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December 15, 1988

88-199

FMB to seek funding relief for missions

By Bob Stanley

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Hit by the one-two punch of decreased income at home and a weaker U.S. dollar overseas, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board voted Dec. 14 to send its trustee chairman to Nashville to inform Southern Baptist Convention budget decision-makers of the urgency of its financial needs.

The board unanimously approved a motion by trustee Paige Patterson that asks Chairman Mark Corts to accompany President R. Keith Parks and Vice President for Finance Carl Johnson to the January meeting of the SBC Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee, when SBC agencies will present their needs for the 1989-90 budget year.

The subcommittee makes its recommendations in February to the full Executive Committee, which in turns sends the budget to messengers to the convention's annual meeting for final approval.

Patterson said he thinks the board must make the Executive Committee aware of the "strategic time we're in right now" in global evangelism and to "state particularly the critical nature of the (financial) need at this moment."

Earlier in the meeting, Johnson told the trustees that if the exchange rate of the Japanese yen to the U.S. dollar went down from its present rate of 122 yen to the dollar to a rate of 100 to the dollar, as proposed by some economic advisers to President-elect George Bush, the Foreign Mission Board would have to spend an additional \$1 million a year just to pay for the Japan missionaries' cost-of-living increases. Similar cost increases would occur in other countries if the dollar weakens further.

While a weak dollar helps U.S. exports, it hurts those who depend upon the dollar for their living and work expenses overseas, Johnson said.

The falling dollar has hit foreign missions at the same time income has dwindled from its two major funding sources, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Cooperative Program unified budget Johnson said. Cooperative Program receipts for October and November, the first two months of the the 1988-89 fiscal year, are 2.45 percent below last year.

"We are counting very much on the Cooperative Program" to offset the decrease in budget from anticipated Lottie Moon funding, Johnson said. "We're hoping these two months are an aberration and there will be a very strong December and January" to help offset the shortfall.

The strong expression of budget concern came during an otherwise upbeat meeting in which trustees affirmed the FMB president, staff and missionaries and their approach to missions in a six-point "resolution of commitment"; approved Hungary as the 114th country where Southern Baptist overseas personnel are stationed; appointed 31 new missionaries; and applauded SBC President Jerry Vines in his first address to the board.

Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., said he had a "real special experience" attending the missionary appointment service Dec. 13 and visiting the Missionary Learning Center at Rockville, Va. He said he felt he had come to the "very heart of what Southern Baptists are all about -- winning people to Jesus Christ."

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Trustees sent a message of sympathy to Soviet Baptists and to all people in the Soviet Union "in the loss of lives and in other destruction resulting from the recent earthquake in your country." The board has released \$30,000 to assist the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in their Armenian relief efforts and pledged hunger funds if needed.

Two couples from Florida received special recognition during the meeting. Ed and Vi Mason, volunteers from Tallahassee, were cited for their five years of work coordinating relief ministries in Ethiopia. Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, presented the commission's Distinguished Service Award to missionaries Doug and Evelyn Knapp of Gainesville, who will retire in 1989 after more than 25 years of work in Tanzania.

Land said the Knapps' ministry reflected a blending of evangelism, which resulted in thousands of baptisms, and applied Christianity through agricultural development and encouragement of racial equality.

Approval to open work in Hungary came with the transfer of two veteran missionaries to Spain, Errol and Mary Simmons, who will move to Hungary in January as fraternal representatives. He is from Franklinton, La., and she is from Laurel, Miss. He will become associate director of the new International Baptist Lay Academy, scheduled to open in Budapest in 1990.

The board also voted to establish the Southern Asia and Pacific Itinerant Mission, whose personnel will live much of the time out of suitcases as they travel to continue an evangelistic witness and ministry in limited-access countries. In addition, trustees approved documents to place Bangalore Baptist Hospital in India under the management of Christian Medical College of Vellore, a change the board approved in principle last June.

Trustee Barbara Cunningham of Houston, chairman of the Americas committee, reported after a five-week tour that "the people of Central and South America are truly hungry to know there is someone they can trust" in Jesus Christ. As she visited with missionaries, she said, she was "so thankful I could say to them, 'Your Foreign Mission Board is united in purpose and heart in winning the world to Christ.'"

Johnson, the board's chief financial officer, said he is concerned because the SBC budget goal for 1989-90, as approved by the SBC Executive Committee in September "subject to review and/or modification" at its February meeting, is a zero-growth goal that allows no room for escalating overseas costs or growth in the missionary force.

