

January 21, 1974

**90% of Downtown Churches  
Dying, Says Sociologist**

By Dan Martin

DALLAS (BP)--Ninety per cent of the downtown churches in the United States are dying, a New York sociologist said here.

The downtown church, according to Ezra Earl Jones, a sociologist with the department of research and survey for the United Methodist Church's Board of Global Ministries, is "Old First Church," a unique institution, different from any other urban church.

"Just because a church has a lot of money and property isn't a sign it's successful," said Jones. "Many are dead but haven't been buried yet," he added.

Jones recently completed a two-year study of more than 300 downtown churches of all denominations in the United States to determine the unique characteristics and problems of such a church.

Jones told the Urban Strategy Council of the Baptist General Convention of Texas here that his study revealed 90 per cent of the downtown churches in America are failing. The study was of particular interest to the council, created in 1970, as their role is to develop strategy for ministries in urban areas and to coordinate resources and programs within the Texas convention.

The only church with more problems than the downtown church is the "Old Second Church" in a deteriorating neighborhood near the downtown area, Jones said. "'Old Second Church' is tied to its community," he explained.

He noted sociological changes of a "negative character" are affecting the downtown churches.

"First is transportation," he said. "Expressways take you away from downtown. Mass transit usually isn't good.

"Then, crime is increasing in the downtown area. People say it isn't growing any more in downtown than in the suburbs, but fear of crime is greater in the downtown area," he added.

He cited one church which advertised on its bulletin a high quality music program.

"Down in small print is a notice that armed police guards protect the parking lots," he said.

"A third factor is that the downtown is hurting economically. It has less of what it used to have," Jones said.

He drew an analogy: "It used to be retail and business. Now it is business with some retail. A downtown church as a social institution is like a retail store in that it requires people to be physically present to do what it is that we have to do. It requires people to come."

The most significant finding of his study--which will be published in book form in the fall by Harper and Row--is one statement:

"The church that is surviving today in the downtown area is the church that has learned to balance survival and service. Churches that are failing today are those churches which give all to survival or all to service.

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"You can't give all to survival, because you have to have a purpose. You can't give it all to service because you have to survive if you are going to serve.

"Successful downtown churches have learned to balance that," Jones said.

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Bibles to All International  
Students is BSU, NSM Goal

1/21/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--Baptist Student Unions (BSU) and National Student Ministries (NSM) of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board have launched a plan to give every international student in United States colleges, schools and universities a copy of the Bible or New Testament in his or her native language.

The Baptist Student Union Bible distribution plan, sponsored by NSM, hopes to place Bibles in the hands of an estimated 180,000 international students, according to Benton Williams, NSM's consultant in international student work.

Ten of the versions are diglot New Testaments. That is, English and the native language are on facing pages throughout the translation.

Diglot New Testaments are printed in Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, German, Greek, Hebrew, Korean, Portuguese and Hopi (Indian).

Altogether, 37 different translations will be available. In addition to the diglot New Testaments, the other 27 will be translations of the entire Bible.

BSU groups on university and college campuses will purchase the Bibles with money raised by BSU international committees and with the help of local Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood and other church organizations, Williams said.

The BSU students will then visit the international students in homes or dormitories to present the Bibles, he explained.

The American Bible Society is ordering the Bibles from overseas to make them available to the Baptist Student Unions, Williams added.

He said, "The majority of international students in the United States are not Christians.

"Although most international students speak English," he said, "We want to present them a copy of the Bible in their mother language so they can have a better understanding of the scriptures."

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Bahama Baptists Speak Out  
Against Government Casinos

1/21/74

NASSAU, Bahamas (BP)--Baptists here have issued a statement to Prime Minister Lyndon O. Pindling expressing displeasure over the Bahamian government's plans to begin operating the country's gambling casinos in 1977 when present license renewals come due.

The statement, prepared by a committee of the Bahama Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, outlines reasons they say are based on scripture, as to why Baptists here are opposed to gambling.

In the statement, the government is commended for not renewing present casino licenses when they expire but the statement also expresses disapproval of the government's proposed involvement in ownership or operation of the casinos.

Baptists are the largest Christian group in the Bahamas and were the first denominational group to issue a statement on the gambling situation, a convention spokesman said.

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Georgia Baptist Gifts  
Reach Record High

ATLANTA (BP)--Gifts from Georgia Baptist churches through the Cooperative Program (unified budget) and designated funds from churches reached an all-time high during the past year, according to Searcy S. Garrison, Georgia Baptist Convention executive secretary.

For the first time in Georgia, total designated gifts for denominational causes exceeded \$15 million while Cooperative Program receipts were over \$7 million, also for the first time, Garrison said.

An increase of 11.8 per cent in 1973 was the state's largest percentage increase in Cooperative Program giving since 1956, he added.

A total increase of 24.4 per cent in Georgia's Cooperative Program gifts was reflected during December, 1973, over the same month a year ago.

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Gifts to BWA Relief  
Show World Concern

1/21/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--In a recent week the Baptist World Alliance received two special checks from concerned Christians. One check was for \$30,000 from the Baptist Federation of Canada and the other was for \$25 from a woman in Texas. Both checks were designated for BWA's relief program.

Gifts to the relief program certainly do range from large to small, but all show concern for suffering people on every continent, says Carl W. Tiller, BWA relief coordinator.

The woman from Texas requested simply that her gift be used "for hungry and homeless people in other countries."

A check for \$200 came from a Michigan woman, "in memory of my beloved husband who was killed tragically four months ago. Please use the enclosed for starving people only."

Tiller said the Michigan check was added to other contributions for famine relief in the Sahelian nations of Africa.

Another check for \$253 came from the pastor of a North American Baptist General Conference church in Parma, Ohio. The congregation's youth raised the money in a 15-mile "hunger walk."

"It is with gratitude to them and the Lord Jesus that I forward to you the fruit of their sore feet, this check for \$253," Ward Kroguletz, the youth's pastor, wrote.

The BWA relief program makes it possible for Baptists of the world to contribute to the relief and rehabilitation of suffering people, Tiller said. The United States was the object of relief projects for flood and tornado victims in 1973, he said.

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