



-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

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

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, 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. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

July 29, 1981

81-117

Lay Participation Up In Los Angeles SBC

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Lay participation increased slightly in the 1981 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles, according to the annual messenger survey.

The survey, conducted by Martin Bradley of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board research department, is based on 11,376 responses from the 13,549 registered messengers at the convention.

Bradley said the survey showed there was "no great change" in the characteristics of 1981 messengers, as compared to previous meetings of the 13.6 million member denomination.

"There is an amazing stability over the years," he commented. "The 1981 meeting reflects a slight rise in lay participation, and by women messengers, but other than that, there is no great change."

Of those who participated in the survey, 59 percent were male, 39.1 percent were female and 1.9 percent did not indicate sex. This compares with the St. Louis SBC when 60.2 percent were male, 38.1 percent female and 1.7 percent not indicated.

Of the male messengers, 65.2 percent serve on church staffs, compared to 72 percent in St. Louis. An additional 14.6 percent indicated they were denominational employees, working in home, foreign or associational missions, state conventions, agencies, institutions or other denominational service.

This compared with slightly less than 10 percent denominational employees attending the St. Louis meeting.

For female messengers, only 6.6 percent indicated they are on church staffs, 6.8 are in other denominational service. The predominant occupation is homemaking, with 57.2 percent of the female messengers indicating that as their vocational area.

For the total messenger participation, 41.4 percent indicated work on church staffs, compared with 46 percent in St. Louis. Denominational workers accounted for 11.5 percent of the registration and laypersons accounted for 40.9 percent.

The messengers also came predominantly from churches with more than 500 members. The survey indicated 37.6 percent came from churches with more than 1,000 members, compared with 28.7 in 1980; 26.4 came from churches with 500 to 999 members, compared with 25.8 in St. Louis, and 16.1 percent came from churches with 300 to 499 members, compared with 21.5 percent last year. The remainder came from churches with 300 or less members.

-more-

In contrast to the St. Louis meeting, when 75.7 percent of the messengers traveled by car, the overwhelming choice of mode of travel to Los Angeles was by air. The survey showed 58.7 percent arrived by airplane, while 42.3 percent came by car.

The meeting also was more costly: 70.1 percent indicated expenditures in excess of \$150, compared with 55.1 percent of the St. Louis messengers. Also, in Los Angeles, only four percent indicated they spent less than \$25 to attend.

Of messengers, 67.2 percent of the men attended the pre-convention Pastors' Conference, compared to 73 percent in St. Louis. They were joined by 52.7 percent of the women. The Woman's Missionary Union annual conference was attended by 26.5 percent of the women and only 8.7 percent of the men. Last year, 23 percent of the women and 9.1 percent of the men attended the WMU meeting.

Of those who attended the Los Angeles meeting, many indicated they had attended the previous six conventions.

Of the male messengers, 41.6 percent had attended the St. Louis meeting; 44.1 in Houston; 45.1 in Atlanta; 38.2 in Kansas City; 35.5 in Norfolk, and 35.2 in Miami Beach.

Of female participants, 3.14 percent were in St. Louis; 35.2 in Houston; 35.7 in Atlanta; 28.9 in Kansas City; 28.3 in Norfolk; and 28.9 in Miami Beach.

Texas provided the most messengers, with 13.7 percent of the total. California contributed 12.7. North Carolina was third with 9.0 percent; Georgia, 6.6; Tennessee, 6.3; South Carolina, 5.2; Alabama, 5.1; and Virginia, 5.0.

In 1980, Missouri provided 11.4 percent of the messengers, Texas 9.6, Tennessee 7.5 and Kentucky 7.2.

The survey also showed there were no registered participants from Maine, Rhode Island or Vermont. Five other states showed less than 0.1 percent participation: Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Puerto Rico.

-30-

What's the Sweetest
Church in Illinois?

Baptist Press
7/28/81

TAMAROA, Ill. (BP)--What is the "sweetest" church in Illinois?

It could be the Paradise Baptist Church, a rural congregation near Tamaroa, Ill.

"When we arrived for services, we found the pews and our carpeting completely covered with bees and honey," said Frank Cornia, one of the members.

"We noticed lots of bees outside on the previous Wednesday night, and had sprayed for them," Cornia explained. "But evidently we drove them inside, for on Sunday morning they were so thick we didn't even try to enter the auditorium."

Instead, members sealed off the sanctuary and met in the basement.

-more-

"There was honey everywhere; you can't imagine how thick it was, all over the carpet and pews," Cornia said. "We had to employ a commercial cleaner to come in the following week."

Since pastor Wayne Reid was on vacation, John Wittmer of Pinckneyville, director of missions for Nine Mile Association, had the privilege of preaching to the "sweetest church in Illinois."

-30-

Annie Armstrong Gifts
Pass \$17.25 Million Goal

Baptist Press
7/28/81

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists exceeded the \$17.25 million goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions in July, the second earliest the goal has been reached in the past decade.

Total contributions through offerings in Southern Baptist churches received by the SBC Home Mission Board reached \$17,274,088 on July 27.

If giving through the offering continues for the rest of the year at the same rate as during the past five years, total offerings by the end of 1981 may exceed \$18.5 million, predicted Leonard Irwin, Home Mission Board vice president for planning.

HMB President William G. Tanner observed that in the light of today's economy and inflation, the record gifts are an indication that Baptist churches are continuing to take seriously Jesus Christ's great commission "to preach the gospel to every living creature."

In Birmingham, Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of SBC Woman's Missionary Union, which promotes the offering nationally, expressed thanks to Southern Baptists for supporting the offering, adding she hopes surpassing the goal will enable a breakthrough in home mission efforts.

