



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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79-26

SBC Programs Record
Four Losses, One Gain

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Four of the five Southern Baptist Convention church program organizations registered losses in this year's final SBC statistical report, with church music experiencing an enrollment gain for the 14th consecutive year.

Southern Baptists' church training program was estimated in the December statistical report for a .2 percent gain for the year, but the final report showed a loss of .1 percent, or 2,478 members, by far the smallest loss in 15 years.

A change in the reporting process on the annual church letter, which asked churches for the first time to include people in church training activities other than those in the Sunday night ongoing training groups, had a positive effect on the church training enrollment total.

Baptisms also dropped again this year, decreasing by 9,640 from 345,690 to 336,050, but membership rose .9 percent from 13,083,199 to 13,196,979 and SBC churches went up .4 percent from 35,255 to 35,404.

Total receipts of the Southern Baptist Convention increased by 10.5 percent last year to a total of nearly \$2 billion.

C. B. Hogue, director, evangelism section, SBC Home Mission Board, expressed concern over the drop in baptisms, but is optimistic about the future. "I have faith in God who will bring to harvest all the seed we and others have sown in our efforts to evangelize this nation. Hopefully the leadership in the churches will expend themselves in whatever efforts are necessary to reap the harvest."

Church music, with an enrollment increase this year of 42,589, or 3.1 percent, also had a change in guidelines on the annual church letter, which specified the inclusion of certain general leaders for the first time. This resulted in a significant jump in general music leader enrollment for the year, and is included in the music enrollment total. Also, eight percent more churches, or 1,864, reported new church music programs this year over last.

Sunday School enrollment, down by almost 93,000, or 1.2 percent, decreased for the second straight year, following five years of increases. Total Sunday School enrollment now is 7,338,046.

Harry Piland, director of the Sunday School department, SBC Sunday School Board, said although the decline was less than projected, it still is "a clear signal to Southern Baptist churches to renew our commitment to aggressively reach out in loving, caring concern to the millions of persons in our nation who are not enrolled or involved in Bible study. It is the job of the Sunday School to enroll them, to witness to them, and to seek to lead them to Christ."

Woman's Missionary Union enrollment decreased during the past year by 2.1 percent, or 23,119, to a total just under 1.1 million.

Carolyn Weatherford, executive director, Woman's Missionary Union, said, "We have good indications that Woman's Missionary Union work is progressing well in the churches and we are doing everything possible to reverse the statistics."

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Brotherhood enrollment also experienced a loss this year, down 1.4 percent to 466,698, a loss of 6,611.

Bob Banks, director of the program section, Brotherhood Commission, was "disappointed in the loss in Brotherhood work, especially in the light of need for a strong missions base in the churches at the time of Bold Mission Thrust. Southern Baptists must provide viable missions education programs in the churches if Bold Mission Thrust goals are to be reached."

The annual statistical report is prepared by the research services department at the Sunday School Board, using information submitted by 34,989 reporting churches. Four hundred and fifteen churches did not report.

Summary of the 1978 SBC Statistics:				
	<u>1978</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>Gain or Loss</u>	<u>Percent Gain or Loss</u>
Churches	35,404	35,255	149	0.4
Total Membership	13,196,979	13,083,199	113,780	0.9
Baptisms	336,050	345,690	-9,640	-2.8
Sunday School Ongoing Enrollment	7,338,046	7,430,931	-92,885	-1.2
Church Training Ongoing Enrollment	1,775,701	1,778,179	-2,478	-0.1
Woman's Missionary Union, Ongoing Enrollment	1,094,966	1,118,085	-23,119	-2.1
Brotherhood Ongoing Enrollment	466,698	473,309	-6,611	-1.4
Church Music Ongoing Enrollment	1,424,693	1,382,104	42,589	3.1
Total Receipts	\$1,986,040,615	\$1,797,139,698	\$188,900,917	10.5
Total Mission Expenditures	\$ 316,919,377	\$ 289,372,474	\$ 27,656,425	9.5

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Wrapup

SBC Peace Convocation

Urges SALT II Approval

By Stan Hastey and Rex Hammock

Baptist Press
2/19/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--More than 400 Southern Baptists attending a denominational meeting on peacemaking and the nuclear arms race endorsed the proposed SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union.

