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State executives
tout CP's value

By Erich Bridges

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program helped South Carolina Baptists respond to Hurricane Hugo last year -- even before the storm came ashore, according to Ray Rust.

Rust, executive secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention's general board, joined four other state convention leaders who highlighted the impact of Cooperative Program unified budget giving in their states. They spoke Feb. 20 during the annual Cooperative Program luncheon sponsored by the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission.

Thanks to Cooperative Program support, Rust said, South Carolina Baptists had the people and the resources to form a disaster response team almost two days before Hugo hit land. The team set up a disaster relief center, sent workers to devastated areas and provided food, clothing and shelter to hurricane victims.

Aid came from Southern Baptists in many other states, Rust added; more than \$1 million in relief funds flowed through the state convention office. "The Cooperative Program created a network out of which the resources flowed to the need," he said. "It's downright overwhelming in a time of need."

Through pastor support, outreach funds and aid for property purchases, Cooperative Program giving also is helping California Baptists go after their goal of starting 2,000 churches by the year 2,000, said Wendell Foss, associate executive director of the California Southern Baptist Convention.

California's population is expected to total 29 million after the 1990 census is completed. At least 80 percent of those people are unchurched, Foss said, "so we have a prospect list of about 24 million."

New York Baptists minister in 20 languages besides English, and half of their church membership is ethnic or non-English-speaking. Cooperative Program funds make new language mission outreach possible, said R. Quinn Pugh, executive director of the New York Baptist Convention.

Stewardship begets stewardship, Pugh added. Of the top 25 givers among New York churches last year, seven were ethnic congregations, he reported.

But not all Cooperative Program funds go to exciting or high-profile causes, Donald Wideman reminded luncheon listeners. Wideman, executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention, said the third-largest item in the Missouri convention's annual budget is the Expanded Annuity Plan to help pastors and other church staff members pay for their retirement years.

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Of Missouri Baptists' 1,900 or so churches and mission congregations, Wideman said, 1,400 count 75 or fewer people in Sunday school. Many pastors of such churches "hope they die with their boots on" and live in terror of retiring into poverty, he said. Nationwide, more than 17,000 Southern Baptist churches have fewer than 100 people enrolled in Sunday school, according to Southern Baptist Sunday School Board statistics for 1989.

"It's fair, responsible and compassionate to do something about our annuity program for the pastors and staff members who give their lives to our Lord, our churches and our denomination," Wideman stated.

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Regulations on alcohol
warning labels issued

By Louis Moore

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Health-warning labels on alcoholic beverage containers must be "legible, conspicuous and prominent," the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms ordered in its final regulations, issued Feb. 14.

The Alcoholic Beverage Labeling Act of 1988, which went into effect Nov. 18, 1989, required that all containers of wine, wine coolers, distilled spirits and beer must carry health- and safety-warning labels. The bureau's temporary regulations issued in early 1989 were criticized by pro-health advocates, who charged that the regulations did not ensure that the labels would be in conspicuous and prominent places on the containers.

The new rule makes labels more readily legible, supporters said.

The labels read: "GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) According to the surgeon general, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2) Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems."

"The alcohol industry lost, and the public won," said Robert M. Parham, associate director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "Southern Baptists and other pro-health advocates have clinched a 20-year battle against one of the major disease-promoting industries in the United States.

"Warning labels are a proven way to alert consumers to the health and safety dangers of the drug that America drinks. Now, we can concentrate on a number of legislation efforts designed to curb the influence of alcohol, including expected legislation mandating an alcohol-free viewing period on television."

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Un-called leaders hurt
churches, Lotz reports

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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Leadership that has not been called by God is "one of the primary things wrong with the churches in America," Ann Graham Lotz told a Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary audience.

Lotz, a Bible teacher, lecturer and daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, spoke to the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary's Conservative Evangelical Fellowship and guests on women in ministry.

"I believe that one of the primary things wrong with the churches in America is that we have men and women in the pulpit, men and women in the echelons of the seminary, men and women teaching the Bible, and they have never been called of God to be there," she said.

"I've never had a problem with women in the ministry as I was, because I knew God had commissioned me," Lotz said of her own ministry, noting she has been opposed by men who felt she should not address audiences that include men.

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Prayer and Bible study have helped define her role, she said. "I believe God has revealed to me that God has forbidden me to hold a position of, for instance, a senior pastor in a church, or to be on a board of deacons or elders where I would be in a position of authority over men, making decisions, enforcing discipline that puts me in authority over them," she explained. "So I feel forbidden by God to take on a position like that.

"When I speak, if I speak with authority, it is the authority of the Scriptures, it's the authority of the Holy Spirit. But I stand before you unashamed, simply a woman, not with authority, a woman under authority -- a woman under the authority of my Lord, under the authority of my husband, under the authority of my pastor, under the authority in this particular case of (Southeastern President) Dr. (Lewis) Drummond and (fellowship President) Steve Griffith."

Consequently, the central issue of whether a person should be a minister ought to focus on God's call, not gender, Lotz said.

"God forbid that anyone should ever tell a woman that she cannot preach, that she cannot teach and she cannot give out God's word if she has been commissioned," she noted. "The issue for me is not whether or not women should be in ministry. The issue is whether those in ministry, men or women, have been called by God to be there.

"I would challenge you to acknowledge that women as well as men can be under compulsion -- compelled by the love of God, locked in by the truth that we know, as we live in his world, that we have to give verbal expression, not just to our faith, but to our faith in the word of God.

"And I seek very carefully not to give out my opinions or my ideas; I seek to give out God's word. Every time I speak, I will ask people to open their Bibles that I might give out his word. I believe that is my commission as a woman in ministry."

