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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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March 21, 1983

83-43

HMB Adopts Objectives,  
Strategies To Year 2000

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)--Updating a document drafted in 1978, directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board adopted new objectives and outlined seven strategies for achieving them by the year 2000.

Called "Target A.D. 2000," the 17-page document, plus 16 pages of statistical documentation, was developed after a 10-month intensive study by the HMB's planning section and other staff.

Leonard G. Irwin, vice president for planning, said the document was revised in the light of data from the 1980 census plus subjective input from HMB staff and mission experts giving "intuitive forecasts" on sociological changes affecting missions work.

HMB President William G. Tanner said "the hundreds of hours spent in evaluating data about our society is not enough unless we seek to know what God is doing and can know his will for our lives."

Tanner added that the implications for the Home Mission Board strategy affect more than just the United States, "for we must maintain a strong, viable home base" to reach effectively the whole world.

Compared to the statement of objectives adopted by the HMB in 1978, the new document simplifies eight previous objectives to five. It also adds seven strategies, some of which were objectives.

"Strategies are selected courses of action involving all the programs of the HMB in a major coordinated endeavor," Irwin explained.

The seven strategies include:

1. Appoint, support and equip missions personnel in their vital role to accomplish the purpose of the HMB.
2. Utilize short and long-term volunteers and bi-vocational ministers as important resources.
3. Lead in strengthening the Baptist association.
4. Work in cooperation with Baptist state conventions.
5. Assist churches in the development and promotion of evangelism and missions with special emphasis on the church evangelism committee and church missions committee.
6. Lead in the development of an effective, comprehensive and cohesive approach to the great cities in America.
7. Lead in the enlistment and development of leadership from the people served, recognizing them as full participants.

The 1983 statement includes two new objectives not included in 1978.

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While the first two objectives of the HMB to "evangelize" and "congregationalize" (start new churches) remain basically the same, a third major objective, "minister to the needs of persons" was added.

"Ministering" also was added to the previous objective "to move into new frontiers where the need for evangelizing, congregationalizing and ministering is most crucial."

A second objective is "to lead Southern Baptists to a greater awareness of missions and evangelism needs and opportunities...."

The purpose of the Home Mission Board remained unchanged: serving as a channel through which the SBC expresses missions and evangelism concerns in the U.S. and assigned territories by developing a comprehensive strategy to enable churches, associations and state conventions to move into new frontiers in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to make disciples and in establishing congregations for witnessing and ministering.

The 33-page document was crammed with statistical data documenting the research. Each objective was supported by an analysis of the implications.

"Agency researchers report about 38 percent of the U.S. population in 1980 was not affiliated with any religious group, compared to 34 percent in 1970," the report said. "The unaffiliated increased from 69 million in 1970 to 84 million in 1980."

To keep up with population growth and increasing secularism, SBC churches should be baptizing a million converts a year by 2000, the report said.

There also must be a concerted effort at starting new churches. If current trends continue, by the year 2000 there will be 38,893 SBC churches, "significantly short of the 50,000 goal," the report predicted. To reach that goal (part of an overall denominational emphasis), Baptists will need to double the rate of adding new churches, and reduce the number of churches which merge, die or disband, Irwin said. The SBC loses about 240 churches per year, compared to an average of 309 new churches started per year from 1960-80.

In the objective on ministry, the document said more attention will be given to ministries to the poor, the elderly, minority groups, transients, handicapped persons, refugees, the illiterate, persons in institutions and the criminal justice system.

The HMB called for creativity and commitment for Baptists to move into new frontiers in seven areas: geographical, ethnic/cultural, social/economic, racial, physical/institutional, religious/philosophical and lifestyle.

While blacks account for nearly 12 percent of the nation's population, blacks comprise only about one percent of SBC membership. "We hope this would increase to eight percent by 2000," Irwin said.

Six guidelines were adopted by the directors as a part of the long-range plan. The guidelines stressed the need for cooperation between the HMB and conventions, associations, churches and other SBC agencies and emphasized the role of stewardship and the SBC Cooperative Program.

A 1978 objective calling for closer relationships with other evangelicals in efforts "to accomplish Christ's purpose in the world" was changed to become the final guideline adopted by the directors.

"Communication and cooperation with other denominations shall be welcomed and initiated by the HMB where there is no sacrifice of principles or weakening of basic beliefs and practices," the HMB said.

Irwin said the agency is in the process of developing a mid-range plan with goals to implement the new objectives/strategies. Annual goals and action plans will also be developed on which the HMB annual budgets will be based, he added.

Minister Shares Experience  
Of Forced Termination

By Linda Lawson

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--"A pastor-church relationship is similar to family living, only churches seem to have divorces more often," says a Southern Baptist pastor who resigned from his church in 1980 amid a conflict that threatened to split the congregation.

Tragically, Paul's (not his real name) situation is not unique. Nor is the hurt and pain in the church he left. There, unless the problems that prompted his resignation are dealt with, the next pastor may soon find himself in the same situation.

Paul was one of 30 ministers who attended a recent two-day conference on forced termination sponsored by the Missouri Baptist Convention. He was willing to tell his story because he'd like to help other ministers in the same crisis. He would also like to see churches in conflict experience healing.

