



BAPTIST PRESS

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July 8, 1988

88-107

CP stays ahead of '87,
below inflation rate

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's ministry budget remains ahead of its 1987 pace, but its year-to-date receipts fell below the annual rate of inflation at the end of nine months.

June receipts for the SBC Cooperative Program brought its year-to-date total to \$100,265,278, reported Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee. That amount is 2.19 percent ahead of the budget's pace last year, but it is more than 1.5 percent below the current U.S. inflation rate.

The Cooperative Program, a combined budget that funds evangelistic, missionary and educational enterprises around the world, received \$10,268,120 at the national level in June, Bennett reported. That amount reflects a 13.36 percent drop below receipts for June 1987.

The Cooperative Program's conventionwide goal for the October 1987-September 1988 fiscal year is \$140 million. The goal includes a first-phase basic operating budget of \$132 million, a capital needs budget of \$6.45 million and a second-phase basic operating budget of \$1.55 million. The capital needs budget is not funded until the first-phase budget is met, and the second-phase budget is not funded until the capital needs budget is met.

The Cooperative Program requires \$11.7 million per month to meet the overall goal and \$11 million per month to meet the first-phase basic operating budget, Bennett said.

"I'm disappointed in the June report of Cooperative Program receipts, because it is almost \$1.4 million below the total Cooperative Program budget for the month," he admitted. "More specifically, it is more than \$700,000 short of the basic operating budget.

"Year-to-date conventionwide receipts -- taken from October through June -- are ahead of the same point last year but \$4.7 million short of the convention's Cooperative Program budget goal for the nine-month period."

Reasons for the lag are not easy to pinpoint, Bennett said: "I do not know why the Cooperative Program receipts are slowing at this point in time. But I hope the churches will provide resources which will assure a more positive year-end report."

National Cooperative Program receipts represent about 38 percent of funds contributed to the program by Southern Baptist churches. The balance of the total receipts is used to fund mission projects of 40 Southern Baptist state conventions and fellowships.

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Texas Baptist volunteers
aid Brownsville relief

By Ken Camp

N-Tex

Baptist Press
7/8/88

DALLAS (BP)--About a dozen volunteer Texas Baptist Disaster Relief workers helped in an emergency feeding operation for rescue workers in Brownsville, Texas, where a downtown department store building collapsed July 7, killing at least 13 persons and injuring about 47.

The roof of the three-story department store caved in during a torrential afternoon rainstorm. The La Tienda Amigo building had been crowded with more than 100 shoppers and people seeking shelter from the rain. No Texas Baptists were known to be victims.

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Tommy Dulin, regional Texas Baptist Disaster Relief director, and a team of volunteers began working at First Baptist Church in nearby Harlingen, Texas, at 5 p.m. July 7 preparing about 600 sandwiches for rescuers.

Working in cooperation with the American Red Cross, three team members traveled to the disaster site where they served water and sandwiches until midnight. They also helped to distribute food made available by local restaurants to rescuers and the families of victims.

Dulin anticipated Baptist involvement in another feeding operation at noon July 8 as rescue operations continued. He did not foresee the need for the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Mobile Unit, a tractor-trailer rig with mobile field kitchen.

Craig Smith, associate pastor of First Baptist Church in Brownsville, said his church had been involved in the relief effort primarily through members who donated much-needed blood.

A medical team at Valley Baptist Medical Center, Harlingen, was on stand-by for about four hours July 7 and was alerted to receive 10 to 12 patients, but none were admitted, according to hospital spokesperson Aurora Zurlinden.

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Missionary burn victims
moved to Dallas hospital

N-FMB

Baptist Press
7/8/88

ESMERALDAS, Ecuador (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary James Parrish and his son, Stephen, 7, who were in a car fire July 4 in Ecuador, have been transferred to a Dallas burn trauma center.

Parrish's wife, Martha, and their other son, Micah, 5, accompanied them in an ambulance jet. They left Quito, Ecuador, early July 8 and were expected to arrive at the Methodist Medical Center in Dallas 12 hours later, said Betty Law, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's associate area director for Spanish-speaking South America.

The Parrishes youngest son, John, 3, died inside the flame-engulfed car. Parrish had stopped to buy fuel at a gasoline station in Esmeraldas, Ecuador, when an explosion occurred and his car burst into flames. Mrs. Parrish and Micah were at home during the incident. John was buried in Quito following services there July 5.

Stephen, who has second- and third-degree burns, mostly on his face, hands and arms, will be treated in an intensive care unit, and Parrish, whose face and hands were burned, will have a private room in the hospital, Law said. Both are "doing well," she added.

As the Parrishes boarded the jet, Law noted, they told other missionaries, "We'll see you back in Ecuador." The family arrived on the field in Ecuador in December 1987.

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Tennessee pastor tries
'bold mission' wrestling

By Lonnie Wilkey

F-CO
(Tenn.)

