



BAPTIST PRESS

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Sunday School Starts

Total 1,092 for 1979-80

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A total of 1,092 new Southern Baptist Sunday Schools were started in the year ending Sept. 30, and a Sunday School Board consultant reports "encouraging signs" more church leaders are seeing the importance of starting new work.

Since 1976, the year a renewed denominational emphasis on starting new work was launched, 4,105 new Sunday Schools have been started. While the 1979-80 total of 1,092 exceeded the year's goal of 1,000, it is down from the previous year's 1,273.

James Lackey, new work consultant in the board's Sunday School department, said, "I sense more leaders are beginning to feel it's worth the effort" to start a new Sunday school in the community, in a nursing home or within the church building for a language or cultural group not currently being reached.

"I think Bold Mission Thrust has given us the umbrella for encouraging the start of new work," Lackey said.

For 1979-80, Texas led all state conventions with 209 new Sunday Schools, exceeding their goal of 200. Eight other states reached or exceeded their goals—California, 142; Kentucky, 29; Tennessee, 28; New Mexico, 25; Oklahoma, 25; Maryland/Delaware, 18; Iowa, 11; and Washington, D.C., 2.

For the four years since 1976, Texas has led all states in starting new Sunday Schools with a total of 674.

Lackey cited California as the state reporting the most significant increase during that period. In 1976-77, 14 Sunday Schools were started. That increased to 65 in 1977-78, dropped slightly to 63 in 1978-79 and grew to 142 for 1979-80, for a four-year total of 284.

New Mexico has reported annual increases in new starts during the four years. Only one Sunday School was started in 1976-77. The totals for the next three years were five, 18 and 25, for a four-year total of 49.

While records are not maintained on the continuing progress of new Sunday Schools, Lackey noted "it is safe to say that more than 80 percent of those begun since 1976 are still in existence" and many have become missions or churches.

Leaders involved in starting new Sunday Schools have reported varying kinds of progress.

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C. M. Ivin Ratheal is pastor of a mission which has grown from a Sunday School. Property has just been purchased for the congregation and "a modular building will be placed on the lot. Our first building will probably be started in December," Ratheal said. "We will probably be running close to 100 by then."

Sun City Baptist Chapel, in Sun City West, Ariz., is a mission of North Phoenix Baptist Church and consists primarily of retired persons.

Joseph C. Price Jr., pastor of Norwin Baptist Chapel, Irwin, Pa., which is sponsoring a mission Sunday School in Greensburg, Pa., said, "We are presently reaching four families, and three more will come with us just as soon as we can find a meeting place and begin Sunday afternoon Sunday school and worship."

"There is a good possibility this will develop into a chapel and eventually into a church," said Price. "Greensburg is the county seat of Westmoreland County and is a vital area in our Bold Mission Advance."

Haywood Hills Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., recently began Sunday Schools for Laotians and Hispanics.

"Both of these Bible study units are conducted here at our church facilities," said Roger Shelton, pastor. "They have graded classes for various ages and are followed by separate worship services."

In Palatine, Ill., Wing-Shu Lam, pastor of a Chinese mission of First Baptist Church, reports his congregation is conducting Sunday School in Mandarin and Cantonese dialects and in Vietnamese.

"We need help to design curriculum and teaching materials in Chinese and Vietnamese," he said.

Lackey believes if leaders in churches which have not started new Sunday Schools or missions could visit with leaders who have had the experience, "they would catch the excitement."

"Starting new work adds a giving dimension to a church because members are giving of themselves as well as their money," Lackey said.

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Foreign Fields Request
1,900 New Missionaries

By Mary Jane Welch

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries are requesting more than 1,900 new missionaries for 1981 and want most of them to be directly involved in evangelism and church growth.

They are asking that 72 percent of the career missionaries requested, plus 61 missionary associates and journeymen, have primary assignments of winning people to Christ and starting churches.

Missionaries submitted a record 1,009 job requests, which translates to more than 1,900 people because most jobs will be filled by couples. Besides evangelism and church development specialists, they are asking for additional missionaries to work in education, health

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care, mass media, business services, community development and other areas.

