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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Geography Likely Explains
SBC Registration Record

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Atlanta's location in the heart of almost three-fourths of all Southern Baptist churches likely explains the all-time record official registration of 22,872 messengers last month at the Southern Baptist Convention there.

Basing his observations on geographical and statistical factors, SBC Registration Secretary Lee Porter of Nashville said he doesn't expect such a huge registration again in the foreseeable future because no cities eligible for future meetings will have access to such a concentration of Baptists.

A statistical analysis by Baptist Press bears out that conclusion. Georgia and five bordering states (N.C., S.C., Ala., Tenn. and Fla.) accounted for 13,740 messengers, 60.1 percent of the total. Based on 1977 statistics, those states contain 43.5 percent (15,338 out of 35,255) of all SBC churches and 42.3 percent (5,530,057 out of 13,083,199) of all members of SBC churches.

Further BP analysis reveals that a 500-mile circumference--about one day's drive--drawn around Atlanta covers not only those six states (except for a tip of Florida) but all or substantial portions of nine other states. They are Kentucky, Mississippi, Virginia, West Virginia, Arkansas, Louisiana, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. They sent 5,316 messengers (23.2 percent) and contain 9,714 churches (27.6 percent) and 3,252,202 Southern Baptists (24.9 percent).

Combined, the 15 states accounted for 19,055, or 83.3 percent, of the 22,872 messengers, who came to Atlanta from 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and far surpassed the previous record of 18,637 in Norfolk, Va., in 1976.

The 15 states contain 25,052 Southern Baptist churches (71.1 percent) and 8,782,259 Southern Baptists (67.1 percent). All but West Virginia, which has only 66 churches with 17,708 members, placed in the top 20 states sending messengers.

Small portions of three other states--Missouri, Pennsylvania and Maryland--are touched by the 500-mile circumference. They accounted for another 978 messengers and contain combined statewide totals of 2,157 churches and 679,034 members but were not counted in the analysis.

Porter believes the record may not be exceeded until the SBC meets again in Atlanta in the distant future, unless some issue, event or other factor causes unusual interest in a given convention or convention city. None of the five cities planned for the SBC annual meetings between now and 1983 have such a huge chunk of Baptist population in close range. They are Houston, St. Louis, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Pittsburgh, 1979-83 respectively.

The same holds true for another group of cities--the only ones in the U.S., besides Atlanta and the five mentioned, which currently have enough facilities for an SBC meeting. They are Dallas, Kansas City, Chicago and New York City, and maybe Portland and San Francisco, which have borderline facilities, and possibly Miami, which would be eliminated if it approves casino gambling.

Future registration, under present conditions, will probably range between 16,000 and 20,000, Porter said. The exception would be Los Angeles in 1981, which would register much less, as did Portland, Ore., in 1973, when only 8,871 messengers registered. Only

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12 states, with 3,426,778 Southern Baptists (26.2 percent), are touched by a 1,000-mile circumference drawn around Los Angeles. That includes Texas statistics, although the circumference touches only a small portion of it.

The record-shattering 22,872, made official by an SBC Historical Commission tabulation, totals only 31 less than the unofficial figure of 22,903 announced at the close of the SBC, June 15. That record accompanies another record--462 persons registered in the SBC newsroom. That figure, 189 higher than the Norfolk record of 273, included 266 secular newsmagazine, daily newspaper and wire service writers, editors and photographers, as well as radio and television personnel and miscellaneous media representatives. Religious journalists, newsroom staff and others made up the rest.

A breakdown by states in the SBC registration ranked the host state of Georgia as number one, with 3,895 messengers and reveals Vermont as the only state not to send a messenger. Others in the top 10 were North Carolina, 2,334; South Carolina, 2,076; Alabama, 2,044; Tennessee, 1,913; Texas, 1,539; Florida, 1,478; Virginia, 1,169; Kentucky, 1,086; and Mississippi, 1,027.

Ten other states ranged from 104 to 721 messengers--Missouri, 721; Louisiana, 672; Arkansas, 476; Oklahoma, 440; Illinois, 327; Ohio, 311; Maryland, 207; Indiana, 188; California, 174; and New Mexico, 104.

