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90-29

Church starts top '89
Bold Mission Thrust goal

By Mark Wingfield *N-HMB*

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Southern Baptists started 842 congregations in the United States and Puerto Rico in 1988-89, thrusting the total number of their congregations above the 1989 goal set for the Bold Mission Thrust campaign.

The statistics on church starting for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 1989, were released during a national church extension leadership training conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Figures were compiled by the board's extension section using reports from state directors of missions.

Bold Mission Thrust is the denomination's effort to present the gospel to every person on earth by the year 2000. The emphasis calls for 50,000 Southern Baptist churches and missions by that year. To monitor progress toward that goal, the board has set goals for each year.

The 842 new congregations reported by state missions directors brings the total number of SBC congregations to 42,735. That is 69 more than the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 42,666 set for 1988-89.

However, the 842 starts are 111 fewer than the 953 new churches or missions reported started the previous year.

Texas Baptists led the denomination in number of church starts, with 169. They were followed by California, 90; Florida, 82; North Carolina, 55; Missouri, 36; Georgia, 27; Tennessee, 24; Arkansas, 23; Louisiana and New York, 20.

While the older state conventions showed the largest number of new congregations, younger state conventions continued to show the best ratio of starts to existing churches.

Although the Dakotas Fellowship started only seven congregations, it led the way in ratio of new starts. Dakota Baptists needed an average of 11 existing congregations to start one congregation, compared to a ratio of more than 100-to-1 for older state conventions.

Other leaders in ratio of existing congregations to new ones were Puerto Rico and New England, 12-to-1; Alaska and New York, 14-to-1; California, Colorado and Michigan, 15-to-1; Minnesota-Wisconsin and Utah-Idaho, 16-to-1.

The number of new congregations reported by other state conventions are Alabama, 13; Alaska, 6; Arizona, 14; Colorado, 14; District of Columbia, 2; Hawaii, 3; Illinois, 7; Indiana, 5; Iowa, 3; Kansas-Nebraska, 11.

Also Kentucky, 10; Maryland-Delaware, 19; Michigan, 18; Minnesota-Wisconsin, 7; Mississippi, 15; Montana, 4; Nevada, 7; New England, 13; New Mexico, 10; Northwest, 16; Ohio, 13; Oklahoma, 17; Pennsylvania-South Jersey, 10; Puerto Rico, 4; South Carolina, 19; Utah-Idaho, 9; Virginia, 11; West Virginia, 3; and Wyoming, 3.

The figures include congregations started among all people groups. Of the total, 478 are predominantly anglo congregations, 285 are ethnic congregations and 79 are predominantly black congregations.

Also, Southern Baptists reported starting 10 congregations in Canada last year, bringing the total number of Southern Baptist congregations there to 106.

Ethnic baptism ratio,
church starts increase

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

LOS ANGELES (BP)--The baptism ratio for Southern Baptist ethnic congregations reached a high in 1988-89, and nearly 500 of them were begun, a report from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board reveals.

Oscar Romo, director of the board's language church extension division, said the baptism ratio reached 14-to-1 for the church year that ended Sept. 30, 1989. The ratio was up from the previous eight-year average of 10-to-1. That means an average of 14 ethnic Southern Baptists reached one unchurched person for Christ.

Nationally, the ratio of Southern Baptists to baptisms was 44-to-1.

Ethnic congregations also reported 485 units established during the year, an increase of 30 from 1988. Romo released the figures during the board's language church extension conference in Los Angeles.

Romo also said the board helped local churches resettle 573 refugees from 13 countries. In addition, 1,225 ethnic leaders were trained in church starting and evangelism strategy through 84 ethnic leadership development centers.

The gains underscore the silent strength that language congregations bring to the Southern Baptist Convention, he noted.

"Although there are those who say that ethnic groups do not give to world missions through the (Southern Baptist) Cooperative Program (unified budget), the record shows an increase of 243.5 percent for 1980-87. Cooperative Program gifts would be considerably less if it were not for these language-culture congregations," he said.

