

DEC 19 1985



- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

Jim
NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(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, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201-3355, Telephone (214) 720-0550
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. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

December 18, 1985

85-159

CLC Meeting On Apartheid Issues 'Call To Concern'

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Sixteen Baptist leaders have issued a "Call to Concern" which expresses support "for all who are working to dismantle the evil system of apartheid" in South Africa.

The statement was approved unanimously at a Dec. 12 meeting in Nashville entitled "Southern Baptists and Apartheid: A Consultation on Racial Reconciliation, Human Rights, and Justice."

The consultation was sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention under the leadership of W. David Lockard, the agency's director of organization. The commission's SBC program assignment includes education and action on issues related to race relations and human rights.

In addition to the Christian Life Commission, the meeting involved representatives, both black and white, from the Southern Baptist Foundation, Baptist World Alliance, Home and Foreign Mission Boards, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Baptist Sunday School Board. Other participants were pastors of Baptist churches and representatives from state Baptist conventions.

The "Call to Concern" emerged from discussion of the moral, religious and political dimensions of the racial crisis in South Africa.

The 10-point statement was drafted following a Bible study on justice presented by Marvin Griffin, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; a statement of concern about racism presented by Foy Valentine, executive director of the CLC; and a study paper on the "contextual trauma" in South Africa presented by John N. Jonsson, professor of missions and world religions at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky., a native of South Africa and a longtime Baptist leader in that country.

In the statement, consultation participants expressed their conviction that the issues addressed in the document "are not peripheral concerns merely tagged on to the Christian gospel but rather are fundamental concerns that are central to the Christian mission and that belong to the very heart of the Christian gospel."

The statement, to be shared with Southern Baptist agencies and institutions and other Baptist bodies around the world, commends the Baptist Union of Southern Africa for recent action which "spoke courageously and stood prophetically against the gross immoralities of apartheid."

At its annual meeting in October the Baptist Union adopted a statement addressed to South African President P.W. Botha which urged "that the whole structure of apartheid be dismantled as a matter of extreme urgency." The official government policy, it declared, is "in conflict with the Bible" and is "an evil which needs to be repented of."

The "Call to Concern" intentionally avoided specific mention of divestiture, choosing rather to "urge that future economic policies be developed wisely and applied courageously to help in moving the entire South African society away from apartheid."

It also expressed support for "decisive movement beyond the Sullivan Principles" towards involving blacks in decision-making "at the highest levels of government."

The statement praised those "men like Bishop Tutu and those women like Winnie Mandela together with those imprisoned leaders and hundreds of slain protestors who have valiantly laid down their lives for the cause of human dignity and freedom."

It also acknowledged "frankly but painfully...our own all-too-recent involvement as individuals, as Americans, and as Baptist Christians in a morally reprehensible system of legally enforced racial discrimination closely akin to apartheid as it still exists in South Africa."

The statement called on Southern Baptists to urge their elected officials "to challenge apartheid and oppose racism in all of its manifestations and wherever it may be found, not only in South Africa but also in our own country."

--30--

Evangelism Leader Urges
SBC Concert Of Prayer

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
12/18/85

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's vice-president for evangelism has issued a call for Southern Baptists to unite in a "Concert of Prayer" that Southern Baptists' simultaneous nation-wide revivals in 1986 would begin another great spiritual awakening in America.

Robert L. Hamblin of Atlanta issued the appeal during the opening address of the national conference of SBC evangelism directors meeting at the Holiday Inn, Las Vegas. "My desire is for thousands and millions of believers in Christ to meet in small groups...offering up united prayers to God," Hamblin said.

Noting that every great awakening in history started as a result of prayer, Hamblin said Southern Baptists will never be successful in evangelism if they depend on programs and plans, no matter how good, instead of on God.

Hamblin said the second great awakening in America began after Isaac Baccus, a Baptist pastor and historian, led a group of pastors in 1784 to call for prayer groups all over New England to unite in prayer for spiritual awakening. Baccus used the term "Concert of Prayer" to describe the chorus of voices praying in harmony and unity for spiritual awakening.

