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Reorganized FMB Identifies
Targets For Bold Goals

N-FMB
By Bob Stanley

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A set of goals aimed at accelerating the pace of world evangelization was outlined Dec. 9 for members of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Almost a year after the board began a major reorganization to equip it better for global outreach, President R. Keith Parks said the board's Global Strategy Group has zeroed in on specific 1988 priority concerns and goals.

The goals will help move Southern Baptists along the road toward their Bold Mission Thrust goal of sharing the gospel with all people by the year 2000, Parks said.

This task is too big for Southern Baptists alone, he acknowledged, but he said he is encouraged by a growing sense of partnership with overseas Baptists and a new awareness of the need to coordinate work with other evangelical groups.

"We're convinced that as we begin to probe and explore, we're going to find so much more than any one of us or any group of us can do that we hope to be a catalyst in challenging other evangelical, Great Commission Christians," he said.

For its part, the board has set several 1988 goals:

-- Work with 50 missions, the organizations of missionaries, and national conventions to find ways to reach groups of neglected people in these mission fields who have not yet heard the gospel.

-- In partnership with overseas Baptist conventions that also have foreign missions outreach, establish a witness among 25 unevangelized people groups. In some instances, Baptists from these overseas conventions may be able to live and work in countries that would not admit American missionaries.

-- Identify and deploy 25 non-residential missionaries. These would be missionaries best suited to help evangelize nations or people groups where living among them is impossible.

-- Share a model of international prayer strategy and seek to secure participation of 25 conventions and unions overseas.

-- Plan and start strategies of evangelism for six limited-access countries.

Reports at the meeting stressed that a growing number of the world's 235 countries are not open to a traditional missionary approach. Of the total, 139 are open to the gospel, and Southern Baptists now have missionaries assigned to 112. The other 96 include 44 nations closed to missionaries or extremely difficult to enter and 52 with only limited access.

Later, the board unanimously approved a policy that will allow missionaries voluntarily to become citizens of certain countries where foreign missionary access is difficult. The action came in response to a plea from missionaries in Indonesia, where visa restrictions may force nearly two-thirds of the 87 missionaries to leave by early 1989.

Only a few missionaries to Indonesia are expected to consider changing citizenship. But the approach might be used to obtain entry to countries like India and Malaysia, said Bill Wakefield, vice president for Asia and the Pacific.

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As the board develops strategies to penetrate difficult areas, it also is trying to intensify evangelism that results in churches in the countries where missionaries already work, Parks said. In some cases this will mean redeployment of some missionaries.

One of the 1988 goals calls for the board to work with each mission to develop a 10-year plan through which at least 70 percent of the mission force will be involved directly in outreach and church planting. The goal is based on continued involvement of all missionaries in personal evangelism but will require redeployment of some missionaries now working in institutions or denominational roles.

Another goal will ask missions to identify all positions now occupied by missionaries that should be filled by nationals. By Aug. 31 they will be asked to report on steps taken to prepare national Baptists for these positions and on how the missionaries involved will be redeployed.

The 1988 goals "force us to look specifically at those positions that missionaries now occupy in institutions or denominational responsibilities that ultimately are to be filled by nationals and develop a plan to get there," Parks explained.

This leads to looking at the institutions themselves, he continued. He said some institutions will be supported by the board indefinitely, noting, "They must be if we're to preach the gospel in some places." Others will need long periods of transition. But some institutions, he added, can be eliminated because they no longer fulfill the reasons for their creation.

"The whole point is," Parks said, "we will not sit in Richmond and decide, country by country, what ought to be done. But the strategy planning that will take place here is to say to the mission: 'You must do this. We want to review what you do and lay that alongside total world needs.' And we may come back to say, 'You're going to have to accelerate this in order to free up resources to accomplish (goals) that are more urgent.'"

The board next year will study the foreign mission efforts of three other groups -- the Assemblies of God, Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Church of God, based in Cleveland, Tenn. "We want to see if they have learned something we haven't learned and if we can learn from others who are being successful in certain areas," Parks said.

In other actions, the board appointed 30 missionaries to work in 14 countries and approved 40 young adults for training as journeymen, a two-year program for Baptists just out of college. With these additions, the board has added 407 people to its overseas force in 1987. The total missionary force now stands at 3,843.

The board added its 112th country with assignment of personnel to Vanuatu, an island group in the South Pacific. Trustees also approved opening work in the Comoro Islands, in the Indian Ocean between Mozambique and Madagascar, but will not add the Comoros to the country count until personnel are assigned.

