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November 3, 1989

89-158

Annuity Board trustees examine
retirement gains, medical claims

N-CO
(A.Bd.)

DALLAS (BP)--Annuity Board trustees heard reports of growing retirement plan earnings and rising medical claims at their fall meeting in Dallas Oct. 30-31.

Buoyed by increasing contributions and rising earnings, the assets of the board have increased by more than \$1 million a day in 1989, President Darold H. Morgan told the trustees.

Treasurer Harold D. Richardson noted that while falling long-term interest rates caused a reduction in the funding rate for annuities, rising stock prices and increased bond values both worked to enhance the value of members' accounts.

Trustees in the insurance committee and in the full board meeting grappled with the continuing losses in the board's medical plans.

Heavy use of the Church Comprehensive Medical Plan by pastors, other church staff members and their families, and large doctor and hospital bills resulted in losses of \$5.1 million in the plan during the first nine months of the year, board officials noted. Losses by year end are expected to be \$6.9 million to \$7 million.

In the past three years, claims paid by Annuity Board medical plans have exceeded premiums paid by \$31 million. In recent years, adequate plan surpluses made moderate increases possible. Now, administrators are trying to equalize premiums and claims.

Trustees, a number of whom are insurance executives, discussed the national medical insurance crisis and asked the Annuity Board staff to expand its efforts to inform participants of the dangers of canceling medical coverage.

The board has announced rate increases in the church medical plan that range from 9 percent to more than 30 percent, with rates based on regional medical costs. The aggregate increase in projected premium income to match claims experience is 20 percent. The aggregate increase in the Group Comprehensive Medical Plan will be about 19 percent. The present Seminarian Comprehensive Medical Plan will merge into the Church Plan Jan. 1.

Reporting on retirement, Treasurer Richardson noted that net earnings of \$291.4 million in nine months is the greatest dollar earnings in any January-September period. Equities led the earnings, with a year-to-date rate of more than 24 percent. Member contributions exceeded the same nine-month period in 1988 by 10.5 percent and totaled \$126.3 million.

Trustees approved a 1990 operating budget of \$26.2 million, an increase of 6 percent over 1989. The budget does not include cost-of-living adjustments in salaries for 1990.

At an Oct. 30 evening dinner meeting, Morgan, who will retire as chief executive officer March 1, 1990, spoke to trustees about his years of ministry and the changes he has seen.

Morgan praised the trustees as the "ideal for the rest of the denomination" as they have "again and again demonstrated the true role of trusteeship."

Morgan honored the memory of his predecessor, the late Alton Reed, and praised his successor, Paul W. Powell.

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The trustee relief committee reported approval of eight people for two-year monthly grants and eight for two-year expense grants. One person received a one-time grant. Relief funds are allocated from Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget receipts after approval of the trustee committee.

The committee approved a Christmas check of \$125 to each person on the relief roll as of Dec. 1, 1989.

In addition to supplemental assistance, the Annuity Board also provides funds to 553 people or couples through its Adopt An Annuitant program.

Annuity Board trustees will meet again Feb. 5-6, 1990.

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HMB has toll-free number
for missions volunteers

N-HMB

Baptist Press
11/3/89

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has installed a toll-free telephone line to assist home missions volunteers and people needing volunteer assistance.

The number is (800) HMB-VOLS, or (800) 462-8657.

Calls on the toll-free line will be answered in the HMB's volunteer division office. Division Director Don Hammonds said the line was installed to allow Southern Baptists easier access to information about volunteer missions opportunities and to assist missionaries, pastors and associational workers who want to request volunteer assistance.

Callers may use the toll-free line to receive information about a variety of HMB volunteer programs:

- Mission Service Corps, for adult volunteers willing to serve one year or longer.
- Christian Service Corps, for adult volunteers willing to serve in short-term assignments of one week or longer.
- Student summer and semester missions, for college students willing to serve 10- to 14-week terms.
- Sojourners, for high school juniors and seniors willing to serve four to 10 weeks, usually in the summer.
- Mission youth groups, for high school church groups willing to serve one week or longer, usually in the summer.

