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90-32

February produces
8th-best CP total

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Cooperative Program receipts topped the \$12 million mark for the eighth time in its 65-year history in February, reported Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the convention's Executive Committee.

The Southern Baptist unified ministry budget received \$12,150,296 at the national level last month, Bennett said. That is an increase of \$721,581, or 6.31 percent, over February 1989.

February receipts brought the Cooperative Program's year-to-date total to \$59,872,497 at the end of five months of its fiscal year, he said. That is a gain of \$1,201,641 over the total for the first five months of the 1988-89 fiscal year.

The 2.05 percent year-to-date increase is about half the current U.S. inflation rate.

The Cooperative Program's national basic operating goal this year is \$134,787,543. It also has a \$2.5 million capital needs priority item, designed to pay off the debt on the 5-year-old SBC Building in Nashville.

To meet that overall goal, Cooperative Program monthly receipts must average \$11,059,292 for the balance of the fiscal year.

"It is my hope that Southern Baptists will continue to give liberally to their churches and that churches will be found faithful in giving to world missions through the Cooperative Program," Bennett said.

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

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Abortion becomes 'benchmark'
for CLC conference speakers

By Marv Knox

N-CO

Baptist Press
3/5/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Abortion will become the litmus test for speakers at meetings sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The CLC voted 12-11 to "respectfully request our executive director to refrain in the future from inviting speakers who support the so-called 'pro-choice' position on abortion."

The motion was approved during the CLC's spring meeting March 1-2 in Nashville. Commissioners took opposing sides on the policy.

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"There are more important issues than abortion we ought to agree on," said Harry A. "Hal" Lane, pastor of West Side Baptist Church in Greenwood, S.C. "The issue of salvation is far more important, yet we work with people who have different theological views."

Liz Minnick, a homemaker from Austin, Texas, disagreed. "Abortion is the benchmark issue ... because this is life. The way you look at abortion colors how you look at all issues," from creationism to pornography, she said.

James Paul Wood, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Atlanta, offered the motion, a substitute for a more binding proposal by Skeet Workman, a homemaker from Lubbock, Texas.

Workman's motion would have required the CLC to "not invite speakers who support abortion to participate in any ... function of the (CLC), and if by accident it is later found that a confirmed speaker does support abortion, he/she be asked to step down; and as a witness to this person, we tell him our opposition to abortion as a reason to remove him."

The effect of the two motions would be the same, Wood said, although his proposal does not completely eliminate the possibility of someone with a contrary position speaking at a CLC event. "Someone who's not real clear could be invited, but someone who's clearly opposed to us should not be invited," he explained.

As originally proposed, Workman's motion would have covered speakers at the CLC's national seminar March 12-14 in Birmingham, Ala. And that would have included Glen Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Wood's motion, as well as a friendly amendment he attached to Workman's original motion, excludes speakers already confirmed for CLC events.

But Stassen remained the commissioners' illustration during their discussion.

Presenting her motion, Workman singled out Stassen, "who has signed a pro-abortion statement," a petition drafted in 1977 titled "A Call to Concern." The petition notes, "We support the Supreme Court decisions of 1973 which had the effect of removing abortion from the criminal law codes" and voices concern about "those who take the absolutist position that it is always wrong to terminate a pregnancy at any time after the moment of conception."

Stassen represents the kind of speaker who should not be on CLC platforms, Workman said. "We do not need to give them the floor of our conferences and seminars, even though they may be known in other areas," she added.

In a prepared statement released after the meeting, Stassen said: "I believe in the right to life for all persons. I believe we need to work together in practical ways to deal with the actual causes of abortions.

"My wife, Dot, is a nurse who has chosen to work full time at a special school for teen-age mothers who have elected not to have an abortion. She helps them nurture and care for their babies, stay in school and plan their vocational futures. Our blind son, David, is extensively handicapped as a result of the German measles Dot got in the first three months of pregnancy. We did not get an abortion. Instead, we have tried to help David cope with the suffering of 14 operations, including heart surgery twice, and struggle against heavy odds to grow into a bright linguist who speaks German without an accent.

"I am especially surprised that speculation about my position on abortion became an issue even though I have been invited to speak on an entirely different subject -- peacemaking in the family. My area of specialty is peacemaking and justice, not medical ethics.

