



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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SBC Churches Show Substantial Statistical Gains in 1975

NASHVILLE (BP)--Churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention have reported substantial gains during 1975 in nearly every statistical category, according to final figures released by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's research services department.

Statistics compiled through reports received from the 34,902 Southern Baptist churches indicate significant increases in churches, baptisms, church membership, total receipts and mission expenditures and in Sunday School, church music, Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and Brotherhood enrolments.

The number of baptisms reported in 1975 by America's largest Protestant denomination--421,809 or 2.8 percent increase--represent the third highest figure in SBC history. The record number of baptisms was recorded in 1972 with 445,725, surpassing the previous record of 429,063 in 1959. The 400,000 figure in baptisms has been exceeded each of the past five years. The convention has surpassed that mark only nine times in its 130-year existence.

Church membership increased 1.8 percent to a total of 12,735,663 members, representing nearly 220,000 additional members in SBC churches. The number of Southern Baptist churches reached 34,902, a gain of 168.

The statistics indicate a 9.9 percent increase in the denomination's total receipts, an increase of more than \$132 million for a total of \$1,475,611,266 for 1975.

Mission gifts continued to increase, gaining more than \$18 million. That represents an 8.3 percent increase for a total of \$237,617,406 in mission gifts and marks the first time more than 30,000 churches have given through the Cooperative Program, the SBC's unified budget program.

Sunday School enrolment gained 90,703 members in 1975 for a total membership of 7,281,532, a 1.3 percent increase. This enrolment figure reflects the largest net gain since 1961, and marks the fourth consecutive year that Sunday School has gained in enrolment. Almost 34,000 churches, a gain of 241, reported Sunday School programs during the year.

Sunday School attendance through a bus program was reported by 6,737 churches, representing 266,604 persons attending on a weekly basis.

Church music enrolment, increasing 50,876 or 3.9 percent for a total of 1,354,944 members, has showed a gain for 10 straight years, averaging a 48,000-member increase a year. A total of 570 more Southern Baptist churches reported a music program in 1975 than in 1974.

Brotherhood, the Southern Baptist men's missions organization, gained 15,289 members for a total membership increase of 3.3 percent and enrolment of 476,002. A total of 365 more churches included Brotherhood in their church program during the year. Brotherhood enrolment has been gaining since 1971 following seven years of decline. The program had remained stable in 1974.

Woman's Missionary Union experienced an enrolment gain for the second straight year, following 10 years of decrease. WMU increased 18,438 members or 1.7 percent, for a total membership of 1,133,587. The number of churches with a WMU program increased by 374.

The only decrease reported by Southern Baptist churches was in Training Union enrolment. However, that organization experienced only a one percent decrease in membership. This continues a definite slowing trend in the Training Union decline and "hopefully forecasts a turn-around for that organization," Sunday School Board officials report.

The 1975 Training Union ongoing enrolment, which does not include new member, leader training, or short term member training registration, shows a loss of 18,809 (1.0 percent) for a total membership of 1,886,177. The one percent loss in 1975 compares to a 2.3 percent decrease in 1974 and a 4.6 percent decrease in 1973.

Summary of the 1975 Southern Baptist Convention statistics:

	<u>1975</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>Numerical Change</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
Churches	34,902	34,734	168	.5
Baptisms	421,809	410,482	11,327	2.8
Church Membership	12,735,663	12,515,842	219,821	1.8
Ongoing Sunday School Enrolment	7,281,532	7,190,829	90,703	1.3
Ongoing Training Union Enrolment	1,886,177	1,904,986	-18,809	-1.0
Ongoing Church Music Enrolment	1,354,944	1,304,068	50,876	3.9
Ongoing WMU Enrolment	1,133,587	1,115,149	18,438	1.7
Ongoing Brother- hood Enrolment	476,002	460,713	15,289	3.3
Total Receipts	\$1,475,611,266	\$1,342,997,051	\$132,614,215	9.9
Total Mission Gifts	\$237,617,406	\$219,389,030	\$18,228,376	8.3

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Texas Baptists Make
One-Sixth of Texas

Baptist Press
2/16/76

DALLAS (BP)--One out of every six Texans is a member of a Texas Baptist church, according to figures released here.

