



## - - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 15, 1987

87-106

### Inflation Catches Up With SBC Contributions

NASHVILLE (BP)--The economy's tortoise has caught the Southern Baptist Convention's hare.

After racing ahead of inflation for months, the SBC Cooperative Program is locked in a dead heat with the consumer price increase -- about 4 percent annually.

The Cooperative Program is the SBC's convention-wide missions budget, which supports evangelistic, educational and ministry efforts around the globe. Southern Baptists contributed \$11,851,554 to the fund during June, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

Contributions to the Cooperative Program at the end of three-quarters of its fiscal year are \$98,114,965, or 4 percent ahead of the same point last year, Bennett said.

That gain compares to a U.S. inflation rate of about 3.8 percent, said Tim A. Hedquist, vice president for business and finance of the Executive Committee.

The race between inflation and the Cooperative Program has evened out because the inflation rate has speeded up while the CP's increase has slowed. For example, inflation swayed down to below 2 percent for periods when the CP grew at a 4.5 percent to 6 percent pace.

"We are not disappointed with the year-to-date Cooperative Program total compared to the inflation rate," Bennett said. "But if inflation goes above 4 percent, we hope receipts will reflect that trend."

Bennett cited two encouraging factors:

"First, the three states hardest-hit by the farm and petroleum crises -- Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana -- are not as far below last year's giving levels as some had predicted. We are concerned about the states afflicted with economic problems, and we appreciate the sacrifices they are making for the Cooperative Program.

"Second, the other larger state conventions are leveling off in their giving. Their increases are healthy."

The \$11.8 million total for June represents a 17.27 percent increase over June of 1986. However, it includes about \$2 million which was contributed the last Sunday in May but arrived at the Executive Committee after the books closed on the month. Consequently, the high June actually balances out the low May and presents the Cooperative Program with a fairly accurate picture of its year-to-date status, Hedquist said.

If the 4 percent rate of increase holds through the final quarter of the fiscal year, the Cooperative Program should receive about \$130 million of its \$136 million goal.

'Missionary Kid' Realizes Dream  
Of Working In 'Real China'

By Mary E. Speidel

LIBERTY, Mo. (BP)--Never say "never" to God.

That may be the most important lesson missionary kid Rhonda K. Winstead learned as a student at William Jewell College, a small Baptist liberal arts college in Liberty, Mo.

A 1987 William Jewell graduate, Winstead will study two years in Shanghai's Fudan University, one of China's top 10 universities. "For years, my goal has been to study or work in the 'real China,' but I thought it would be 30 years down the road. I didn't know it would happen this soon," says Winstead, daughter of Southern Baptist foreign missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Ronnie Winstead of Taipei, Taiwan.

She is one of several Southern Baptists selected to study in China through a Cooperative Services International scholarship. CSI is the organization that relates to countries where career Southern Baptist missionaries do not work.

Since she grew up speaking Mandarin in Taiwan, Winstead will be an advanced student in Chinese language of Fudan, says Lewis Myers, vice president for CSI at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "The Chinese are very eager to have someone like Rhonda, who can move to a higher level of language study. We are fortunate to enroll her in a scholarship program," he notes.

Jana Clayton, from Grand Canyon College, a Baptist school in Phoenix, Ariz., will study and teach English at August the First Agricultural College in Urumqi. Grand Canyon has an exchange program with August the First.

The women will be "bridge builders," Myers says, noting, "They will create understanding by befriending the Chinese." The students were selected through the Foreign Mission Board's journeyman program. However, Myers says the roles of CSI scholarship students are dramatically different from those of regular journeymen.

The CSI scholarship students in China are assigned four tasks: to study Chinese with integrity; to become involved in a Chinese church; to be a friend to the Chinese students on campus and to create understanding with the Chinese; to respond to inquiries about Christianity by introducing seekers to the Chinese pastor and the local church.

The students have discovered a good place to build relationships is the "English corner," found in the central park in most of China's modern cities. In these "corners," Chinese students studying English gather to practice speaking to each other. They are elated when an English-speaking native comes to talk with them.

The challenges of China are overwhelming. With a population of more than 1 billion, China is home for one out of every four people on earth. When Communist forces took over the country in 1949, the new government restricted church activity and missionaries left the country. During what was called the Cultural Revolution of 1966, churches were closed and outlawed. But after the Cultural Revolution ended, churches began to reopen.