The offering is promoted in local churches by the Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood, mission education organizations of the church. It is named for Annie Armstrong, corresponding secretary of WMU in the early 1900s.

Last year, Southern Baptists gave almost \$16.5 million through the Annie Armstrong offering, exceeding the \$15.5 million goal.

Irwin warned, however, against resting on past laurels. Next year's goal will be \$22 million, an increase of 27.5 percent over this year's goal. "That means Baptists will have to stretch really hard to reach and exceed the goal next year," Irwin said.

Tanner added that by surpassing the goal this year, it might enable the board to grant some salary increases to the 3,000 missionaries across the nation in an effort to offset inflation. In the past 10 years, missionary salary increases have not quite kept pace with inflation, Irwin said.

"We still have tremendous needs, especially in the large metropolitan areas of America," Tanner said. "Just because we have met the goal this year does not mean we have met all the needs."

-30-

Missionaries Begin Transfer Of Sanyati Baptist Hospital

By Robert O'Brien

SANYATI, Zimbabwe (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries in Zimbabwe have completed the first step in transferring control of Sanyati Baptist Hospital to the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

The Baptist Mission of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe convention signed a trust agreement in late June and have designated July 1, 1985, as the date for completion of the transfer.

Baptists in Zimbabwe kept the hospital operating in the latter years of the long guerrilla war in the country formerly known as Rhodesia.

Except for missionary physicians who flew in to treat critically ill patients, Southern Baptist missionaries evacuated the Sanyati compound after guerrillas murdered missionary Archie Dunaway in 1978. They resumed full-time residence in early 1981, more than a year after the ceasefire.

A number of local Baptists, including hospital staff, lost their lives during that period but kept the hospital operating "in a heroic manner," according to Davis L. Saunders, the Foreign Mission Board's director for eastern and southern Africa.

By July 1, 1984, the hospital's administrative staff and the eight-person board of governors, which will include four missionaries, will be trained. Phase three will complete the transfer of financial responsibility to the convention.

The decision to transfer ownership, made after a fact-finding trip by the board's medical consultant, Franklin T. Fowler, and former missionary hospital administrator Bill Mason of Jacksonville, Fla., does not represent a cutback in commitment to medical missions, Saunders said.

"We're just making necessary adjustments to fit the realities of the situation, as we have done throughout the history of missions," he said. "We will continue to provide personnel and take an active role in the hospital."

Changes in policy by the Zimbabwe government and rapidly rising costs mainly prompted the transfer at this point in the 100-bed hospital's 28-year history, but it also fits in with Southern Baptists' policy of eventually making work abroad indigenous, Saunders explained.

He said a decision by the Zimbabwe government that all medical facilities must practice socialized medicine makes all medical services free and adds more financial strain.

Another factor involved a request by the Zimbabwe Baptist Convention that the hospital receive government funds, he said. Previously, Sanyati Baptist Hospital was the only one in the country not receiving such subsidies.

The Sanyati Baptist Hospital also has suffered a personnel shortage. Currently, career missionary physician, Maurice L. Randall; career nurse, Mary Louise Clark; career dentist, John Monroe; five missionary journeymen medical personnel; and about 40 African medical personnel staff the hospital.

When Randall comes home on furlough in December, Saunders said, it will leave the hospital without a physician, unless a replacement is found. If none becomes available through appointment procedures, the board may have to transfer a current missionary physician from another place of service. The hospital also desperately needs another career physician, a career nurse, a hospital administrator/business manager, and a hospital maintenance engineer.

House Churches Catch On
In Blue Collar Home Area

By Jerilynn Armstrong

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — The sanctuary is the living room of a rented house with folding chairs for pews. Members come dressed casually in jeans and slacks. The atmosphere is informal and friendly among the 40 people gathered to worship.

This is not a scene from a pioneer mission area, but is within walking distance of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

About three years ago Gambrell Street Baptist Church, one block east of the seminary, launched a mission effort to reach families in their community. This house church ministry tries to reach individuals "turned off" by the traditional church.

"Gambrell Street is seen by the community as a white collar, professional church and we are sitting in the midst of a working class neighborhood which responds better to small, informal gatherings," said Gambrell Street pastor Joel Gregory.

"Our church has been able to share the gospel with many of our neighbors but because of cultural and socio-economic reasons few became regular members. For our congregation, the house church ministry gave us the opportunity to congregationalize these individuals,"

Tim Lewis, a student at Southwestern, is liaison on the church staff and coordinates the three house churches. A fourth is to begin soon.

"Our study and research seems to indicate that 50 is the leveling off point in this type of congregation so we hope that within the year several house churches will be able to split and start new ones," Lewis said. "In this program the aim is not to get big but to remain a small, loving fellowship and hopefully start other congregations."

To begin a new church two or three families form a core group then meet regularly for six weeks of training. Their tithes are used to rent a home in the neighborhood they will serve. Many of the core families have been seminary students.

"Gambrell Street has given the house churches tremendous freedom with only minor supervision," Lewis said. "The house churches are autonomous congregations with a separate budget and monthly contributions to the Cooperative Program and associational missions."

Lewis and the house church pastors agree that at times the work is difficult but very rewarding

"I believe my congregation of 50 is as much work as a church of 300," said Jim Perkins, pastor of Parkway Baptist House Church. "My people rely on me not just to preach but also to help them find housing, move them and at times buy food and clothing."

"I have the unique opportunity of sharing intimately in the lives of my members and hopefully reaching individuals not drawn to the traditional worship service."

Church member George Hogan agrees: "Coming to Parkway House Church is like coming to a family reunion every week. Everyone knows each other and actively participates in the service. If it wasn't for this house church my family and I would be sleeping in on Sunday mornings."