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Texas Baptists set new record
for Sunday school attendance

By Terry Barone

N-Texas

Baptist Press
11/3/89

DALLAS (BP)--About 740,000 people attended Texas Baptist Bible studies on "Great Day in the Morning" Oct. 29, setting a record for Sunday school attendance.

Bob Fuston, associational consultant in the Sunday school division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said 739,534 people were reported in Sunday schools across the state. The total is 18,791 more than the previous record, set in 1988.

For several years, the statewide goal has been to have 725,000 people in Bible study to celebrate Sunday School High Attendance Day, known in Texas as "Great Day in the Morning."

On an average Sunday, Texas Baptists have 599,632 attending Bible study. The 739,534 attendance figure is a 23 percent increase over the statewide average attendance.

"I am excited about the significance this has to the climax of the 'Year of the Sunday School' emphasis as we have tried to focus on mobilizing laypersons to reach people while strengthening Sunday schools," Fuston said.

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"This also is significant as we enter the final year of Challenge 10/90, with Southern Baptists attempting to have 10 million persons enrolled in Southern Baptist Sunday schools nationwide by the last Sunday in September of 1990."

The record figure demonstrates that Texans that can be reached for Bible study, considering that about 600,000 attend on an average Sunday, Fuston noted.

"I think this attendance figure also demonstrates that when we (Texas and Southern Baptists) cooperate, we can do great things for the Lord," he added.

Churches and associations across the state had "glowing reports," he reported. Both large and small associations reported all-time record attendances. And many churches reported their best Sunday school attendances ever, he said.

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New Mexico Baptists
re-elect president

N-10

Baptist Press
11/3/89

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--In the 77th annual session of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, held Oct. 31-Nov. 2 in Hoffmantown Baptist Church, Albuquerque, officers were elected and a \$5.2 million budget adopted.

Charles Price, pastor of First Baptist Church of Las Cruces, was re-elected president; David McConkey, pastor of First Baptist Church of Rio Rancho, was elected first vice president; and Frank Zamora, pastor of First Baptist Church of Farmington, was re-elected second vice president.

The convention adopted a budget totaling \$5.2 million, of which \$2.5 million will be contributed by the 327 congregations cooperating with the BCNM. The budget includes a 0.5 percent increase in contributions to worldwide missions causes through the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget.

Of the budget, 69.5 percent will be used in New Mexico and 30.5 percent will be sent sent to support SBC missions, education and evangelism projects around the world.

In his report to the convention, New Mexico Foundation and Church Loan Corporation President Lee Black reported that according to a survey conducted of other state Baptist foundations, the New Mexico Baptist Foundation is second only to the Texas Baptist Foundation in total assets managed per resident member and resident church.

Black pointed out that in 1979 Foundation assets amounted to only \$1.5 million, but now those assets are approaching \$7 million.

Next year's convention will be Nov. 13-15 at First Baptist Church of Roswell.

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CORRECTION: In the Baptist Press article titled "Governments 'doomed' without religious influence" dated 10/6/89, the "kind of freedom" mentioned by Russ Bush in paragraph 17 is freedom from sin, not the political freedom implied by the previous sentence. The corrected paragraph should read:

"The legitimate basis for political freedom is not merely the presence of the Lord," he said. The freedom from sin offered by the Spirit "fully existed under Roman rule, under Europe's monarchies, under Hitler's dictatorship, as well as under U.S. Supreme Court rulings."

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Philosopher urges quest
for understanding faith

By Pat Cole

N-(CO)
(SBTS)

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Christians should love God with their minds as well as their hearts by seeking a "fuller understanding" of their faith, claimed British philosopher Basil Mitchell.

"As Christians, we have been taught to hear God speaking to us in the Bible and in the tradition of the church," said Mitchell during the Norton Lectures at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "Simply to repeat what is said in the Bible without any attempt to understand it can scarcely be worthy to be called listening to it."