Lotz said to men: "I challenge you, what woman do you know in ministry? ... Will you ask her, 'When were you commissioned by God in your ministry?' If she answers quite honestly, on such and such a date, from such and such a Scripture God called me to be in the ministry, then what will you do to encourage her and to support her and to do what you can to see that she complies fully with the commission she has been given by God?"

She urged the seminarians to examine their calls to the ministry. "Can you date it? Can you give a (Scripture) verse that backs that date up?" she asked. "And if you cannot, you're just going on a feeling or what someone else said you ought to be doing.

"Would you get down on your face before God today and ask him to call you from his word that you might never doubt the fact that you are in the ministry for no other reason than that you are commissioned by God and you are complying with his command?"

In an interview after the meeting, Lotz discussed her feelings about her own ministry. "I don't feel that God has called me to go on a campaign to put women in the pulpit or to call women into the ministry," she said. "Personally, I feel that God has called me to give out his word in a unique way so that people, through his word, can hear God speak in their own lives, in their own hearts, that they might know God. ...

"As far as women being in the ministry, I just encourage women and men to examine whether or not they are called, if they are called by God. You know if you're called. You know it from Scripture; you know it in your heart; you know it from circumstances -- just know it in every fiber of your being. You just know when you're called of God to do this."

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Paul Brock, director of public relations and communication for Southeastern Seminary, reported this story.

Pastor's wife awaits
heart-lung transplant

By Tim Nicholas

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LELAND, Miss. (BP)--Scotti Doler first noticed something was wrong when she found herself out of breath climbing one flight of stairs.

But she was recovering in mid-1988 from the Caesarean delivery three months earlier of her daughter and thought she was just out of shape.

Her husband, Jon, had just become pastor of First Baptist Church of Leland, Miss., and the move was exhausting.

But her energy didn't return. She fainted while walking with a friend.

Doctors hoped it was blood clots from her surgery. But by December 1988, the diagnosis was primary pulmonary hypertension, a deadly condition that strikes only about two people in a million, mostly women of child-bearing age.

The 35-year-old mother of three faced a prognosis of both heart and lungs wearing out because of high blood pressure in the lungs.

"It's like beating your fist against a wall," said Doler. "Eventually it gets tired and quits."

The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., tried a drug that helped the blood pressure for about six weeks and then stopped working. Now Mrs. Doler's only chance is a heart-lung transplant. And so they wait for word.

Word, when it comes, will be from Presbyterian Hospital at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, where the Dolers were referred from the Mayo Clinic and which has experience in transplanting the three organs.

When word arrives, Mrs. Doler has about four hours to get to the operating table in Pittsburgh -- a long trip with a critical deadline. The donated organs must be implanted quickly, so her trip must be without delay.

But the Dolers shouldn't have to worry about transportation, thanks to the ministry developed by a layman at their church. Over a cup of coffee, Doler told Cooper DeLoach of the transportation dilemma. DeLoach, a retired insurance salesman and a pilot who is a volunteer with the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Unit, began organizing for the trip.

So far, he's lined up eight corporate and private jet aircraft to take her to Pittsburgh when the time comes. He is connected to Doler by a beeper, and when he gets the call, he'll begin contacting the pilots to see which can do the time. Flight plans for all eight are pre-filed from the Greenville, Miss., airport, about 10 miles from Leland.

"I've tried to cut every corner," said DeLoach, who also has the Leland police chief ready to provide an escort to Greenville if necessary. The Greenville airport has made the Doler flight a priority.

"When I needed to do this," said Doler, "I couldn't handle it emotionally. He (DeLoach) took off and basically coordinated the whole thing."

Added DeLoach, who is working lining up two or three more plans, "We've got people really excited about wanting to help somebody."

The Leland church "has been super," said Doler. The church has voted medical leave with pay for him to take when necessary. Members have brought food, volunteered to babysit.

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"There are several pairs of adoptive grandparents around," said Mrs. Doler. The church even had a special prayer meeting for the Dolers during one of their trips to the Mayo Clinic.

Until June of 1987, Doler had carried private insurance rather than the Southern Baptist Annuity Board's program through Aetna. "Had I not done that we would have been looking a tremendous out-of-pocket expense," he said. Also, First Baptist Church has covered recent increases in his medical insurance costs in addition to a cost in addition to a cost-of-living increase.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Doler lives quietly. She can go out to eat or to a movie, but she can't do housework, or stoop to pick up a toy, or pick up their children. She's on four medications. She supervises a housekeeper and he shops and gets the kids to and from school.

"It's a gradual thing," said Mrs. Doler. "Every week or every day we find a different way of coping."

She gets help from prayer, searching the Scriptures and the support of Christian friends. "I don't know how anybody would get through this without those types of things," she noted.

"The Lord takes care of you in very difficult circumstances. People look after your needs even before I'm aware of the need."

She grew up being very active, and her enforced inactivity made her feel she couldn't do anything for God. "I've come to realize the reason for making me was to have fellowship with him. I don't have to bring anything."

Doler said he has learned a number of things not to say to someone who has serious illness in the family or is experiencing grief. "I've made a list," he said, quoting one of the ill-conceived phrases, "God won't put on you more than you can handle."

She said one person told her husband, "Isn't it great it happened to a pastor. You can handle this."

From Doler's reading on grief, he's learned that "you recognize you are limited and God is with you regardless of what you go through. And some things happen that you don't bring on yourself."

When friends or relatives are experiencing grief, said Doler, "The best thing you can do is put your arm around them and tell them you love them."