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Brotherhood initiates coed  
missions education program

By Jim Burton

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists' first coeducational missions education/action program for youth was approved at the October meeting of the denomination's Brotherhood Commission.

Targeted for youth from age 15 through high school seniors, the new program is called World Changers -- Southern Baptist youth making a difference. It consists of 10 training sessions, typically led by a local church's youth leadership, and culminates in a nine-day missions project.

"If we are going to function in today's culture, we have to function in a coeducational environment," said Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith.

"Involving Baptist teen-agers in a project of the magnitude of World Changers can help shape a world view out of which comes a heightened receptivity to ongoing missions education and participation," said Dellanna O'Brien, Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union president, from her office in Birmingham, Ala.

"World Changers has the potential of providing for young people many of the positive dimensions that volunteer missions projects have given our adults in recent year. We are pleased to find ways of cooperating with Brotherhood in the area of missions projects while continuing our primary focus on women and girls."

"The future of our missions endeavors is the involvement of our young people," said Billy Summerlin, Brotherhood trustee chairman from Gadsden, Ala. "If we miss them, we've missed a great opportunity for our future missions movement."

World Changers "has a broad impact on our whole convention. I'm glad we're on the cutting edge of something like this."

Trustees approved a new staff position, special projects coordinator for the children and youth division. Mike Day, former editor of High School Baptist Young Men's curriculum, will fill that position and develop the World Changers program.

World Changers will be piloted next summer with churches in Tennessee's Shelby Baptist Association, where the Brotherhood Commission is located, Day said. Two hundred youth are expected to participate in a summer project tentatively slated for Appalachia.

Long-range plans call for three national projects each summer and one international project. Each would require up to 400 youth, said Day.

Brotherhood officials said World Changers is designed to enhance existing High School Baptist Young Men, Pioneer Royal Ambassador and Acteen programs by providing an option for cooperative missions involvement. In churches that currently have youth missions education programs, the different groups would meet once monthly 10 times for missions study prior to the summer project.

World Changers also is designed for churches without a youth missions education program that wish to provide missions involvement experience. The desire behind World Changers is for these churches to develop High School Baptist Young Men and Acteen programs after participation in World Changers, Day said.

A third target group cited by Day is "non-traditional" Brotherhood audiences. Black and ethnic leaders reportedly have endorsed World Changers as the "kind of combination" needed for their youth, he said.

In other business, trustees heard reports on a year-long financial turnaround and disaster response.

Smith reported to the trustees that the Brotherhood Commission's "year of austerity" left the agency in the black Sept. 30, the last day of the fiscal year. A year ago, the commission had an estimated \$110,000 deficit following the introduction of two new programs and the production of more than 30 new publications.

The commission's income statement shows a net gain of \$287,477.12 for the year. The commission currently is operating on a budget of \$3,132,788.

"Not only have we paid ourselves out of debt entirely, but we have generated a very sufficient cash flow," said Smith.

In 1988-89, the Brotherhood Commission faced the challenge of two hurricanes -- Gilbert and Hugo -- in its disaster relief program. Working with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, 570 volunteers Brotherhood-recruited went to Jamaica to rebuild churches following Hurricane Gilbert. Brotherhood trustee John Baxley of St. Augustine, Fla., was the on-site coordinator.

More recently, volunteers from 11 states fed 350,312 meals in South Carolina following Hurricane Hugo. According to Douglas Beggs, the commission's adult division director, the South Carolina response was the largest effort in the history of the commission.

Both Summerlin and Smith noted the spirit of the trustee meeting as indicative of the cooperation needed in missions.

"The spirit of unanimity continues to amaze me," said Smith. "Nearly every entity of the Southern Baptist Convention has moved toward their trustee meeting with apprehension because there is division. We have too many important things to accomplish. We need to be about the business which we've been called."

Trustees elected to serve on the commission's executive committee this year are Summerlin, chairman; Don Varnado, Alexandria, La.; Walter Barnes, Birmingham, Ala.; C.L. Bowe, San Jon, N.M.; Joe Lenamon, Fort Worth, Texas; Joe Lennon, Wake Forest, N.C.; Ellis Norris, Washington; Wendell Reed, Salem, Va.; and Spud Willett, Warren, Mich.

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Poll shows less confidence  
in television evangelists

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press  
10/24/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--Public opinion of television evangelists is at an all-time low, according to a new Gallup Poll.

A large majority of the American public now believes television evangelists are untrustworthy in dealing with money, do not have a special relationship with God and are uncaring, dishonest and insincere.

Of the people surveyed, 79 percent said television evangelists cannot be trusted with money given them by donors. That number contrasts with only 36 percent who agreed with that position in 1980.

During the same nine-year period, the number of people who said they believe television evangelists have a special relationship with God decreased from 47 percent to 23 percent.

The number of people who would describe TV evangelists as honest, sincere and caring also decreased dramatically during that time.

