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81-186

1981 SBC Statistics
 Are Moderate, Mixed

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Statistical projections in nine key program and interest areas of Southern Baptist life predict smaller gains--along with two decreases--than in last year's banner totals.

All nine areas increased in 1980 for the first time since 1961.

Increases are predicted this year in enrollments in church membership, Sunday School, church music, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood, plus mission expenditures and total receipts. Baptisms will be down from last year and church training is projected to have a small loss.

Baptisms are predicted to decrease from 1980 by 6.9 percent, or 29,652, to a total of 400,090, topping the 400,000 plateau for only the 10th time, according to projects made by the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The projections are based on reports from 23,899 Southern Baptist churches across the nation. The final statistical count, which will be completed in February of 1982, will be based on Uniform Church Letters submitted by some 36,000 churches. The final figures also will include the total number of churches participating in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The projections may differ slightly from the final figures because of normal statistical sampling error, but they are expected to be very close to the final report.

Mission expenditures and total receipts are expected to increase by 10.8 and 11.0 percent, respectively. Expenditures increase of \$43,361,947 is second only to last year's record increase of more than \$45 million. Totals of mission expenditures have risen significantly in the last three years over figures from the middle 1970s when the amount was consistently between \$18 and \$27 million.

Total receipts are predicted to increase by more than \$273 million to a total of \$2,756,846,561. This is a record dollar increase for receipts, but not a record percentage gain.

The church membership gain of 1.2 percent will push the estimated 1981 total to 13,770,090, an increase of more than 163,000. This percentage gain is one of the smallest ever made in church membership. The smallest increase on record was in 1978, which was 0.9 percent.

Program areas which are projected to increase include Sunday School, the largest Southern Baptist program, with a gain of more than 59,000, or 0.8 percent, bringing that total to 7,492,872. It is the second consecutive gain for Sunday School enrollment.

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The program of church music is projected to have the largest percentage gain, with 3.3 percent, or 50,404, to a total of 1,577,801.

The 2.5 percent estimated gain for Brotherhood enrollment is significant because it puts the enrollment back over the half-million mark for the first time since 1964. The increase of 12,392 is the third consecutive year for a Brotherhood increase.

Woman's Missionary Union enrollment is predicted to increase by 0.9 percent, or 9,900, to a new total of 1,109,943. This will be the second increase in a row for WMU, following three years of losses.

Enrollment in church training is projected to drop by 0.6 percent or 10,774, to a new total of 1,784,845. Last year Southern Baptists' training program experienced a gain of more than 40,000.

ESTIMATED 1981 SBC STATISTICS

	<u>1980 Total</u>	<u>Estimated 1980-81 Percent Change</u>	<u>Estimated 1980-81 Numerical Change</u>	<u>Estimated 1981 Total</u>
Baptisms	429,742	- 6.9	- 29,652	400,090
Church Membership	13,606,808	1.2	163,282	13,770,090
Ongoing Sunday School Enrollment	7,433,405	0.8	59,467	7,492,872
Church Training Enrollment	1,795,619	- 0.6	- 10,774	1,784,845
Ongoing Church Music Enrollment	1,527,397	3.3	50,404	1,577,801
Ongoing WMU Enrollment	1,100,043	0.9	9,900	1,109,943
Ongoing Brotherhood Enrollment	495,666	2.5	12,392	508,058
Mission Expenditures	\$ 401,499,506	10.8	\$ 43,361,947	\$ 444,861,453
Total Receipts	\$ 2,483,645,551	11.0	\$ 273,201,010	\$ 2,756,846,561

HMB Report Shows Declines In South

By Patti Stephenson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Despite a projected drop of almost seven percent in baptisms in 1981, Southern Baptist churches still are baptizing an average of more than 1,000 persons a day, evangelism directors were told.

During the annual conference of evangelism directors from 34 state conventions and three fellowships, it was reported 1981 baptisms are predicted to decline 29,652, or 6.9 percent from the 1980 totals.