The modernization of China has brought rapid social, political, economic and religious change. Today, more than 4,000 Protestant churches are meeting in China. A total of 22 churches are open in the largest city, Shanghai, with an estimated 18 million population. Government sources say 3 million to 5 million Christians live in China. But international Christian leaders estimate the number is closer to 20 million, compared to a total of 700,000 in 1949.

On American soil, Winstead's more recent church experiences have come from membership in Liberty Manor Baptist Church in Liberty, Mo., where she's been youth church training leader and teacher of missions, doctrinal and January Bible studies. On May 31, the congregation affirmed her assignment to China in worship.

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Her Sunday school department directors, Bonnie and Joe Crossett of Liberty, Mo., have observed her Christian growth during her three years at William Jewell. "Rhonda has a great ability to be patient and refrain from making snap judgements. She gives things time. She possesses tolerance and patience. In China, I think she'll need it," says Mrs. Crossett.

In addition to serving in her local church, Winstead has been a campus leader. She finished college in three years with majors in international relations, history and Spanish. She was vice president of Christian Student Ministries and was the international representative of the executive council of the Baptist Student Union of Missouri. She was one of five finalists for the Faculty Award, the highest honor granted to a graduating senior.

During the summer of 1986, she was a Missouri Baptist Student Union summer missionary in Barbour County, Ala., where she worked with underprivileged children in Backyard Bible Clubs.

In China, Winstead anticipates influencing others through her daily Christian lifestyle: "We must be the best students we can be. Just by being there, we'll make an impact. We'll be finding out what the students are doing and feeling. And we'll gain respect by showing we're genuinely interested in China."

After two years in China, she plans to complete graduate studies in international relations and join the foreign service. So far, she has passed the written portion of the foreign service exam.

Although her calling hasn't turned out to be career missions, Winstead's college years have helped her discover the importance of being open to God's leadership.

"A lot of MK's (missionary kids) say, 'I don't think I'd ever be a missionary.' And I had a lot of those feelings. I wanted to do my own thing," she says. "But I've learned, never say 'never' to God. And in my case, I found God was saying 'Just be willing to go.'"

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Mary E. Speidel is coordinator of news services at William Jewell College.

Pagan Trades  
Idols For Pulpit

By Pam Parry

Baptist Press  
7/15/87

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Family and friends of Joel Ojemola believed he would become a strong worship leader in his hometown. But he shocked the Yoruba tribe when he turned from his pagan rituals to become a proclaimer of the gospel.

This commitment to Christ is what brought the Nigerian Baptist pastor to pursue a theological education at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. Ojemola, who earned the master of divinity and religious education degrees at the school, currently is enrolled in its doctor of ministry program.

Since his father was the tribal worship leader, Ojemola experienced honor and power from an early age. With an "inborn" leadership ability, Ojemola was destined to follow in his father's footsteps, leading his tribe in pagan rituals.

But God had different plans for Ojemola.

In 1960, his mother accepted Christ as her Savior through the influence of a Southern Baptist pastor. Five years later, she witnessed the conversion of her 20-year-old son. He entered the ministry three years later.

"As soon as I became a Christian, a desire for witnessing was in my heart," Ojemola said. "My decision to enter the ministry cannot be divorced from the circumstances in my life in which I feel constrained to do something about meeting the need of those who are not effectively reached with the good news of the gospel within my immediate extended family and community.

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"I still believe very strongly that the fruit depends on the root; right living is the result of correct understanding of the truth revealed by God. The need of our day is more Bible teaching and living, and not less."

Ojemola noted his conversion and decision to enter the ministry did not alienate him from his people, but rather, it "makes them more receptive, and they have taken special interest in me."

The tribal chieftain has been particularly intrigued by Ojemola's commitment, "because he didn't think anyone from a pagan family could become a proclaimer of the gospel. As a pastor I have a real impact on the people of my hometown, because I am the only one (pastor) from a pagan family."

Indeed, Ojemola's life has made an impact. His entire family has been converted to Christianity, including two brothers, a sister and four cousins. He also has had an effective pastorate.

Upon graduation from Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso in 1972, he became the pastor of First Baptist Church of Lagos, Nigeria. The Lagos church had 350 members when he came there and within six years it rose to more than 800. He said an emphasis in evangelism accounted for the growth.

In 1975, Ojemola said he began to "sense the pews becoming stronger than the pulpit; the people in my church were more educated."