Board President Larry Lewis said Southern Baptists must not practice selective evangelism.

"It is the responsibility of every church to see that the gospel is shared with every creature. Somehow, someday, we must find a way to communicate the gospel to every person in the manner and cultural context that he or she can understand," he said.

Although everyone will not understand or accept the message, Southern Baptists remain commanded by Scripture and accountable to God to share the gospel message, he added.

Stating that the work of the church is "to be Jesus in the community," Lewis praised ethnic congregations for "stepping into the gap left by Anglo Southern Baptist churches who left the inner city for the suburbs. You have sought to redeem it for the kingdom of God."

About 150 Southern Baptist state missions directors and language missions directors attended the annual meeting. In addition to group sessions, participants fanned out across Los Angeles on Sunday to worship with ethnic congregations and experience the city's ethnic communities.

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BP photo mailed to state Baptist papers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Empty silos in Romania
to get Baptist aid

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

Baptist Press
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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Many of Romania's silos are empty, devoid of seed just as the planting season is at hand. But Baptists are addressing the crisis in one depressed section of the country.

More than \$1 million in hunger relief funds donated by Southern Baptists will buy seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides and spraying equipment for farm cooperatives in the region surrounding the city of Bacau in northeastern Romania, said John Cheyne, who directs human needs ministries for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Government officials have assured Romanian Baptists, who will oversee distribution of the aid, that they will be able to spread the Christian gospel as they provide seed, Cheyne said.

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The new assistance follows \$100,000 in Southern Baptist relief funds released in December to help counter shortages of food and medicine in the wake of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's fall from power and execution.

Seventy-one farm cooperatives in the northeastern region range in size from 800 to 3,000 people and from 2,200 to 6,600 acres, Cheyne said. He and Van Williams, a physician and administrator on the Foreign Mission Board staff, met with Romanian Baptist leaders in mid-February to discuss possible avenues for Southern Baptist aid. The number of cooperatives to be aided has not yet been determined.

Besides agricultural aid, Baptists will provide medicines to the region's major hospital, a 2,500-bed facility in Bacau, to alleviate severe shortages. Baptists in Europe or Southern Baptists also may help the hospital fill other needs, including two ambulances and replacements for outdated equipment.

A 170-bed orphanage will receive washing machines and dryers to improve sanitary conditions and lessen the spread of such diseases as hepatitis, Cheyne said. The orphanage, which houses children up to 3 years old, also will receive food supplements and vitamins.

Southern Baptist volunteers also may be needed, Cheyne added. People with expertise in crop production and animal husbandry could help the cooperatives upgrade their farming methods, while medical personnel could teach new and specialized skills to the Bacau hospital staff.

Under the oppressive Ceausescu regime, most of the corn, wheat, potatoes and sugar beets grown by the cooperatives (then called communes) were exported to obtain hard currency. That left "members of the communes with only the dregs for their labors," Cheyne said.

In the emotion of their first taste of freedom, workers long deprived of their crops raided the silos and began consuming grain the government had stockpiled for seed, Cheyne recounted. "Now, if the cooperatives aren't helped, they're going to become increasingly desperate. They have a little bit of raw hay left (for undernourished cattle), but that's about all."

The cooperatives are in one of the poorest regions of Romania -- a region bypassed by much of the aid flooding into Romania from neighboring countries, Cheyne said.

Food shortages in Romania are serious, but not as desperate as the hunger that again threatens the lives of millions in Ethiopia, Cheyne added. "The tragedy right now in Ethiopia is that we're not allowed to go into those areas of need, and neither is anybody else," he said. The Ethiopian region where Southern Baptist workers administered millions of dollars to combat the 1985 famine has become contested territory between government and rebel forces.

When the area becomes safe for relief workers, Southern Baptists should be ready to spend \$1.5 million or more to combat Ethiopian starvation, Cheyne said.

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Penn-South Jersey plans
1991-92 'Year of Jubilee'

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Baptist Press
2/28/90

HARRISBURG, Pa. (BP)--The Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey has planned a "Year of Jubilee" for its 1991-92 fiscal year.