The SALT resolution urged the U.S. Senate to ratify the treaty and called on Southern Baptist pastors, laypeople, and denominational leaders to consider declaring themselves for the treaty.

The convocation was convened by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics professor Glen H. Stassen; seminary student government president Robert Parham; and Carman Sharp, pastor of Louisville's Deer Park Baptist Church, in response to a strongly worded resolution on nuclear arms limitation adopted last June by the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta.

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Participants at the two-day meeting at Deer Park church also called on the 13-million-member denomination to look beyond SALT II and work for multilateral disarmament.

Another resolution called on the SBC Executive Committee to fund and staff three new positions for persons designated to deal exclusively with peace, world hunger, and human rights.

By implication, the statement chided the nation's largest Protestant denomination's two biggest agencies, the Foreign and Home Mission Boards, for failing to engage in political activity on behalf of human rights.

The statement further challenged multinational corporations "to issue impact statements of their policies in regard to world hunger, peace and human rights."

Several denominational agencies were urged to provide literature and other educational materials to help local pastors and churches in educating Southern Baptists about peace issues.

Local churches should observe Christian Citizenship Sunday on the Sunday before the Fourth of July with a special emphasis on peacemaking, another resolution declared.

The Christian Life Commission, which sponsors the special day each year, was urged to provide new information to churches "concerning the nuclear arms race and its implications for Southern Baptist life and mission as peacemakers in our world."

Individually, Baptists were urged to renew their "personal and corporate worship" leading to the development of "lifestyles which lessen motives that lead to violence and war."

David Matthews, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., warned conferees that "the awesome amassing of destructive nuclear power is a manifestation of idolatry."

While America claims trust in God, Matthews said, "When it comes to protecting our property and pleasure we trust in ourselves and our weapons." This, he said, "is one of the most spectacular denials in all time of God's sovereign lordship."

U.S. Sen. Wendell Ford, D-Ky., told the convocation that he has not decided whether to vote for the proposed SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union.

Ford, a Baptist, commended his denomination for adopting the peace resolution, but said that his eventual decision hinges on the ability of the U.S. to verify the Soviets' willingness to abide by the terms of the treaty.

William Dyess, deputy assistant secretary of state for public affairs, insisted that Soviet concern over details during the lengthy negotiating process of SALT II indicates their real commitment to an agreement. Dyess, also a Baptist, said he does not believe the Russians' aim during the process has been "to get us to let down our guard."

Richard Barnet, director of the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., warned that "the political reality that hangs over us... is that the world is drifting toward nuclear war. On both sides, people are planning for war and feel that it is inevitable."

He explained that Christians confronting the arms race are torn between the clear biblical call to peacemaking and what are popularly considered to be the practical realities.

Convocation participants also heard from several Southern Baptist pastors, educators, and agency representatives on practical approaches to peacemaking.

Walter B. Shurden, associate professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, declared that Southern Baptists have historically recognized the spiritual dimensions of peacemaking.

Reviewing five statements on peace adopted by the SBC in this century, Shurden admitted that "it is true that Southern Baptists have mostly talked, resolved and urged."

Bill Elder of the SBC Christian Life Commission called on the conferees to narrow their present political activities to the passage of SALT II. He challenged the convocation to help influence the votes of undecided senators from 16 states.

Phil Strickland of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission discussed the role of human rights and world hunger on the peacemaking process. While admitting that some defense spending is necessary to maintain justice in the world, Strickland said, "Assuring our freedom is important but we should have learned from the prodigal that the critical issue is what we do with our freedom."

C. Welton Gaddy, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, told the convocation of the importance of the local church in initiating peace.

"Our influence to . . . erect structures of peace is directly related to the pervasiveness of peacemaking convictions within the memberships of our individual congregations," he said.

Also addressing the convocation were a pair of non-Baptist peace activists.

Gordon Cosby, pastor of the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C., urged the Christian community not to turn over the decision to implement arms systems to government "experts."

"It is not hard for me to look at some proposal which is given to me by my government, such as the monstrous new weapons system, and to know that it makes the peace of God unbelievable," he said.

Dale Brown, professor of theology at Bethany Theological Seminary, called on Christians to raise the arms race as an issue, adding "We must keep peacemaking in the realm of biblical hope."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers from conference.

