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86-101

Cooperative Program Headed
Toward 97 Percent Of Total

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists' national Cooperative Program budget should reach almost 97 percent of its goal if trends established during the first nine months of 1985-86 continue.

The Cooperative Program is the Southern Baptist Convention's unified system of financing SBC mission, education and ministry programs worldwide. The program's funds are sent by local churches to state Baptist conventions. The state conventions retain about two-thirds of the funds for their own ministries and pass along the rest to the SBC Executive Committee, which disburses the funds to about 20 agencies and institutions.

The 1985-86 Cooperative Program national allocation budget is \$130 million. Through June, the ninth month of the fiscal year, \$94.3 million had been contributed from churches through 37 Baptist state conventions. If the monthly average of almost \$10.5 million holds for the July-September quarter, the final tally should be about \$125.8 million.

The current year's budget was boosted by receipts of \$10,106,146 in June, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the Executive Committee. Although only 1.16 percent ahead of receipts for the same period in 1985, the monthly total made this June the first \$10 million June in the 61-year history of the Cooperative Program.

"If the present trend continues, a prediction of \$126 million for the 1985-86 Cooperative Program seems reasonable," said Tim Hedquist, Executive Committee vice president for business and finance.

He noted June receipts traditionally are unpredictable, but given the trajectory of the Cooperative Program thus far this year, \$126 million "still looks pretty good." If the \$130 million goal is reached, Southern Baptists must contribute an average of \$11,885,783 per month for the next three months—an amount which would be the program's second-highest monthly total.

The \$94.3 million in receipts for the first three quarters of the current fiscal year has put the Cooperative Program 7.04 percent ahead of its 1984-85 pace and growing about twice the U.S. rate of inflation. Expected receipts for the year should allow dependent SBC agencies to meet the first phase of their operating budgets and allow convention-selected entities to receive capital funds.

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Falling Plane Prompts
Urgent Evangelism

By Laura Lee Stewart

Baptist Press
7/10/86

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)—"I'm going to die, I'm going to die!" the woman next to Ralph Bethea cried out as the plane tilted sharply and the ground loomed closer.

One engine was out, and the other was sputtering.

The plane was about 15 minutes outside of Nairobi, Kenya, on the way to Mombasa, where Bethea, of Memphis, Tenn., works as a Southern Baptist missionary. He had boarded the two-engine turboprop after waiting with other passengers for an hour because of a delay caused by electrical problems.

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During the delay he had begun talking with a group of German tourists in the departure lounge. One man sported a kayak insignia on his gear. The water sport of kayaking also interests Bethea, and he soon struck up a conversation.

The man told Bethea he was an industrialist and asked the missionary what he did for a living. "I'm getting up a party for the King," Bethea replied. "Oh, what king do you work for?" the man wanted to know. Bethea's answer, "The King of kings."

"Oh, you're one of those religious people."

"Yes," Bethea said. "I'm a missionary for Southern Baptists."

"Well, my wife sometimes gets religious, but I don't have time for that," the man replied.

Once on the plane, the man directed a few barbs about having a beer at the missionary. Unruffled, Bethea declined the offer with his usual smile.

Then came the engine trouble. The cry of the man's wife revealed her terror of impending death. "It's an emergency," the stewardess announced. The industrialist, sitting across the aisle from Bethea, called out desperately: "Missionary, tell me how to get saved."

"I don't know if we have time or not," Bethea answered, remembering the man's earlier comment.

"You pray for time!" the man said. Bethea did just that. He asked the Lord for time to tell this man how to be saved.

About that time the plane began to level out, turn around and head back for emergency landing in Nairobi. The industrialist jumped over his wife and grabbed Bethea's arm. "Now, you tell me how to be saved," he said.

Some of the other Germans began to murmur, but the man told them to be quiet, "He's going to tell us how to be saved."

The airplane rumbled along unsteadily while Bethea explained simply how to receive Christ. The man knelt in the aisle and asked Jesus to come into his life.

