



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353 0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

November 1, 1984

84-157

Report Identifies Fastest Growing SBC Churches

By Michael Tutterow

ATLANTA (BP)—The location of a church contributes more to its growth potential than any other factor, according to a recent Southern Baptist Home Mission Board research report.

The published study concluded the majority (60 percent) of the 671 fastest growing churches in the Southern Baptist Convention were located in neighborhoods where the population was increasing. Most of the remainder were in stable neighborhoods, the report noted, with only 3.3 percent of the churches located in neighborhoods described as declining.

Two researchers, Phillip Jones, director of the Home Mission Board's planning and services research department, and David Jones, director of Jones Counseling and Research Services, Inc. in Jackson, Miss., compiled data to determine the SBC's fastest growing churches from 1975 to 1980.

The study was a follow-up to a similar study done in 1977 for "Home Missions" magazine.

The two researchers used four factors to examine growth patterns of 32,784 Southern Baptist churches: 1) net change in total membership from 1975 to 1980; 2) percentage change in total membership from 1975 to 1980; 3) net change in Sunday school enrollment from 1975 to 1980, and 4) percentage change in Sunday school enrollment from 1975 to 1980.

Using the factors, the two researchers identified 671 Southern Baptist churches as the fastest growing congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention.

They also surfaced the nation's top 10 fastest growing churches for the five-year period for a report in the HMB's MissionsUSA magazine.

Listed alphabetically, the churches and the percentages of total membership increase from 1975 to 1980, only one of the factors used to determine the top 10, were: Casa Adobes (397%), Tucson, Ariz.; Central (515%), Pinehurst (Houston suburb), Texas; Champion Forest (363%), Houston; Council Road (362%), Oklahoma City; Hunter Hills (347%), Greensboro, N.C.; Mount Zion (325%), St. Clair, Mo.; New Hope (341%), Fayetteville (near Atlanta), Ga.; Shiloh (364%), Plant City, Fla.; Smoke Rise (306%), Stone Mountain (near Atlanta), Ga., and Wildwood (512%), Clinton (Jackson suburb), Miss.

A random sample of 724 churches also was selected for comparison purposes and surveys of pastors and laypersons from both groups were conducted to determine differences between fastest growing churches and the comparison group.

The two researchers noted the following 10 observations:

1) A church's location has more to do with church growth potential than any other factor. The majority of fastest growing churches were located in growing communities, the researchers noted. Also, churches which grew fastest were more likely to be found in suburban areas of cities with populations of more than 10,000.

2) The researchers noted little difference in church program orientation between the two groups. Both groups promoted their churches, evangelized, welcomed visitors, disciplined new members, equipped old members and prioritized church program areas in basically the same way. However, enthusiasm and polish with which the groups undertook their tasks could not be measured for influence, the researchers said.

Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

--more--

3) Both the fastest growing churches and the typical churches primarily reached married persons with children, but the fastest growing churches reached more young families than comparison churches. Also, the average age of members in the fastest growing churches was significantly less than in the comparison group, indicating young families are an important part of their growth, the report said.

4) Although most pastors of the fastest growing churches perceived the majority of the growth stemmed from conversion of the unchurched, statistics showed that the bulk of their growth came from transfer of church memberships. "In general," the report added, "churches grow at the expense of other churches."

5) Fastest growing churches tended to emphasize numerical growth more than comparison churches, the researchers said.

6) Fastest growing churches boasted pastors with at least 10 years experience and four to five years in their present church. Pastors of the comparison group also averaged 10 years of pastoral experience but only two to three years in their present location, the report added.

7) Fastest growing churches were begun more recently than random sample churches. The median age of fastest growing churches was 24 years verses 63 years for the comparison group.

8) The report also noted laity of the fastest growing churches thought of themselves as being better equipped for ministry than did laity of the typical SBC church.

9) Laity in the typical SBC churches pictured their pastor as being more warm, easy-going and quiet than did the laity of the fastest growing churches, who saw their pastor as more dynamic and pulpit-oriented, the report said.

10) Responses of church members and pastors of fastest growing churches identified in the 1977 study differed very little from responses given in the 1984 study, concluded the report.

Other characteristics noted in the study showed fastest growing churches and typical churches alike were comprised of mostly whites, were located in predominantly white communities, had average family incomes of \$15,000 to \$30,000 annually and had not started a mission in the last five years.

Most church programs and outreach of the two groups were identical, including ranking evangelism as the most important area of church ministry, the researchers observed.