Baptist Senator Ford
Undecided on SALT II

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--U.S. Senator Wendell Ford, D-Ky., told 400 persons at a Southern Baptist Convocation on Peacemaking and the Nuclear Arms Race that he has not decided whether to vote for the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union.

Ford said that his eventual decision will hinge on the ability of the United States to verify the Soviets' willingness to abide by the terms of the treaty.

"Peace is a two-way proposition," he said, "where the intentions and goals of one party must be just as honorable and sincere as the other."

The meeting was a follow-up to a resolution on arms control passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in its annual session in Atlanta last June. It was convened by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics professor Glen H. Stassen, seminary student government president Robert Parham, and Carman Sharp, pastor of Louisville's Deer Park Baptist Church, where the convocation was held.

While commending his denomination for adopting the resolution, Ford indicated he will take into account the so-called "linkage" issue before deciding on SALT II.

Ford said the treaty must be linked to considerations such as the recent Russian-backed invasion of Cambodia by Vietnamese forces, the Russians' supplying arms to a growing Cuban army in Africa, and "documented repeated violation of human rights" by the Soviet Union.

He said also he will be looking at national security and defense needs before making up his mind on the nearly-completed treaty. The goals of peace and an adequate national defense "are not incompatible," he declared.

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Also addressing conferees were William Dyess, deputy assistant secretary of state for public affairs, and Richard Barnet, director of the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington, D. C.

Dyess, like Ford, emphasized the importance of verification as a feature of the treaty. "We do not ask them to trust us, and they don't ask us to trust them," he said.

He expressed confidence that the U.S. will be able to verify Soviet compliance and expressed the view that the Soviets will not "cheat."

In spite of the Soviet Union's rapid move in recent years to catch up with American nuclear forces, Dyess said he believes that the Russians still have immense respect for American technology, a respect attributed in large measure to a demonstrated superiority of the U.S. in the race to place men on the moon.

He also insisted that Soviet concern over details during the lengthy negotiating process indicates real commitment to an agreement. He said he does not believe the Russians' aim during the process has been "to get us to let down our guard."

In spite of his overall optimism over provisions in the treaty, Dyess said there is "no doubt" that each side could destroy the other "several times over."

Dyess warned that the U.S. military budget will mushroom if SALT II is not passed by the Senate. Even with a treaty, he went on, Americans can expect continued but much more moderate annual increases in defense spending.

Barnet, a former official at the U.S. State and Defense Departments, warned that "the political reality that hangs over us... is that the world is drifting toward nuclear war."

"What most concerns me," he said, "is that on both sides people are planning for war and feel that it is inevitable."

The real danger in the arms race, Barnet declared, is not so much a premeditated first strike attack, but a war resulting from "miscalculation."

He said that Christians confronting the arms race are in a "schizophrenic dilemma" between the clear biblical call to peacemaking and what are popularly considered to be the practical realities.

For Christians, he said, the issue is not "guns versus butter," but what we believe about Christ's teachings.

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SBC Peace Conference Told
Bible Calls For Arms Halt

By Rex Hammock

Baptist Press
2/19/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--"The awesome amassing of destructive nuclear power is a manifestation of idolatry," a South Carolina minister told participants of a Southern Baptist Convocation on Peacemaking and the Nuclear Arms Race.

The arms race, said David Matthews, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., "is one of the most spectacular denials in all time of God's sovereign lordship."

While America claims trust in God, Matthews explained, "when it comes to protecting our property and pleasure we trust in ourselves and our weapons."

Matthews was one of several religious leaders to speak to the conferees on the biblical and theological implications of the arms race and peacemaking.

Gordon Cosby, pastor of the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C., told participants that "the preparation to kill any segment of the global family is a denial of the vision which Christians should have.

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"When Christ meets us," he explained, "he gives us a sense of his presence coupled with a vision of the global family in unity. This is the shalom or peace of God."

Cosby argued that the Christian community should not turn over to government experts the decision to implement arms systems.

"Often we hear that the issues are so complex that only the experts can tell us what to do," he said. "But no expert gives me my vision. That is given to me only by the crucified one (Jesus Christ)."

"It is not hard for me to look at some proposal which is given to me by my government, such as the monstrous new weapons system, and to know that it makes the peace of God unbelievable by hundreds of million people around the world."