In a few minutes the passengers were safely back in the departure lounge. As the man began to talk in German, Bethea realized he was telling the others about the gospel. Before long 18 German tourists prayed to receive salvation through Jesus Christ.

Bethea handed out 10 New Testaments to those in the group who said they had none. When the call came to board the plane again, some other tourists said, "No, I won't get back on that plane. I'm going to catch a train."

But those who had prayed to receive Christ continued their journey in the air. Said the industrialist, "If that missionary is going, I'm going, too."

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(Stewart is Southern Baptist missionary press representative in Kenya.)

College Professor Compares
Leadership And Stewardship

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
7/10/86

Editor's Note: Following is the second of a four-part series on leadership which developed from the Southern Baptist Education Commission's recent National Congress on Leadership.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The biblical model of the Christian steward is one of the most useful perspectives from which to construct a leadership model, a Southern Baptist college religion professor claimed.

Dan McGee, professor of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, noted stewardship and leadership have four common traits.

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McGee, who spoke on "The Ethics of Leadership" at a seminar during the National Congress on Leadership sponsored by the Southern Baptist Education Commission, said the Christian steward "has a sense of the transcendent" in biblical stories.

This individual, he said, recognizes "that all he has is from a source beyond himself" and he is dependent upon that source for the abilities or power he might have.

"A leader who has this sense of the transcendent will communicate to all about him there is a transcendent reality beyond himself and beyond the organization," he said, adding, such a sense of transcendence cuts at the root of the most pernicious of all sins--idolatry.

A good Christian steward also is marked by a sense of responsibility, McGee observed. "When this sense marks a leader, he understands that leadership is first of all a task and not primarily a privilege."

Such a leader, he said, is driven to achieve and understands the role of a leader is marked primarily by responsibilities to be fulfilled rather than rights to be acquired.

The third common characteristic of a good steward and a good leader is a sense of community, McGee said, explaining, "The opportunity of leadership is not an occasion to use others, but rather to serve others." A leader must not demand loyalty primarily to himself but rather to the total community and its common task, he added.

The final common characteristic of stewardship and leadership, McGee noted, is a sense of gratitude, because a good steward is not motivated by fear or greed but by gratitude toward God.

A leader who understands his leadership opportunities come from God is "elevated by a freeing sense of thanksgiving," McGee said. "This leader is not driven by a sense that he must achieve to be important. Rather, he is elevated by a sense of importance that is freely given to him."

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Oklahomans Blindfolded, Beaten
During Mission Trip To Zambia

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
7/10/86

SAND SPRINGS, Okla. (BP)—Blindfolded and beaten in Zambia, two Oklahoma Baptists learned the difference between easy faith and that tested by fire.

Don Stivers and Eddie Zuniga, two of eight members of Angus Acres Baptist Church in Sand Springs, Okla., who were on a leadership training mission to Zambia in June, were taking an evening stroll with a small group of Zambian church members when several men on bicycles stopped them for questioning.

The bicyclists' spokesman was in military uniform. Dismissing their passports as forgeries, he refused to believe the Americans were anything other than South African paratroopers sent to Zambia to destroy bridges and communications.

Only the day before, a South African confessed to planning just such a task, but he relented and informed Zambian officials where explosives were placed, according to information learned after the incident.

The soldiers took the shirts from several Central Baptist Church youths who were walking with Stivers and Zuniga. They used the shirts to blindfold the Americans, threw them into a commandeered truck and drove to military barracks.

On the way, the men punched and kicked Stivers, bruising his face. They kicked Zuniga in the side. All the while they told the pair they would die that night.

"The longer it went, the more serious I realized it was getting," said Zuniga. "I began to wonder if I'd come 12,000 miles to die."

Zuniga's legs bore indentations from the tight boot laces he wears in a Sand Springs steel mill. The soldiers pointed to those as proof he was a paratrooper.

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Soldiers separated the two and intimidated them individually. Neither could comprehend what was happening, but both prayed fervently.

"I prayed for someone to intervene that would bring sanity to the situation," said Stivers, on his first overseas mission trip.

