

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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September 22, 1975

75-148

Economy Affects Churches In SBC, But Not Radically

By Mike Chute

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist churches are definitely touched by the current U. S. recession, but economic conditions are not greatly affecting the total mission of churches, according to Southern Baptist Convention statistics.

In the present energy crisis, churches are not taking radical conservation steps, according to surveys by the research services department of the Sunday School Board. But the number of churches entering a major building program in the immediate future will be lower than in previous years due to inflated costs of materials and rising interest rates.

In conserving energy, the majority of churches have taken the usual steps of raising or lowering thermostats to conserve fuel (70 percent); turning off unnecessary lighting (80.3 percent); and concentrating meetings and services in specific church areas (63.5 percent).

Compared to earlier years, fewer churches will enter a major building program during the next three to four years unless the American economic situation brightens. If economic problems continue, only 30 percent of the SBC's 34,734 churches reportedly would consider a major building program. In addition, 63.1 percent of the churches report they would employ greater use of present structures rather than construct new buildings.

In harmony with building statistics, 62.7 percent of SBC churches feel educational programs should be scheduled to permit greater use of buildings during the week. Only 24 percent reported disagreement with this concept.

The surveys conclude that an overwhelming percentage of educational space in churches is used on a multi-purpose basis. Statistics reveal a large majority of pastors believe programs should make greater use of church buildings during the week.

In contrast, 57.9 percent of survey respondents think new church buildings should not be planned for multi-use solely as an economy measure, compared to 36.9 percent who think they should. Reports show churches with 1,000 or more members tend to feel, more than other size churches, that new church buildings should be planned for multi-use as an economy measure.

Sixty percent of the reporting churches believe dual preaching services will become permanent in the future instead of more and larger church buildings; 33.5 percent disagree with this statement.

According to reports, only 4.7 percent of SBC churches now conduct two morning worship services. Of those churches, a majority cite crowded facilities as the reasoning behind two services. However, only a few plan to build additional space for worship.

The occurrence of two morning worship services is not confined to any one church membership size. Thirty-six percent of churches conducting two worship services are in the 300-499 membership range. The majority of those churches having two services plan to continue on a permanent basis.

As statistics verify, the majority of dual morning worship services and Sunday Schools are conducted because of crowded facilities rather than as a convenience to members.

Churches' responses indicate only 2.1 percent currently conduct two Sunday School programs using the same space at different times. Sixty percent of these churches conduct two Sunday Schools because their facilities are too crowded for just one. One-third of these churches plan to build additional educational space in order to have just one Sunday School.

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Statistics show very few churches with facilities beyond an auditorium and educational space. Activities using educational space in SBC churches include Sunday School, 99.1 percent; fellowships, 89.7 percent; church training, 79.4 percent; recreation, 66.5 percent; missions organizations (such as Baptist Men, Royal Ambassadors, Baptist Women, Acteens, etc.), 59.7 percent; nursery, 36.5 percent; community meetings, 22.3 percent; Boy and Girl Scouts, 17.6 percent; kindergarten, 12.9 percent; special education, 12.4 percent; and day care, 7.7 percent.

Surveys conclude 97 percent of Southern Baptist churches have an auditorium. Other church buildings include an educational building, 93.6 percent; activities building, 22.7 percent; chapel, 8.6 percent; and gymnasium as a separate building, 2.6 percent.

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'SoulSearcherS' Picked
Up By WLS, Chicago

Baptist Press
9/22/75

FORT WORTH (BP)--"SoulSearcherS," the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission's half-hour rhythm and blues show for black audiences, is now booming on WLS Radio, 50,000-watt, clear channel radio station in Chicago.

WLS Radio covers 133 counties in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin during daylight hours. At night the station covers some 45 states and most of Canada.

"WLS Radio was one of the first stations to accept the commission's 'Powerline' for teenagers, when it was initially offered in 1969," said Jerome B. Pillow, the commission's vice president, marketing services. "They played it at 4:30 a.m. and still consistently produced more audience response mail than any other station which carried 'Powerline'.

"We are excited about the prospect of that same thing happening with 'SoulSearcherS', which will be aired at 4:30 a.m. on Sundays," Pillow said.

The Radio and Television Commission introduced "SoulSearcherS" in 1973. Pillow said the show has "worked its way through an extensive research and shakedown period to its present format.

"The format is music the audience can relate to, a voice they can trust, and our commercial--the gospel--in short doses." Steve Woods, a Los Angeles disc jockey, hosts the show.

The song lyrics are used as a springboard to discuss the problems of today's black people from a Christian perspective. Listeners are urged to write for copies of the comments and for answers to personal problems.