Last year they made 873 job requests, representing 1,526 persons, but fewer than one out of four such requests is expected to be met by appointments this year.

The urgent need for more missionaries was emphasized as members of the Foreign Mission Board's personnel selection department and office of overseas operations met Sept. 29 to discuss priority requests in the board's eight geographical areas. Reports also underscored the increasing partnership between missionaries and Baptists in more than 90 countries where Southern Baptists have work overseas.

A request for a general evangelist in Quibdo, Colombia, resulted in part from a meeting requested by the executive director and the president of the Colombian Baptist Convention while at the Baptist World Congress in Toronto in June, said J. Bryan Brasington, director for western South America.

At the meeting, the Colombian Baptists said they wanted the Foreign Mission Board to send as many field evangelists as possible to their country. "In essence, they said, 'The door is open. We need field evangelists who will preach the Good News of the gospel,'" said Brasington.

A different aspect of partnership was evident in a request for a general evangelist to join another couple in beginning work in Equatorial Guinea, a small West African nation where the former ruler, an absolute dictator, reduced the nation to poverty. The other missionary couple would be sent by Spanish Baptists, who initiated the first Baptist contact in the country.

The impact of Bold Mission Thrust could be seen in requests for general evangelists and other church development specialists for follow-up of or preparation for major cities evangelization projects. The urban evangelism program is a Bold Mission effort to penetrate large metropolitan areas with the gospel.

Priority requests were made for a general evangelist, a seminary professor, a student worker and a religious education promoter in Korea, where 20,000 Koreans became Christians during crusades last June, climaxing the major cities evangelization project in that country.

But only one missionary couple for field evangelism has been appointed to Korea since 1974, in spite of unprecedented response during that time, according to George H. Hays, director for East Asia. In 1978 alone, 48 new churches were begun.

The Korea Baptist Convention also has expressed a need for people such as the religious education promoter for Taegu, to train the large numbers becoming Christians there, said Samuel M. James, associate to Hays.

The convention asked that the seminary professor have a doctoral degree and credentials which equip him to help develop a graduate school at the Korea Baptist Theological College, Taejon. Few other job requests called for doctoral degrees, but all stressed the need for qualified personnel.

"Requests from missions have underscored the necessity for adequate training, solid experience in church work prior to appointment and a high sense of calling to the missionary task," said Louis R. Cobbs, director of the personnel selection department.

In some countries, missionaries made priority requests for general evangelists although visa problems have prevented any new missionaries from entering the country in recent months. Missionaries in Indonesia, Bangladesh and Malaysia all have requested that new church planters try to obtain visas, said William R. Wakefield, director for South and Southeast Asia. Missionaries in Bangladesh have also requested an agricultural evangelist to carry on programs of animal husbandry, fish production and silkworm culture, development projects which could help to improve relations with the Bangladesh government.

In Africa, requests for 21 missionaries in Zimbabwe reflected renewed opportunities in a country where missionary activity had been limited by seven years of guerrilla warfare. Since the war ended and a majority government was installed last spring, the Zimbabwe mission is seeking to restore a missionary force which dwindled to half its pre-war size. Missionaries requested workers in all categories, but a request for a professor for the Baptist Theological Seminary, Gwelo, reflected the Zimbabwe convention's priority on seminary training for future Baptist leaders.

Although most requests fell into the evangelism and church development category, mission groups also made priority requests for missionaries in other fields. In health care, for example, they requested 41 career missionary physicians, 18 career nurses and 22 other career health professionals. Hospital administrators for Nalerigu, Ghana, and Barranquilla, Colombia, were singled out as especially urgent. Both Brasington and Betty Kay Abell, administrative assistant for West Africa, stressed that physicians in those hospitals are having to assume administrative duties which limit their practice as physicians.

A host and hostess who speak some Portuguese were requested to deal with the large numbers of volunteers coming to Brazil as part of a partnership evangelism project between that country and Texas. The couple would free missionaries who are having to leave other duties to care for volunteers in Rio de Janeiro, said Thurmon E. Bryant, director for eastern South America.

