



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) Gomer Lesch, 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) 544-4226

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SBC Executive Committee
Proposes \$35 Million Budget

NASHVILLE (BP)--A record Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program budget of \$35 million for 1973-74 cleared the SBC Executive Committee here after brief but spirited discussion.

The recommended budget, which represents an increase of almost \$2 million, or 6.8 per cent over the previous year, will go to the Southern Baptist Convention in Portland, Ore., in June for final consideration.

In other major actions, the 60-member Executive Committee voted to encourage SBC churches to share the expenses of lay persons attending the annual Southern Baptist Convention authorized a revised timetable for drafting the convention's proposed budget on a trial basis, and paid tribute to a retiring Texas Baptist executive.

Most of the three-day session was devoted to budget presentations from 18 agencies of the SBC requesting a total of \$36,371,241.

The \$35 million goal finally approved includes \$34 million for the operating funds of the 18 agencies, plus an additional \$1 million for capital needs.

The recommended budget would grant to the SBC Foreign Mission Board \$17,387,284, an increase of \$1,067,325. The six SBC seminaries would receive \$7,025,402, an increase of \$450,029; the Home Mission Board, \$6,225,915, a jump of \$400,952; and the Radio and Television Commission, \$1,581,098, a hike of \$108,254.

In terms of percentage of increase, the Executive Committee retained for operating purposes \$310,000, an increase of 24 per cent; and the SBC Stewardship Commission got \$163,096, an increase of 19 per cent.

Following brief but spirited discussion, only one change was made in the proposal made by the program subcommittee--an "advance" section was added to challenge Baptists to exceed the \$35 million goal.

A motion was approved overwhelmingly to recommend to the convention that any funds received about the \$35 million budget be divided in equal parts, one-third to foreign missions, one-third to home missions, and one-third to all other agencies at a rate the program subcommittee will determine.

An effort to amend the motion to increase the allocation to the SBC Brotherhood Commission by \$140,000 failed after short, spirited debate. Only about half a dozen committee members voiced approval of the amendment.

Norvell Jones, a chemical company executive from St. Louis, Mo., and chairman of the Executive's Committee's finance subcommittee, made the proposal for the increase and asked for the \$140,000 to be added to the total budget, increasing the total goal.

Chiding the Executive Committee for "having too little faith," Jones said the agency for Baptist men and boys needed "seed money" to motivate the lay persons in the pew to larger commitments in giving, and deeper involvement in missions and the denomination.

The program subcommittee had reached agreement on the budget proposal after five hours of discussions, and after hours of homework studying a 176-page book explaining the budget requests mailed to members a month earlier.

In formal presentations to the Executive Committee, Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, cited the need for increased funds to offset dollar devaluation in countries where SBC missionaries are on assignment, and to appoint another 250 new missionaries.

Seminary spokesmen pointed out low faculty salaries and poor average expenditures per student ratios in their request for funds.

During 1971-72, Baptists spent \$1,601 per seminary student, while American Baptists spent \$4,819 and Episcopalians spent \$5,681, the representatives said.

Among the needs cited by the Home Mission Board were 90 new language culture congregations the agency hopes to start, an expanded program of work with National Baptists, and an emphasis on establishing new churches and church-type missions.

Other allocations approved by the Executive Committee included: Annuity Board \$175,000, the same as last year; Southern Baptist Foundation, \$85,000, up \$3,400; American Baptist Seminary, \$95,000, same as last year; Christian Life Commission, \$223,734, up \$13,734; Education Commission, \$151,020, up \$9,270; Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, \$134,240, an increase of \$8,240; and the SBC Historical Commission, \$128,913, up \$7,913.

In another major action, the Executive Committee voted to begin next July on a trial basis a new process for proposing the annual budget which would call for hearings in September Executive Committee meeting for budget increases by the agencies, rather than in February under the current procedure.

In January, there would be additional meetings when agency executives and staff members could discuss in detail with the program subcommittee their budget requests. The final budget proposal would be finalized for recommendation to the convention in February.

In order to encourage greater lay participation in the annual convention, the Executive Committee voted to encourage churches to pay, or share, expenses of lay persons attending annual convention sessions, as well as the pastor.

Porter W. Routh, executive secretary of the Executive Committee, told the group that results of a survey of lay leadership in SBC churches had disclosed that financial assistance in going to the convention was a more important factor in determining their attendance than was the date of the convention. About 65 per cent said they would prefer the convention to start on Monday or Tuesday rather than sessions during a weekend, he said.

