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May 19, 1986

86-75

Giving Triples Inflation Rate

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists' year-to-date increases in contributions to their Cooperative Program of mission and ministry support have stretched to three times the U.S. inflation rate, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the convention's Executive Committee.

"The convention's seven-month Cooperative Program increase is 7.13 percent, compared to a Consumer Price Index of 2.3 percent," Bennett said. "The Cooperative Program is growing more than three times as fast as inflation."

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' unified giving plan that supports 19 agencies and institutions which conduct mission, education and ministry activities worldwide. The Cooperative Program fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

Through the end of April, 1985-86 Cooperative Program contributions totaled \$72,735,276, an increase of \$4,842,495 over the same period the previous year, Bennett reported. April contributions were \$9,954,113, an increase of \$164,289 over April of 1985.

Although the April increase—1.68 percent—did not outstrip inflation, the important figure is the year-to-date total, noted Tim Hedquist, the Executive Committee's vice president for business and finance.

"It can be very difficult to compare a particular month to the same month a year before," Hedquist explained. "The number of Sundays may vary, and bad weather over a significant portion of the country can make a difference in a single month's total."

"What is important seven months into the fiscal year is the year-to-date total. When we are this far ahead of inflation, that's good news."

More good news is found in reports of Southern Baptists' contributions to their mission offerings, Bennett added. "The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions is 3.75 percent over the same period a year ago," he said. "And the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions is up 14.28 percent."

"So while the Cooperative Program is very stable, the specific offerings for foreign and home missions are up."

Those gains have been made in the face of financial crises—particularly in the oil and farming industries—across significant portions of the country, Hedquist pointed out. "The faithfulness of people is evident even when times are tough," he said. "The Cooperative Program is a reflection of their gifts to their churches."

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Working Class Abandoned,
Redford Says Of Baptists

By Ken Camp

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES** Baptist Press
Historical Commission, 5/19/86
Nashville, Tennessee

DALLAS (BP)—Southern Baptists and other mainline denominations have "abandoned the working class," Jack Redford, former director of church extension at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said during a Texas Baptist Church Extension/Church Administration Conference May 12-13 at Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin.

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"We've written off millions of people simply because we have 'matured' in our worship styles and decors," said Redford, who is returning to Texas to be an associational director of missions. He noted the poor and working class no longer feel comfortable in what was begun as a "poor folks denomination."

He said Southern Baptists need to begin new churches and missions to meet the needs of low socio-economic groups, highlighting that need as he pointed to things he believes must break the heart of Jesus.

"He must be heartbroken at the sight of plateaued churches that don't want to grow," Redford said. While noting existing churches should be renewed, he said the emphasis should be upon starting new work.

"Lost people don't wait on our long-range plans while we fix churches' 'want to's,' so we need to start new churches," he said.

Though an urgent need exists for church planters, seminary students and many graduates feel they must seek secular employment because there are more preachers than there are existing churches. The need for mission pastors must somehow be communicated to them, Redford said.

"We have a preacher supply that amazes all of Christendom," he said, remarking Southern Baptist seminaries graduate a surplus of 1,500 preachers annually.

Redford said the key to Southern Baptist success in church extension is a renewed awareness of the "lostness" of mankind without Jesus Christ.

"We get so busy doing our ministerial work that we forget people are lost," he said. "The supreme motivation for church planting is the knowledge that people are lost."

In order to penetrate the world with the Good News of Jesus, Steve Stroope, pastor of Dalrock Baptist Church in Rowlett, Texas, said Southern Baptists must tear down barriers of culture, comfort and complacency.

"We need to start new churches to break down some barriers," he said. "When a new church is started, it has one purpose—to reach out and bring people to Jesus Christ."

Stroope noted in a new mission every member realizes the importance of his role in the congregation, an awareness that sometimes is absent in established churches where only those with certain talents feel needed.

"We have bottlenecked the gospel. We've said to the majority of people that they cannot participate," he said. "While we emphasize the stars in the pulpit, the gospel emphasizes the saints in the trenches."

Stroope challenged conference participants to expand their vision in light of the world's non-Christians.

"God's vision for us is always greater than our vision for ourselves," he said. "We should never stop reaching out—reaching across barriers—as long as there is one lost person out there."