Trustees unanimously approved a motion by Harrell Cushing of Gadsden, Ala., expressing "deep concern over the diminishing percentage of Cooperative Program funds going to foreign missions" and urging the Southern Baptist Executive Committee to begin moving toward a Planned Growth in Giving stewardship campaign goal of allocating 75 percent of the convention's Cooperative Program unified budget funds to home and foreign missions by the year 2000.

Special tribute was paid to Mary Dalton, a trustee from Asheville, N.C., who died Dec. 5 after a seven-year battle with cancer. Parks said Mrs. Dalton was diagnosed as having cancer soon after being named to the board in 1980 but "prayed that the Lord would enable her to serve out her term." Next June she would have completed the normal two four-year terms as a trustee. She was vice chairman and later chairman of two committees and a member of three others, in addition to two years as recording secretary of the board.

At a dinner Dec. 7, the board honored Charles W. Bryan, who will retire in January as senior vice president for overseas operations. He has held this position since 1980. Earlier, he was area director for Middle America and the Caribbean. He and his wife, Martha, were missionaries from 1950 until he was named to the area post in 1968.

Carl Johnson, vice president for finance, told trustees that because of diversification of the board's investment portfolio, the overall drop in value caused by the recent stock market decline was less than 10 percent. The loss is not expected to affect the board's budget for either 1987 or 1988, since investment revenues are still expected to meet the amounts budgeted, he said.

Parks told trustees he had not yet felt "a definite sense of (God's) leadership" toward a person to fill the vice presidency for communications.

The board applauded Elise Bridges, associate director for Europe, who will retire Dec. 31 after 20 years' service at the board.

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(BP) Map mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press

FMB Trustees Permit Foreign
Citizenship For Missionaries

N-FMB
By Michael D. Chute

Baptist Press
12/11/87

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board approved a policy in its December meeting allowing missionaries to voluntarily become citizens of certain countries where foreign missionary access is restricted.

The new policy is the latest in a series of steps to place personnel in countries that have placed limits on missionaries. Of the 235 countries in the world, 44 are closed to missionaries or extremely difficult for them to enter, and only limited missionary access is possible in another 52.

Bill Wakefield, vice president for Asia and the Pacific, told board members, "The number of countries where (becoming citizens) would be a real possibility will be limited to selected cases where the missionary could have an effective ministry."

He mentioned Indonesia, India and Malaysia as possible countries where the program could be implemented. He noted, for example, that Catholic priests in India and Indonesia have taken citizenship in those countries to continue ministries there. Indonesian immigration officials even encouraged Southern Baptist missionaries to consider such a move.

Indonesian missionaries first presented such a proposal to the board's strategy committee in October. The committee granted them an exception to investigate the possibility but decided to wait until the December meeting before discussing it as mission strategy.

Missionaries in Indonesia say 23 families have been told their visas will not be renewed under a law that limits visas to people who have been in the country 10 years or less.

Under this law, the first missionary family affected would have to leave in March. That number would swell to 28 families over the next 18 months. Unless the government reverses its decision, nearly two-thirds of the 87 Southern Baptist missionaries in Indonesia will have to leave by early 1989.

The unanimous vote to allow missionaries to take foreign citizenship came after discussion about protecting those missionaries who choose this route. Board members asked questions about the proposal's impact on furlough and other visits to the United States, implications it would have on the missionary's retirement package and opportunities for a missionary to regain U.S. citizenship.

Missionaries who take foreign citizenship will need to have immediate family who are U.S. citizens to gain permission to travel to the United States for furlough or to regain their U.S. citizenship after retirement or resignation. Two legal firms retained by the board confirmed missionaries will not have difficulty regaining U.S. citizenship if their family members are U.S. citizens.

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For married couples, only one spouse will take foreign citizenship, with the other spouse maintaining U.S. citizenship. Children, who are U.S. citizens, will further help the missionary gain access to the United States. In the case of a single missionary, parents or siblings with U.S. citizenship will provide the basis for re-entry into the United States.

When a missionary who becomes a foreign citizen ceases to work in that country, the board will pay the expenses for the missionary to regain U.S. citizenship through the naturalization process.

Wakefield reminded board members missionaries who become citizens of another country cannot participate in the U.S. Social Security system or the Southern Baptist Convention's Annuity Board retirement plan. Therefore, the board will need to provide supplemental funds to bring the income of these missionaries to the level it would have been had they been allowed to participate in these two programs. He pointed out missionaries will be able to draw on funds paid into the social security and annuity programs before the change in citizenship.

"There's risk involved" in missionaries giving up their U.S. citizenship, Wakefield said. But he called it an acceptable risk in light "of our dealing with lost people and giving them the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Wakefield told board members the policy is very carefully stated to emphasize its volunteer nature. He said it will not become a program "where we would actively seek to persuade missionaries to move into this program of becoming a citizen. We're very cautious that missionaries not be pressured into doing this."

The proposal brought questions from at least two board members as to whether such a policy could be used to appoint nationals to work in their countries, contrary to normal board policy. Wakefield said the board "can do that on an exceptional basis; we have been doing that on an exceptional basis. But we don't feel it ought to be mixed in with this policy."

He also noted the board can employ nationals to work in their country of origin if that needs to be done because of access limitations. He cited India and Bangladesh as two countries where the procedure has been implemented in the past.

A biblical basis for taking foreign citizenship can be found in the ministry of Jesus Christ, Wakefield said. He quoted famed pioneer missionary David Livingstone as saying, "God had one son and sent him as a missionary."

Philippians 2 also speaks of Jesus giving up his citizenship: "Being in the form of God he didn't see it as a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a servant," he quoted.

Obedience to the Great Commission, the biblical imperative to proclaim the gospel to all the world, is at the heart of the issue, Wakefield said: "The issue that brought Jesus to earth is the issue we are faced with. It's a very serious question. This isn't obedience unto death as we understand it, but it's giving up something that we consider to be very valuable to us -- our American citizenship.

"We think we're doing it with a great deal of protection for the missionary, but certainly there's no way to absolutely guarantee that a missionary might not be caught in some situation in which being an American citizen would be highly advantageous and (he or she) would not have that advantage.

"Yet we feel the risk can be guarded against to the degree that it is an acceptable one."

FMB Trustees Concerned Over
Cooperative Program Division

N-FMB
By Anita Bowden

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board unanimously approved a motion in their December meeting expressing concern over the percentage of the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget funds being directed to missions.

The motion, presented by Harrell Cushing, trustee from Gadsden, Ala., expressed "deep concern over the diminishing percentage of Cooperative Program funds going to foreign missions" and urged the Southern Baptist Executive Committee to begin moving toward a Planned Growth in Giving goal of allocating 75 percent of Cooperative Program funds to home and foreign missions by the year 2000.

The Cooperative Program supports 19 Southern Baptist organizations that conduct evangelistic, missionary, educational and ministerial efforts. Funds are provided by individual Southern Baptists, who contribute to their churches. The churches forward a portion of their receipts to 37 state Baptist conventions, which in turn forward a portion of their receipts to the conventionwide Cooperative Program.

Planned Growth in Giving is the denomination's long-term campaign to encourage individuals to give more to their churches and to allocate more convention resources to the support of missions.

Cushing said he is concerned that while individual state conventions have increased the percentage of their funds going to the national Cooperative Program, the percentage earmarked for the Foreign Mission Board actually has decreased.

Figures from SBC annual reports show Cooperative Program funds given by the states have increased 4 percent since 1976 when the Bold Mission Thrust worldwide ministry campaign was adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, he said. Yet during the same time, the percentage of these funds designated for foreign missions has decreased, he added.

During the 1975-76 budget year, states sent to the SBC an average of 34.24 percent of their total Cooperative Program receipts. By the 1985-86 budget year, the figure had increased to 38.17 percent -- an increase of nearly 4 percent.

But the figures coming from the SBC Executive Committee look different, he said. The 1975-76 recommended budget, if fully funded, allocated 48.89 percent to foreign missions. For the 1985-86 budget year, that allocation had dropped to 46.72 percent.

"I feel our churches and state conventions are working to send higher percentages of Cooperative Program funds so they can go towards missions," Cushing said. "But the figures show this isn't happening."

The Cooperative Program budget is allocated in three tiers or phases. For the 1987-88 fiscal year, the first phase, or working budget, allocates 50 percent to foreign missions. But foreign missions is not included in the next tier, which deals with capital needs. The final tier, or challenge phase, again allocates 50 percent to foreign missions.

(A steadily decreasing portion of the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, along with some funds raised through the board's development office, helps to meet capital needs overseas, board officials said. In 1987, the board's capital allocations totaled just over \$15 million for work in 111 countries.)

If the SBC working budget is met, the Foreign Mission Board will receive 50 percent of those Cooperative Program funds received. It also will get 50 percent of any money received after the capital budget is met. But that does not equal 50 percent of all Cooperative Program funds received at the national level.

Following the vote, Mark Corts, trustee from Winston-Salem, N.C., urged fellow trustees to take their concern also to their states' budget committees and encourage them to express their feelings to the Executive Committee.