



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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'Below Budget' Report
Produces Some Optimism

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Midpoint in its fiscal year, the unified national giving program of the Southern Baptist Convention lags behind budget. Yet optimism is being expressed.

October through March the 37 state conventions which voluntarily relate to the national SBC, contributed \$53,957,213 to support the worldwide mission and educational work of the 14.1 million member denomination. That is 6.16 percent (\$3.1 million) above the 1982-83 pace.

The 1983-84 operating budget is \$114.5 million and the total budget is \$125 million.

"I think 'below budget' is much more accurate than 'shortfall' because we are doing very well against the inflation rate--it was our budget planning that didn't anticipate the dramatic drop in the inflation rate," Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, said.

"People from many other denominations are asking us how we are doing so well."

What the Cooperative Program is doing is running about two percent ahead of the inflation rate--because 21 of the 38 state conventions have increased their gifts to the national program by more than four percent over last year.

"Certainly we are behind our goals, but in terms of real dollar growth we are doing very well," Tim Hedquist, director of financial planning for the SBC Executive Committee, said. "I'd hate for us to be negative over a six percent increase during four percent inflation when we used to get excited about an eight percent increase during 14 percent inflation."

The bad weather which stalked the country this winter also was a factor in holding down offerings at the local church level. "As a rule income lost when church attendance drops because of weather is not recovered," Hedquist said. "But I've talked to several state conventions recently who feel some of the lost income is being made up."

Some evidence of that is that March 1984 receipts at the national level are the second highest month in the history of the Cooperative Program. The \$9,620,987 is the sixth time the monthly total has broken the \$9 million mark. January 1984 (\$10,233,923) is the top month.

The March total is more than \$1.2 million higher than the March 1983 figure.

To reach the basic operating budget, receipts would have to average approximately \$10.1 million for the final six months.

In addition to the almost \$54 million in undesignated gifts to the national Cooperative Program since last May, the 36,500 churches which are affiliated with the SBC have contributed more than \$57 million in designated offerings--\$50.2 million to the convention's Foreign Mission Board. Designated gifts are 5.19 percent (\$2.75 million) ahead of 1982-83.

Florida is the only state to rank in the top ten in both dollar giving and percentage increase over last year. Florida is third in both categories--15.96 percent ahead of 1982-83 with gifts of \$4,176,719.

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Other percentage increase leaders are:

West Virginia, 35.22; Hawaii, 29.24; Kansas-Nebraska, 12.75; Nevada, 12.64; Arizona, 11.01; Arkansas, 10.02; Michigan, 9.64; Illinois, 9.4, and California, 8.86.

Other conventions which are surpassing the inflation rate are: Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

Other total dollar leaders are:

Texas, \$9,505,878; Georgia, \$4,682,868; North Carolina, \$3,742,662; Alabama, \$3,605,919; Oklahoma, \$3,549,972; Tennessee, \$3,192,107; South Carolina, \$3,061,529; Mississippi, \$2,672,973, and Louisiana, \$2,517,075.

Other conventions which have given more than \$1 million to the national programs during the first six months of the fiscal year are: Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Virginia.

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of a two-part series adapted from an article in the April 11, 1984, Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.)

SBC Pastors Divided
Over Robison-Green

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
4/13/84

DALLAS (BP)--Leading Southern Baptist pastors are divided over the ministry of longtime Southern Baptist evangelist James Robison and his new associate Milton Green.

Robison, once known as "God's angry young man," has swapped the appellation for an emphasis on deliverance, healing and demons. Over the past two years, the James Robison Evangelistic Association has sponsored seminars featuring the Bible teaching of Green, a one-time carpet cleaner with a ninth grade education from Cleveland, Tenn.

Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, is concerned because of what he believes is an extreme emphasis on the demonic and an abuse of the doctrine of healing.

Draper, also Robison's pastor, said the controversy over the ministry of Robison and Green has spread across the convention and "has divided friends...has affected churches."