The concept of a Year of Jubilee is found in the Old Testament books of Leviticus, Numbers, Exodus and Malachi. Its original intent was to allow the Hebrew people to set aside a time for God and to allow their land to lie fallow for renewal.

For Pennsylvania/South Jersey Baptists, the Year of Jubilee will involve "a deliberate effort to pare back significantly the number of meetings on the state convention calendar in order for the churches to experience a fresh breath from God and for God to energize them," according to the Penn-Jersey Baptist, the convention's newsjournal.

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"It will be, hopefully, a year to step back and listen to the Spirit of God give direction and focus for the years ahead. This will allow the state staff to be available in new, flexible and more resourceful ways to the churches and associations."

Pennsylvania/South Jersey Baptists will try to follow a pattern set by God in the beginning, said Wallace Williams, executive director-treasurer of the convention.

"In the creation theology of Genesis, God created in six days and called it good, and then he rested," Williams explained. "It was as if at that time ... the Creator made a cycle of life for us to abide by; therefore, the sabbatic principle is built into the very fabric of life itself. It should become a guide for us in the activities that we plan for God's work."

"All we have done is go back and examine once again the sabbatic principle in Scriptures and ask the ruthlessly hard question: Are we observing that kind of rhythm in the work we are doing in the name of God in the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey?"

The convention's annotated calendar for the year, which lists and describes all convention events, was trimmed from 13 pages to six. During the year, churches will be encouraged to conduct prayer retreats that will focus on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Williams, who was a pastor before becoming the convention's chief executive, reported that he was "coldly confronted by the ruthlessness of the rituals and routines that drive the work of a state Baptist convention staff."

Noting prayer is vital for directing a convention, he added: "The exciting thing about the Year of Jubilee is this: It lets us get hold of the planning process, exercise our control and insert the places to pause and pray that are very strategic."

"In pausing and praying and asking, we must deal with several questions: Whose plans are most important, God's or ours? Which party needs to be adjusted to which? Do we need to have God adjust to our plans, or do we need to adjust to his plans? Surely we need to pray and seek God's face and become obedient to him."

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Volunteer coaches need
training, leaders urge

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

Baptist Press
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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Volunteer coaches for church sports should not just be given a team roster and told to "go at it," a minister of activities said during a Southern Baptist recreation conference.

Bob Sessoms, minister of activities at First Baptist Church of Concord in Knoxville, Tenn., said too often a volunteer coach is someone who simply was in the right place at the wrong time.

"That person is probably a mother or father whose kid is playing the sport," he said during a session on "Training Your Christian Coach" during the Feb. 23-March 1 meeting at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. A similar conference was held in January at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly near Leesburg, Fla. Both were sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department.

A volunteer coach should be trained to set goals, follow guidelines, learn responsibilities and cultivate relationships, said Sessoms, who earlier was a consultant in the Sunday School Board's church recreation department.

Coaches also should possess certain qualities, the most important "being a born-again Christian," he said. "You cannot lead a person to the light if you are in the darkness."

Just as effective Sunday school teachers should be called by God to their volunteer tasks, so should coaches of church sports, he added.

"They should feel they are in God's will," Sessoms said.

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Likewise, they should have an evangelistic concern for non-Christians, he said: "They should know who is and who is not a Christian on their team. They should be able to answer the questions non-Christians might have about Christ."

Volunteer coaches also should love and understand the age group of those they are coaching; they should hold enthusiasm for the sport; and they should possess a sense of humor and "a lot of patience," Sessoms noted.

"They should be kind, dependable, loyal, mature, willing to listen, adaptable, cooperative, communicative and know the fundamental skills and rules of the sport," he said. "I know a person can't exhibit all these qualities, but it would be nice."

Church sports should minister to the total person, Sessoms said, adding, "Church recreation should provide opportunities for all church members who desire to play, whether they be young, old, skilled or unskilled."

Church sports should perform the functions of developing a spirit of fellowship and enable players to receive enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment, he reported.