Desiring to be a better-prepared minister, Ojemola left behind his wife and children for an education in the United States. He earned a degree from Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., before coming to Midwestern.

Ojemola remembers when he first arrived in the United States a number of adjustments had to be made. Loneliness was the No. 1 hardship, he said.

"When he first got here it was especially hard because I was in the midst of people but yet felt lonely," he recalled. "It is a strain to come to a different culture, leaving my wife and kids behind."

He also faced a big food adjustment. He explained that Americans "eat too much sugar and that was tough on me the first few months." Referring to the American custom of lettuce in salads, Ojemola added, "We don't eat leaves in Nigeria, but I have gotten used to everything now."

In 1981, he earned both master's degrees from Midwestern and returned to his church in Nigeria for a time. Between 1981 and 1986, the Lagos church membership rose to 1,500, and the congregation started a new church building in 1984.

"My main objective when I get back home is to establish Baptist crisis center ministries to families and to serve as a medium of witness to non-Christians," Ojemola said. "There's a need in my country; we are having more divorce cases than ever before. Many want a quick fix, and I just want to help my people understand the concept of Christian marriage and the permanency of it."

"My experience here has opened my eyes education-wise," Ojemola continued. "I have learned so much about the education of the church, marriage and family, ministry and administration."

And the Nigerian pastor can't wait to get home and try out what he's learned.

Missouri Church's Staff  
Now Ministers Worldwide

By Shari Schubert

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo. (BP)--Argentina, Colombia, Mali, Lee's Summit, Mo. -- what do they have in common?

Missionaries now serving, or preparing to serve, in each of the three foreign countries have paused at Lee's Summit on their journey to the foreign mission field, to serve for a time as staff members of First Baptist Church there.

Jeannette Meredith Smith, who now works with her husband, Richard, in Bamako, Mali, West Africa, was minister of youth at the Lee's Summit church from 1976 to 1978.

Richard Carter was minister of education there from 1971 to 1977. He and his wife, Marie, currently are in language school in Costa Rica, preparing to minister in Argentina.

Charles Hood, who was the Lee's Summit church's minister of education from 1983 to 1987, was appointed earlier this year to work in Colombia, where he and his wife, Becky, will be involved in church planting and outreach ministries.

In addition, Wendell Page, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lee's Summit, served on the foreign mission field from 1965 to 1972 in the French West Indies.

"It would appear to me that this is noteworthy," Carter wrote in a recent letter to Word & Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention. "I don't know of too many churches who send this many former staff members on the mission field."

Although all three couples indicated their initial call to foreign missions came some time before their involvement with the Lee's Summit church, they point to experiences and influences there that helped keep the call alive and prepare them for future service.

Mrs. Smith, who had been a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board journeyman in Guatemala, recalled: "I returned to the States with an excitement and enthusiasm for foreign missions. Serving as minister of youth at Lee's Summit kept those feelings alive. It was, and still is, a very mission-minded church."

Carter's call to foreign missions was first felt during a Baptist Student Union convention in 1965. He said even though he and his wife opted to serve in a local church at the beginning of their ministry, the call "was ever present with us, as was evidenced in our interest in missions and mission-related activities. During the time I served on the First Church, Lee's Summit, staff, I felt there was something 'but there in the future' for us in missions, but that God had not chosen to reveal it to us at (that) time."

Shortly after joining the Lee's Summit church staff, Carter met Ray McKinney, a home missionary with whom Mrs. Carter had worked as a BSU summer missionary.

"Ray challenged us to bring some of the youth from First Church to New Mexico to assist with VBS (Vacation Bible School) work on the Indian reservations," Carter recalled. "This was the first of seven straight summer mission trips. As Marie and I wrote our life history for the Foreign Mission Board, we were able to see the very strong influence these seven trips had had on our ultimate answering of God's call to missions."

While there has been no intentional effort to direct church staff members toward foreign mission service, Page believes an ongoing emphasis on missions in the Lee's Summit church has been instrumental in helping people hear and respond to God's leading.

"We try to keep missions before the people every Sunday," he said, noting, with a couple of minutes in each Sunday service are devoted to sharing mission needs and information. Use of missionary speakers and promotion of the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget and mission offerings are also a part of the emphasis.

In addition, the church seeks to make opportunities available for all interested members to participate in first-hand mission trips and projects.

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Page acknowledged his experiences on the foreign mission field still strongly influence his life and preaching. "We had a very positive experience, and a very positive relationship with the Foreign Mission Board," he noted, and that has been communicated to his congregation through sermon illustrations and down-to-earth talk about missions.

