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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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83-156

National Cooperative Program
Records First \$100 Million Year

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Contributions to the national Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention broke the \$100 million barrier for the first time during 1982-83.

Total gifts to the worldwide mission and education causes of the SBC totaled \$102,313,308 when the fiscal year ended Sept. 30, an increase of 9.61 percent and \$8,968,952 over 1981-82.

September gifts of \$9,008,042 from the 34 state Southern Baptist conventions underwrote the basic operating budget of \$100 million and 32 percent of the \$6 million challenge budget.

"The real thrill of going over the \$100 million mark is not in the impressive row of zeros--rather it is in the lives of the people touched by the programs that money funded," Harold C. Bennett, executive director-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, said.

"It is in the hundreds of thousands who learned of the saving power of Jesus Christ because of Southern Baptist missionaries. It is the thousands of students who grew spiritually in the study of God's word at Southern Baptist seminaries. It is the lives touched by the extensive ministries of Southern Baptist agencies.

"One hundred million dollars is a lot of money--but the changed lives are to be valued beyond measure."

The first \$500,000 above the basic budget will be divided among the six SBC seminaries and the remaining \$2.7 million will be divided on a percentage basis among all the agencies. Almost 72 percent will go to the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board.

A. R. Fagan, executive director-treasurer of the convention's Stewardship Commission (which has the job assignment of promoting the Cooperative Program) pointed out the 1982-83 totals reflect "the largest growth in real dollars in 10 years."

Since 1974, with the nation experiencing double digit inflation, "our real growth has been running one to one and three-fourths percent a year," he said. "But with current inflation the 9.61 percent increase over last year translates into about 7.5 percent real growth."

The increases were seen all across the country as 32 of the 34 state conventions increased gifts to the national programs.

"There is much to celebrate in the 1982-83 Cooperative Program report," Bennett said. "The growing strength of Southern Baptist churches in newer state conventions is obvious as well as the continued dedication and participation of the older established conventions."

Since individual contributions to a church, the church's contributions to the state convention and the state convention's contributions to the national Cooperative Program are voluntary at every step, it is difficult to profile "typical" individual participation.

However, by taking the memberships of the 34 conventions as reported in the 1983 annual report, and dividing them into the state contributions as reported by the SBC Executive Committee a per capita figure for each state convention can be determined.

By that method, the individual Southern Baptist in Florida had the most impact on the national programs.

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Florida's average gift was \$9.62, followed closely by Oklahoma at \$9.58. The national per capita gift was \$7.31.

Florida was the only state convention to be in the top 10 in per capita giving, percentage increase over 1981-82 contributions and total dollar amount contributed. Twenty-one of the 34 state conventions are in the top 10 in at least one category.

The leading per capita state conventions are mostly from the deep South--yet Maryland is fifth and Hawaii is eighth.

The other per capita figures were: (3) Louisiana, \$8.60; (4) South Carolina, \$8.33; (5) Maryland, \$8.16; (6) Arkansas, \$8.09; (7) Mississippi, \$8.01; (8) Texas, \$7.94; (9) Hawaii, \$7.61; (10) Alabama, \$7.74; (11) Virginia, \$7.29; (12) Georgia, \$7.28; (13) ~~Alabama~~, \$6.83; (14) ~~Missouri~~, \$6.79; (15) Ohio, \$6.564; (16) Illinois, \$6.560; (17) Kentucky, \$6.24;

(18) North Carolina, \$6.23; (19) Northwest, \$5.91; (20) Tennessee, \$5.89; (21) New Mexico, \$5.16; (22) Pennsylvania-South Jersey, \$4.97; (23) Indiana, \$4.94; (24) Arizona, \$4.68; (25) Colorado, \$4.66; (26) Michigan, \$4.02; (27) Northern Plains, \$3.97; (28) New York, \$3.95; (29) West Virginia, \$3.90; (30) Kansas-Nebraska, \$3.84; (31) Utah-Idaho, \$3.74; (32) California, \$3.36; (33) District of Columbia, \$3.20; and (34) Nevada, \$2.96.

In total dollar giving nine of the 34 state conventions contributed more than \$5 million to the national programs and 28 of the 34 supported the worldwide mission and education efforts of the SBC with more than \$100,000 each.

