



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
Telephone (615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-5461  
**RICHMOND** Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 344-4226

February 19, 1973

**SBC Tops 12 Million Members;  
Sets Baptism, Giving Record**

**NASHVILLE (BP)**--Southern Baptists in 1972 passed the 12 million mark in membership, set a record number of baptisms, and reached the billion dollar mark in total receipts.

The record year of growth was reflected in annual statistical tabulations compiled by the research services department of the Baptist Sunday School Board, and reported to the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee meeting here.

Church membership for the nation's largest evangelical body increased nearly a quarter of a million persons (240,821) over 1971 membership. The 1972 total membership was reported at 12,067,284.

The record number of baptisms (conversions) was 445,725, an increase of 36,066. It was the second year in a row the number of baptisms had increased. The new record exceeded by more than 16,000 the previous record for baptisms in one year, 429,063 in 1959.

In church organizations, Sunday School, church music and Brotherhood enrollments increased during 1972; while decreases were reported in Training Union and Women's Missionary Union enrollments.

Statistics were based on a total of 34,534 churches cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention. The number of churches increased by 93 from the 1971 report.

Sunday School enrollment totaled 7,177,651, an increase of 36,198 for the year. This signaled a turnaround for the organization, the first increase in seven years.

Church Music enrollment continued to increase with 84,024 added during 1972 to bring the total to 1,173,004.

The Brotherhood (men's and boys' organizations) had an enrollment of 454,272, an increase of 2,734, instead of a decrease as projected in December.

Training Union enrollment totaled 2,044,445, dropping by 62,410 from the 1971 figure.

Enrollment reported for Women's Missionary Union (women and girls) decreased 11,945 to total of 1,125,641.

Giving by Southern Baptists continued to increase. Total receipts reached \$1,071,512,302, passing the billion dollar mark for the first time, an increase of \$96,239,363.

Contributions to missions increased \$14,226,635 for a total of \$174,772,885.

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## Summary of 1972 Southern Baptist Convention Statistics

	<u>1972</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>Numerical Change</u>	<u>Per Cent Change</u>
Churches	34,534	34,441	+93	+0.3
Baptisms	445,725	409,659	+36,066	+8.8
Church membership	12,067,284	11,826,463	+240,821	+2.0
Ongoing Sunday School Enrollment	7,177,651	7,141,453	+36,198	+0.5
Ongoing Brotherhood Enrollment	454,272	451,538	+2,734	+0.6
Ongoing WMU Enrollment	1,125,641	1,137,586	-11,945	-1.0
Ongoing Church Music Enrollment	1,173,004	1,088,980	+84,024	+7.7
Ongoing Training Union Enrollment	2,044,445	2,106,855	-62,410	-3.0
Total Receipts	\$1,071,512,302	\$975,272,939	+96,239,363	+9.9
Total mission gifts	\$174,772,885	\$160,546,250	+\$14,226,635	+8.9

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Baptist Editors Protest  
Restrictions on Press Freedom

2/19/73

BILOXI, Miss. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Press Association meeting here adopted a resolution protesting any restrictions regarding freedom of the press, declaring that "the full and free sharing of information is essential for any self governing society."

The editors of Baptist state papers across the country noted that "there are warnings on the national horizon that restrict free flow of information."

The resolution came in a business session after which the editors selected L. H. Moore, editor of the Ohio Baptist Messenger, as their new president and named O. L. Bayless, editor of the Rocky Mountain Baptist, as president-elect. Al Shackelford of the Indiana Baptist was re-elected secretary-treasurer.

During their three-day annual session at the Sheraton Hotel here, the editors took a look at a wide range of issues and problems facing the SBC, including Christian education, denominational structures, social issues, theological education and world missions.

During the session dealing with social issues, Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the SBC Christian Life Commission reminded the editors that many Southern Baptists are becoming angry at those within the convention who agitate for action and press for social change.

Valentine said he felt his agency, the Christian Life Commission, was ordained of God to bear a prophetic message urging Baptists to apply Christianity to the problems of society. "Our ordainment, we fully understand, is not to polarize," he said.

"Our task is to convince our alienated bretheren who seek to turn the church away from the great issues of our time that if, indeed, we did turn away, the world would be impoverished and the church's whole life and work would be invalidated," Valentine said.

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Speaking from the viewpoint of a pastor, former Southern Baptist Convention President Wayne Dehoney told the editors what his church, Walnut Street Baptist Church of Louisville, had done in the area of social action, pointing out that never did he call it "social action," but rather "ministry" and "evangelism."