In addition to the WLS time, "SoulSearcherS" is heard on more than 75 stations weekly. Other cities airing the show include Detroit, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.), Jackson (Miss.), and Fort Worth.

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Beirut, Lebanon:
A City in Flames

Baptist Press
9/22/75

By William W. Marshall

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--After a slow but lethal crescendo of fighting outside Beirut, utter chaos has descended upon this city of one million. Five consecutive days and nights of fighting have left many parts of the city aflame.

No one ventures an estimate of the dead and many still lie beneath the rubble. The intensity of mortar and rocket explosions is frightening. Firemen attempting rescues are fired upon, necessitating withdrawal while the helpless remain to die.

All are hopeful that occasional lulls reflect some new ceasefire. So far, however, the lulls are only opportunities for regrouping, resting and re-equipping. One complete block of the city has been devastated. Hundreds of shops throughout the city owned by Muslims and Christians have been blown up.

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Local radio announcers make constant pleas for the people to remain calm while pronouncing all roads unsafe. Foreigners remain confined, and many await the opportunity to get to the airport. Numbers of foreign companies have evacuated their personnel, some permanently.

Many people have returned frustrated to their homes after futile efforts to secure food. Bread, the Lebanon mainstay, is in short supply. There are fuel shortages, water and electricity shortages.

Simple graveside services are held to keep down the emotions. Men who are normally at work are confined to their homes. Some who have been a part of the fighting will never return. Disagreements among the government's many factions have prevented the Army from stepping in. Security forces are too few and Beirut is too large.

Fourteen Southern Baptist missionaries, situated in three of the many districts, remain largely confined to their homes with frequent telephone contact with each other. They are watching the situation carefully and are aware that they have full support from their Foreign Mission Board in the event that conditions should call for evacuation. Four Southern Baptist missionary couples assigned to Lebanon are in Jordan and others are in the United States.

How to provide help in such a situation is as perplexing a problem as missionaries face. Unlike major catastrophes, where relief efforts are welcomed and can be correlated on a broad scale, the unpredictable nature of the violence frustrates even individual efforts. A road may be open one hour and closed the rest of the day. A district seems peaceful one moment and chaotic the next.

The fighting could end tomorrow or it could last for weeks. Actually, this country has been in a state of war for several months, with intermittent periods of so-called peace. No one feels the situation is close to resolution. When the fighting finally ceases, regardless of who gains control, it will be many long months before Beirut can again be called the Riviera of the Near East.

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Editor's Note: William Marshall, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's field representative for the Middle East, is stationed in Beirut, one of 14 Southern Baptist missionaries still in the city as of September 22. The situation is changing daily. Further reports will be forthcoming.

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Bicentennial Feature

Court Unable to Convict
Accused Baptist Preacher

Baptist Press
9/22/75

CULPEPPER, Va., May, 1770--(BP)--Another brilliant victory was won here in the battle for religious freedom in Virginia when James Ireland, a Baptist minister charged with preaching without authority from the state church, was released because a jury could find no fault in a just man.

Arrested while conducting a Baptist meeting because he had no license from Virginia's state church, Ireland spent five months in Culpepper County jail, during which two attempts were made on his life and he was forced to endure torture, abuse and insults.

When the king's attorney read the indictment against Ireland and asked, "Guilty or not guilty?" Ireland replied, "Not guilty, and if 500 witnesses are not enough to prove these charges are invalid, then I can produce a thousand."

The Baptist crusader for religious liberty doubtless made no idle boast. The courthouse was filled with his friends and supporters, who were overjoyed by his release. While Ireland was in prison, many of them faced threats and bodily harm to hear him preach from his cell window. On one occasion horses were ridden into the crowd and many were trampled.

When magistrates were unmoved by his defense, Ireland produced a license signed by Governor Bottecourt granting him permission to build a meetinghouse in Culpepper County and to serve as pastor. This action caught the prosecution completely off guard, but authorities still seemed determined to return the minister to jail.

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At this point a lawyer came to Ireland's defense, pointing out that he was being charged with violating laws which had been repealed 70 years ago and had never been in effect since.

As the prosecution now seemed to be fully routed, the county parson, in the interest of the state church, attempted to rally the magistrates. This was more than the defendant could bear, and he announced that he would gladly argue the case in open court with the parson.

"And if I am unable to confute him," Ireland told the court, "I will return to prison as a volunteer!"

The minister had so skillfully parried every thrust of the prosecution that the court realized the folly of pursuing the case further. The foreman of the jury picked up his hat and quietly left the courtroom. Soon others followed until the bench was empty.

The clerk of the court went through the formality of asking Ireland if he would appear if summoned and the case was dismissed. Now the Baptist minister is free again for the first time since last November to build a meetinghouse and preach to his rapidly growing congregation.

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