Hamblin urged Baptists to observe days of prayer in their homes and churches, and to humble themselves in confession of sin, earnest prayer for an outpouring of God's spirit for healing of the churches, denomination, home and society.

Winfred Moore, first vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Tex., repeated a plea for unity in the Southern Baptist Convention divided over theological differences. "Until we as Southern Baptists become one in purpose and mission in unity, we're not going to have much influence in the world," said Moore, who spoke three times during the conference.

Urging prayer for the Southern Baptist Convention's Peace Committee assigned to study the reasons for the controversy and bring back recommendations, Moore said what Baptists do in evangelism may be more significant in bringing unity than anything the Peace Committee does.

"If there is anything in the world that will bring us together, it won't be resolving our theological differences in discussion (by a committee), it will be when we get so caught up in winning people to the Lord Jesus Christ that everything else is secondary," said Moore, a member of the SBC Peace Committee.

"We can't have a divided heart, a divided convention," Moore said. "We've got to get our priorities right and make a commitment that if it takes everything we have, we are willing to give it to see the world brought to the Lord Jesus Christ."

He warned, however, there is no use putting on the 1986 campaign called "Good News America: God Loves You" unless Baptists are really committed. "We're kidding ourselves if we think we can reach America and the world unless we are willing to make the kind of commitment that makes this the top priority of our lives in which everything else is secondary."

James Pleitz, pastor, Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, cautioned Baptists not to "get so caught up with the politics of the kingdom we forget the priorities of the king (Jesus Christ)."

--more--

SBC Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner stressed that Baptists need to love the world the same way God loves the world. "God loves a man named Khomeini in Iran just as much as he loves a man named Reagan in Washington," Tanner said.

Describing the problems of the world, Tanner said it is hard for Christians to really love the world, with its ugliness, debauchery, crime, drug abuse and threat of nuclear destruction. "But our God of the universe does not intend to preside over a cosmic suicide," Tanner said. "Instead, he is the architect of eternal life. He is not the caretaker of a mushrooming cemetery (of nuclear missiles) that grows every day."

Jimmy Maroney, senior consultant in evangelism and church growth ministries at the SBC Foreign Mission Board, called for Baptists to deal with the issues affecting the whole world, not just the nation, noting "There are 2.7 billion people in the world who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. There are 1.5 billion people who are suffering from hunger and malnutrition. The major cause of malnutrition is poverty, and the major cause of poverty is human injustice."

Maroney said the church is being challenged by a hungry world suffering from injustice. "They are saying to Christians, 'You have to deal with the issues,' and we'd better do it or we will lose our right to be heard."

Several evangelism professors at Southern Baptist seminaries traced the history of revival and spiritual awakening, saying Baptists need to learn from the way God has worked in the past if they are to see awakening in the future.

Lewis Drummond, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., pointed out the great spiritual awakening in England began as a result of prayer which burdened a few brokenhearted Christians who felt they could not go on living without God's bringing revival.

Chuck Kelly, professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, examined the history of revival in the Southern Baptist Convention. He said when the SBC observed its 100th anniversary in 1945, Baptists sponsored a big emphasis on revivals with a goal of 1 million decisions, but only about 256,000 decisions resulted.

Brokenhearted over the disappointing results, Baptists began to pray and work together in developing the most comprehensive evangelism program of any denomination in America, Kelly said. Response, however, peaked in 1959 when SBC churches baptized a record 429,000 persons.

Kelly said he did not know why, but since the mid and late 1950s, the SBC seems to have lost its burden for evangelism and, "vision has turned into plans and programs and organization run by a great big, fat bureaucracy in the SBC. The fires of revival have been replaced by cold coals."

"God will not bless a proud denomination or the best programs developed by human mind," Kelly said. "Unless we catch a vision of God's glory, we are doomed to failure. Something will happen in the next 10 to 15 years that will either bring a great awakening among Baptists, or will plunge the SBC into the greatest downward spiral we've ever seen," he said.

Jimmy Eaves, professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, said Southern Baptists have incorrectly used the term "revival" for decades since the rest of the Christian world uses the term to mean what Baptists say is a "great spiritual awakening."