National rankings by dollar amounts were: (1) Texas, \$18,300,447; (2) Georgia, \$8,456,833; (3) Florida, \$8,061,318; (4) North Carolina, \$7,079,535; (5) Alabama, \$6,820,070; (6) Oklahoma, \$6,726,254; (7) Tennessee, \$6,124,707; (8) South Carolina, \$5,633,699; (9) Mississippi, \$5,060,517; (10) Louisiana, \$4,751,441; (11) Kentucky, \$4,689,103; (12) Virginia, \$4,297,875; (13) Missouri, \$4,151,247; (14) Arkansas, \$3,659,606; (15) California, \$1,196,621; (16) Illinois, \$1,519,486; (17) Ohio, \$882,382;

(18) Maryland, \$879,449; (19) New Mexico, \$574,921; (20) Arizona, \$486,876; (21) Northwest, \$432,303; (22) Indiana, \$400,077; (23) Colorado, \$287,355; (24) Kansas-Nebraska, \$285,344; (25) Michigan, \$194,770; (26) Alaska, \$121,155; (27) District of Columbia, \$102,428; (28) Northern Plains, \$102,081; (29) Pennsylvania-South Jersey, \$93,324; (30) New York, \$90,321; (31) Hawaii, \$86,480; (32) West Virginia, \$81,661; (33) Utah-Idaho, \$63,126; (34) Nevada, \$48,264.

The state conventions with the highest percentage increases are mainly in the north--yet Florida is third and Georgia is eighth.

National rankings by percentage increase over 1981-82 were: (1) Northern Plains, 76.62; (2) New York, 65.48; (3) Florida, 24.85; (4) Nevada, 22.97; (5) District of Columbia, 14.65; (6) Maryland, 13.87; (7) Georgia, 13.86; (8) Hawaii, 13.3; (9) Arizona, 13.62; (10) Mississippi, 12.52; (11) Utah-Idaho, 12.44; (12) Alabama, 11.16; (13) Indiana, 10.73; (14) California, 10.58; (15) Tennessee, 9.78; (16) Missouri, 9.46; (17) South Carolina, 9.36;

(18) Virginia, 9.05; (19) Illinois, 8.84; (20) Northwest, 8.75; (21) North Carolina, 8.47; (22) Oklahoma, 8.28; (23) Alaska, 8.21; (24) Louisiana, 7.51; (25) New Mexico, 6.83; (26) Arkansas, 6.54; (27) Michigan, 6.09; (28) Texas, 5.78; (29) Pennsylvania-South Jersey, 5.36; (30) Ohio, 3.81; (31) Kentucky, .74; (32) Colorado, .15; (33) Kansas-Nebraska, -2.53; (34) West Virginia, -17.27.

Bennett said, "the most exciting thing to me is the foundation the giving of Southern Baptists in 1982-83 has constructed for future commitment. As we move into Planned Growth in Giving and challenge Southern Baptists to increase--in 15 years--their gifts through their churches to \$20 billion a year and the contributions to the national level to \$2 billion annually, this report gives great encouragement.

Prior to the 1982-83 fiscal year, monthly national Cooperative Program receipts had surpassed \$8 million only five times and \$9 million only twice since the Cooperative Program was started in 1925. This year three months were above \$9 million and nine above \$8 million.

Medical Insurance
Rates To Increase

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist ministers and church employees are facing an increase in medical premiums next year, according to officials of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

Effective Jan. 1, 1984, participants in the Church Insurance Program will experience a 12 percent aggregate increase in medical premiums. According to Insurance Services director John Dudley, the increase will range from 11 percent to 14 percent among the three geographical regions to six percent for those eligible for Medicare.

Dudley said the increase was due to the continued medical inflation rate and the escalation in use of medical care. He noted last year's medical claims rose to nearly \$18 million, a 21 percent increase over the previous year.

"One of the ways the Annuity Board was able to avoid a 31.5 percent rate hike recommended by the insurance carrier was by adjusting the participants' initial out-of-pocket expense from \$100 to \$200," said Dudley.

Dudley noted with the adoption of new actuarial tables the disability plan rates will decrease for women while those of the male participants will not be changed. Life insurance premiums will not be affected, Dudley said.