"We've tried to talk honestly about mission service," he said. He explained he tries to help people understand that mission service is "not dramatic," and that missionaries are "just people" who have followed God's leading to that kind of service.

He said he also tries to increase awareness the FMB provides adequate salaries and benefits for mission personnel, an aspect of missions he feels is sometimes clouded by misconceptions.

The Lee's Summit church's "special offering goals and mission emphases were always challenging and informative, and there are some very dear people there who are real prayer warriors for the cause of world missions," Mrs. Smith said.

Hood recalled that as he and his family were preparing to leave the Missouri congregation to go to the foreign mission field, many individuals in the church signed commitments to pray for them on an ongoing basis. Women in the church's Woman's Missionary Union assured the Hoods they would be on their prayer calendar every time the group meets.

Hood stressed the value of mission education of young people, saying organizations such as Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action "can't be overemphasized enough." He added meetings of such groups need to be "a time of significant mission education," not just a time of fun and games.

While the Lee's Summit church's contribution to the lives of three career missionary couples stands, Page is quick to affirm that those who do not serve on foreign fields are missionaries just the same. "I'm convinced you can practice missions wherever you are," he said.

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Texas/Mexico Partnership  
Leads To New Churches

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
7/15/87

DALLAS (BP)--From the tropics of the south to the deserts of the rugged northwest, Mexican Baptists are experiencing a revival in church planting, fueled in part by Partnership Missions efforts of Texas Baptists.

In South Central Mexico, where a mission traditionally observes an extended probationary period before organizing as a church, Iglesia Bautista Bethesda in Yautepec constituted in eight months due to the teamwork of Mexican Baptists, Southern Baptist missionaries and a Texas Baptist church working through Partnership Missions.

"With the organization of work at Yautepec, we now have 13 churches and 17 other missions and preaching points in Morelos. When we came in 1981, there were five churches, and the youngest one was 13 years old," said Buddy Albright, field evangelist with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Last summer, Westbury Baptist Church in Houston agreed to join Prince of Peace Baptist Church in Cuernavaca and Elim Baptist Association in a pilot project to help organize a Baptist church in the state of Morelos within one year.

Westbury, which entered a Partnership Missions relationship with churches in Morelos more than four years, agreed to pay the mission pastor's salary and housing expenses and provide monthly financial support to the mission for a year. Under the leadership of Pastor Milton Cunningham and Partnership Missions Chairman Earl Kesner, Westbury also pledged to work with the new congregation in evangelistic efforts and leadership training.

Home Bible studies were begun last fall, and in January the mission started meeting in a rented building. Since that time, Bethesda has recorded 29 baptisms and numerous other decisions for Christ. Recently, the new congregation secured a 70 foot x 240 foot building site at a strategic location in Yautepec for 11 million pesos, about \$8,650.

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On May 23, the 47 charter members of Bethesda joined messengers from 10 churches in Elim Association, officials from the National Baptist Convention in Mexico and representatives from Westbury under a tarp on that dusty, windswept lot for the church's organizational service.

Since beginning the Mexico Partnership more than four years ago, Westbury has worked with at least 16 churches and missions in Morelos. One key to the successful relationship between Morelos and Westbury has been an understanding on both sides that the relationship is a true partnership, not the beginning of a paternalistic dependency.

"The relationship between Westbury Baptist Church and the new church at Yautepec is a good example for others. It shows that working as a team is the best way we can realize what God would have us to do," said Rafael Salinas, director of the church growth division of the National Baptist Convention of Mexico. "Southern Baptists in Texas can help Mexican Baptists by helping to equip and prepare them for service, not by coming and doing the job for them."

When Southern Baptist missionary Bill Hayes arrived in Torreon in 1976, La Laguna Baptist Association had 17 churches. Today there are 31 churches and more than 70 preaching points in the association, thanks in part to the Partnership Missions work of Texas Baptist churches in Tarrant Baptist Association.

Although Baptist work began in the Torreon area of Northwest Mexico more than a century earlier, widespread church planting did not begin until the National Baptist Convention of Mexico started the "2,000 by 2000" campaign in 1982, said Hayes.

"Initially, our association set a goal of 80 churches by the year 2000. The churches had to come back and set a new goal of 60 by 1990 and another 60 by 2000," he said. "There's a new mentality here. Churches start out with the idea of making new churches, not making missions to build up the mother church. Now it's considered a shameful thing for a church if it doesn't start new churches."