Cosby compared the church's present role in the arms race to that of the church in Nazi Germany.

"As the Christian community had complicity in the holocaust which occurred against Jews in Nazi Germany, the church now has complicity in the holocaust which will occur with nuclear war."

That possible holocaust, said Dale Brown, professor of theology at Bethany Theological Seminary, "is so terrible that many Christians don't want to face it. We want to sweep it under the rug."

Brown called for Christians to raise the arms race as an issue, reminding convocation participants "we must keep peacemaking in the realm of biblical hope."

"Our Bible," added Matthews, "is a profound peace treatise. It centers around a peacemaker--the peacemaker."

"As the mediator between heaven and earth, between neighbor and neighbor, Jesus is our peace."

The meeting at Louisville's Deer Park Baptist Church, a follow-up to a resolution on arms control passed at last June's annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, was attended by more than 400 persons from 17 states and the District of Columbia.

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Speakers Offer Practical
Suggestions on Peace

By Gene Puckett

Baptist Press
2/19/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Recognizing the danger of "400 people drowning in a sea of words," several speakers offered suggestions on achieving peace during the Southern Baptist Convocation on Peacemaking and the Nuclear Arms Race in Louisville.

"It is true that Southern Baptists have mostly talked, resolved and urged," Walter Shurden, associate professor of church history at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, told 400 persons from 17 states. "But we will not do much about peace until we talk about it."

Bill Elder, of the SBC Christian Life Commission, said: "We have the potential within us simply by virtue of our size, not to mention an incredible reservoir of talent and energy, to provide the crucial grassroots leadership which is so essential if our action is ever to turn toward the goal of a more peaceful and humane world. To fail to take the redemptive steps we're capable of taking would be nothing less than the gravest of corporate sins."

Elder, who narrowed the broad spectrum of political involvement to a consideration of the proposed SALT II treaty, called for commitment from Southern Baptists that exceeds mere recognition of the task and formation of detailed, planned strategies.

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"There comes a time when we must fish or cut bait," he said, noting that implementation of beliefs and plans will be essential to any effective influence in achieving world peace.

Analyzing three prevailing attitudes on maintaining America's security, Elder placed the SALT II efforts by the Carter Administration in the middle and said that those who advocate total disarmament should support SALT II because "it is a true step in the direction" of peace.

Elder urged persons from the religious community who support the SALT II process to define their primary targets--government (particularly the U.S. Senate's 16 undecided members), the denomination and the general public--while making accurate assessments of their resources and liabilities. He also warned that those who support SALT II must evaluate carefully the positions and arguments of those who oppose the treaty.

"Our job is not to win arguments," he stressed, "but to win support."

Phil Strickland of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission contended that ours is an age of choices. He said these choices relate to values, priorities and power. "Man is God's best effort, not government," he declared, "and government is to serve the needs of man, not man serve the needs of government."

"For Christians, the answer should ring clear. There are things more important than self-interest," Strickland said, detailing human rights and the necessity of some defense spending to maintain justice in the world.

"Justice is necessary to apply love. And in a world of sinful men, justice presupposes power," he said. "Assuring our freedom is important. But we should have learned from the prodigal that the critical issue is what we do with our freedom."

C. Welton Gaddy, pastor of the Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and former Christian Life Commission staffer, said, "Any effective initiative for peace among religious groups in the United States will be a local church movement."

"The impressiveness of our influence to halt the production of new weaponry, to dismantle the machinery of war, and to erect structures of peace is directly related to the pervasiveness of peacemaking convictions within the memberships of our individual congregations," he said.

Gaddy suggested local churches could embody peacemaking efforts by an emphasis upon it in worship--"we incorporate into public worship those matters which we consider most important."

A consistent study and application of the biblical concept of peacemaking is required, insisted Gaddy, who encouraged a pastoral-prophetic implementation of the concept.

Gaddy said churches should be organized for information, action and models of peacemaking. "The politics of the church must at least be as open as the highly visible politics we demand of government," Gaddy observed. "The church must demonstrate the possibility of diversity without militant divisiveness."

Gaddy called upon Southern Baptists to practice consistency on the matter of peace and that local congregations should be models of peacemaking in the world today.