The state's largest Protestant group, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, now has 2,073,841 members, compared with 2,037,791 a year ago.

That figure also represents about one-sixth of the membership of the 12.7 million member Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Statistics also showed that Texas Baptists contributed \$243,169,125 to all church causes during 1975, compared with \$219,300,076, in 1974.

Texas Baptists also increased in the number of churches affiliated, while declining slightly in the number of missions. At year's end, 3,914 churches were part of the convention, which is affiliated with the SBC, the nation's largest Protestant denomination. The affiliations compare with 3,852 last year, a gain of 62 congregations.

In missions, the denomination's churches support 363 missions, as compared with 380 last year.

For the second straight year, the denomination declined slightly in the number of baptisms, recording 58,828 new converts as compared with 58,908 last year.

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Avoid Destructive Orthodoxy
Fights, Graves Advises

By Robert O'Brien

SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--There's nothing ahead but brightness for the 12.7-million-member Southern Baptist Convention if it doesn't get involved in a destructive orthodoxy fight, a veteran Southern Baptist seminary president told the Southern Baptist Press Association here.

Harold A. Graves, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in nearby Mill Valley, Calif., reflected what he has seen in 41 years as a pastor and denominational leader and what he sees in the future of the nation's largest Protestant body.

Graves, who will retire as the Golden Gate president in July, 1977, after 25 years in the post, cited several encouraging factors in denominational life.

They include a "new wholesome emphasis" on Bible-based evangelism, continued financial support of SBC causes, increasing response of young people reflected in rising seminary enrollments, and a growing openness in methods and programming.

But, among things which disturb him, Graves said, is a demand on the part of some Southern Baptists for specific orthodoxy statements. "We deny that we are a creedal people," he said, "but many turn right around and ask for a creed."

He said certain ultra-conservative elements demand that statements on theology and doctrine be expressed in certain code words which allow for no flexibility of expression and generate controversy.

"If we want to destroy a great evangelical denomination," said Graves, who affirmed his own conservative theological stance, "let us get into a controversy over orthodoxy."

Commenting on theological controversies of the past, Graves noted that if both sides of the debates "had spent some time trying to find out what the other was saying, we might have been spared that controversy. They spent too much time reacting to what they thought the other was saying."

Other disturbing things, Graves said, are transitory pastorates, acceptance of false measurements of success, unnecessary church-building sprees across the denomination, the "trade school concept of ministerial training," and a large percentage of inactive church members.

"There's no major denomination that consistently has such poor preaching as we do in the pulpit," he said, noting that that phenomenon is related to high turnover in pastorates.

He said many pastors excuse lack of sermon preparation by reminding themselves of all the other things they have had to do as pastors.

"But if you're not ready when its 11 a.m. on Sunday morning--no matter what else you've done that week--you've failed," he declared. "Not many of our pastors believe that."

Elaborating on what he called the "trade school concept of ministerial training," Graves said too many pastors are "more concerned about the job next Sunday than about developing theological depth.

"Next Sunday is important," he said, "but we want to develop pastors who produce sermons not parrot them and men who can produce creative programs, not copy them."

On inactive church members, Graves noted, "I don't have much to say about nearly 13 million Southern Baptists when I realize how many of them don't amount to very much. I believe that in California, alone, we have one million Baptists who have left their church membership somewhere else and have dropped out of active church participation."

Graves, looking back on Southern Baptist growth and impact around the world, sounded an optimistic note about the denomination's future growth and impact as its pluralistic elements in 50 states and 82 countries learn to recognize diversity as a strength.

Urban Missions Expert
Cites Baptist Pluralism

By James Lee Young

SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--The majority of Southern Baptists must realize they are no longer an exclusively-white, southern-region denomination but a pluralistic people in a pluralistic society and world, an urban missions expert said here.