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Baptist Home for Retarded
Provides Christian Refuge

By Martha Skelton

Baptist Press
10/17/83

SCHMALKALDEN, East Germany (BP)--At the Christian Care Home in Schmalkalden, 140 men and women take refuge from a world which has labeled them retarded.

In that world, they were disturbed and, to others, disturbing. But at the only home on earth Baptists run solely for the mentally handicapped, they are no longer an absurd exception measured against the pace of a world beyond them.

Instead, they are the pace.

For 109 years the "home dwellers," as they are called, have come to the center from state institutions and families who no longer could support them. The state contributes about \$25 a day per resident to help East German churches keep the home afloat.

Residents are divided into two groups, those mentally developed as much as a one- or two-year-old and those equal to an older child. Some toil at handicrafts and set tables or hang clothes to dry, while others don't work at all. As residents are able, they pitch in. As they need, they receive.

A few focus their lives on the 112-acre farm about four kilometers away. The farm, Gut Rothof (good red dirt), provides vegetables, dairy products and fresh meat for the home dwellers and 53 staff members. About 80 percent of the output is sold in the marketplace.

Farm manager Joachim Deschner, became a Christian at age 12 and felt God's call early. He trained in agriculture and worked on a state farm, praying the Lord would use him. In 1976 he received a call about Gut Rothof, after the former manager resigned.

Now Gut Rothof is his ministry. He teaches Sunday evening Bible studies and daily devotions at the farm. He also speaks to churches throughout the East German Baptist Union about the work at Schmalkalden. His wife, Dorothea, lives and works with him.

About a dozen persons from the home work in shifts of 10 days on, four off, and have their own living space at Gut Rothof. "They have the same rights and privileges as others to develop a happy life," Deschner says. "A godly purpose in life is needed. This work is fulfilling to them. They are a part of us as we are of them."

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The farm, bought from the state in 1930, maintains a close relationship with the state and produces high quality food. Gut Rothof sells produce and stock to the government distribution system and buys the raw materials from that system. Last year its 31 cows each produced an average of nearly 300 pounds of three-percent butterfat milk which brought premium prices.

The majority of the home's residents are unable to handle the rigors of farm work. For many, days move slowly and in well-worn routine. Often change brings confusion and sameness is a sanctuary.

It is to these people that Christa Friedel ministers. Oberschwester (head nurse) Friedel knows every room in every building, every resident and staff member and every detail necessary to run the home. With equal poise, she can seize control of a discipline problem or praise a resident for a painstakingly handcrafted potholder.

A Christian since age nine, Friedel committed her life at 19 to being a deaconess and nurse. "It was an inner decision," she says, "my way of serving God."

She is one of five deaconesses at the home. Theirs is a life of isolation from family, of intense involvement with the people they serve.

Intense personal involvement is what makes Schmalkalden the ministry it is. "Our community in worship is more intense than a church," says Gerhard Wutzler, director. Unordained but trained in legal matters, Wutzler must nonetheless take time out from the daily duties of management to lead the home as a father figure and spiritual steward.

Despite varying levels of discernment, residents find a spiritual center with Wutzler's help. "I believe those not able (to understand spiritual things) are caught up in the grace of God," he says. "I think of Jesus' words, 'Suffer the little children.'"

The care home is a community given over to serving by Christ's example, living out his love. "It is an opportunity," says farm manager Deschner, "to put into practice Christian ideals...with no restraints."

Volunteers find that attitude attractive. Many weekends the grounds at Gut Rothof are peppered with tents of Baptist union church members working on a construction project.

Workers from Time for God, a one-year volunteer program for Christian service within the union, often undertake projects there also.

Those who come sometimes don't want to leave. "They find such love here," says Oberschwester Friedel, "that they don't want to go back."

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(Adapted from The Commission, magazine of the Foreign Mission Board.)

2,750 Women Attend Dayspring
Conference at Ridgecrest

By Sherri Anthony

Baptist Press
10/17/83

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)-- A record crowd of 2,750 women overflowed Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center to attend Dayspring, the first national conference on evangelism jointly sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Boards and Woman's Missionary Union, SBC.

