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PGG Starts In 1,000 Churches;
Planners Sight Its Potential

By Marv Knox

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--About 1,000 of the Southern Baptist Convention's 36,979 churches have participated in their denomination's year-old Planned Growth in Giving emphasis. The percentage may be low, but planners say the campaign is on track for realistic success.

Planned Growth in Giving is designed to raise combined contributions given to Southern Baptist churches from \$3 billion to \$20 billion annually by the year 2000. The campaign was approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in 1983 and was launched throughout the convention last fall.

Conducted on the local church level, it calls for increased contributions to churches. It also seeks greater participation by churches in the Cooperative Program, the SBC unified budget which supports missions, ministry and education endeavors worldwide.

"The churches which have used it have responded with a great deal of excitement," said Cecil Ray, national Planned Growth in Giving director. "They have given a very favorable assessment of the program, as have state, denominational and associational leaders."

"We're talking about relative things" in attempting to assess current progress of the program, said A.R. Fagan, president of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission. "Without exception, those churches that have tried it have liked it."

Participating churches have experienced offering increases ranging from 12 to 45 percent, reported Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

However, the 1,000 churches that have participated thus far come from only about 10,000 or 12,000 of the convention's churches that conduct any type of stewardship emphasis, Fagan said, noting these are the churches most likely to participate in the program.

Nationwide, more than 800 people have been trained to conduct seminars for leaders of churches which want to participate in the program. More than 500 of the seminars have been held during the first year.

"We could hope 30,000 churches eventually would participate, but that's unrealistic," Fagan said, noting 3,500 churches might be a realistic expectation. Bennett said he hopes 50 percent of churches which conduct regular stewardship emphases--about 5,000 to 6,000 churches--will have participated by the end of 1988.

"For Planned Growth in Giving ultimately to be successful, we'll have to stay with it over a long period of time, and more of our churches will have to be enlisted," Ray noted. "We'll have to have as part of our long-range plan to enlist those churches which do not normally have a stewardship plan as part of their program."

"The realization of our \$20 billion goal will not be accomplished with only 10 percent of our churches involved, so we'll have to have a higher percentage," he added. "Over the years, I expect we'll have more than 10 percent involved. That's the advantage of it being a 15-year program."

"My strong conviction about Planned Growth in Giving is it is a steady, ongoing program that will endure 15 years and more," agreed Bennett. "Pastors and leaders who learn about it will become involved."

Several factors apparently have kept Planned Growth in Giving participation lower than most of its advocates had hoped, planners indicated. These include:

-- The length of "The Church Event," the actual campaign that is conducted in local churches, has pushed it back on many church calendars.

"Participation thus far has been low because it's a massive effort, a five-week event," explained T.T. Crabtree, pastor of First Baptist Church of Springfield, Mo., and chairman of the National Planned Growth in Giving Task Force. "Many pastors already have a crowded calendar and are not able to block out time."

-- Several state Baptist conventions had similar calendar conflicts and are only just beginning to promote the program in their states. For example, conventions in Missouri, Alabama, New Mexico, Iowa and Ohio are launching their statewide efforts this fall.

-- Some detractors have complained the program takes an anti-tithing attitude.

"This is a biblically sound program," countered Fagan. "It is thoroughly in keeping with Scriptures concerning the use of the tithe as a model."

"It begins where people are and goes beyond the tithe," Bennett pointed out.

Ray added: "The program allows a church to make a strong emphasis on tithing as a base for growth or an all-out emphasis for growth. It gives freedom to the church. Church leaders are able to express their feelings, particularly as they relate to the tithe."

-- Alarm has been expressed that the program has too great of an emphasis on money.

"Spiritual dividends will far exceed the financial benefits," Crabtree insisted. He promised "fantastic growth in joy and happiness" as Baptists "grow in the likeness of God." Ray noted, "The spiritual emphasis is the big payoff."

-- Some critics have said the program is a "denomination-building" program rather than one which supports the local church.