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But survey responses did not reveal a lower evaluation of organized religion as a whole. Three in 10 Americans said they have a "great deal" of confidence in organized religion, 22 percent have "quite a lot" of confidence, 26 percent have "some" confidence and 20 percent have "very little" or no confidence.

The number of adults who said religion is "very important" in their life also remained steady, with 57 percent citing it as such.

The harshest critics of the television evangelists tended to be whites who are under age 50 have a college degree, are middle or upper income and live in the East.

Only 5 percent of those surveyed have contributed money to a television evangelist during the past year.

The survey results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected sample of 1,238 adults nationwide. The interviews were conducted in September 1989 by the Gallup Organization.

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Lack of challenge said to result  
in shortfall of ministry workers

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press  
10/24/89

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists stand to lose a generation seeking careers in Christian ministry and need to prepare for leaner days if the trend is not reversed, a denominational social worker warned.

Anne Davis, dean of the School of Social Work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the downturn can be traced to recent years when church youth directors became more concerned with entertaining young people than challenging them with a sacrificial life of Christian ministry.

"When we shifted our youth programs from Bible study to entertainment and pizza parties, we lost an entire generation who no longer has the commitment to ministry," she told a group of Baptist center workers.

The conference, which focused on starting churches through ministry, was sponsored by the church and community ministries department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"Too many young people today want a youth minister who will take them on more trips and plan more activities," she told the workers representing Baptist centers in 14 states.

The downtrend will not be reversed until youth directors begin to instill a higher level of commitment and a dedication to Christian ministry in the lives of young people, Davis said.

She made the prediction based on information compiled from Quarterly Review magazine published by the Southern Baptist Baptist Sunday School Board and "Fact Book on Higher Education."

The problem does not stop with a lack of future ministers and lay volunteers but also will show up in lower levels of giving to fund budgets for churches and the denomination, Davis said: "Whatever happened to tithing? We have so many alternate ways of raising funds for mission trip that when these young people get to be adults, they're going to think the way you support your church or home missionaries is through bake sales and car washes."

Consequently, a lack of financial means to fund missions "may very well spell our doom as denomination long before our theological differences," she predicted.

In discussing ways to minister, Davis urged the missionaries to guard against becoming insensitive to people in need of ministry: "The first thing Jesus did when he met the woman at the well was not to judge her for her condition but to ask her to meet one of his needs. He was thirsty and acknowledged he was dependent on her to meet one of those needs."

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Christians need to guard against the mindset that "if I dump God on you, you're going to be better off," she added. "We have a tendency to sell our faith like Madison Avenue sells cereal. 'Buy our cereal and you get a prize.'

"Jesus never had a condescending attitude toward those he was attempting to minister to. He first sought to establish some common ground before he ever started a relationship."

Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis told conference participants that they are ministering in Southern Baptist's most untapped mission field: "Southern Baptists have a common idea that when a city changes its racial and economic mixture, it is lost to ministry. We have traditionally withdrawn and retreated from the changing ethnic and socio-economic makeup of our cities, ... but that remains our greatest opportunity for ministry.

"There is no greater need for churches than where Baptist centers are located. Today the word 'church' symbolizes a building with a steeple, but no New Testament church had its own building....It was simply a gathering of believers in people's homes, in fields and under trees.

"The myth that you have to have a new big building before you start a church has stood in the way of starting more congregations than any other myth I know. You can meet anywhere if you have a spirit of worship."

The denomination also has become far too theatrical and entertainment-oriented in its approach to worship, Lewis added: "We feel that we have to entertain people when they come to church. But Baptist centers are closer to the reality of worship than many churches because they are less pretentious in their style."

The denomination needs more "break out" ministries among its churches -- "churches willing to break out of their buildings and reach into the community with redemptive ministry," he said.

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Students belong to churches,  
but don't attend regularly

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press  
10/24/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--About two-thirds of the nation's college students claim membership in a church or synagogue, but far fewer attend worship services regularly or participate in campus religious organizations, according to a recent Gallup Poll.

Among the group of college students surveyed, 67 percent said they belong to a church or synagogue.

Female students outnumbered male students in claiming church membership by a margin of 72 percent to 62 percent.

Students in the South (76 percent) and Midwest (72 percent) are more likely to say they belong to a church than students in the West (49 percent) or East (64 percent).

But only 34 percent of all students surveyed said they attend religious services on a weekly basis. Of the remainder, 18 percent said they attend worship services about monthly, 25 percent said they attend a few times a year and 23 percent said they almost never attend.

Young women (39 percent) are more likely to attend church on a regular basis than young men (30 percent), according to the poll. Lowerclassmen (36 percent) also are more likely to attend than upperclassmen (30 percent).

Students in the South (43 percent) and the Midwest (40 percent) said they attend church regularly more than students in the West (27 percent) and the East (24 percent.)

In addition, students with an A grade-point average (43 percent) are more likely to attend church weekly than students with a B average (32 percent) or C average (35 percent).

Only 12 percent of the students surveyed said they participate in a campus religious organization.