"The problem is often one of terminology," Dehoney said. "We found the laymen of our church ready and anxious to get involved with programs dealing with social problems, but we don't call it social action."

Dehoney recounted that when he came to the church five years ago as pastor, the congregation made a commitment to stay downtown and minister to the racially-changing community, and to build a fellowship of believers across racial, social and economic lines.

Their first step was to develop a ministry of social work, he noted. The church went five years without a minister of education, but they employed a minister of social work as a priority item.

"We've done all kinds of far out things," Dehoney said. Some of the approaches he listed included: a thrift shop with clothing at almost no cost for the poor; a food closet and commissary kept filled by church members who fill up dozens of barrels all over the church; a "help" office that refers people with problems to social agencies and individuals who can help them, a tutoring program, a recreation building to provide entertainment for the poor, a drug rehabilitation house, a bus ministry, and a television ministry in which Dehoney does a "hard sell" urging other Christians to come to the church and help them get involved with helping people.

Two approaches which have attracted national attention, he noted, included the church's role in establishing a Neighborhood Development Corp., and its support of a spin-off corporation which constructed Baptist Towers, a high rise home for the aging.

The Neighborhood Development Corp., he said, is sponsored by seven churches in the area and has built four high rise apartments in the area.

Dehoney said that the church was reaching and involving people in the racially mixed community, and that almost half of the persons baptized by the church this year are black. About 100 black people regularly attend Sunday School, and one half of the participants in the recreation program are black.

The church accepted its first black members when two young black men came forward during a revival meeting, saying they had been saved. They told the congregation they had made their living mugging and robbing people on the streets, but no longer would they live a life of crime. "There was hardly a dry eye in the house, and we haven't had a problem of race relations since," Dehoney said.

Later, in a dialogue session, Valentine said that churches located in racially mixed communities should not fear that black members would "take over the church" if they were welcomed as members. "They are not much interested in coming to our churches, and that is why we should not set up guards to keep them out."

The editors' meeting opened with a banquet in joint session with the executive secretaries of state conventions across the SBC, featuring an after-dinner address by J.D. Grey, recently retired pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"If we didn't have a free and unfettered press among us, I shudder to think of the mess the SBC would be in," Grey told the group.

"Most of you could have written on your epitaphs, 'He prodded a lot.'" Grey said. "I didn't say, 'plodded,' I said 'prodded,'" he quipped.

Commenting on the editors' courage to take a stand, Grey observed that "I'd rather a man say 'He put his foot in a lot of buckets,' than to say, 'He pussy-footed around and never would take a stand on anything.'"

A former editor of the California Southern Baptist, J. Terry Young, identified three major roles for the Baptist state paper editor--the role of the prophet, the role of the minister, and the role of the catalyst.

Urging the editors to deal with the issues of the "rough and tumble world," Young said he was tired of letting the pendulum be swung by radical groups. "It is time we Christians took a more positive, militant stand in trying to influence society and reaching those people who live out there on the ragged edges."

Young, now professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, added that in addition to urging people to action on issues, the state paper should play a "healing role," drawing the denomination together in times of conflict and polarization.

"Sometimes you need to weep over an editorial," he counseled. "Bombastic words may gain you plaudits from some, but carefully tailored words may get you more success in the goals you hope to achieve."

The editors voted to change the place of the Feb. 25-28, 1974 meeting from Washington, D.C., to Honolulu, Hawaii in order to meet with the state executive secretaries; and to meet in Mobile, Ala., Feb. 20-22, 1975.

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Moni Named Manager of  
San Antonio Book Store

2/19/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--Donald L. Moni, former shipping and receiving clerk at the Baptist Book Store in San Antonio, Tex., has recently been named manager of that store.

Moni has served as acting manager of the San Antonio store since Charles Lanningham, former store manager, was transferred to the Houston Baptist Book Store as manager in July, 1972.

A retired Air Force sergeant, Moni is presently working toward a degree in business administration at San Antonio Junior College. (Prepared by BSSB Bureau)

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#### CORRECTION

We goofed, and we're sorry. The Baptist Press story of Jan. 22, headlined: "Baptists Pray, Protest, Pass Out Cookies at Inauguration," incorrectly reported that two professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Henlee Barnett and Paul Simmons, participated in an anti-war demonstration in Washington during the inauguration of President Nixon. Neither professor was in Washington. Both were in Richmond, Va., at the time. We regret the inaccuracy and any embarrassment it may have caused.

--Baptist Press