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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Baptism Increase Leads
1978-79 SBC Projections

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Initial projections from Southern Baptist churches indicate a significant rise in baptisms for the 1978-79 year, plus increases in mission expenditures, total receipts, church music and Brotherhood enrollments and church membership.

Losses are projected in Sunday School, church training and Woman's Missionary Union enrollments.

All of the projections are made on the basis of figures from three-fourths of Southern Baptist churches. Final figures, based on information from about 35,500 churches, will be released in February 1980, and will differ slightly from projected figures.

The baptism total is predicted to increase by 9.7 percent for the 1978-79 year after a loss last year of more than 9,000, or almost 3 percent. The projected increase this year represents more than 32,000 additional baptisms, bringing the total to more than 368,000. The upturn would end a three year decline.

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, said the increase in baptisms is "significant, and establishes the direction for the years ahead. It is a reflection of an added interest in the basic purpose of the churches in reaching people for Christ."

"Even with this advance," he added, "we are a great distance from accomplishing our goals of Bold Mission Thrust. Personal commitment and sacrifice are mandatory because there is so much to be done in the name of Jesus Christ."

Mission expenditures are expected to be up by 10.5 percent this year, bringing the total to nearly \$350.2 million--an increase of more than \$33 million. Total receipts of Southern Baptist churches should go over \$2.2 billion during the year, an increase of 11.8 percent, or more than \$234 million.

Church music has the largest projected program enrollment percentage increase, with 2.8 percent, or 39,891, to bring the church music total enrollment to more than 1.465 million. The increase continues a trend in church music enrollment, which has been rising since the first report in 1957, except for two years when changes were made in the reporting process.

William J. Reynolds, secretary of the church music department, said, "The splendid increase reported by the churches...reflects the excellent leadership of church music directors."

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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Brotherhood enrollment is estimated to post a one percent gain for the year, just over a 4,600 increase. That brings the total to more than 471,000.

James H. Smith, executive director of the Brotherhood Commission, expressed gratitude "for this growing commitment of men and boys to Christian missions as expressed by the increase in enrollment, and for the effort of state Baptist brotherhood leaders and others in presenting missions opportunities to churches with such conviction.

"It is my prayer that this growing interest is but a prelude to a mammoth mobilization in the churches of men and boys for missions outreach and ministry during the 'Decade of the Laity' starting in 1980."

Church membership is projected to climb by 1.4 percent to a total of almost 13.4 million. The gain represents 184,758 new members in Southern Baptist churches, compared to an increase of 113,780 last year.

Woman's Missionary Union enrollment is projected to be down by one percent this year, to a total of 1,084,016. The loss represents almost 11,000.

"In January the executive board of the Woman's Missionary Union will consider a massive strategy for enlarging the number of churches reporting WMU organizations," said Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the WMU. "There's only so much that can be done at a national level, however."

"WMU is continuing to revise strategies to enable employed women to participate effectively in missions and church activities that have traditionally relied on housewives for a large amount of volunteer work," she continued. "This statistic raises the question of whether pastors, ministers of education and congregations are willing to give time, budget, emphasis and encouragement to WMU."

The anticipated loss in enrollment for the Sunday School program of 0.1 percent represents an expected loss of 7,338, which will leave the total enrollment at more than 7.3 million. This small loss is significant because Sunday School enrollment was down by more than 92,000 last year.

"I am not pleased with a 7,338 loss in Sunday School enrollment," stated Sunday School department secretary Harry Piland, "not when there are millions in our nation not involved in any kind of Bible study. I am, however, encouraged by the fact that the loss is far less than last year."

"In any case, the direction of the Sunday School department is clear," he continued, "We shall do all in our power to lead our churches to reach out, enroll and win every possible person. We shall ask for the direction of the Holy Spirit in this monumental and deeply significant task."

In the church training program, a loss of nearly 32,000, or 1.8 percent, is projected for the 1978-79 year, making the total enrollment more than 1.74 million.

"We have spent a year of intensive work in streamlining and strengthening all aspects of church training," commented Roy Edgemon, secretary of the church training department, "and we are now focusing on discipleship and doctrinal training as never before to help church members in Bible doctrine and assist them in Christian growth."

"Of course, I was hoping that church training enrollment would be up this year," Edgemon continued, "but I am confident that God is blessing the work and that there is a commitment and enthusiasm on the part of the pastors and church leaders to equip all of God's people."

Projected statistics are taken from information on the Uniform Church Letter, submitted annually by churches in the Southern Baptist Convention. Statistics for the projected figures were taken from the first 26,309 letters received by the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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Baptist Schools In Bowl Games

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Wake Forest and Baylor Universities didn't end up playing in a "Baptist Bowl" as some had hoped, but the football teams of the two Southern Baptist schools will both play in post season bowl games.

