



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Cooperative Program Giving Continues Surge

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Worldwide mission efforts were high on the Christmas lists of Southern Baptists in December.

The Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention received more than \$6.85 million during the last month of 1982 to help fund the mission and educational programs of the national convention. That was \$1,891,363 more than the Cooperative Program received during December, 1982--an increase of almost 28 percent.

Additionally, another \$2,073,817 in designated gifts (mostly to the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board) was received by SBC agencies during December.

Since October, when the SBC fiscal year begins, Southern Baptists in the 36,000 SBC churches around the country have given \$24,015,420 to the Cooperative Program--16.42 percent and \$3,872,880 ahead of the first quarter of the last fiscal year.

"Southern Baptists have been challenged to recognize the importance of missions and they continue to respond to that challenge in a remarkable way," Harold Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC executive committee, said. "Despite a troubled economy and in the midst of Christmas shopping they have shown again their commitment to sharing the message of Jesus Christ with the world."

The first quarter giving surge was widespread as 31 of the 34 regional conventions increased their gifts to the national CP over a year ago. Nine regional conventions are up more than 20 percent each and 24 have increased more than 10 percent.

Of course percentage increases translate into more dollars in the larger conventions--and five states that have given more than \$1 million in the first three months are in the top ten for percentage increase.

Florida is third in percentage increase (43.89) and has given \$1,559,857; South Carolina is seventh (23.61) and has given \$1,449,162; Missouri is eighth (22.31, \$1,055,829); Texas is ninth (22.08, \$4,051,950); and Oklahoma is tenth (17.08, \$1,586,872). Other percentage leaders are: Northern Plains (140.3 percent, \$48,338); New York (73.64, \$28,635); Nevada (37.75, \$12,173); Washington, D.C. (37.17, \$26,770) and Hawaii (26.78, \$22,896).

The total contribution leaders are: Texas, Georgia (\$1,738,871), North Carolina (\$1,732,094), Alabama (\$1,629,107); Oklahoma; Florida; Tennessee (\$1,543,626); South Carolina, Virginia (\$1,195,133) and Louisiana (\$1,130,186).

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Kong Succeeds Walker
As Hawaii Executive Director

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HONOLULU (BP)--Dan H. Kong, 54, vice president-development of the Hawaii Baptist Academy, was unanimously elected executive director-treasurer of the Hawaii Baptist Convention at a called meeting of the executive board Jan. 22. He will assume his new post March 1.

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Kong succeeds Edmund Walker, recently appointed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as national consultant for senior adult ministries based in California.

The new executive director is the fourth to head the convention in its 40-year history. The first local denominational leader to hold the post, Kong is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Harry H. Kong Sr., of Wahiawa who encouraged and supported early Christian work and also undergirded early Hawaii Baptist beginnings by the Foreign Mission Board in the early 1940s.

Kong, a graduate of Leilehua High School, attended Michigan State University and received his B.A. from Georgetown College in Kentucky. After completing his B.D. at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., he returned to Hawaii in 1954 as the first full-time native pastor of a Southern Baptist Church in Hawaii.

Kong served at the historic First Baptist Church of Wahiawa, the denomination's oldest church in the islands, until 1960 when he was called to the pastorate of the Olivet Baptist Church where he served until 1973. He joined the staff of the Hawaii Baptist Academy in 1973 as vice president for development.

Kong described his call to the post as "uniquely tempered with a flavor of mystery and excitement," and said he is "convinced this endeavor will open even greater doors for the cause of Christ throughout the islands, Pacific Basin and the world".

In a statement to fellow Baptists, Kong urged them to "continue your vital support and join me in making our Hawaii Baptist Convention a dynamic and viable force that will continue to honor God and bring glory to his name. Please pray for me as I seek to fulfill what I believe to be his calling to a challenging responsibility and opportunity."

Kong, who previously served two terms as president of the Hawaii Baptist Convention, has been a keynote speaker in the community and on denominational programs nationally. He has also preached in Vietnam, New Zealand and Israel.

He is married to the former Mary Eleanor Braddock of Ripley, Miss. She currently is interim associate director of Cooperative Missions for the state convention. They have four daughters.

Currently there are 43 fully organized churches, 10 church-type missions and 10 language congregations in the 12,000-member Hawaii Baptist Convention.

