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90-137

Virginia executive director suggests  
'renewal' of Cooperative Program By Robert H. Dilday

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A renewal of the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program will provide the denomination with "the most effective means possible to spread the gospel to a world in need," Virginia Baptists' executive director maintains.

"We can no longer ignore the need for a thorough reexamination and updating of the Cooperative Program to make it viable for current and future generations," Reginald M. McDonough, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, said Oct. 2.

McDonough discussed the SBC's 65-year-old missions support system in an address to the Virginia Baptist general board during its fall meeting.

The state association will consider a proposed 1991 budget at its annual meeting Nov. 13-14 that would reduce by half undesignated contributions to the SBC's Cooperative Program budget. The remaining amount would be designated for selected Southern Baptist causes.

"A healthy, growing Cooperative Program is essential to our mission now and in the future," McDonough said. "But we don't have to spell 'cooperative program' the same way we have always spelled it."

He noted that Southern Baptists' understanding of the CP has varied in the years since its establishment in 1925 "because needs and circumstances have changed."

While most Southern Baptists today define CP contributions as undesignated gifts to state and national unified budgets, past definitions have included foreign and home missions offerings, McDonough explained.

In fact, he continued, Austin Crouch, the first executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee, defined the CP as "all funds received for any (Southern Baptist) cause ... whether they be distributable, designated or special funds."

"Although I am not suggesting that we try to reclaim the original approach," McDonough said, "I do believe we need to be willing to let the plan change as the needs change in order for it to remain effective in witnessing and ministering to a lost world in the name of Christ."

McDonough insisted the need to reevaluate the CP is not due exclusively to the 12-year theological and political conflict in the SBC.

Recent conservative control of national Southern Baptist agencies and institutions has prompted some moderates to develop alternative means of missions funding that bypass the CP.

North Carolina Baptists have proposed a budget similar to Virginia's and an unknown number of churches are considering alternative plans.

But "while there is no doubt that the search for 'new wine skins' was initiated by our despair and anger relating to the denominational controversy, we must turn our anger into a positive pilgrimage toward a renewal of our cooperative missions program," McDonough countered.

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"The denominational controversy did not initiate the pressures on the Cooperative Program . . .," he said. "The controversy, by breaking down the level of trust among us, has simply magnified and accelerated the need for change." McDonough suggested five revisions as "starters" for CP renewal:

-- Make the CP more cause-oriented and less institution-oriented. "We assume persons understand the causes behind the line items" in budgets, while in fact they must study several pieces of literature "to learn about the ministries."

-- Move the decision making as close to the givers as possible. "The long loop between the giver and the final destination of the gift makes it very difficult for the giver to see and feel the benefits."

-- Tie the cause and the hands-on experience by the giver together as closely as possible. For example, in the partnership missions movement, a "volunteer can actually be a part of mission dollars in action."

-- Redouble our efforts to teach the biblical model of Christian stewardship and train persons to manage their money. "We must not only teach total discipleship, but continue in our efforts to educate young adults to the broader vision of a world in need."

-- Promote the CP as a means for helping persons express their Christian calling rather than as a method to which a person must be loyal. "Brand-name loyalty is not big among young adults, whether it relates to soap, churches or giving plans. They respond much better to plans and organizations that help them reach their goals."

McDonough maintained the proposed Virginia budget would implement his suggested revisions. Virginia Baptists are "working for renewal of the Cooperative Program, not its demise, and the journey has just begun," he said.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The complete text of McDonough's address is available upon request from his office.

State convention presidents  
seek 'peace,' 'common ground'

N-CO

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE (BP)--"Our key emphasis was that of peace and seeking common ground," said Murray Mathis, outgoing president of the State Baptist Convention Presidents' Fellowship which met in Nashville in September.

Mathis, president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and who has led the group for the past year, was succeeded by Eddie Hamilton, president of the Alabama State Baptist Convention. Hamilton is eligible for re-election by the Alabama messengers at November's state convention.

"One of the high points of our meeting was a dialogue with Morris Chapman," SBC president, said Mathis, pastor of Third Baptist Church in Murfreesboro. Mathis said Chapman discussed problems facing Southern Baptists and some possible solutions.

Mathis said the presidents' group has been meeting for several years during the sessions of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee in Nashville.

Attendance at the presidents' meeting has increased during the past months, he said. SBC presidents have been invited to attend the meeting, but have not always been able to do so, he added.

Chapman asked the state convention presidents to "open your hearts to each other." Mathis said the group ended the meeting "with earnest prayer for healing in the Southern Baptist Convention -- and that God would use each of us in that process."

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North Carolina proposed budget  
to designate part of CP

N-CO (NC)

CARY, N.C. (BP)--The General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina voted recently to designate a portion of the 1991 Cooperative Program unified budget money for Southern Baptist causes. The proposed action requires the vote of the full convention meeting Nov. 12-14 in Winston-Salem.

All of the money in the proposed plan will go to Southern Baptist mission causes, with no money going to the newly formed Baptist Cooperative Missions Program. A story in the Baptist Courier, newsjournal of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, erroneously reported that the North Carolina plan included the new group recently formed in Atlanta.

Under the proposal, the North Carolina convention will continue to send about 35 percent of its Cooperative Program receipts to the Southern Baptist Convention. The only difference in the new proposal is that about 20 percent would go undesignated, as is true with the full 35 percent this year, and 15 percent would be earmarked for designated SBC causes.

The new plan, if adopted in November, will provide for more money for Southern Baptist foreign mission and home mission causes.

"We are extremely sorry that an earlier story reported that part of our CP gifts would go to the new group that met recently in Atlanta," said Roy J. Smith, North Carolina executive director.

"This is totally untrue. We never at any point in our budget planning ever even considered sending money to the newly formed group in Atlanta, or for that matter, to any mission causes other than Southern Baptist ones," Smith said.

"We have insisted throughout the budgeting process that North Carolina Baptists would not use a 'third broker.' In fact, the North Carolina budget was completed and approved by the executive committee prior to the Atlanta meeting," Smith said.

North Carolina churches may still elect to send their Cooperative Program gift undesignated to the SBC. The new approach, added Smith, was developed to give churches greater options in giving while at the same time provide maximum support for SBC mission causes.

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Shannon addresses NOBTS students  
during Layne Lecture Series

By Breena Kent Paine

N-CO  
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press  
10/8/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"You can't have the peace of God until you have peace with God," Harper Shannon told students and faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during the seminary's recent Layne Lecture Series.

The director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist Convention said the victorious Christian life is one of joy and forbearance, without anxiety, where the Christian is living in the light of the presence of God and the imminent return of Christ.

"If you will maintain the right kind of prayer life, the right kind of thoughts, and the right kind of actions, then the peace of God will be with you," he said.

"The basic definition of prayer is being in communion with God. Supplication is the earnestness, ... the motivation for prayer. Thanksgiving is gratitude. Maybe one of the reasons why God is not answering our prayers is that we fail to thank him and praise him for answering the prayers he's already answered.

"It's the little things in life ... that keep us from experiencing the fullness of life," he continued. "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. When a crisis comes ... it ought to be the most natural thing to talk to God about it."

Second, to have inner peace, the Christian should "think right -- cultivate, meditate on the right things," he said. "If there's anything virtuous, concentrate on these things.

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"What you think about most of the time is what you're becoming in the innermost part of you," he said. "A whole lot of the way you feel has to do with the way you think. ... We must discipline our minds."

Third, "We must put into practice and practice as a habit," Shannon continued. "If most individuals who complain about all they have to do would spend as much time doing as they do complaining, they'd get a lot more done."

Also during the Layne Lectures, Shannon told Christians to adapt to all situations in order to bring people to Christ. "To save all is impossible. To save some is imperative, to save any is expensive, and to save just one is a triumphant achievement."

"Although the gospel is the free gift of God's grace, it is always expensive to get the gospel to those who need to hear it," he continued. "If Southern Baptists are going to be serious about fulfilling the Great Commission, we've got to decide on our values. We have the resources; we just haven't decided how we're going to use them yet."

Shannon said the Christian must put Jesus first in his/her life, be grounded in the Holy Spirit, preach the message of Jesus as Lord, be in the mind of Christ, and exalt Jesus Christ as Lord.

"If we will listen to his word, he will teach us his will," he continued. "Our job is not to defend the word of God but to proclaim it. ... The bottom line is not how much you know about the Bible, but how much you do."

"Then, if we will discern that will and do what he says, he will show us his marvelous and miraculous power," Shannon said. Shannon feels many ministers are missing out on the miracles God wants to do in their churches because they are not doing what God says; or because what they desire for their churches comes from the wrong motives.

"It will cost you all you have and all you are to lay yourself at the feet of Jesus," Shannon explained. "If in our brokenness we can come before God, then he will forgive us and fill us and send us on our way to do his work in his power."

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Christians are 'in the way'  
if not witnessing: Sunderland By Breena Kent Paine

Baptist Press  
10/8/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Are you in the way or on the way?" Bobby Sunderland asked students and faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a recent chapel service. "Are you bringing someone to Jesus ... or just listening to the sermon?"

The director of the direct evangelism division of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board told Christians they are "in the way" if they are not actively trying to win the lost to Christ.

"One of the greatest tragedies in my life, and one of the places where Satan gets me the most, even though I've worked in evangelism all of my life, is that I become apathetic toward the lost," Sunderland said.

"It's easy to become a bureaucrat. It's easy to become a paper-shuffler. It's easy to get caught up in the agenda and the schedule and the programs, and forget the reason that Jesus Christ has put us into the ministry is to focus on those people who are bound for a devil's hell," he continued. "Sometimes, I become so apathetic toward the lost that God has to almost drop them into my lap."

"The second problem is keeping the excitement about what God can do in the lives of people to change them for the better, ... how Jesus Christ can give eternal life beyond the grave, and how he can give life now."

Third, "I have a difficult time getting beyond tradition," Sunderland said. "We've done things the same way for so long, and we find ourselves with the same methodology and the same tricks, and the same techniques and the same procedures."

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Instead, he said, Christians should have compassion for those who need "the touch of Jesus." They should recognize a person's lostness and go out of their way to see that he hears the gospel and has the opportunity to experience Christ's love.

Second, "You've got to come to the place in your life that you believe that Jesus Christ can straighten out the mess in people's lives," Sunderland said, "and convey it to people in a convincing way."

Third, Christians must be "tremendously creative in the face of difficult circumstances." Sunderland quoted evangelist Billy Graham as saying, "I'm anchored to the rock, but I'm geared to the times."

"The message of Christ never changes but the methods must," he continued. Instead of being defeated or discouraged, the Christian should be determined; and the words, the efforts, and the testimonies of friends can encourage a lost person to come into the presence of Jesus and be changed.

Sunderland said many times Christians are like the people in Mark 2 who were crowded into a man's home listening to Jesus preach. "The people on the roof were on the way to Jesus to bring someone to Jesus, and the people in the living room and dining room listening to his sermon were blocking the way.

"Every day of my life in the Lord's work, I'm either on the roof or in the living room," Sunderland concluded. "How about you: are you in the way or on the way?"

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(BP) photo available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

President's advisory council  
established at Southeastern

N-CO  
(SEBTS)

Baptist Press  
10/8/90

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary began the fall semester by inaugurating a president's advisory council which convened in early September.

The group is composed of Christian laypersons who will serve as advisors to the seminary administration in planning, promoting and building the seminary with a view of its total impact on the world.

The meetings were the first of their kind held on the Wake Forest, N.C., campus and represented the establishment of the council. The council will meet annually to review campus programs and activities and to discuss future development projects. A chairperson, vice chairperson and a secretary will be elected yearly. Members are nominated and elected by the council and seminary administration.

The president's advisory council will aid in seeking and obtaining gifts for capital needs, endowment, student aid as well as recruiting qualified students. It also will pursue the continued development of goodwill between the seminary and local communities. Lewis Drummond, seminary president, said, "I am excited about involving community leaders in the life of Southeastern Seminary. These outstanding laypeople are a tremendous asset to this institution."

The council members include: Robert Allen, Greensboro, N.C.; Sanford Bailey, Wake Forest, N.C.; Dotson Benefield, Atlanta; Evander M. Britt Sr., Lumberton, N.C.; Kenny Goetze, Knightdale, N.C.; Robert Hamblin, Tupelo, Miss.; Billy Hand, Weldon, N.C.; Stan Haywood, Asheboro, N.C.; Doroth Helms, Raleigh, N.C.; J.T. Knott Jr., Knightdale, N.C.; Don Lanier, Auburn, Ala.; Daniel M. Lotz, Raleigh, N.C.; Bob G. Mallory, Weatherford, Texas; Edwin Shufelt, High Point, N.C.; Dudley Simms III, Winston-Salem, N.C.; Eldred Turner, Louisville, Ky.; and others who wish to remain unnamed.

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