More than 3,000 additional women had sought reservations but were unable to attend because of limited facilities.

"The enormous response (from women) shows there is a deep hunger within American Christian women today," said Evelyn Christenson, director of United Prayer Ministries, Minneapolis, Minn., and one of the conference leaders at Dayspring.

Women desperately want more opportunities for growth than they are now getting, she added.

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Laura Allen, national evangelism consultant with women at the Home Mission Board and coordinator of Dayspring, said, the meeting was the first national conference for women in the Southern Baptist Convention focused completely on evangelism.

Allen reported about 85 percent of the participants were women who work. "Most are not able to attend week-long meetings, but were able to attend this one," she said.

There was a heavy emphasis in the conference on lifestyle evangelism, with special interest conferences focused on spiritual growth, how to witness, witnessing through ministry and spiritual awakening.

Allen told participants, "lifestyle evangelism is sharing your faith in your everyday living with non-Christians God brings into your life. It is something you do as you go; not something you go to do."

Dorothy Sample, president of Woman's Missionary Union, told the women how to be a witness through relationships.

"The springboard of commitment was when Jesus said, 'If you are going to follow me, take the focus off yourself, take up the cross and follow me,'" Sample said. "We cannot take that focus off ourselves unless we are able to truly relax in the grace and love of Christ."

In another major address, Jeannette Cliff George, star of the movie "The Hiding Place" on the life of the late Corrie Ten Boom, warned the women, "Don't stiff-arm the non-believer by refusing to accept anything from them."

"One of the ways to establish relationships is to say, 'Friend, you need me and I need you,'" explained George, producing manager of the After Dinner Players in Houston.

William O'Brien, vice-president of the Foreign Mission Board, stressed the need for world-wide spiritual awakening.

"The world is not sick; quit trying to heal it," O'Brien declared. "The world is dead. It desperately needs resurrection," he said. "For those who think it only sick, the activities to which they give themselves, the priorities to which they sublimate themselves--good as they may seem in and of themselves--are no better than band-aids on cancer."

Following O'Brien's message, participants made a covenant to pray each day at 11:55 a.m. for world-wide spiritual awakening. The covenant cited the need for daily prayer because of increasing worldwide tensions and unrest, and recognized that historically spiritual awakening has come as the result of unified, explicit, extraordinary prayer.

Also participating in the conference were musicians Ragan Courtney and Raymond Brown, who premiered their new musical, "Rubies"; Ellen Roweton, music evangelist, Bolivar, Mo.; Marge Caldwell, writer, marriage counselor, professional charm and model teacher, Houston; Martha Franks, retired missionary to China, Laurens, S.C.; Barbara Joiner, writer, Columbiana, Ala., and Helen Jean Parks, author, Richmond, Va.

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Ken Prickett, Home Missions
National Consultant, Dies

Baptist Press
10/17/83

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Kenneth R. Prickett, national consultant for experimental ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board since 1973, died Oct. 13 after complications with diabetes and heart failure.

Prickett, who had gained a reputation as one of the most creative missionaries of the Home Mission Board, had been involved in numerous special projects such as Baptist ministries at the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y., and the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tenn.

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Prickett had been in a St. Louis hospital since Sept. 27 when he went into a diabetic coma, but had improved and was able to write notes to his wife, Marilyn, on his 45th birthday, Oct. 12, the day before his death.

Marilyn had been appointed by the Home Mission Board as a missionary in September to serve as director of Christian social ministries for the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and director of the Johanning Baptist Center. The family was in the process of moving to Washington when Prickett went into the coma.

Prickett, a native of Texas, had been a missionary of the Home Mission Board since 1970, serving first in Indian and resort missions in Santa Fe, N.M.

Previously, he had worked with Lyman Coleman and a halfway house in Newton, Penn., had been a Baptist student worker in Wichita, Kan., and a music-education-and/or youth director for churches in Wichita, Kans., Amarillo, Lubbock, Midland, Snyder and Denver City, Texas.

Prickett asked any memorial contributions be sent to the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, 1628 Sixteenth St., N. W., Washington, D. C., 20009.