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WMU Names Former Missionary
New Royal Service Editor

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Betty Merrell, a former Southern Baptist missionary, has been named editor of Royal Service magazine by Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention. Royal Service, WMU's monthly magazine for adult women, has 320,000 subscribers--the largest circulation of any mission magazine within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Merrell, a native of Tulsa, Okla., is a graduate of Southern Baptist Junior College and Arkansas Polytechnic University. She attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. She also was a missionary to Vietnam for 10 years and director of the Vietnam Baptist Publication Department for one year.

Merrell has been on church staffs in Maryland, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. She was music and education director at First Baptist Church, Livingston, Ala., before coming to WMU. Her husband, R.D. Merrell Sr., is pastor of the church.

She has also been administrative assistant at the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

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Elmer Gray To Retire
As California Editor

FRESNO, Calif. (BP) -- Elmer L. Gray, editor of the California Southern Baptist since January of 1974, has announced his retirement, effective July 31, 1983.

Gray, 64, made his announcement at the closing session of the executive board of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California Jan. 25. In a prepared statement, Gray said: "I have found such a peace of spirit with this decision that I can now serve with excitement and love and do whatever you (the executive board) feel you want me to do for you in the months ahead."

In announcing the decision, Gray said he would continue working for the executive board--of which the newsjournal is a part--until a replacement is employed and "until the board operations committee replaces me."

James Rives, of Sacramento, chairman of the board operations committee, said a three member committee has been appointed to develop a profile of the type of individual who will be sought as Gray's successor. The committee consists of John Lewis of Redwood City, Wayne Reynolds of Escondido and Joy McClung of Hollywood.

Gray, who will be 65 in March, came to the editorship of the 27,000 circulation newspaper from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., where he had been academic dean. He held the dean's post from 1970 to 1974. Previously, he was manager of the Sunday School department at the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville for three years, professor of church administration at GGBTS for eight years, and pastor of three Southern Baptist churches in California.

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RTVC Trustees Okay
ACTS Launch Strategy

By Greg Warner

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Trustees of the Radio and Television Commission (RTVC) have unanimously approved a comprehensive strategy launching the American Christian Television System (ACTS) in March 1984.

In other board action during its Jan. 24-25 meeting, the trustees announced James Landes, retired director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, would serve as development consultant to the commission, approved a policy for handling controversy and thanked comedian Jerry Clower for his ten-year association with "Country Crossroads."

"There comes a time when every vision must be transformed into reality," said RTVC President Jimmy R. Allen in introducing the ACTS strategy. "That time is crucial. That time is now." The plan, which was the product of a five-month study by a staff task force, included a tentative program schedule for 16 hours of daily broadcast. The majority of the programming would be produced by the RTVC, while some would be purchased from outside producers.

ACTS plans to broadcast six hours of new programming each day and repeat other programs for 10 hours. No programs will be repeated on the same day or at the same time of day, however. The cost of acquiring and producing the programming was estimated at \$3.3 million dollars for the first year.

Although ACTS will be non-commercial and make no appeals for money on the air, it will provide revenue through direct mail, commercial recognition (similar to those used in public broadcasting) and from a system of sharing the satellite delivery costs. "From the very beginning, we expected to receive approximately \$162,000 per month," said Ron Dixon, RTVC vice president of media services.

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Participating churches and TV stations will be asked to share the delivery costs on a proportionate basis. Each low-power TV station will pay \$500 per month. Full-power stations will be charged \$1,000 per month. Churches using ACTS on cable TV will be asked to share the costs at a rate of 10 cents per month for each resident member.

The satellite to be used to deliver ACTS programming to the stations and churches will cost the RTVC \$175,000 per month.

The task force, chaired by RTVC's Executive Vice President Luke Williams, also presented a strategy for counseling viewers who respond by telephone to ACTS broadcasts, a plan to enlarge and improve RTVC production facilities and a schedule for building the "uplink," or satellite transmitter unit.

The RTVC has asked the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention for \$6.4 million to meet capital needs during 1984-88, while committing to raise \$2.6 million on its own.

After kneeling in prayer, the trustees unanimously adopted the report. Board Chairman John Hughes of Independence, Mo., called the action "a milestone and a step of faith."

