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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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76-21

SBC Budget Sets One-Month  
 Record of \$4,870,138

NASHVILLE (BP)--The national Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget entered 1976 like it entered 1975--setting an all-time, one-month giving record of more than \$4 million.

Receipts in January, 1976, in fact, neared \$5 million, with \$4,870,138, according to figures released by Billy D. Malesovas, who succeeded John H. Williams on Feb. 1 as the director of financial planning and assistant to the treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The January performance tops last January's \$4,303,029 in receipts, then a record, by 13.18 percent.

"Southern Baptists started off the Bicentennial year in a meaningful way," said Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee. "The record \$4,870,138 represents more than \$12,500,000 given by the churches for both state and SBC causes through the Cooperative Program and it includes advance or challenge funds received by many of the states over their primary budgets."

During the first four months of the 1975-76 fiscal year, October through January, national Cooperative Program receipts total \$15,474,310--or 13.15 percent ahead of the same point in 1974-75.

Meanwhile, 33 state conventions covering 50 states also funneled \$6,789,363 in designated contributions from Southern Baptist church members to Southern Baptists' worldwide missions program. That represents 10.62 percent more than \$6,137,403 in designated contributions last January.

Total giving for the first four months of 1975-76--Cooperative Program and designated--amounts to \$23,506,211, compared to \$20,927,279 at the same point in 1974-75. That's a 12.32 percent increase.

Designated giving alone through the first four months totaled \$8,031,902--a 10.76 percent increase over the same point last fiscal year.

-30-

Baptists' 'Miracle of Giving'  
 Bucks Economic Woes

Baptist Press  
 2/2/76

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention leaders all but rolled out the brass band at the end of the 1974-75 fiscal year when the SBC's national Cooperative Program finished over \$3 million--more than eight percent--ahead of the year before.

They went into figurative pirouettes of joy when the Cooperative Program (CP) surged four months into the 1975-76 fiscal year, running 13.15 percent ahead of the same point the year before. One of those months, January, 1976, set an all-time, one-month SBC national CP record, with \$4,870,138 received.

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None of these figures include designated contributions, above the CP, which amounted to \$35.6 million in 1974-75 alone and have topped \$8 million during the first four months of fiscal 1975-76.

Southern Baptists have grown accustomed to setting a CP record each year as their worldwide missions program grows apace. In fact, in any other year, because it has grown so consistently, denominational leaders would have accepted the CP increases with modulated appreciation.

Then why all the fuss? Well, it's really not so hard to explain. While the nation's embattled economy took it on the chin in 1975, the Cooperative Program bucked the economic downtrend in remarkably resilient fashion, keeping intact a track record which began in 1935. Gifts to missions through the Cooperative Program have never failed to increase since that year.

Fittingly, during the CP's 50th birthday celebration year, the 12.6 million Southern Baptists in the nation's largest Protestant denomination weathered the twin body blows of inflation and recession.

And all the people said, "Amen."

But as those Baptistic "amens" are still rolling--and rightly so--off the tongues of grateful SBC leaders, a note of caution settles in--and rightly so.

It's a caution to beware of the "euphoria of inflated dollars," as one observer termed it.

In 1973-74, the SBC took in \$38,036,809 on a national level. Based on the purchasing power of the 1967 consumer dollar, that bought \$25,865,030, according to an analysis by John H. Williams, who retired Jan. 31 as the SBC Executive Committee's director of financial planning and assistant to the treasurer.

Then came 1974-75 with its \$41,114,252 in national SBC-level receipts. That was \$3,077,443 more than 1973-74 receipts. But its purchasing power amounted to \$25,614,179. Sobering. \$250,851 less in purchasing power though nearly \$3.1 million more in receipts.

Meanwhile, the percentage of the dollar which goes to the Cooperative Program from the collection plates of the 34,734 Southern Baptist churches has declined steadily from a peak of 10.35 percent in 1959 to 8.87 percent in 1974, the latest available figure. The 1974 figure is up slightly from the 1973 figure and SBC leaders hope for a continued rise.

And as the Cooperative Program surges into the 1975-76 year, another factor surfaces which calls for attention. The 1975-76 total SBC Cooperative Program goal amounts to \$51 million--\$11 million more than the 1974-75 total goal of \$40 million--exceeded by over \$1.1 million.

But, of that \$51 million, the basic operating budget for the SBC agencies is \$41 million and the capital needs budget is \$1,080,000. That totals \$42,080,000, a target which Southern Baptists should exceed with no problem, Williams projected.

Beyond that \$42 million, the SBC set an \$8,920,000 "challenge" goal, considerably more than 1974-75's \$3 million challenge figure which was exceeded.

Williams predicted that if Southern Baptists continue the same rate of giving shown in the first four months of 1975-76, the SBC Cooperative Program should take in about \$46.5 million this fiscal year. That's well over the operating and capital needs budgets but short of the \$51 million total goal.

"Pastors and church members ask why they should continue increasing Cooperative Program gifts when the SBC is exceeding its basic operating budget goals and churches are barely meeting their budgets," said Michael Speer, the SBC Stewardship Commission's director of Cooperative Program promotion and associate executive director.

"They should do so because of a difference in budgeting philosophies," Speer explained. "The SBC budgets on minimum expectancy--the least they project will be received; whereas most churches budget on maximum expectancy--the most they project they will receive."

