



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 5, 1984

84-84

**Lottie Misses 1983 Goal
But Tops Inflation Rate**

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Final receipts for the 1983 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions fell nearly \$2 million short of the \$60 million goal. When the books closed May 31 the total was \$58,025,336.79, or 96.7 percent of the goal.

But Southern Baptists topped their 1982 offering receipts by nearly \$4 million, with the 1983 offering running 7.3 percent ahead of the previous year and well ahead of the 5.5 percent national inflation rate.

The 1983 offering goal was lowered last summer after the previous year's receipts fell \$4 million short of the goal. It was originally set for \$66 million.

Carl Johnson, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board treasurer, says he believes the 1983 goal would have been met if extremely cold weather in December, the primary month the offering is received in churches, had not kept many Southern Baptists from attending church services. Cooperative Program receipts for December increased only 2.2 percent over December of the previous year, making it the ninth lowest monthly percentage increase in the past 10 years.

The 1984 offering goal is \$66 million. All of it will be budgeted, Johnson says, because the money is needed and he and other board officials are convinced Southern Baptists can reach the goal. Meeting it will require a 13.74 percent increase, which Johnson says is possible.

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**Oklahoma Baptist Convention
Affirms OBU, Constitution**

Baptist Press
6/5/84

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—A motion to prevent churches which ordain women or practice "speaking in tongues" being seated at the annual meetings of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma has been withdrawn.

At the same meeting directors of the convention expressed their confidence and appreciation of Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee in response to recently published charges of "heresy" at the school.

The motion to bar churches from the state convention meeting was introduced last November by Hugo Lindquist, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Oklahoma City. It was withdrawn on his behalf by Sam Pace, director of missions for the Comanche-Cotton Baptist Association in southwest Oklahoma.

Pace then asked that a study committee be named to study all aspects of the constitution to determine if updating was necessary "to reflect the passing of time and doctrinal changes." The motion failed when other directors argued there was no apparent need for changes.

The OBU motion expressed "deep appreciation and excitement for the splendid work going on at OBU," to the university president, Bob R. Agee. The Oklahoma Baptist Messenger said the stand was prompted by "an article in an obscure Georgia publication trying to resurrect a 1979 'heresy' paper published by several disgruntled OBU students."

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The paper, the Southern Baptist Journal, is published by William Powell and has no official connection with any national, state or associational Southern Baptist organization. Powell said he mailed a copy of his paper to each Southern Baptist church in the state.

The publication claimed nothing had been done about supposed liberals on the faculty and that state convention officials and the Baptist Messenger had conspired to cover up the alleged deficiencies on campus and allowed them to continue.

Agee is writing a letter to all state Baptist pastors answering the charges which were brought to the state convention five years ago.

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Missionaries Warned: Don't Allow
Controversy To Prevent Ministry

By Michael Tutterow

Baptist Press
6/5/84

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—A home missions leader warned Christian social ministries missionaries not to allow controversies in the denomination to sidetrack them from the task of meeting human needs in the name of Christ.

M. Wendell Belew, director of the SBC Home Mission Board's missions ministries division, told the missionaries Southern Baptists' attention to meeting needs has been diverted away to arguments about inerrancy and the place of women in ministry.

While controversy about the Bible rages in the Southern Baptist Convention, "the world must look at us in astonishment and God must look at us in despair that after thousands of years of his revelation to us we do not know him well," Belew lamented.

Although he predicted "those who would divide us (Baptists) will fade away," Belew observed convention bickerings would cause difficulty and damage to missions and ministry.

"It is much easier to preach at the world than to serve the world, to become a part of the suffering," Belew asserted. "When control does not become as important, then we will discover the great truths of Jesus" regarding Christian ministry.

Christian social ministries is sometimes viewed as secular, said Belew. He added the dichotomy between evangelism and ministry within the SBC still exists, even though some don't want to admit it.

Baptists once believed "the only true good news was that which was preached from a pulpit or a revival tent," said Belew. "The church has re-taken evangelism and preaches that perspective as if it were the only recourse today.

"But Jesus had no problem coupling service and evangelism," Belew noted. He called on Southern Baptists to balance their presentation of the gospel by following not only God's word but God's acts of love and compassion for people.

Don Anderson, executive director of the Ecumenical Center for Religion and Health in San Antonio, Texas, asserted the church should work to become a tangible caring extension of God's love and concern.

"The image of the church should be that of the good Samaritan with his arms under the broken body of the man in the ditch," said Anderson. "Established religion is like the people who pass broken folks by. But real faith is people standing in the ditch, stained with blood, doing what God wants them to do.

"Jesus has not called us to a painless service," he added. "He has called us to expose our hearts to brokenness and all the pain of the cities and countries around us. Ministry is in the ditch where the pain is."

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A growing disregard for ministry among Southern Baptists may have a negative impact on reaching people with any form of the gospel, said Anderson, a former Southern Baptist pastor in San Antonio. He added often Christians spend more time planning to do ministry than doing it, resulting in unmet needs.

"The tragedy is that many of the needy have grown cynical because they feel, 'If the church doesn't help, who will help?'"

Anderson charged fundamental Christians often are not so much expressing their theology as they are expressing a personality type that is "gunning for deviation" at either end of the conservative/liberal spectrum. He warned that fundamentalists "are trying to make everyone into their image" and are dangerous to the denomination and the future of ministry.

He also said Southern Baptists need to balance their approach to ministry. "We've got a warped gospel that does not cover the gamut of human need," he charged. "Christ is the Christ of all people, and we must be responsive to every strata of society."

He noted the pharisee's response to the prostitute who washed Jesus' feet is like Southern Baptists today who judge people based on preconceptions.

"Our denomination has a long way to go in its view of women. Their personhood is deeper than their sexuality. We've got a long way to go before we stop judging one another on some theological test," he said. "We've got a long way to go before we realize God may be carrying out redemption through others, though they may differ from us." He challenged the group to "see people for what they might, with God's grace, become in this world."

James Goodson, state director of missions for the Florida Baptist Convention, told the group how to work within "the system," despite denominational differences.

Goodson defined the system as not denominational agencies and bureaucracy but individuals who apply policy and procedures. He maintained the system is flexible because it has a personal element. "If we have a problem with the system," he stated, "it is evidence that we have a problem with each other."

He suggested cooperation instead of bucking the system. "No one is going to get very much out of a personal system if he translates autonomy into assertiveness and even belligerent behavior," he explained.

Belew acknowledged trends in Southern Baptist life make it difficult to refrain from retaliation against those who share differing theological views of Christian faith.

"Sometimes it is easy for those who feel angry because they believe they are not well-represented to strike back with the same anger, the same judgment they have seen in others," he conceded. "But there are a lot of things we need to do, a lot of people who need us to keep our heads above the water,"--especially the poor and needy.

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Yarbrough To Head
WMU Publications Section

Baptist Press
6/5/84

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Lynn Yarbrough, training design group manager at Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, assumed full responsibilities as publications section director at the national headquarters June 2.

Yarbrough succeeds Gertrude Tharpe, who retired June 1. In her new position, Yarbrough will direct the publications section which includes the work of over 30 persons, plus other staff who produce the content of WMU study and program publications. These include seven magazines and nearly 250 other items.

A native of Texas, Yarbrough came to WMU from the Baptist General Convention of Texas, where she was art director from 1968-1980.

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Options Sought To Problem
Of Forced Termination

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Forced terminations of ministers and the resulting direct consequences to churches, careers and families often could be avoided with alternate methods of problem solving, according to church administration department consultant Bruce Grubbs of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Even though problems may appear to be removed by firing the pastor, many times great stress is left in the wake, Grubbs said.

"Forced termination is a destructive methodology being used all too frequently in churches to deal with relational problems between churches and ministers," explained Grubbs.

Joe Stacker, secretary of the church administration department at the board, said he would like to see a mutual understanding by ministers and church leaders that each is a believer/priest with different responsibilities but a shared responsibility for the total ministry of the church.

Shared Ministry, sponsored by the church administration department, calls for a reassertion of the nature of relationships based on equality and brotherhood rather than on rank, Stacker said. Christians should examine their different roles instead of ranks in the local church and relate to each other as persons who are believer/priests.

"The distress generally is a result of the relationship being formed poorly from the beginning because of misunderstood expectations or because of a breakdown due to a breach of unspoken covenant between ministers and churches," he continued.

Grubbs, who has a special assignment for two years to work in staff relationships and forced terminations, said the expectations of churches for pastors frequently are unrealistic. One expectation is that the preacher won't change anything. The other is that he will be perfect.

There are times, Grubbs admits, when forced termination may be the only way to resolve dealing with an inflexible, dominant, directive minister. Neither the church nor the pastor is always at fault, but sometimes the relationship must be ended. This should occur, however, only after a serious attempt to solve the problems and protect the church, the minister and the minister's family.

"Things that are not fundamental issues of the Christian faith are the cause of many forced terminations," Grubbs said. "Many times the problems are cultural, traditional or related to family patterns, personal grooming or communication.

"The methodology of forced termination is a bad methodology because church leaders have not found more positive ways to deal with these relational breakdowns," he continued.

"Forced terminations are not new to the Southern Baptist Convention," Grubbs said. "It is like a disease that has been around for a long time with victims, but we have just now given it a name and are doing research on it.

"There does not appear to be an ultimate answer to the denominational dilemma for the immediate future," Grubbs said. "There are Band-Aid solutions for the wounded and recommendations for new ministers, but no short-term panacea.

"One longer-term solution is a reshaping of the nature of the basic relationship between ministers and churches," he said. "This reshaping of church-minister relationships is what Shared Ministry is all about.

"Shared Ministry is a recovery of basic New Testament patterns of equality in Christ, as opposed to the alienation that often results through persons relating to each other in roles," he continued.

"The minister, by definition of the word, is a servant by both assignment and gift," Grubbs explained. "When there is a distinction between clergy and laity, the laity usually depends more on the clergy."

"Shared Ministry affirms the divine calling of church staff persons, but eliminates the development of the Christian caste system headed and dominated by the clergy," he continued. "It creates a group of servant leaders who honor God and respect other Christians."

Grubbs said the pastor should be assigned the generalist role in the guidance of the church's ministry, but the basis of a pastoral ministry should be that of a faithful guide with the spirit and mentality of the servant.

While Shared Ministry is not a new program, Grubbs said he thinks it can represent a positive revolution for the Southern Baptist Convention by heading off some of the problems arising in churches which suddenly seem faced with terminating a minister.

"Part of the solution lies in churches and ministers spending more time getting acquainted initially," he suggests. "Instead of more courtship, too many churches and ministers run off and get married only to discover later that they do not know their partner."

In that negotiation phase, attention needs to be given to detailed discussion of expectations. Specifically, what is the minister to do while he is serving the church, and what are the appropriate manners in which his ministry may be conducted?

After a minister is called by the church, there should be an orientation period where he meets regularly with a group from the church to discuss the adjustment of the pastor to the church and the church to the pastor. The relationship needs to be renegotiated continually in both directions, through honest communication and evaluations.

Although rural churches appear to suffer the majority of forced terminations, Grubbs said any church could one day face the prospect of a broken relationship and no apparent solution but firing.

"If ministers and churches make every effort to communicate openly and seriously when the relationship goes awry, they might work through the problem to reach a richer, deeper relationship with both parties," he said. "Church leaders may be depriving themselves of the greatest contribution a man has to make if he is allowed to go beyond the problems."

If, at last, after sincere negotiations, the relationship is beyond resolution, Grubbs urges both parties to be sensitive in the final steps of the termination. He said some pastors get only one or two days' notice and frequently no more than two weeks' salary.

For a pastor with no reserve funds, who lives in a church-owned house, the termination can be devastating. And, Grubbs adds, the pastor still feels called to the ministry for which he has trained.

The minister then is faced with the desire to be a pastor and no marketable skills to qualify him immediately for secular employment. Even then employers are hesitant to hire a terminated minister because they believe he will leave when given the opportunity to return to the pastorate.

For many churches, forced terminations can be prevented and relationships salvaged through open, continuing communications about problems. As in dealing with any problems, sensitivity and compassion for others should be of primary concern while seeking solutions.



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