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**Bus Ministry Grows  
From "Grass Roots"**

ATLANTA (BP)--More than 7,000 of the Southern Baptist Convention's 34,000 churches now have a bus ministry, William A. Powell, director of bus evangelism for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board said here.

"This is about 20 per cent of our churches, almost 20 times as many as there were two years ago," Powell said.

When the first Southern Baptist church bus evangelism clinic was held in February of 1971, there were only about 350 SBC churches with a bus ministry, Powell said. In 1971, these 350 churches had about 700 bus routes bringing 18,000 riders to church each Sunday.

Today, more than 500,000 riders are enrolled on 14,000 bus routes, Powell estimated.

"On an average Sunday morning, there are now about 350,000 people riding church buses to SBC churches," he said. "It is estimated that about 10 per cent of the people attending a Southern Baptist church next Sunday will ride a church bus."

In an editorial in the Texas Baptist state paper, the Baptist Standard, the editor wrote that the day would come when the Baptist church without a bus ministry would be as unique as a Baptist church without a baptistry.

"The unique thing about this ministry," said Powell, "is that it is a grassroots groundsell-- a ministry that has grown without promotion. It is moving so rapidly that we cannot predict how fast it will grow."

Last year Southern Baptists reported the highest number of baptisms in the history of the 127-year-old convention. Sunday School enrolment also increased, reversing a seven-year trend of declining enrolment.

"Part of this may be due to the bus ministries," Powell said.

The Home Mission Board Division of Evangelism, in cooperation with the Sunday School department of the Baptist Sunday School Board, assists churches in conducting church bus evangelism clinics throughout the nation through the "bus outreach" emphasis.

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**Astronaut Jim Irwin  
Suffers Heart Attack**

4/5/73

COLORADO SPRINGS (BP)--Apollo 15 Astronaut Jim Irwin, who retired from the space program last year to become an international Baptist lay evangelist, suffered an apparent heart attack here April 3 after a game of handball.

The 42 year-old former astronaut had just returned from a speaking engagement at Silvan Hills Baptist Church, Atlanta, and was playing handball when stricken.

He was rushed to Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver and placed under intensive care. Physicians were guarded in making official diagnoses until 72 hours had passed.

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They did tell W.H. Rittenhouse, Irwin's partner in the High Flight religious foundation he established last year, that Irwin would likely be in the hospital for six weeks and confined to his home for three months.

A spokesman for the hospital said Irwin was taken to the clinic at Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado Springs for observation after suffering chest pains before being rushed to Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver. A hospital bulletin said Irwin's vital signs were stable and he was resting well.

Two weeks earlier, Irwin had received a complete physical checkup, and his physician told him he was in better shape physically than he had been a year earlier.

Following his return from the Apollo 15 moon flight Aug. 1, 1971, Irwin, an Air Force Colonel, suffered "strange palpitations" of the heart.

On Aug. 1, 1972, Irwin retired from the Air Force and established High Flight as a means of sharing his religious experience while on the surface of the moon. He since has traveled throughout the world, seeking to share with all men everywhere the message that he "felt God's presence on the moon."

Irwin, an active member of Nassau Bay Baptist Church in Houston, teamed with Rittenhouse, then pastor of the Houston church, in organizing High Flight. At the time of Irwin's heart attack, Rittenhouse was leading a revival at Silvan Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta, where he had been pastor from 1959-62.

Irwin and Rittenhouse had made plans for a trip sponsored by High Flight throughout Europe, from May 9-June 9. The travel schedule would include England, Ireland, Scotland, Spain, Portugal, Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Last fall, Irwin travelled throughout the Orient on behalf of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, visiting Baptist missions work and heads of state in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand.

As a result of personal contact on the Vietnam trip, Mr. and Mrs. Irwin have just adopted a three-year-old Vietnamese orphan. They adopted the boy through World Vision after meeting him in a Vietnam orphans home. The boy's name, in Vietnamese, is "Cho" but the Irwins have renamed him "Joe" to become the fifth "J" among the Irwin children. The four other Irwin children are named Jimmy, Jan, Joy and Jill.

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SBC Cooperative Program  
Gifts Up At Halfway Point

4/5/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--Halfway through the 1973-74 fiscal year, contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget had increased by 7.6 per cent over gifts for the same period in 1971-72.

During the first six month of the 72-73 budget year, Southern Baptists had given \$16,897,674 through the Cooperative Program unified budget, an increase of almost \$1.2 million over contributions for the same period the previous year.

The mid-year financial report was released here by the SBC Executive Committee, which receives and distributes contributions from the 33 Baptist state conventions for the benefit of 19 agencies and organizations which receive SBC Cooperative Program support.

The financial report for the month of March, however, was down slightly compared to March of 1972.

During March 1973, Southern Baptists gave \$2.7 million through the Cooperative Program, virtually the same amount as for March, 1972. It was a decrease of \$3,279 or .12 per cent, not enough to substantially change the 7.6 per cent average for the year already on the books.

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In addition to the \$16.9 million given through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists have contributed \$19.2 million to specific world mission causes during the first six months of the fiscal year.

Designated gifts have increased by 11.42 per cent for the year, an even greater increase than Cooperative Program giving. The \$19.2 million in designated gifts is an increase of \$1.9 million over designations for the same period for 1971-72.

Of the \$19.2 million in designated gifts, a total of \$18.4 million has gone to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, most of it through the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions.

While Cooperative Program gifts for the month of March remained at virtually the same level as March, 1972 gifts, designated contributions during March increased by \$248,018 or 6.47 per cent. During March, 1973, more than \$4 million was received in designated gifts.

The combined grand total in contributions, both Cooperative Program and designated gifts, reached \$36.1 million for the six month period, an increase of \$3.1 million or 9.6 per cent.

Amounts reflected in the financial report include only contributions to national and world wide Southern Baptist mission efforts, and do not include gifts to local and state Baptist mission causes.

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Baptist Deacon Killed  
In South Carolina Tornado

4/5/73

CALHOUN FALLS, S.C. (BP)--A Baptist deacon was among four persons killed when a tornado struck the Slaton's Motel here, lifting the building and dumping it in a heap on the other side of the highway.

Wallace Powell, a member of Northside Baptist Church here and former deacon who recently rotated off the deacon body, was living in the motel at the time.

Dial Jacks, pastor of the Northside church, said the devastation caused by the tornado was appalling. "You just have to see it to believe it," he said. "The real blessing is that it did not strike the heart of town."

Jacks said that two other church members lost their homes, a barn and a cloth shop housed in a trailer.

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