



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

# --- FEATURES

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SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2356  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

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California Congregation  
Places Priority on Others

By Marv Knox

FULLERTON, Calif. (BP)—Members of Sunny Hills Baptist Church believe congregations should spend more on others than on themselves, and their figures prove their sincerity.

With only 47 members, the church gave \$41,725.49 last year to the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist Convention's unified budget to finance missions and education. That was an average of \$887.78 per resident member—more than 11 times the next highest per capita average in California.

The church's ability to give so much is not a matter of wealth, but a decision of priority, says pastor Bill Grady.

"When we started this church in 1962, we owned five acres of land and had a master plan for a large auditorium, gym and other buildings," he explains. "But God led us to believe we should spend our money on people, not buildings."

Consequently, the church still meets in the chapel of Fullerton's YMCA, and Grady still serves bivocationally, supporting himself through land investment.

"Our goal is to always give out more than we spend on ourselves," Grady says. The church hopes to give 51.18 percent of its budget through the Cooperative Program and associational missions this year.

The Sunny Hills congregation specifically gives to the Cooperative Program because members know their offering dollars go to support mission causes all around the world, Grady explains.

"It's great for each member to know he or she is contributing to the life support of our state convention and agencies beyond the local church," he says. "Our people enjoy helping missionaries, churches, orphanages, hospitals, schools and universities—all through their offerings and we believe it's biblical, too."

"There are many small churches with few expenses that can do the same thing," he insists. "Larger churches—those with buildings to maintain and salaries to pay—may say this is impractical, but I think all of us can do more. You are not giving away anything when you give to the Lord."

"The Holy Spirit convicts us that we, the local church, are the living body of Christ, and thus we must give tithes and offerings, just as each individual believes he is expected to give if he is a faithful steward," he adds.

In addition to its Cooperative Program giving, the church also places a high priority on the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

During the past three years, per capita gifts have averaged \$124 to the Lottie Moon offering and \$69.33 to the Annie Armstrong offering, best in the Southern Baptist Convention.



## **BAPTIST PRESS**

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**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
SBC Executive Committee  
480 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
Wilmer C. Fields, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

### **BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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### South Carolina Baptists Multiply Hunger Giving

**COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)**--A new fund raising program has helped South Carolina Baptists multiply last year's gifts to world hunger more than six times.

The 1,705 churches of the South Carolina Baptist Convention had given a record \$818,005 for world hunger as of Sept. 26, and the total is expected to top the \$1 million mark by the year's end, according to Flynn T. Harrell, executive assistant for business affairs. That compares to some \$125,000 the state's Baptists gave last year for both hunger and disaster relief.

A key factor behind the dramatic increase is a program using plastic banks which look like bowls of rice. They were distributed to 144,000 Southern Baptists across the state last year to place on the table for mealtime hunger offerings. It is the first time a state convention has used such a concept, which has been an effective tool for some private hunger agencies.

Although the offering was to be collected in churches during World Hunger Day in August, funds continue to come in to the convention's office in Columbia. "Judging by the way funds are coming in, we feel sure by the end of the year the total very easily could reach the \$1 million mark," Harrell said.

The plan adopted by the convention during its annual session in 1979 calls for funds collected during the offering to be distributed on a percentage basis: 85 percent to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, 10 percent to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, and five percent for in-state use by the convention.

Originator of the program was Alastair C. Walker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, and member of the Foreign Mission Board. He introduced the concept to the convention while serving as its president last year and led in collecting funds for making a mold and other start-up costs.

"The drive to raise funds for fighting hunger has been a grassroots effort. Our people have responded positively to the concept from the beginning," said Harrell. "There have been many stories of sacrificial giving by Baptists in our state, and we feel the entire experience of giving has been a good way of teaching sound, biblical principles of stewardship and of expressing concern for the hungry in a concrete way."

Harrell said he cannot see that the offering has harmed the Cooperative Program giving, though he added that a multiplicity of such offerings likely would have a chilling effect on missions giving through the Southern Baptist unified budget plan.

## Churches Key to Offset Decreased Buying Power

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist churches hold the key to offset the decreased buying power of missions dollars, executive secretaries and editors of the state Baptist conventions were told at a two-day briefing in Richmond.

Statistics detailed for the leaders show the 35,605 churches affiliated with the SBC contributed an average of only 8.83 percent of their total gifts to the denomination's Cooperative Program in 1979.

"Year by year we tell our 3,000 missionaries in 94 countries to plan boldly and then only allow them an eight percent increase because of shrinking buying power," said R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board. "They think we're playing games with them."

Parks said if the vast majority of churches overseas (four out of five) were not self-supporting and if national Baptists were not increasing stewardship efforts to pick up the slack, foreign missions work would suffer drastically.

And it will suffer drastically before too long if Southern Baptists don't find a way to offset a devastating combination of overseas dollar devaluation and inflation at home and abroad, he declared.