When Stivers and Zuniga were hauled away, the youth they were walking with raced to the church. Women there told them to contact the Catholic priest who was well known in the area, although he had not been sympathetic with Baptist evangelism.

He drove to the barracks and convinced the soldiers the Americans were part of an evangelistic team he was familiar with and for which he could vouch. The men then loaded Stivers and Zuniga in another truck and took them to the police station. There the priest continued to plead their case, a truckload of women from the church pleaded for them and Southern Baptist missionary John Sapp, who coordinated their trip, arrived to plead for them.

They finally were released, about two and a half hours after their ordeal began. But they were told a council would convene the next day to consider whether to allow them to remain in the country.

Missionary Sapp figured the entire effort, for which he had labored two years to bring about, would be dashed. But at the council meeting the presence of a governor's representative who was fully aware of the American's purpose resolved their stay.

Then the team members, considering the trauma Stivers and Zuniga had endured, voted on whether to continue the mission or just return home.

Although fear had gripped them all, Stivers said he had no doubt the mission would continue and he and the others would go to their field assignments the following day. Zuniga was afraid Sapp was going to end it.

"I actually felt the Lord's presence and his peace," said Stivers, "not to mention what it's done for my faith. This has given me more courage. (The apostle) Peter talked of faith being purified through a refiner's fire. I feel like I've gone through a little bit of the fire, and it's made me a stronger person of me."

With the trauma behind them, the team proceeded in pairs into the bush country where evangelistic teams from the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists had preached the year before. The Angus Acres teams were to develop leadership for new churches resulting from the previous year's efforts. They also held evangelistic services at night.

Churches were packed and people responded to the altar calls until there was no more room at the front of the church. "God blessed the effort tremendously," said team member Randy Shuler. "The results made the trip well worth it."

Both Stivers and Zuniga are ready to return to Zambia. They have a stake in the work now. "There's more important things to do in life than worry about whether you're going to get beat up or not," Stiver said. "Nowhere in the Bible does it say there won't be opposition. But it does say you will win."

All team members raised their own support of about \$2,000 each. Last year 36 people from Angus Acres went on overseas missions, and 23 went in 1984.

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Buddhist Monks Ask
For Bible Study

By Maxine Stewart

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7/10/86

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)—After teaching a class of Buddhist monks about Jesus, Southern Baptist missionary Jack Martin knows even the most unlikely people can become open to the gospel of Christ.

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"This has shown me monks can be open to the gospel," says Martin, who directs work at the Baptist Student Center in Bangkok, Thailand. "It has changed my attitude that they are unreachable."

Martin, of St. Louis, started out with 20 students who asked him to teach English and the Christian religion in their Buddhist temple. By the time he left Thailand for a furlough in the United States, he was meeting in his home with five monks who wanted to study only the Bible and specifically the ministry of Jesus.

"They were very interested about Jesus dying on the cross," recalls Martin. "They wanted to know: Why did he die on the cross? They were very interested when I taught about Jesus healing. They seemed very interested when, on several occasions, I shared with them about what God means to me."

At one point Martin grew uneasy. He feared he might be teaching too much Bible too fast. To counter this, he began teaching more conversational English. But the monks protested.

"I was amazed that interest in the Bible increased," he said. "At one study they particularly asked that I not teach English, but the Bible, just teach the stories of Jesus. That showed me we must not sell short what God can do through the power of witnessing." From then until his furlough departure, Martin taught as much Bible as he could.

Martin found the monk he believed would be hardest to reach became the most interested. "The (one) who in the beginning seemed the least interested in the Bible turned out to be the one who was the most interested, stayed with me the longest and asked the most probing questions about Christianity," Martin says. "He completely fooled me."

The monks first asked Martin to teach them in English classes at the Baptist Student Center. But since Thai law prohibits monks from studying in schools registered with the government's Ministry of Education, Martin agreed to teach at the temple.

Classes began with about 20 monks aged 24 and up. But the temple was being remodeled, and rooms they were using for teaching were torn down. The class moved to Martin's home. At the time some monks were transferred to other temples, some returned home and others stopped attending the study.