Critics of the Robison-Green ministry say it includes charismatic teachings, including emphases on healing and demonology and an anti-local church, anti-pastor bias. Several prominent SBC churches--including First Baptist of Dallas and First Southern Baptist of Del City, Okla., have cancelled or postponed Robison appearances.

Many Texas Baptist churches as well as congregations in other states have been adversely affected, claim their pastors, who are vocal in opposition to the Robison-Green seminars.

Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, said several members of his church have attended a Robison-Green seminar "and the immediate effect is that they come back judgmental, critical."

While Jackson has not attended a seminar, he said he has listened to tapes, heard reports from reliable people who attended and discussed them with Robison. The popular preacher also compared some of Green's statements with similar pronouncements made in the past by Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormons, Christian Scientist Mary Baker Eddy and Jehovah's Witnesses founder Charles Taze Russell.

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Jackson questions Green's method of interpretation and conclusions, but said: "The thing that is most devastating to me is that within an hour of the opening of the seminars, the local church and all the local church pastors are placed in question if not condemnation. The statement is made that what you (the person attending the seminar) has been getting is deception and dishonesty."

John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston said there "are some truths in much of what is being said, but there are also excesses that must be guarded against...." He questions Green's system of biblical interpretation and belief that all of the Bible is assumed to be for all people at all times.

"While this sounds ideally and philosophically beautiful and true, it is also true that we must rightly divide the word. We do not bring Old Testament sacrifices and burnt offerings today. It is obvious that one must have some system of hermeneutics (system of biblical interpretation) by which we try to interpret the word. The seminar seems to suggest that this is not necessary and that everyone can become a law unto himself."

Milton Cunningham, pastor of the Westbury Baptist Church in Houston, said the church lost 75 to 100 members after a Green seminar in Houston last year. Many who went and subsequently left the church, he said, were told not to tell their pastor what they were being taught "because he won't understand."

Darrell Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church of Mobile, Ala., and a member of the SBC Executive Committee, said he believes Robison to be a Pentecostal, although he is attracting crowds in some areas based on his old reputation as a Southern Baptist evangelist.

"I think they get a foothold that is detrimental to the local church...Their direction and thrust is in line with Pentecostalism, teaching that healing is in the atonement, that it is a priority; majoring in demonism, casting out demons; and deliverance and so on."

Another Mobile pastor, Fred Wolfe, of Cottage Hill Baptist Church and immediate past president of the SBC Pastor's Conference, found no fault with Robison's emphasis.

"James was with us for one night and then in the crusade he did preach on healing and he did preach on deliverance, but I did not find any unusual or unbiblical emphasis in what he did," Wolfe said.

Emil Becker, pastor of First Baptist Church of Stephenville, Texas, attended a Green seminar last December. Becker complimented Green on his preparation and said he has no problem with some of the teachings in the area of the lordship of Christ, repentance from sin and confession of sin.

"I do take issue with his belief that every sickness is a demon and that every sickness can be cured by repenting of sin and exercising faith in God. This is not taught in the Bible, Becker said.

George Harris, pastor of Castle Hills Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, says the criticism of pastors and churches comes not so much from "what is taught but from what is caught." He added people come away from the seminars feeling that if their pastors don't agree with Green they've been blinded and deceived by demons.

Harris said Green makes remarks like, "You are responsible to God, not to some church boss." Harris added: "He (Green) just claims to be teaching the Bible but every once in a while one of these little remarks comes across. That is what I mean by 'caught rather than taught'."

The Green-Robison movement has supporters, too.

Wallace Henley, pastor of McElwain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., and current president of the Alabama Baptist Convention, said he has been concerned about the demonic ever since being on the Nixon White House staff during the Watergate days. "I believe demons cluster about power centers," he said.

Henley listened to tapes of Green's seminars conducted during a Jack Taylor conference at Merritt Island, Fla., and said he came to believe Green "perceives what's happening." He added he saw no evidence of Green criticizing the local church or undermining pastoral authority, but had gotten exactly the opposite opinion.