Other priority needs in Brazil, said Bryant, include a student worker for the university in Salvador and a secretary to the associate to the area director.

Of the total requests, 816 could be filled by career missionaries, 130 by missionary associates and special project medical workers and 146 by missionary journeymen. Missionary associates are persons between 35 and 59, employed for a renewable four-year term. Special project workers are medical professionals employed for one year. Missionary journeymen are college graduates 26 or under who spend two years working alongside career missionaries overseas before pursuing a career in the United States.

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following story may be added to one mailed 10/1/80: "Houston Pastor Questions Motives of Those Who Attack Seminaries." Judge Paul Pressler was reached after the mailing deadline for Baptist Press.)

Pressler Denies Intent
To Criticize Trustees

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HOUSTON (BP)--Texas Judge Paul Pressler says he did not intend to criticize current trustees of Southern Baptist Convention boards and agencies during a recent meeting in Lynchburg, Va.

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Pressler, however, did confirm he said in the public meeting conservatives are going to gain control of the SBC institutions and made the statement: "We are going for having knowledgeable, Bible-centered, Christ-honoring trustees of all our institutions, who are not going to sit there like a bunch of dummies and rubber stamp everything that's presented to them..."

Pressler, who is judge of the 14th Court of Civil Appeals in Houston, said he did not mean current trustees are dummies or rubber stamps. "I did not intend to imply anything like that. I think some of the current trustees are outstanding, but like any board, some are weak, and some are strong."

"Criticism was the farthest thing from my mind. I was setting forth affirmatively what trustees should be, not criticizing anybody," he said, adding he has not backed down from wanting only those "nominees (for trustee) who believe in the principles Southern Baptists have always believed in."

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Brotherhood Employees
Sponsor Three Cubans

Baptist Press
10/2/80

MEMPHIS (BP)—The word "freedom" falls easily from the lips of most Americans, but it will never be taken lightly by a trio of Cuban refugees sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

Juan Diaz, Lazaro Fernandez and Ernesto Paez, former political prisoners in Fidel Castro's tightly controlled Cuba, tell typically tragic tales of escape from Cuba—the crowded ride aboard the "freedom flotilla," weeks of anxious waiting in Ft. Chaffee's refugee processing center, and now the specter of multiple adjustments to American life.

The three middle-aged men came to Memphis after language missions consultant Dan Moon challenged fellow Brotherhood Commission employees during a weekly chapel service to consider sponsoring two or three Cuban refugees. The response was positive and unanimous.

In addition to legal sponsorship, Brotherhood Commission employees provided financial support, clothing, furniture, food and medical assistance. With the help of Elias Pantoja, pastor of the Spanish-speaking department of Temple Baptist Church in Memphis, the agency's specially-elected refugee resettlement committee located an apartment with convenient access to public transportation.

When the committee learned that Juan and Ernesto were illiterate and that Lazaro had only a sixth-grade education, the language barrier became a formidable obstacle. But a staff member with a degree in education agreed to teach the men basic conversational English to supplement bi-weekly adult education classes at a local high school.

The men were given interim employment—painting the interior of the Brotherhood Commission building—until they secured full-time jobs at a lumber company owned by a Memphis Cuban-American.

Sponsoring the three refugees was simply "an application of what we teach about missions involvement," explains Moon. "The decision to sponsor these men was a choice made by individual Christians, not the agency. It was an unofficial, voluntary commitment."

"None of us had any thoughts of 'setting an example' for others to follow," says James Hatley, the Brotherhood Commission's director of World Missions Conferences and associational relations. "We just wanted to be a part of the action in resettlement."

Hatley, who speaks Spanish, adds that "our primary concern for the men we sponsored was not only that they find a new life of freedom, opportunity and purpose in the United States, but that they find spiritual freedom in Jesus Christ."

That concern was realized several weeks after the Cuban men's arrival in Memphis. All three made professions of faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized by Pantoja into the membership of Temple Baptist Church.

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