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EDITOR'S NOTE: Orrin D. Morris, director of the Research Division for the SBC Home Mission Board, made the following predictions on life in the 1980s based on his study of 1980 Census Data. The following article was adapted from a paper presented to Mission in Context at Ridgecrest and to the staff of the SBC Home Mission Board, Atlanta.

## SBC Researcher Predicts Challenges of the 1980s

By Orrin D. Morris

There is nothing magical about the ending of one decade and the beginning of another. Following release of census data at the end of each decade, there is almost always a plethora of prognostications by those who study the data in order to predict what might happen in the next decade.

As a result of study of the 1970 and 1980 census reports in comparison with denominational statistics during the past decade, the following "predictions" are offered for whatever they may be worth.

They will not come to pass just because they are stated. Some, we hope, will not take place. Others will be welcomed, just as some are rejected. Some are listed with the hope that they may never occur and that Southern Baptists will make the commitment to prevent these predictions from coming true.

In general, an extension of current trends, and some personal guesses and fears leads to the following conclusions:

1. The national mood will continue to be generally conservative through most of the 1980s. This will encourage favorable attitudes toward organized religion in general and toward Southern Baptists, particularly in the South. Thus the rate of increase in resident members of SBC churches will be higher than this past decade (20 percent compared to 17 percent).
2. The population will increase more than 28 million in the 1980s compared to the 23 million increase in the 1970s. The "echo effect" of the post-World War II Baby Boom will supply a temporary rise in the number of births for most of the decade. Immigrants and new streams of refugees will continue to swell the population. However, there probably will be a rising resentment against refugees.
3. The South will continue to be a highly attractive region for Sunbelt migrants. Florida and Texas will continue to account for over one-half of the region's growth.

Florida will become the fourth largest state, passing Ohio in 1984, Illinois in 1988 and Pennsylvania in 1990. It is possible that Texas will be the second largest state by A.D. 2000, passing New York late in the 1990s.

4. The net increase in number of SBC churches for the 1980s will be above 2,000 compared to less than 1,500 during the 1970s. The most rapid growth (percentage increase) in SBC work will continue to occur in the Northeast while the poorest rate of growth will be in the South.

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5. It is not very likely that Baptists in either Texas, Florida or Georgia will keep up with the population growth. It also may be difficult to keep up in Virginia, North Carolina and Louisiana.
6. The large cities of the South will present the most formidable challenge to Southern Baptists.

There will be little hope for growth in SBC work apart from very aggressive church extension, particularly developing black, Hispanic and other ethnic pastors to develop new racial and ethnic congregations.

The "church growth" interests will favor helping large congregations get larger with little or no concern for helping small churches in racially changing areas.

Media exposure of many "super church" pastors will mitigate against their support of starting new congregations. Dollars will pour into mass media technology while the number of pulpits decrease in proportion to the population.

7. Hispanics will become the largest minority in the nation, passing blacks in the late 1990s. Within Southern Baptist life both groups will be about equally strong with the most rapid rate of increase occurring among blacks.
8. There likely will be two large periods of "white flight" before the turn of the century. The first period will be from the mid-80s to the early-90s, then again in the late-90s. The primary retardant will be tight money for financing new housing in the early-80s and mid-90s. When mortgage money begins to flow the flight will accelerate. The "white flight" will actually be a "middle-class flight" including persons of all races.
9. The nonmetropolitan counties will be the fastest growing areas by the 1990s, spurred by "white flight," decentralization of industries and advances in mass media and computer technology. However, the so-called "nonmetropolitan" areas will become "metropolitanized." The concept of agrarian or rural lifestyles will be replaced by a middle-class cosmopolitan mind-set which looks down on city dwellers much like city folks looked down on "country hicks" 40 years ago.
10. The hoped-for "gentrification" or restoration of "elite areas" of the cities will have played out by the late 1980s because of discouragement created by racist politics, deteriorated standards of education, near-bankrupt city governments, exorbitant taxes and relocation of industry.
11. The bright spots for Southern Baptists will be the challenges that society offers for the churches in the South, including:
  - Influx of migrants from the North and West.
  - Influx of immigrants, especially refugees from political turmoil in Third World nations.
  - Invitations by black and Hispanic city officials requesting churches to help with the moral and spiritual problems they face.
  - The enriching experience of following the missionary stories of Southern Baptist black, Hispanic and other ethnic pastors who report victories in the giant cities.
  - The pride that comes from witnessing emerging pluralism of SBC churches and associations; a pluralism reflected in some integrated congregations and many

racial and ethnic congregations that integrate on the associational level.

12. Finally, the district association will emerge in Southern Baptist life as the most crucial unit in the denomination. The local congregation is and will always be central in SBC polity, but apart from it the association will best understand the context. The association will help motivate state and national leaders to be responsive to the reality of the local situation. At the same time the association will help motivate congregational leaders to keep reaching outward on mission.

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Foreign Board Releases  
Another \$130,000 for Poles

Baptist Press  
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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Responding to continued need for food and relief in Poland, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board released an additional \$130,000 in hunger and relief funds Dec. 28 to assist Baptists and others in Poland.

Earlier the board had released \$135,000 for channeling through West German Baptists for hunger and relief needs in Poland.

John R. Cheyne, the board's relief ministries consultant, said relief agencies have experienced some problems with getting trucks across the border but are pushing ahead with efforts to assist hungry Poles.

He said four trucks of volunteer agencies were detained at one border crossing but that eight trucks of supplies from Baptists have made it across, carrying 3,000 packages each.

Though Southern Baptist-financed truckloads are being sent to Baptist leaders in Poland, Cheyne said the food is being distributed without regard to religious preference.

He said the target of the supplies are those who physically cannot stand in long food ration lines during severe weather.

Cheyne quoted Knud Wumpelmann, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, as saying that food shipments had been reaching Polish Baptist leaders for distribution.

But Cheyne emphasized the importance of getting as much food to Poland as quickly as possible because no one is certain how long the borders will remain open.

He said Baptist leaders will continue to monitor how long the Polish military, which has tightened access to the country, allows these shipments to continue.

Cheyne is scheduled to meet with Wumpelmann, Southern Baptist representative John David Hopper and Manfred Otto, administrative director for the German Baptist Union, in Frankfurt, West Germany, Jan. 30, to discuss other urgent needs in Poland and to plan for the next three to six months.

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### Board Seeks To Contact Missionaries After Ghana Coup

ACCRA, Ghana (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board leaders are trying to contact missionaries in Accra, Ghana, in the wake of a military coup in that capital city early Dec. 31.

The American Embassy in Accra reported the estimated 1,500 Americans in the country were believed safe and were being urged to stay in their homes. Heavy gunfire was reported at the airport and in the area of Burma Barracks, the central military camp at Accra, news reports said.

Thirty-one of the 51 Southern Baptist missionaries stationed in Ghana were in the west African country when the coup was staged before dawn. Two couples and two single missionaries are stationed in Accra.

Jerry J. Rawlings, 34-year-old former flight lieutenant, staged the overthrow of the civilian government led by elected president Hilla Limann, the reports said. Rawlings staged a similar coup two years ago, overturning the government of Lt. Gen. Frederick Akuffo, then turned over leadership of the nation to Limann after a public election.

Shortly after the dissidents gained control of the Accra radio station, Rawlings broadcast an appeal for unity and urged that Limann not be harmed.

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A list of missionaries stationed in Ghana, with home states, has been mailed to state editors by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

### Smith's Church Plans Expansion Project

Baptist Press  
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DEL CITY, Okla. (BP)--First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., has voted to buy 47 acres one mile east of its current location on which to build a new church plant.

The church, led by Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith, will pay \$1.8 million for the property primarily from funds already accumulated. The property, at the corner of Southeast 29th and Sooner Road, currently contains a Seventh Day Adventist camp, a movie theater, a mobile home park and a trucking company.

Smith, who has been at First Southern since December 1973, raised the question in his church newsletter about his commitment to stay at the church and see it through this project.

"Yes, I have become a very well known preacher," he wrote. "Offers galore have come my way. Let me skip over all of that and tell you that as we go into this project I am here for life. I've got so many glorious ideas. More than fame, money recognition and honor, I want to be your pastor and see God do a great, great work reaching souls for Jesus."

He also wrote that he will cancel most of his engagements for 1982 to give full energy to the expansion project.

Construction of a 5,000-seat, \$7 million auditorium is expected to start in 1982. Current education space may continue to be used for up to five years.

The church had planned to build on its current 12-acre site but could not acquire the necessary additional property. In recent years, the church has purchased a motel, a theater, a Mormon church, a shopping center and six houses nearby it.

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Smith told the members, "We could stay here forever. If we do, our growth is limited, and we will, like hundreds of other churches, pass our day of opportunity and will become known as the church that 'used to be' something for God."

He wrote that after he asked God to give him direction from the Word about what to do, "The first passage I read, I mean the very first words I saw, said, 'Go, sell whatsoever thou hast.' The next passage, 'Sell everything.' And the third, 'Sell all of thy garments.' That was all in five minutes. I was literally overwhelmed by the fact that God was telling us to sell, sell, sell and move."

Unneeded property such as the shopping center and the theater at the current location, will be sold. As for the eventual use of the present property, some of the members have mentioned the possibility of using it for a Christian school, but that has not been decided.

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Surprise Postage Jump  
Hits Baptist Newspapers By Norman Jameson and Larry Chesser

Baptist Press  
12/31/81

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--After fighting and apparently winning a continued subsidy for second class non-profit mailers this summer, Baptist editors learned in late December the subsidy will end Jan. 10.

The immediate effect for Baptist state newspapers and similar mailers is an increase in postage costs of at least 100 percent and up to 150 percent, depending on volume and weight of the newspaper.

"Congress lied to us," said Lynn Clayton, editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message, who is faced with an immediate annual increase in postage costs of \$126,000.

"At a time when the federal government is asking charitable organizations to pick up more of the load for the needy of society, they cripple our communications that is essential to doing what they've asked us to do."

In meeting President Reagan's demand for an additional across-the-board reduction in domestic spending, Congress slashed nearly \$4 billion from the 1982 budget when it passed a stop-gap funding bill in mid-December to keep the government running through March 31. The bill provided \$82 million less funding for the subsidy which provides preferential rates for non-profit, second class mailers than was authorized by Congress when it set federal spending ceilings during the first round of budget cuts last summer.

Had Congress appropriated the full \$696 million authorized for this postal subsidy, second-class non-profit mailers would have continued to move gradually toward paying their full mailing costs. Last June, they reached step 10 of a 16-year phasing process started by Congress in 1970.

But as directed by the stop-gap funding bill, the postal service adjusted all preferred-rate categories, except second-class-within-county and fourth-class library rates, to step 16, or full-phased rates, effective Jan. 10. Second-class in-county and fourth-class library will be adjusted to step 13.

Reaction from Baptist editors varied from the fury of Clayton, to rather calm acceptance by Presnall Wood, editor of the Texas Baptist Standard, by far the largest of the 34 Baptist state newspapers with 390,000 circulation.

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"I don't think it's all bad," said Wood, whose cost will jump from \$9,065 per week to \$22,098 per week. "The federal budget does need cutting and its time for religious publications to pay their own way."

The Standard will immediately pass their increased cost to their subscription customers, raising their church member plan from \$3.80 Dec. 31, to the already planned \$4.80 Jan. 1 to an unexpected \$5.50 Feb. 1.

Newspapers whose primary income is from subscriptions can more easily rebound from such a blow. Others, funded completely through state Cooperative Program contributions, must wait a year before they can make a budget adjustment or ask for an emergency allocation from reserve funds.

One such newspaper is the Illinois Baptist, edited by Robert J. Hastings, who when he first heard of the changes, "just went into shock."

"We don't know what we are going to do," he said. "We have got money enough to go to the first of July. We just have to go to the board and ask for more money or cut back frequency. It boils down to that."

Particularly galling to the Baptist state newspapers is the fact that regular second class mailers, those who deliver a product for profit through the mails, will pay less per piece than non-profit mailers.

The surprise comes just after most churches have already determined their budgets for the coming year. Clayton says timing of the announcement was "more than coincidental," coming at a time when Congress was not in session.

C. R. Daley, editor of Kentucky's Western Recorder says if he passes the cost on to his subscribers, he will lose one-third to one-half of them. Passing on full cost would require raising his basic subscription from \$3.75 to \$5.75 and he said "every time we raise it a quarter we lose several thousand."

"I hope I'm overly pessimistic, but I'm afraid I'm realistic," he said.

**(BP)**

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