William M. Pinson Jr., executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, noted the historical relationship between new church starts and the number of people reached for Christ.

Pinson stressed the two-fold strategy of the Mission Texas program centers around churches—starting new churches and strengthening existing churches. Mission Texas is the five-year emphasis on spiritual awakening, developing believers, strengthening missions and reaching people through 2,000 new churches and missions.

Pinson particularly noted the effectiveness of new churches in reaching the unchurched, citing evidence it takes 25 Texas Baptists in an established church to reach one non-Christian for Jesus Christ but only seven in a new church or mission.

CORRECTION: In May 15 (BP) story entitled, "ACTS Recognizes Work Of Affiliates," a wrong name was given in the 6th graf. That graf should read:

As an example of what Allen meant, 77-member Sublette Baptist Church of Sublette, Kan., was honored with the Best Local Promotion Award. The church's pastor, Jerry Smith, told the 1,000-plus audience, "ACTS gives a small church like ours an opportunity for a big ministry."

Also, please replace final graf with the following:

ACTS now is available to 4 million households via 225 cable systems and nine broadcast affiliates.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Active Deaf Ministry
Creates Involved Members

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
5/19/86

RENTON, Wash. (BP)—"There is no such thing as spectator Christians, and that's true for deaf Christians as well," says Fred DeBerry, minister to the deaf at Calvary Baptist Church in Renton, Wash.

Providing interpretation of regular services is not an adequate ministry. A deaf ministry must involve deaf persons in active church membership, DeBerry insists.

He directs a deaf ministry which includes worship services, Sunday school and Wednesday night Bible study, with deaf persons providing leadership.

"Of course deaf persons can have leadership roles," he emphasizes. Calvary Baptist Church has three deaf deacons who work specifically with the deaf ministry. The eight teachers in the deaf Sunday school classes are deaf themselves.

"Deaf services are run totally by the deaf. It's not something we do for them—they do it for themselves," DeBerry explains.

The deaf ministries include separate services from the regular church services to accommodate what DeBerry identifies as a deaf culture. "To place them in the regular service and provide an interpreter would force them to be spectators. Deaf members feel an ownership for the church and their ministry," DeBerry says.

One deaf member bought a van to give to the church because several deaf members needed a way to get to church. A new church addition included a chapel for use by deaf members, but the church did not have funds to furnish it immediately. The deaf congregation bought furniture without cutting regular tithes and offerings.

"They have the attitude that if they don't do things for themselves, things won't get done," DeBerry explains.

The deaf ministry at Calvary began more than 15 years ago with Irene Stark, a church member, interpreting services for her father. "Church members got ambitious evangelistically. They went out visiting deaf people," DeBerry says.

That year the church baptized 26 deaf adults. Stark soon began encouraging the church to hire a pastor for the deaf. DeBerry has been full-time minister to the deaf at Calvary for eight years.

About 60 deaf persons are involved actively in church. DeBerry believes the church, with an average worship attendance of 250, may be one of the smallest Southern Baptist churches with a full-time deaf minister.

While worship services and Bible study are primary concerns, social functions also are important for the deaf congregation.

"We probably put more emphasis on that. Deaf people are lonely, and social functions can be our most powerful outreach," he said.

Deaf persons who have never been in a church before have started attending fellowships and home Bible studies, he explains.

"When they become comfortable with that, they start coming to church."

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

Inner City Congregation
Opens Doors To Homeless

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
5/19/86

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—On a wintry Sunday morning more than five years ago, Southern Baptist pastor Mike Elliott reluctantly invited a group of freezing, homeless men to come in for a cup of coffee.

His church has been opening its doors and its heart to the homeless ever since.

Elliott, a Christian social ministries home missionary and pastor of Jefferson Street Baptist Chapel in inner-city Louisville, Ky., had noticed four or five men huddled near the chapel's entrance trying to shield themselves from the icy wind.

The men had nowhere to go. The nearby mission where they had spent the night routinely emptied its residents at 6 a.m. Churches were locked, security guards kept them out of hospital waiting rooms and bus station, and none of the stores were open yet.

Burdened by what he learned, Elliott decided to do something about the problem.