"This is a church-centered program where individuals and families increase their giving to their own church," Bennett contended. "If those churches want to give more to the Cooperative Program, that's their decision."

-- Faithful tithers in some churches have expressed concern about demands upon them in relation to overall giving goals.

"Automatically they think in terms of their having to increase far beyond what they're giving; if there is no spiritual preparation, they can react negatively," Crabtree explained. Actually, tithers are not expected to increase their contributions more than sixfold to raise the \$3 billion total receipts to \$20 billion, he said, noting emphasis also urges non-tithers to increase their giving levels.

On the whole, planners are optimistic about the program's chances for growth.

"Planned Growth in Giving is having a growing acceptance in Baptist churches," Fagan said. "We didn't expect it to go out the first year. The story has to be told, and successes made known."

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News Analysis

Sudden Shift Unlikely
In Rehnquist-Led Court

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
9/5/86

WASHINGTON (BP)--Although President Reagan has achieved one of the primary goals of his administration with the elevation of Supreme Court Justice William H. Rehnquist to chief justice of the United States, the victory likely does not signal a judicial revolution at the nation's highest tribunal, at least not for now.

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Former Chief Justice Warren E. Burger's decision to step down to head up the Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution and the president's choice of Rehnquist as his successor have given Reagan his second chance to fill a vacancy on the high court. The developments also bring the president a step closer to his stated objective of reshaping the court in his own ideological image.

Yet not even Rehnquist's promotion and the addition of the equally conservative Antonin Scalia to take the spot vacated by Burger ensure any significant short-term power shift.

At the same time, the symbolic importance of Rehnquist's elevation should not be minimized. Leaders in the movement known as the New Right were quick to claim the development as a major victory in their vision of a refashioned federal judiciary, a vital component in what they see as the Reagan administration's legacy to the nation. They clearly hope Rehnquist's new position will augment the considerable philosophical influence over the court he already enjoys.

For the short term, however, the basic contours of the court will remain essentially unaltered. On a wide range of constitutional questions, Rehnquist and Scalia are likely to team up with Reagan's other appointment to the court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, as a potent and reliable trio advocating judicial restraint, the philosophy that the federal courts should be reticent to review laws passed by elected legislatures or actions undertaken by executive branch personnel in enforcing laws.

On the other wing—that advocating judicial activism—Justices William J. Brennan Jr. and Thurgood Marshall are likely to be joined more and more frequently by Justice John Paul Stevens. Judicial activism refers to the view that federal courts should be aggressive in reviewing laws and executive actions so as to preserve a balance of power among the three branches of government.

Such a configuration—with three justices at either end of the philosophical spectrum—leaves the other three as the key swing votes. That trio, consisting of Justices Byron R. White, Harry A. Blackmun and Lewis F. Powell Jr., is less predictable and more mobile. These justices will continue to be the objects of special attention from attorneys arguing before the high court in the never-ending objective of putting together a majority of five to obtain a favorable decision.

A case can be made that with the more predictable Rehnquist at the court's helm, along with the addition of Scalia, these three justices will exert more judicial independence than ever before out of a concern to preserve balance. Their role certainly will be more important now than before.

Another possibility, although slimmer, is that Rehnquist himself may turn out to be less predictable as chief justice than he was as a junior member. Frequently a lone dissenter in 8-1 decisions, Rehnquist now finds himself the leader of the court.

Will he be more inclined to seek middle ground in his new role rather than always holding out for a more narrowly defined ideological position? Will his added duties as chief administrator of the entire federal judicial system deprive him of time to engage in the routine give-and-take that goes into the process of arriving at decisions? Or will he choose to concentrate on his role as a molder of opinion on the court rather than as an administrator in the style of his predecessor?

The answers to these and many other questions will go a long way in determining whether the Rehnquist court someday will be seen as one of the watershed tribunals in American judicial history. For now, the balance of the court basically remains unchanged.

That balance could shift dramatically, however, if President Reagan is given another opportunity to fill a vacancy on the high court. If that happens, the judicial revolution longed for by the New Right could break out.

