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CP tops predictions;
falls short of goal

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists' 1987-88 combined ministry budget surpassed predictions but fell short of its goal.

The Cooperative Program received \$134,787,542 for conventionwide causes during the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the denomination's Executive Committee.

The total is almost \$1.2 million more than convention officials had predicted, Bennett said.

But it is more than \$5 million below the budget's \$140 million goal, he added.

The \$134.8 million total includes a gain of more than \$4.3 million over the previous year's budget, Bennett said.

However, the increase amounts to a decrease in buying power, since the 3.4 percent gain trailed the current U.S. inflation rate of about 4.1 percent.

Consequently, the just-completed budget marked the first time in seven years that national receipts for the Cooperative Program -- as measured in constant dollars that account for inflation -- have fallen below the previous year's Cooperative Program gifts, Bennett noted.

Nevertheless, the \$134.8 million budget was a record, he added: "It is gratifying to note Southern Baptists are giving more money than ever before to support the cause of Christ around the world. The churches and their people are to be commended for their commitment."

The 1987-88 budget supplied \$132 million to support the work of 19 convention-related organizations, reported Tim A. Hedquist, the Executive Committee's vice president for business and finance. The budget also provided \$36,641 to fund the work of the Southern Baptist Peace Committee, he added.

It supplied \$716,801 to pay for capital needs first targeted in the 1985-86 Cooperative Program budget, he said. And it paid \$2,034,100 to provide for capital needs earmarked in the 1986-87 budget.

The budget left unfunded \$3,839,900 remaining from the 1986-87 capital needs portion of the budget and the entire \$6,450,000 budgeted for capital needs in the 1987-88 budget, he added.

The budget also did not pay out any of the \$1.55 million itemized in the second phase of its basic operating budget, he said, explaining all the outstanding capital needs budgets first would have to be met.

The 1988-89 Cooperative Program budget, which took effect Oct. 1, is \$145.6 million. That includes more than \$137.6 million for the first-phase basic operating budget, almost \$6.9 million for the capital needs budget and almost \$1.1 million for the second-phase basic operating budget.

As with the previous budgets, the \$10,289,900 pending from the capital needs portions of the 1986-87 and 1987-88 budgets must be paid before funds can be applied to the 1989-90 capital needs and second-phase basic operating budgets.

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The Cooperative Program supports evangelistic, missionary, educational and church-starting enterprises around the world. Money is channeled from church members to their congregations, to state conventions and to national and international causes.

The \$134.8 million received for the 1987-88 budget is being used to support efforts beyond the state level. That amount represents about 39 percent of funds sent from individual congregations. The balance is used to fund similar efforts within 36 state conventions and four state fellowships.

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333 missionaries sought;
budget becomes crucial

By Marty Croll

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Budget restraints have forced Southern Baptist missionaries overseas to take a look at strategy and, in some cases, reduce the number of requests they are making for new co-workers in the coming year.

Missionaries asked the board to fill 333 new jobs in 1989, about 22 percent fewer than in 1988.

Speaking at the home offices of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board during an annual review session concerning personnel needs, area directors of mission work pointed out that field budgets next year are less able to support new missionaries and the work they do.

And because the individual Southern Baptist mission fields overseas are continuing to narrow their personnel requests to meet strategic needs, area directors urged board staff to be even more precise in matching new missionaries' skills with the jobs that need to be filled. Some suggested that the successful missionary of the future would be a self-starter with experience in sharing Jesus Christ person-to-person and starting churches composed of these new believers.

About three-fourths of next year's requests, or 240 units, are for evangelism and church development specialists. Of that group, 179 units are for church starters. A unit can be either a couple or a single person, depending on how the request is filled.

Other requests include 17 for educators, 42 for health-care workers, eight for media workers, 18 for support people including business specialists and eight for community development workers.

The top 25 requests, chosen by the board's Global Strategy Group from priority needs identified on the field, include four missionaries to develop ties to groups of unreached people inaccessible to traditional missionary methods.

Area directors also outlined personnel considerations for the future, told about trends in their areas and heard that the number of new missionaries appointed in 1988 would represent a drop for the third straight year.

Bryan Brasington, director of work in Spanish South America, said because of budget and strategy he asked missionaries in the nine countries of his area to submit five personnel requests each, although mission organizations scarcely would be able to pay operating expenses for half of them.

Of Europe, Area Director Keith Parker said he already had asked missionary organizations this year to cut excess from their budgets, and because of continued restraints, many have no budget left to fund future missionaries.

"When they get there, we have got to support them," said Dale Thorne, area director for North Africa and the Middle East. "You cannot bring someone you can't rent a house for. So we either have to cut down on what we provide the people we have or limit the people we bring in."

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In Eastern and Southern Africa, several mission organizations are starting to think they will "just do with the missionaries they have," said Area Director John Faulkner. Otherwise, they would need to use money from operating budgets of existing programs to support new missionaries.

Missionaries and home office staff were forced to shave 12 percent off their 1989 operating budgets because of a shortfall in receipts. Board President R. Keith Parks has warned Southern Baptists that eroding support eventually could force a retreat from sending new missionaries. Next year's budget reflects the first decrease in Foreign Mission Board spending since the Great Depression years of the 1930s.

"It is ironic," said Harlan Spurgeon, vice president for mission management and personnel. "This is a time when missions opportunity and vision are at their zenith."

The two main sources of funding for the foreign missions budget are Southern Baptists' giving to the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and through the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget. The Lottie Moon goal has not been met since 1981 and has fallen some \$5 million short of its goal for the past two years. Some church leaders have threatened to cut back giving through the Cooperative Program because they are dissatisfied with the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention.

But area directors stopped short of pessimism about budget restraints, generally agreeing less money already has caused missionaries to better define strategies.

"There are ways of cutting a family budget and still enjoy living, and there are ways of cutting a mission budget and still enjoy serving," Brasington said, hinting that the Southern Baptist mission enterprise could be on the downside of a "tremendous golden era."

Speaking about the three-year downward trend in missionary appointments, Associate Vice President Tim Brendle told the group there is no reason for panic. But Brendle, who directs the mission personnel office, listed several possible reasons, including start-up time for the emphasis on enlisting more preachers and a board reorganization; short-handedness among board staff; a shrinking dollar overseas; the 10-year-old convention controversy; and more strategic field emphases, which reduce the pool of qualified Southern Baptists available to fill these posts.

He also reminded the area directors that many Southern Baptists who have the necessary skills remain unresponsive to a lost world. "To reverse the numbers of the last three years ... will require heroic efforts and God-given victories in what I believe is a spiritual war," he said.

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Visitors' authority fills
Las Vegas housing requests

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
10/18/88

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--More than 5,000 Southern Baptists have been assigned hotel accommodations for their convention's annual meeting next summer in Las Vegas, Nev.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors' Authority has assigned 5,440 rooms to participants in the June 13-15 meeting, announced Convention Manager Tim A. Hedquist.

"The visitors' authority received 7,033 hotel requests, or 1,593 more than we could accommodate," Hedquist reported. "But we placed more than 77 percent of the people who have requested rooms. Last year, we only were able to place around 37 percent."

Indeed, convention housing should not be a problem in Las Vegas, he noted.

The resort city already is home to more than 51,000 hotel rooms, and more are being built. That's 5,000 rooms more than the largest number of people ever registered for a Southern Baptist meeting.

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The drawing for the 5,000-plus rooms in the main Southern Baptist Convention block was held Oct. 12 in Las Vegas, Hedquist said.

Hotel accommodations have been a point of dispute in recent years, especially as moderate and conservative Southern Baptists have attended their annual meetings in record numbers, contending for control of the convention.

But as in previous years, convention planners took precautions to ensure fairness in the way the rooms were assigned, Hedquist said.

The process was conducted by five employees of the visitors' authority, none of them Southern Baptist, he explained. All housing requests were removed from post office containers, stacked on tables and opened randomly. Rooms were assigned as space in the requested hotels permitted.

This year, an outside member of the press -- Michael B. McCullough, editor of the Nevada Baptist, newsjournal of the Nevada Baptist Convention -- was invited to observe the process. He told Baptist Press: "The opening was done as impartially as you can do it; request forms were randomly stacked and processed. It looked fair to me."

The 1,593 requests not assigned to hotel rooms failed for three reasons, Hedquist said:

-- About 100 requests were mailed too early or too late -- before Oct. 1 and after Oct. 3.

Oct. 3 postmarks were accepted this year because the Oct. 1-2 filing dates fell on a weekend, and some post offices do not cancel mail on Saturday or Sunday, he said.

-- About 600 requests were not processed because requestors "chose to limit the price they would accept," he added. Hotels with lower room rates were filled early, and people whose requests were handled later were not put in hotels with rates higher than they indicated they would accept.

-- The rest, about 900, fell victim to the luck of the draw: All available rooms had been assigned by the time those requests were handled.

People whose requests were not assigned should not have trouble getting rooms, Hedquist said: "The visitors' authority is shipping those forms back to our office. We're going to send those requestors letters notifying them they did not get a room. We also will send them the number for the Las Vegas hotel registration hotline, a service of the visitors' bureau. We also will provide them with other suggestions for reserving rooms in the city."

Each person whose room request was accepted will receive written notification from the visitors' authority, he said. Later, the hotels will contact those people directly, verifying the registrations and asking for room deposits.

People who did not participate in the drawing may receive information about hotel reservations from the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

The 5,440-room SBC block only has three segments that were pre-reserved, Hedquist said. They are 150 rooms for the SBC Woman's Missionary Union, 125 rooms for the press and 325 rooms for Executive Committee members and staff, SBC agency leaders, Baptist state convention and fellowship executives, SBC program personalities and some members of convention committees.

The SBC block is about 1,100 rooms smaller than originally anticipated, Hedquist reported: "Some hotels withdrew their initial offers. They decided not to participate because of the nature of our convention."

Primary obstacles for convention participants will be booking rooms the weekend before the meeting starts and paying for airline tickets, he noted.

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"Las Vegas does not like to book people beginning on Saturday night," he said of the first potential problem. "But people can work around that by dealing directly with their hotels. Participants in the pre-convention Las Vegas evangelism emphases should not have major trouble getting reservations."

And of the travel cost, he added: "Direct airfare to Las Vegas is not reduced for Saturday travel. However, the cost of other flights into the airlines' hub cities should be reduced for participants who travel on Saturday."

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(BP) photo mailed to Baptist state papers from Baptist Press central office

Atlanta's First Baptist
approves relocation plan

By Joe Westbury

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ATLANTA (BP)--Members of First Baptist Church of Atlanta voted Oct. 16 to move the 140-year-old downtown church to the city's northern suburbs.

Charles Stanley, former Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of the church for the past 18 years, outlined the plan during both Sunday morning worship services.

Later that evening in a called business meeting, members decided to purchase a 52-acre tract in a mixed commercial-residential area just off Interstate 285 at North Peachtree Road in Dunwoody.

The property is owned by Avon Products Inc., a New York-based cosmetics firm that maintains its regional office and distribution site there.

First Baptist will purchase the \$22.5 million property for \$20 million, with the difference being a gift from Avon. The church will then lease the site back to Avon for up to three years to enable the business to continue its operations as it seeks a new location.

At the end of the 36-month lease, First Baptist will pay the \$20 million bank loan with funds raised from the sale of 4.5 acres of its 17 acres of downtown property. Avon, through a leasing arrangement, has offered to pay higher-than-market rates to First Baptist that also will cover closing costs, legal fees and interest payments incurred by the church.

Stanley attributed the unique financing to a divine plan that provides an opportunity "to acquire tomorrow's property at today's cost and sell today's property at tomorrow's price."

"These plans are not the works of man's wisdom but the hand of God. We are able to secure an ideal location at a fair price," he told the congregation.

He then publicly thanked Avon officials for their \$2.5 million gift and for their cooperation, and asked God to bless them in their future business dealings.

In addition to the acreage, First Baptist will get the business's 325,000-square-foot headquarters building which includes 30 offices, 2 large conference rooms and a 400-seat dining area. The building more than doubles the church's current space of 150,000 square feet.

The property comes complete with its own softball field, access road and parking for 500 cars.

The corporation's packing room, the size of two-and-a-half football fields, could be remodeled for educational space, while the warehouse could be converted to a gymnasium and indoor track, Stanley said.

The church's vote empowered Stanley, Associate Pastor Fred Powell and the seven-member relocation committee to continue negotiations to purchase an additional 30 acres adjoining the western boundary of the Avon property.

The second tract would be used as a buffer against encroaching commercialization and to provide for growth "well into the 21st century," Stanley said.

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Although no plans were announced for the additional property, Stanley speculated First Baptist eventually might launch a seminary, Bible school or Christian day school at the site.

The relocation is not dependent on purchase of both tracts of land, Stanley noted. "The 52 acres will be adequate for our needs, but the second tract will be a hedge for future growth of our ministry," he said.

The Avon property was the only location of more than 40 sites considered in north Atlanta that met all 11 criteria for relocation, Stanley said.

Among those considerations were standards that the new site be in a growth area convenient to the majority of the church membership and that it not cause displacement of homeowners or conflict with the location of other major evangelical churches.

The site will be a 20-minute drive for the majority of First Baptist members, 80 percent of whom live in the immediate area.

Although Stanley gave no timetable for occupying the site, he said the church would require 18 months to compile architectural plans and a similar length of time for renovation and construction of a new sanctuary.

"We feel confident we can be in our new facilities within three-and-a-half to four years," he told the church.

The purchase arrangement will allow the church to begin new construction at any time as long as it does not impair Avon's daily operations. Renovation of the existing structure also can begin as the corporation vacates portions of the building.

Although details remain to be worked out, Stanley said he favored a 7,500-seat sanctuary rather than a 10,000-seat building "that would turn worshippers into spectators." First Baptist's current auditorium, constructed in 1930 at 754 Peachtree Street, seats about 2,600 people.

All renovation and construction costs are to be recovered through sale of the church's remaining downtown property, which Stanley speculated would be more than \$60 million.

First Baptist will maintain some type of downtown presence after the move, Stanley said, but he did not elaborate on the nature of that ministry. Members have voiced concern that the church's food and clothing ministry not be abandoned following the relocation.

With 11,056 members, First Baptist is the ninth-largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The move will leave only one Southern Baptist church in inner city Atlanta. Baptist Tabernacle, which has been in its current location since 1911, continues to evaluate its downtown ministry and is considering its future in the neighborhood.

The church, which also seats about 2,600 in its sanctuary, now averages 150 in Sunday morning worship. It has been without a pastor for the past 18 months.