Now, every Sunday morning a group of volunteers from local Southern Baptist churches meets in the basement kitchen to cook breakfast for 50 to 100 homeless people who find their way to the chapel.

Unused space has been converted into small bedrooms for the homeless. Showers have been installed for street people who need a place to clean up. Storage space is provided so people can leave their belongings in a safe place rather than carry them all day. In addition to the services of a clothes closet, street people can get a change of clothes and personal care items such as razors and toothbrushes.

A washing machine and dryer have been installed. Street people, Elliott explains, "don't have money to wash their clothes at a laundromat. They usually pick up clothing, wear it until it wears out and then throw it away."

Reflecting a nationwide trend, the number of persons seeking shelter at Jeff Street has escalated each year. They match the basic profile of the nation's homeless:

--Today's homeless population is younger and more diverse in age, education, race.

--The ranks of the homeless have swelled in recent years with huge numbers of released mental patients who now make up one-third to one-half of the total, estimated by experts to be anywhere from 300,000 to 2 million.

--The homeless population now includes more single women, more women with children and more complete families. It includes immigrants, illegal aliens, blacks, Hispanics and other minorities. It also includes a growing number of working men and women who have been forced on the road in search of a job.

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Many of these uprooted persons, particularly the young, are more than restless—they are angry. "They have no meaningful employment, few if any intimate relationships and little hope for change in their lives," says Elliott.

Jeff Street's response to the homeless reflects the holistic approach advocated by its 29-year-old pastor.

When Elliott came six years ago, Jeff Street had a few programs and a dwindling congregation. Now, 130 to 150 persons attend worship. During the week, every square inch of space is put to use as the chapel buzzes with activities—nutrition programs, missions education for area children, ceramics and other crafts for senior adults, a "Breakaway" program for men from the Community Treatment Center, Bible studies for single mothers, tutoring, recreation.

Each week Jeff Street responds to crisis calls for emergency food and clothing and financial assistance for medicine, utilities or overdue rent. Creating order out of apparent chaos, Secretary Janice Money patches together assistance for needy people through church benevolence funds, social service agencies, missions and other groups.

"What do you do with a mother of four with a part-time job and no car who has had all her money and \$400 in food stamps stolen?" she illustrates.

As Jeff Street's staff "saw what was happening to people," it became obvious the church had to move "beyond Band-Aids" to advocacy and social action, Elliott says.

He served on a mayor's task force on the homeless which studied the extent of the problem and made a series of recommendations to the mayor. With his encouragement, Jeff Street has provided office space and support for Project Independence, an effort to keep poor people who can't afford to pay their utility bills from having services cut off unilaterally.

Elliott also has been working to get a Habitat for Humanity housing project going, hoping to utilize a glut of abandoned housing in Louisville to build homes for the poor.

Whatever the project, "the key is relationships," Elliott says. Dignity is appreciated as a precious commodity. Rewards are counted not in buildings or budgets but in the personal currency of individual lives.

Like Ed. After years of working for a meat truck driver, retirement meant living on the streets. Ed had always been paid in cash. Retirement income was a forgotten luxury.

"One day we found him out on the sidewalk, drunk and crying," Money recalls. "He kept saying, 'I just ain't got nothing to do, nothing to do.' So we gave him something to do."

Despite frail health, arthritis and two hip replacements, Ed is a regular at the chapel, helping with everything from firing the kiln for the ceramics class to folding Sunday bulletins. After a hip operation, the chapel staff presented him a tee shirt with a message typical of Jeff Street's caring spirit: "Made by God. Replacement Parts by Dupont."

Or Chester. A promising career as a licensed practical nurse was destroyed by 45 years of alcoholism. Elliott and Jeff Street, however, convinced Chester life was not over. Now a deacon and a regular helper at the chapel, Chester is a source of encouragement to other alcoholics.

Or Randy. One of Chester's former drinking buddies, Randy now helps coordinate weekday ministries to the homeless, including supervision of the clothes closet.

Through persons such as these, Elliott's faith is kept alive and honest.

"I'm convinced that the road to the inner city is a two-way street: You give and you receive," he says. "The poor and the homeless are not just some people we're trying to help. They are a way by which we are blessed. They keep the gospel tangible for us. They help us. Just like Jesus said."



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