



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St. N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave. N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

December 14, 1988

88-198

RTVC to receive \$375,000
for extension on sale of ACTS

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission would receive up to \$375,000 under terms of an agreement to grant a second extension for closing the sale of the ACTS network to a for-profit corporation.

The extension of the closing date to March 14, 1989, was granted at the scheduled December 13 meeting of the executive committee of the RTVC trustees at the request of Friends of ACTS, a group of investors based in San Antonio, Texas. Commission spokesmen said the Friends of ACTS private sale offering document is due to expire on that date.

Friends of ACTS, a private corporation headed by San Antonio, Texas, advertising executive Center (Chip) Atkins, originally was scheduled to complete the sale Sept. 15 under a contract with the RTVC signed June 9. The contract calls for Friends of ACTS to continue the programming policies currently in effect for the network and provide up to 35 hours per week of time for commission-produced programs for 30 years.

In addition, the commission is to be paid \$11 million at closing. The network is to purchase RTVC programming to be used on the network at the rate of \$2 million per year for 11 and one-half years, and pay a 3 percent override on advertising income for 30 years.

Atkins said the offering document could not be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission until Sept. 14, and his group did not have enough time to get the \$20 million investment package committed as required by the contract. A spokesman for Friends of ACTS said, "The SEC knew what it was doing when it established a six-month time for private placement documents."

In exchange for the extension of time, the purchasers have agreed to pay the \$85,000 monthly satellite transponder fee on behalf of ACTS and a \$40,000 monthly payment toward the RTVC operating budget. If the full three months is required to complete the purchase, Friends of ACTS would provide \$375,000 toward the operation of ACTS and the RTVC, according to Atkins.

Atkins said that since April his group had spent almost \$1.2 million in pursuing the purchase, including \$780,000 for the transponder lease. He said confidence in their ability to raise funds to complete the sale made them willing to invest additional money in the network.

The executive committee also reviewed financial reports for 1987-88 and the first two months of the 1988-89 fiscal years. They also asked Friends of ACTS to make a progress report to the full commission at its next meeting Jan. 9-10, 1989.

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Soviet Baptists aiding
injured Armenian children

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
12/14/88

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Soviet Baptists have found a niche in post-earthquake relief work by aiding 2,000 injured Armenian children who have been flown to Moscow.

The Soviet government requested visitation and care for the children in hospitals and other locations in Moscow, reported Keith Parker, director of Southern Baptist work in Europe.

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Meanwhile, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, has set aside \$30,000 in disaster relief funds for medical, clothing and housing needs stemming from the Dec. 7 earthquake in Soviet Armenia. As many as 60,000 people died and half a million were left homeless by the earthquake, according to estimates. Foreign Mission Board officials expect to make additional allocations for Armenian relief from hunger relief funds.

Soviet Baptists also have asked the Foreign Mission Board and Baptist World Alliance to send 10,000 Armenian-language Bibles for distribution among the survivors.

Two Soviet Baptists dispatched to Armenia have reported the destruction of two of the three Baptist churches in the earthquake-stricken region, Parker said. No Baptists were reported killed, but nearly all lost relatives in the disaster. One church had about 80 members, while the other two had about 40 members each.

The request for Soviet Baptist help with injured Armenian children resulted from the Soviet government's earlier positive experience with 80 Baptist women volunteers who are cooking in a mental hospital in Moscow, Parker said. Since April, the women have befriended patients at the hospital and helped with cleaning and other jobs there.

In the past, the government has not allowed churches to engage in social ministry, but that stance has changed with the "glasnost" reforms initiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Parker said news of the opportunity for Soviet Baptists to aid Armenian children was reported by Alexei Bichkov, general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Soviet Union, and relayed by Knud Wumpelmann, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

Two Baptist volunteer teams have started the children's ministry, and more teams are being organized, Parker said.

Baptist churches throughout the Ukraine, and in other Soviet regions have scheduled special Armenian relief offerings Dec. 18, reported John Merritt in a telephone call from Leningrad. Merritt, executive director of the English-language European Baptist Convention, was in the midst of a Dec. 5-15 trip to the Soviet Union.

No Soviet Baptist volunteer work crews have yet been granted entry to Armenia. For now, government officials say, only trauma specialists and persons skilled in sorting through disaster debris are needed.

