



BAPTIST PRESS

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August 10, 1981

81-124

SBC Keeps Up With U.S.,
Falters Behind Sun Belt

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist membership grew faster than the U.S. population during the 1970s, but the convention's growth fell "alarmingly" behind the rate of increase in Sun Belt states, according to an SBC Home Mission Board report just released.

SBC resident membership increased 17 percent during the decade, while the U.S. population grew 11.4 percent, noted Orrin D. Morris, the board's research director and author of the reports.

Based on 1980 U.S. census data and SBC Uniform Church Letters, the report said the nation's population grew from 203.3 million to 226.5 million, and the SBC expanded from 8.3 million resident members to 9.7 million. The convention claims 13.6 million total members.

But the figures are misleading, because Southern Baptists are "losing in the states where we have the greatest strength—the South," Morris claimed.

"The shocker is that we've shown what appears to be growth, but we've been overrun by the population," he said.

Churches in the South provided 79 percent of the total SBC membership growth and 48 percent of the increase in churches. But while population in those states increased 20 percent, SBC churches there increased by only 15.4 percent.

"If we'd kept up with the rise in population in eight of these states, we would have 427,000 more Southern Baptists right now," Morris said.

He noted states in which Baptists lagged farthest behind total population growth—Texas, Georgia, Florida and North Carolina—were among the biggest gainers in SBC numerical growth.

They ranked first, second, fifth and sixth respectively in total membership growth. But combined, their number of members increased only about half as much as the populations in their states.

"This is alarming," Morris said. "We say we're in favor of Bold Mission Thrust and reaching our world and country for Christ, but we're not making gains. We're losing ground."

In contrast to the South, churches in the Northeast, West and North Central states recorded gains which surpassed population increases in those areas.

In the Northeast, where population climbed only 0.2 percent, Southern Baptist membership recorded a 109.7 percent gain. Western states grew 23.9 percent, but Baptists there increased

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35.9 percent. Churches in North Central states grew by 22.4 percent, compared to a 4.0 percent population gain.

"We knew we'd make gains in these areas, because we were smaller there to start with," he said. "From those beginnings, we had nowhere to go but up."

The percentages of those gains also were deceptive, because many of the increases were not numerically large, he said. For example, Southern Baptists in the Northeast more than doubled in the 1970s, but the actual gain was only a "modest" increase of 18,305 members.

Reasons for Southern Baptists falling behind in the fastest-growing states vary, Morris said. Early indicators show the denomination is not keeping pace with the increase in black and ethnic populations.

Another factor may be that Baptists have adopted a "large church" mentality, building more huge churches, but not enough new churches to keep up with shifts in population.

Morris said Home Mission Board researchers plan to continue studying church growth/population change factors in an investigation which may include as many as 10 reports.

"Right now, we know we're losing ground," he said. "We've got a lot of work to do to see just why."

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Television Deterrent
To Needed Family Time

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/10/81

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--With children and television, "the bigger problem is not the behavior television produces but the behavior it prevents--games, talks, healthy arguments and communication among family members," says a professor of childhood education.

Norma Stevens, professor at Belmont College, Nashville, Tenn., criticized parents who use TV as a babysitter or who "find it easier to let TV tranquilize their children than deal with squabbles."

The conference on television and children was one of several on family life issues offered by departments of the Baptist Sunday School Board during a church training leadership conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

Stevens said a child between the ages of 5 and 18 watches an average of 15,000 hours of television--more than he spends in school during the same period.

Television is here to stay and parents must learn to deal with it, Stevens said. "Your part as an adult is to help children develop critical viewing skills and provide activities to enable them to develop their imaginations and control their own thinking."

In another conference on rearing responsible children, Wayne Grant, a San Antonio, Texas, pediatrician, said, "Our goal of parenthood should be to rear our children into adults who can love, live and leave."

Effective parenting includes authoritative discipline, open communication and positive relationships, said Grant.

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"It is very important that children experience the authority of their parents," he said. "It is important that they know parents are in charge and will define limits."

However, Grant said, many parents are so concerned with punishing children for negative behavior that they fail to affirm good things in their children.

"The most effective way to teach or train children is to focus on the desirable goals you are working toward," he said. "When we ignore desirable behavior we teach children that the only way to get their parents' attention is to misbehave."

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Baylor President Chairs
Pension Study Committee

Baptist Press
8/10/81

DALLAS (BP)--Herbert H. Reynolds, president of Baylor University, has been named to lead a committee to study and recommend a new church pension plan for churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Annuity Board trustee chairman Charles L. Holland Jr., Longview, Texas, appointed the committee for the project which has received the endorsement of state executive secretaries, five of which are on the 20-member committee.

They are: George E. Bagley, Alabama; Ernest E. Mosley, Illinois; Chester O'Brien, New Mexico; Joe L. Ingram, Oklahoma; and Tom J. Madden, Tennessee.

Other members are, five at-large from the Southern Baptist Convention: J. Howard Cobble, currently pastor of First Baptist Church, Avondale Estates, Ga.; who will become pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown, Ky., in September; C.R. Daley, editor of the Western Recorder, Middletown, Ky.; Christine Gregory, vice president, Southern Baptist Convention, Danville, Va.; H. Franklin Paschall, pastor, First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.; and Dan Rivera, president of Mexican Baptist Bible Institute, San Antonio, Texas; also five Annuity Board trustees, T.L. Cashwell Jr., North Carolina, J. Cecil Hamiter, Alabama, David A. Nelson, Kentucky, Milton L. Wood, Michigan, and Reynolds.