"Southern Baptists won't 'fail' if we don't meet all of the \$51 million goal, because it's pretty certain that minimum expectancy expenses of the operating and capital needs budgets will be covered," Speer added. "But that additional \$8.9 million in challenge funds will allow the SBC to move into many areas of dire need in our worldwide program of missions, benevolence and education to achieve maximum, rather than minimum, results."

Recognizing that statistics may be interpreted variously, SBC leaders have not been alarmed by negative signs, but they realize that without continued vigilance, the Cooperative Program could be only one generation away from disaster. They believe that each new generation must learn what the Cooperative Program does and why.

"Many Southern Baptists have taken the Cooperative Program for granted," said A. R. Fagan, executive director of the Stewardship Commission, who sounds an optimistic note on the CP's future. "It has been encroached on by neglect, misunderstanding and ignorance. We have a need and a responsibility to renew the telling of the Cooperative Program story."

That responsibility, SBC leaders said, is great, considering the worldwide program of missions, education and benevolence administered by the SBC, which has some 5,000 missionaries at home and abroad and 17 national agencies, including six theological seminaries.

But they also point out that the SBC, a denomination which puts its priority on winning converts and ministering to spiritual and physical needs around the globe, has a dynamic going for it most other groups would envy.

Despite decreasing buying power and the need to strengthen the quality of percentage giving from churches, the Cooperative Program has continued to rise--every year since 1934--while budgets of some other religious groups decrease.

That's why leaders of the 131-year-old SBC, seeing their 50-year-old plan of support emerge unbowed from the economic hardships of 1975, have reason to cheer.

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Mars Hill Baptist Church  
Elects Woman Deacon Chairman

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2/2/76

MARS HILL, N. C. (BP)--Evelyn Underwood, chairman of the history department at Mars Hill College here, has been elected chairman of deacons at the Mars Hill Baptist Church, a rare distinction among Southern Baptists.

The Mars Hill church, which serves the community as well as the students and faculty of the Baptist college, first ordained a woman as a deacon in 1965. She was Miss Mildred Bingham, chairman of the department of business administration and economics at the college. Miss Underwood was ordained in 1970.

Two other women in the church, Elizabeth Crocco and Mary Ihrig, were elected as deacons in 1972. Mrs. Crocco was ordained at that time, but Miss Ihrig, a member of the English department faculty at the college, had been ordained by the Olin T. Binkley Baptist Church in Chapel Hill in 1968, while she was working on a doctorate at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

A native of Haywood County in western North Carolina, Miss Underwood has been a member of the college faculty since 1944. Her undergraduate studies were at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; and she earned master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill. She has also studied at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland).

She taught in public schools in her home county and at Gastonia, N. C., before joining the college faculty. She became chairman of the history department in 1962.

-30-

Seminary Fund Campaign  
Launched by \$400,000 in Gifts

FORT WORTH (BP)--Grants totaling \$400,000 have been received from two Fort Worth foundations by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

The grants, \$200,000 each from the Amon G. Carter Foundation and the Sid Richardson Foundation, are expected to be applied toward the seminary's current fund raising drive called "Eight by Eighty." The three-month Fort Worth campaign is set to begin in March.

The campaign seeks to raise \$8 million by the year 1980. The campaign is divided into three stages. The initial Fort Worth campaign, with a \$2 million goal, will be followed by a Dallas-Metroplex campaign with a \$1.5 million goal. Subsequent campaigns are planned for key Texas cities, with a total goal of \$2 million, and a national campaign with a \$3 million goal.

The money raised by the fund drive is expected to be applied towards several campus improvements, including a proposed physical fitness center, and endowment needs.

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Bicentennial Feature  
Baptist Layman Suffers  
Persecution for Beliefs

Baptist Press  
2/2/76

GOOCHLAND COUNTY, Va., Dec. 1774--(BP)--One good reason for the growing strength of Baptists in Virginia was the zeal and courage of laymen such as Thomas Waford, who was willing to pay the price of persecution for his faith.

Although not an ordained minister, Waford urged upon his listeners in private conversation the same message which Baptist preachers delivered from the pulpit. And along with Baptist ministers he endured arrest, personal abuse, and other persecution.

While working with a group of Baptist evangelists in Essex County, Waford was arrested. He was taken before a justice of the peace and his saddlebags were searched "for treasonable papers."

Waford was dismissed without fine or imprisonment because he had not "disturbed the peace" by preaching.

Many Baptists preachers were arrested and imprisoned in Virginia for preaching without a license from the state church. While there was no law to prevent Baptists from preaching, they were sentenced on charges of "disturbing the peace" or "disorderly conduct."

The zealous layman was not so fortunate a few years earlier when he was arrested in Middlesex County with four Baptist preachers. Although he was not imprisoned with the ministers, Waford was beaten severely by the posse which broke up the meeting being conducted by the Baptists.

After his beating, Waford was searched for firearms and incriminating papers. Finding none, his persecutors gave the Baptist until noon the following day to be out of the county or face imprisonment along with the preachers. The raid on the Baptist meeting was led by two law enforcement officers and a parson of the state church.

In the tradition of John the Baptist, Waford went ahead of the ministers of the gospel, preparing the way for them. When an evangelist was to go into a new territory, Waford preceded him as an advance agent to publicize the meeting.

When the evangelist arrived, not only did he find that the community knew about the meeting, but he soon discovered that through personal witnessing and exemplary conduct Waford rendered invaluable service in preparing the hearts of the people for the message.

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