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N-HMB

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SBC baptisms to rise 1.9%
for 1989, projections reveal

By Joe Westbury

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists will report an increase in annual baptisms for the second consecutive year if projections by the denomination's Home Mission Board are on target.

A poll of state evangelism directors for the first eleven months of 1989 show an anticipated increase of 1.9 percent, or a net gain of 6,680 baptisms over 1988. The year-end forecast was announced during the evangelism directors' annual meeting in Atlanta.

Clay Price, director of program research in the board's research division, said the denomination is expected to report about 353,000 baptisms for the last year of the decade, up from 346,200 in 1988.

Baptisms have been on a roller coaster ride for much of the 1980s, posting five declines and four gains. The steepest drop was between 1983 and 1985, when baptisms posted three consecutive years of decline.

Although 1989 baptisms, as with 1988, are expected to be up -- the first back-to-back increase of the decade -- the total still will be 76,742 below the decade's high of 429,742 in 1980.

A stronger emphasis will be needed in future years on reaching adults above age 30 if the denomination is to keep up with the population growth, Price said. He reminded the directors that a 1988 Gallup study found 44 percent of adults age 18 and older were unchurched.

Southern Baptists have thousands of potential members on the rolls of their Sunday school classes, he added: "According to the 1989 Uniform Church Letter, there were 660,000 persons who were enrolled in Sunday school but were not members of any church. The number of potential converts already enrolled within the church's activities is almost twice the number of converts reported" in 1989.

However, a November 1988 Baptist VIEWpoll revealed that almost two-thirds of all Southern Baptist churches do not set evangelism goals, he said.

Price noted 6,210 churches reported no baptisms in 1988, and about a thousand of those churches reported no baptisms for the past four years.

Darrell Robinson, the board's vice president for evangelism, viewed the 1989 baptism increase as a sign the denomination is returning to a renewed emphasis on evangelism.

"We went through a period in the '70s and early '80s when the churches were reflecting more of their culture rather than following Christ's mandate to reach people for him," he said.

"I feel we're seeing a turn-around, getting back to the basics of the Bible, the church's mission and assertive evangelism. Until recently even the word 'soul-winning' was all but dropped from our vocabulary, but there's a revival of its usage today among pastors, laity and denominational leaders."

Robinson also credited the increase with a growing number of state conventions that have elevated their evangelism departments to division status -- "a change which gives it greater status, influence and resources."

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Board president Larry Lewis said he believes Southern Baptists are facing several years of increases in the totals, although they remain "far, far short of what we are capable of doing."

"Next year, we will have another soul-winning emphasis at the convention in New Orleans and our 'Here's Hope' national revivals, and I firmly expect we will be up in baptisms every year in the 1990s," he said. "We must have much stronger percentage increases if we are to reach our Bold Mission Thrust (evangelism/missions campaign) goals of 500,000 annual baptisms by the turn of the century."

Don Ledbetter, evangelism director in Nevada, said his state reported its best year for baptisms as a result of the soul-winning emphasis at the Las Vegas Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June and the statewide revivals held in late spring.

"We will be up about 20 percent, but part of that increase is because we are a new-work state. I expect we will baptize about 1,375 for the year," he said.

But J.W. Hutchens, director of evangelism for North Carolina, said he expects his state will be down slightly from 1988.

"The year prior to a national simultaneous revival, like we have planned for 1990, is usually a plateau and the year following the revival we have a decline," he said. "I feel we have put all our emphasis this year on planning and training for next year and didn't work hard enough for 1989 baptisms."

With all but one association and 80 percent of the state's churches planning "Here's Hope" revivals, Hutchens said he expects 1990 will be a strong year for North Carolina baptisms.

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SBC budget enjoys
best 2-month start

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A second record-setting month has pushed the Southern Baptist Convention's unified budget to its best two-month start.

The Cooperative Program conventionwide budget received \$11,093,732 in November, reported Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

That makes last month the best November in the Cooperative Program's 64-year history. It teamed with a record October to produce \$22,655,099 for the first two months of the budget's fiscal year -- almost \$2.05 million better than the previous best October/November combination, set in 1986.

