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Home missionary appointments up,  
Annie offering falls short

By Mark Wingfield

ATLANTA (BP)--As of December, Southern Baptists had deployed their largest number of home missionaries ever but failed to meet the goal for their annual home missions offering.

Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis told the agency's executive committee 3,841 missionaries now serve across the United States and its territories. That is the largest number of missionaries under appointment by the board at any time, he said.

However, Lewis also told the board that gifts to the 1988 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions will fall nearly \$7 million short of the goal. Receipts as of Dec. 6 were \$30.6 million, only 82 percent of the \$37.5 million goal.

Annie Armstrong gifts are up 2 percent from the same time last year, Lewis said, noting that does not keep pace with the 4.5 percent rate of inflation. Although the books had not been closed on the offering, Home Mission Board leaders did not anticipate a substantial change from the current figures.

Lewis told the executive committee he is encouraged to see the board's emphases on church starting, church growth, evangelism and ministry catching on across the nation.

However, he expressed concern about the proposed distribution of Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget funds for 1988-89. The program and budget subcommittee of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee has proposed no increases in distribution of Cooperative Program funds to Southern Baptist agencies for operating expenses.

Lewis said he intends to ask the program and budget subcommittee to reconsider when it meets in January.

He also expressed concern about what he called a "continued assault" on the Cooperative Program and an escalating trend toward negative designation of funds away from some agencies.

"Negative designation is becoming a popular concept for channeling money away from parts of our cooperative ministries some may not agree with," he noted. "This smacks of the immaturity of a child who says, 'If I can't have my way, I'll take my bat and ball and go home.'"

The executive committee also elected Don Carter and Dean Doster to new positions. Carter, who has been the board's purchasing agent since 1983, was named director of purchasing services. Doster, currently associate vice president for evangelism, was named a regional coordinator in the board's planning section.

At the December meeting, directors appointed 26 missionaries and approved support for 17 mission pastors.

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Budget crisis hits  
Mercer University

By William T. Neal

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MACON, Ga. (BP)--Mercer University trustees discovered a short-term debt twice as large as they previously had been told but reaffirmed Mercer President R. Kirby Godsey during their Dec. 1-2 meeting in Macon, Ga.

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Meanwhile, two groups of Mercer faculty members have asked for the resignations of Godsey and other administrators whom they believe hid the deficit.

The Georgia Baptist school incurred a \$10.8 million debt during the past five years, with projections of an additional \$4.5 million to \$6 million this year, said trustee Chairman Robert Steed.

Godsey admitted he made an error in judgment by not sharing complete financial information with trustees before the December board meeting. Trustees responded by passing unanimously a resolution reaffirming their support of Godsey's leadership.

However, the trustee finance committee accepted the resignation of Robert A. Skelton, vice president for finance. Neither Skelton nor Mercer officials announced whether he will leave Mercer or move into another job affiliated with the university.

In separate meetings Dec. 6, the faculties of the College of Liberal Arts in Macon and the College of Arts and Sciences in Atlanta called for the resignation of Godsey and other top aides.

Macon faculty passed a no-confidence resolution 74-14, and their Atlanta colleagues adopted their resolution unanimously. Citing the possibility of faculty firings, the Macon chapter of the American Association of University Professors has announced it is exploring legal recourses the faculty may use to keep their jobs.

During the trustee meeting, Godsey attributed the deficit to a combination of factors, including the school's rapid expansion, faulty assumptions related to projected income and sources of income.

Steed, an attorney from Atlanta, told reporters Mercer as a whole is in sound financial shape, even though the financial problem is serious.

Trustees and administrators agreed budget cuts of \$7 million will be necessary this year. A special trustee committee will work with administrators to determine where to make the cuts.

Faculty and administrators will be affected by the cuts, Godsey said, reporting no specific number of layoffs had yet been decided. The nature and extent of budget cuts should be decided within the next month, Steed said.

Trustees discussed restructuring Mercer's present debt under more favorable terms and the possibility of turning land assets into cash income. Funds from any sale of university property in Atlanta or Forsyth, Ga., would be placed in endowment, but endowment income could be used to help ease the school's financial situation, Godsey said.

Trustees also are considering redirecting their fund-raising efforts to generate money for the operating budget rather than endowment.

Mercer's total indebtedness, including long-term loans, is about \$70 million, school officials said.

Godsey's critics have claimed the recent financial disclosures verified their charges of mismanagement at Mercer.

Godsey's administration has been marked by controversy in recent years. Critics have cited the handling of the merger between Mercer and Tift College in Forsyth; expansion of Mercer's academic programs, including its new medical and engineering schools; the proposed change in its liberal arts emphasis on the Atlanta campus; the rumored sale of property in Forsyth and Atlanta; and alleged liberalism of the school and its president.

The faculty also has voiced disagreement with Godsey over the direction of the school. And faculty members have expressed discontent with high administrative salaries, quoted by the Atlanta Constitution to be \$120,000 for Godsey and as much as \$100,00 for other administrators.

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However, observers noted faculty members generally supported Godsey last year when he was under personal attack in what they said was an attempt by conservative Georgia Baptists to curb academic freedom.