Landes, who retired as head of Texas Baptists in December, will assume his role as consultant to the RTVC immediately. Allen said the commission is still seeking a vice president of development.

Admitting controversy is inevitable for a national TV network, the trustees adopted the guidelines for the RTVC management in handling conflicts that arise through the ACTS network. The policy states ACTS will adhere to the broadcast industry standards of the Fairness Doctrine and Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters. While maintaining the "freedom of the pulpit," ACTS will draw on the the Baptist Faith and Message Statement as a guide to doctrinal integrity.

In a special appreciation luncheon Jan. 25, the trustee board named Clower "Ambassador at Large" for the RTVC. The entertainer has donated his time to co-host the weekly "Country Crossroads" radio program since 1972. Testimonials at the luncheon came from several "Crossroads" listeners who had received spiritual help from the program.

Other board action allocated \$1.3 million in 1982-83 Bold Mission Thrust advance funds to aquisition and production of programming for ACTS. Last year the trustees requested and received the 20 percent share of the advance funds, the money given to the Cooperative Program in excess of its budget.

Trustees also agreed to spend up to \$50,000, to be raised through special gifts, for occasional broadcasts on an existing satellite network later this year. The air time will be used to promote the 1984 launch of the network. The board also asked the commission staff to study the possibility of using and marketing a series of TV spot announcements.

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Missionaries Rush To Help
Africans Stranded On Beaches

By Mary Jane Welch

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LOME, Togo (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries have rushed to aid thousands of Africans expelled from Nigeria and stranded on the beaches of Togo with no shelter, food or water.

The crowd swelled form 10,000 to about 50,000 in about a day's time and is still growing, according to Clayton Bond, Southern Baptist missionary in Lome, Togo, near the Ghanaian border.

Conditions are so bad, he reports, that babies are being born on the beaches. On Jan.26, the third day of the crisis Bond and three other SBC missionaries in Lome distributed bread to 10,000 people, using \$20,000 allocated by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for food, water and medical supplies. Southern Baptist had begun aid as soon as refugees arrived and were still the only group providing food. The Red Cross was beginning medical aid.

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The board is also dispatching an emergency medical team. John and Martha Adams, missionary physician and nurse on furlough from Kenya, and Thomas Newton, a nurse from Hope, Ark. are expected to leave Jan. 27 for Togo.

The Nigerian government announced it was expelling expatriates without work permits to reserve jobs for Nigerians. Two to three million people may be in Nigeria without work permits, according to John Mills, who directs the board's work in West Africa, but he cannot estimate how many will be affected by the order.

Following the main road from Nigeria across Southern Benin and Togo, some refugees stopped at the Benin-Togo border but most stacked up at the Togo-Ghana border, Mills said. Ghana earlier had closed the border to prevent cocoa smugglin into its more prosperous neighbor. Togo in turn closed its border.

Nigeria's borders have been easy to cross and thousands have been lured from poorer nations by the country's oil wealth and available jobs, Mills explained. But the world oil glut has slowed the nation's economy and shrunk the pool of jobs and goods available. Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation, with more than 82 million people.

Mills says he expects the problem to ease in coming weeks as borders open or refugees move north through Upper Volta, which has open borders with both Togo and Ghana.

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(BP) map mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Heart Disease, Cancer Top Killers In SBC

DALLAS (BP)--Heart disease and cancer were the leading killers in 1982 of Southern Baptist ministers and denominational personnel, according to statistics released by the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Of 317 deaths reported to the Annuity Board in 1982, 70 percent were attributed to heart-related illnesses (155) and cancer (68). Both categories reflected one percent increases of 1981 figures.

The totals reflect deaths of Southern Baptist ministers and denomnational employees who participated in the Annuity Board retirement program. One hundred and twenty-six died in active service, while 191 persons died in retirement.

Accidental death (12), blood clots (9), brain strokes (8) and suicide (6) totals were double 1981 statistics; art riosclerosis claimed one life, and all tumors (other than brain) took seven lives for the first time since 1980. Respritory failure deaths decreased by 63 percent claiming 19 people.

Other causes of death included: kidney failure (6), leukemia (3), natural causes (6), brain tumor (3), Parkinson's Disease (1), pneumonia (10) and hemmoraging (3).

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