Partnership Missions teams from Tarrant Association have played a key role in helping to start these new churches, said Hayes. Up to 30 teams have participated in simultaneous crusades, and many churches have participated in construction projects, Vacation Bible Schools, literacy training classes and other programs in La Laguna Association.

"Partnership Missions came along at a time when our people were under conviction about the need to start churches and were ready to work," Hayes said. "Partnership has complemented what the local people are doing."

The strength of the relationship between Tarrant and La Laguna associations is its give-and-take nature, according to Hayes. In addition to sending groups to Mexico, churches in Tarrant Association also have received singing groups and visiting pastors from La Laguna Association.

"It is a true partnership. The brethren here see that Christians in the United States are not super saints. They have needs, too, that are met when they're here," said Hayes.

"The relationship is two-sided. People go back to Texas having seen a level of dedication among Mexican churches that is amazing sometimes," he said. "People say they have a new outlook about their own areas, discovering opportunities they didn't see before. Often, Cooperative Program (budget) giving increases and the churches become more missions-minded all the way around."

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Partnership Missions Strengthens  
Urban Church Planting Efforts

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
7/15/87

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Church planting is the Baptist strategy for reaching millions in Mexico's metropolitan areas, and Partnership Missions can strongly undergird that church starting effort, according to Southern Baptist missionaries in Mexico City.

"Unless churches are giving birth to new churches, something is lacking in their missionary commitment," said Craig Johnson, a Southern Baptist missionary who is director of the urban missions program for the National Baptist Convention of Mexico.

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"My job is to get all urban churches in Mexico involved in efficient, consistent, effective missionary outreach programs which, to me, means starting new churches," he said.

Johnson noted Mexico City has an estimated population of up to 21 million, and there are 65 cities in Mexico with a population of 100,000 or greater.

"Mexico is becoming more and more an urban society. People in the urban areas are lost in anonymity. As the people become more urbanized, they grow more secular, more modern and more materialistic. There is a greater depth of felt needs in the midst of this urban desperation," said Johnson. "The great cities of Mexico, by and large, are open to the gospel of Christ."

"The outcome of our evangelistic efforts has to be church planting," said Dennis Johnson, Southern Baptist church planter in Mexico City. "If not, what are we doing here?"

As part of the plan of the National Baptist Convention of Mexico to organize 2,000 churches by the year 2000, Mexico City has been divided into four geographic sectors, and each sector has adopted church starting goals. For instance, the northwest sector -- 12 unreached neighborhoods with a population of about 7 million -- will work with Oklahoma Baptist volunteers in August to start 12 new churches. Most of the other 60 churches in the city plan to start as many as 20 new churches this year.

Missionaries agree that Texas Baptists, working through the ongoing Partnership Missions relationship with the National Baptist Convention of Mexico, can help Mexican Baptists start new work in urban areas. However, they differ as to the best approach for churches in the United States to follow.

Citing examples of Texas Baptist churches that have established ongoing sister church relationships with Mexican Baptist churches, Craig Johnson said the key to success is consistency. He believes long-term partnerships between churches or associations in Texas and churches or associations in Mexico are more effective than one-shot evangelistic efforts.

"The degree to which long-term relationships exist is the degree to which Partnership Missions efforts will succeed," he said. "Once Texas Baptist churches and churches in Mexico establish sister and brother relationships, appropriate ministries flow from those relationships -- both ways in some cases."

He also warned against creating an economic dependency between Southern Baptist and Mexican Baptist churches.

"The key is not predominantly money; it is predominantly personal relationships," he said. "Money can be a quick and superficial answer that leads to tokenism or paternalism."

While other missionaries agree Mexican Baptists should maintain a degree of independence and that sister-church relationships are valid, they also see the benefit of one-time efforts by Southern Baptist evangelistic teams in simultaneous revivals.

"Both the one-shot effort and the continuing relationships are helpful. It shouldn't be one at the expense of the other," said Allen Alexander, chairman of the Mexico Mission and former field evangelist in Oaxaca. He noted several benefits from the door-to-door visitation and simultaneous revivals led by Southern Baptists.

"Partnership evangelistic groups show the national brethren what they themselves can do. They involve them as interpreters and get them fired up to do evangelism," said Alexander. "That encourages the nationals, and it gives them contacts to follow up."