Wake Forest (8-3) of the Atlantic Coast Conference will play Louisiana State University (6-5) of the Southeastern Conference, Dec. 22 in the Tangerine Bowl in Orlando, Fla. Baylor University (7-4) of the Southwest Conference will play Clemson University of the ACC, Dec. 31 in the Peach Bowl in Atlanta, Ga.

Baylor, whose junior linebacker, Mike Singletary, made the Associated Press first team All-America squad, was ranked 19th in both the AP and UPI polls at the end of the regular season. Clemson was ranked 18th and 17th respectively. Wake Forest, which had appeared in the top 20 earlier in the season, and LSU are both unranked.

Meanwhile, Alan Duncan, son of Southern Baptist missionaries to Kenya, who hopes to return eventually as a missionary to Africa, will play with the University of Tennessee (7-4) of the SEC against Purdue (9-2) of the Big 10, Dec. 31, in the Bluebonnet Bowl in Houston, Texas.

Duncan, a junior, completed the regular season with 10 field goals in 15 attempts and 33 consecutive extra points to lead the Tennessee team for the second year in scoring. During two years as the school's first string place kicker, Duncan has scored 128 points on 23 field goals in 32 attempts and 59 extra points in 61 attempts. He has hit 40 consecutive extra points over the past two seasons.

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Kennedy Campaigns In Black Baptist Church

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WASHINGTON (BP)--U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) took his presidential campaign to a black Baptist church here and received the endorsement of several prominent pastors of black churches.

In an obvious effort to cut into President Carter's popularity with the black community, Kennedy criticized his rival for the Democratic presidential nomination without mentioning his name. "Too often in the past, those who were white came to our black sisters and brothers with their idea of what was best for you," he said.

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He declared that instead, "We must hear your wisdom and heed your will. We must not only ask for your votes in an election year; we must ask for your views on every issue, every year."

Kennedy's visit to the historic Shiloh Baptist Church, located in one of Washington's poorest neighborhoods, came at the invitation of the church's pastor, Henry C. Gregory III, and other area pastors eager to endorse the Massachusetts senator.

The occasion took on the air of a normal Sunday worship service, with the choir singing both before and after Kennedy's address to a packed house. At least three members of the D.C. City Council were also present to lend their support.

Kennedy repeated his support of a measure now pending in Congress to make the birthday of the late Martin Luther King Jr. a national holiday and for final passage of the embattled Equal Rights Amendment.

He also called for new battles against poverty and unemployment as they afflict blacks and for full voting rights for D.C. residents. He declared his support for strengthening the nation's black colleges.

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Elderly Lady Carpenter
Travels World on Mission

By Beth Sayers Wildes

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SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--"Ben, I can do carpentry work. Can you use me?" The words seemed to spill out of Clara Pahl's mouth.

But if Ben Freeman was shocked by Clara's offer, he concealed it well. "Sure," he said. "You can go."

As minister of activities and missions at Trinity Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, Freeman was organizing a construction team for a short-term missions project in El Salvador.

Clara probably wasn't the kind of person Ben had envisioned as a crew member for the rugged assignment. She was 69 years old.

That was in January 1976. Since then, 73-year-old Clara has logged thousands of air miles on seven short-term projects all over the world.

"Why the Lord asked me to get in on all of this, I don't know," she says. "I don't have any education. I do have a good, strong body and the ability to learn."

She is also a skilled carpenter. Because of this skill, she's gone to El Salvador once and Costa Rica and Mexico City twice.

There's almost nothing Clara can't do in construction. She's dropped ceilings, put in cabinets, installed sheetrock, and made church pews.

She gained her knowledge of carpentry by remodeling some houses herself.

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"I'd come to a problem I didn't know how to handle--maybe hang a door, put some cabinets up. I'd give up and go home," she says.

"But in the night, it would come to me just as clear as everything--this is the way you do it. I'd go back the next day, and it would work perfectly. Now who was telling me how to do that?"

Although Clara says she's more comfortable putting a roof on a church than speaking from a pulpit, she spoke and witnessed on two of her trips.

"Those were different kinds of trips for me. I didn't take my saw and hammer," she says of journeys to Japan and Eastern Europe.

"I've found on these trips that God will supply your needs. He'll speak for you. He'll do what you can't do," she says.

According to Clara, God has also taken care of the financial arrangements.

"For more than 23 years, I've sold advertising for the North Side Recorder, a weekly newspaper. I work on commission, so I put whatever I want to in my job.

"But these trips aren't cheap. Even so, the money I've spent on them has been returned to me many times. When I'd get back, I'd have extra work to do. I put right back in savings what I had taken out.

"But I don't think you should count on that happening. You should go because you want to go. I don't go just for the trip. My main concern is always--can God use me?"

In addition to projects outside the continental United States, Clara also has helped in two projects in Rio Grande City on the Mexican border and three projects in San Antonio.

"I've enjoyed these trips," she says. "I've gotten the greatest joy out of my Christianity and out of serving the Lord since I've been going.

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