The predictions, prepared by the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, are based on reports from 23,899 churches, and projected to include the 36,000-plus congregations of the denomination.

The report indicates baptisms probably will total 400,090 in 1981.

Southern Baptist Home Mission Board researcher Leonard Hinton, prepared a convention-by-convention report, which includes figures from all conventions but Texas and North Carolina, and from two of the three fellowships, excluding only Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Fellowship.

Of the remainder, 16 conventions and one fellowship indicated gains and 16 conventions and one fellowship indicated declines.

Kentucky, California and the Northwest led the states showing increases, while Georgia, Oklahoma and Alabama experienced the greatest declines.

The report shows baptisms down across the south, traditionally the stronghold of the 13.7-million member denomination. The declines occur at a time when the south is experiencing substantial population growth.

In the south, only Kentucky and South Carolina reported increases over 1980 baptism figures, while Georgia led southern states in decline, dropping four percent, although the state is now ranked fifth in the nation in population gains.

States showing gains, in descending order, were: Kentucky, California, Northwest, Pennsylvania-South Jersey, District of Columbia, Arizona, Illinois, West Virginia, Nevada, South Carolina, Michigan, Utah-Idaho, New York, Maryland, Alaska and New Mexico.

The New England Southern Baptist Fellowship also reported gains in baptisms.

Conventions showing declines, from highest to lowest, were Georgia, Oklahoma, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, Virginia, Indiana, Kansas-Nebraska, Ohio, Northern Plains, Colorado and Hawaii.

The Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship showed a decline.

According to Hinton's report, North Phoenix Baptist Church of Phoenix, Ariz., led the SBC in baptisms, reporting 1,206 baptisms, compared to 1,033 in 1980.

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First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., where Bailey E. Smith, president of the SBC, is pastor, reported a sharp decline. In 1980, the church reported 2,028 baptisms, the first time in SBC history a congregation baptized more than 2,000 persons in a single year.

This year, however, Hinton's report indicates First Southern baptized 1,164 persons, a drop of 864 baptisms during the year in which Smith has been president of the denomination.

C. B. Hogue, the HMB's vice president for evangelism, advised the evangelism directors to waste no time "moping and being discouraged and discussing unreached goals." Instead, he urged them to "get on with the task to which God has called us."

California evangelism director Harry Williams, Jr. attributed his state's projected 11 percent increase to recent emphasis on discipleship training among pastors, broad use of Growing an Evangelistic Church seminar and momentum gained from revivals held before the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Los Angeles last year.

Williams also cited the rapid growth of ethnic and black congregations in California.

Georgia evangelism director O.M. Cates said "we are disturbed to see our baptisms are down 4 percent but we rejoice that we are still 26 percent above where we were in 1979." He noted other Georgia statistics were slightly up adding "it seems that when one old-line state declines they all do and when one goes up the rest follow."

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Reaching People
Plans Launched

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
12/7/81

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist leaders launched a three-year plan for reaching unsaved people with calls for changed lifestyles, renewed commitment and unselfish cooperation.

Frequent pleas for lay involvement punctuated a two-day National Launch Meeting for Reaching People, sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School and Home Mission boards.

Speakers told 800 participants that leadership from pastors, church staff and state and denominational workers is necessary, but attaining Bold Mission Thrust goals of reaching the world for Christ depends on the enthusiasm and dedication of lay workers.

Sunday School Board President Grady C. Cothen told agency, state convention and associational leaders: "I believe there has been expressed here the most carefully planned action of Christian evangelistic action in history."

"We need a new emphasis on bivocational workers, especially in establishing new work," Cothen said. "If we wait until we have a church on every downtown corner in every large city, we'll never make it. There are people in seminaries and not enough First Baptist Churches for them to pastor.

"There are literally thousands of people who can be involved in storefront churches. We must try to get lay people to do that work."