In one sense, Paul might be considered one of the lucky ones.

During the five months he was without work, he received two love offerings from members of his former church. These helped him survive financially.

He also was the beneficiary of moral and financial support from fellow ministers and received invitations to preach and lead conferences during his interim.

He is now pastor of a church where he and his family are experiencing love by the church members and people and pastor are moving forward together.

However, the positive side is not the only part of the story.

"I felt anger and bitterness for a while. It was six or seven months before I could begin working through it," he recalled. "I went through Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, resignation and acceptance). Knowing what was happening, I couldn't stop the process."

His family suffered. "My wife is a strong Christian, but the experience almost destroyed her. It almost killed my children emotionally."

Several pastoral search committees dropped him from consideration when they learned he had been forced to resign. However, he said, "There have been so many bad experiences, I can understand why committees are apprehensive."

His greatest hurt came in seeing the church he had left "ripped apart." At the same time, he noted, "Many church members told me they didn't know what was going on and didn't want to know."

In analyzing the cause of church conflicts and forced termination, he places responsibility both on pastors and churches. "I blame pastors because we haven't given people adequate resources for dealing with confrontation," he said.

He is convinced the root of church conflicts is spiritual. "Too many lay leaders are living in the world without adequate spiritual depth. People should expect a higher degree of maturity from church leaders."

Also, Paul is concerned the role of pastor is not viewed as highly as it should be in many churches.

Emphasizing he is not an authoritarian style of leader, he said, "I believe the convention has sold to the churches the idea that the pastor is just a good old boy like everybody else.

"In a church there does need to be a chain of leadership," he said. "If the church refuses to follow the pastor, there are problems. On the other hand, if a pastor feels no one can question him, there will be divisions.

"A pastor ought to be closer to God than most of his church members because he ought to be spending time with God," Paul insisted. "He ought to present plans to his people that he believes come from God. Then the people should be allowed to feed in their thoughts and beliefs. What is needed is a merging of minds and hearts."

Paul concluded, "I've learned to quit trying to do everything and to trust the Holy Spirit to deal in people's lives."

About his experience, he said, "I'm not so sure the Lord didn't allow it to happen. I was too busy with the ministry to listen to God. I spent two years preaching about faith and needed to live it. My relationship with God declined due to my responsibilities at church."

He spent part of his five-month interim on retreat, in prayer and Bible study. "This experience has definitely given me patience," he laughed. "I'm not in as much of a hurry to get things done."

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BSU Retreat Features Gospel Choirs  
Elects 1983-84 National Officers

By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press  
3/21/83

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--More than 1,200 black college students representing 100 campuses and 20 states gathered attended the 38th annual retreat of the National Baptist Student Union March 18-20.

The retreat, the largest meeting of black Christian college students in the United States, is sponsored by national student ministries of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn., and by the department of black church relations of the Home Mission Board, Atlanta, Ga.

Directed by John H. Corbitt, pastor, Springfield Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., and part-time NSM ethnic ministries consultant, the weekend conference promotes Christian growth and fellowship among black students.

Grady Cothen, president of the Sunday School Board and one of six speakers, challenged students to use God's love in their lives to be change agents in today's world. Advancements in technology and education do not have to be the only factors bringing about change, he said.

A gospel choir concert competition and the Miss BSU pageant highlighted the annual retreat.

Greta Washington, a student at Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, was chosen from 31 contestants as the 1983 Miss BSU. The pageant encourages spiritual growth, develops talent and inspires cultural growth among black college women, said Jessie Dawson, BSU advisor, Utica Junior College, Utica, Miss., and coordinator of the pageant.

Winners of the gospel choir competition were: small choir division, Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, Ark.; medium choir division, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and large choir division, Southern University, Baton Rouge, La.

The 1983-84 National BSU officers are president, Joe McGee, Alcorn State University, Lorman, Miss.; vice president, Carla Murry, University of Missouri, Columbia; secretary, Kimberly Scott, University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Ala.; treasurer, Barbara Brooks, Union College, Barbourville, Ky.; music director, Lois Johnson, Grambling State University, Grambling, La.; organist/pianist, Elbert Hensley Jr., East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas; national pastoral adviser, Herbert Brisbane, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas, and faculty adviser, Kenneth Harris, Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, Ark.

More than 60 seminars were offered during the conference. Topics included breaking down racial barriers, involving students in the local church, understanding God's will, how to remain Christian in an un-Christian environment, strengthening the black family, understanding the Holy Spirit and seeking to combine intellect and spirit in the black church.

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Other conference speakers included T. Oscar Chappelle Sr., vice president, National Baptist Congress of Christian Education, Tulsa, Okla.; Fannie C. Thompson, president of the Women's Auxiliary of the National Baptist convention, Tuscon, Ariz.; and Hickman Johnson, pastor, Farish Street Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.

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(BP photo to be mailed separately to state Baptist newspapers by Nashville bureau of Baptist Press)

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CORRECTION: In BP mailed 3/17/83, in "HMB Directors Approve Long-Range Strategy, Officers," please correct fifth graf, second sentence to read: He noted "it took 53 years for Baptists to give \$691 million to the Home and Foreign Mission Boards, but annual gifts of \$937 million will be needed by the year 2000.

Thanks, BP