Henley said he believes much of the criticism of Green has come from inerrantists who are disturbed because Green is not a dispensationalist (one who sees history as divided into strict 'dispensations' or time frames).

The Alabama pastor explained: "Frankly, I am kind of perturbed at my inerrantist brothers for leading the assault because, in my view, Milton Green and James Robison are just trying to interpret very literally and specifically the Scriptures, which is what the inerrantists have been telling us to do."

Jim Hylton, pastor of Lake Country Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, who has been instrumental in helping Green come to prominence, said: "Milton is a man that God has worked in and done a beautiful thing in."

Hylton, who led the meeting in which Robison met Green, added: "To say that he is not for the local church or for the pastor is totally to miss the point, and especially is that true with James. They are for the local church; they are for the pastor. What they are wanting is that the local pastor begin to minister to the needs of hurting people and see the needs of people met...."

He said part of the "misunderstanding" comes from Green "verbalizing something the church has neglected for awhile."

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\$2.8 Million Committed
To Help Launch ACTS

Baptist Press
4/13/84

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission reported receiving gifts and pledges of \$2.7 million to help launch the American Christian Television System during a nationwide satellite broadcast to 43 dinner meetings at closed circuit locations in 20 states April 12.

Encouraged by news of a \$1-million anonymous gift, supporters of ACTS pledged an additional \$1.8 million over the next three years.

The 75-minute broadcast, which previewed ACTS programs and asked for prayer and financial support for the venture, was carried live from the studios of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, which is assembling the network.

Jimmy R. Allen, president of the commission and ACTS, called the event the largest dinner meeting in the Southern Baptist history. More than 4,500 attended, with almost 1,200 pledging an estimated \$1,825,000. The figures likely will go higher, Allen said, when all reports are in.

Allen said the event was a project of the commission's ongoing development program.

His announcement of the initial \$1-million gift early in the broadcast brought applause from the Fort Worth dinner guests, who served as the studio audience for the broadcast.

Allen told the participants, who watched the program locally on large-screen TV sets, \$12 million has been spent so far on the network. However, more is needed, he said, to keep ACTS on target for its May 15 launch.

"We have a problem of success," Allen said. "We planned to build the network slowly. But folks are anxious to see it and we have to move quickly to do everything that has to be done."

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John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston, and preacher for ACTS' "Invitation to Life" evangelistic program, challenged the participants to "help get the network off the ground. We're in a crisis," he said. "We have to have about \$4.3 million in the next couple of years."

Bisagno explained the appeal was a one-time effort. Once on the air, he said, ACTS will generate its own revenue and be self-perpetuating. "After a year or two, there will be no need to ask for additional funds," he said. The network will never ask for money on the air, he said.

Bisagno reported his own church members have contributed \$155,000 to ACTS, pledged \$200,000, plus another \$200,000 over a five-year period.

"We're on the precipice of launching the single most powerful tool to win the world to Jesus Christ," Bisagno said. "This will be a catalyst to everything else we are doing."

Bisagno said the Southern Baptist network will not feature a personality but the local church. SBC President James T. Draper Jr., who also appeared on the program, said ACTS will bring attention and people to churches.

The Fort Worth dinner meeting reported the highest pledge total, with 71 people promising \$219,655 to the effort. Fort Worth also had the largest single pledge of \$100,000. Dallas was the second highest reporting site, with participants pledging \$129,205.

The satellite broadcast, which was delivered by Holiday Inn's HiNet telecommunications system, mixed live interviews and entertainment with videotaped excerpts from most of the 30-plus ACTS programs. Hosts of the various shows were introduced to participants, who included Baptists and non-Baptists.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Radio and Television Commission

Southeastern Gets
\$510,000 Challenge

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Baptist Press
4/13/84

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., has received a challenge gift of \$510,000 from the Cannon Charitable Trusts of Kannapolis, N.C.

The gift will go toward the development of a comprehensive student center, expected to cost more than \$2.5 million. This brings to more than \$1.8 million given for the project.

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