Four program statements changes were approved for recommendation to the convention, dealing with the work of the Seminary Extension Department, Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission, and Home Mission Board. A revised charter for the Radio-TV Commission was also approved.

The executive Committee also recommended the theme, "Let Christ's Freedom Ring," for SBC emphasis promotion during the years 1975-76, pending convention approval.

A resolution adopted by the Executive Committee expressed gratitude for the 50-year ministry of T.A. Patterson, who retires Dec. 31 as executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the SBC's largest state convention. Patterson has held the position for 13 years, the longest continuous term of service of any who have filled the Texas position.

In another action, the Executive Committee voted to recommend a SBC operating budget of \$666,000, an increase of \$68,000 over the 1972-73 budget.

Two long-range studies were approved, one authorizing consultants to conduct space utilization studies of agencies requesting capital funds, and another authorizing development of a new formula for allocation and distribution of Cooperative Program funds to the six seminaries.

Cooper Issues Challenge
On Cooperative Program

NASHVILLE (BP)--Pointing to the 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program unified budget plan in 1975, Southern Baptist Convention President Owen Cooper issued an impassioned plea for Baptists to renew their commitment to greater gains in the future through greater support of the Cooperative Program.

"I believe in the Cooperative Program as the best means known to Southern Baptists to channel their giving in a worldwide mission program of unprecedented magnitude," Cooper declared at a Cooperative Program luncheon held during the SBC Executive Committee meeting here.

He urged pastors in the 12 million member convention to reaffirm their faith in the Cooperative Program, deacons to lead their churches to increase their gifts to missions through the Cooperative Program, laymen to promote the denomination's unified budget plan supporting world missions, and all Baptists to more effectively personalize the Cooperative Program.

"The Cooperative Program is not perfect," he admitted, "but it is the best plan available to Southern Baptists, and until someone discovers a better idea we should not destroy what we have."

Cooper chided those in the denomination who would make caustic comments about the Cooperative Program, or resort to ridicule or destructive criticism. "Such remarks ill become the maker and reflect on the agency he represents," and "should not be tolerated," he added.

Though Cooper was strong and enthusiastic in his support of the Cooperative Program, he acknowledged that Southern Baptists have not done as well as they should in support of world missions through the unified budget plan.

"Southern Baptists have made acceptable but not noteworthy gains in the area of stewardship during the past decades," he said. "It is true that our total giving is up year after year," and that total gifts exceeded \$1 billion last year.

The percentage of total church contributions allocated to the Cooperative Program, however has remained relatively constant for the past 30 years, and in fact diminished slightly from 10.07 per cent in 1942 to 9.14 per cent in 1971, he said.

Likewise, Baptists are not keeping up with per capita giving increases, he said. Between 1963 and 1971, per capita income in the U.S. increased by 69 per cent; whereas per capita giving for Southern Baptist causes through the Cooperative Program increased by only 38 per cent from 1963 to 1972, he said.

If Baptists had kept up with the per capita giving increase nationally, the SBC would have had \$6.85 million more for Cooperative Program causes than it has.

"If we had just given 25 cents more through the Cooperative Program--25 cents per member you could meet all the agency requests" and do a lot more, he noted. Only a few hours before he spoke, 18 agencies of the SBC had requested a total of \$36.4 million for operating needs, but only \$34 million was expected to be available.

Cooper referred to the annual "financial allocation" session of the Executive Committee, saying there is understandable "competition" between each of the 18 agencies as to "how big a slice of the pie they get."

Cooper strongly disagreed with the concept that there is only a "fixed" amount of money available for all causes, and when you allocate funds for one cause, there is less money for other causes thus causing competition for the "fixed" amount of money.

"I believe that compared with the giving patterns we have had in the past there is a relatively unlimited amount of money available to Southern Baptist causes if Southern Baptists are properly informed, motivated and approached." There is a lot of extra money in the pockets of laymen, and they don't know what to do with it and the church is not telling them what to do with it, he argued.

The challenge to the churches, he said, is to magnify the biblical basis of stewardship--the tithe--and the challenge to SBC leaders is to increase the size of the Cooperative Program to provide more money for all.

It is my firm belief that in a church where the pastor believes in the Cooperative Program, where the deacons support it, where the laymen promote it, where the congregation is educated and knowledgeable of mission needs, and where the Cooperative Program is personalized, you will have a church that understands the Cooperative Program, that gives through the Cooperative Program, and that supports the Cooperative Program."

