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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, 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
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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CP Study Committee
Proposes 20/2000 Vision

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists are being challenged to give \$20 billion a year through local congregations by the year 2000.

The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention will receive a report in February from the 25-member Cooperative Program Study Committee it appointed last year to consider making recommendations to the SBC annual meeting in Pittsburgh in June.

Also to be considered will be a significant change in the Cooperative Program.

The 15-step "Planned Growth in Giving" anticipates each Baptist individual, family, church and regional convention to respond with a percentage increase in giving through the Cooperative Program each year from 1985 through 2000.

"Giving patterns in the Southern Baptist Convention have not changed in the last 20 years and if we pull it off with this program it will be dramatic," said Cecil Ray, executive secretary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and a member of the study committee writing team which drafted the basic document. "To match a dream you have to have deliberate and planned commitment—these goals are within reach but awesome enough to scare us."

"The dream" Ray referred to is Bold Mission Thrust, the SBC effort to present the message of Jesus Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000. The SBC launched Bold Mission Thrust in 1979 but the 1983 meeting will be the first at which long term funding of the program will be addressed.

The heart of the plan is the week-long training of 700 church and denominational leaders to lead state sponsored Planned Growth in Giving Conferences. The state conferences will be three-day sessions with a pastor and a layman from each of the convention's 36,000 churches invited. "The cost in dollars and time for the training is large—but the benefits are even larger," Ray explained. "We have never asked pastors and laymen to give three days to this type of meeting but that is what it will take for Planned Growth In Giving to be successful."

The change in the Cooperative Program, the SBC voluntary contribution plan which underwrites national and worldwide mission and educational efforts, will be the first major change since the Cooperative Program was created in 1925.

Presently all gifts to the Cooperative Program are divided among all SBC agencies according to a budget approved by messengers to the annual SBC meeting. The study committee is suggesting churches be allowed to "exclude certain causes" and still have their gifts considered as Cooperative Program contributions.

"No one is comfortable with undue exclusions but if we're going to ask for theological diversity in unity within the convention then we should provide for flexibility in funding," said Randall Lolley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. and chairman of the writing team.

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"This is a good statement," agreed Dan Vestal, pastor of First Baptist Church in Midland, Texas which has been among the leaders in Cooperative Program giving for 20 years. But he said he would oppose additional changes to allow for totally designated giving.

Ray said, "We don't question any individual's or church's right to designate but I don't think you can designate all your contributions and call it cooperative—because it isn't."

Cooperative Program givings has become a focal point in the struggle within the SBC between inerrantists and moderates. Inerrantists have protested being forced to support seminaries and agencies they disagree with while moderates have maintained tampering with the Cooperative Program would wreck the mission support program.

Several regional conventions, notably the Baptist General Association of Virginia, have adopted similar "negative designation" plans which have been successful. Conrad Johnson, pastor of Salem Baptist Church in Salem, Va. said giving actually increased statewide since churches were allowed to exclude agencies they did not feel they could support.

If the change is adopted it will be watched closely since even small percentage changes will produce large dollar changes within the Cooperative Program—especially if Planned Growth in Giving is adopted and successful.

The biggest impact of Planned Growth In Giving would be at the local church level. The committee is recommending that each of the 36,000 churches increase giving through the SBC Cooperative Program each year so that in 2000 they are budgeting at least 7.5 percent more to the Cooperative Program than they gave in 1985. Approximately half of the member churches presently give less than four percent.

The 34 regional conventions, which receive the individual church contributions and then distribute the money between its own programs and the national unified giving plan, will be asked to move toward a 50-50 split. Three conventions (Florida, Georgia and Oklahoma) now send 45-48 percent of their income to the national level and are planning to be at the 50-50 level by 1985. Most other conventions send between 20-35 percent.

The committee is suggesting the Executive Committee of the SBC name a 15-member Planned Growth In Giving task force of pastors, laypersons, directors of missions, SBC agency personnel, state executive directors and state stewardship directors.

A national director of the effort also would be named by the Executive Committee. Both the task force and the national director would be set up for a period not to exceed five years.

The committee also is recommending the states pay for two-thirds of the cost of the training and promotion and the SBC operating budget provide the other third.

The part of the \$20 billion per year flowing into SBC churches by 2000 could produce a national budget of \$1.25 billion. Of that amount, the plan designated 75 percent to fund the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board. This past year the two mission boards received 66.34 percent of the \$93.34 million national Cooperative Program receipts.

To reach the projections will require a real growth in giving of 300-350 percent beyond inflation but according to Ray the goals are actually, "conservative projections, based on solid data." Lolley noted, "what we are doing is asking Southern Baptists to give to world missions what it costs to buy one 1983 Nimitz class aircraft carrier."