--30--

MasterLife Model
Rooted In Indonesia

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
11/1/84

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--About 10 years ago, a missionary in Indonesia perused Royal Ambassadors manuals he had used as a youth in Abilene, Texas.

The missionary, Marvin Leech, gleaned some ideas for undergirding the witness of Indonesian Baptists--ideas that also led to MasterLife, a widely used Southern Baptist discipleship program.

Leech, guest professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, is the dean of theological education by extension and leader of discipleship training at the Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary in Semarang, a city of 1.5 million people in north-central Java.

Concern for his students prompted Leech to turn to his RA materials. "In a sense, they were being trained for leadership before receiving training in discipleship." He noticed "a systematic training program" and accountability in RAs, with the youth tackling concrete assignments and then reporting to their leaders which "led to formation of character and skills."

--more--

Thus, in 1976, the RA manuals "helped me to initiate a design for discipleship training in our local church," which Avery Willis, then a missionary in Indonesia, repeated in his church.

Willis later used a similar approach when, as supervisor of leadership development in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department, he led the development of MasterLife.

Today at the 40-student main campus in Indonesia, first-year students are discipled by those in their second year who, in turn, receive training in discipleship skills from third-year students who, in turn, are supervised by the faculty.

Leech also oversees eight regional seminary campuses with more than 500 students in a country with 158 million people spread over 3,000 islands.

Theological education by extension is "a means for reaching the world for Christ," he said. "It's not a program of preparation," as in traditional theological education, "but a program of equipping for people who are already actively involved in ministry.

"There's no way theological educators can directly train church members," Leech noted, "but it is possible to design programs for leadership training which can be reproduced directly in the life of a church."

Leaders trained through such programs then should seek "to make it possible for every Christian to have a significant ministry--to make every Christian competent to serve according to his or her gifts and abilities," Leech said.

--30--

Colley Would Rather
Counsel Than Divorce

Baptist Press
11/1/84

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--When Nathaniel Colley Jr. found himself trying to prevent divorces instead of helping couples get them, he realized law might not be his forte. So he will practice truth and justice in a different arena--Baptist ministry.

The 28-year-old son of Nathaniel Colley Sr., a prominent Sacramento attorney, minority rights leader, gubernatorial board appointee and chairman of the special contribution fund for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, worked at his father's law firm for the past four years but his philosophy and approach to law became incompatible with his father's, so he left the firm in July.

Colley started classes this fall at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. His family is still having difficulty accepting his decision to become a National Baptist minister, Colley admitted.

"It's been painful because (being in law practice) together has been everyone's lifelong assumption and dream," Colley explained. "You know, I love my father. He has been hurt by this, but that was never my intention. We cried together over it. But the Lord has other plans for me. As the expression goes, "I hear a different drummer."

Colley, the youngest of five children and the only son, graduated from the University of Michigan in 1977 with bachelor's degrees in political science and psychology and went on to earn his law degree from the university's law school.

After graduation in 1979, he immediately began working as a law clerk at his father's firm, alongside his sister, Natalie, also an attorney. In 1980, he passed the California state bar exam and began practicing family and civil and criminal law. The next year he served as the local president of the NAACP.

"It's no secret I hated family law precisely because it's dividing marriages," he says. "People start using their children as weapons against each other."

--more--

Colley felt best when he advised couples to work on their problems rather than giving up the marriage, even though it meant a loss of clients and money to him. He recalls one estranged couple with whom he and his wife socialized. Following many discussions with Colley, the couple reconciled and the wife sent him a letter thanking him for refusing their divorce case.

"Time and again, I've seen the Lord work in these marriages. I am just an instrument for him," says Colley.

When Colley receives his master of divinity degree in about three years, he hopes to return to Sacramento and concentrate on family counseling.

Colley also has resigned himself to a minister's salary that won't come close to the money he was making as an attorney. But he's confident he, his wife and three daughters, ages one, five and eight, will get by on savings and other resources.

"If you're going into the ministry looking for a good-paying job, you're going in for the wrong reason. You have to go in with the faith that the Lord will provide," he says. "The money in law practice didn't make me happy."

--30--

Salvadoran Baptist Pastor
Arrested, Deported To Sweden

Baptist Press
11/1/84

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (BP)--Baptist Pastor Migeul Castro Garcia, arrested for alleged ties to Leftist rebels, was released Oct. 30, and immediately deported to Sweden, according to American Baptist officials in the United States.