A major factor, he claimed, is \$26 million in capital needs for 14 SBC entities, approved at the 1985 SBC annual meeting.

He agreed that the remaining indebtedness incurred to finance the seven-agency SBC Building in Nashville is a legal obligation which must be met. Leaders have said they have a moral obligation to provide funds to match those received from foundations for capital projects, but Johnson said he doubts this obligation is nearly as great as the moral obligation Southern Baptists have to support their 3,900 missionaries in 114 countries.

William F. Harrell of Martinez, Ga., chairman of the Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee, said in September that the convention approved the capital items in 1985. "We have no option but to deal with the capital improvements," he said. "Either we've got to pay it, or the convention's got to alter or rescind the action."

Johnson said "the Foreign Mission Board very much supports the second option delineated by the chairman (Harrell)."

Of the \$84 million goal for this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the board has budgeted \$72.5 million in its 1989 budget. Although he hopes the record goal can be met, Johnson said the board would rather face the pleasant task of deciding where to use additional funds than have to reconstruct the whole budget if giving falls short. Last year, Southern Baptists gave \$69.9 million of their \$75 million goal.

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Because of the shortfall and increased costs for new missionaries, the board asked its overseas mission organizations to cut their 1989 operating budgets by 12 percent and sought similar cuts in its home office operating budget. Parks has appointed a special staff committee to study all functions at the home-office to determine whether they still are vital in view of new strategies for global evangelization. Because of budget constraints, the board's staff will get no pay raises in 1989.

Parks, in his year-end report, said the board is making "a deliberate and studied effort" to determine the appropriate level of Southern Baptist participation in approaching all 252 nations of the world for Christ.

"We must complete the task God has given us," Parks said. "We are in our day of greatest opportunity, which can also be a day of greatest failure."

He described 1988 as "another good year in world missions," but said he continues to remind himself, the trustees and all Southern Baptists that "we must daily choose whether we will try to build our own empires or be instruments in the building of the Kingdom of God."

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BP photos mailed to Baptist state papers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Trustees affirm FMB staff,  
missionaries, methods

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press  
12/15/88

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees unanimously affirmed the FMB's president, staff, missionaries and their approach to missions in a six-point "resolution of commitment" during the board's December meeting.

The resolution, drafted by a special committee, responded positively to a challenge from FMB President R. Keith Parks in October for trustees to clear up misperceptions about themselves, staff and missionaries that threaten the survival of foreign missions.

Missionaries and Southern Baptists should be reassured by the resolution, Parks said, noting, "I'm grateful the trustees unanimously affirmed our personnel, direction in missions and comprehensive methodology and committed themselves to maintaining the kind of cooperative missions program we have conducted through the years."

In October Parks had expressed regret that conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention has caused a number of Baptists to think missionaries and staff are not theologically and evangelistically sound. He also said trustees are not trusted by others, who perceive they are motivated by a political agenda rather than missions.

Many fear, Parks said at that time, that trustees will purge staff and missionaries; show no commitment to cooperative missions; reject the principle of indigenous missions; reject ministry to physical human need in favor of evangelism only; seek to control overseas Baptist conventions; appoint only missionaries who have a certain political position; and coerce staff into politically-based missions decisions.

The special committee, chaired by John Thomas of Daphne, Ala., responded to Parks' challenge in principles rather than dealing with specific misperceptions cited in Parks' October report to the board. "But we made certain each point reflected his concerns," Thomas said.

Besides affirming the soundness of staff and missionaries, the resolution promised faithful trusteeship. It also affirmed cooperative missions and giving, appointment of all qualified missionaries, continuation of both evangelism and human-needs ministries, adherence to the principle of developing indigenous leadership overseas, cooperation with Baptist leaders overseas as "equal co-laborers" and commitment to world evangelization.

Trustees agreed with Parks' assessment that misperceptions about the FMB "appear to be eroding historic mission support" and noted that "cooperative missions has epitomized the Southern Baptist Convention since its inception."

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The resolution encouraged churches "to honor the historic Baptist principle of unity through diversity by continued, faithful giving to the Cooperative Program" unified budget, and it said trustees would seek to provide a positive influence in that direction.

L.H. McCollough, trustee from Bastrop, La., said he conducted a survey of FMB trustees that indicated strong cooperative giving by most of the churches of 66 trustees who responded. He challenged all 88 trustees to encourage faithful percentage giving to the Cooperative Program and increases in gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to offset shortfalls that have caused cutbacks in foreign mission budgets.