Nor have Southern Baptist volunteers been dispatched to the scene, although numerous phone calls offering help have been received at the Foreign Mission Board. The U.S. Agency for International Development's disaster assistance office in Washington, is processing appropriate specialists to be sent to the Soviet Union, said John Cheyne, Foreign Mission Board human needs director.

Southern Baptists could channel funds for Armenian relief through the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230, Cheyne said.

With relief efforts taking on a worldwide dimension, Soviet Baptist leader Bichkov commented, "Our people watch with tears in their eyes how this tragedy has brought unity among all people in the world."

For Dick Thomassian, one of the trustees attending the Foreign Mission Board's Dec. 12-14 meeting in Richmond, concern for Armenia runs deep.

His father's parents were among 1.4 million Armenians killed during a rampage by Muslims from neighboring Turkey that began in 1915 and lasted a year. The persecution scattered Armenians throughout the world, Thomassian said.

Thomassian has been the minister of music and missions at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., for 22 years.

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Armenia is mentioned in the Bible, Thomassian noted. And it is "the oldest Christian country in the world," he said, explaining that Armenia declared itself a Christian nation in 314 A.D. Armenia became a Soviet republic in 1920.

Armenians have been surrounded by religious enemies throughout history, and persecution has fostered a deep sense of unity, Thomassian said. "We consider ourselves brothers and sisters. One Armenian meets another Armenian, and all barriers are broken down."

Thomassian said Whitesburg church had scheduled a memorial service Dec. 15 for Armenians killed by the earthquake. About 20 Armenian families live in the Huntsville area. The church also is collecting medical supplies, clothing and food for the earthquake victims.

The death toll in Armenia is the highest from an earthquake since 1976, when an estimated 240,000 Chinese were killed in tremors that struck the Tangshan area.

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Black churches find resources
In Southern Baptist Convention

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
12/14/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--While leaders of black Baptist churches are attracted to the Southern Baptist Convention because of the diversity of resources, they also are finding an openness for inclusion, according to Sid Smith.

Smith, manager of the black church development section at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said black churches represent the denomination's fastest growing group with approximately 1,200 churches including about 200,000 members, up from about 1,000 churches in 1985.

Smith estimates that at least another 50,000 blacks are members of perhaps 3,000 predominantly white churches for a convention black membership total of well over 250,000.

Convention agencies such as the Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board have staff components dealing with ministries in black churches. Several state conventions also have staff personnel assigned specifically to work with black churches.

"Southern Baptists suffer an image crisis based on our heritage, but that's not where Southern Baptists are today. It's a new day for blacks in the SBC," Smith said.

Not only is the convention accepting blacks, but "the system is opening up and providing positions of leadership for blacks," Smith said.

For example, he said blacks have been elected presidents of state conventions seven times since 1970 and have held numerous other state convention and SBC elected and appointed positions.

At the SBC Christian Life Commission, race relations was one of the first topics addressed by Richard Land when he was elected executive director in September 1988. Land said he began planning a race relations conference on the first day after he was named to head the agency.

Supporting a claim that the SBC is the nation's most ethnically diverse denomination, Smith cited a study by the United Methodist Reporter, a weekly newspaper based in Dallas, and distributed nationally.

Reporter Managing Editor John Loveless said the 1985 study revealed that "Southern Baptists were doing far more active work than Methodists" in ethnic and minority church development. He cited specifically the work of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The Home Mission Board has been involved in work with black churches since the convention was organized in 1845, according to Emmanuel McCall, director of the black church relations department. What was then an evangelism effort to reach slaves now is an inclusive work with 327 blacks among the board's 3,700 missionaries and a black church relations department.

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McCall said blacks have been attracted to the SBC by its church growth principles and practices and have found the organization for growth and development something that is not available elsewhere.

The department serves as a broker for other board departments to help adapt programs for black churches, McCall said.

At the Foreign Mission Board, five blacks currently are career missionaries while three are Journeymen, a two-year missions program.

About 125 blacks participated in short-term volunteer projects during 1988, and that number likely will increase in 1989, according to Victor Davis, director of black church relations at the Foreign Mission Board.

"The trend is beginning to change as more black churches become aware of the opportunities," Davis said.

Smith said the Sunday School Board, like the Home Mission Board, offers resources that attract black churches because they are not found elsewhere and has expanded to meet "the obvious challenge" of serving black churches.

