



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Mission Service Corps Heads  
1977 (BP) Top 10 Poll

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE (BP)--The amazingly swift formation of the Mission Service Corps, from a June challenge to Southern Baptists by President Jimmy Carter to the first personnel selection in October, ranked first in balloting for the Top 10 Baptist Press (BP) stories of 1977.

The ambitious plan to place 5,000 short-term volunteers on Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) home and foreign mission fields by 1982 to back up career missionaries collected 12 firsts and 11 seconds in the balloting among state Southern Baptist editors and (BP) national staff and bureau chiefs. It placed on all ballots received and tallied 252.4 points in (BP)'s statistically-weighted numerical rating system.

Other rankings went like this:

SECOND: The national clamor over television programming, which caused reverberations throughout the broadcast industry, placed on all ballots and collected seven first place votes and 226.4 points in hotly contested voting for second, third and fourth places. It included nationwide efforts by the SBC Christian Life Commission to urge responsible programming and battle ABC-TV's controversial "Soap" series.

THIRD: The bold religious thrust President Carter's inauguration has brought to the White House and administration policy rated first place on eight ballots and 214.3 total points. It placed on all but one ballot. The unprecedented religious implications of Carter's election placed a strong first in the 1976 balloting.

FOURTH: Increasing discussion and debate among Southern Baptists over ordination of women, an issue which has confronted other denominations, placed on all ballots and picked up four first place votes and 204.7 points.

FIFTH: Escalating protests across the nation over homosexual rights, including the furor surrounding singer Anita Bryant's opposition to homosexuals in positions of influence over children, received no first place mentions. But it placed on all but five ballots and finished with 155.7 points.

SIXTH: Danger faced by Southern Baptist missionaries in troubled Africa collected 114 points to barely edge out two other contenders for sixth. The issue included detaining of missionaries by Ethiopian authorities and eventual evacuation of missionaries there; continued missionary presence in Uganda despite Idi Amin's clamp down on Christians; and tension in several other African nations.

SEVENTH: Allegations that evangelist Billy Graham concealed a \$22.9 million fund, his denial of wrongdoing and his eventual decision to give full disclosure to avoid the appearance of wrongdoing tallied 107.9 points.

EIGHTH: Widespread alarm by religious leaders over decisions by governmental taxing authorities in regard to church institutions finished with 102.5 points. It involved such issues as the Internal Revenue Service "integrated auxiliaries" ruling about filing of information forms by certain church institutions and efforts in Kentucky to remove the state Baptist convention's tax exemption.

Nine stories waged an extremely close battle in the balloting for ninth and tenth places.

**NINTH:** Top rating in finances, academics and enrollment given Southern Baptist colleges by Earl J. McGrath, national, known evaluator of educational effectiveness, in relation to others across the country collected 63.5 points. The McGrath Study, funded by a Lilly Endowment grant, involved a year of intensive study and includes a follow-up phase.

**TENTH:** Congressional efforts to confront issues involving human and civil rights, ethics and church-state relationships accumulated 55.2 points to barely shade furor surrounding Carter's appointment of a Vatican envoy (49 points); Carter's heralded stand on human rights (44.8); the continuing controversy surrounding racial problems, loss of pastor and split at Plains (Ga.) Baptist Church (44.5); the decision by SBC president James L. Sullivan not to seek a traditional second term and subsequent election of Jimmy Allen (36.1); acceptance of Christ by such well-known unbelievers as Charles "Tex" Watson and Susan Atkins of the Manson Family and Hustler publisher Larry Flynt (35.9); the SBC's vote to instruct agencies to assist Baptist churches in Canada (26.7); and the SBC's vote to instruct agencies to release salary data (22.6).

Out of 42 possible ballots among (BP) personnel and state Baptist editors, 12 state editors failed to return ballots. That represents a 71.43 percent return. Martin Bradley, manager of the research services department of the SBC Sunday School Board, Nashville, designed the statistically-weighted numerical rating system used by (BP)'s national office to tabulate ballots.

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Parochial School Ruling Tops  
1977 Church-State Poll

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12/27/77

SILVER SPRING, Md. (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court ruling in June that states cannot constitutionally aid parochial schools with field trip transportation or loans of instructional equipment was the top church-state story of 1977, according to the staffs of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and Church & State Magazine here.

The other significant stories in the Americans United top 10 were:

- (2) A massive new campaign launched in Congress to get federal aid to parochial schools via tuition reimbursement grants and income tax credits (the Packwood-Moynihan bill).
- (3) Resolutions by nine state legislatures requesting Congress to call a constitutional convention to amend the Constitution to outlaw abortion.
- (4) Denominational groups in Michigan campaigning to petition to referendum in 1978 a proposed amendment to the state constitution to provide full public funding for parochial schools under a voucher plan.
- (5) Transcendental Meditation (TM) found by a New Jersey federal court to be a substantially religious movement, and its teaching and promotion ordered banned from public schools.
- (6) A federal appeals court ruling that the National Labor Relations Board has no jurisdiction over Catholic schools since they are religious institutions. The Supreme Court is being asked to settle the controversy.
- (7) President Carter naming a "personal presidential envoy" to the Vatican, while efforts in Congress to pave the way for upgrading the envoy to ambassador rank were defeated.
- (8) The First World Congress on Religious Liberty held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in March.