The solution, denominational leaders believe, lies not just in an increased percentage to foreign missions from the Cooperative Program, but in an expanded concept of stewardship from churches which retain so much for their ministries.

Churches gave \$184,281,033 through Cooperative Program channels of state Baptist conventions out of \$2,085,955,800 given for all causes during the 1979 calendar year. The Foreign Mission Board received \$30,954,030 of that, which accounted for 37.3 percent of its total income.

Parks told editors and executives the board will not yet lower its standard of pushing toward 5,000 missionaries in 125 countries with expanding ministries to reach the world for Christ by the end of the century.

"We will continue our appointments, believing money follows people," he said. "If Southern Baptists understand the mission story, they will respond in a way which will help not only foreign missionaries but all the convention's work."

Meanwhile, Parks said, the board is making a "very deliberate choice" to enter the arena of development as a means of supplementing funds received through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The action results from a deep conviction that such a step will enhance the Cooperative Program, rather than hurt it, he said.

If added support cannot be found, Parks said, the board faces the decision of whether it will have to start saying to God-called candidates: "We don't have enough money to send you to the mission field." Or, to cut back on the support of missionaries already on the field.

"History shows that if we get to the point of retrenchment, this will do more to hurt the Cooperative Program than anything else," Parks said. "We believe we've got to tap some other resources."

The board's development program will not launch a massive publicity campaign or go directly to the churches, Parks explained. Instead it will zero in on persons who have not yet been challenged to make major contributions to spread the gospel through their own Foreign Mission Board.

Many of these people, he said, now give to other missions causes outside the Southern Baptist Convention and would respond to a challenge from their own denomination.

Parks assured the leaders the board will actively work to promote the Cooperative Program and cooperate with Baptist foundations in the process of seeking wider sources of revenue.

The board has projected its new missionary orientation center as one of the projects to seek financing through development efforts. The 233-acre site near Richmond has been donated and the board hopes to have it in operation by the spring of 1983.

Dialogue with the editors and chief executives ran the gamut from evangelism and church growth to use of hunger and disaster relief funds.

Parks underscored Southern Baptists' continuing commitment to evangelism and starting churches and to the career missionary as the one who goes to "incarnate the gospel in another culture." He and other board executives emphasized they will continue to place emphasis on the need for missionary preachers, which are in short supply all over the world.

He said the board also is strengthening its staff to handle more adequately the "great wave of voluntarism" and to find ways to utilize the witness of Southern Baptist laymen whose jobs take them overseas.

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Missouri Men Pour  
Cold Drinks for Lord

By Laura Fite

Baptist Press  
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COLUMBIA, Mo. (BP)—I was thirsty and you gave me a drink of soda or coffee.

I was a stranger and you took me in at an Interstate 70 rest stop.

These modified phrases from the gospel of Matthew were echoed by some 24,000 weary travelers this summer who were refreshed by a unique ministry of Lamine Baptist Association.

Under the leadership of John C. Farris, director of missions, at least 50 Baptist men from seven area churches provided and manned a refreshment trailer at the eastbound rest stop on I-70 near Columbia.

They opened "business" on Memorial Day weekend and continued on Saturdays and Sundays through Labor Day weekend.

"We aren't promoting anything but the love of Jesus Christ," Mel Moehle of First Baptist Church, Booneville, and others would tell the travelers as they wondered what the absolutely free refreshments were all about.

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"Compliments of the people on the service was just super," exclaimed Farris. "People wondered why we were doing it and that gave the men an opportunity to witness to them."

Farris said that once the Lamine Association men got a taste of the work, they were eager to continue.

"It's one thing when you go out and tell one person about Christ, but it's another thing to tell so many people about Christ all day long," commented 36-year-old Jack Shackelford of West Union Church, Versailles. The 1980-81 Lamine Association Brotherhood director said he had been a Christian 13 years, "and until this summer I didn't really know what missions was."

One little girl exclaimed to Moehle that "You're just trading Pepsi and Mountain Dew for living water!" to which he answered, "I hope so!"

When asked why the men tolerated so many children who soaked up the drinks like a sponge, the reply was that they felt they were investing in the future.

"Later on in life," said Moehle, "They'll know that Baptists are caring people."

"Some of these people were in need," continued Moehle. Several stopped with little or no money to continue travel, so the men directed them to the Booneville Ministerial Alliance.

Some travelers exited off I-70 because of a "Coffee Break" sign and ended up reading scripture tracts provided "without pressure" by the association. A popular pamphlet was JESUS, produced by American Bible Society.

Still others didn't have to stop at all--they were there when Moehle arrived with the equipment at 6 a.m. He found them asleep in cars, under cars, on top of cars, in campers, in the "open" and in trees. After a so-called night's rest in such cramped positions, Moehle found them grateful for a cup of coffee to begin another day of travel.

One refreshed Christian traveler finished his coffee and expressed gratitude to Moehle for making the rest stop available.

"I'll probably never see you men again," he commented, "but I'm looking forward to drinking a cup of coffee with you in Heaven!"