Real revival, Eaves said, is the work of a sovereign God who revives the people of God; it is not a series of meetings in a local church. "When real revival comes, renewed people will witness to others at all costs," he added. "The key words," he added, "are 'at all costs.'"

In the closing address of the conference, James Semple, pastor of First Baptist Church, Paris, Texas, cautioned against depending on one method for revival---mass evangelism. "Revival is more than holding a revival meeting," he said.

Semple said the greatest response in his 23-year-ministry at the Texas church has come because lay people in the church have gone through the SBC Continuing Witness Training (CWI) program, making a personal commitment to be evangelists in every area of life. Instead of relying on the pastor, members of the Paris church have accepted the responsibility for evangelism themselves. "That's what we need," Semple said.

Hays' Retirement Hints End
Of Postwar Missions Era

By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—George and Helen Hays first arrived by ship in Japan in 1948. During the 30-mile car trip from Yokohama to Tokyo, the two new Southern Baptist missionaries didn't see a single standing building. Japan had paid dearly for its war in the Pacific.

Thirty-seven years later, Hays is retiring as director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's operation in East Asia, which includes more than 500 missionaries in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao. His departure is a symbol of the gradual end of an era: the postwar generation of Asia missionaries.

That generation includes a host of veteran missionaries forced to leave China after the Communists came to power, and another host of young idealists who, like Hays, never reached China at all. They scattered throughout the Pacific region instead, answering the call for postwar aid in places like the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan.

Hays remembers that first ride to Tokyo, three years after the war, when "People were living in thousands of corrugated shacks, with bricks or stones on top to hold the roof on. People were living under trestles or bridges, anyplace where they could get out of the elements."

Japanese Baptists were starting over during those years. War, hardship and persecution had purged a pre-war church membership of some 3,000 to barely 500 in 16 churches. "I was not fully aware of these giant statesmen I was living and working with," Hays remembers. "It was a tremendous experience and tremendous privilege to know the dozen men and one or two women who single-handedly kept Baptists together during the war, though they were all forced into the united church by the government."

Hays gladly went to Japan, even though his oldest brother died in the attack on Pearl Harbor. "There are many dastardly deeds in war, and you can't fault a whole people for that kind of act," he says.

His lack of bitterness reflects a lifelong way of responding to people. Said Japanese pastor Shuichi Matsumura years ago: "Even if Dr. Hays never opened his mouth, his very presence in our church is a benediction to it. With such a man of character present, no one has the heart to raise a fuss or act small." Hays won't even answer a sharply worded letter, according to an associate, without putting it aside for several days to pray about his reply.

Born the third of nine children in a Missouri farm family, Hays came of age in the hungry depression years. His father, like many farmers in the Midwest and Southwest, fought drought and dust storms. One year the family's entire corn harvest didn't fill a single wagon. Another year, young George had to live with relatives who had fewer mouths to feed. He attended a one-room school and a one-room church.

Hays committed his life to Christ at age 11 and later sensed a call from God to preach. A college education seemed an impossible goal financially. But he quietly made it through college, seminary and doctoral studies with 50 hard-earned dollars from his parents, scholarships and jobs on the side.

He met the former Helen Mathis of Louisville, Ky., while at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in that city. They married in 1946, and he led two small churches as pastor while completing his studies.

The couple aimed for missions in China. But by the time they were appointed in 1948, China was rapidly closing to missionaries. They went instead to Japan and began language study in the remains of Tokyo, where they lived for weeks in the unheated living room of another missionary couple. "Cold, colder, coldest is all we remember about the first winter," Mrs. Hays says.

Hays originally intended to evangelize rural areas. The Japan missionaries had different plans. They sent him to teach in the seminary at Seinan Gakuin, the university founded by Baptists in Fukuoka (a 26-hour train trip from Tokyo in those days, on straight-backed seats in unheated cars).

Hays enjoyed teaching and working with churches in the Fukuoka area. He would have happily stayed at the seminary throughout his missionary career. But the other missionaries called on him to handle numerous jobs, including the mission organization chairmanship and a six-year stint as mission treasurer in Tokyo, which made him responsible for missionary property, finances and business affairs nationwide. He took on the latter task with much hesitation.