McCollough's survey showed that the 66 churches gave nearly \$6.4 million through the Cooperative Program and nearly \$1.5 million through the Lottie Moon Offering in 1987. Fifty-five of the churches gave above the 8.5 percent national average of undesignated gifts through the Cooperative Program. That total includes 21 churches giving 15 percent and above.

Trustee Chairman Mark Corts, who appointed the special committee in October, emphasized the sincerity of the resolution and his own appreciation of the "caliber, quality, heart and soul" of FMB personnel.

"We mean what we say," Corts said. "We wholeheartedly affirm Dr. Parks and this staff. We make a commitment to you, having voted this thing (resolution), to do everything we can to flesh that out in our personal relationships."

He challenged FMB staff, in turn, "to give mutual affirmation back to the board," particularly in helping the overseas mission force to understand that trustees support them and their work.

"They (the missionaries) don't know us. They do know you," Corts told the staff. "We recognize we can't answer all misperceptions, but we can help the situation directly with our missionaries. I think that would be a magnanimous thing, and I know you will respond. It will help our fellowship."

The resolution said FMB trustees:

-- "Wholeheartedly affirm Dr. Keith Parks, the Foreign Mission Board staff and our adopted strategy of 'evangelism that produces churches'; and that we will carry out the policy and fiduciary responsibilities in a manner that is both faithful to the convention and supportive of the staff and missionaries.

-- "Affirm our commitment to cooperative missions and the Cooperative Program; that we accept our responsibility to be greater channels of positive information to our local churches which are already in strong support of missions and to the churches of our associations and conventions, which are the lifeline of foreign missions through their undesignated gifts; that we encourage churches to honor the historic Baptist principle of unity through diversity by continued, faithful giving to the Cooperative Program.

-- "Affirm the traditional mandate of the Foreign Mission Board to send all qualified missionaries 'called out' by God to preach reconciliation to him through Christ and to minister to human needs. We also affirm the primary deployment of missionaries in evangelism that leads to establishing churches and discipling which results in indigenous leadership.

-- "Affirm our confidence in the integrity of our missionary personnel, all of whom have, in the appointment process, affirmed to us their agreement with the 'Baptist Faith and Message' statement adopted by the SBC in 1963.

-- "Communicate to our Baptist partners around the world our continued desire to be equal co-laborers in our shared task of world missions.

-- "Join our hearts and hands with our president, Dr. Keith Parks, our staff, our missionaries and Christians everywhere to share the gospel with a hurting and lost world."

IRS revokes tax exemption  
of church for 1st time

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Internal Revenue Service has for the first time revoked the tax-exempt status of a local church.

Following two examinations, the IRS concluded Second Baptist Church of Goldsboro, N.C., did not qualify under the Internal Revenue Code as a charitable organization for the years 1983-1985, because it operated a racially segregated school during that period.

The church, an independent Baptist congregation, has challenged the IRS action in U.S. Tax Court, arguing that following a 1983 Supreme Court decision it operated the school in a racially non-discriminatory manner, but even had it not the public benefit it provided to society should entitle it to tax exemption. The court has not yet set a date to hear the congregation's challenge.

The school in question was established in 1963 by a non-profit corporation -- Goldsboro Christian Schools Inc. -- that was affiliated with the Goldsboro congregation and primarily supported by funds from church members.

From the school's inception, the school corporation adopted an admissions policy that barred black students. The policy stated a "religious belief that God set up racial barriers and that the mixing of races is contrary to the teaching of the Bible."

Because of the admissions policy, the IRS denied the school corporation tax-exempt status during 1969-1972. The corporation's legal challenge to the IRS ruling became part of a publicized 1983 Supreme Court decision.

In that decision -- which also involved the revocation of Bob Jones University's tax-exempt status over racially discriminatory policies -- the high court upheld the IRS's position, ruling that a private school must maintain a non-discriminatory policy in order to qualify as an exempt organization. The court held that schools with racially discriminatory policies violate a fundamental "public policy" and cannot be viewed as conferring a public benefit within the "charitable" concept of common law standards.

In 1974, shortly after the original IRS action against the school corporation and nine years before the Supreme Court decision, Second Baptist Church acquired all of the school corporation's assets and took over operation of the school. From 1974 until 1983, the school maintained its closed admissions policy. Following the 1983 high court decision, the congregation adopted a non-discriminatory admissions policy for both the school -- which closed after the 1986-87 school year -- and a day-care center the church began operating in 1979.

Despite the adoption of the new admissions policy, the IRS concluded the church did not adequately show that the school was operated during the years in question in a "bona fide racially non-discriminatory manner" as required under federal tax regulations. The IRS specially mentioned the school failed to publicize its non-discriminatory policy in printed materials and actively to recruit black students and teachers.

Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, called the issue an extremely difficult one for the religious community.

"No one wishes to defend racial discrimination," Thomas said. "Yet, at the same time, who can be comfortable knowing that a church's tax exemption is conditioned upon its acting in accordance with 'public policy'?"

"It is racial discrimination today, but might it not be sex discrimination tomorrow? It is the Goldsboro congregation now, but might it not be peace churches later? And what about Martin Luther King Jr.? It would seem that anybody engaged in civil disobedience is not acting in accordance with public policy.

"The IRS really has us over the barrel on this one."

Louis Moore  
Joins CLC

NASHVILLE (BP)--Texas journalist Louis Moore will become a media relations and publications consultant for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, effective Jan. 1, announced CLC Executive Director Richard Land.

Moore, who lives in the Dallas area, on an interim basis will edit the agency's various publications, including Light magazine; manage the news operations of the commission's regional and national meetings; participate in program planning; and work with the CLC trustees and staff to plan the use of mass communications for the agency, Land said.

Moore, 42, was religion editor of the Houston Chronicle from 1972 to 1986 and was editor of the Plano (Texas) Star Courier from 1986 to 1988. He currently is professor of journalism at Collin County Community College and writes for a variety of religious and secular publications.

From 1984 to 1986, Moore was president of the Religion Newswriters Association, the professional journalism society for reporters who cover religion for secular newspapers, newsmagazines and wire services.

Moore is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Both Moore and Land said the consulting arrangement "might well lead to a permanent relationship at a later date."

Moore's wife, Kay, is a journalist who graduated from Baylor and attended classes at Southern Seminary. They have two children, Matthew, 12, and Katie, 7, and have co-written six books, including "When You Both Go to Work," published by Word, Inc. The Moores are members of First Baptist Church of Plano.

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Churches can change lives  
by tackling hard issues

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press  
12/15/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist churches need to understand the urgency of reaching out to special groups -- black, language and ethnic people and special-education groups -- Bill Banks told state Sunday school leaders attending December planning meetings at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

The three areas of language, black-church development and special education, while operating as separate programs, are included in the board's special ministries department directed by Banks.

"Cast your nets on the side of ethnic, language, black-church and special-education work. Already there are people in these groups involved in Southern Baptist life who are ready to reach out to others. Find those who are involved and are ready to work," Banks said.

According to information from the special ministries department, about 13 percent of the 37,000 Southern Baptist churches are ethnic congregations, with another 1,200 black congregations. More than 2,500 Southern Baptist churches provide ministry to about 16,000 mentally handicapped people while more than 1,100 churches have ministries to blind people.

Focusing on the needs of special education, Banks said churches must make a commitment to tackle the difficult issues of providing for handicapped and other special needs groups.

"If a church never addresses these real issues of life, the church can continue -- it can even grow. But it will never touch the lives of many people who need help," Banks said. "We are in the business of making church a real place that deals with real problems of real people."

Thirty million people are included in the seven special-needs groups addressed by the special education section, Banks estimated.

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The groups include mentally handicapped, blind/visually handicapped, multiple handicapped, learning disabled, physically disabled, emotionally handicapped and gifted/talented.

In addition to the special-needs people, about 90 million people who are in families that include these people, Banks said.

The church should address the needs of the families as well as those of the individuals, he said.

Addressing a concern not included in the special ministries areas, Banks said churches also must deal with the real-life problems of children who have suffered physical and sexual abuse.

"These may not be as easily identified, but their needs are just as great. The child needs to see people who love them unconditionally," he said.

Abuse victims would not normally be in a special-education class but instead would need to experience the love and care that Sunday school teachers can provide, Banks pointed out.

In all areas of special ministries, Sunday school programs can meet needs, he said, noting, "There will have to be adaptations but the Sunday school program will be able to address the concerns."

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CORRECTION: Please change the fifth paragraph of the 12/14/88 BP story titled "RTVC to receive \$375,000 for extension on sale of ACTS" to begin:

Atkins said the offering document was not complete until Sept. 14, and his group . . . .

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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Architectural consultants  
report SBC building trends

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
12/15/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist architectural consultants and designers who work annually with hundreds of the denomination's churches are seeing trends toward smaller building indebtedness and more multi-use facilities.

Gwenn McCormick, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church architecture department, said reports show building finances and facilities have changed since the mid-1970s.

"The relationship of debt to income has changed dramatically," McCormick said. "Church debt as a percentage of total gifts gradually decreased from 72.3 percent in 1975 to 42.7 percent in 1986."

He attributed the improvement in the debt to income ratio to capital fund-raising, improved stewardship attitudes, the cost of loan interest and a generally higher level of affluence among Southern Baptists.

Also, the percentage of Southern Baptist churches reporting new construction decreased from 33.2 percent in 1975 to 26.4 percent in 1986.

"Only churches of 3,000 or more members showed an increase in the percentage reporting new construction," he said. "Those increased from 39.8 percent in 1975 to 43.7 percent in 1986."

For churches reporting new construction, the average amount reported was \$50,477. By church membership size, averages ranged from \$5,911 for churches with fewer than 50 members to \$951,285 for those with 3,000 or more members.

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In the area of facilities trends, McCormick said, the denomination's architectural consultants and designers receive more requests for multi-use facilities, where multiple Sunday schools and worship services may be held. Smaller churches often discover when the same space is used for education, worship, fellowship and recreation the size of the building can be reduced 25 to 30 percent, he explained.

Churches now want more vestibule space, more gathering room for fellowship before and after worship services.

Flexibility is the watchword for the 1990s church design, he reported. In the 1940s, McCormick recalled, one denominational publication appealed for a "Baptist architecture," a colonial design.

"Today there is more interest in diversity of design," he said. "More congregations build fan-shaped worship facilities or designs that bring seating closer to the platform than do rectangular buildings."

Along with an increased variety in architectural styles, a movement is being made toward concern for function rather than a fixation on appearance, he said.

"There should be a desire that the design provides a distinctive witness," McCormick observed. "There is no longer a reluctance to use Christian symbols to identify our buildings."

Among other trends he said architectural consultants report are:

- Increasingly strict local codes enforcement.
- Greater sensitivity to access for the physically handicapped.
- An increased sensitivity to having adequate property for growth.
- Greater emphasis on flexibility in the choir/pulpit area for drama and music, even in smaller churches.
- Increasing complication of legal requirements and design standards.
- A trend toward improved master planning that locates first units in a logical place for future development.

"Today's church facilities incorporate the technology, construction methods, materials and energy concerns of the times," McCormick said. "More importantly, they represent the sense of mission and priorities of the congregations who build and use them."

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

Elder urges  
CP support

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press  
12/15/88

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The future of Southern Baptists as a viable missions force hinges on their collective commitment to their Cooperative Program unified budget, the president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board said.

Lloyd Elder noted support of the denomination's giving plan can be a testimony to the faith of Southern Baptists. "It can continue to be the story of a great missionary people, or it can be the story of the most disruptive time we may ever have had as Southern Baptists," he said in a December address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Elder was the keynote speaker at a two-day Cooperative Program emphasis sponsored by the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission. The Stewardship Commission held similar events at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary earlier this year.

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Elder's address came on the heels of news that in November Cooperative Program giving reached its lowest monthly level in 37 months. The Southern Baptist Executive Committee in September tentatively proposed no increase in the convention's basic operating budget for the next fiscal year.

Elder, who heads an institution that receives no Cooperative Program funds, said the unified budget has had "phenomenal success" as a funding method for Southern Baptists.

He also noted how he had been helped personally by the Cooperative Program. He was 18 years old and 4,000 miles away from home when he made a profession of faith in a Baptist church in Fairbanks, Alaska. The church partially was funded by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, which received Cooperative Program money, he said.

"I believe in the CP because I believe that around this world as well as across these United States there is a need for the planted church to be there," he said.

After sensing the call to ministry, Elder noted he was trained at two Baptist colleges funded in part by the Cooperative Program. The 62 Southern Baptist colleges, universities and academies, he said, continue to "make an impact on the lives of a new generation."

Elder pointed out he furthered his education at a Southern Baptist seminary where most of his educational expense was paid by the Cooperative Program. There he "dipped deeply" into the offerings of theological education, he said.

His faith in the Cooperative Program was strengthened by later working on the seminary staff and seeing "what happened in the lives and ministries" of professors and students, he added.

Theological education is crucial to Southern Baptists' missionary strategy, he noted, explaining, "There is an understanding on the part of Southern Baptists that if we are going to reach this world with the superlative gospel of Jesus Christ, we need to have excellence in ministry."

As a pastor for 22 years, Elder said, he always believed the Cooperative Program provided him an "opportunity to lead a church that had some part in the worldwide missionary enterprise."

Southern Baptists need to tell themselves and others about the missionary heritage inherited by Southern Baptists from their forebears, he emphasized: "We have a story to tell to the nations about how they built biblical principles for us to build upon. We have a story to tell to the nations how that Jesus Christ is the only savior and the whole gospel is organized around him."

Support of the Cooperative Program should not be based on absolute agreement with everything funded by it, Elder contended. During his pastorates, he sometimes disagreed with funding priorities of his church budget, but he still maintained it was the "storehouse of tithes and offerings," he recalled.

While he may not be "equally committed" to everything supported by the Cooperative Program, he expressed a "deepening confidence in the larger wisdom of the family of God called Southern Baptists." He intends to stay involved in Southern Baptist life and attempt to participate in the denomination's decision-making process, he added.

Some structural changes might be necessary to save the Cooperative Program, he said. Although he did not mention specific proposals, he urged that any modification be done cautiously.

Ministers will play a key role in the future of the Cooperative Program, because "most churches will do what they trust the pastor or staff member to lead them to do," he said.

Elder's prayer is that God will use and strengthen the Cooperative Program and that Southern Baptists will "come through an era stronger, more intelligent and more faithful" in their stewardship of resources, he said.

Piland urges evangelism  
focus for convention unity

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP)--By focusing on evangelism and leading people to accept Christ as their personal savior, the Sunday school program can do more to unify and heal the Southern Baptist Convention now than at any time in history, Harry Piland told state Sunday school leaders.

"Evangelism is what Sunday school is about. When you start seeing folks get saved, excitement over the mission becomes more important than any differences that divide us," Piland, director of the SBC Sunday School Board's Sunday school division, said in an annual planning session with Sunday school leaders from state conventions.

Although reaching people for Christ has always been part of Sunday school, Piland said, he believes Sunday schools in local churches will in the next few years contribute to a denominational breakthrough in growth through outreach and evangelism.

Piland cited letters from people who have used the plan of salvation feature included each quarter in Sunday school literature to lead people to faith in Christ.

He listed other trends and developments in Sunday school emphases and materials that highlight evangelism. Among those are Outreach Bible Study as an approach to presenting Bible study to non-Christians in locations away from the church; the Outreach Communication Plan as a means to identify prospects; and increased efforts to encourage churches to conduct Bible study at times other than Sunday morning in order to reach people.

Additional plans to highlight the Bible and evangelism are among improvements in Sunday school literature that will be recommended to board trustees in February 1989, he said. If approved, they would be introduced in the October 1991 literature.

The curriculum proposals feature an increased emphasis on the Bible, improved ease of use, increased focus on evangelism, application of Bible truths and greater attractiveness.

The evangelism emphasis will help bring a breakthrough for Sunday school growth that is needed to move enrollment from a two-year plateau, Piland said.

For the past two years, Southern Baptist Sunday school enrollment has stood at about 8 million after six years with annual increases averaging 100,000. The increases represented a turning point but not a breakthrough, Piland said.

Prior to 1960, Sunday school enrollment doubled at least every two decades and then experienced declines until 1980 before beginning an upward swing, he explained.

He acknowledged that many people believe the stall in enrollment increases makes the 1990 enrollment goal of 10 million people impossible.

"It is possible for us to have a breakthrough in enrollment. We can reach 10 million and more with every church being bold in reaching people," he predicted.

The theme for the final year of the 1985-90 enrollment emphasis is "Share Hope ... Reach 10."

The Reach 10 emphasis asks state conventions, associations, churches or Sunday school classes and departments to set goals related to the convention goal of 10 million members.

A four-month campaign called "The Final Four" in June through September 1990 will be a push for enrollment gains to conclude the emphasis and launch the 1990-95 emphasis with a goal of 11 million by 1995.

The Sunday school enrollment goals are part of the Southern Baptist Bold Mission Thrust emphasis to present the message of Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000.