



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Statistics Show Mega  
Focus City Successful

By Michael Tutterow

ATLANTA (BP)—The first hard-data analysis of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Mega Focus City project revealed the program is statistically successful, according to research study prepared by the mission agency's research division.

Home Mission Board researcher Clay L. Price examined trends among Southern Baptists in the 50 largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) from 1977 to 1983 to measure the impact of the board's Mega Focus Cities program.

The report noted changes in the number of churches, resident members, Sunday school enrollment and baptisms from 1977 to 1983.

In 1982, the Home Mission Board initiated Mega Focus Cities to strengthen Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) work in the 50 cities with populations in excess of one million people. The word "mega" means million, referring to the cities' population.

Though the first Mega Focus Cities—New York and Los Angeles—were not emphasized until 1982, the report indicated "it appears the emphasis on SBC work in metropolitan areas is making an overall difference in outreach to the cities."

During the six-year period, Southern Baptists noted a net increase of 324 churches in the mega cities, raising the total number of churches in mega areas to 5,816. The increase represented a gain of six churches for every 100 churches in existence in 1977. This is double the gain in other cities.

For the remainder of the U.S., the net increase was 952 churches, with a non-mega city increase of only three churches for every 100 churches in existence in 1977, noted Price.

He also said growth of SBC churches and resident members in the mega cities is occurring at a higher rate than growth outside the mega cities. From 1977 to 1980, the number of churches in the mega cities increased by 3.1 percent compared to 1.4 percent for the remainder of the U.S. From 1980 to 1983, the percentages of change were 2.7 percent in mega areas compared to 1.8 percent in the rest of the U.S.

Resident membership from 1977-1980 increased 3.9 percent in the mega cities versus 3.3 percent in the remainder of the U.S., the report revealed, with 4.6 percent versus 3.9 percent for 1980-1983.

Sunday school enrollment in the non-mega city areas experienced a slight increase from 1977 to 1980 while mega cities reported a slight decrease. However, the report said, since 1980, Sunday school enrollment in mega cities has increased 6.9 percent compared to 4.6 percent for the non-megas.

The only area to fall short in the Mega Focus City analysis was the number of baptisms. But because 1980 was the second highest year for baptisms in SBC history, trends from 1977 to 1980 were very positive while trends from 1980 to 1983 were negative, said Price. Baptisms both inside and outside the mega cities were down eight percent from 1980 to 1983, he noted.

He added from 1980 to 1983, all areas except baptisms in the 1980-1983 growth trends in the Mega Focus Cities exceeded the trends in other megacities.

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Almost half of the United States' population lives in one of the top 50 metropolitan areas, said Price, yet only 15.9 percent of SBC churches and 23.4 percent of SBC resident members reside in these mega cities. Southern Baptists have 5,816 churches to reach th half of the population living in the 50 mega cities and 30,715 churches to reach the half of the population living in the rest of the U.S., Price said.

About one of every 43 persons in the mega cities is a Southern Baptist resident member while outside the mega cities the ratio is one in 16, he added.

Southern Baptists' growth in the cities cannot totally be attributed to Mega Focus City, conceded George Bullard, associate director of the HMB metropolitan association department. "But it does represent an increasing denominational commitment to the large cities as a whol and that we're shifting our emphasis to the great cities of America where half the population lives."

The report also indicates Southern Baptists are now more open to "addressing a broader spectrum of target groups," said Bullard. "We're willing to intentionally be more pluralistic."

Bullard admitted the baptismal reports appear negative but insisted they must be viewed in the context of decreases throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I do suspect a lot of our growth in urban churches is coming from the assimilation of church members into new and emerging congregations," said Bullard. "Evidently we'r not doing an effective job of reaching the unchurched," he said. Bullard predicted "succeeding reports will continue to show significant strides in all four areas because of the high level of Sunday school growth, the significant increase in the number of new churches which are being started, and the emphasis on witness training and the national simultaneous revivals in 1986."

He added each Mega Focus City strategy sets its own priorities. Some have placed evangelism emphases later in their strategy time frame, said Bullard. He noted a few Mega Focus City strategies place new work as a priority for the first two years and evangelism for the third and fourth years. Bullard said it was too early to evaluate the success of evangelism strategies, but predicted an increase in baptisms during the next few years.

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Patterson Positive  
At Oklahoma City First

Baptist Press  
10/19/84

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—Citing a friendship of "many, many moons," Paige Patterson lauded Gene Garrison and First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, for contributions which "indirectly have meant so much to all" Southern Baptists.

Patterson, a leader of the most conservative Southern Baptist faction vying for control of SBC agencies and seminaries, and state convention colleges, was invited to speak by Garrison, a moderate leader, in an effort to initiate healing among the factions.

Garrison lauded Patterson as a man with a "long list of credentials" and added: "There are many, many things that unite Paige Patterson and me and all Southern Baptists."

Patterson made no reference to the significance of his appearance until after the invitation, during which one man joined First Baptist Church by letter.

"There are times when men differ over real, substantive issues," Patterson said. "I hope we are reminded if we have forgotten, that though men differ, even substantially, they can be real friends. Your pastor (Garrison) has demonstrated that tonight for the world to see."

Patterson's participation at First Baptist Church was well publicized. Garrison said of the 30 letters he'd received about the event, only one "questioned" his wisdom and the others, "from both sides" expressed positive support for the move. One, from a man Garrison said would be identified as "moderate" said he, too, would like Patterson to preach in his church.

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New SBC Building  
Nearing Completion

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A mid-January move-in date has been scheduled for the eight Southern Baptist organizations which will occupy a new building in Nashville, Tenn.

The seven-story, 170,000 square-foot structure was approved by messengers to the 1983 Southern Baptist Convention in Pittsburgh. Groundbreaking was in September 1983.

Reginald M. McDonough, associate executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee, sees the building "as a symbol of the growth Southern Baptists are experiencing through the convention's program of witness and ministry, Bold Mission Thrust."

The "serious overcrowding" in meeting rooms, storage space and parking that has occurred as a byproduct of the rapid growth of the Southern Baptist Convention since the present building was constructed in 1963 will be eliminated in the new building, McDonough pointed out, which will allow the organizations to more efficiently carry out the program assignments given them by messengers to the SBC meetings.

"But the greatest thing, I believe, will be the much better working relationship made possible by so many agencies being physically close together and being able to hold so many meetings at the building," he continued. The new building is beside the administrative building of the Baptist Sunday School Board and the Historical Commission, currently housed in the BSSB, will move into the new building.

While each organization will receive much needed space, McDonough said the Historical Commission, the Stewardship Commission and the Seminary External Education Division of the six Southern Baptist seminaries would benefit most dramatically by new facilities because of their greater needs.

Organizations making the move in January include: the Christian Life Commission, the Education Commission, the Executive Committee, the Seminary External Education Division, the Southern Baptist Commission on the American Theological Seminary, the Southern Baptist Foundation and the Stewardship Commission.

This will mark the first time the Historical Commission has had its own facilities in its 34-year history which, "will make it possible for the commission to enlarge its efforts to help Southern Baptists to know and act on insights from our Baptist past as we move forward together in Bold Mission Thrust," Lynn E. May Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Historical Commission said.

A major addition will be the development of a world center for the study of Baptist history. The commission will occupy the entire fourth floor of the structure, with 78 percent of its space going to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives—with 2.9 million of shelving.

"The current struggle in the Southern Baptist Convention for unity amidst diversity underscores the vital importance of the role of the Historical Commission in helping church members know their heritage and identity and to be tied more closely to their denomination."

Raymond M. Rigdon, executive director of the Seminary External Education Division, said his office is very aware, "the number of persons we serve and/or responsibilities have more than doubled" since they occupied their present facilities.

A graphic example of their space problem is storage. "Our print shop printed 15,613 study guides in 1983--stacked they would be as high as the tallest skyscrapers in Nashville. Yet our print shop is so small we can't store the guides inside the shop" resulting in inefficient storage and shipping operations.

The Stewardship Commission, headed by President A.R. Fagan, will utilize the space to help continue highly successful programs and carry a major load in an ambitious new program.

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In addition to promoting giving through the Cooperative Program, the unified budget of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Stewardship Commission also helps individual churches with fund raising. Since 1969 the Together We Build efforts have raised more than \$315 million.

Now the convention has approved a 15-year effort to increase levels of giving, by individuals, churches and state conventions, significantly through Planned Growth In Giving. The Stewardship Commission will play a major part in the effort to increase giving through SBC churches to \$20 billion a year by the year 2000.

When the present SBC building was dedicated in 1963 it housed 40 employees. Now there are over 100 employees, some crammed into cubbyholes and pushed into hallways. The Executive Committee had 55 members in 1963--the 1984-85 Executive Committee has 69 members.

In 1963 the SBC reported 33,000 churches with a combined membership of 10.4 million. The 1984 figures are 36,500 churches and 14.1 million members.

If the convention is to continue its growth--which is certainly the intention given the goal of Bold Mission Thrust to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000--much of the planning and implementation necessary will be facilitated by groups housed in the new SBC building.

None of the organizations had ever requested capital needs funds from the convention prior to seeking approval for the building. Messengers okayed \$4.5 million in capital funds in the 1984-85 budget and \$3.5 million in 1985-86. Proceeds from the sale of the present building (approximately \$2 million) will be applied to loan interest, principal furnishings, equipment and moving costs.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Press.

Largest Cooperative Program  
Year Short Of Budget

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
10/19/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Gifts to the national Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention increased by more than \$6.5 million during 1983-84. The 6.39 percent hike over 1982-83 was more than double the national inflation rate of approximately 3 percent.

However, receipts of \$108,835,732 did not meet the 1983-84 basic budget of \$114.5 million which is divided among 19 agencies and seminaries of the convention. No funds were available for the capital needs (\$3,340,385) and challenge (\$7,159,615) parts of the budget.

The capital needs projects will be carried over to the 1984-85 budget. That will increase that budget to \$133,340,385, including a basic operating budget of \$118 million.

Voluntarily contributions from the 37 Southern Baptist state conventions continued the trend of recent years as the conventions from the southern states provided most of the money while newer state conventions across the North and West were the percentage increase leaders over the previous years.

Alabama and Mississippi were the only states in the top 10 in both dollar giving and percentage increase. Alabama was fifth in giving (\$7,379,168) and 10th in increase (8.20). Mississippi ranked ninth in giving (\$5,557,832) and seventh in increase (9.83 percent).

Of the 37 state conventions, 30 contributed more to the national Cooperative Program this year than last, four declined and three were formed in 1983-84.

Texas was the leading dollar contributor (\$19,191,992) and Hawaii was the percentage increase leader (32.15).

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Other contributions included: 2. Georgia (\$9,085,151); 3. Florida (\$8,380,571); 4. North Carolina (\$7,621,878); 6. Oklahoma (\$7,202,146); 7. Tennessee (\$6,516,427); 8. South Carolina (\$6,046,172); 10. Louisiana (\$4,999,806);

11. Kentucky (\$4,809,347); 12. Virginia (\$4,573,934); 13. Missouri (\$4,323,171); 14. Arkansas (\$3,949,122); 15. Illinois (\$1,627,316); 16. California (\$1,295,642); 17. Ohio (\$961,380); 18. Maryland (\$911,619); 19. New Mexico (\$601,451);

20. Arizona (\$552,563); 21. Northwest (\$447,341); 22. Indiana (\$425,895); 23. Kansas-Nebraska (\$372,748); 24. Colorado (\$344,068); 25. Michigan (\$205,774); 26. Alaska (\$117,951); 27. Hawaii (\$114,281); 28. Pennsylvania-South Jersey (\$98,821); 29. District of Columbia (\$94,653);

30. West Virginia (\$93,475); 31. New York (\$85,372); 32. Nevada (\$57,571); 33. Northern Plains (\$56,267), and 34. Utah-Idaho (\$52,790). Among the new conventions, Michigan-Wisconsin contributed \$41,690, New England contributed \$38,702 and Wyoming contributed \$22,300.

Percentage increase figures included: 2. Kansas-Nebraska (30.63); 3. Colorado (19.74); 4. Nevada (19.28); 5. West Virginia (14.47); 6. Arizona (13.49); 8. Ohio (8.95); 9. California (8.28); 11. Arkansas (7.91); 12. North Carolina (7.66); 13. Georgia (7.43); 14. South Carolina (7.32); 15. Illinois (7.10); 16. Oklahoma (7.08); 17. Indiana (6.45);

18. Virginia (6.42); 19. Tennessee (6.40); 20. Pennsylvania-South Jersey (5.89); 21. Michigan (5.65); 22. Louisiana (5.23); 23. Texas (4.87); 24. New Mexico (4.61); 25. Missouri (4.14); 26. Florida (3.96); 27. Maryland (3.66); 28. Northwest (3.48) and 29. Kentucky (2.56).

Among those giving less in 1983-84 than in 1982-83 were: Alaska (-2.64); New York (-5.48); District of Columbia (-7.59); Utah-Idaho (-16.37) and Northern Plains (-44.88).