modest increases this year than last year.

Training Union membership increased slightly in open country churches, even though fewer churches reported an enrolment increase in that group along with churches in other locations.

In church music, there was a sizeable increase in enrolment and churches reporting enrolment in all size and location groups, with the greatest gains in open country churches.

There were increases in open country and village churches in WMU enrolment, but decreases in the larger churches in towns and cities more than offset these increases.

Brotherhood losses in some town churches and city churches with 300 members and up were offset by general gains in the open country, village, and smaller churches in towns.

Financial increases were fairly uniform across all size and location groups, with open country churches reporting the largest gains in total receipts.

The preliminary figures were arrived at by the research services department by computing the actual figures from 26,337 churches, then projecting through statistical means the expected reports from the remaining churches, based on their 1971 reports.

Weighting factors were added to give an acceptable degree of accuracy to these projected figures for planning and decision-making purposes in the denomination, according to Bradley. (Prepared by BSSB Bureau)

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"13th Checks" Top  
\$1 Million Mark

12/6/72

DALLAS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board here went over \$1 million for the first time in writing "13th checks" for 6,792 retired pastors and church and denominational workers.

Board President Darold H. Morgan reported total payment as \$1,004,277.

He said the payment is called "13th check" since it is given in addition to 12 regular monthly checks. The "13th check," however, actually equalled about two regular monthly payments, so that annuitants received what amounted to 14 months' income in a year, Morgan said.

The "13th check" is made possible year by year because of "good experience" on returns from invested funds, Morgan said.

Although no "13th check" is guaranteed, the board has been writing them every year since 1967. The checks help annuitants, whose payments are for a fixed amount based on contract, overcome effects of the rising cost of living.

The same "good experience" on investment income enabled the Annuity Board to credit 10 per cent to retirement funds being built up by 20,000 pastors and church and denominational workers still in active service. The good experience credit, effective Jan. 1, 1973, was announced earlier by the board.

The board also sent its usual Christmas-time gift to 392 persons who receive relief funds. These gifts totaled \$29,475, according to Morgan.

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Criswell Bible Institute  
Offers College Credit Plan

DALLAS (BP)--Criswell Bible Institute, sponsored by the 17,000 member First Baptist Church here, will begin a special "three-two program" to encourage its graduates to complete a college education.

The program, according to H. Leo Eddleman, institute president, will allow a student to abstract two years of credit from the institute's three-year program and transfer them to an accredited undergraduate school to count toward a four-year bachelor's degree with a major in Bible or religion.

"The Criswell Bible institute will primarily reach the most neglected segment of Baptist pastors--those who have not finished college and cannot to go seminary," Eddleman said. "We will basically offer courses taught in seminary but will not compete with seminaries for students," he said.

Eddleman, former president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said the institute is seeking accreditation which will make the three-two possible.

He said the school, which has had night classes only, is converting to a full daytime schedule and adding two fulltime professors besides himself and three part-time professors.

Eddleman said all institute professors, including daytime faculty and some 16 part-time evening school faculty, have one or more earned doctor's degrees.



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