Smith joined the board in 1979 after serving on the staff of the California Southern Baptist Convention. The black church development section, which had only one person until September 1987 when two more were added, is expanding to meet the needs for training and involvement with black churches by adding a fourth person in January 1989.

"No other denomination has the staff for black church development that we have," Smith said. "We have people on our staff who have a track record for experience."

Jay Wells will be special projects coordinator when he begins work at the board Jan. 2, 1989. He will be responsible for all projects for leadership training including existing projects of black church development institutes and Project LEARN, a program for black church leaders to help train others from nearby churches.

Wells has been a black church ministries consultant for the California Southern Baptist Convention since April 1987. He previously was associate pastor and minister of education at Emmanuel Baptist Church in San Jose, Calif.

Other staff members are Olivia Cloud, age-group coordinator and editor of Ethnicity, a publication for black church leaders funded jointly by the Sunday School Board and the Home Mission Board, and Sam Beene, general officers coordinator with responsibility for field service, conference center planning, Vacation Bible School work and Associational Sunday School Improvement Support Team training.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

Caution urged in choosing
metal building for church

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
12/14/88

NASHVILLE--(BP) While metal buildings may be a major cost-saving solution to facility needs for a young, fast-growing or modest-income church, Southern Baptist architectural consultants recently urged state Baptist convention building consultants to encourage careful investigation of available options.

Fred Turner, manager of architectural services, and Jerry Grubbs, architectural consultant, both of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church architecture department, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of using metal buildings during annual meetings with state consultants.

"The primary attraction of the metal building is in its initial cost," Turner said. "Basic, standard construction, including metal roof and wall panels, must be used as fully as possible in constructing a pre-engineered metal building to realize the greatest price advantage.

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"When a church purchases a pre-engineered metal building, cost quotations may be only for the shell. Additional costs will be added for plumbing, electrical wiring, heating and air conditioning and interior finishing," he said."

If the interior finishes are equal in a pre-engineered building and one of conventional construction, the costs will be nearly identical, he continued.

"Unfortunately," Grubbs added, "this fact may be discovered too late."

To get the most economy from a metal building, churches must choose from among fixed width "bays" in increments usually of 16-, 20-, and 24-feet. If a church requires a square footage that falls between standard sizes, selecting the next largest size for future expansion may be the only choice. Turner and Grubbs agreed the cost of heating and maintaining unneeded space for an indefinite time is not economical.

New metal buildings require little outside maintenance.

"In fact," Turner said, "these buildings should be virtually free of exterior maintenance for the first 10 years. Usually, a factory-applied, baked enamel finish is standard. In geographic areas where there is an adverse environmental condition, such as acid rain, Turner said the exterior finish should be of concern, along with installation quality.

Grubbs said investigating the performance of the manufacturer and installer of a metal building is necessary, "just as you would look for a qualified contractor in commercial construction. Be sure the company uses workmen who are experienced and who do this type of work all the time."

"Who designs buildings for the company?" is a question Turner suggests church committees ask. "Find out the designer's qualifications."

Structural design of metal buildings can be a plus in terms of economy and efficient structural support. However, this benefit can become a detractor if the appearance of exposed supports is too "industrial" to suit the congregation. Exposed beams can be made attractive, they said, but usually at an added cost.

While attractive, economical, well-engineered metal buildings are available, Turner and Grubbs feel many churches should shop for such a purchase, just as they would compare bids and proposals in traditional construction.

Objections to the use of metal buildings generally are related to meeting church program needs and affecting witness in the community, they observed.

Grubbs said he believes buildings should be "tools to assist the church in its mission of evangelizing and teaching. If the building creates hardships which must be overcome, then the building can limit ministry."

Turner agreed that "a church should study its program needs first, letting those dictate the amount and kind of space to provide."

And both said the image usually associated with churches often is missing in metal buildings. In addition to the "temporary location" persons may infer from the use of a metal building, the incompatible appearance of such buildings in some communities may create barriers that hamper witness and outreach efforts.

Turner suggested church building committees discuss what the proposed building should symbolize to the congregation and the community.

"If a church has determined they want to use a metal building," Grubbs said, "we would like to help them make the best choice for their needs and the best use of space."

The Sunday School Board provides free and cost-recovery architectural services to churches as a program assignment of the Southern Baptist Convention.