"Had we stayed at the temple we probably would have had a larger class, but I believe we will eventually see fruit from at least some of these five," Martin says. "We had no public professions of faith, but after all, these were Buddhist monks."

Martin is the first Christian any of the monks had ever visited. He gave each of them a Bible and suggested they read the stories he taught—over and over again. "The Word will bear fruit," he promises.

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(Stewart is Southern Baptist missionary press representative in Thailand.)

Large Cities
Outpace SBC

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
7/10/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A mid-decade report of Southern Baptist progress in the 45 largest American population centers shows a slow but definite trend of growth toward larger urban churches.

The growth, detailed in a new research project from the Center for Urban Church Studies at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, also points to significantly higher resident membership growth in northern cities as compared to the South.

The Southern Baptist Convention, long comprised of a majority of churches with a membership of less than 300, is experiencing an increase in the average size of churches because of the growth in the urban areas, reported Kirk Hadaway.

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Hadaway, research director for the Center for Urban Church Studies, said the growth in the North is necessary if the denomination is to reach large cities, because the largest U.S. cities are located outside the South.

Southern cities still rate above northern cities in the survey when net increases in resident membership are compared, because of the large membership base they have.

The only large city to break the top five in net change in membership and percentage change in membership for the past five years was Los Angeles, where 26,212 new members, or 29.4 percent, placed third in net change and fourth in percentage change. The only Southern city to rank in the top 10 in percentage and net increase was San Antonio, Texas. Phoenix, Ariz., and San Francisco join Los Angeles to make three Western cities in the top 10.

Houston ranked first in net change in resident members, with an increase of 28,419, or 12 percent, which was 14th in percentage increase. Dallas, with an increase of 27,588, or 8.7 percent, was second in net gain and 16th in percentage gain.

Hartford, Conn., which ranked number one under percentage increases with 123 percent, was number 30 in net increase with 599. The Boston area ranked number two in percentage gain with a 109 percent increase and 28th in net gain with a growth in resident members of 911.

Growth of the urban population centers is projected to be faster during the current decade than will be experienced overall by Southern Baptist Convention churches.

The number of churches in the 45 largest population centers in the U.S. registered a gain of 7.7 percent from 1970 to 1980, compared to a 4.3 percent gain for the total number of churches in the convention. For 1980-85, churches in urban centers increased by 4.8 percent, compared to 3.2 percent for SBC churches. Projections for the decade predict an increase of 8.8 percent for urban churches and 6.4 percent for all SBC churches.

In resident members, the urban population centers also are projected to outdistance all SBC churches by 14.8 percent to 11.4 percent during the '80s, based on growth for the first half of the decade of 7.3 percent for urban churches over 5.4 percent for all SBC churches.

Additionally, Southern Baptist churches in the top 45 population centers will represent more of the total number of churches in the denomination at the end of the '80s. In 1970, churches in the urban centers represented 18.6 percent of the total, compared to a projected percentage of 19.6 in 1990.

Resident members of churches in the top 45 population centers will grow by almost 1 percent from 1970 to 1990, according to the projection in the new research project. In 1970, the 2.3 million resident members in urban areas represented 27.5 percent of the SBC resident membership. That total is projected to be 28.4 percent for just under 3.1 million resident members in urban areas by 1990.

Resident membership growth in the largest cities in the South was 6.0 percent between 1980 and 1985. This compares to a 13.3 percent gain outside the South. The greatest growth was experienced in the West, with a 21.6 percent increase, and in the Northeast, with a 9.6 percent increase.

Resident membership increased in 37 of the 45 metropolitan areas, and most cities increased by more than 1,000. No western cities declined, while two dropped in the Northeast (Rochester, N.Y., and Pittsburgh). Four of the nine urban areas in the Midwest lost, including Detroit, Cleveland, Minneapolis and Milwaukee. Also losing resident members for the five-year period were Baltimore and St. Louis, which had the largest net loss among the urban population centers.

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(A copy of the research project is being mailed to all state Baptist newspaper editors by BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.)



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