

127 Ninth Avenue, North Nashville, Tennessee

For release Wednesday, Feb. 13SOUTHERN BAPTISTS STILL GROWING  
EDITORS HEAR IN ANNUAL REPORT

NEW ORLEANS, La. --(BP)-- Southern Baptists are still growing! Statistics released this week to Southern Baptist editors in their annual meeting in New Orleans say that 375,525 people were baptized into membership of the 28,289 churches of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1951, bringing the total membership to 7,373,498. This gave a net increase of 293,609 or 4.1 per cent.

The information was compiled on the basis of reports received from the Convention's 992 district associations and released by J.P. Edmunds, secretary of the Department of Survey, Statistics and Information of the Sunday School Board in Nashville.

The more than 28,000 churches represent an increase of 501 churches over the 27,788 reported in 1950 or a growth of 1.8 per cent. A decrease in both the number of half-time and quarter-time churches is responsible for the 8.5 per cent increase in churches on a full-time basis. The full-time churches now number 16,362 as compared with 15,074 last year. Of the remaining churches, nearly 400 are three-quarter-time and over 8,000 are half-time.

Churches with pastors at the close of 1951 numbered 25,255 and 23,658 churches reported baptisms during the year.

Total gifts for the year jumped 13 per cent over 1950's giving but mission gifts went up only 11.6 per cent. Southern Baptists gave \$222,838,109, or \$30.22 per capita, during 1951 with \$37,268,172, or \$5.05 per capita, going to missions. The per capita giving increased 8.5 per cent for total gifts and 7 per cent for mission gifts.

Texas Baptists were first in total gifts, with a total of \$44,013,408, and also led in numerical gains with a net membership increase of 56,931. North Carolina came in second in giving with \$22,458,710.

The value of Southern Baptist church property throughout the twenty-two states in the Convention rose 18 per cent during the year. Total value at the end of 1951 was \$761,510,838.

Evidence of continued growth in the western states is shown by California's net membership gain of 22.2 per cent, the largest percentage gain in any state.

All organizations of the churches reported consistent growth with the Sunday schools adding 229,142 to bring the total enrolment for the year to 5,253,695, a 4.6 per cent growth over the 5,024,553 reported in 1950. Churches reporting Sunday schools this year numbered 27,340, a gain of 2.5 per cent over 1950.

Training Unions throughout the Convention enrolled a net gain of 113,765 to bring the

more SB 1951 growth -- 2 --

total enrolment of the year for that organization to 1,554,660. A gain of 6.6 per cent during the year brings to 16,886 the number of churches now having active Training Unions. The membership gain for the year represented a 7.9 per cent growth.

The Woman's Missionary Union reports 1,087,427 members in 1951 as compared with 1,033,479 in 1950, an increase of 5.2 per cent. Six per cent more churches report W.M.U. work this year, bringing the total number of churches with active W.M.U.'s to 16,101.

Work with the men of Southern Baptist churches saw a 10.6 per cent boom in the membership of Brotherhoods. The Brotherhood organizations in 5,729 churches have an enrolment of 185,587 men, compared to the 167,744 in 5,076 organizations in 1950.

Vacation Bible schools last summer ministered to 1,770,418 children, many of whom are in territories without a regular Sunday school or church.

The Statistics Department for the first time this year has divided church classifications into five classes with the addition of the city suburban class in which there are 281 churches this year.

An increase of 5.9 per cent in city churches brings that total to 4,918. More than half of the Southern Baptist churches, 14,531, are classified as open country churches, while another 4,905 are known as village churches. Town churches showed an increase of 3.6 per cent to bring their total number to 3,654.