In addition to urging pastors, deacons and laymen to support and promote the Cooperative Program, he called for churches to vigorously educate each church generation concerning the Cooperative Program, saying the SBC is raising a generation of young people who don't know what the denomination's unified budget plan is or what it does.

He further called for more effective means of personalizing the Cooperative Program, communicating how it helps people ranging from Baptist College and seminary students, to victims of the ghetto, and to people around the world in need of the gospel.

Unfortunately, he said, there are 5,100 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention that make no contribution at all through the Cooperative Program, and there are 27,200 churches in the SBC that give 10 per cent or less to the Cooperative Program.

He told how his own church, First Baptist Church of Yazoo City, Miss., had increased its Cooperative Program giving by 800 per cent from 1950 to 1972. The church now gives 26.5 per cent of its total budget through the Cooperative Program.

On an average, members of the church gave \$4.44 each to Cooperative Program causes in 1950; whereas in 1972, the per capita giving to the Cooperative Program for the church was \$35.93. In 1972, the SBC-wide average per person for Cooperative Program giving was \$7.58.

Cooper concluded his remarks by referring to the 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program in 1975, saying it should be used for an occasion to recommit ourselves to the challenging task of informing all Baptists about mission support through the Cooperative Program.

"It should be an opportunity when we will strive to motivate Southern Baptists with a new zeal for mission giving and reaffirmation of their goals to make the Great Commission an accomplished reality in this generation," he told the 300 SBC leaders attending the luncheon.

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Open Hearing on Structure
Prompts Little Response

2/22/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--A committee assigned to study the total structure of the Southern Baptist Convention held an open hearing to allow any Southern Baptist to make suggestions for change but no one showed up with any specific proposals.

Two weeks earlier, the Committee of Fifteen, as the study committee is popularly called announced it would hold the open hearing "to provide a forum for any Southern Baptist to present ideas on the structure and organization of the convention."

When the meeting convened, there were 14 visitors who attended--all of them denominational workers or others who had attended sessions earlier in the day of the SBC Executive Committee.

Almost all said they came "just to hear" what might come up during the open forum.

One committee member expressed fear the visitors were "overly bashful" about expressing their opinions. "We hope you will communicate to others the spirit of openness that prevails in our committee, for we've really tried to listen, to hear, to seek opposing viewpoints concerning alternatives in our study."

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The committee pointed out they would still be open to receiving suggestions in writing from any who were unable to attend, and added that a few such communications had already been received.

E.W. Price Jr., pastor of Green Street Baptist Church in High Point, N.C., is chairman of the study committee.

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Morgan Predicts Government
Regulations on Pension Plans

2/22/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board predicted here government regulations will be enacted this year covering private pension plans, possibly including those offered by religious denominations.

Speaking to the SBC Executive Committee, Darold H. Morgan of Dallas said it was impossible to say yet what the nature and extent of such regulation would be.

He said failures in a number of private pension plans in industry and in labor unions has focused legislative attention on the need for regulation.

Since the Annuity Board, which offers retirement protection for SBC pastors and for church and denominational workers, is fully funded, it may be less affected by such regulation, Morgan continued.

"Fully funded" means the board holds sufficient funds in trust for its participants and annuitants to assure them of retirement income based on the amount of money they have contributed to a retirement program.

According to Morgan, the government will be primarily interested in "vesting" and "portability" of retirement plans.

"Vesting" means the person participating in a retirement plan has a right in the funds which are being put up in his name toward retirement, funds which will remain his throughout the future.

"Portability," according to the Annuity Board president, means a person changing places of employment carries his accruing pension rights with him as he moves from one job to another, and does not risk losing them by making a change.

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Bruce Whitfield Takes
New Book Store Position

2/22/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--Bruce K. Whitfield, manager of the Baptist Book Store at Greenville, S.C., has been named direct sales promotion specialist for the book store division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Whitfield will be responsible for developing and implementing merchandise plans for direct sales and will also coordinate the development of advertising pieces, book store officials said.

A native of Homer, Ga., Whitfield was graduated from Mercer University, Macon, Ga., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

During his 21 years with the Sunday School Board, Whitfield has served as an audiovisual aids worker and office supervisor at the Atlanta Baptist Book Store and as manager of the Greenville store. (Prepared by BSSB bureau)

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