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Executive, Two Superintendents
To Leave Childrens' Home Posts

Baptist Press
10/17/83

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--The executive of the Tennessee Baptist Childrens' Homes, Inc., has announced he will take early retirement and two of the three campus superintendents have resigned following disclosures of "extremely low morale" among TBCH employees.

At an Oct. 11 meeting of TBCH trustees, Evans B. Bowen, 63, who has been executive director-treasurer since 1976, announced plans to retire Dec. 31, 1983. At the same meeting, John Ashby, superintendent of the Franklin home, and Keith Wilson of the Memphis home tendered their resignations.

The third superintendent, Burl McMillan of the Chattanooga home, was commended by trustees for his positive attitude and the actions he is taking in response to the trustees, according to Charles Gibbs, trustee chairman and pastor of North Athens Baptist Church, Athens.

The Oct. 11 meeting was the first of 12 monthly meetings planned by trustees during the coming year to deal with what was described as "extremely low morale" on the TBCH campuses.

The decision to meet monthly rather than semi-annually was made at a meeting Sept. 8, following a report by a special study committee appointed to investigate questions which had been raised by Nashville-area pastors, former employees and county school officials.

At that September meeting, trustees voted to "express disapproval of the executive director's failure to recognize and to respond to" the low morale problem. They cited the morale problem existed on all campuses, but said it was most critical on the Franklin campus. They also voted to express disapproval of the superintendent of that home for his failure to recognize and respond to the problem.

Chairman Gibbs said the resignations of Ashby and Wilson were voluntary. Bowen said he and his wife have been looking forward to early retirement for nearly two years.

Trustees adopted a statement: "That in all the facts and information that have been brought to our attention, we wish to make clear that there is no note of immorality or moral wrongdoing. The problems have been matters of judgment and policy management. Further, we have been advised that our children are well cared for and spiritually motivated."

Gibbs said trustees did not rescind any of the actions taken at the Sept. 8 meeting.

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It also was reported following the October meeting that Ashby and Wilson found difficulty in accepting the Sept. 8 action of trustees in eliminating the educational coordinator position from their staffs. In each instance, the position was filled by the wife of the superintendent.

Both superintendents will continue their responsibilities through Dec. 31. Trustees voted to continue the salaries of their wives for a full year--through Oct. 31, 1984--even though the positions have been abolished.

Trustees instructed Gibbs to name a committee to develop plans honoring Bowen for achievements during his eight-year tenure with TBCH. Trustees also elected a six-member search committee to seek a replacement for Bowen.

Named to the committee are Ralph Stone of Nashville as chairman; James Cooley of Signal Mountain, Frank Ingraham of Franklin, Norris Smith of Memphis, H.K. Sorrells of Brownsville and Ruth Willhoit of Chattanooga.

The advisory committees for the Franklin and Memphis homes, consisting of the nine trustees in those respective grand divisions, will serve as search committees to nominate replacements for Ashby and Wilson.

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Missions 'Commandos' Ignite
Church; Produce Missionary

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
10/17/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--For nine months after she moved to Nashville, Vicki Dunwoody gave Woodmont Baptist Church only a passing thought as she drove past it.

She was intimidated by Woodmont's imposing structure, rising out of a middle-class neighborhood in Nashville. But then she was invited inside. And she stopped searching for a church home.

On Sept. 13, after eight years of encouragement from Woodmont's congregation, Dunwoody was appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., to be a nurse in Nigeria.

She could be the first of many modern-day missionaries from Woodmont. In an atmosphere of interest in missions by church members, many young people there have felt God's call to Christian service, and some are responding.

Since 1977, when 30 church men flew to Guatemala to help rebuild after a severe 1976 earthquake, Woodmont has shown signs of increasing world awareness. In the past six years, the church has sent volunteers to fill more than 250 needs, including spots for professional people and craftsmen.

Volunteers have flown to 25 countries including Jamaica, Venezuela, Jordan and Korea. Many members have participated in home mission projects.

"Our folks just take missions to heart, and they go, and they pray," said Pastor Bill Sherman. Many members work in the medical field. Dewey Dunn, a physician, keeps close tabs on medical needs overseas by making regular calls to Franklin Fowler, senior medical consultant for the Foreign Mission Board.

Last year, while giving more than 15 percent of its budget to the Cooperative Program, Woodmont sent more dollars into missions than all but one church (which has four times as many members) in the Tennessee convention.