Mitchell, retired professor at Oxford University and the author of several books on the philosophy of religion, said Christians must "expect to grow in understanding" and "move beyond the faith that satisfied us as children." Yet God's truth cannot be wholly comprehended, he said.

"We ought to surely expect that God's truth will transcend our understanding at any particular time and indeed prove inexhaustible," he said. "Though we may progress in the understanding of it, we shall never be in the position to comprehend it fully."

The understanding of God's truth can be aided by the work of theologians, Mitchell noted. "If theology is a creative discipline, that is, if it involves the creative powers of the mind, it is not possible at any time to predict what fresh and genuine insights later theologians may achieve into the nature of Christian truth," he explained.

Mitchell also stressed that Christians should examine their faith critically. They should be able to trust that their faith can both "withstand criticism and be illuminated by it."

"Which attitude shows the greater trust in God," he asked, "that which refuses to submit our traditional formulations of belief to criticism or that which is confident that if we put them to the test of reason and experience we shall be led in the end to a fuller understanding of them?"

Christians who seek God with all their minds echo the Apostle Paul's words, he said, quoting, "'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heights, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.'"

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Baptist ministers to police
department through chaplaincy

By Mark Wingfield

F-HMB

Baptist Press
11/3/89

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)--Call him counselor. Call him "Father." Call him reverend. However he is addressed, Dennis Whitaker will listen.

That's his job.

Whitaker, a Southern Baptist, is police counselor with the Charlotte (N.C.) Police Department. In that role, he represents a growing trend among Southern Baptists to take the gospel to the workplace through chaplaincy, according to Huey Perry, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's chaplaincy division.

Whitaker is one of 13 full-time law-enforcement chaplain-counselors endorsed by the Home Mission Board.

After 10 years on the job, one Catholic officer still insists on calling him "Father." Despite his own Southern Baptist training, that doesn't bother Whitaker.

"That's really a compliment," he said. "It means he respects me as a religious person in his tradition."

Such respect is hard to come by in police work, he added: "A police officer judges you by what he sees in you and experiences with you. He deals in a world where trust is everything."

To be a police chaplain, "you don't have to be a saint," Whitaker explained. "You just have to be a person who will accept officers where they are."

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He believes police officers are like pastors -- "put upon a pedestal by the public so that any imperfection is magnified beyond its importance."

That stress is compounded by the danger of the job, the drain of shift work and pessimism created by seeing everything bad that goes on in the world. "You don't call a police officer to have a cup of coffee with him," Whitaker said. "You call because you have a problem."

That is the very thing he attempts to overcome as police counselor.

"I'm bringing God's love to people who are so consumed by a secular environment that they may not realize the good things going on in life," he said. "As a civilian employee, I can provide an objective view about problems created by the job."

And as a long-term co-worker, he also has a better-than-average understanding of how police officers think. "One officer said he felt closer to me than to his own pastor because I understand police work," he said.

Whitaker also has a better appreciation of the police officer's world because his wife, Roberta, is a police sergeant in Charlotte.

To help build the kind of relationships that lead to ministry, Whitaker spends much of his time out of the office. He rides with officers on patrol, accompanies them to deliver death messages and often shows up where a group of them are working together.

This commitment takes Whitaker to some unusual places. For two nights this fall, he found himself at the Charlotte Coliseum during sold-out concerts by the Grateful Dead.

He didn't go because he likes the loud music and throngs of "Dead Heads" dancing in the aisles. He was there because 90 police officers were on duty around the coliseum.

"The more you're out in the field, the more you may be where you can help someone," he said. "They may not seek you out in the office, but if you're there, they'll talk."

"I can stand here and tell Dennis things that are bothering me that I can't tell my immediate supervisor," explained Officer Lisa Shores during a break patrolling the concert crowd. "When you're under this kind of stress, you've got to have someone to talk to."

