



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Mission Service Corps  
Defined By Committee

NASHVILLE (BP)--A special committee studying formation of the Mission Service Corps (MSC), which will be designed to put 5,000 volunteers on Southern Baptist home and foreign mission fields by 1982, has agreed on a definition for the MSC and the need for a steering committee to coordinate the committee's continuing work.

At a meeting here, characterized by a strong sense of excitement about the MSC concept which grew out of action at the 1977 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Kansas City, the committee also heard reports from the SBC Home and Foreign Mission Boards, representatives of state conventions and others on suggested MSC implementation.

The committee will collate the voluminous information and make specific recommendations to the SBC Executive Committee, Sept. 19-21 in Nashville. By October, committee members said, data will be available on the process a person must follow in signing up for a one or two-year term of service in cooperation with the Home or Foreign Mission Board, state conventions or associations.

President Jimmy Carter, whose pastor, Charles Trentham of First Baptist Church, Washington, attended the meeting, sent a telegram to the committee expressing thanks "for the responsiveness with which you are working out the means for doubling our mission personnel in the next five years. May I encourage you to allow no complexity or problem to slow down the process of so challenging our people."

Concept for MSC grew out of a recommendation Carter, an active Southern Baptist layman, made via videotape to the 1977 SBC annual meeting.

The MSC definition agreed on by the committee, made up of a wide range of Southern Baptist leadership, says:

"The Mission Service Corps is a plan for enlisting and utilizing Southern Baptists to give full time for a period of one or two years in mission work under the direction of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, state mission board or association. These persons may support themselves financially or their support may come from gifts by individuals, groups of individuals, churches, groups of churches or others. This support should be designated other than the Cooperative Program, the Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong or state mission offerings. The personnel and projects shall be subject to the approval of the mission agencies involved."

The committee asked MSC committee chairman W. Ches Smith, a pastor from Tifton, Ga., and also Executive Committee chairman, to appoint the steering committee in cooperation mission board leaders.

Committee members and guests invited to give input urged that the MSC concept be implemented so that it will enhance the SBC's ongoing mission work and not run counter to it.

"This may be the most stimulating, challenging, radical thing Southern Baptists have ever done, and I'm for it," one pastor declared, "but we shouldn't get intoxicated on one thing if it doesn't undergird the Cooperative Program and the whole missions enterprise."

He and others emphasized that the program offer an "opportunity for sacrificial service," that it be "exciting and person-centered" and that it be used "as a God-given instrument to think through strategy and style, not just to put more people in the same pot but to find new ways to use them."

Allen Supports 'Bold  
Day of Commitment'

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Jimmy R. Allen has issued a proclamation here in support of the SBC's Bold Day of Commitment, Sunday Oct. 2.

The day is the first Sunday of the two-year denominational emphasis--"Let the Church Reach Out." Southern Baptist churches throughout the United States have received information on how to observe the day through their Sunday Schools, Church Training programs, morning worship services and evening worship services.

The special day will confront Southern Baptist church members with world needs, the resources the church has to meet the needs, and the necessity for commitment to the SBC's Bold Mission effort to reach America and the rest of the world for Christ.

Noting action of the SBC annual meeting in Kansas City to establish the special day, Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., said, "A rising tide of mission consciousness is sweeping Southern Baptist life. The commitment to double our mission forces through the concept of Mission Service Corps (now in process of organization) has caused a renewed interest in the totality of mission opportunities."

Allen expressed hope that "every pastor in every Southern Baptist church across our nation will call his congregation to prayer for spiritual awakening and for the Bold Mission Thrust of the SBC to be one of God's channels for bringing it about.

"Our people are ready to give their energies in prayer intercession, their money in mission support and their talents in mission service," Allen said. "October 2 is a day for this call to be sounded from every Baptist pulpit and every Sunday School teacher's lesson.

"God's spirit is moving throughout America," Allen continued "I am glad that Southern Baptists are seizing their day of opportunity for mission expansion. In a day when many Christian groups have turned their energies in other directions, Southern Baptists are pressing forward toward a goal of sharing the gospel with every person on our planet within this century."

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Irish Baptists Work  
Amidst Civil Strife

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By Bonita Sparrow

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--"We find the Gospel very relevant in Northern Ireland--still viable and valid in this time of need."

Joshua Thompson, pastor of Windsor Baptist Church of Belfast, reflected on the civil war between Protestants and Catholics in his country which has claimed some 1,700 lives during the last seven years in the small country.

Mrs. Thompson, a English literature lecturer at Belfast's College of Business Studies Academy, has students on both sides.

"I take a common sense approach to the question," she said in an interview during a recent visit here by the Thompsons. "I don't allow extreme views to be discussed in the classroom. They have nothing to do with English literature. If a moral question comes up, however, we do discuss that."

"Irish Baptists are deeply involved in seeking solutions to the problem," her husband added. "We are beginning to see the solution to the problem in spiritual terms, rather than in political terms," he said. "It's a question of people willing to be changed.

Thompson said the friction is most heated between members of the Irish working class and noted that "the problem reaches down to all age groups... One of our Baptist churches in one of the sensitive areas had a Sunday School class for 30 Roman Catholic children. When the Protestant children realized it, they refused to attend the Sunday School class," he said sadly.

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He said the fact that there are two distinct educational systems in the country also contributes to the problem. "There are the public schools and the parochial schools, both receiving state support. A child enters one of these schools at a young age and has no opportunity to learn about people who think differently until the university level. It's much more difficult by then."

Irish Baptists, he said, are playing a helpful role in Ireland. "The governor of Maze Prison in Belfast, where most of the terrorists are held is a Baptist," he noted. "We have surgeons in our congregation involved in the treatment of bombing casualties. Many of our paramedics are Baptist, and so are our nurses and students. There are Baptists on our police force."

His voice grew sad. "We've had members of our church murdered, and have participated in their funerals. A few months ago one of our fine men, the equivalent of your police lieutenant, was shot dead by terrorists. Just the night before he died he had been speaker at a meeting of the Christian Police Association.

"Another of our young policeman was with an older policeman on patrol one night when their car was ambushed and bombed, and they were both killed. When my wife and I went to visit his young widow, just 21-years-old, with a six-month old baby, she was in shock, of course. But she expressed no animosity toward the terrorists, no bitterness about what had happened."

"Many senseless things have happened," Mrs. Thompson added. "I was talking with a friend one evening, before my husband and I went to a meeting. After we had returned and retired for the night, we heard on the late news that her house had been destroyed by a bomb.

"After she and I had finished our telephone conversation she had answered a knock on the door and some men wanted to know where her husband was. He was at a meeting. So the terrorists made her and her five children lie on the floor while they planted a bomb in the house. They told her she had 10 minutes to get her children out, and she did but they lost their home. There was no time to save anything."

Mrs. Thompson continued the sad litany. "Our daughter had a young friend who planned to attend the university with her. But one evening Rose was standing in the hall with her father when he answered a knock on the door and they both were shot dead. In one evening that girl's mother lost her only child and her husband."

In spite of the tragedies, the Thompsons say, the gospel is still viable in Northern Ireland.

"We are communicating the gospel in times of stress. Our Irish Baptist Union also has mission work in several countries. The work in Peru, for example, has grown larger now than our own Irish Union," he said.

"And this year the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland held a special prayer meeting for Irish Baptists. The auditorium that had been chosen was too small for the overflow crowd that prayed for two hours instead of the scheduled one hour.

"God is answering prayer in Northern Ireland. We are sticking to the Bible message and preaching the gospel there. We are seeing conversions. In spite of problems we are functioning as God wants his children to function--telling everyone that the gospel offers hope and love in our situation, and in all situations," Thompson said.