Faculty spokesmen have said their disagreements with Godsey and conservatives' complaints are unrelated.

Trustees have not reacted to the faculty groups' demands. Prior to their meetings, Godsey said he would be unmoved by negative resolutions or votes of no confidence from the faculty.

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Bivocational pastors lauded  
for exemplary ministry

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JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Pastors of churches in three states were honored as exemplary bivocational ministers during the Southern Baptist National Council of Bivocational Ministries.

The awards were presented by Dale Holloway, national consultant for bivocational ministries with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, honoring bivocational ministers in open-country, urban and new mission congregations.

William M. Suttles, pastor for 38 years at Haralson Baptist Church in a rural area southwest of Atlanta, was honored as for his work in a town-and-country situation. Suttles is acting president and provost of Georgia State University in Atlanta. He has been a country bivocational preacher for more than 50 years.

Claud Slate, pastor of Rivercrest Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, for 28 years, received a plaque as exemplary bivocational pastor in a metropolitan area. Slate, who supplements his income through direct sales, marketing and insurance commissions, was recognized for his leadership role in establishing and leading bivocational ministers' fellowships in Tarrant Baptist Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Ken Brown, pastor of Lifeline Baptist Mission in Florence, Miss., was honored for leading his congregation to baptize 22 new Christian believers last year, with 20 other new converts awaiting baptism at the time the annual report was prepared. A former auto body shop owner in Amarillo, Texas, Brown helped start the mission four years ago. To support his family, he does automotive upholstery work, restores antique cars, vinyl and convertible tops.

The three pastors honored during the conference were success models other bivocational ministers could admire, respect and emulate, Holloway said. "We're not saying these are the very best bivocational ministers in the SBC, but we are holding them up as exemplary models for others," he explained.

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Sellers Home offers toll-free  
number for maternity inquiries

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Sellers Baptist Home and Adoption Center in New Orleans has installed a toll-free telephone line to handle crisis pregnancy and maternity inquiries, (800) 552-9243.

Mary Dan Kuhnle, director of the Southern Baptist home for unwed mothers, said trained social workers will be available from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time. Callers may leave messages on an answering machine after hours.

Sellers Home is supported by the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions and is operated by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Sellers Home offers residential care in a family environment for pregnant unmarried women. Mothers-to-be receive professional prenatal and postnatal care as well as delivery services. Residents have access to professional counselors, child-care classes and resources for completing their educations.

Calls about adoption should be directed to the home's regular telephone number so that the toll-free number may be left open for women in crisis, Kuhnle said.

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Breakaway Catholic Missions  
group loses exemption appeal

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--A small breakaway Catholic missions organization has failed to convince the U.S. Supreme Court to review the revocation of its federal tax exemption by the Internal Revenue Service.

The group, Contemporary Mission Inc., based in Westport, Conn., fell into disfavor with the tax collection agency after moving into a 19-room mansion on two acres of waterfront property overlooking Long Island Sound in the upscale Connecticut community. Besides the house, the group owned three Mercedes Benz automobiles, a motorcycle and a yacht.

Five priests comprise the organization's total membership, one of whom became an Eastern Rite Catholic and subsequently married. The priest's wife and their four children are the other occupants of the Westport mansion.

Contemporary Mission Inc. was organized in 1968 following an internal disagreement within the Society of Montfort Missionaries in St. Louis. The original breakaway group consisted of a priest and several seminarians engaged in inner-city charitable work.

The group was granted federal tax exemption in 1970 as an "integral part" of the larger Missionary Society of the Holy Apostles, an organization covered by a group exemption issued to the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

In papers filed with the Supreme Court, the U.S. Department of Justice noted the group's tax exemption was revoked in 1977 after financial data revealed direct mail sales of nearly \$1.5 million that year. Products sold included tax guides, diet books, bath salts, exercise devices, jewelry, golf tips and the books of psychic Edgar Cayce. Net profits that year came to \$250,000.

Two lower federal courts later upheld the IRS action revoking tax-exempt status.

Arguing the group "conducted business on a grand scale," the government asked the high court to reject the group's appeal to reverse the lower decisions. "Rather than living in a frugal or ascetic fashion consistent with a vow of poverty, (the priests) enjoyed every manner of luxury," the government argued.

Attorneys for the group, on the other hand, asked the justices to review what they called discriminatory treatment. The IRS demanded "distinctly different and more rigorous" standards of Contemporary Mission Inc. than of other more established Catholic missions agencies, they claimed.

Insisting the five priests did take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the group's lawyers said most of the priests' time is spent in study and meditation, religious rites and a ministry to runaway teen-agers in lower Manhattan.

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Peacemaking conference  
hears about 'Star Wars'

By Pat Cole

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The Strategic Defense Initiative -- Star Wars -- may help deter a nuclear war or prevent catastrophic destruction should the United States and the Soviet Union engage in nuclear warfare, a Reagan administration official told a conference on peacemaking.

Matthew Murphy, public information officer for the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, said the Strategic Defense Initiative gives the United States a choice between increasing its deterrence and protection or "submitting to determinism with a capital 'D.'"

Murphy spoke to a Dec. 1-2 conference on "Christian Peacemaking in a Hostile World" at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The conference was sponsored by the Clarence Jordan Center for Christian Ethical Concerns at the Louisville, Ky., school.

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The administration, Murphy said, has not determined whether the system is possible. "We are conducting a feasibility program," he explained. "We have to be funded to the extent we know the program will work."

In addition to defending against nuclear missiles, Murphy said, Strategic Defense Initiative could be a defense against the growing threat of countries placing chemical weapons on ballistic missiles.

Pat McCollough, executive director of the Louisville Council on Peacemaking and Religion, voiced doubts that the system would be able to intercept more than 25 percent of the Soviet missiles and also said the system may prompt the Soviet Union to produce enough nuclear missiles to "overwhelm the system." She added the program could cost up to \$1 trillion and would provide no defense against manned bombers, submarine-launched missiles and low-flying cruise missiles.

If the system were coupled with a first strike by the United States that destroyed 80 to 90 percent of the Soviet missile arsenal, it would be able to intercept the remaining Soviet missiles, McCollough said, noting such a scenario makes the Strategic Defense Initiative "highly de-stabilizing."

She compared the situation to "sword and shield" warfare. "You go in with the sword and protect yourself with the shield," she said.

Strategic stability must be maintained because there are "50,000 nuclear weapons in the world, 400 of which could destroy the creation," she added.

Murphy denied the United States has the first-strike capability described by McCollough. The Soviet Union would never have agreed to the SALT II accords if the United States had that type of potential, he said.

In order to allay Soviet fears over the Strategic Defense Initiative, the United States has offered to exchange programmatic information with the Soviets on strategic defense, Murphy said, noting the Soviets have their own defense program. The offer included reciprocal visits to strategic defense laboratories and test sites, he said.

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Peacemaking efforts led  
to treaty, professor says

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press  
12/7/88

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Grassroots peacemaking efforts in the United States and Western Europe can take partial credit for the first missile reduction treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union, claimed a Southern Baptist ethicist.

Glen Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty was a "huge triumph" for the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign and the European peace movements, despite claims by President-elect George Bush that the treaty success proved the freeze movement was wrong.

Bush's contention that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to the treaty because he wanted to stop the U.S. missile buildup was "most likely right," Stassen conceded. However, that "hardly proved the freeze is wrong," he said.

The treaty "confirms what the freeze has always said," he said. "The freeze is in both sides' national interests because both sides wanted to stop the other side's buildup."

Stassen spoke during a Dec. 1-2 conference at Southern Seminary titled "Christian Peacemaking in a Hostile World." The conference was sponsored by the Clarence Jordan Center for Christian Ethical Concerns at the Louisville, Ky., school.

Historically, military buildups by one side have led to counter military buildups for the other side, Stassen noted. Therefore, something besides the U.S. missile buildup must have been responsible for the INF treaty, he insisted.

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The INF treaty, signed last year in Washington, will eliminate all U.S. and Soviet medium-range, land-based nuclear missiles by May 31, 1991.

A member of the Reagan administration refuted Stassen's assessment of the freeze campaign's influence on the treaty.

Matthew Murphy, public information officer for the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, said the Soviets were in an advantageous position when the freeze was first suggested. The Soviets already had 800 intermediate nuclear warheads deployed, but the United States had not yet deployed the Pershing IIs or the ground-launched cruise missiles, he noted.

"You need leverage," he said. "You need something to get the other side to make a concession. I would argue as a self-evident proposition that you don't get the Soviets to give up something unless you make them fear something or unless you give them the incentive to give something up."

In his address, Stassen traced the influence of the freeze campaign and the European peace movements on the proposal to eliminate all land-based, medium-range nuclear missiles, commonly called the "zero solution."

"No significant arms control agreement has been reached in this century when the people weren't pushing for peace," he contended.

The zero solution originally was proposed in 1981 by West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt because of pressure from the European peace movements, Stassen said. Two books, a German work, "Mittel-streckenwaffen in Europa" by Lothar Ruehl, and Strobe Talbot's "Deadly Gambits," document the peace movements' influence in proposing the elimination of medium-range missiles, he added.

The freeze campaign, working with a military adviser to the West German government, also helped persuade the NATO Nuclear Planning Group in 1981 to support the zero solution, he said. Only the U.S. member, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, voted against the proposal. However, after detecting widespread opposition in Europe to U.S. deployment of additional medium-range missiles, the Reagan administration announced support for the zero solution, Stassen said.

Gorbachev made a "surprising initiative" at Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986 by proposing the same zero solution that NATO had approved earlier, he said. However, President Reagan rejected the offer, because the Soviet leader linked the proposal to dismantlement of the United States' Strategic Defense Initiative program.

Yet the Soviets later were able to drop their demand to link the treaty and the Strategic Defense Initiative because Congress, with encouragement from the freeze movement, reduced the system's funding and deleted the funding for tests that violated the anti-ballistic missile treaty, Stassen said.