Others were Michigan, 80; District of Columbia, 69; Kansas, 67; Colorado and West Virginia, 60 each; Arizona, 52; Pennsylvania, 50; New York, 34; Washington, 20; South Dakota, 19; Oregon and New Jersey, 18 each; Alaska, Wisconsin and Wyoming, 12 each; Hawaii, 11; Connecticut and Nevada, 10 each; Minnesota and Nebraska, 9 each; Delaware, Iowa, Massachusetts and Utah, 8 each; Idaho, 7; Puerto Rico, 6; Rhode Island, 4; Montana and North Dakota, 3 each; Maine and New Hampshire, 2 each.

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13 MSC Volunteers
Going to 8 Countries

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RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Thirteen Southern Baptist Mission Service Corps volunteers have been approved by the Foreign Mission Board to work in eight different countries in eight different types of service.

The new group, almost twice the number already serving overseas in the volunteer program, represents a combined mission commitment of 17 years. MSC is a program in which volunteers may serve one or two years at home or abroad.

One of the four couples approved will serve in England, where no Southern Baptist career missionaries currently work. Larry and Mary Ann Michael, accompanied by an infant daughter, will live in Kent, England, where he will be pastoral assistant for the Tonbridge Baptist Church. They are from Cumberland, Md., and will be supported by the Tonbridge Church, Shively Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., and First Baptist Church, Yazoo City, Miss.

Three of the volunteers will serve in Kenya. Edley and Betty Felts of Chamois, Mo., will teach at Rosslyn Academy near Nairobi, Kenya. The academy serves as a primary and mid-level school for the children of missionaries. Their costs will be borne by the academy. G. H. Cain of Pasadena, Texas, will be an agriculturist and science teacher for one year at the Nyeri (Kenya) Baptist High School. The Baptist General Convention of Texas will provide Cain's support.

One of the volunteers for foreign service will stay in the United States. Nola M. Granberry of San Antonio, Texas, will serve at the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Texas, and provide her own support.

Three other widowed or single women were among the volunteers. Derthia Vell Taube of Mobile, Ala., will be curriculum director and teacher at Colegio Maya School, Guatemala City, Guatemala. Her support will come from the school.

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Mildred G. Taylor of Columbia, S.C., will be a houseparent at a hostel for missionary kids in Jakarta, Indonesia, supporting herself. She says she will be doing what she has done all of her life--caring for children. Only now they will belong to someone else.

Edna Dunaway will leave her home in Clearwater, Fla., for a year as administrator of a Bible Way Correspondence School in Gaborone, Botswana. Her support will come from herself, a gift from an individual in Georgia, and other undesignated Mission Service Corps gifts.

Two other couples round out the Mission Service Corps group. Charles and Oattie Arrington, assigned to an interim pastorate in Rota, Spain, will return to the mission field. They have served previously as Southern Baptist missionary associates in English-language work. They have been living in Clemson, S.C. Their support will be provided by Rota Baptist Church.

Stewardship work is the assignment of Bill and Jerry Guffey of Shreveport, La. An anonymous donor of Broadmoor Baptist Church there will support their year of service in the Turks and Caicos Islands near the Bahamas.

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Ben Elrod Named
Georgetown President

Baptist Press
7/3/78

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (BP)--Ben M. Elrod, senior vice president and director of development at Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Ark., has been named the 21st president of Georgetown (Ky.) College.

Elrod, 47, was elected by a unanimous vote of the trustees of the Baptist college. He will assume his duties Aug. 1, succeeding Robert L. Mills, who will remain as chancellor.

A native of Little Rock, Ark., Elrod is a graduate of Ouachita and received the bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and the doctor of education degree from Indiana University.

Elrod has served as a pastor and counselor in Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma, and was named vice president for development at Ouachita in 1963, serving until 1968, when he was elected president of Oakland City (Ind.) College. He returned to Ouachita as vice president for development in 1970 and was named senior vice president and director of development earlier this year.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Ouachita Baptist University.

