

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Eight Texas Churches
Among SBC's Ten Largest

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75-134

NASHVILLE (BP) --Eight Texas churches dominated the 10 largest churches in the nation-wide Southern Baptist Convention, according to statistics compiled here.

The 18,506-member First Baptist Church, Dallas, continued its long-time position as the largest church in the nation's largest Protestant-evangelical body, based on statistics through the end of the 1974 church year. That's a 4,968-member increase over the church's conv ntion leading total of 13,538 through 1965, the last year for which compiled top 10 membership figures are available.

The statistics, compiled by the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, revealed that 18 churches, out of 34,734 SBC congregations across 50 states, exceed the 6,000-member level. The 1965 statistics recorded 18 churches with 5,000 or more members. The latest figures tabulated churches in the over 6,000 range only.

Listed in order of total membership, the top 18 SBC churches through 1974 are:

1. First Church, Dallas, Tex., 18,506 members;
2. Bellevue, Memphis, Tenn., 9,803;
3. First, Lubbock, Tex., 9,790;
4. First, Amarillo, Tex., 9,012;
5. First, San Antonio, Tex., 8,332;
6. First, Houston, Tex., 7,941;
7. First Southern, Del City, Okla., 7,886;
8. First, Beaumont, Tex., 7,080;
9. First, Wichita Falls, Tex., 7,045;
10. Travis Avenue, Fort Worth, Tex., 7,040;
11. Dauphin Way, Mobile, Ala., 6,595;
12. First, Tulsa, Okla., 6,465;
13. Cliff Temple, Dallas, Tex., 6,421;
14. South Main, Houston, Tex., 6,170;
15. Walnut Street, Louisville, Ky., 6,137;
16. First, Baton Rouge, La., 6,090;
17. First, Midland, Tex., 6,075;
18. First, Jacksonville, Fla., 6,074.

Out of 12,515,842 Southern Baptists in 33 state conventions covering all 50 states, the top 18 churches represent a combined membership of 142,462. That's only 1.14 percent of the total.

Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., which had been the SBC's second largest for many years until two churches from West Texas moved ahead of it in 1965, regained the number two spot in 1974, with 9,803 members.

Those two West Texas church (First Baptist of Lubbock and First Baptist of Amarillo), which had been second and third respectively, moved back into third and fourth places, with 9,790 and 9,012 members respectively.

The only other non-Texas Baptist church in the top 10 besides Bellevue, is First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., not ranked in 1965, which took the 1974 seventh slot, with 7,886 members. Another church not ranked in 1965, First Baptist Church, Houston, Tex., is ranked sixth through 1974, with 7,941 members.

The top 18 for 1974 include 11 Texas churches, with two Oklahoma representatives and single representatives from Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana and Florida.

Only three churches from the 1965 top 18 do not appear in the 1974 top 18. They are First Baptist Church, Atlanta, formerly 10th with 6,041 members (now with 5,620); First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, formerly 12th with 5,881 members (now 5,860); and Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Tex., formerly 17th, with 5,251 members (now with 4,857). The Houston and Del City churches and First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., which holds the 18th slot in the 1974 figures with 6,074 members, are the new representatives in the top 18.

In terms of growth, the three new representatives in the top 18 owe their ranking to tremendous spurts in membership.

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Between 1964 and 1970, First Southern, Del City, increased 2,982 and then added another 3,290 members, 1970 through 1974, for a cumulative increase of 6,272. The main growth of First Church, Houston, came 1970 through 1974, when it recorded a 4,036 increase. First Church, Jacksonville, also recorded its major increase, 1970 through 1974, adding 2,115 new members.

Of the 15 churches which remained in the top 18, increases were recorded by 13 and decreases by two. The 12 which showed increases, 1965 through 1974, were First Church, Dallas, 4,968; Bellevue, Memphis, 1,693; First, Lubbock, 1,637; Travis Avenue, Fort Worth, 1,323; Walnut Street, Louisville, 935; First, Amarillo, 869; First, San Antonio, 803; First, Baton Rouge, 802; First, Midland, 659; Dauphin Way, Mobile, 544; First, Tulsa, 441; South Main, Houston, 310; and First, Wichita Falls, 198.

Losses were recorded by First, Beaumont, 187, and Cliff Temple, Dallas, 12.

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HEW Grants \$32,502 to
Dallas Baptist College

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8/29/75

WASHINGTON (BP)--Dallas Baptist College is one of three religiously-affiliated institutions to receive federal grants for overseas study programs, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) announced here.

The Texas Baptist school will receive \$32,502 for an "ethnic heritage seminar" to be conducted in Mexico, an HEW news release stated.

According to the release, 35 institutions and organizations were selected for its group projects abroad program this summer and during the 1975-76 school year. The grants are "intended to increase the competency of U.S. education personnel and institutions in modern foreign languages and area studies" and were made under the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961.

Participants in the program will be educators at the elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels, as well as undergraduate and graduate students planning to teach.

Besides Dallas Baptist College, the other two sectarian schools awarded grants were Eckerd College (Presbyterian) of Saint Petersburg, Fla. and Duquesne University (Roman Catholic) in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Eckerd College will receive more than \$49,000, while Duquesne's grant of \$9,795 is the smallest of all 35 awarded. The highest single grant, \$166,062, goes to the University of Michigan.

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Church Colleges Outperform
'Prestige' Ones, Fisher says

Baptist Press
8/29/75

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Small, private, church-related colleges have a greater potential for impact on individuals than many of the large, so-called "prestige" universities, a Southern Baptist educator declared here.