Baptist Press
7/8/88

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. (BP)--Tennessee pastor Tom Melzoni has proven he will do almost anything if means an opportunity to share the gospel.

After all, not many pastors would be willing to be body slammed by a 235-lb. professional wrestler.

Melzoni, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Oak Ridge, did just that July 3 during a special Sunday night barbecue and service.

Melzoni, billed as the Powerhouse Parson, took on Chris Whaley, the Masked Saint, who has recently graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and has wrestled professionally for about eight years.

The Tennessee pastor emphasized the sole objective of the event, which attracted 1,000 people, about half of whom were youth, was to "bring people under the influence of the Gospel so they might have the opportunity to have eternal life."

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Whaley, who plans to start a mission in Lakeland, Fla., led a worship service immediately after the match and told how he overcame polio and became involved in wrestling.

Melzoni proclaimed himself winner with his "famous sleeper hold." After he had Whaley in his grasp, "they turned on one of my sermons and that did the trick," he laughed.

Melzoni, a former high school All-American football player from Dayton, Ohio, who is not small at 6'2" 190 lbs., said, "The event was more successful than I'd ever thought it would be."

He observed churches have to be willing to reach people where they are, noting professional wrestling is attracting "hundreds of thousands of people across America." He estimated Central gained the names of 300 prospects through the event. "Our mission is to share the Gospel."

Will Tom Melzoni wrestle again? He said he told his congregation he has gone into "semi-retirement like Mike Tyson" but admitted he could be persuaded back into the ring "for a good cause."

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World Baptist growth has
increase of 1.4 million

By John M. Wilkes

N-CO
(BWA)

Baptist Press
7/8/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptists in India, Korea, Honduras and Togo have reported tremendous growth for the past year, helping to push membership in Baptist churches upward by 1.4 million worldwide.

In reports to the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) compiled by the world organization's Division of Study and Research, the BWA's 137 constituent bodies reported 35,418,044 baptized members, an increase of 1,385,673 or 4.07 percent during 1987.

Denton Lotz, acting BWA general secretary-treasurer, said, "Baptists are an evangelizing people. This is what unites us. Doctrine divides, but mission brings us together. We are grateful to God for the great increase and pray that we shall keep before us even more the challenge of evangelizing the world in our generation."

In India, the Convention of Baptist Churches in Northern Circars reported 55,000 members at the end of 1986, which increased to 125,000 at the end of 1987. However, this convention reported eight fewer churches for a current total of 210. Their percentage increase was 127.3.

The Karnataka Baptist Convention, also in India, showed a 50 percent increase by moving from 8,000 to 12,000 members. This group also reported 90 churches, five more than the previous year.

Baptists in Korea also reported a statistical increase of 127.3 percent over the previous year, from 132,000 members in 913 churches to 300,000 members in 1,400 churches. However, the BWA had carried the previous figure over several years when no updated statistics were given.

Growth in Korea, host country for the 16th Baptist World Congress scheduled Aug. 14-19, 1990, in Seoul, is, therefore, considered cumulative through recent reporting periods, Study and Research Director Reinhold J. Kerstan said.

Asia, among the six BWA regional fellowships, showed the highest overall increase of 16.46 percent, going for the first time above the 2 million membership mark to a total of 2,328,058.

In Central America and the Caribbean, the National Convention of Baptist Churches in Honduras grew from 2,269 members in 40 churches to 4,500 members in 56 churches, a 98.3 percent rate. The Dominican (Republic) Baptist Convention reported 34.2 percent growth and the Bermuda Baptist Fellowship reported 22 percent also were leading bodies there.

In Africa, which overall had a growth rate of 1.2 percent among Baptists, the Togo Baptist Association led with 7,216 members last year compared with 4,500 at the end of 1986, representing a numerical increase of 60.4 percent.

The Baptist Evangelical Association of Ethiopia went from 4,200 to 6,178 members for a 47.1 percent increase. The Evangelical Baptist Church of Malawai and the Baptist Union of Zimbabwe also reported significant growth.

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In Europe, the Union of Baptist Churches in Bulgaria showed a gain of from 670 to 730 members, a 9 percent growth rate.

After having a slight decrease during 1986 following its slow but steady growth every year since the 1940s, the Union of Baptist Churches in The Netherlands restored the trend with 12,342 members compared with 12,251, a .7 percent growth rate.

Europe overall reported 1,110,943 members this past year, up from 1,110,527 in 1986.

For North America, the National Baptist Convention in the U.S.A., Inc., had the highest gain of 13.2 percent, from 6,800,200 members to 7,700,000.

Throughout North America, where Baptists have the highest concentration, the figure of 29,447,688 members was a 3.5 percent increase over 1986.

The regional totals are: Africa, 1,430,499 members in 1986, compared to 1,448,275 in 1987; Asia, 1,999,084 in 1986 and 2,328,058 in 1987; Central America and the Caribbean, 228,800 in 1986 and 231,587 in 1987; Europe, 1,110,527 in 1986 and 1,110,943 in 1987; North America, 28,452,417 in 1986 and 29,447,688 in 1987; and South America 809,324 in 1986 and 849,824 in 1987.

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Young men raise roof,
touch future in Boston

By Bill Bangham

F-60
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
7/8/88

NORTHBOROUGH, Mass. (BP)--Members of Baptist Young Men groups from six states capped off a week-long missions project by raising the roof and setting the steeple at Rice Memorial Baptist Church in Northborough, Mass., a suburban Boston community.

The 18 young men, participants in an annual nationwide home missions work project sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, were one of 15 groups scheduled to help the Northborough congregation build a new sanctuary and education space.

The church would not have been able to build without volunteers, said pastor J.V. Davis. Nearly 300 volunteers who will participate in the project over 13 weeks this summer will allow the church to construct a \$780,000 facility for \$400,000.

But Davis said he believes their influence has already gone beyond the tangible, physical help of their labor.

"Only the Lord knows the impact this is having on our community," he said. "Everywhere I go (people in the community) want to talk about our building. They're impressed with the network of volunteers that allows something like this to take place.

"That tower going up today made a real statement to our community. It says that we're here, and we're going to be here."

Three previous groups framed the walls and constructed two-thirds of the roof. The Baptist Young Men members finished setting rafters, decking the roof and set the tower which, with its cross, is the modern-day equivalent of a steeple.

They ranged in age from 16 to 39. All were either members of High School Baptist Young Men and Baptist Young Men units in their churches or were advisers to those units.

They came from California, Georgia, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina and Tennessee.

Jim Pierce, a Missions Service Corps volunteer acting as construction coordinator for the project, enjoyed working with the volunteers. "They're young and they're eager," he said. "All they need is some direction. They can drive a nail, but they don't know anything about layout or anything else." But by the end of the week, they were running radial-arm saws, figuring complicated roof angles and doing finish carpentry.

"It's fun to watch the progress they make in their own personal skills," said Pierce. "I'm proud of them -- makes me have hope for our world."

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For the young men and their advisers, beyond the opportunity to help someone else, the project was an opportunity to experience missions firsthand.

"I've learned more on this trip about missions than anything I've done in my church life," said Leland Jackson from Belmont, N.C. "It's renewed me toward missions."

Jackson, a medical sales representative who serves as adviser at Belmont's First Baptist Church, compared his experience with priorities back home: "Our priorities are totally out of kilter compared with these people. These people are looking for money for stamps. We're looking for money for a new carpet, and the carpet we've got is good. We're just tired of the color."

Steve White, 29, custodian at First Baptist Church of Sedalia, Mo., will never forget the time he spent on the building project. "If I come back 10 years from now, hey, I drove some of the nails in that roof. I feel honored," he said.

Pierce offered some final comments as the group prepared to leave: "You came to build a building. The building is not finished, but you've made your contribution. And that's what God asks us to do.

"I think that's indicative of the kingdom of God. None of us by ourselves are going to build the kingdom of God. But we each make our own contribution and ultimately God's kingdom will come to pass."

Jon Miles, 16, from First Baptist Church of Amory, Miss., echoed Pierce's comments: "It's surprising the feeling you get knowing you've touched the future, that someone will come in here and have an experience that will change their life.

"That's going to happen. And we've had a part of that."

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(BP) photos available upon request from Brotherhood Commission

Birthday service set
for Baptist bishop

N-10
(BWA)

Baptist Press
7/8/88

RIGA, Latvia (BP)--The Baptist church in Riga has scheduled a special service to recognize retired Bishop Petris Egle on his 85th birthday July 10.

Egle is one of three known Baptist "bishops" in the world. Traditionally, Latvian Baptists have had a bishop as the leader of their churches (now numbering 60 with some 5,000 members).

Although officially retired since 1979, when his successor, Janis Tervits, was named bishop, Egle still is active as a preacher and in sharing his biblical knowledge and experience with younger preachers.

In addition to Tervits and Egle, the other bishop is D.K. Mohanty of the Cuttack Diocese in Orissa State, India. Although not a Baptist bishop, he is a Baptist serving as a bishop of the Christian Church of North India, of which Baptists are a part.

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CORRECTION: Please note the following corrections in the 6/27/88 BP story titled "Kingerys evangelize Asians with agriculture, aerobics":

Change the first paragraph to read: DALLAS (BP)--Through agriculture, advocacy and aerobics, Baptist mission volunteers Chip and Jean Kingery ...

Add to the end of the third graph: They are Texas Baptist Mission Service Corps volunteers commissioned by their home church in Dallas.

Thanks,
Baptist Press