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**Ray To Be Nominated
For National Position**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Cecil A. Ray, general secretary-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, will be nominated as national director of the Planned Growth in Giving effort when the Southern Baptist Executive Committee meets Sept. 19-21.

Planned Growth in Giving is a national plan to increase giving by Southern Baptist congregations to local, state, national and international causes during the remainder of this century. Goals call for increasing total gifts to the 36,000-plus congregations to \$20 billion per year, up from the current \$3 billion, and to through the SBC Cooperative Program to \$1.2 billion, up from the current \$125 million.

Planned Growth in Giving is an outgrowth of the work of a special convention-wide Cooperative Program Study Committee, whose report was approved by messengers to the 1983 Southern Baptist Convention in Pittsburgh. Ray was a member of the committee and participated in writing its final report.

Ray, 61, has been general secretary-treasurer of North Carolina Southern Baptists since 1976. He moved to Raleigh after having been director of the stewardship division of the Baptist General Convention in Texas. Many Baptist observers consider him one of the foremost experts in stewardship and Cooperative Program promotion.

In adopting the report of the Cooperative Program Study Committee, messengers at the 1983 annual SBC authorized Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee, and A.R. (Rudy) Fagan, executive director-treasurer of the SBC Stewardship Commission, to select the national director, and to make a recommendation to the Executive Committee.

The report specified the national director's job would last for a period not to exceed five years and said the person selected would be supervised jointly by Bennett and Fagan.

Ray told Baptist Press he has consented to having his name presented to the Executive Committee, but declined additional comment.

He did, however, talk animatedly about Planned Growth in Giving and Bold Mission Thrust, the denomination's plan to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000 AD.

"Planned Growth in Giving holds the potential of helping Baptists make the exciting dreams of Bold Mission Thrust an actuality. This could usher in a whole new period in Baptist life; a major new effectiveness," Ray said. "This could be a historic turning in the Southern Baptist Convention, moving us into a whole new level of effective work around the world."

Ray said the national director will have a major responsibility of "enlisting a broad spectrum of Baptist leadership to help the churches know how to do this and then helping them implement it."

Ray will be assisted by a volunteer, 15-member task force, composed of pastors, laymen, directors of missions, SBC agency personnel, state executive directors and state stewardship leaders expected to be named during the September meeting of the Executive Committee.

The initial assignment of the director of planned growth in giving, according to the plan adopted in Pittsburgh, would be to enlist and train 700 church and denominational lay leaders to lead state-sponsored Planned Growth in Giving Conference.

Ray is a native of Texas and a graduate of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was pastor in Lubbock, Texas, and director of missions in San Antonio prior to joining the stewardship division of the BGCT in 1961.

He is expected to continue his residence in Raleigh, N.C., because the assignment is primarily a traveling position rather than an office position. If all proceeds as planned, he will assume his new position Jan. 1, 1984, completing exactly eight years as general secretary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Ray is expected to submit his resignation to the North Carolina convention general board when it meets Sept. 26-27.

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Lifetime Mabebe's Shoes
Are Empty In Morokweng

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MOROKWENG, Bophuthatswana (BP)--Rural villagers quickly gathered as Carolyn Roberson's yellow Peugeot pickup pulled to a stop.

What had the "sister" (nurse) come for today? Perhaps a baby had been born or maybe someone needed to go to the hospital. Sometimes she brought news of a loved one's death in the hospital far away from the small southern African village of Morokweng, Bophuthatswana.

Soon about 30 Africans gathered at the home of little Aviva Mohibidu, a 7-year-old d af boy who would soon go away to a special school. That's why the "sister" had come--to make final arrangements for Aviva's schooling.

Grateful for the curiosity which brought the people together, Roberson, a Southern Baptist missionary nurse, handed out gospel tracts and asked if anyone were present who could read from the Tswana Bible.

Eighty-year-old Lifetime Mabebe stepped forward but, before taking the Bible, he turned to a woman and spoke briefly with her. She quickly disappeared into the house and soon returned with a suit coat. She helped the old gentleman into the coat, which was at least three sizes too big for his 4-foot-10-inch frame. Then he stepped forward to read.

Slowly, haltingly, but very reverently, he read God's Word to the people gathered in the yard of Aviva's home. After reading, he knelt to pray.

Two months later, Lifetime Mabebe and Roberson met again--this time at the nearby medical clinic. He was having difficulty swallowing. X-rays revealed far-advanced cancer of the esophagus. No treatment would help at this stage.

