



BAPTIST PRESS

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Moderate Gains, Losses
Reported For SBC In 1985

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A mixture of small gains and losses characterizes the final report for 1985 statistics tracking the ministry efforts of Southern Baptists.

The most impressive gain for the year was recorded by the largest program, Sunday school, which increased by 1.3 percent, or 103,459 members, over last year, reaching a record total just short of eight million.

Overall, the statistics reveal results in Southern Baptist Convention programs close to projections which were released in December, with all areas reporting totals higher than anticipated.

The loss which has raised the most concern is baptisms, which decreased by 5.6 percent, or 20,957, in 1985, to a total of 351,071. Baptisms were projected to decline by 6.9 percent or 25,670.

The baptism total reflects that in 1985 it took 41.3 Southern Baptist church members to win one person to Christ. That baptism ratio has been worsening for the past several years. In 1955, when the membership of the denomination was 8.5 million, the ratio was one baptism to every 20.3 members. As late as 1975 the ratio was one to 30.2.

This decline comes at a time when church staffs are bigger than in the past, more students are enrolled in seminaries than ever before and there are more evangelism workers throughout the convention.

Church membership recorded a gain in 1985 of 1.0 percent, or 136,746, to reach 14,486,403. Membership was projected to increase by 0.7 percent, or approximately 100,000.

Of the 14.5 million members reported in Southern Baptist churches, 4.2 million are reported as non-resident members, which leaves resident membership at about 10.2 million.

The number of churches in the convention increased by 239 in 1985, to a total of 36,979. The number of churches has increased by about the same number for each of the past several years.

Church programs which experienced losses this year are church training and Woman's Missionary Union.

The church training enrollment decrease of 0.2 percent, or 3,869 members brings the new enrollment to 1,969,038 and is better than the projected 1.1 percent decline. This is the second consecutive loss for church training, but it follows four straight years of increases.

Enrollment in WMU decreased by 0.4 percent, or 4,390 members to a new total of 1,165,240. This program was projected to decrease by 0.5 percent.

The program of church music recorded its 20th consecutive gain, with an increase of 0.6 percent, or 10,353 participants, bringing enrollment to 1,677,738. The projected gain was the same as the actual increase.

The increase in Brotherhood enrollment was 0.9 percent, or 5,357 members, rising to 573,740. Brotherhood was projected to increase by 0.4 percent.

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The 1.3 percent increase for Sunday school was more than the projected 1.0 percent gain and was the fourth consecutive record high for the denomination's Bible study program.

Giving in the denomination continued to increase at a pace ahead of inflation.

Total receipts in Southern Baptist churches increased in 1985 by 6.0 percent, or more than \$220 million, to \$3.89 billion. The projected increase was 5.7 percent.

Mission expenditures for the year increased by 7.5 percent, or \$42.6 million, to almost \$611 million. A gain of 6.7 percent was projected.

Information in the annual statistical report for Southern Baptists is compiled by the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. The information is taken from Uniform Church Letters mailed by approximately 36,000 churches to the research services department.

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Summary of the 1985 Southern Baptist Convention Statistics:

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>Gain or Loss</u>	<u>Percent Gain or Loss</u>
Churches	36,979	36,740	239	0.7
Baptisms	351,071	372,028	-20,957	-5.6
Total Membership	14,486,403	14,349,657	136,746	1.0
Sunday School Ongoing Enrollment	7,960,796	7,857,337	103,459	1.3
Church Training Enrollment	1,969,038	1,972,907	-3,869	-0.2
Ongoing Music Ministry Enrollment	1,677,738	1,667,385	10,353	0.6
Woman's Missionary Union Ongoing Enrollment	1,165,240	1,169,630	-4,390	-0.4
Brotherhood Ongoing Enrollment	573,740	568,383	5,357	0.9
Total Mission Expenditures	\$ 610,668,080	\$ 568,059,173	\$ 42,608,907	7.5
Total Receipts	\$ 3,886,048,305	\$ 3,665,735,085	\$ 220,313,220	6.0

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Southern Baptist Workers Safe
After Haitian Dictator Flees

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2/10/86

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP)--In the wake of Haitian dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier's fall from power, Southern Baptist missionaries Jack and Doris Hancox were following U.S. embassy advice by staying at home.