Woodmont is considerably ahead in this year's budget, and about 60 percent of the surplus will go to home and foreign mission trips, a practice the church started six years ago.

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"Not only will the people give to the budget, but they'll give to everything," Sherman said. "Their heart gets into the church, and they love it. And everybody likes to do the things they love."

After one mission trip, an appeal was made for money to buy much needed vaccine. "They gave \$4,000. Boom. On the spot," Sherman said.

The church became somewhat interested in missions 11 years ago when members set up a house adjoining the churchyard for furloughing missionaries. "It was kind of like moving foreign missions across the yard from us, instead of across the world," Sherman said.

But it was the trip to Guatemala that forced global vision upon the church members. Clark Scanlon, a missionary furloughing at the home then, suggested to Sherman that help was needed in Guatemala. The church decided to use surplus budget money to send men overseas.

Upon their return, the men shared the depth of their experience with family and friends. When he asked them to speak in church Sunday morning, Sherman found he had a group of missions commandos on his hands. The spark they ignited changed the life of the church.

Before the trip, Lottie Moon offering gifts were less than \$20,000. Last year the church set a goal of \$63,500, and members responded with more than \$100,000. Next year the church will probably set a budget of more than five times what it was when Sherman came in 1968. And physical facilities are crowded as membership grows in response to outreach.

Such a backdrop has nurtured Dunwoody in her growth into service as a missionary. Dunn and his wife, Bobbie, who first invited her to Woodmont after she met them at a business function, have provided her with a home away from her Midwest home.

On a couple of occasions, the Dunns even helped keep her financially afloat. She was not trained as a nurse and had limited means for three years of re-schooling. The needs she had while attending nursing school often were filled by the Dunns, or other church friends.

While in school, Dunwoody's decision to be a missionary was confirmed many times, as she spent summers in volunteer mission work in Ghana and India. After graduating, she went to work as a nurse to earn the professional experience needed for foreign missionary appointment by Southern Baptists.

At first, Dunwoody had thought the call to missions was not genuine. It was eight years ago, she was 26 years old, and she was a relatively new Christian. The Lottie Moon emphasis was in full swing.

"I felt the Lord was somehow speaking to me in terms of a commitment to Christian service. And then I thought perhaps it was emotions because of the strong emphasis on missions at the time." In discussing it with Sherman, she decided to wait and see if the feelings persisted. They did.

"I really didn't want to be a missionary. I had grown up on a farm until I was 18, never left until I went to college, and my mom told me I was the type that seemed to be scared of my own shadow. I wouldn't go anywhere by myself," she said.

"And here was this thought of going to another place in the world that I'd never been to before. Alone."

Alone? The Shermans, the Dunns and other Woodmont members don't necessarily think so. "Our people are going to take care of Vicki," Sherman said. "She's a jewel."

MasterLife Helps Missionaries To Train Disciples Overseas

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--MasterLife, a program most participants credit for preparing them to seek God's leadership, has become a vital part of Southern Baptists' ministry overseas.

The intensive 26-week discipleship training program has been instrumental in participants winning new Christians throughout the world. Its emphasis on spirituality demands new discipleship groups be formed through personal evangelism.

"It goes right to the heart of what we're trying to do worldwide," said Charles Bryan, senior vice president for overseas operations of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The program has become a regular part of orientation for newly appointed missionaries.

"What we're seeing in MasterLife is people getting in touch with the Word of God again and letting the Lord work in their hearts," said Avery Willis Jr., who developed the program. A former missionary to Indonesia, Willis has helped introduce MasterLife to missionaries and Baptist leaders worldwide during the past two years.

About a third of the foreign missionary force has been trained to lead MasterLife groups, and more than half of those have begun using the program to make disciples of those won to Christ. Many missionaries say they have been searching for years for a tool like MasterLife.

Baptists in as many as 85 countries have been introduced to MasterLife, and conventions from Middle America to South Korea report results from it. In fact, Baptists in Nigeria, Argentina and Malaysia have incorporated MasterLife into their seminary curricula.

Through MasterLife, Willis said, "we're seeing revival and renewal in the lives of people, to really change a lifestyle and a direction."