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(9) The October Supreme Court affirmation of lower federal court rulings favorable to state aid for sectarian colleges.

(10) A federal district court in Rhode Island ruling in March that tax paid transportation services for parochial schools could not go beyond those provided to public schools.

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SBC Seminaries Approach  
9,000 Enrollment Mark

Baptist Press  
12/27/77

NASHVILLE (BP)--Another year of explosive growth saw enrollments at Southern Baptists' six theological seminaries increase over 800 to 8,805 in all degree and non-degree programs, according to updated reports.

Enrollments have risen nearly 1,000 a year since the 1974-75 total of some 6,000 among Southern Baptist seminaries, which include the two largest seminaries in the world (Southwestern and Southern) and the fourth largest (New Orleans). Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif. ranks third.

While combined totals for all programs--degree and non-degree--brought the six seminaries to the 8,805 figure, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), received a combined 8,392 (compared to 7,672 last year) total fall enrollment figure of students enrolled in SBC seminary degree programs, as accredited by ATS.

The ATS total for SBC seminaries represents a more than 9.1 percent increase over fall 1976. ATS said the six SBC seminaries showed the largest increase of seminaries of any one denominational body.

Southern Baptists this fall accounted for 18.5 percent of 45,222 students enrolled in 198 U. S. seminaries reporting to ATS. Last year, ATS reported 43,467 in 199 seminaries.

For the second straight year, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary claimed the largest percentage increase of the SBC seminaries, with a first term enrollment of 1,038, up 13 percent from 1976. Second term enrollment at all centers pushed the total to 1,139, making New Orleans the third largest SBC seminary, surpassing Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C., for the first time.

Southeastern Seminary showed an enrollment increase to 1,007, up from last fall's 997.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, reported a 1977 fall enrollment of 3,475, an increase of 7.9 percent over 1976. Enrollment at Southwestern has increased 122 percent since 1966, the first year of noticeable increase.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., had a 6.5 percent increase, moving up to 2,272 enrolled in its schools of theology, religious education and church music, the Boyce Bible School, and evening school program. The total marks the 17th consecutive year Southern Seminary has shown an enrollment increase.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., continued to set new records with an enrollment of 484, up 9 percent from 1976.

First term enrollment at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., which holds classes in four-week terms, was up 10 percent. Second term additions pushed the total to 428 in degree programs. An additional 70 students are enrolled in evening classes in the School of Christian Training, a non-degree program.

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Baptists Give Gifts  
To All S. C. Prisoners

Baptist Press  
12/27/77

COLUMBIA, S. C. (BP)--South Carolina Baptists gave a present to every prisoner in the state during the Christmas season.

Hundreds of churches affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention contributed items for more than 10,000 gift packages to be distributed by prison authorities.

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Each package contained personal hygiene items, candy, nuts, Scripture portions and a Christmas card.

"It's our way of letting the prisoners know we're thinking of them. We hope it will make their Christmas a bit brighter in spite of their situation," said Miss Bernice Popham, missions department associate coordinating the project.

She said she hopes the effort will alert South Carolina Baptists to possibilities for prison ministry at other times during the year, making it more than just a token gesture.

The convention sponsored a similar project last December, which distributed about 10,500 packages to prisoners. Prison authorities are enthusiastic about the program, Miss Popham said.

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Larry Flynt Resigns Post  
As Publisher of 'Hustler'

Baptist Press  
12/27/77

COLUMBUS, Oh. (BP)--Larry Flynt has resigned as publisher of Hustler magazine.

Flynt, who announced in November that he had become a Christian, has appointed Paul Krassner as publisher. Krassner was formerly publisher of The Realist, a magazine that was controversial in the 1960s because of its use of profane language in political articles, according to a report in Religious News Service.

Flynt is appealing a 25-year prison sentence that resulted from convictions on charges of pandering and involvement with organized crime in connection with Hustler.

Joanne Fairchild, public relations director for Flynt Publications, said there is no connection between Flynt's conversion and his efforts to overturn his conviction.

He earlier placed a full-page advertisement praising Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D.-Minn.), in 25 of the nation's Sunday newspapers.

In his message Flynt announced that on Dec. 21 he would begin a four-day "fast and prayer meditation for world peace, for an end to hunger and for you, Hubert Humphrey, and all the good things you represent."

"He (Flynt) has been very moved by Sen. Humphrey's very courageous fight against cancer and he is doing this as an independent gesture," Fairchild said.

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