Roberson gently explained the prognosis of his disease and asked if he had any questions. The soft-spoken man, small in stature but mighty in spirit, answered: "Yes, Sister, I do understand that there is no treatment for my disease and that I will soon die."

Slowly, Lifetime stood, took his walking stick and turned to leave. As he reached the door h stopped, turned around and slowly made his way back to Roberson.

Leaning over the desk, he spoke, his voice shaking and eyes filled with tears. "Sister, it's all right about dying...I am ready to meet Jesus...." His voice broke and he paused to regain control. "But, Sister, in my village, who is going to read from the Book?"

The little man died six weeks later, but his question still haunts Carolyn Roberson. Who, she wonders, will come to Bophuthatswana to read from the Book in Morokweng and hundreds of villages like it--and help fill the large shoes of a little man named Lifetime Mabebe?

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Mexican Missionaries Leave
Tense Honduras Border Region

SALTILLO, Mexico (BP)--Jose and Susana Guzman, Mexican Baptists' first and only foreign missionaries, have resigned from assignments near the tense Honduras Nicaragua border.

The Guzmans, who have worked as church planters and regional missionaries in Honduras since early 1981, said mounting military tension along the border influenced their decision. Honduran and Nicaraguan forces face each other at the border and Nicaraguan rebels use the Honduran side as a base for raids into Nicaragua.

The missionary couple also cited financial problems. Mexican Baptists purchase U.S. dollars to support the work in Honduras, and since early 1982 the value of the Mexican peso has plunged from 26 pesos to the dollar to nearly 150 pesos to the dollar, a 600 percent drop.

The resignation was announced at the annual National Baptist Convention of Mexico meeting in Saltillo and left the future of the Mexican Baptist foreign missions uncertain. The 1984 budget kept foreign missions in for 1984, however, and a new mission field may be sought.

In other action the convention voted to reduce its use of an annual subsidy for operating budgets from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board by 10 percent each year for the next 10 years. The unused funds will be rerouted to finance capital projects such as strategic property purchases, building and church loans.

Southern Baptist representative Larry Gay said the subsidy vote was a "step of faith and ...a calculated step with vision" for Mexican Baptists, especially in light of Mexico's unstable economy. Baptist leaders hope the move will enable churches to begin new work while decreasing convention dependence on Foreign Mission Board funds for regular operations.

A major effort is being undertaken among the convention's 535 churches and more than 700 missions to teach denominational awareness and stewardship.

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Christianity Gives Meaning
Buddhism Failed To Provide

By Mary E. Speidel

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Alan Odiam once sought life's meaning through Buddhism.

Now a born-again Christian and recent graduate of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., Odiam, 44, finds his fulfillment through Christian ministry.

Odiam's interest in Buddhism began in the early 1960s. After serving in the Merchant Marines and Royal Air Force, he accepted an executive position with a top aluminum company in England. "I was searching for some meaning to life," Odiam recalled. Buddhism's principles of self-discipline and self-reliance appealed to him.

Though he told others he was a Buddhist, Odiam said he actually just studied the religion. But through his studies, he found Buddhism didn't offer any satisfying answers. "I never found peace or self-fulfillment," he noted. "I realized I was far from perfection and wouldn't get there in this life."

Several years later, Odiam's company transferred him to his native South Africa. In 1971, he joined another metal company as an area manager. During this time, a fellow executive in Odiam's company became a Christian.

"I saw something in his life which was radical," Odiam said. The business colleague invited Odiam to attend a Bible study in his home. "For nine months I went to these Thursday night Bible studies," said Odiam. Following one Bible study, Odiam argued with some of the Christians until 2 a.m. "They kept telling me they were praying for me. It made me angry," he said. "I just stood there blowing smoke in their faces."

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When a lay minister who led the Bible study invited Odiam to attend a church service where he was preaching, Odiam hesistantly agreed to go.

He had "only been to church about three or four times since I was 16," but the message during that service was tailored for his needs and "that night I went with Jesus Christ."

Odiam returned home after the service singing so loudly he woke up his wife, Maureen. "She thought I was drunk," recalled Odiam, grinning. But during the following weeks, Maureen noticed a real change in her husband.

"He had a lot of different interests," said Maureen. "Even the kids said 'What's happened to Daddy?'" she said. "At that point, I thought I'd better find out what this was about." Six weeks later she accepted Christ at a Christian convention, a series of evangelistic services held in Cape Town.