"My father is the most unambitious high achiever I've ever known," quips Hays' son, Howard, now a physician in Columbia, Mo. His family and colleagues agree that Hays has never sought or even desired a "promotion." But others have sought him regularly for leadership posts because of the integrity and character they observed in him. The Japan missionaries eventually adopted a half-humorous, half-serious phrase: "Let George do it."

Hays returned in 1966 to full-time teaching and became dean of the seminary at Seinan Gakuin. It was to be the hardest period of his ministry, as anti-establishment, anti-Vietnam War student protests rocked Japanese university campuses. Student unrest nearly closed the small seminary.

Hays decided to turn seminary leadership over to a Japanese faculty member, but he stayed on as a teacher. "From September (1970) until the end of the year there were no classes," he says. "We met nearly every day as a faculty, either talking among ourselves or meeting the students for the most intense period and one of the most distressing, agonizing experiences of all my life."

The seminary survived. Hays went on to serve as field representative for then-East Asia director James Belote. When Belote died of a heart attack in 1975, the Foreign Mission Board called on Hays. He moved to Richmond that year to administer all East Asia missionary work.

In the decade since, career and associate missionary forces in the region have grown from 366 to nearly 500, despite more than 160 retirements and resignations. The Baptist churches they work with baptized more than 70,000 new believers, and church membership climbed from some 79,000 to more than 136,000. Congregations multiplied from about 700 to almost 1,300.

South Korea dominates the statistics, with major growth in nearly every category as the nation's Christian movement continues to amaze the world. "What's happening now in Korea is one of the most encouraging things I've seen in my 10 years," Hays says.

He predicts continuing progress in the region in the coming years, but he has several concerns. One is the steady "brain drain" of leadership as many national pastors and leaders leave for the United States, Canada or Europe. It's a worldwide phenomenon, but the leadership exodus is hitting Taiwan and Hong Kong hard as political uncertainty grows about mainland China's plans. Another problem is the historical lack of lay leadership training in the region's pastor-centered churches.

Hays' other major concern is the soaring cost of doing missions in East Asia. In 1975 the Foreign Mission Board's budget for the region totaled about \$5 million. In 1985 it reached almost \$14.5 million.

This year's budget for Japan alone topped the entire regional budget of a decade ago. But given East Asia's huge population and crucial social and economic importance, Hays says "the necessity of continuing a strong evangelism program in these countries is beyond question."

Now 65, Hays suffered a severe heart attack while in Hong Kong in the summer of 1981, and spent several months there recovering. But he returned to a full-time schedule in 1982 by following his doctor's list of "four don'ts": don't hurry, don't worry, don't get angry, don't get tired.

He'll carry that philosophy into retirement. He plans to do some traveling and preaching, maybe a little teaching, and spend a lot of time enjoying his two favorite hobbies, woodworking and golf. Meanwhile, former missionary to South Vietnam Sam James takes over in January as director for East Asia.

Hays suggests with a smile that it's time for East Asia missionaries to adopt a new policy: "Let Sam do it."

Hunger Relief Groups
Assess Africa's Needs

By David Wilkinson

WASHINGTON (BP)--As a new year approaches, Africa may be moving from a crisis of acute hunger to a crisis of chronic hunger, underscoring the need for long-term assistance and development.

Recent assessments by hunger relief and development organizations working in Africa illustrate both significant progress and continued need. Reports from famine-stricken countries indicate that while emergency food aid requirements for 1986 may be half the amount needed in 1985, millions of people will still have critical food needs next year.

The U.N. Office for Emergency Operations in Africa noted in a recent status report that the emergency is still "acute" in 12 countries.

Rains have returned to parts of the continent, but they have been unevenly distributed and too little, too late for harvests in many areas. In addition, transportation problems and civil strife in some countries have continued to hamper relief efforts.

In Ethiopia, where much of the world's attention has been focused in the last year, relief officials estimate six million people will still be in need of international food assistance next year. Southern Baptist missionaries report that transportation problems and lean crops will add at least another year to Southern Baptist short-term relief efforts in that country.