The November receipts were 22.51 percent greater than receipts for November 1988. Year-to-date receipts were 13.23 percent greater than receipts for the first two months of the 1988-89 fiscal year. The current U.S. inflation rate is 4.3 percent.

"I am keenly aware of the urgent mission needs and am delighted with the gifts to world missions through the Cooperative Program this fall," Bennett said. "We thank God and express appreciation to the millions of church members who make this possible and to the state conventions for their strong commitment to the Cooperative Program."

The current Cooperative Program basic operating budget is \$134,787,543. It also includes a \$2.5 million capital needs priority item, designed to pay off the debt on the SBC Building in Nashville, which will be five years old in February.

The Cooperative Program helps support 18 SBC organizations that conduct evangelistic, missionary and educational ministries worldwide. It is funded by contributions from individual Southern Baptists. Their gifts are processed through the budgets of local churches and state Baptist conventions before reaching the Executive Committee for distribution to the receiving organizations.

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Missionaries, others seek
refuge from Manila battle

By Marty Croll

N-FMB

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--Three Southern Baptist missionary families and two other American families associated with Baptists in the Philippines evacuated their homes Dec. 4 as fighting intensified in Manila's financial district.

The moves were precautions to avoid the danger of crossfire between Philippine armed forces and rebels holed up in the district following an attempted coup, reported missionary Trudy Crittendon, chairman of the Southern Baptist mission organization in the Philippines.

By early Dec. 4, government forces had confined fighting to an 11-block area in the financial district of the Makati area, where numerous embassies are located and where many foreign diplomats and businessmen live. Southern Baptist missionary homes are scattered throughout six subdivisions in the Makati area.

One of the families that fled moved into an evacuation center in their neighborhood. The other four families moved to mission guest quarters in another part of Manila.

Southern Baptist workers Marvin and Judy Raley of Houston decided to move into the nearby Assumption Convent instead of leaving their neighborhood, San Lorenzo. But as fighting continued, they planned to leave San Lorenzo by Dec. 5. Missionaries Phil and Martha Anderson c Killen and Florence, Ala., respectively, and Mark and Geneva Weiler of Sioux Falls, S.D., and Elkins, Ark., respectively, moved Dec. 4 to the mission guest quarters.

Also at the guest quarters were two families who live in Manila and attend International Baptist Church there. They are R.A. and June Hayden, and Sherri Hamil and her two teen-age children, whose hometowns are unknown. Hamil's husband was out of the country at the time. Hayden is the nephew of Herbert Gabhart, chancellor of Belmont College in Nashville, Tenn.

Hamil and her children were in the Twin Towers building in Manila when rebel troops took it over but were able to leave safely, Crittendon said.

Loyalist and rebel troops battled for a time around International Church, located in the Salcedo Village area of Makati, adjacent to the Bel Air neighborhood where two Southern Baptist missionary families live. The families consider themselves safe and did not leave the area, Crittendon said.

Those families and the 13 other Southern Baptist missionary families in Manila were keeping a low profile, Crittendon said. Missionaries outside the city were being advised to stay home also, since government officials used barricades to block travel on major arteries.

Mutinous forces fighting to overthrow the government of President Corazon Aquino overcame the air force command headquarters, government broadcast center and parts of the international airport, as well as a number of other military installations in the Philippines, Dec. 1. But they failed in a fierce attack on military headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo in Manila.

Reports estimated more than 10,000 Filipinos fled their homes and were staying in churches, schools and other evacuation centers. People throughout Manila were encouraged by radio to attend churches within walking distance and pray, Crittendon said. Schools were closed indefinitely.

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ACTS awards honor
local TV ministry

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(RTVC)

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--ACTS stations in Mississippi and Georgia shared top broadcast honor recently when the American Christian Television System honored 15 network affiliates at the fourth annual ACTS Awards program in Fort Worth, Texas.

ACTS is the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission's 24-hour Christian television network, now available to more than 9 million homes through cable, low-power and full-power television.