Five members from the Annuity Board staff are: Gary S. Nash, legal services, who will chair the board staff group; Harold S. Bailey, development-church retirement and insurance; Bernelle Harrison, actuarial services and research; Pat McDaniel, executive vice president; and I.D. Maricle, member services.

Ex-officio members include: Vern Powers, annuity secretary from Tennessee; Harvey J. Wright, annuity secretary from Missouri; Holland, and Morgan.

"This committee will consider the design, marketing, financing and documentation of the new Church Plan," stated Morgan. "We expect the study to take about 18 months; however, the committee will make a preliminary report at the 1982 Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans.

The new plan could affect 35,600 Southern Baptist churches, if all choose to participate in the Annuity Board program.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Annuity Board.

Foreign Missionaries Help
Meet Home Mission Needs

By Pat Guile

ATLANTA (BP) — The final trip stateside doesn't necessarily mean work is finished for Southern Baptist foreign missionaries.

Some return home to meet mission needs in the United States, bringing a wealth of experience in ethnic, language and pioneer work.

"Nothing can replace the background of experience that foreign missionaries have; they are veterans of mission work," explains Irvin Dawson, missionary personnel director for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board where some former foreign missionaries now work.

The Home Mission Board keeps no statistics on the number of people it appoints who had previous foreign missions experience, but Dawson says it is not uncommon and happens "with some regularity."

When missionaries return home due to unworkable circumstances—family illness, lack of educational facilities or personal family problems—their involvement in home missions becomes valuable, he says.

For instance, foreign missionaries relate well to different cultures and backgrounds, Dawson says. And with the rising visibility of ethnic groups, knowledge of language and culture opens doors for the missionaries.

Urban and Loretta Green walked through one such door in Tulsa, Okla. They were missionaries to Ghana for 17 years until she contracted a blood disease that brought them back to the United States. Now he directs a Baptist education center and helps develop black churches in the area.

"At first, it took me awhile to adjust to not being overseas in mission work," Green admits. "But now I realize this work is God's continuous plan for my life. I'm just as happy here as in Africa."

Because of his work overseas, he was "more quickly accepted" by U.S. black churches who doubt newcomers, Green relates.

Experienced in "working from ground zero," Wade Akins, a former journeyman to South Vietnam, remembers hauling beer cartons to the jungle for people to build their homes. One morning he witnessed about 100 Vietnamese baptized in a two-foot U.S. Air Force life raft.

"On the mission field you learn the principle of flexibility," Akins says. "Nothing goes right. The generator breaks down, the power goes out and the wrong movie is sent. But this principle has given me the ability to adapt to any situation."

As director of missions for Prince Georges Baptist Association, near the District of Columbia, Akins sees the heavily international area as "a real mission field in every sense of the word," and relishes the opportunity to start new missions with blacks and language groups.

And in Tucson, Ariz., where 35 percent of the population is Spanish speaking, starting language missions also is a high priority for director of missions Jim Richards. A former missionary to the Dominican Republic, he has started five new missions in the past 18 months.

Richards claims people "trust you a little more when you know their language and understand their culture. Even non-Hispanics, such as Koreans and Chinese, are impressed that I've taken the time to learn another language and culture."

Richards speaks for his colleagues, noting the experience in foreign missions "has prepared me to work in home missions. It has broadened my ministry tremendously."

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Guile is a Home Mission Board intern.

One Church's Gift Inspires
Another Toward New Building

By Greta Pinkston

Baptist Press
8/10/81

DALOA, Ivory Coast (BP) — What began as a frustrating effort to repair Caillou Baptist Church's mud and straw building ended in a three-day celebration to dedicate this African nation's first permanent church building among the Bete-speaking people.

When the original Caillou church was damaged in a windstorm, members began saving to buy a new straw roof. But the money was stolen, and members, mostly rice and coffee farmers, became discouraged.

The Marcory Baptist Church in Abidjan, the first French-speaking Baptist church in Ivory Coast, heard of Caillou's plight and sent \$100 to repair the roof. Encouraged by their fellow Christians' love and concern, Caillou members caught a new vision and began planning a permanent building.

The men made 1,200 mud blocks, and members began a building fund. Soon they had another \$100, enough to buy about 20 sacks of cement and hire a mason. They dug and hauled sand and gravel themselves from a nearby creek.

Soon members had pledged 25 of the 46 sheets of corrugated steel roofing needed. Two other churches paid for the rest of the roofing, and a nearby sawmill gave the lumber for rafters.

With the building finished, church members invited neighboring churches to a three-day celebration. After a day of praying, fasting, and studying 14 cassettes on church membership, celebrators spent the next day singing, praising God, and giving testimonies late into the night.

On Sunday Gueye Brice, pastor of the Marcory church, spoke and Southern Baptist missionary Ed Pinkston, from Arkansas, baptized new believers in a portable baptistry outside the building. Many passersby and village people, drawn by curiosity, gathered to watch. Most had never seen a baptism.

The Caillou church's new vision reaches beyond their new building. They have begun visiting a neighboring village every Friday, preaching and witnessing. Many church members, after working in the fields all day, walk five miles to the village. One of the young people baptized during the celebration was from this village.

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Greta Pinkston is a Southern Baptist missionary in Ivory Coast.