Two days after her conversion, both she and Odiam sensed God's call to ministry while attending one of the convention services. "We didn't sit together in the meeting that night because Maureen had brought a friend and had come a little later," Odiam explained. Though they were sitting on opposite sides of the auditorium, "The call to us was very clear--to spread the gospel of Christ."

The clarity of their call prompted Odiam to resign a prestigious job and sell his family's new home. They then moved 1,000 miles so Odiam could attend the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg.

Four years ago, the Odiam's moved again, this time to another continent. In May, Odiam received the master of divinity degree from Midwestern Seminary. This fall he will enter the Ph.D. program at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., studying preaching and New Testament. Odiam's vocational goal is to teach preaching.

Though he is still seeking answers to some of his questions, Odiam is confident God will continue leading him. "We've lived by faith for many years and the Lord has never failed," he said. "He's called us and promised to meet all our needs."

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Harlem Baptist Minister
Shares Cheese, Hope and Christ

By Kathy Berry

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NEW YORK (BP)--In Harlem, many people call Michael Williams the "People's Minister," a compliment he accepts since "because they are not comfortable in coming to a church, I take the church to them."

Recently Williams climbed the rubble strewn steps to Apartment 10B, 110 W. 137th Street when Mrs. Corine Betts welcomed him into her dark, two bedroom railroad flat. Williams, pastordirector of New York City's Harlem Baptist Ministry, was delivering cheese--government cheese.

This spring, Harlem Ministry distributed 9,723 pounds of cheese to 1,300 individuals or households. As physical needs were met, spiritual needs surfaced. Sunday school, worship services and three Bible studies resulted. One Bible study began in Bett's home.

"We went to take the cheese to Mrs. Betts who signed up over the phone. She knew her house so well, I didn't know she was blind until later," Williams said. "When she couldn't sign her name, I thought it was a literacy problem," he added.

Williams, a native of St. Simons, Ga., read the Bible to Mrs. Betts. A few weeks later, she invited two visually handicapped friends to join them for Bible study. Now, this group of four meet weekly. "I just read to them or one lady will read by braille. I'm just their eyes. They do the discussing!" Williams quipped.

When Williams, the 137th Street Block Association and local clergy decided to feed Harlem's hungry people, a steering committee applied for cheese through a United Food Bank.

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For Harlem Ministry, cheese distribution became part of their "beforehand" ministry. Williams said. The Center operates a crisis ministry--food, counseling and clothing--to deal with situations before a crisis actually arrives. A crisis, as Williams defines it, is anything that prevents a person from being him or herself.

Tucked in among a block of neat row houses, Harlem Baptist Ministry is located on Manhattan's upper West Side. The block association, at first enthusiastic about the cheese project, had second thoughts as 500 eager people stretched down the block during the first few hours of distribution.

"Community people didn't like the long lines," Williams admitted. The once helpful Block Association "passed a motion that cheese distribution must stop because of 'undesirable people' coming in to get cheese," Williams remembered. But the crowds were orderly, and Williams was determined to continue, despite opposition.

"It was a very difficult process because we had to document all distribution," Williams said. The government required signatures from each recipient, but Harlem Center chose to have more than nominal contact with the people.

"We set up a system of interview and application before the program began," Williams recalled. This way, the center attained the name, address, family size and income level of each individual. A potentially sterile process was given a personal touch, God's touch.

Baptist Student Union work teams from North Carolina and Virginia, church groups, Metropolitan New York Baptist Association people and community members pitched in to help. Cheese distribution became a mission activity for local RAs who met on Saturday mornings to deliver cheese to shut-ins.

As volunteers delivered cheese to senior citizens and handicapped persons, they checked on other needs. "We did a lot of counseling and referrals," Williams said.

John, an area drug leader, came for cheese. A Vietnam war veteran, John had once planned to be a minister. Although he never realized this dream, "John never denied the Lord in his life," Williams asserted.

John asked Williams to start a Bible study for his drug related friends. Following John to the doorway of a vacant building on 135th Street, Williams admitted, "I was scared."

Now he says, "They're my friends. Nothing in this situation has been me. It's been the Lord." Each week, a handful of men crouch down on the sidewalk in front of an abandoned building. Slipping New Testaments out of their pockets, they study God's word in the midst of chaos.

Another Bible study began as a "rap" session among senior citizens and handicapped persons. "Most of these people were afraid, for one reason or another, to leave their apartments," Williams said. So, Williams goes to the people at the Odell Clark Projects on 138th Street.

Needs are being met in Harlem. People are coming to Christ.

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Kathy Berry is a Christian Service Ministry missionary in New York City.