Each member of the committee who spoke noted the key to the program is the involvement of the laity.

"This whole program starts with the family sitting down at home and talking about what God wants them to do," Lolley said. "We need a challenge, bold but bite-sized, to fund Bold Mission Thrust. Planned Growth In Giving requires a quantum leap but we think we can place before Southern Baptists a challenge to make that quantum leap."

Three Gardner-Webb
Profes Die In Wreck

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. (BP)—Three professors at Gardner-Webb College were killed in a three-car wreck Jan. 27 as they were returning to campus after teaching classes at the school's Catawba Center in Newton, N.C.

Mike Harrelson, 51, professor of biology and chairman of the department of natural sciences, and John Rast, 36, assistant professor of religion, were dead at the scene, about eight miles south of Hickory.

James Henson, 55, professor of psychology, was taken to a Hickory hospital. He died Sunday morning in the intensive care unit.

The three-car wreck—which also claimed the lives of two other persons—occurred at 10:18 p.m. Thursday. The three men had finished teaching at the Catawba Center at 10 a.m. The center is one of 10 operated by the college as part of its GOAL (Greater Opportunity for Adult Learners) program.

Harrelson had been a teacher at the school since 1968. Henson taught from 1957 to 1962, and then returned in 1968. Rast had been on the faculty since 1981.

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Disabled Find Acceptance,
Accessibility At Florida Church

By Janice Trusty

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)—"Acceptance," declared Pastor J.W. Wynn, "is why the handicapped come to Hogan Baptist."

Wynn and his congregation are among the growing number of Southern Baptists who have become aware of their responsibilities to the nation's 30.1 million disabled persons. Realizing most churches remain gracious turn-of-the-century bastions whose narrow corridors and unscalable stairways bar entries to the disabled, Hogan Baptist began a concerted effort to make its facilities accessible.

Their sprawling, mostly ground-level buildings needed only slight alterations such as ramps and enlarged rest rooms. Teenagers and adults volunteered to stand ready to push a wheelchair or hold a door.

Volunteer Becky Hill, 19, believes helping the disabled is one of the best things that has happened to her. "I love working with these people," she said. "It means a lot to them and I have learned the importance of caring for others."

Wynn has discovered that ministry to the disabled by the able-bodied is good for both. "Most people who join a church want to work," he pointed out, "and the disabled program is an ideal outlet."

Each person entering Hogan's doors is encouraged to serve. Brenda Broach, 31, who suffered brain damage at birth, sings in the choir despite a slight speech impediment. Jack Mincey, a paraplegic since an automobile accident, is a favorite with the children in the nursery. Other disabled persons work in Sunday School, Church Training or in the sign language ministry.

The project has expanded to include braille hymnbooks, interpreters for the deaf and audio system outlets throughout the sanctuary to aid persons with hearing disabilities. Two vans equipped with hydraulic lifts were purchased to transport wheelchair users and elderly members who have difficulty entering and exiting regular automobiles.

"What most people fail to realize," Wynn commented, "is that anything helpful to the disabled is just as useful for the elderly and doesn't hinder the able-bodied."

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Wynn is one of Southern Baptists' best-informed pastors on work with the disabled. But, he admitted, the knowledge was forced upon him. When Stan Carter was paralyzed in an automobile accident at age 19, his family came to Wynn.

"I felt it was all over," remembered Carter. "But the preacher visited me from the very beginning. He faithfully appeared at the hospital with a smile, a prayer and cassette tapes of Sunday services.

Knowing Carter wasn't a Christian, Wynn asked him to critique the sermons. "He had to listen, and listening meant he heard the gospel," Wynn smiled. Carter became a Christian.

After leaving the hospital Carter re-entered college. Today he runs his own business equipping vans for the disabled and works as director of disabled youth education at Florida Junior College.

Through his attempts to minister to Carter, Wynn discovered another critical need of the disabled—fellowship. The answer was the Bethesda Club—a fraternity for the disabled, begun by Wynn with Carter as the lone member. But the club grew rapidly. Volunteers took the group on shopping trips, to the zoo and to athletic events. For many, these trips were the first time they had participated in such outings since being disabled.

Recreational facilities also were non-existent for disabled persons until 50 wooded acres were donated to the church for a park for the disabled. Financially unable to develop the land, the church gave it to the city and served as a consultant to the project.