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"I am also saddened that some have chosen to criticize me without first talking with me as Jesus admonishes in Matthew 5 or without reading or hearing anything I have said about abortion. I wish instead of extrapolating from a signature on a petition 13 years ago that these persons could get to know me and my family.

"Despite these misguided attacks, I am grateful to (CLC Executive Director) Dr. (Richard D.) Land and the commission for inviting me to speak. ... I hope my presentation will be helpful to the commission and to families.

"I think it's regrettable that some persons have made up their minds about me on the basis of a petition I signed 13 long years ago, that I didn't write and that I don't even remember very well. I do remember that I signed the statement based on my Baptist convictions about religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

"No one asked me what my current views on abortion may be or about what I am trying to do in practical ways to deal redemptively with the causes of abortion. I believe dialogue is always better than diatribe."

During debate, Celia Minix, a homemaker from Alexandria, Va., said, "I have a problem with associating ... with people who do not stand for what Scriptures clearly teach us."

Carl W. Garrett, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Overland Park, Kan., countered: "One of the criticisms of Jesus is that he sat with publicans and sinners. To say we cannot associate with these people is opposed to what Jesus taught."

Nancy S. Schaefer, president of Family Concerns Inc. in Atlanta, noted: "It's due to compromise that we are where we are in our churches. ... We need to be careful where we compromise. If we ask him to speak on one area and he's pro-abortion in another, we send out a message."

"We want to provide the greatest expertise on every issue," said Coy C. Privette, director of the Christian Action League of North Carolina in Raleigh. "The secret to get anything done in government is coalitions. ... We must trust our staff to bring us the finest minds in America."

Wood's proposal subsequently addressed that issue. It said: "We do not wish to hinder (Land's) efforts at building coalitions and relationships with those who make common cause with us on particular issues. But given the depth of our concern and the continuing tragic lack of understanding among many people regarding the abortion issue, we specifically urge that no future speakers be invited who have clearly demonstrated opposition to the pro-life movement."

John Yeats, pastor of Shawnee Heights Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan., said he is opposed to speakers who have "made a public show" for abortion. "We as Southern Baptists do not need people on our programs who are pro-death," he added.

Land said Stassen had been invited to the Birmingham seminar for his "peculiar perspective on the theology of transforming initiatives." He also praised Stassen for the his receptivity to Land and the CLC, noting Stassen had asked Land to lecture in his classes, had distributed CLC literature and was bringing 10 students to the seminar.

"I don't think any reasonable, rational person is going to come to any other conclusion than that this Christian Life Commission is pro-life," Land said.

"We have a Southern Baptist Convention which is diverse, and we need to affirm people when we can affirm them. If we are confident of our position, we want people to hear us. ... If we take a policy which severely restricts us, we are going to lessen our ability to get a hearing for what we clearly believe is a superior view."

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He later told commissioners, "If you decide to pass this issue on pro-life, you need to give us a definition of pro-life," noting Christians hold a variety of views.

Privette urged the CLC to defeat the proposal and allow staff and commissioners to do their jobs. "Either we trust our executive director, or we don't," he said. "Either we trust our program committee, or we don't."

"This is showing trust," contended Workman. "It is a statement and a desire we are expressing."

During discussion of the policy, commissioners turned down a recommendation to create a committee to "study procedures for the program and promotion items to be reviewed before contracts are signed and literature published."

After the final vote, Chairman Joe W. Atchison, director of missions for Benton Baptist Association from Rogers, Ark., noted: "We're together (on the abortion issue). We're behind our staff. We're very supportive. ... This was a procedural matter."

Garrett responded, "I hope I never get to the point where my wife says, 'I trust you, but I want to vote on it.'"

The CLC then approved without dissent a motion by Lane to "commend the executive director and staff for their comprehensive efforts."

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Materialism weakens Western
Christians: mission leader

N- FMB

Baptist Press
3/5/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Many Third World Christians have "spiritual treasures and insights" lacking in the West, according to a British mission leader.

Most Christians in Third World nations are not yet afflicted by materialism, said Reg Harvey, general secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society in Great Britain. Harvey visited the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's offices in Richmond, Va., in late February.

Materialism is the greatest challenge facing Christians, especially Christians in the West, he said.

"Folk have been greatly influenced by what they feel is progress, but it is in fact a movement toward the cherishing of material things. And this is contagious," Harvey said, noting materialism has spread to the middle and upper classes in Third World countries.

Affluence decreases adherence to faith, whether a person is Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, Harvey said. Among many Christians in the West, he observed, a sharp contrast exists between principles of Scripture and "the lifestyle we've become accustomed to." Western congregations worship in comfortable buildings but often have declined in size and influence, he said.

"By contrast, churches in many of our mission areas have become stronger," Harvey said. "They themselves are mission-sending bodies now." Less-affluent Christians often have keen insight "into Scripture, who they are as Christians and the priorities of Christian living."

No sophisticated solution exists to the problem of affluence among Christians, Harvey admitted.

Rather, believers need to return to "the simple things of the gospel. We have concentrated too much on the material things and not enough on the spiritual values we see in Christ himself," he said. "Either we've never discovered them or we've lost them."

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Loss of spiritual passion
called sign of burnout

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Loss of spiritual passion is a possible sign of ministerial burnout, participants in a church recreation conference were told.

"When we lose the joy of being a minister of the gospel, we have lost our spiritual passion," said Scott Werner, Centrifuge consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department. The session was held during the conference February 23-March 1 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

When ministers begin doing more and enjoying it less, they need to step back and re-evaluate their positions, Werner said.

Ministers can become spiritually drained as a result of giving too much of themselves yet not taking anything back from those they serve, he noted. Spiritual drain also can result from disillusionment "or when our great ideas or dreams are defeated."

Distorted expectation of a minister's own capabilities; defeat or failure in ministry; devastation, such as broken relationships or forced termination; and disheartenment or a loss of faith all can lead to a minister losing his or her spiritual passion, Werner said.

Ministers who believe they are on the edge of burnout should set goals and priorities in their lives and surround themselves with resourceful people who ignite spiritual passion, he suggested.

Potential burnout victims should not retreat within themselves, but seek help from counselors, friends or others who have been in the same situation he said.

Werner listed five types of people who, positively or negatively, might affect spiritual passion: resourceful people, important people, trainable people, nice people and draining people.

"Resourceful people are our mentors, our shapers," he said. "They are people who ignite our spiritual passion. They are people from whom we gain energy."

Important people share a minister's spiritual passion, he explained: "They are our teammates, our soulmates. They sense when we are hurting; they sense our needs."

Trainable people "catch our passion," Werner said. These are the people who become involved in the ministry of the church.

Nice people "enjoy our passion. They clap, laugh, build our egos and come to our programs. They aren't bad, but they don't contribute a lot."

And finally, draining people "are those who always live on crisis," Werner said. "They call every evening during dinner, and they never ask how you are."

Hobbs says Christian character
essential element in ministry

By Chip Alford

7-SUBTS

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Christian ministers must maintain character or face the loss of credibility, Baptist statesman Herschel Hobbs told students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"It doesn't matter how beautiful you sing, or how oratorically you preach, or how studiously you plan and promote programs in religious education," the 82-year-old pastor said. "If your character is under suspicion, all of this other is for naught."

Hobbs reminded seminary students of the apostle Paul's instruction to believers to "walk worthy of their calling."

"Paul says that the weight of the way that you and I live should be as heavy as the calling by which we are called out," Hobbs said. "We've had a lot of examples in the last few years of people that didn't live up to that standard, and what a tragedy that is."

Christian ministers shouldn't be concerned with building a reputation for themselves, Hobbs said. "Reputation is what people think you are; character is what you really are. And sooner or later the character will show through."

Christians must keep close to God and "stay so busy with his work that we don't have time to listen" to temptation, he admonished.

Hobbs also touched on Paul's treatment of the doctrine of election.

"Some theologians say you can't harmonize the sovereignty of God and the free will of man," he said. "I think you can. The sovereignty of God means that God can act as he wills in keeping with his nature and purpose without the advice or consent of anyone outside himself. And God, in his sovereignty, laid down a plan of salvation, and that plan is in Christ."

God could not be a God of love and mercy "and leave man without at least a hope," Hobbs said. "Whether man (accepts Christ) or not is up to him, but we're not puppets on a string of faith. We are persons."

A former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Hobbs is pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City. He also is an author, with 129 published books to his credit.

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BP photo mailed to state Baptist papers by Southwestern Seminary