Citing the 12.7-million-member denomination's growing work in 50 states and mission posts in 82 countries, Francis M. DuBose said newer Southern Baptist areas outside denominational strongholds in the South and Southwest "are bringing new dimensions to our denominational life."

The professor of missions at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, told the Southern Baptist Press Association meeting here that the newer areas of work "have brought us more deeply in touch with our various American minorities."

Such states as California, Michigan and New York, for example, he said, are beginning a meaningful penetration of the black community.

He cited California and San Francisco, in particular, as examples of increasing trends among Southern Baptists toward ethnic pluralism. "Of 35 Southern Baptist churches in the Long Beach Harbor (Calif.) Southern Baptist Association, 18 are black or predominantly so, and the moderator is a black pastor," he said.

The largest Southern Baptist church in San Francisco, DuBose continued, is a black church, the second largest a Spanish-speaking church, and the third largest a Chinese congregation.

The city and county of San Francisco, he said, have twice as many Southern Baptist ethnic churches as Anglo churches. He noted that the church which led the San Francisco Peninsula Association in baptisms last year was a black church, the newest in the association. The association's moderator is a Mexican American, and its evangelism committee chairman is American Indian.

DuBose defined a pluralistic society as "one in which a plurality of identities, ideologies and life styles prevail in more or less general acceptance. He applied that definition to American society in general and in particular to Southern Baptists, with whom, he said, increasing numbers of black and ethnic groups have sought affiliation.

The "reality of Southern Baptist pluralism" first came to him, DuBose said, when he went to Detroit as a missions director in 1961. There he encountered three distinct Southern Baptist regional identities, with each convinced it was the original Southern Baptist type.

"These were the Western Kentucky Landmark Baptists, the Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee mountain Baptists and urban Baptists from the major cities of the South and Southeast. They were not only different culturally, reflecting opposing styles of worship, preaching and music, but they had marked differences of ecclesiology and eschatology," he explained.

"One of the first realities," DuBose reflected, "of our young work in Michigan was how to achieve a mutual acceptance and a purposeful unity of mission within the framework of this religious pluralism."

On national pluralism, DeBose said, "Nothing illustrates America's pluralism better than her varied and complex religious life. Religion was never more popular, but it isn't all Christian."

The religious scene has become increasingly complex in pluralistic America, DuBose noted, citing several newer dimensions on the American religious scene in recent years.

"One is the revolution in the Roman Catholic Church. Besides the charismatic movement, there is a growing evangelicism among American Catholics characterized by conversion, love for Bible study, and a less liturgical worship.

"Vatican II has opened the way for more liberal interpretations of traditional Catholic views, making it possible for Protestants and Catholics to feel a greater sense of mutual acceptance. A number of Baptist-Catholic dialogues have proved enlightening and conciliatory," he said.

Another mark of religious pluralism is evidenced by the charismatic movement, DuBose said. The "growing number of charismatics in our ranks," have caused some to react negatively, others moderately, and some quite liberally. But we have all been forced to take cognizance of a reality which gives no promise of going away, he said.

"Baptists, of all the Christian groups, seem to have the greatest difficulty in accommodating the charismatics," DuBose said, referring to Southern Baptists.

"The American bishops have given their blessing to the large minority contingency of charismatics in the Roman Catholic Church. The Eastern Orthodox and all of the other major denominations have witnessed the emergence of charismatics in their midst and appear to have accepted them.

"More traditional Pentecostal groups, once despised and rejected, are being accepted today. In general, the fastest growing Christian groups in the world today are Pentecostal. And many of their churches and institutions are among the most prestigious in our country. Figures such as Oral Roberts and Katherine Kuhlman command large followings," DuBose said.

Cults are proliferating, he continued, citing the growth of Mormons, "now larger than some of the mainline Protestant bodies", and the rise of The Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Bahais, the Christian Unification Church, and others. "Two of the most respected American institutions are the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Christian Science Monitor."