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Seventeen awards were presented for outstanding achievements in local programming, promotion and channel management, chosen from 136 entries submitted by ACTS network affiliates throughout the nation.

Mississippi affiliates received the largest number of awards, followed by Texas and Arkansas. Other states represented in the awards program were Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Oklahoma, Alaska and Tennessee.

ACTS of Hattiesburg, Miss. -- operated by First Baptist Church for the past 13 years -- was named Cable Affiliate of the year. TV-51 of Tifton, Ga. -- sponsored by Northside Baptist Church -- was named the Broadcast Affiliate of the Year for its extensive community involvement.

Other top honors were:

-- Best Program of the Year. "A Christmas Carol," a musical/theatrical production of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Produced by Ron Harris, media minister at Travis Avenue, "Christmas Carol" also won in the Musical/Theatrical Special category.

-- Best spot of the year. "Tracks," a 30-second spot conveying a message of Christian love and caring. It was produced by the First Baptist Church of Brandon, Miss., and also was honored for Best Christian Message.

Also receiving awards were:

-- Best Educational or Informational Program. Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth, for "Window on the World," a Bible study program hosted by Pastor Cecil Sherman.

-- Best Musical or Theatrical Series. First Baptist Church of Altus, Okla., for "Rod Smith Specials," a half-hour series featuring local musical talent and hosted by Minister of Music Rod Smith.

-- Best Human Interest Special. ACTS affiliate WJFB-TV in Lebanon, Tenn., for "Nashville & Eastern -- A Tennessee Short Line," a documentary on the decline and resurgence of the railroad industry in northern Tennessee.

-- Best Human Interest Series. Wingate College Television in Wingate, N.C., for "Union Weekly," a half-hour magazine show about people, places and events in the community, produced by Wingate College communication majors.

-- Best Events Coverage Series. To Beech Street First Baptist Church in Texarkana, Ark., for "Texarkana High School Football," weekly play-by-play coverage incorporating subtle, yet effective, spiritual messages.

-- Best Events Coverage Special. Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for "To Him Who is Able," a half-hour special showing highlights of the 153rd session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

-- Best Short Feature. ACTS board of Fort Smith, Ark., for "Father Me," a music video featuring Craig Smith, local resident and recording artist with Benson Music Company.

-- Best Promotional Announcement. ACTS affiliate K20AG (TV-20) in Anchorage, Alaska, for "Memorial Day," a 30-second spot produced by ABT (Anchorage Baptist Temple-Productions) promoting Memorial Day church attendance.

-- Best Commercial. ACTS-14 of Jackson, Miss., for "Subscribe Now," a commercial designed to increase subscriptions to the Mississippi Business Journal.

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Musicians urged to bridge
denominational conflict

By Charles Willis

N-SSB

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Church musicians can span the great divide of musical prejudice in the Southern Baptist Convention, Tom McEachin told state church music leaders during their annual planning meeting at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board Nov. 28-Dec. 1.

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McEachin, associate director of the SBC Home Mission Board's mass evangelism department, told the music leaders that bridge-building can begin at the national and state levels.

"Differences in worship philosophy are at the root of a lot of our denominational differences," he said. "I came out of a church background that used a wide variety of music, from string quartet to male quartet. I like it all. I'm glad I do."

A steady diet of musical sameness can become boring and give the wrong perception about a church's mission, he said: "The musical style a church decides to use can give a perception that the church is or is not evangelistic. If our music is not alive, despite the spoken message, people don't perceive us to be evangelistic."

Musical exclusivity may be a larger issue than some Southern Baptists have realized, McEachin added: "Like a telephone or a television set, music is a medium, not just an art form. Communication of people to God and of God to people requires different kinds of styles."

Some schools of thought perpetuate music as an art form, believing music must be artistically worthy for worship, he noted.

"I have experienced the conflict between music as an art form and music as a medium," the former music minister and missionary to Taiwan said. "I'm not sure it's been resolved, but I think it needs to be resolved."