Ben C. Fisher of Nashville, executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention's Education Commission, said the church-related schools are better in teaching and imparting values than many of the prestige institutions.

"Some of the worst teaching being done is in the large Ivy League and graduate schools, where a teaching fellow rushes into his class and then rushes back to his research to finish his degree," Fisher told the faculty at Campbellsville College, a Baptist school here.

"Some of the best teaching today," he continued, "is in the small, private, church-related colleges" where students receive concentrated attention of qualified faculty.

Discussing the purposes behind Christian liberal arts colleges, Fisher said, "Schools such as Campbellsville College, which are taking the issue of morality seriously, are doing the church and our nation divine service.

"A person can go all the way from kindergarten through college in the public school system without ever being helped to gain a basic foundation of moral values," declared Fisher.

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"Too many professors in public schools say, 'What this man does and what he becomes is of no concern to us,' but this is precisely what we (Baptist schools) must be concerned with," he said.

"Baptist colleges must emphasize the teaching of values. We must make clear our own position with regard to morality and ethics. We have an imperative to teach, an imperative to evangelize, and an imperative to introduce the gospel into every area of life."

His comment--"if we're going to have Christian institutions we've got to call them that, and we've got to be that"--drew agreeing nods from faculty members.

Fisher said the swing away from a liberal arts education toward a strictly technical education seems to now be coming back somewhat.

"Industries are saying, 'We don't want a man who is trained only in technology', and many are sending their people to liberal arts schools to help them gain a better understanding of what's going on in the world around them.

"Prominent educators have long realized that 'the four characteristics of an educated man are that he can think clearly, communicate effectively, make relevant judgements, and discriminate among values,'" Fisher said. "This is part of the purpose of Christian liberal arts schools."

On Baptist support of colleges, Fisher said, "Baptists have supported us and believed in us or else we wouldn't be here.

"We are foolish if we say that the great body of Baptist people have nothing to say about how we do things. That doesn't mean we can't be on the cutting edge and take an unpopular stand, but it does mean that we can't be contemptuous of our publics."

Speaking to the subject of costs at Baptist colleges, Fisher said two-thirds of the 53 Southern Baptist colleges are still very competitive with publicly supported schools in terms of cost.

"State schools are masters of the hidden cost," he said. "For many, the tuition is set by law, but the fees can go anywhere. The room fee may be twice the published figure for dorm space, since many schools will publish the lowest charge on their campuses."

Fisher said Baptist colleges throughout the convention gained 5,000 students over the last year. "The trend is hopeful for church-related colleges," he said.

He told the Campbellsville educators that if Americans had "been willing to do the right and Christian things about blacks and other minority groups, and about women, we wouldn't be caught up in the excesses we are now embroiled in."

Answering questions from faculty members, Fisher said the Department of Health Education and Welfare interpretation of Title IX legislation (to end sex discrimination in education) could conceivably cause serious problems for colleges supported by Southern Baptists.

"We have allowed certain trends to develop in our culture that have brought us to this point. If we don't stay in contact with our legislators; if we don't keep in touch with what is going on, we are going to rue the day."

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BWA Revises Congress
Attendance Figures

Baptist Press
8/29/75

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance has revised--upward--attendance figures for the 13th Baptist World Congress, held in Stockholm, Sweden, in July.

An audit of registration slips shows 9,936 delegates and visitors from 92 countries. A figure of 9,612 from 84 countries had been announced on the final day of the conference, according to Miss Betty Smith, BWA conference coordinator.

The figure is for full time registration and does not include several hundred Swedish people who registered on a day-to-day basis, she noted. BWA officials had estimated an attendance of about 8,500, based on advance registrations.

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Robert S. Denny, general secretary of BWA, said 92 countries is the largest number of countries ever represented at a world Baptist meeting but not the largest attendance. Previous highs in both attendance and representation were at the 1965 congress in Miami Beach, Fla., with 19,598 registered from 79 countries. An attendance of 8,558 from 78 countries was registered at the Tokyo BWA meeting in 1970.

Countries with the largest representation in Stockholm were the United States, 5,853; Sweden, 2,131; West Germany and Canada, with 268 each; Denmark, 178; Australia, 177; Norway, 161; and Brazil, 119. All other countries had under 100, headed by Hungary, with 68.

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SBC Continues to Lead
Contributions to ABS

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NEW YORK (BP)--The Southern Baptists continue to top all other denominational groups in gifts to the American Bible Society (ABS), according to figures released here by the ABS.

Through the first six months of 1975, the ABS received \$682,561 in contributions, including \$121,154 from Southern Baptists. The Southern Baptist figure represents an \$11,181 increase over what the denomination gave during the same period in 1974.

United Methodists ranked second in denominational giving, with \$77,461. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was third with \$59,144. Among other top contributors, the American Lutheran Church gave \$43,328; the Lutheran Church in America, \$36,490; the American Baptist Churches in the USA, \$26,351; and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, \$25,963.

The total contribution, the ABS said, represents a \$62,000 increase over 1974, but only a \$13,000 increase over 1973.

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CORRECTIONS

In the BP Story of 8/28/75, headlined "9-year-old Baptist Counts Blessings after Kidnapping," 10th graph, 3rd line, it should read Buttemere, not Buttemore.

In the BP story of 8/28/75, headlined "Big Spring Takes Vietnamese Refugees to Texas," change "terse" to "tense" in line 1, graph 9. Thanks--Baptist Press.