



# BAPTIST PRESS

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87-18

Baptists Inch Forward  
With Small 1986 Gains

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists inched forward in 1986 but small gains coupled with losses in three major programs indicate a stagnant year for the denomination.

Bright spots are baptisms, and gains in church music and Woman's Missionary Union.

These statistics are a final reporting of information gathered from 1986 Uniform Church Letters from more than 37,000 churches. Projections were released in December based on the first 26,000 letters received in the research services department at the Baptist Sunday School Board. The final report revealed no major changes from the projections.

The gain in baptisms of 3.4 percent, or 12,053, comes on the heels of losses for four consecutive years. The total number of baptisms in 1986 was 363,124. Projected statistics indicated a gain of 3.8 percent.

The number of churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, which was not included in projections, topped 37,000 for the first time. The increase of 137 churches, or 0.4 percent, brings the total to 37,116, for the 57th consecutive gain in number of SBC churches. This year's total reflects the dropping of 40 churches in Canada which became part of a separate convention.

The 1986 statistical report shows there are now 14,618,567 persons who are members of Southern Baptist churches. This is an increase of 0.9 percent, or 132,164, over 1985. This increase confirms the projection of the 60th consecutive gain in membership.

Sunday school, the denomination's largest program, experienced a decrease this year of 0.2 percent, or 16,823, to a new total of 7,943,973. This loss follows a gain of more than 100,000 last year and increases for six consecutive years. The program was projected to lose 0.1 percent.

The next largest program, church training, decreased in enrollment in 1986 by 0.7 percent, or 14,693, to a new total of 1,954,345. This is the third consecutive loss for the training program, which has had an increase of 12.2 percent over the past seven years. The enrollment in church training had been projected to decline by 0.2 percent.

Enrollment in church music recorded its 21st consecutive gain, with an increase of 2.8 percent, or 46,354, to a new total of 1,724,092. The projected increase was 2.9 percent.

Enrollment in Woman's Missionary Union increased by 1.3 percent, or 14,673, to a new total of 1,179,913. This increase follows two consecutive losses for the program. WMU was projected to gain 1.8 percent.

Brotherhood enrollment showed a loss in 1986 of 0.8 percent, or 4,536, to a new total of 569,204. This year's decrease is the first for Brotherhood following seven consecutive increases. The actual loss is the same as the December projection.

Mission expenditures for the Southern Baptist Convention increased by 4.0 percent, or \$24.7 million to a new total of \$635,377,346. The increase for mission expenditures is smaller than for the past several years, when gains have been between 7 and 10 percent. The projected increase was 4.1 percent.

As projected, total receipts increased by 6.0 percent, or more than \$231.5 million, as the denomination surpassed \$4 billion for the first time. Total receipts, which reached \$4,117,574,240, have not decreased since the early 1930s.

## SOUTHERN BAPTIST STATISTICAL SUMMARY, 1985-1986

	<u>1985 Total</u>	<u>1985-86 % Change</u>	<u>1985-86 Numerical Change</u>	<u>1986 Total</u>
Churches.....	36,979	0.4	137	37,116
Baptisms.....	351,071	3.4	12,053	363,124
Church Membership.....	14,486,403	0.9	132,164	14,618,567
Ongoing Sunday School enrollment.....	7,960,796	-0.2	-16,823	7,943,973
Church Training enrollment.....	1,969,038	-0.7	-14,693	1,954,345
Ongoing Church Music enrollment.....	1,677,738	2.8	46,354	1,724,092
Ongoing WMU enrollment...	1,165,240	1.3	14,673	1,179,913
Ongoing Brotherhood enrollment.....	573,740	-0.8	-4,536	569,204
Mission Expenditures.....	\$610,668,080	4.0	\$24,709,266	\$635,377,346
Total Receipts.....	\$3,886,048,305	6.0	\$231,525,935	\$4,117,574,240

-30-

Challenger Launch Director  
Recalls 'Cloud Of Smoke'

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WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (BP)--A year since the Challenger disaster, the man who had the final say on the space shuttle launch remains shadowed by the "cloud of smoke" 73 seconds into flight.

Launch Director Gene Thomas did some remembering Jan. 27 from the pulpit of First Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., to more than 1,000 Palm Beach Atlantic College students, including his 21-year-old son who is studying for the ministry. He told students at the Southern Baptist college that religion carried him through the catastrophe that shook the nation and its space program.

"There is no way to explain what you feel when you see a cloud of white smoke and know something is wrong," he said, noting, his first reaction was to say to himself, "Why me, Lord? Why in the world would this happen to me?"

"God told me I shouldn't worry, that he was still in control of everything," said Thomas, director of safety, reliability and quality assurance for NASA.

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"I certainly thought about quitting, but you don't quit," Thomas said of his career with NASA. Instead, he assumed the safety position with the space agency. "I told my wife I never want to be launch director again."

"There's no way to describe how it feels," he said of the disaster. That day, after 24 hours at the cape, he went home and cried.

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O'Brien Identifies Trends  
Affecting Missions Efforts

By Carol Garrett

Baptist Press  
2/9/87

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Six major trends or movements will impact the future of missions education and support, William O'Brien told Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union leaders.

O'Brien, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, pointed to:

- Globalization of the world's economy.
- A shift in world emphasis from East-West to North-South.
- Urbanization of the world.
- Internationalization of the cities.
- Growth of the church in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Equalization of sending of missionaries.

Missions strategists must consider that Southern Baptists live in an age of global industries, global patterns and global economies, O'Brien said. "Part of the problem we have now is still acting as though ours is a national economy and everybody else's is a national economy in competition one with another," he explained.

Southern Baptists also must adjust their view of the world as balanced between East-West hemispheres to North-South, he added noting, "The real problems and the real issues of the future lie in the vertical axis."

Too, O'Brien said, 52 percent of the world's population will live in major cities by the year 2000. Trends indicate that more than 400 of those major cities will be megacities, with populations of between 1 and 4 million people. At least 17 cities will be supergiant cities, with more than 10 million people in each.

By the end of the century, seven of the supergiant cities will be Islamic and "basically hostile to the gospel and the presence of missionaries," he said.

In addition to the urbanization of the world, the internationalization of the cities will have great impact on missions, O'Brien continued. "Look at any major city here in the United States, and you see a small microcosmic United Nations," he said.

In New York City, more than 6 million people speak English as a second language. More than 14 percent of the population of Paris, France, is Arabic.

The rising of the church in the Southern Hemisphere also must be considered by serious mission strategists, O'Brien stressed.

By the end of the century, there will be about 100 million Protestant evangelicals in Latin America, and between 250 million and 300 million Christians on the continent of Africa, he said. Already, most of the Christians of the world are not white.

"The churches of the Southern Hemisphere, and in China, the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc are the most dynamic and alive churches in the world, who literally should be our teachers rather than learners," O'Brien said.

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Dynamic churches in the Southern Hemisphere and the developing part of the world "have their own sense of responsibility for evangelization and missions," O'Brien said, and they must play an important part in the sending of missionaries.

These churches have already sent about 15,000 missionaries of their own, across tribal and national lines and geopolitical boundaries, "and they're doing it out of their poverty, not out of affluence," he said.

In light of worldwide trends that already are affecting missions, WMU and Foreign Mission Board must consider tailoring the missions message at local and regional levels, O'Brien said.

"How do we infiltrate the grassroots precincts of this great denomination with the seeds of contagion on behalf of our missions potential?" O'Brien asked.

WMU and Foreign Mission Board must take responsibility for spreading "missions contagion" in order to "help Southern Baptists stop stealing from their missions future," he said.

"Some of the churches of our convention are annually increasing their world missions knowledge indebtedness. Many churches are mortgaging missions education, cashing in awareness and knowledge potential for quick growth and/or survival in the pawn shops of pragmatism."

O'Brien called WMU and the Foreign Mission Board to renew their coalition in pointing Southern Baptists toward "biblical and Kingdom priorities."

"In an ecclesiastical world that is more comfortable with ladders and authority, let us form a circle of servants that is not so much concerned with moving up as it is with moving out."

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Southwestern Music Professor  
Writes Doctrine Study On Prayer

By David Reid

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—If it seems unusual that a music professor would write discipleship materials and a doctrinal study guide on prayer, think again.

What better choice than a man who has dedicated an entire room in his home to prayer and has missed his daily devotion only once in the past 28 years?

"Ever since 1959, I just can't operate without prayer. I don't see how people get by without it," says T.W. Hunt, professor of church music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and an authority among Southern Baptists on the subject of prayer.

"Failure to pray is the failure to realize that God is the real source," Hunt notes. "It is he who blesses and directs our work. No true work of God can be done without prayer."

Hunt wrote Southern Baptists' 1987 adult doctrinal study on prayer, already available in bookstores, and PrayerLife, a new course in the Lay Institute for Equipping, produced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department.

He doesn't think it too extraordinary that a non-theologian should be selected to write a doctrine study -- especially one on prayer.

"Every Christian ought to be given to prayer, and God often chooses to use a layman to teach other laymen," he says.

Hunt teaches about 35 seminars on prayer and the "mind of Christ" each year. He has spoken in conferences and churches across the United States and to missionaries in Africa, South America and Europe.

In the process, Hunt came to the attention of church training department leaders who asked him to write the adult doctrine text and Prayerlife.

The Baptist Doctrine Study will be observed April 20-24 in many churches.

Hunt is most excited about PrayerLife, a 13-week study course to be taught to small groups in churches.

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"I think we have succeeded in achieving a spiritual orientation which is not mechanical," he says. "The person involved in PrayerLife, who is faithful to what we ask them to do, will have an encounter with God.

"It's been the hardest thing I've ever done. It's required the most hours, the most prayer and the most thought," Hunt reports.

Although PrayerLife is considered a sequel, MasterLife will not be a prerequisite. In addition, Hunt has written "Music and Missions: Discipleship through Music," to be published by Broadman Press in April, and is writing an article, commentary notes and application material on prayer for the upcoming Disciple's Study Bible, produced by Holman.

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New Orleans Church  
Reaches Its Community

By Breena Kent

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)—Staffed entirely by seminary students, faculty and staff, Elysian Fields Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans is reaching the needs of the community, and growing.

When Jimmy Dukes became the church's bi-vocational pastor four years ago, the average attendance was 35; now, about 140 people attend Sunday services. Dukes is assistant professor of New Testament in the School of Christian Training at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"We have an international flavor," he said. One man attending Elysian Fields church defected from mainland China by "jumping ship in the Mississippi River," Dukes said. And recently, a profession of faith was made by a student from Cameroon.

However, the "most effective" ministry of the church is its children's ministry. About 60 children from the community are brought to Sunday school in church vans every week.

The ministry began to grow two years ago when assistant pastor Kenneth Taylor, a doctoral student at New Orleans Seminary, began visiting people in trailer parks and low-income apartment complexes in the area, inviting children to Vacation Bible School.

"It was the first time we really began reaching the people of the area," said Dukes. Even after Bible school ended, the children continued to bring more and more friends with them to church every week.

"The background of most of the children is bad; they come from broken homes; some are dirty; others haven't eaten," said Dukes.

To minister to the families of these children, the church set up a "benevolent fund" to provide groceries, rent money, and help with utility bills for needy families in the community.

Elysian Fields church has also been involved in starting missions in the area. Continuing Witness Training teams from the seminary aid in surveying neighborhoods and channeling the information to the church so that members can visit those who are interested.

This past summer, Keith Singleton, a student at the seminary and member of Elysian Fields church, began a mission in "probably the worst housing project in the city," said Dukes.

"Keith was raised there," he said. "So he is better able to minister to them." About 40 people came to the first meeting of St. Thomas Baptist Mission.

Elysian Fields church has been through some tough times in its history, including two major highways built through the community, a split in the church, and a hurricane.

"Lots of people have relocated," said Dukes. "The community is really changing." But a "bond" has developed between the members, especially with "some of the older members who have been there through all this."

And although much of the leadership is "transient," due to its make-up of seminary students, the leadership is also dedicated, and the church is continuing to grow.

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