Willis produced the MasterLife program for the church training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board after he resigned as a missionary, but he had been working on the concept for a number of years. He had felt God leading him in this direction during a six-month furlough in 1977, when he noted a death of spirituality in Southern Baptist churches.

"By and large I was appalled at the lack of concern and awareness of what God is up to in the world," he said. While on preaching assignments during that furlough, Willis recalled looking at some of the churches and saying, "Lord, surely we're not going to export this all over the world. If we don't have any more life than this, there's no use for us to go share."

At first, Willis turned down the Sunday School Board's offer to work fulltime in discipleship. Though he felt God speaking to him, he doubted the call. "I said, 'Lord, you have 50,000 ordained preachers here (United States) and 13 million Southern Baptists. I just cannot understand you would want me to stay here.'"

Willis had begun experimenting in discipleship while at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. There as a student and pastor he began to see more impact from the lives of people he trained as disciples than from baptisms and building additions.

Later, while a missionary, Willis began to realize Christians not only must mature in their own faith, but they must teach others how to do the same thing. As he and a fellow missionary began working with small groups of Indonesians, he developed a stronger and stronger conviction that only a program of discipleship would reach the world for Christ. He continued revising the written discipleship materials that would become MasterLife.

MasterLife materials fill two three-ring binders. Only those who have been through the program or have attended an intense MasterLife group workshop for leaders are allowed to lead sessions.

Participants receive only one week's material at a time. The strength of MasterLife lies not in the material but in the model of discipleship set by the group leader as he uses the material. Groups have eight or fewer people.

Discipleship is learned as an individual strengthens his relationship with God through a lifestyle of prayer. Out of this grows an understanding of the types of ministry a Christian has been called to do.

Participants learn to minister by teaching, nurturing new Christians, worshipping God, interceding for others and evangelizing on a personal basis. Participants also learn to serve people in need. "In these ministries is the whole ministry of the church," Willis said.

Ervin Hastey, the foreign board representative who oversees MasterLife workshops around the world, is impressed with how rapidly the program is being adapted to overseas cultures.

"The only thing that can break MasterLife down is if people treat it as an academic teaching tool instead of a modeling of discipleship," Hastey said. "Frankly, it has taken hold and multiplied faster than I had ever been able to envision."

MasterLife was designed for easy adaptation. With its Biblical basis, it can be reproduced in any context. "So many things we've taken overseas are not reproducible if you don't have the money or tools or whatever it takes," said Willis. "But discipleship is reproducible with or without tools."

One participant was quite skeptical before he attended a MasterLife group workshop in Mitt rsill, Austria. But he underwent a change of heart after the five-day program.

At the closing session, a pastor revealed hostility toward various people and asked their forgiveness, and a pastor's wife related how the Holy Spirit had ministered through the workshop to her bitterness about a number of miscarriages she had suffered.

"One Christian leader after another stood up to tell how God had used MasterLife to touch his heart," wrote pastor Paul Beasley-Murray in the Baptist Times in London. "I experienced real spiritual depth. I have rarely experienced the Holy Spirit move in such a way."

Such experiences are what Willis seeks. He seems considerably less interested in MasterLife than he is in its potential. "I'm looking for an army of 200,000 to 300,000 people who are ready to go anywhere, any time, and do anything the Lord says do," Willis said. "People who are disciples."

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(Adapted from September issue of The Commission, Foreign Mission Board magazine.)

Grenada Leader Deposed
Baptist Missionaries Safe

Baptist Press
10/17/83

HATO REY, Puerto Rico (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries on the Caribbean island of Grenada were reported safe following an army takeover of the island government Oct. 16.

The head of Grenada's army said on radio troops had taken control of the small island and deposed Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, who is under house arrest.

Fred Day, Foreign Mission Board associate to the director for the Caribbean, talked by phone with Carter Davis, missionary dentist on the island, following the coup.

Davis reported that he and his wife, Charlotte, both Tennesseans, and Michael and Robin Eb rhardt of Georgia, the only other Southern Baptist missionaries on the island, were keeping a low profile, but felt there was no danger.

According to new reports, the new leader named by the army, Bernard Coard, has close ties with Cuba and Russia.

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