"I've never made an appointment with Dennis, but he's counseled me on numerous occasions -- in the hallways, in the coliseum."

Sgt. Hank Wilkins, who has worked for the Charlotte Police Department for 36 years, said Whitaker always seems to show up when he is needed. "My mother passed away and he was there. My father passed away and he was there."

"In that moment, you're the most important thing in the world to him. The reverend takes me as an individual, as though I'm the only one around."

Whitaker also seemed to show up just when Angela Smith needed him. Smith, the wife of a young officer, had never met Whitaker until he knocked on her door in the early hours of the morning, accompanied by the police chief.

"When I saw the chief coming, I knew something was bad wrong," she recalled. "They came and said Robert had been shot."

"We talked, and I cried on Dennis' shoulder. And we prayed."

In the days after her husband's death, Whitaker was "always there when I needed him," she said. He accompanied her to the funeral home to select a casket and took her husband's uniform to the funeral home for him to be dressed for burial.

"It was wonderful that somebody was concerned and cared enough to do the things he did," she said. "When you talk to other wives who've lost their husbands and hear what they've been through, you're grateful for our police department."

These examples show the importance of a ministry to police officers, Whitaker said: "I can't look to a number of baptisms or number of church buildings completed. My mileposts are more intangible. But I don't think that means they are any less important.

"If we as Southern Baptists stay only within our community, I feel we're falling short of the gospel and the life Christ called us to lead.

"I don't go out and deal with these people with the idea of making them Southern Baptists, but because they're hurting. I think that's what Christ called us to do, to go out and minister to the hurting.

"So many people, the first time I meet them, are in deep crisis. But I've also found there's nothing that forms a binding friendship faster than touching someone in crisis."

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

Whitaker's ministry could be duplicated, HMB leader says

N-HMB

Baptist Press
11/3/89

ATLANTA (BP)--Although Dennis Whitaker is one of only 13 full-time Southern Baptist law-enforcement chaplains, his ministry could be duplicated in cities across the nation, said Lowell Lawson, national missionary in chaplaincy development with the denomination's Home Mission Board

Whitaker, police counselor with the Charlotte (N.C.) Police Department for nine years, was one of the first Southern Baptists to serve in full-time law-enforcement chaplaincy. He and the 12 other Southern Baptists are among about 50 full-time law-enforcement chaplains recognized by the International Conference of Police Chaplains.

"Southern Baptists have been involved in law-enforcement chaplaincy for decades, but the concept of the full-time, paid chaplain is relatively new," Lawson explained. "This is one of the most rapidly developing areas of chaplaincy in the United States."

Today, Southern Baptists' 13 full-time law-enforcement chaplains serve in eight states, with organizations ranging from the Maryland State Police to the Genesee (Mich.) Township Police Department. Dozens of other Southern Baptists are volunteer law-enforcement chaplains.

Whitaker, a past president of the International Conference of Police Chaplains, cited four essentials to a success:

-- The chaplaincy must have full support from the police chief and top administrators. "This not only lends credibility to the chaplain; it also ensures that he or she will get direct input and feedback from the chief on matters relating to the welfare of personnel," he said.

-- The chaplain must keep counseling information confidential. "Gaining the confidence of the officers is the chaplain's toughest task and can only be accomplished when everyone feels the chaplain can be trusted with a secret," he said.

-- The chaplain must be readily available to the officers. "I've tried to get our officers to have problems only between the hours of 8 and 5," he quipped. "But it never works out that way."

-- Chaplains must realize their ministry often will be more of a witness by action than by word. "An understanding ear and an open heart often transmit God's love for the officer more effectively than a passage of Scripture or mini-sermons. Officers will accept you as a minister once they realize you are not out to judge them," Whitaker said.

The Home Mission Board does not appoint chaplains in the same way as missionaries, but it does endorse them for service through its Chaplaincy Commission. Additional resources on chaplaincy are available from the Home Mission Board.

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