5-Agency Coalition
Marks 'Major Step'

By Karen Benson

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Leaders of five Southern Baptist Convention agencies have vowed to join their resources—money, time and staff—to make missions the "pivotal element" of Southern Baptist life.

Agreeing to "lock step and walk together," the five leaders met Sept. 24 and adopted three strategies that will shape, interpret and implement a churchwide missions education plan.

Joining forces were Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board; Bob Banks, interim president of the Home Mission Board; Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union; James Smith, president of the Brotherhood Commission; and Jim Clark, executive vice president of the Sunday School Board, who was representing Lloyd Elder, Sunday School Board president.

Their action represents the first time the five agencies deliberately have agreed to cooperate with each other to present a unified missions education plan for Southern Baptist churches.

Although the agencies have cooperated in past years on curriculum materials for churches, they have not developed deliberate, coordinated efforts at this level on other missions programs and activities.

While specifics were not mentioned, the agency executives nonetheless recognized "decidedly innovative things" can happen as the result of this cooperation, Smith said.

Agreed Parks: "We are committing to take the time and effort to be involved in a level that we've not been involved in years. As new things begin to emerge, there ought to be an immediate impact on missions education that we've not always had."

In taking the action, the five leaders agreed their decision to join together is based on certain fundamental principles. The strategy statement adopted reflected that agreement:

"Growing out of our commitment to Jesus Christ and his word, and out of our concern for a lost world, we affirm that missions is a binding force for Southern Baptists; that every Southern Baptist church needs the kind of continuing missions education which supports the work of the kingdom; that education for missions demands a comprehensive approach and must build from processes which begin from a common center and reach to every church member; and that education for missions requires a coordinated approach in proper relation to all the church is doing."

To implement the agreement, the agency leaders instructed the administrative committee of the Missions Education Council, a group of representatives from each of these agencies, to carry out three strategies:

—To shape denominational emphases and religious education through making missions the pivotal element of Southern Baptist life;

—To interpret missions through ways that focus on the churches' responsibility to provide the learning environment for living in a diverse society and challenging opportunities for congregations and individual members to live out the Great Commission; and

—To implement missions education through programs and materials designed to result in Bold Mission Thrust awareness and involvement on the part of every church and every member.

Bold Mission Thrust is the Southern Baptist plan to present the Gospel to every person on earth by the year 2000.

When these strategies are implemented, said Banks, Southern Baptists will have taken a "major step beyond where we've been."

Florida Group Formed To Seek
'Freedom, Fairness' In SBC

By Greg Warner

PLAN

VERO BEACH, Fla. (BP)—A group of Florida Baptist pastors and others met in early September to chart a course of "prayer, dialogue and encouragement" to promote freedom and fairness among differing Southern Baptists.

Organizers said the effort was not political in nature, but admitted their stand for "unity in diversity" would pit them against others calling for "theological conformity" in the Southern Baptist Convention. They also insisted the meeting did not violate the SBC Peace Committee's request for depoliticizing the denominational controversy.

During the organizational meeting at First Baptist Church, Vero Beach, the group adopted a name—Florida Baptists for Cooperation—and a statement of purpose, which said:

"Florida Baptists for Cooperation is an organization dedicated to the preservation of our Baptist heritage of missions, evangelism and education. In the midst of the crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention, we are committed to the principles of biblical authority, the lordship of Christ, soul competency of every believer, local church autonomy and the Cooperative Program method of missions."

Seventeen people, most of them pastors, signed the statement, which included a list of nine objectives.

Members agreed to educate people about the Baptist traditions of religious liberty and cooperation and vowed to work for the election of SBC leaders who are "cooperative" and "fair." The group has not yet spelled out the methods it will use to accomplish those objectives.

"We're not out to form a political party in order to defeat another political party," said Hershel Adams, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ft. Pierce, Fla., and chairman of the group's steering committee.