"Who are we to look askance at people on the bottom of the denominational totem pole?" he asked. "We need a renewal of lay ministries with pastors as equippers of the saints and

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the saints doing the ministry."

Cothen said the new telecommunications plans of the Sunday School Board and the Radio-Television Commission could be how Southern Baptists can do the seemingly impossible.

"Telecommunications gives a means of relating to everything Baptists do," he said. We're interdependent as well as independent. The best of plans and telecommunications won't achieve Bold Mission Thrust. It will take the power of God's Holy Spirit, " or it won't be done.

During the meeting, a four-part plan was detailed for participants.

Part one of the plan is Church Growth Thrust, an ongoing support plan headed by the church administration department to help churches reach people.

The Sunday School department's part two is 8.5 by '85, a move to have 8.5 million enrolled in Sunday School by 1985.

Gerald Palmer, vice president-missions at the Home Mission Board, outlined part three, Bold New Work. Goals include 1,500 new churches by 1985, 1.5 million baptisms, 30,000 churches with increased giving to the Cooperative Program, double the number of career missionaries, 300,000 volunteers and 1 million trained church members to be committed witnesses.

As people become Christians and join the church, cyclical training to prepare them for witnessing will be led by the church training department. Department head Roy Edgemon shared plans for part four of the plan, Bold Witness Training.

Southern Baptist interest in growth has been criticized in some quarters as being too numbers oriented, but speakers offered no apologies for wanting church growth in the meeting.

The denomination is not interested just in numerical growth, but in a qualitative growth of churches and members toward the likeness of Jesus Christ, Edgemon said. "The church is God's agent in growth, and the barriers of man can be overcome by the Word of God."

William G. Tanner, president of the Home Mission Board, opened the meeting with a charge for Southern Baptists to get serious about reaching America for Christ, by "getting people who know Jesus to reach people who don't know Jesus." Tanner added that "unless we love lost people, our plan will fail."

Reginald M. McDonough, associate executive secretary for the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, said the Southern Baptist Convention is a sleeping giant in terms of men and women available for witnessing.

"The dream of this launch meeting," McDonough said, "is to affirm the priority of reaching people and affirm the commitment of working together as a denomination. We must have growth as a priority and teamwork as a mandate."

Three Baptists Killed
Crossing Street to Church

Baptist Press
12/7/81

MECHANICSVILLE, Va. (BP)--Three Southern Baptists on their way to Sunday evening services were struck by a car and killed Dec. 6 in Mechanicsville, Va., just outside of Richmond.

Mr. and Mrs. William G. Campbell and Olwyn Lewis, the sister of Mrs. Campbell, all in their 60s, were hit while crossing the street to attend evening worship services at Cool Springs Baptist Church. The two women died at the scene of the accident; Campbell died shortly thereafter at a local hospital.

Police said a 17-year-old Mechanicsville youth was released to his parents following the accident.

The three apparently parked their car in a parking lot across the street from the church. Police said the impact threw the victims about 145 feet.

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Allen Meeks Requests
Retirement In Alaska

Baptist Press
12/7/81

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--Allen H. Meeks, executive director of the Alaska Baptist Convention, has requested a permanent medical leave of absence "upon strong advice" of his cardiologist.

In making his request, Meeks asked that he be relieved of all duties as executive of the convention until medical retirement becomes effective.

Meeks, 63, was hospitalized in Portland, Ore., during a recent Baptist Sunday School Board meeting, after he suffered chest pains. His condition was diagnosed as "reoccurring angina," and his physician recommended immediate retirement.

Meeks, who came to Alaska in 1960 to help establish Sunset Hills Baptist Church, was unanimously elected executive director in the 1980 annual meeting of the ABC.

In his letter of resignation to Ferrell Mills, pastor of Faith Baptist Church of Anchorage and convention president, Meeks wrote, in part: "I am proud to have been a part in Alaska Baptists' exciting growth and development. I am as equally excited about the future, but am unable to fulfill my responsibilities due to my physical condition."