Other illustrations of continued need:

--Ethiopia alone now has at least 200,000 orphans.

--An estimated 4 million persons have been displaced by famine and civil strife.

--In the Sudan, approximately 12,000 homeless boys between the ages of 7 and 17 are roaming the streets of Omdurman and Khartoum.

--Across Africa more than 17 million children under age five are suffering from malnutrition, a trend which will harm the continent's development for generations. In countries such as Ghana and Burkina Faso, more than 40 percent of the children under five are malnourished.

--More than 18 million people in seven countries (Angola, Ethiopia, Cape Verde, Botswana, Sudan, Mozambique and Lesotho) are still "at risk" because of food shortages.

In response to these needs, experts who testified at hearings in December before the U.S. House Select Committee on Hunger and the African Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee called for a long-term commitment to Africa relief and development.

African Subcommittee chairman Howard E. Wolpe, D-Mich., noted that without immediate attention to recovery and rehabilitation, many African countries "will be even more vulnerable to the next drought and even more dependent on international aid."

Robert S. McNamara, former president of The World Bank, testified that despite much progress, "the harsh truth is that Sub-Saharan Africa today faces a crisis of unprecedented proportions." He cited various "underlying realities" of the hunger crisis: deterioration of the physical environment, dramatic population growth, crumbling national economies and steady decreases in per capita production of food grains.

Peter J. Davies, head of Interaction, a coalition of more than 100 U.S. relief, refugee and development agencies, reported that harvests may be better this year and the food deficits will be "correspondingly lower." But Davies warned against being lulled into "a false sense of security, believing that the need has been met."

He said efforts must "move beyond food and life-saving medical assistance to focus limited human and financial resources on getting people back on their feet--back into productive roles--and to focus these same limited resources on addressing the long-term root causes of the famine."

Criswell College
Gains Accreditation

DALLAS (BP)—The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has extended full accreditation to Criswell College, the degree-granting educational arm of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas.

Criswell College, named for W.A. Criswell, pastor of Dallas' First Baptist Church and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is an undergraduate and graduate level institution specializing in the training of men and women for the various ministries of the church. Both the bachelor of arts and master of arts degrees currently are offered. Baccalaureate degrees are granted in biblical studies and counseling. Masters degrees are granted in biblical studies.

President Paige Patterson said a major emphasis of the institution is in the teaching of biblical languages, Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. In addition, he said the school offers studies in cognate semitic languages, and Akkadian, Eblite, Moabite, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions, Phoenician, Sumerian, Syriac and Ugaritic.

The present enrollment in the Dallas-based school is 400, about 50 of whom are in the graduate program. Twenty-seven full-time professors are employed, 90 percent of whom hold earned doctorates in their teaching fields.

Of the nearly 400 graduates in the school's 14-year history, a large portion of them are involved in church planting ministries in the United States and internationally in places such as Brazil and Mexico.

Additional educational activities of the school include the operation of major radio stations in Weatherford, Texas, and Dallas (KCNI-FM). Also KCBI International, a shortwave facility broadcasting the message of freedom and free enterprise, together with the Christian gospel, to eastern and western Europe and the Soviet Union, and to Cuba and South America commenced operation recently.

A theological journal (Criswell Theological Review) will be inaugurated soon and will be published twice a year.

The school also participates with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in an annual archaeological dig at Yoqne'am in the valley of Megiddo. Approximately one-third of the student body is overseas in direct missionary work each summer.

Patterson said application for accreditation with the Southern Association was made nearly three years ago. During the period of candidacy extensive self appraisal and the contribution of two SACs visiting teams (comprised of scholars and administrators from a total of eighteen accredited institutions) were a part of the process leading to final accreditation.

Criswell College is a school initiated by the First Baptist Church of Dallas.

Patterson explained it is a Southern Baptist school in terms of its commitment and doctrine, but not an official Southern Baptist school in terms of Southern Baptist Convention or Baptist General Convention of Texas institutional financial support.