Dennis Johnson said he believes Partnership Missions teams are most effective when Mexican Baptists have done adequate preparation and are prepared to do extensive follow-up.

"I've seen the one-shot campaigns work really well, but the key is preparation by the churches here as they discover prospects and pray for those people," he said.

"I think it also benefits the churches in the States," he continued. "People who were not necessarily bold witnesses when they came go back home on fire for the Lord."

Missionary Shuns Realism,  
Accomplishes 'Impossible'

By Maxine Stewart

BANGKLA, Thailand (BP)--A Buddhist language teacher reminded him to be realistic, but Southern Baptist missionary John Gibson decided instead to believe in the impossible.

The missionary doctor from San Antonio, Texas, became the first Westerner to pass Thailand's required medical examination in the Thai language. Out of 30 candidates who took the exam, Gibson was among six who passed the written part. He scored second highest on it.

He and his wife, Linda, were appointed missionaries three years ago and had prepared to live in India, where he had worked for two months as a medical student. But India never awarded them visas. So Southern Baptists asked Gibson and his wife to consider Thailand.

After arriving in the country he was not certain he could work there. However, the Gibsons both set out to meet the challenge of learning the language, committing their success to the God.

Although most people cheered him on, one of his Buddhist teachers at Union Language School said it was impossible for him to pass such a difficult examination in the Thai language. Under new government requirements, he had to pass it to practice medicine at Bangkok Baptist Hospital.

But the Christian language teachers were more encouraging. Supported by the prayers of new Christian friends in Thailand, he took the two-day Thai-language written portion of the test and became eligible for the oral exam.

For the oral portion, in the presence of the board of examiners, Gibson used the Thai language to interview and examine actual patients. Then, also in Thai, he presented each case to the examiners, made a diagnosis, and recommended treatment. Examiners then asked him questions about his conclusions.

After Gibson passed the exam, examiners and other candidates were amazed that he wanted to work in a rural area. "Why did you even bother to take the exam?" some asked. "If you go out there (into rural areas) and practice, no one cares whether you have had the exam or not." They felt since he had proven himself, he could now write his own ticket to medical success in Bangkok -- every Thai doctor's dream.

"It was a good opportunity for me to explain to them why I want to be in this situation -- why I wanted to come to Bangkok and what we are doing here in the mission hospital," said Gibson.

Returning to the language school, he talked to the teacher who had told him what an insurmountable obstacle the examination would be. "I wanted her to know we have a source of power beyond theirs," Gibson said.

The teacher smiled the gracious way Thais are known to smile when he told her, "Mai mi sing nung sing dai soong phra jao song gratom mai dai," which means, "For with God, nothing shall be impossible."

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Ministers of Education  
Often Neglect Growth Role

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press  
7/15/87

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--In the struggle to do all things, ministers of education often neglect the one area that is most likely to cause them to lose their job -- numerical growth, according to two religious education specialists.

Evaluations of ministers of education often will be based on numerical growth, said Al Parks, professor of administration at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

But, he said, that area often is neglected as ministers of education juggle the role of growth agent with other roles of educator, administrator and minister.

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Parks and Will Beal, church administration consultant at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, led a seminar on trends and issues in religious education for ministers of education attending Sunday school leadership conferences at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Growth has been identified as a major area of concern for ministers of education in recent "Viewpoll" surveys conducted by the research services department of the Sunday School Board, Beal said.

The most healthy pattern of growth may be steady numerical growth followed by a period of training and reorganization to assimilate new people and then further numerical growth, Beal explained.

"We need to rely on the basics of finding people, training people and using the principles of the Sunday school for consistent, quality growth," Parks said.

Other trends cited by Parks as affecting the role of the minister of education included increased expectations. "Churches are demanding more of ministers of education and they should expect more," he said.

Increased demands are weeding out some ministers of education who have not kept up with skills. Others are retooling to meet the demands, he said, warning, "If you don't keep up, you aren't going to be able to stay around."

Meanwhile, Beal and Parks agreed a new professionalism among ministers of education is leading to an increase in tenure. An October 1986 survey of 425 ministers of education showed an average tenure of 47.2 months, Beal said.

That is almost double the 24- to 26-month average church stay for ministers of education in 1975.

However, forced termination remains a problem for ministers of education. Eighteen percent of those in the 1986 survey had experienced forced termination at some time in their ministry, Beal said. Although ministers of education are in greater demand than before, the expectations for professionalism, productivity and accountability are increasing, he added.