"The mood is still tense, but there's an awful lot of celebration," Hancox said in a telephone interview after Duvalier flew to France in the early morning hours of Feb. 7.

Also safe are Southern Baptist volunteers Dan and Freddie Peters and their two teen-age daughters. They have tickets for a flight to the United States Feb. 11.

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All schools, including about 140 operated by churches in the Baptist Convention of Haiti, were ordered closed by Duvalier Jan. 6. Hancox hopes the schools will reopen, but no specific date has been set by the new six-man council ruling the nation.

Hancox worked in late January to distribute food to 60 schools where nutrition programs are operated with Southern Baptist relief funds.

"A lot of the food was looted," he said. "But we don't have any tabulation. I have only second- and third-hand reports."

He said enough food is on order to carry the nutrition programs through the remainder of the school year.

"There has been enormous frustration that the schools were shut down," and it probably fueled the revolt, Hancox said. "Even the poorest peasant prides himself that his kid can go to the Baptist or Methodist school and learn to read and write and have a better chance than he did."

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Southern Baptist Performs
At National Prayer Breakfast

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
2/10/86

WASHINGTON (BP)--When Mary Beth Kissee attended the National Prayer Breakfast in 1983, she never dreamed three years later she would be the featured soloist at the event.

Kissee, a native of Miami, Okla., now lives in Fort Worth, Texas, where she completed a master of divinity degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary last May. She is a member of Fort Worth's Hope Baptist Church.

The main goal she set for her participation on the breakfast's program was to facilitate worship rather than just to perform, said Kissee, who described the opportunity as "beyond my wildest dreams."

"I have been praying, 'God, what if your presence came into that room of national leaders and caused a change for our country?'" Kissee said. "If people could just get a glimpse of God, they would fall in love with him."

"Our impression of God comes with so many trappings that often our idea of God is too small. Sometimes true glimpses of God can come through chances like this."

Kissee's invitation to sing at the national gathering came as a result of her performance several years ago at a prayer breakfast in Seminole, Okla. Among those attending the Seminole event was U.S. Rep. Wes Watkins, D-Okla. When Watkins rotated onto the National Prayer Breakfast committee this year, he suggested Kissee as the featured soloist.

Kissee described other such "chains of events" that she said have confirmed the direction God would have her life go.

"When I graduated from OBU," said Kissee, who is a 1979 Oklahoma Baptist University graduate, "I had been singing for quite a while. Although I wasn't sure what I would do as a career, I went on a hunch that it might be in music."

"I saw a lot of Christian artists who didn't have theological training but were still expected to be ministers. I felt the need to have a background that would enable me to be looked upon as a minister as well as an artist. I didn't want to be just an entertainer."

While studying at Southwestern Seminary, Kissee was active in college and youth work as well as music. When she completed her seminary degree last spring, she had several job opportunities, including a Baptist Student Union position and a secular recording offer.

"I had to decide at that point between the good and the best," she recalled. "I had to decide what God was really calling me to do."

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Following six months in what she described as "turmoil," Kissee said she came to the conclusion that God was leading her to attempt a career in the Christian music field.

Kissee already has recorded one album and is in the process of recording a second. She also continues to book concerts. Although to date most of her of concerts have been in the Oklahoma-Texas region, she has made a number of appearances in California.

"I want to sing where I see people--whether in meetings, crusades or churches--on the cutting edge of Christianity," Kissee said. "I want to see a real spiritual awakening take place in our land."

A difficult aspect of the Christian music field, Kissee said, is the necessity of combining ministry and business. The high financial cost of producing albums requires a return on the investments, she explained, adding that to sell albums an artist must do live concerts.