"Most importantly, they should be an opportunity to witness for Christ," Sessoms said.

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New churches are hope
of SBC, pastors says

By Mark Wingfield

N- HMB

Baptist Press
2/28/90

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Starting new churches is the hope of the Southern Baptist Convention, Rick Warren told Baptist state mission directors and church extension directors.

Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., was keynote speaker for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's annual church extension leadership conference. Warren has become known for growing Saddleback Church from nothing to more than 4,000 in attendance while starting 14 additional missions in 10 years.

At the banquet, the board's new church extension division presented Warren with the Jack Redford Church Extension Award, citing him as "an exemplary role model for church planters."

In his message, Warren said: "The hope of our convention is new churches. People always ask me, 'Is it easier to turn a church around or start a new one?' It's always easier to have babies than to raise the dead."

Warren explained he does not advocate one particular method of church starting for the same reason he advocates starting new churches to assist existing churches.

"It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people," he said. "The thing I love about our convention is that there is diversity. We are unified in the essentials, but there is such diversity."

"In my own association, we're reaching blue collar and white collar, we're reaching street people and Yuppies. That is the glory of our convention."

Southern Baptists must continue starting new churches to reach these diverse groups, especially the Baby Boomers the denomination generally has failed to reach, Warren said.

He explained that one of every three Americans is a Baby Boomer, born between 1948 and 1965. Baby Boomers espouse different values and lifestyles than Southern Baptists customarily have addressed, he said.

These 78 million Americans who now set the nation's cultural agenda are a "generation unto themselves," Warren said. "If we're going to reach America, we've got to learn to reach Baby Boomers."

However, to reach Baby Boomers, most churches would have to make changes that would kill the existing church, Warren said. "So I do not advocate going out and trying to change all our churches. What I advocate is that every church should be starting new churches, and many of those should be targeted to reaching Baby Boomers," he explained.

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Warren told the mission leaders not to view Saddleback as the only way to start a church. "There is no one right model," he said, noting that many people have attempted to copy the Saddleback strategy in areas where that method will not work.

Instead of copying methods, church starters should observe principles that will work anywhere, he added, stressing, "Principles stay, but methods change."

Warren noted that Jesus did not have a standard strategy for his ministry except to start where the people were. "Adapt your ministry to the situation God puts you in," he urged.

"If we're going to reach America, every church must clearly define its target. No one church will reach everybody, but every church can reach somebody."

Southern Baptists also must learn to start churches without buildings, Warren said, noting that Saddleback has used 51 buildings in 10 years.

Financial resources are better spent on people and programs in the early life of a church, he said.

And, churches should wait to build until they can afford the size buildings they will need, he added: "Most churches build too small, too soon. A permanently small building builds a permanently small church."

The size of a congregation or its sanctuary is not a good measure of a church's importance, Warren explained, noting, "The strength of a church is determined not by its seating capacity but by its sending capacity."

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HMB launches campaign
for church missions councils

N-HMB

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has launched a national campaign to encourage churches to start missions development councils.

The emphasis was begun at a training event in Atlanta for certified missions development trainers. Similar events will be held throughout the next year to equip more than 100 trainers.

Missions development is an emphasis the board began six years ago to help churches and associations become directly involved in missions. J.B. Graham, who directs missions development at the board, described the emphasis as "a pipeline or bucket to carry missions in."

John Budlong, retired national consultant in missions development, described the difference missions development has made in his own church, Eudora Baptist in Memphis, Tenn.

"Two or three years ago, the pastor couldn't get the congregation to look beyond the four walls of the church. Now they're seeing many ways to reach out," he said, describing the church's new Chinese mission and ministry in a high-rise apartment complex.

"We have to get out where the people are and get our hands dirty if we're going to win this world for Christ," Budlong said.

Certified missions development trainers will help associations present missions development opportunities in the churches board leaders said. They will be available to speak in churches and lead members through a step-by-step process of identifying missions needs, developing mission strategies and starting new works and ministries.

Seminars may be scheduled through associational offices or state missions offices.

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SBC language missions
workers receive awards

N-HMB

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Southern Baptist language missions workers have been cited for outstanding ministry in their states by the language church extension division of the denomination's Home Mission Board.

Division Director Oscar Romo presented the awards in Los Angeles during the board's annual language missions leadership conference.

Five ministers received the Kaleidoscopic Award in recognition of their conventions' achievements with minimal resources. Romo praised progress made by language missions work in Canada, Tennessee, Pennsylvania/South Jersey, Texas and California.

Philip Yung, language missions director for Canadian Southern Baptists, was honored for his accomplishments in a newer convention.

James Redding, program associate in the missions department for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, was presented the award for his work with refugee resettlement.

Stanley Smith, director of language missions/stewardship for the Pennsylvania/South Jersey convention, received the award for inroads made into the convention's deaf population.

E.B. Brooks, director of the church extension department for Texas Baptists, was honored for helping congregations reach self-support status.

Lonnie Chavez, language missions director for California Southern Baptists, was cited for his accomplishments with ethnic leadership development centers.

In another area, Romo presented six awards for exceptional contributions to language/culture work.

Lynn May Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, was presented the 1990 Mosaic Missions Award. May was honored for his contribution in preserving ethnic history in the denomination.

Hubert Hurt, retired language missions director for the Florida Baptist Convention, was named recipient of the Missions Heritage Award. He was chosen for his contribution to the development of language missions in Cuba, Panama and Florida.

Don Venosdel, director of missions for the California convention, was presented the Missions Heritage Award for his contribution to the development of California language missions.

Eduardo Peol Jr., pastor-consultant for Filipino Baptists in California, was recipient of the Filipino Church Growth Award. Peol established the first Filipino church in the denomination and assisted in the establishment of numerous other Filipino churches.

Don Kim, retired pastor of Berendo Street Baptist Church in Los Angeles, received the Korean Church Growth Award. The church today has the fastest-growing Sunday school in the greater Los Angeles area.

Kim established the first Korean church in California and has assisted in establishing other Korean Southern Baptist churches in the denomination.

Thomas Lowe, retired general missionary to Chinese in California, was presented the Chinese Church Growth Award. Lowe was given the award in recognition of being the first Chinese missionary appointed by the board and for establishing the denomination's first Chinese church.

Romo noted that the Los Angeles church was established as a Southern Baptist congregation at its founding and today is the largest Southern Baptist church in the state affiliated solely with the denomination. Numerous churches in the state are dually-aligned with other conventions.

NOTE TO EDITORS: The total number of Southern Baptist congregations reported in this story differs from the figure determined by the Uniform Church Letter analysis. This is because Home Mission Board statistics were gathered directly from state directors of missions rather than by a national survey of every church.

Open buildings, not just services
to ethnics, HMB trustee urges

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Southern Baptists could reach more people who do not go to church if they were not so protective of others using their buildings, a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board trustee told a meeting of the denomination's ethnic leaders.

Jon Meek Jr., pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Aberdeen, N.J., said the denomination must "go for broke" in doing everything possible to reach the nation's growing ethnic population with the gospel. Meek's church sponsors seven ethnic congregations, four of which meet in its facilities.

Meek was one of a slate of speakers who addressed the board's language missions leadership conference in Los Angeles.

He called on the nation's ethnics to help Southern Baptist churches break down barriers of racism and destroy the fortress mentality that, he said, characterizes many churches today.

"Racism is not confined to who sits where on a bus," Meek said. "We have a racism in our nation today that says because some people are different, they are not worth the effort.

"All of us, when cut, bleed the same red blood; there is no race or barrier when blood is concerned. Likewise, there is no race or barrier where the blood of Christ is concerned."

Southern Baptists waste the majority of their potential for ministry through poor use of their facilities, he maintained.

"We must depart from the fortress mentality that says, 'This is our building, and you cannot use it for your services.' Part of our commitment to reach all people for Christ is to let them use our buildings," he added.

One reason the denomination suffers from "stewardship stagnation" is because its churches have spent so much on themselves, Meek said: "We Anglos are very selfish with our resources. Through our actions, we say 'Having spent it all on myself, I have nothing to give to you.'"

Southern Baptist would have "money aplenty" if churches stopped renovating their sanctuaries and installing newer and better pews, he said.

The convention's missions offerings "would have all the money they could carry to the bank if we were not so selfish," he said. "Our stewardship promotion should teach us less of how to give more and more of how to live on less.

"The good news is we have the money. We can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.' But the bad news is neither can we say, 'In the name of Jesus, take up thy bed and walk,' because we are not plugged into the power.

"The early church was poor but pious and powerful; the contemporary church is wealthy, worldly and weak.

"If there is any hope, and there is, it is discovering that no matter how much stewardship development we have, nothing is going to help more than plugging into the power of the Holy Spirit."

WMU executive director
welcomes 'monitoring'

By Susan Todd & Karen Benson

N- (O
(WMU)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Dellanna W. O'Brien said Feb. 28 she welcomes monitoring of WMU.

Southern Baptist Convention conservative leaders, during a meeting in Atlanta Feb. 22, expressed concern that Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, an announced candidate for SBC first vice president, would use her position as former national executive director of WMU to establish a "precinct-type organization in each state through WMU," according to James Hefley, a meeting participant.

Conservative leaders pledged to monitor WMU to make sure it is not used "for political purposes," Hefley said.

"I welcome any and all people who want to monitor WMU for any purpose," O'Brien said. "I am confident that once individuals completely monitor our organization, their commitment to missions -- not controversy -- will be challenged."

Those monitoring WMU may find themselves challenged to join other WMU members "in our single commitment to missions -- studying it, supporting it and participating in it," O'Brien said.

O'Brien outlined several avenues for monitoring WMU:

-- By attending local church WMU meetings and activities -- including Baptist Women (for women ages 35 and older), Baptist Young Women (for women ages 18-34), Acteens (for girls in grades seven through 12), Girls in Action (for girls in grades one through six), and Mission Friends (for preschool boys and girls);

-- By participating in associational WMU meetings, activities and sponsored events;

-- By attending state WMU meetings, retreats and activities, such as the annual state WMU house party or annual meeting, and state BW and BYW retreats;

-- By participating in the national WMU annual meetings. This year, the national WMU annual meeting will be held June 11-12 at the New Orleans Convention Center. "For me, the WMU annual meeting is the most inspirational and exciting meeting of the whole Southern Baptist Convention, because we celebrate missions," O'Brien said. The first session begins at 2:15 p.m. Sunday, June 11;

-- By subscribing to all WMU organizational periodicals -- Dimension magazine for WMU and church leaders; Royal Service magazine for Baptist Women, Contempo magazine for Baptist Young Women, Accent magazine for Acteens, Discovery magazine for Girls in Action, Aware magazine for GA leaders, and Start and Share periodicals for Mission Friends members and leaders;

-- By subscribing to Magazette, a quarterly publication for pastors' wives which is produced by WMU, and to Prayer Patterns, a monthly publication to aid all church members in their prayer efforts for missions; and

-- By purchasing each product produced by WMU or New Hope, a publishing arm of WMU which provides missions-related materials for the broader Christian market.

O'Brien also issued a public invitation for any of the convention leaders -- regardless of their political stance -- to visit the national WMU headquarters in Birmingham, where they will be given a VIP tour and opportunities to visit with national staff members.

The pledge by conservative leaders to monitor WMU could not come at a more appropriate time, O'Brien said.

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She learned of the conservative leaders' concern just days after returning from a several-day retreat with state WMU executive directors. At that retreat, O'Brien had announced her own pledge to keep WMU on a level "above the convention controversy."

Her pledge was met with strong affirmation and was returned by pledges of support from the state WMU leaders, O'Brien said.

"Any time missions is monitored, nothing but good can come of it," O'Brien said. "Perhaps those who are monitoring WMU will see how much more there is to be done. They can be strategic catalysts in moving Southern Baptists toward a stronger missions commitment."