Completed, the park provides cabins, restrooms and other facilities accessible to both the disabled and the able-bodied. Trails, winding through wooded terrain and around the well-stocked lake, accept wheelchair users. "It's shocking how these people have been deprived of so many things for such a long time," emphasized Wynn.

Appalled at the lack of educational opportunities for the disabled, Wynn approached Florida Junior College on behalf of Bethesda Club members. The college established a mini-high school at the church; many club members have since earned high school diplomas.

Wynn knows well the frustration of a lack of education. "I always thought I was just stupid," said Wynn. "Once the doctors identified my problem as dyslexia, it was a relief."

With endurance and his wife's help, Wynn earned his high school diploma in 1972. "I still have trouble reading," he said. "But accepting my handicap and my limitations released me. Some people believe a disabled person's mind is as disabled as his body. Thankfully," Wynn said, "that idea is changing."

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(BP) photo mailed to Baptist state papers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

'New Trails' Lead
Iowa Church To Prison

By David Chancey

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WATERLOO, Iowa (BP)—"I think God is using me to blaze a new trail in the black church," admits Eugene Williams, pastor of Faith Temple Baptist Church in Waterloo, Iowa. "The minister who spends his time building up worship statistics and buying choir robes is ridiculous. You have to be a brother to your people, a father sometimes, a lawyer, a counselor, a doctor."

Williams can "lay it on heavy" in the highly emotional sing-song sermon delivery many black congregations know as "whooping." But his ministry philosophy goes far beyond whooping, to meeting the social and physical needs of his community.

Williams has been caring for people in Waterloo for more than 20 years. He "laid it on heavy" from the pulpit of Antioch Baptist Church for 17 years, building it into a strong, prosperous congregation of 1,500. But when he tried to lead Antioch to develop a new ministry concept, some members resisted.

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Williams decided it was time for a change. In June 1978, he and his wife, with a nucleus of 45 people, began a "work of faith" in the inner-city—Faith Temple.

The church joined Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship, becoming one of only three predominantly black Southern Baptist churches in Iowa. Williams immediately began to mold the new church into what he thought it should be: a unique black church with an interracial appeal and a focus on ministry.

Made up primarily of laborers and factory workers, Faith Temple tries to reach the "common man." Inscribed in concrete across the church's front entrance is the theme: "Everybody is somebody and Jesus Christ is Lord."

The community where the church is located is poor. Children and youth roam the streets, drugs are readily available. Faith Temple members attempt to help their neighbors by providing a food pantry and a clothes closet. Appliances and furniture, donated by church members, are also available.

Summer backyard Bible clubs offer structured activities and Christian lessons to kids who otherwise might not receive such direction. Adult Vacation Bible School receives excellent response. Sunday School outreach efforts include a bus ministry, door-to-door visits and a telephone contact ministry.

To broaden the interests of area residents, Faith Temple has allowed a drama club, a creative dance club, an orchestra and several singing groups to use its building for meetings.

Beyond its immediate community, prison ministries are Faith Temple's top priority. Recently members donated \$1,000 worth of books to the Iowa State Penitentiary library. Gourmet food packages have been sent. A letter-writing ministry offering encouragement follows visits. A job placement program coordinated by Williams finds employment for inmates who have earned a work-furlough release.

"If they don't find a job within three weeks they have to go back to prison," explained Williams. "Sometimes, when it comes down to the last few days, we employ them at the church so they can stay out. They can continue to look for work while helping us," he said.

When the radio station at Anamosa (Iowa) prison needed gospel records, Williams rallied the Waterloo community. Records worth \$150 were donated. The church sent inmates at a Rockwell city women's prison Christmas dinner.

When they can come up with the \$120 it takes to pay for a round trip, Faith Temple members travel four hours to Iowa State Penitentiary at Fort Madison. Invited by the prison's Progressive Black Culture Organization, Faith Temple is one of the few groups allowed in the prison.

"This kind of thing is what they need most," Williams emphasized. "Involving them in the service, touching and hugging, just being with them—they need this."

Prisoners agree. "I'd like for them to come more often," said James, an inmate. "A lot of people forget we're here but we need to be remembered. A lot of guys in here can be helped." Tony, another inmate, said, "Their coming is inspirational. We very seldom have black services. It's good to see support from outside people. That Williams can really preach, too. He's all right."

Williams believes his success can be attributed to a congregation who gave him the opportunity to shape a caring ministry. "I enjoy the freedom to dream and to put foundations under those dreams," he said. "We've come far, but I want to continue to make great strides. I want us to become more interracial. I envision us increasing our stewardship responsibility."

"I enjoy the love we experience here," he continued. "We've become a family instead of an institution. All of our worship and training is geared to help us serve and minister."