"What I've come to realize is that singing is my career, but my ministry won't stop if my career does," Kissee concluded. "Singing is not my ministry, although that ministry does occur somewhat through my singing."

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Religious Broadcasters Hear
Conflicting Church-State Views

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--People who disagree on political or religious issues should not be considered less American than their opponents, former U.S. Congressman John Buchanan said in a debate during the National Religious Broadcasters annual convention.

Buchanan was countered by television evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, who insisted the "true American way is the true Christian way."

"Imposing someone's view on everyone does not result in revival," said Buchanan, an ordained Southern Baptist minister who represented Alabama in Congress from 1965 to 1980. Buchanan and Swaggart debated Feb. 4.

Buchanan said Christians in the United States should "thank God" their religious liberties are protected by the First Amendment. "Our God does not impose himself on us, and neither should our government," he insisted.

Recalling the lack of religious liberty during the country's early days, Buchanan warned, "Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell should remember that Virginia Baptist ministers were beaten and run out of town, while Anglican ministers were paid out of government treasuries."

Buchanan added his advocacy of church-state separation does not mean he believes Christians should not be involved in government and politics.

"We have not only the opportunity, but the responsibility to bring faith into political life," he said. "Yes, let us be involved, but let us respect a fact of life: We Christians have always disagreed."

Buchanan, who is now chairman of People for the American Way--an organization often criticized by conservative religious-political groups-- also argued that the idea of church-state separation was not born out of secular humanism or atheism. He added, in reference to Swaggart, "Just because we disagree doesn't mean he's on God's side and I'm on Satan's side."

Swaggart countered, however, that the argument is not separation of church and state, but separation of God and state.

"When they legislated God out of the country, they legislated morality out," said Swaggart, who blamed "secular humanists" for destroying traditional American values.

"The reason we have freedom in this country is because of the Bible," Swaggart continued. "During the past 40 to 50 years, secular humanists have encroached upon these freedoms, while Christianity sat back and did little."

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Swaggart, who is president of Jimmy Swaggart Ministries in Baton Rouge, La., charged secular humanists with taking over the country's media, entertainment, politics, public schools and most churches, adding, "They came within a hair's breadth of destroying this nation."

Also aiming criticism at Buchanan's People for the American Way, Swaggart said the organization in its title uses "the same play on words the Communists use." He then added the "true American way is the true Christian way."

Buchanan's organization also received mention during another keynote address at the NRB convention.

While recalling the hard times and limited resources shared by himself and other conservative Christian broadcasters during their building years, Pat Robertson, Christian Broadcasting Network president, joked, "We didn't have any organizations like People for the American Way to warn how dangerous we were."

Robertson said while religious broadcasting was growing, the nation also was going through growth--but he characterized the nation's growth as "not good."

He recalled not getting "too excited" over a Supreme Court decision in the 1960s concerning public school prayer because "I was a Southern Baptist." He did not elaborate on the meaning of his statement.

During a U.S. Senate hearing last summer, Robertson also identified himself as a Southern Baptist. Baptist Press, however, learned that although Robertson is a member of Freemason Street Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., he participates minimally in the congregation's life. The church is affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Robertson continued to outline events he said led to "indecision, lack of resolve and moral decay" in the country.

He credited the political involvement of concerned evangelicals with a turnabout in the nation. "We are seeing the greatest spiritual revival in the history of the world," he said.

Other major sessions during the NRB convention featured addresses by evangelist Billy Graham and White House Communications Director Patrick Buchanan. More than 2,000 registrants also heard a debate between evangelist Jerry Falwell and Rabbi Joshua Haberman on "The State of Israel in the Christian/Jewish Perspective."

A breakfast honoring the state of Israel was held in conjunction with the NRB convention. Attendance at the breakfast, which was sponsored by Southern Baptist layman Edward McAteer, resulted in only 125 participants attending a plenary NRB session that featured civil rights activist Jesse Jackson.

NRB is an association of nearly 1,200 organizations engaged in producing religious programming for radio and television and operating religious radio and television stations.