When he moved to Alaska, Meeks worked with the U.S. Post Office so he could be music and education director of the Sunset Hills Church. Later, he was full-time worker, and also served Jewel Lake and First churches, also in Anchorage.

In 1964, Meeks joined the convention staff as director of religious education. He served as interim executive director on three occasions.

He and his wife, Ruth, will continue to live in Anchorage.

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Family Ministry Must Include Church and Home Activities

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--If Southern Baptist families are to cope with the myriad of problems in today's society helps must include training and enrichment activities both at church and in the home, family ministry leaders believe.

State family ministry consultants met with personnel from the Sunday School Board's family ministry department to complete plans for a three-year national emphasis, "Strengthen Families, 1982-85."

The emphasis includes projects and resources to involve 500,000 families in regular family worship and Bible study in the home, 50,000 couples in 10,000 churches in a marriage enrichment activity, one million parents in 20,000 churches in a parent enrichment activity and 15,000 couples participating in the Baptist Marriage Enrichment System.

Morton Rose, BSSB vice president for church programs and services, said encouraging family activities at home is sometimes perceived to be taking away from church activities.

"We're still struggling with how to program family life issues in the church," said Rose, who emphasized the need to give increased priority to family ministry.

Grady C. Cothen, board president, said continued efforts must be given to "getting the messages of family life to the churches. Family members must relate with one another out of a resident Christian conviction that this is my family and I owe them all I am and have."

Gerald Jackson, family ministry consultant for the Arkansas Baptist Convention, said, "I have a deep conviction that Arkansas Baptist families will experience enrichment when Arkansas Baptist churches provide activities to make enrichment possible."

Jackson said state-sponsored events will major on helping pastors and other leaders develop skills to use in ministering to families in their churches.

Louisiana family ministry consultant Ray Wells said the goal of his state plans is to involve every church in ministering with families.

In Texas, Bill Blackburn said, "One of the things that has been helpful to me is listening to pastors, directors of missions and others talk about the needs they see. I have tried to build a supportive network of persons throughout the state."

Among Southern Baptists, "family lifestyle must become synonymous with Christian lifestyle if we are to really be the light of the world and the salt of the earth," said Joe Hinkle, manager of the family ministry department at the Sunday School Board.

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Student Enlistment
Plans Finalized

By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press
12/7/81

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist state and denominational student leaders finalized plans for a 1982-83 enlistment/new work campaign to organize 300 new Baptist Student Unions, reach 1,280 campuses and involved 200,000 students in BSU by June 1, 1983.

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The Sunday School Board's National Student Ministries staff and state student directors and associates were told by NSM new work consultant Bob Hartman, "Our college campuses are a ripe mission field. By reaching these students we can change the country, but only if we act through the power of God."

Hartman said a recent survey showed there are currently 12.3 million students on U.S. campuses. Of these, 628,650 indicate a Baptist preference, but only 154,819 students are involved in BSU activities.

Plans for the enlistment/new work emphasis include training state representatives, a Bible study program, "Jesus Reaching People," and increased promotion of the adopt-a-state program where an established BSU is encouraged to adopt a new or weak BSU. More than 30 states are now participating in the program.

In conjunction with the state directors meeting, directors and advisers from the National Baptist Student Union held their fifth annual planning meeting.

John Corblitt, NSM ethnic consultant and pastor of Springfield Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., said while more than one million black students currently study on U.S. campuses, only about 100 persons work with them as BSU directors and advisers.

Corblitt said the majority of directors on predominantly black campuses are volunteers.

In other sessions, plans for reaching 1982-85 Bold Mission Thrust goals for student ministry were discussed. These include involving 50,000 students in witness training, 225,000 students annually in Baptist student ministries, assisting churches in reaching and baptizing 45,000 students, and assisting churches in reaching students for Bible study through the Sunday School.

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