Denominational leaders, including state, associational and local leaders, need to build bridges to end the conflict, McEachin said: "The churches need variety. If only one style of music, no matter what that style is, isn't communicating to the people, it isn't worthy of worship. It's like the tree falling in the forest. Did anyone hear it?"

"I think our people are longing for variety but we are afraid. There is a lot of peer pressure in the church-music field."

McEachin's experiences as an interim music leader have taught him to be careful about change in some churches, he said.

"There is a tremendous amount of pressure to have things stay traditional," he said. "Music has a lot of traditional overtones to it. Some folks don't think it's gospel unless it's by a particular composer."

McEachin doesn't believe Southern churches have been open to all kinds of music, he said.

"It's about more than just different styles and letting each other be," he reflected. "Building bridges is more important than musical styles. We're missing variety, and some people are afraid of variety. Some persons are reached for Christ by Bach and others by contemporary writers.

"We really need to ask ourselves what's happening here."

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Christmas a little brighter
thanks to Hospitality House

By Ken Camp

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DALLAS (BP)--Christmas this year will be a little happier for some families separated by prison walls and iron bars, thanks to the ministry of the Texas Baptist Hospitality House.

For the fourth consecutive year, the staff of Hospitality House in Huntsville, is distributing toys to children of prisoners in Texas Department of Corrections facilities.

Directed by Bob and Nelda Norris, Hospitality House provides a temporary home for visiting families of inmates in Huntsville-area prisons. More than half of the ministry's operating budget is provided through the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions, collected each autumn in most of the 5,100 Southern Baptist congregations in Texas.

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"Last year we distributed toys to about 150 kids, and probably 75 percent of those kids received no other Christmas gifts," Norris said. "There are a number of churches that bring us toys each year -- everything from baby rattles to footballs to dolls to electronic games."

The gift-giving season typically begins in mid-December and continues until well after New Year's Day, Norris said, noting that Christmas time visits to the prisons do not always fall exactly on Dec. 25.

"I remember a family visiting last year during the first week in December. We didn't have much yet at that point, just a stocking with some jacks and a jump rope in it," Norris recalled.

"But when I gave it to little 7-year-old Becky, her eyes lit up. Later, her mother told Nelda that a jump rope was all Becky had been wanting for Christmas. Becky's mother had been wanting to buy her one but wasn't sure she'd be able to.

"A dollar-and-nineteen-cent jump rope made her dream come true. That's where the joy comes in."

Only new toys in good condition are given as Christmas presents. Damaged second-hand toys given to Hospitality House are donated to a local ministry to transients.

Toys not given to children at Christmas are distributed during the year to children celebrating birthdays or making their first visits to Hospitality House.

In addition to delighting the children, the gift-giving also makes parents more open to the various ministries offered by Hospitality House, Norris noted: "It helps break the ice. Give her child a toy, and Momma's heart melts."

Since opening its doors in the summer of 1986, Hospitality House has provided overnight lodging to 8,200 people, provided 3,800 meals and been instrumental in leading 132 people to make professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

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William Jewell gets
\$1 million grant

N-CC

Baptist Press
12/4/89

LIBERTY, Mo. (BP)--William Jewell College has received a \$1 million challenge grant from the Mabee Foundation of Tulsa, Okla.

The \$1 million is designated toward construction of a proposed \$7.5 million center for basic sciences and computer technology on the campus of the Baptist school in Liberty, Mo. The Mabee Foundation's commitment will be paid when the college raises matching funds that allow for construction to begin.

The grant is the third such gift for facilities the college has received from the Mabee Foundation. The foundation provided \$750,000 in 1978 for construction of the Mabee Center for Physical Education and \$450,000 in 1983 to assist with renovations to Brown Hall.

The J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation, incorporated in 1948, assists religious, charitable and educational organizations that combine sound character and stability with progressiveness and purpose. The foundation funds projects only in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

William Jewell trustees have launched "Leadership 2000: The Campaign for William Jewell College," a \$15 million capital campaign in support of academic program endowments, buildings and current funds.

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