Slain Missionary's Colleagues
Intent On Returning To Africa

By Ruth Fowler

Baptist Press
7/3/78

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--One of their missionary colleagues has been killed by guerrilla forces, but their commitment is clear--Southern Baptist missionaries now in the United States on furlough from eastern and southern Africa indicate they have every intention of going back.

The stabbing death of Archie G. Dunaway Jr. by guerillas on Sanyati (Rhodesia) Baptist Compound, June 15, brought grief to missionaries around the world. But missionaries, attending the annual Ridgecrest Foreign Missions Conference, said they plan to return to their mission work, whether in Rhodesia or in more peaceful nations such as Kenya and Tanzania.

Eugene and Reva Milby, for example, are stationed at Plumtree, Rhodesia, two miles from the Botswana border. They understand that the government or the mission (organization of missionaries in Rhodesia) may tell them it would be too dangerous to return there.

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"If they said I couldn't go back to my work in that area, I'd have to re-evaluate," Milby said. "I think we would have to determine if we would want to transfer to another field." But the Milbys agree that they intend to work at Plumtree, "until the door slams shut."

Ed and Mary Ann (Missy) Moses had been stationed at Sanyati, living next door to the Dunaways, until their recent transfer to the newly independent land of Bophuthatswana.

"I had the place I would hide if guerrillas came all picked out," Mrs. Moses said. "But I wasn't really afraid. I had been sent this scripture, 'the gates shall not be closed.'"

They trusted God to keep them in Rhodesia as long as he wanted them there. Then the call to go to Bophuthatswana became as strong as the call had been to work in Rhodesia.

As a pharmacist and church worker in Bophuthatswana they will not be returning to the kind of political turmoil Rhodesia missionaries are now facing. "Whatever the consequences we had the peace to stay until God told us to leave," Moses said. "We were not called to leave Rhodesia so much as called to go to do something else, to pioneer work in Bophuthatswana."

Whether returning to Rhodesia, or to a nation that hasn't had the visible problems of Rhodesia, the whole missionary family of eastern and southern Africa has been affected by Dunaway's death.

"A lot of our friends and relatives have expressed concern about our going back," said Betty (Mrs. Charles) Bedenbaugh. But in returning to their work in Tanzania, the Bedenbaughs feel no personal sense of danger.

Their main concern is that travel restrictions between Tanzania and Kenya have been tightened and their son will be in boarding school in Kenya. They know that even in case of an emergency, it would be difficult for them to reach their son for several days.

The R. Jay E. Stewarts will return to publications work in Kenya, another peaceful African nation. "There's risk in anything that we do," Stewart said. "The risk of physical danger in Kenya is probably about the same as driving on U.S. highways," he continued. "Risks are worth taking for doing the will of God."

That's where the whole issue centers with Dunaway's colleagues--the will of God. Without exception, every Africa missionary interviewed was aware of the possible dangers of service in a politically unsettled area, but also aware of the strength of the will of God in their lives.

Moses also expressed conviction that Dunaway was where God wanted him to be. "Why (this happened)," he said, "we cannot fully understand. But God will work this to his glory. "I am convinced God will use Archie's death to bring many black Africans to know the Lord."

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SBC Cooperative Program 11
Percent Ahead of Last Year

Baptist Press
7/3/78

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Through the first nine months of the 1977-78 fiscal year, giving to the national Southern Baptist Cooperative Program is running 11.04 percent ahead of last year, according to statistics.

To date, undesignated gifts through the Cooperative Program, which funds worldwide missions and capital needs of SBC agencies, has collected \$42,856,390--a \$4,262,211 increase over the same point last year.

Total giving to national SBC causes, including the Cooperative Program figure and another \$45,491,975 in designated giving, amounts to \$88,348,365. That represents a 12.22 percent, or \$9,621,727, increase over last year.

Giving to the Cooperative Program in June, alone, increased 22.72 percent, rising from \$4,085,024 in June of 1977 to \$5,013,080 in June of 1978. That figure, plus another \$3,388,255 in designated giving in June, 1978 (a 2.16 percent decrease over June, 1977) brought total gifts for the month to \$8,401,335. That represents an overall increase for the month of 11.30 percent.

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