The survey was conducted among a representative national sample of undergraduate college students in October 1988 by the Gallup Organization for the Princeton Religion Research Center.

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Journey not in vain  
for Texas volunteers

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)--With mixed emotions, Texas Baptist volunteers received the news that they were not needed after nearing the mid-way point of their journey to San Francisco.

The 11 volunteers had made the sacrifice to leave their families and jobs and were deeply committed to aiding hungry survivors of the California earthquake in the name of Jesus.

The Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Mobile Unit and the team of trained volunteers had left Dallas on Oct. 18 bound for northern California to provide earthquake victims hot meals and Christian counsel.

However, after traveling as far as Santa Rosa, N.M., it was determined that assistance by out-of-state Southern Baptist Disaster Relief workers would not be needed in the San Francisco Bay area, and the volunteers were called back to Texas.

Under a crisp, blue New Mexico sky, they gathered for prayer beside the 18-wheeler that carries the field kitchen and has been a highly visible focus of Texas Baptist's ministry in dozens of disasters in the past 20 years.

"What we have done is not in vain and has not gone unnoticed," said the unit director, Ernie Liebig of Bullard, Texas.

"It is important that you have made the effort, and God is already using it for his glory."

Liebig's words were soon fulfilled in a dramatic way on the return trip when a waitress asked to speak to the unit chaplain, Ricky Hargrave, pastor of King Memorial Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.

"My husband committed suicide, and I have no one to talk with about it," she confided.

Hargrave, who is also chaplain for the Plano Police Department, arranged for her to get the spiritual and psychological help she needs.

"That may have been the reason for our trip," said Hargrave.

"Along the way, we saw other people moved by our effort, but our disaster relief ministry to one hurting family makes it all worthwhile."

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Cooperative Program  
a success story: Naylor

By Barbara Denman

Baptist Press  
10/24/89

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Retired seminary president Robert Naylor is not ready to give up on the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget despite its sluggish growth in recent years.

"As big as our needs, never has our address to the need been larger," he said. "The Cooperative Program is a success story."

During a presentation at the Florida Baptist Building in Jacksonville, Naylor, president emeritus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, told employees they are privileged to be a part of Southern Baptist's unified giving plan.

"You're not a Gloomy Gus out there channeled to a vessel of failure," he said, comparing the Cooperative Program to the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches story. "You've got to talk to people about what God has done for the people that were willing to walk together. Our unity is in our doing."

Comparing the 1934 Cooperative Program receipts of \$800,000 to the 1989 \$137 million budget Naylor decried the "gloomy talk in too many of our publications about this awful hour."

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Naylor dated the conception of the Cooperative Program to the 1919 Seventy-Five Million Campaign that attempted to raise money to support all Southern Baptist benevolences rather than promote causes individually. Although the campaign failed to raise the money Southern Baptists pledged, it provided a starting point for a cooperative effort that became the Cooperative Program in 1925.

His life and the Cooperative Program have been inexplicably intertwined, Naylor said. And after experiencing his second birth of Christian conversion in 1918 he witnessed the birth of the giving plan in 1919. "I'm not the father of the Cooperative Program," he said. "I'm a brother alongside, and we've walked together for a lifetime."

Therefore, the Cooperative Program is personal to him and should be to all Southern Baptists, he said.

"If it's not that, if it's only a method, if it's only a program, if it's inanimate, if there's no life in it, then you haven't come to grips with the Cooperative Program," he noted. "This morning you preached the gospel on the other side of this earth and in the shadows of this church and places we are shut out by caste and society because you're part of the Cooperative Program."

Calling himself a debtor, Naylor noted that he relied on the Cooperative Program for support at the seminary for more than 20 years. His daughter, Rebekah, who is a Southern Baptist medical missionary in India, now depends on the same channel of support.

He recalled that as a seminary president making budget requests to the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, the designations never were enough for everything the seminaries wanted to do. But Executive Committee members were faced with making "an equitable distribution of an inadequate amount of money."

"We knew we had done a good job when we found everybody equally unhappy with the appropriation that had been made," he recalled.

Although the amount designated never completely covered the budget requests, Naylor admitted that the amount was sufficient, noting "that which God provides is enough."

While voluntariness is one of the guiding principles that the Cooperative Program is built upon, it is also a threat to its continuance, he said.

Some methods of promoting the program cross a fine line into coercion. Using someone's old giving record as a criteria for service exposes the Cooperative Program to the "peril of competitiveness," he said.

Naylor acknowledged that the Cooperative Program is vulnerable to political manipulation, especially when people designate gifts to exclude unpopular causes. But the needs of the larger fellowship carry precedence over "the lone wolf claiming the principle of voluntariness and denying the debt owed to corporate causes," he said.

The Cooperative Program is even more important today, Naylor said, as the Southern Baptist membership becomes more massive and diverse. The Cooperative Program "involves all Southern Baptists" and "becomes a stackpole around which gathers our great host of people."

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