Along with the cults' rise, however, traditional churches are experiencing a "new surge of spiritual vitality, with Southern Baptists enjoying a new burst of spiritual energy sparked by youth and lay movements.

"This is especially evidenced in the marked increase in enrollment in our six Southern Baptist seminaries, a most encouraging sign," DuBose cited. The denomination's seminaries experienced an overall 1975 fall enrollment increase of more than 1,000 students over fall, 1974.

"The recent conservative surge," he continued, "is matched by a profound social consciousness among the 'new evangelicals' and by the mellowing and maturing of the Jesus Movement."

The professor admonished that all Southern Baptists be recognized as legitimate contributors in the new "promising" era of witness for Jesus Christ, noting, for example:

"The ethnic-language leaders are deeply thankful for the denomination's support of their work, and black leaders are grateful for insight they have received into evangelism, stewardship and religious education, for opportunity to be part of the world mission program" through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget.

But, DuBose cautioned, "Most of these confess to a sense of estrangement and a feeling of being on the periphery where so little of the denominational life really speaks to them. They cry for a greater acceptance, understanding and participation in the denominational process. Most do not feel this either intentional or personal, but many do feel it and some profoundly."

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Executive Secretaries,
Editors Name Officers

Baptist Press
2/16/76

SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--E. Harmon Moore, executive secretary of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, and Hudson Baggett, editor of the Alabama Baptist weekly newspaper, were named president, respectively, of the State Executive Secretaries Association of the Southern Baptist Convention and of the Southern Baptist Press Association.

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Other officers named during concurrent meetings of the two groups here were:

Executive secretaries group--James Landes, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, vice president, and Joe L. Ingram, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, secretary.

Press Association--Jack U. Harwell, editor of The Christian Index, weekly news publication of Georgia Baptists, president-elect; and R. G. Puckett, editor of the Maryland Baptist weekly news publication, secretary-treasurer for a consecutive term.

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Ryan Named Director
Of Boyce Bible School

Baptist Press
2/16/76

LOUISVILLE (BP)--James L. Ryan has been promoted director of Boyce Bible School, according to Allan W. Graves, executive director of the Ministry Training Center of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ryan is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, Southwestern Baptist Seminary and Southern Baptist Seminary. Formerly a pastor, he taught at Baptist Bible Institute, Graceville, Fla., for a year before coming to Boyce Bible School as assistant executive director of the Ministry Training Center in September, 1974. Boyce Bible School, part of the Ministry Training Center, was developed by Southern Seminary to provide theological education for those who have not had the opportunity to complete college and seminary preparation.

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R. C. Weatherford
Dies in Florida

Baptist Press
2/16/76

FROST PROOF, Fla. (BP)--Funeral services were held here for R. C. Weatherford, father of Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Weatherford died Sunday, Feb. 15, after a brief illness.

He is survived by his wife, a son, and daughter in addition to Miss Weatherford.

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Southern Seminary Awards
Contract for Student Housing

Baptist Press
2/16/76

LOUISVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here has awarded a contract to C. T. Love and Associates, Inc., of Louisville, for construction of 70 married student apartments on the seminary's Lexington Road campus.

Construction is expected to begin immediately on the long-planned \$1.5 million complex. Plans for the apartments have been made necessary by expanding student enrollment which this year has made Southern Baptist Seminary the largest private educational institution in the state of Kentucky, a seminary spokesman said.

The project is expected to be complete, Jan. 1, 1977.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

Did you receive the February 12 mailing of Baptist Press?

The following titles were in that mailing:

Psalm Gives Comfort
To Guatemala Family
By Dan Martin

"Guatemala--On Your Feet?"
Local Baptists Lend A Hand
By Charlie Warren

Baptist Student Union
Assoc. Elects Officers

Two Baptist Pastors Die
In Guatemalan Earthquake

U. S. Doctors Report
Guatemala Is Recovering
By Dan Martin

Please contact Baptist Press if you did not receive this mailing.