The chancellor of the school is W.A. Criswell. Patterson has been president of the school since January of 1975.

--30--

China Deeds To Help Christians,
Foreign Mission Board Hopes

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
12/18/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The Southern Baptist-Foreign Mission Board has six file boxes full of deeds to property in China, and it hopes the documents will help Chinese Christians as they continue to reopen churches and expand their activities.

--more--

A small group of retired and former Southern Baptist missionaries to China huddled in the board's Richmond offices in December to examine the documents one by one. They constitute a fascinating record of more than a century of Southern Baptist mission work in China.

The documents, which have lain dormant in the board's archives for three decades, include deeds to land, churches, schools, hospitals, residences and other buildings spanning eastern China, plus numerous photographs, drawings and brittle handwritten maps of properties.

A 1924 appraisal valued the properties at almost \$3.4 million. Their current value is anybody's guess. Many of the buildings no longer exist. Much of the property was nationalized by the government after 1949 when it was no longer possible for missionaries to work in China.

The Foreign Mission Board has never formally sought compensation for the properties--hoping instead that Chinese Christians might one day regain use of them. Any money that might have been realized from property settlements paled in comparison.

"It is my hope that when it becomes possible for Christian work in China to be resumed more widely, that some of this property can be retrieved for (Christian) work," stated the late Baker James Cauthen in a memorandum he wrote six years ago as he turned over his duties to the board's new chief administrator.

"It may be that such retrieval would have to be over a long period of time, but with deeds in hand and much patience, some progress may be gradually made," he wrote. Cauthen was a missionary in China and later secretary (director) for all the Orient when that country was closed to mission work.

Open churches in China now reportedly number more than 4,000, and the Chinese government has in numerous cases restored and returned church buildings, used for other purposes for many years, to the congregations which once worshiped in them. If restoration is impossible or impractical, the government sometimes provides alternate properties or arranges for rental payments.

The Foreign Mission Board's deeds will be cataloged, computerized and made available on request to Chinese Christian leaders, according to Lewis Myers, director of Cooperative Services International, Southern Baptists' new liaison program with China.

"In some places the presence of the deed in the hands of the Christian leaders talking to the (government) Bureau of Religious Affairs could probably help restore property to be used," Myers said. "In other cases, if it isn't already nailed down as property belonging to a church or religious group, they might register it as such and get paid fair rental value for the use the government is making of it."

The deeds include extensive properties in Shanghai, Canton (Guangzhou), Kweilin (Guilin), Chengchou (Zhengzhou) and other cities. A few examples:

--an elaborate deed for property in Chefoo (now Yantai) in north China, originally purchased from the imperial Russian government in 1908.

--deeds for a church, residence, boys' and girls' schools and mission compound in Wuchow (Wuzhou), south China, and a 70-year lease on the Stout Memorial Hospital, where famed missionary doctor Bill Wallace practiced. The lease didn't expire until 1984.

--deeds for college and seminary property in Shanghai. The Baptist-founded University of Shanghai is now the Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering.

--30--

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Reaching Inactive Church Members
A Goal of Church Training Leaders

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
12/18/85

NASHVILLE (BP)--If Southern Baptist churches could reach only 25 percent of their inactive members, church training enrollment would increase by about 600,000 next year, Sunday School Board church training director Roy Edgemon said.

--more--

Speaking to state church training directors and associates meeting here for annual planning sessions, Edgemon said inactive and non-resident church members make up about 49 percent of churches' total membership. Reaching 25 percent of those members would increase church training enrollment from its present membership of 1.9 million to 2.5 million, he added.

Reaching inactive and non-resident members would be in keeping with the church training department's 1986-87 theme of discipleship training, an effort to help churches orient new members, equip members and train leaders, he said.

Edgemon said among the denomination's 14.4 million members, an estimated 30 percent or 4.1 million are non-resident, no longer living near the church, while approximately 20 percent or 2.8 million are inactive.

An inactive member is defined as one who has not contributed or participated in a local church for 12 months, Edgemon explained.

"In an average church of 400, 83 are inactive and 116 are non-resident," he said. "That leaves 199 actually active members who are carrying the entire load of the church. If we could just touch inactive church members, church training attendance would increase significantly."