Castro, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in San Salvador, reportedly was stopped by armed plainclothed policemen in two cars as he was driving home after morning worship services Oct. 28. The men seized Castro and confiscated his car, leaving a daughter and two church members on the street, reports said.

Church officials in San Salvador told United Press International Oct. 29, that Castro had been arrested because of "alleged links to Leftist rebels." U.S. State department spokesperson Margaret Melcher told Baptist Press the pastor had been charged with "being an active member of a subversive organization."

Melcher said U.S. Embassy personnel in El Salvador met with church and family members Oct. 29, and expressed concern about the arrest to government authorities. She said U.S. officials were informed by Salvadoran authorities that Castro would be released if he agreed to go into exile. He was released and put on a plane for Sweden Oct. 30, according to American Baptist officials. It was unclear whether his wife and two children will be allowed to join him in Sweden, or whether he will be allowed to return to El Salvador if he is cleared of the charges.

Emmanuel Baptist Church is affiliated with the Baptist Association of El Salvador, a group closely associated with the American Baptist denomination in the United States. Castro is a well known Baptist and had been mentioned as a candidate to be the next association president.

The four Southern Baptist literature missionaries in El Salvador supply many of the 55 or so churches in the association with Christian literature. Southern Baptists also have contributed clothing, medicine and other supplies to an orphanage sponsored by Emmanuel Baptist Church.

American Baptist official Russell E. Brown said Emmanuel Baptist has been very active in social ministry and work with the poor.

A Baptist source in San Salvador speculated the church's work with Salvadoran war refugees may have drawn the attention of police authorities. Guerrilla fighters sometimes blend into refugee groups.

--30--

Moore Says Stanley
Should Be Replaced

By Karen Benson

DALLAS (BP)--Winfred Moore, president of the 2.3 million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas, does not believe Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley should be reelected when the SBC meets in Dallas in June of 1985.

Moore, speaking during a news conference immediately following his unanimous reelection as BGCT president, said Stanley has been too involved in the denominational controversy between fundamentalists and conservatives to be a unifying factor.

Also, Stanley has shown a lack of support for Southern Baptist causes, Moore said.

Moore--who has been speculated to be the candidate to oppose Stanley in 1985--also said he did not consider himself a good candidate for SBC president because he, too, has been politicized in the media.

However, Moore said a candidate must be found to restore harmony to the denomination. "If we're ever going to unify the convention, we're going to have to find somebody," he said. "It is my hope and prayer that we could find a person who would unify the convention."

Although Moore would not specify a certain percentage, he did say the contribution to the Cooperative Program by the candidate's church should be a determining factor in the election. Stanley often has been criticized for the low percentage his church gives to the Cooperative Program, the unified giving plan which supports SBC agencies and institutions.

Moore said he did not consider himself a candidate of any political faction last year, nor does he consider his reelection this year to be a statement for either conservatives or fundamentalists.

"I would be concerned if anybody controlled the thinking of Southern Baptists," he said. "I didn't consider myself a candidate of anybody last year, or this year."

Moore expressed concern about the call by fundamentalist leaders for the resignation of several professors at Baylor University in recent months. "I really feel that they need to get to know the professors," Moore said. "The ones I know, I have no question about their ability, or their belief in the Bible."

One of the professors in question is a Mormon who teaches in the Spanish department, and the other is a religion professor who has said he does not feel that evolution is necessarily incompatible with the creation theory.

Moore supported Baylor President Herbert H. Reynolds for the manner in which the university has backed the professors. "I think he's absolutely right in the way he has handled that particular situation," Moore said.

The Southern Baptist laity will not allow Texas Baptist or Southern Baptist institutions to be threatened or controlled by one particular theological faction, Moore predicted. "The lay people--the grass roots--I don't think they're ever going to allow that to happen."

Moore said he feels the current denominational controversy has remained alive simply because of a "lack of communication" among factional leaders. In his discussions this past year with the various leaders from both sides of the issue, Moore said he has discovered that "we are pretty much theologically together."

He admitted he participated in some closed-door meetings with leaders of both factions, but said he has made a commitment to decline comment until additional meetings are held.

He said the meetings are being held to "try to work out the differences."

On the controversial issue on the ordination of women in Southern Baptist churches, Moore said he feels the matter must be left to the local church. His own church--First Baptist Church, Amarillo--has not ordained women, and Moore said he doubts the matter will come up.



BAPTIST PRESS

*460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

Handwritten initials or signature, possibly 'SM' or 'JM', located on the right side of the page.

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 9TH AVE NO
NASHVILLE TN 37234

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION