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89-73

SBC budget continues
roller coaster ride

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's combined ministry budget continued its roller coaster ride in April.

The SBC Cooperative Program received \$13,293,877 in April, a gain of 33.2 percent over April 1988, reported Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the convention's Executive Committee.

"For the first time this year, I am going to venture a projection of Cooperative Program receipts," Bennett said. "It is an optimistic forecast. If the trend continues -- which I expect -- I believe we will receive approximately \$140 million. This would mean that we would reach the basic budget goal of \$137.61 million and have more than \$2 million for capital needs. I would be greatly pleased.

"My prayer is that God will continue to bless Southern Baptists and that we will be faithful in giving to world missions through the Cooperative Program."

The April receipts were the third-best monthly total in the Cooperative Program's 64-year history. They were almost \$4 million more than March receipts, which were among the worst in the past five years.

Since the current fiscal year began last October, Cooperative Program monthly totals have dropped below totals for the same months the previous year four out of seven times. However, this fiscal year's budget boasts two of the three best single-month totals, and January-February was the best two-month combination ever.

April's income brought year-to-date receipts to \$81,361,763, Bennett said. That represents a gain of more than \$3.3 million over the same period last year, an increase of 4.25 percent.

To reach its \$145.6 million overall goal, Cooperative Program monthly receipts must average more than \$12.8 million for the balance of the fiscal year. To reach its \$137.61 million basic operating goal, the budget must take in more than \$11.2 million each month.

The Cooperative Program supports Southern Baptist missionary, evangelistic, educational and church-starting efforts around the globe. It is funded by individual Southern Baptists, who channel their money through churches and state Baptist conventions and on to the national and international causes.

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About 18,500 expected
for Las Vegas meeting

By Dan Martin

N-CO

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LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--About 18,500 messengers will register for the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 13-15, in Las Vegas, Nev., according to projections by SBC Registration Secretary Lee Porter.

Porter, of Nashville, said: "I anticipate about 18,000 to 18,500 messengers will register. I cannot conceive registration will go over 20,000, but would not be surprised if it drops to near 15,000."

He bases his projections on the "long distance to Las Vegas" from many of the centers of Southern Baptist population, including South and East Coast states that normally have high attendance at annual meetings.

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"I also do not sense any excitement about going to Las Vegas," he said. "Therefore, I think attendance will be down."

The largest convention in the history of the SBC was Dallas in 1985, when 45,519 messengers registered. Another Texas convention -- 1988 in San Antonio -- drew significantly less registration, 32,727.

Much of the drop, Porter said, was because Texas and surrounding states -- New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana -- did not turn out the large numbers to San Antonio. Part of the reason, he said, is the Dallas convention was swelled because many churches are within 200 miles of the city, increasing the one-day, drive-in vote.

"We will not have many messengers drive in for one day in Las Vegas, simply because there are not that many churches within easy driving distance," he said.

He also noted five Southeastern states -- North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee -- had significant registration in the 1985 and 1988 conventions. But, he said, "because Las Vegas is far from the Eastern seaboard, there is a significant question about how many will come from the five states."

Porter, who has the responsibility to register and oversee balloting and vote counting at the annual meeting, said registration will open in Meeting Rooms 1-4 of the Las Vegas Convention Center at 4 p.m. Sunday, June 11, and continue until about 10 p.m.

During the remainder of the week, registration will open at 8 a.m. and close about 10 p.m., except on the last day of the annual meeting, when it will close when demand ceases.

"The best time to register will be a couple of hours after opening," he said. "I urge messengers not to stand in line prior to the opening time. If they will come a bit later, they can easily register in five minutes."

The peak hours of congestion, he said, will be in the first hours after opening on Sunday afternoon and Monday and Tuesday mornings.

Messengers will register much easier if they bring properly completed and signed registration cards, available from state convention executive offices, and, in some states, from associational offices, Porter said.

"I ask that messengers use cards that have in the lower left corner the words, 'Revised 1987' or 'Revised 1988,' I urge that all cards with the words, 'Revised 1967' be destroyed," he said. "The revised cards are used to make the tabulating process more efficient."

After messengers are elected by their churches, the cards need to be filled out in detail, including information on the number of members of the church, the amount the church contributed to convention causes and the total number of messengers elected.

"Each church needs to carefully follow the messenger requirements and restrictions in Article III of the SBC Constitution," Porter said. "The requirements are printed on the cards, as is the criteria for determining the number of messengers to which a church is entitled."

The constitution specifies that "each church which is in friendly cooperation with the convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work and has during the fiscal year preceeding been a bona-fide contributor to the convention's work" is entitled to one messenger.

A church is entitled to an additional messenger for each 250 members or \$250 contributed to the work of the convention, up to a maximum of 10. The constitution also specifies messengers "shall be a member of the church by which he is elected."

Missions elect their messengers through the sponsoring church, and the mission messengers count against the total of the sponsoring church. To be eligible for messengers, a church would have had to be constituted in 1988 and have contributed to convention causes in 1988.

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Messengers who do not present properly completed and signed messenger cards must go before the Credentials Committee, chaired this year by Charles Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church of Birmingham, Ala. If cards were not available, messengers may bring a letter on the church letterhead, but still will have to go before the committee.

If neither a card nor a letter is available, telegrams may be sent to the Credentials Committee.

When messengers register, they will receive a set of ballots "which must be used by that messenger and that messenger alone." Messengers also will receive a program booklet and have the opportunity to purchase -- for \$4 -- the "Book of Reports" which includes reports from all SBC agencies and many of the recommendations to be presented to the convention.

Porter said, "Every effort is being made to insure the integrity of the registration and balloting process. Some modernization and new systems -- including computerization -- is being instituted at this convention."

Balloting on issues will be tabulated by Porter and the Tellers Committee, chaired this year by Bob Sorrell, administrator at Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn. Porter, the tellers and convention officers and parliamentarians will rule on voice, standing or hand votes.

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Missionary doctor
aims to help poor

By Breena Kent Paine

F - CD
(NOBTS)

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--George M. Faile III did not choose to be a doctor because of money or prestige. He chose medicine to help poor people in a poverty-stricken country.

The son of the Southern Baptist missionary doctor to Ghana who began Baptist Medical Center in that country, Faile's call to missions came from "the influence of my parents, seeing the needs of people in other parts of the world, and feeling like (helping those people) was what God wanted me to do," he said. Now he is studying at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to return to Ghana as a Southern Baptist missionary.

Although he is aware of the money to be made as a physician in the United States, "I don't feel like I'm giving up very much because (being a missionary) is what I've always wanted to do," Faile explained. "The reason why I wanted to go to medical school and be a doctor was to go back to the mission field."

However, many people have approached Faile asking him, "How can you take your kids to a place like that?" or "How can you deprive them of all the luxuries in the United States?"

His answer has been: "Because I want to give them all the advantages available to make them the best they can be. I don't feel like I've been deprived growing up in (Ghana), and in a lot of ways I feel I'm better off.

"For one thing, I have a broader view of the world situation," whereas most Americans "can only see things from the (American) point of view, or even the state or local point of view."

With that world view, comes "a different view of values and priorities," where people become more important than economic gain or material possessions.

Also, "you develop a strong family life because you spend a lot of time together," without the distractions of television and other forms of entertainment, he said.

In Ghana, Faile will be one of five missionary doctors at Baptist Medical Center in Nalerigu. Other co-workers will include his sister, Cherry, a single career missionary nurse and midwife who has taught public health and nutrition at the center for four years; and his wife, Elisabeth, also a midwife and nurse.

A general practitioner with an added knowledge of anesthesia, Faile will see a range of patients, including those who suffer from starvation, malnutrition and connected diseases. In addition, he will have opportunities to witness to and help train students from Ghana's medical school in Kumasi, as they visit Baptist Medical Center to see a hospital in action.

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Returning as a missionary to the country where he was raised "is an advantage in that I feel comfortable there," he said. "A lot of people know me and my family, so that helps us be more easily accepted. And I know what to expect as far as culture, climate and customs. Knowing the history of Baptist work there is also an advantage."

But a disadvantage would come if his many years of experience would lead him to feel he knew more than other missionaries or even national Christians, he said. "I haven't lived there in several years, and (I don't want to be) not willing to let others teach me about the way things are now," he said.

Faile's road to career medical missions has been a long one. While waiting to be accepted into medical school, he studied to be a physician's assistant in anesthesia. He then taught courses at a medical school in Ghana, and worked for a year at the Baptist hospital in northern Yemen.

In Yemen, he met his Swedish wife, who had worked at the hospital as a nurse and midwife for nine years, and who had a common interest. She also had chosen the medical profession for the purpose of missions.

The Failes were married in Sweden, then moved to Montserrat, British West Indies, where he was accepted to the medical school of the American University of the Caribbean. After doing his residency work at a hospital in Rome, Ga., the Failes were volunteer missionaries to Ghana for a year.

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Photo available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

Hearing ministers prepare
for indigenous deaf churches

By Breena Kent Paine

F-10
(NOBT)

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Indigenous" ministry to deaf people is still unknown in many areas throughout the United States, but two students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary are working to change that.

David and Pattie Collins, of Asheville and Morganton, N.C., realize the importance of deaf people leading deaf churches because of the language and culture differences in interpretive ministries.

As hearing people, "our ministry is working with the deaf without imposing on their culture," Collins said. "A missionary doesn't to (Kenya) and say, 'When you learn English, we'll tell you about Jesus.' Instead, he learns Swahili and tells them about Jesus." In the same way, the Collinses work "indigenously" with deaf people.

To sharpen their skills in ministry, they chose New Orleans Seminary because of its proximity to Baptist Deaf Mission, one of the most established deaf churches in the United States. "We were intrigued by the program going on in this church," said Mrs. Collins, who felt they could learn better how to minister to deaf people by observing the mission's ministry.

"All the deacons, Bible study teachers, worship leaders and committee members are deaf people," she said. "Instead of the work being done for them by hearing people, they do the work themselves.

"We use (the mission) as a learning ground, ... a place to see deaf ministry in action and learn and study," Collins added.

The Collinses spent their first year at the mission "sitting on our hands," not getting involved in the organization and leadership of the church. "It was difficult knowing how to set up a Sunday school, and watching them struggle with it" without helping, Collins said. "We hearing people need to be careful not to impose our standards on them, but to let the Holy Spirit work through them." Mrs. Collins agreed, "We wanted to show them we weren't there to control things or to 'help those poor deaf people.'"

Now, the Collinses teach Sunday school to hearing children in the church; he directs the mission's outreach; and she directs the mission's choir.

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A student in the seminary's associate of divinity in church music degree program, her approach to directing the deaf choir is indigenous. Rather than translating a song word-for-word into sign language, she searches for the meaning and interprets that meaning into a deaf person's point of view. For example, the words "love in any language" may be interpreted as "heart signs."

"Most of the members are deaf," she said. "We don't sing; we sign to taped music. My job is to find the music, decide which signs are important to express the words in the song, and to choreograph the piece."

The choreography includes placement on stage, general stage movement and each person's responsibility. For example, one person might sign an idea, while someone else signs one to augment it.

It is important "to make these signs meaningful to a deaf person, and not just a copy of an English song," Collins said. "The question is, 'How can I make Jesus live through this to them?' rather than how to interpret the song word-for-word."

"English is not the indigenous language of deaf people, and a tremendous amount is lost in the translation," Collins said. The hearing person thinks in terms of a series of words with sounds; the deaf person thinks in a series of visual images.

Because of this difference in communication and the cultural barriers which accompany it, the vocabulary used by a preacher often may not be understandable when translated into sign language. In addition, the speaker may cover his material so fast that if a deaf person does not grasp the meaning, that meaning is lost, for the interpreter cannot explain it; he must continue translating the spoken words that follow.

Collins' deaf brother, Steve, was a victim of this communication problem. Steve Collins had been raised throughout his life in a church with an interpretive ministry, where hearing people translated into sign language what took place during the services.

Through a conversation with his brother one day, Collins discovered Steve did not know many of Christianity's basic teachings, even after years of sitting through church services.

That was when Collins realized the importance of indigenous deaf work -- sharing the gospel with deaf people from the angle of their own culture and language.

Collins' personal "long range goal" is to provide counseling in marriage, alcoholism and drug abuse for deaf people. "I feel I can use my sign language skills to bridge the gap and offer something not widely offered," said Collins, who works as a drug and alcohol counselor/intern at Brantley Baptist Center in New Orleans.

The Collinses want to be on the cutting edge of a deaf-church movement, where churches are "led, fed, grown and developed by deaf people doing it their own way -- completely indigenous."

Their goal is to start deaf churches to be led by deaf pastors, and in so doing, provide "a place of safety a haven of freedom where they can be released from the fears of being wrong or handicapped," Collins said.

"God doesn't see (a deaf person) as handicapped; he sees (the deaf person) as his child," he continued. Mrs. Collins agreed, "They are the choice ones to minister" to other deaf persons because of their skillfulness in both language and culture.

"I'm a hearing man," Collins said. "If I pastor a deaf mission, I'm taking the place away from a deaf pastor. By planting deaf churches, I can open doors up for them."

The Collinses have three children, all of whom know sign language and are involved with their parents in their ministry.

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Photo available upon request from New Orleans Seminary