Adams told the Florida Baptist Witness, newsmagazine of the Florida Baptist Convention, that the group wants to be a "positive influence" in the SBC controversy, while still representing the views of those who have been "disenfranchised" by recent events in the convention.

"We do not feel that recently there has been a fair representation of all Southern Baptists in the appointments" to SBC boards and agencies, Adams said.

"We're not after anybody's hide," he continued, "but we are after some specific objectives."

In its list of objectives, the group committed "to assist the leadership of our denomination in accomplishing their tasks through prayers, dialogue and encouragement."

"We are going to pray for our leaders and try to dialogue with them," Adams said, "but that doesn't mean we will not disagree with them."

The group's steering committee met in late September to decide what type of activities to sponsor, Adams said. The committee is composed of six Florida pastors—Adams; Gary Bagley, Bayshore Baptist Church, Tampa; Henry Green, First Baptist Church, Cocoa; Pete Hill, First Baptist Church, Vero Beach; David Medley, Stetson Baptist Church, DeLand; and Craig Sherouse, First Baptist Church, Seminole.

Curtis Tutterrow, pastor of Azalea Baptist Church, St. Petersburg, was elected to the steering committee and then resigned, saying he fears the group will be "counterproductive" to peace efforts in the denomination and likely would "prolong the conflict."

Adams said he believes "in our spirit we are working for a sense of unity, but it doesn't matter what I say because people are going to make up their own minds. I don't think I am flying in the face of the Peace Committee, or I wouldn't be a part of it."

The statement adopted by the group said religious liberty is best expressed by "practicing the twin concepts of the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church."

Other objectives called for support of "the institutions and employees of the Southern Baptist and Florida Baptist conventions" and encouraged fellowship with like-minded Baptists in Florida and similar organizations in other states.

Adams said he was encouraged by the positive spirit of the group's meeting, which he said avoided "rehearsing grievances."

"We have a hope that, with God's help, we can bring a healing," he said. "We are going to prove by our spirit the sincerity of our words."

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House Passes Bill To Counter
Religious Violence, Vandalism

By Kathy Palen

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WASHINGTON (BP)—Despite opposition from the Reagan administration, the U.S. House of Representatives has approved a bill that would impose criminal penalties on persons damaging religious property or injuring anyone in the free exercise of religious beliefs.

The bill—sponsored by Rep. Dan Glickman, D-Kan., and passed by voice vote—would amend the U.S. Code so that persons who damage any religious property because of its religious character or who obstruct, by force or threat of force, any person's free exercise of religion could receive federal fines up to \$15,000 and prison sentences up to life.

The administration said it opposes the legislation because it believes such offenses should be investigated and prosecuted at the state level. Jurisdiction by the federal government in this area also would violate the principles of federalism, said the administration.

During House hearings on the subject, the Justice Department also opposed such legislation. The department argued that since the legislation would protect only religious property and activity, it would advance the cause of religion and serve no secular purpose, thus violating the First Amendment's establishment clause.

The Justice Department also contended such legislation is not within congressional power under the First Amendment's religion clauses since Congress is not empowered to prohibit purely private interference with religious freedom.

The House Judiciary Committee—which reported the bill, H.R. 4980, to the full House—has disagreed with the Justice Department's arguments. In the report accompanying the bill, the Judiciary Committee said the legislation does not violate the establishment clause because it does not promote any particular activity of a religious organization. The bill, according to the report, also serves the legitimate secular concern of protecting individuals in the exercise of a protected right and does not create excessive entanglement since the government's involvement with religious institutions would be no greater than when it provides other protections against criminal acts.

The House committee also argued Congress has the power, under the Constitution's commerce clause, to prohibit private intrusion on First Amendment rights.

The report pointed to a growing problem of religiously motivated violence. It added that while states have primary responsibility for law enforcement in such cases, the federal government also has a responsibility since many groups that appear to be behind such violence have members in several states and operate across state lines.

Before being enacted, the bill would have to be approved by the Senate and signed by the president.

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