Steve Williams, a new-start consultant in the board's church training growth section, said 22,000 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention have church training programs, but 14,000 do not. "We started 1,700 church training programs last year, but we only had a net increase of 100," Williams said. "We started 1,700 but we lost 1,600."

"We're doing a super, terrific job of starting new programs if we could just hang on to the ones we've got," he said. Williams estimated there are about 38 people per church training program. Multiplying the number of church training programs lost last year by the number of people in each program "adds up to a lot of folks," Williams said.

The church training department is continuing its 1985-90 emphasis on Developing Believers through workshops, leadership conferences and use of short-term training and also is giving strong promotion to its equipping center module, "Training Sunday School Workers in Evangelism."

The BSSB church training and Sunday school departments, along with the Home Mission Board's evangelism section, are cooperating on a five-year emphasis from 1985-90 to train 1 million Sunday school workers in evangelism.

"Fifty percent of U.S. citizens have not expressed a belief in God and are not attending anyone's church," said Wert Campbell, of the church training department.

Meanwhile, the 1985 Friend of Church Training Award was presented to retired California church training director Val Prince. Prince was church training director in California from 1963-81 when he retired. Immediately after retiring, he began working as a MasterLife workshop leader and to date has co-led 75 workshops involving 4,000 participants.

He has also helped train 34 state leaders and seven overseas leaders.

—30—

House-Approved Tax Plan Could
Affect Ministers, Churches

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
12/18/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—The House of Representatives has passed a proposed tax reform plan which would reinstate clergy housing benefits but also would strip church pension groups of their federal tax-exempt status.

In passing the Tax Reform Act of 1985 by voice vote Dec. 17, House members ended a weeklong struggle between Republican congressmen and President Reagan. Republican members led an effort which kept the tax reform measure from reaching the House floor on the originally scheduled date. Reagan's lobbying efforts, however, convinced many of his maverick party members to bring the measure to the floor for debate and eventual passage.

—more—

Should the bill, in its present form, be passed by the Senate and signed into law by the president, ministers would regain the ability to claim mortgage interest and real estate tax deductions as well as tax-exempt housing allowances.

Under current tax law, only ministers who occupied their residence or had a contract to purchase one by Jan. 1, 1983, are eligible to declare mortgage interest and property tax deductions in addition to tax-exempt housing allowances. That eligibility is scheduled to extend only through tax year 1986.

The new measure would make revocation of current law retroactive, meaning ministers unable to claim mortgage interest and property tax deductions for tax years 1983 and 1984 would be able to file amended returns.

Another section of the Tax Reform Act would repeal tax exemption for any nonprofit organization if a "substantial part of its activities consists of providing commercial-type insurance," explaining such insurance "shall be treated as an unrelated trade or business."

Specifically exempted from the definition of "commercial-type insurance" is property or casualty insurance provided by churches or conventions or associations of church. But the measure specifies further that "annuity contracts shall be treated as providing insurance."

In essence, the bill's language would strip the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and other church pension groups of their federal tax-exempt status.

Although the legislation technically would take effect Jan. 1, 1986, the House passed a non-binding resolution which would delay many of the changes for a year.

Other provisions of the bill which would affect churches and church employees include:

--allowing churches which elected to claim exemptions from paying Social Security taxes for their non-ministerial employees to revoke that election.

--penalizing a participant who designates a portion of his salary as a "catch up" device for years in which he was able to put little or nothing into a retirement plan. This provision would forbid participants in a regular retirement plan from investing also in Individual Retirement Accounts.

--reducing contribution limits for amounts which can be contributed to denominational retirement plans.

--imposing penalties on distributions--or funds withdrawn--from retirement plans before age 59 1/2, other than for death, disability or "life-based" annuity payments.

--imposing new minimum distribution rules and a 50 percent tax on those retirement funds not withdrawn at the time of eligibility.

According to informed Senate sources, the tax reform measure will not reach the Senate Finance Committee until at least late January and action by the full Senate will not be taken before mid-1986.

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION