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November 19, 1991

90-160

\$38.8 million Ralph Beeson bequest
to Samford largest in Alabama history By Bill Nunnolley

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A \$38.8 million bequest to Samford University by philanthropist Ralph Waldo Beeson is the largest charitable gift in Alabama history and the largest bequest to a single educational institution in the nation since 1986.

Beeson, a retired Liberty National Life Insurance Co. executive, died Oct. 15 at the age of 89. He was described as "Samford's greatest benefactor" because of his numerous gifts to the university over more than 20 years.

The bulk of his estate was divided between Samford and Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., which also received \$38.8 million.

Beeson's bequest to Samford provides the following:

- \$17 million for endowment and support of Samford's Beeson School of Divinity;
- \$8.5 million for scholarships in the school of divinity and Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education at Samford, which is named for Beeson's late wife;
- \$7.3 million for endowed professorial chairs in the school of divinity and school of education and Samford's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing;
- \$2 million for enrichment of the school of education programs;
- \$2 million for the Samford Summer Institute of Teaching Excellence program for teachers in grades K-12;
- \$2 million for the Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing.

Samford president Thomas E. Corts described Beeson as "a titanic figure in the history of Samford University" and noted "All that Mr. Beeson did, he did with a profound sense of Christian stewardship.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to be a part of a gift of this magnitude," added Corts. "It is truly a transformational gift that enables us to leap-frog as an institution."

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Record number of messengers attend Tennessee convention By Wm. Fletcher Allen Baptist Press 11/19/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Tennessee Baptists met Nov. 13-15 in their annual meeting in Nashville where they elected William "Bill" Bates of Jackson as president and approved a 1990-91 Cooperative Budget unified budget of \$26,797,860.

The 1,740 messengers exceeded by two the previous Middle Tennessee record.

Bates, a retired pastor, Union University staff member, and TBC legislative lobbyist on moral issues, defeated A. Ray Newcomb, pastor of First Baptist Church of Millington, and 1988 Pastors' Conference president.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

Perry "Red" Michel, pastor of host church, Belmont Heights of Nashville, was elected vice president.

The budget, which is the same TBC financial plan for 1989-90, was passed after an effort to amend by Larry Dipboye, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oak Ridge. Dipboye sought to restore an allocation of \$28,000 designated for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

In September, the TBC executive board had recommended the allocation and it was included in the budget to be presented at the November annual meeting.

However, the board reversed that action when it decided on Nov. 12 to rescind the budgeted allocation.

During the executive board session, two board members spoke in favor of keeping the BJC allocation in the budget while no one spoke for rescinding.

Moncrief Jordan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jefferson City, said he made the original motion for the allocation (in September) in a spirit of harmony. "It seems appropriate to me," he said, "that out of simple gratitude we help the BJC financially since their budget has been cut so drastically by the Southern Baptist Convention." He referred to a June SBC cut of \$350,000. George Coaker, pastor of Milton Baptist Church, said he agreed.

During the Tuesday discussion, Dipboye noted that the BJC had "rescued" the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Childrens' Homes when the IRS sought to tax the homes, and helped several churches in Jackson fight off legal attempts to strike their tax exempt status when they banded together to oppose liquor forces.

Rick Nelson, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Knoxville, spoke against Dipboye's motion to amend the budget. "I believe we ought to trust the decision of our executive board," he said.

The motion to amend failed by a large majority, and the \$26.8 million budget was approved with about two dozen dissenting votes. The \$28,000 will again become part of the 37.5 percent of the budget that goes to support SBC causes through the Cooperative Program.

In other convention action:

-- Reports were made by all TBC institutions, colleges, agencies, executive board departments, and other entities.

-- A motion by Jim Stroud, pastor of Third Creek Baptist Church in Knoxville, concerning the relationship of TBC colleges and other entities was referred to the executive board for study and report in November 1991.

-- Resolutions were approved on freedom of the denominational press; health messages in alcoholic beverage ads; abortion; in memory of Ralph E. Norton (former TBC pastor and executive director); voter apathy; and gratitude to those who "worked to make the convention successful."

Next year's annual meeting will be at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Memphis Nov. 19-21.

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Oklahoma City pastor
elected BGC0 president

By Bob Mathews

Baptist Press
11/19/90

MOORE, Okla. (BP)--Messengers to the 85th annual Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, meeting at First Baptist Church of Moore Nov. 12-14, elected Anthony Jordan, pastor of Northwest Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, president.

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A 1991 Cooperative Program budget of \$16.5 million was approved. This is the same goal as voted the past three years. The gifts will be divided 55.75 percent to state causes and 44.25 percent to Southern Baptist mission and educational causes, the same as last year.

Resolutions were passed urging legislation to restrict induced abortion and calling for prior parental consent for girls under 18 years of age; commending the trustees and administration of Oklahoma Baptist University for their commitment to the relationship with the BGC0; reaffirming commitment to the Cooperative Program and discouraging any plan deviant to the existing method of mission support; and calling for prayer for the hostages in Iraq and Kuwait and for the armed forces in the Persian Gulf area.

Next year's convention will be Nov. 11-13 at Council Road Baptist Church in Bethany.

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Indiana messengers
approve 1991 budget

By Tammi Ledbetter & Kim Steele

Baptist Press
11/19/90

GARY, Ind. (BP)--The 271 messengers from among the 312 Southern Baptist churches in Indiana chose devotion over debate during their 3-day state convention meeting in Gary Nov. 13-15.

John Greever, state convention president and pastor of Pleasant Heights Baptist Church in Indianapolis, was unanimously re-elected by acclamation along with first vice president, Clarence Brock, pastor of Coventry Baptist Church in Fort Wayne. James Dwiggins, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Evansville, was elected second vice president by acclamation.

Those present received a report of a 16 percent increase in baptisms following a decade of decline.

A \$2,593,402 budget for 1991 was adopted without discussion or dissent. The total represents an eight percent increase over the previous year's budget, with the portion going to support Southern Baptist Convention causes increased to 32.25 percent.

Messengers adopted a resolution affirming the Cooperative Program unified budget while expressing "profound disappointment in any attempts to decrease or withhold mission giving." Southern Baptist churches in Indiana were urged to "faithfully continue supporting the Cooperative Program at their present of increasing level."

In another resolution, messengers expressed affirmation for the editors of the Indiana Baptists for faithful service "without fear of sharing the truth."

The keynote messages were delivered by Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell College in Dallas, and Avery Willis, manager of the adult section of the discipleship training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Next year's convention meeting will be Nov. 12-14 at First Baptist Church of Floyds Knobs.

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EDITORS' NOTE: These are the first three articles in a six-part series on plateaued and declining churches. The remaining parts of the series will run tomorrow.

First in a six-part series

70 percent of SBC churches
are plateaued or declining

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
11/19/90

ATLANTA (BP)--If Southern Baptist churches were a family of children getting medical check-ups, the doctor would declare 52 percent of them stunted and another 18 percent critically ill.

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The diagnosis: Most Southern Baptist churches are not growing.

And many of the growing churches are living off infusions from their sickly sister churches through membership transfers. It is a phenomenon one expert has dubbed "the circulation of the saints."

"Plateaued" and "declining" are the terms most often used to describe churches that aren't growing. However, defining which churches are plateaued or declining is neither easy nor popular.

In one association in the southwestern United States, pastors were asked if they thought their churches were either plateaued or declining. Few, if any, pastors said their churches fell in those categories.

Yet statistical records revealed that 80 percent of the association's churches had not shown a net growth in the past 10 years.

"Many churches that are feeling good about themselves are plateaued," notes Ebbie Smith, professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "Some of them just haven't recognized that they're plateaued.

"They may get along real well and baptize people every year, but when you really figure it out, they are just sort of maintaining themselves."

The most common way to objectively measure church growth is through statistics. An annual net growth rate is determined by looking at membership additions and losses and changes in average attendance.

Simply put, churches realize net growth when the number of people coming in the front door exceeds the number slipping out the back door.

Among Southern Baptists, the most thorough statistical study on plateaued and declining churches has been done by Kirk Hadaway of the Sunday School Board.

For research, Hadaway defines growing churches as those showing more than a 10 percent increase in membership over a five-year period. Declining churches are those showing more than a 10 percent decrease in membership over a five-year period. Plateaued churches are those showing neither a 10 percent increase or decrease.

Using that criteria, 52 percent of all SBC churches are currently plateaued and 18 percent are declining. When the criteria is narrowed to plus or minus 5 percent growth, 32 percent of churches are plateaued and 21 percent are declining.

Churches of all sizes and all theological shades may fall into these classifications. The phenomenon is experienced in all geographic locations. However, younger churches and suburban churches are less likely to be plateaued and declining than older churches and inner city churches.

Hadaway compared the growth rate of older and newer churches during a five-year period from 1981 to 1986. He found that older churches (those organized prior to 1927) grew only 4 percent on average, while newer churches (those organized between 1972 and 1981) grew an average of 47 percent.

Another researcher's study of churches in Memphis, Tenn., revealed that the further a church was away from the inner city, the more likely it was to be growing.

"Statistical growth is related to context more than anything," says Jere Allen, who directs the Home Mission Board's metropolitan missions department. Location and age are two "virtually uncontrollable factors" in church growth, he says.

For that reason, Allen suggests churches should not be judged on statistical records alone. Within this context, a plateaued church is "any church which has been on the same place spiritually, attitudinally or statistically for the past several years."

Even churches whose locations prohibit statistical growth should be able to grow in spirit and attitude, Allen says. "Some of these churches are in areas where it would be very difficult to grow, but there is an internal growth, a carrying out of the Great Commission.

"Real growth is Great Commission growth -- reaching the pagan pool," Allen says. "Great Commission growth may not show statistical net growth."

"There's nothing wrong with being a statistically plateaued church if there is little or no opportunity for growth," adds HMB President Larry Lewis. "In God's sight, some of the most successful pastors are those who stay by the stuff even though they're in a hard situation where growth is all but impossible.

"However, I'm convinced most churches could grow and would grow if they had the right spirit, commitment and strategies," Lewis says. "The reason two-thirds of our churches are not growing isn't because there's no opportunity for growth, but because there's no real commitment to growth."

Like most of its churches, the SBC is a plateaued denomination.

While the SBC has recorded slight increases in membership in recent years, the rate of those increases is steadily declining. For example, in 1950 the SBC experienced a 4.7 percent increase in membership, compared to less than 1 percent growth every year since 1985.

But Southern Baptists aren't alone in this trend. Other Protestant groups -- such as United Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Missouri Synod Lutherans -- show actual membership decreases.

Despite a rough time for Protestantism, Southern Baptists have fared better than other groups because of a long-term investment in church starting and an emphasis on evangelism, says church growth author Lyle Schaller, who is a Methodist.

A plateaued convention is a sign of plateaued and declining churches, Hadaway explains. Which leads to the Bold Mission Thrust goal of having at least 75 percent of SBC churches growing.

Despite large gains recorded by a few churches, the convention as a whole will not come off the plateau until a majority of churches begin growing, he says.

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(BP) chart mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

EDITORS' NOTE: Following is the second in a six-part series.

Churches headed for plateau
often give warning signs

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
11/19/90

ATLANTA (BP)--Asking some basic questions could be the first step in determining whether a church is plateaued or declining.

Church growth specialist Lyle Schaller offers a seven-point test to indicate whether Southern Baptist churches are headed for plateau or decline.

Although not a definitive list, these items are common indicators of churches that are not growing, says Schaller, a popular church growth author and parish consultant with the Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Ind.

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1. How long has the church been meeting in this particular space? "If more than 15 years, you're probably headed for decline," Schaller says. The reason: growth causes churches to adapt their space to meet new needs.

2. When was the last adult Bible class started? "If more than two or three years, get nervous," he warns. "In larger churches, three months is too long to go without starting a new class."

3. Is the church accumulating capital or consuming capital? "If you are in a capital accumulation stage, you're probably headed up. If you're living off accumulated capital, you will tend to go down," Schaller says. The reason: growing churches will add to their capital assets each year as a result of their vision for the future, while dying churches will survive off the fruits of the past.

4. Do baptisms exceed deaths? "In a growing church baptisms should exceed deaths by at least two to one, ideally three to one," Schaller says. Net growth results when there are more people coming into the church than leaving the church either by death or transfer.

5. Is the adjusted value of member giving going up? Growing churches will show an increase in giving every year, he explains.

6. Do transfers in from other denominations exceed transfers in from other Southern Baptist churches? Growing churches tend to attract more people from outside their denomination, which reveals the attractiveness of the church in the local marketplace, he says.

7. What is the most exciting landmark in the life of the congregation? "By this I mean the one event that everyone in the church recalls and says, 'Ever since then, we've never been the same.' If that was more than 15 years ago, get nervous."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Following is the third in a six-part series.

Pastor and vision identified
as keys to leaving plateau

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
11/19/90

ATLANTA (BP)--Pastoral leadership and vision are the two most important factors in taking a church off a plateau, researchers and pastors of growing churches contend.

One professor explains this by an equation: "Pastoral vision shared with the people and implemented by the two together equals breakthrough," said Ebbie Smith, professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Smith and other experts know a renewed vision is essential to moving a church off plateau. What they can't say is where to find that vision or how to sell it to a congregation.

"This is where you get into a very spiritual dimension," Smith said. "This is where all our graphs and percentages fall apart. A pastor has got to demonstrate a concern for the people, and they've got to be convinced that things are going to work."

But charts and graphs do show some things clearly.

For one thing, there is a statistical correlation between the arrival of a new pastor and the time churches begin to grow off a plateau. This was documented in a 1989 study comparing churches which remained on a plateau and churches which grew off a plateau.

The research, done by Kirk Hadaway of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, found that almost half of breakout churches called their current pastor immediately before they began renewed growth. Breakout churches are those that break away from a plateau with a new spurt of growth.

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"Apparently a new pastor is often necessary to revitalize a stagnant church, and if a church is going to follow its pastor off a plateau the change usually occurs within the first few years," Hadaway said.

Simply changing pastors is not the key to this finding, however, because another 22 percent of breakout churches had the same pastor during their periods of plateau and significant growth.

The key is the vision the pastor communicates to the congregation. New pastors more frequently bring a new vision which results in growth, Hadaway said.

But pastors can experience turnaround in their current churches if they are willing, added Jere Allen of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "There are excellent examples of pastors who have changed their style from business as usual to a determination to be proactive and make a profound difference in the growth pattern of the church."

Such a change in an existing pastorate often comes on the heels of a sabbatical leave, a fresh study of the meaning of the church or a personal crisis, Allen said.

The success of breakout pastors is not based on preaching ability, seminary education, administrative skills or an authoritarian leadership style, Hadaway and Allen concluded.

Instead, the ability to convey a vision of what could be is the critical difference. "The pastor who is able to generate enthusiasm is the one most likely to move a church off the plateau," Allen said. "A church needs a clear and simple, biblically based vision toward which all the other dreams lead."

Most often, this is accomplished by leading a church to re-examine its purpose for existence, to ask, "Why are we here?," Allen suggested. "The first thing a church needs to do is be intentional."

This is not accomplished by dusting off the church constitution for a review, he said. Rather, it happens when pastor and lay leaders work together to draft a new mission statement.

The process of creating the statement will prove to be more important than the statement itself, Allen said.

Unfortunately, many pastors are threatened by the prospect of real growth, even though they say they want the church to grow, added Charles Chaney, HMB vice president for extension. When a church begins to grow, the pastor has to let go, which often is threatening, he said.

Likewise, growth can be threatening to laypeople. "It takes a lot of courage to grow," said Joe Finfrock, pastor of First Baptist Church in Gentry, Ark. "It takes courage to set a goal because you could fail. Nobody wants to be a failure."

Finfrock led his small-town church to grow from a plateau of about 100 in attendance to about 370 in attendance currently.

When he arrived in Gentry, Finfrock said he found a church with low morale. "This was my first pastorate, and I didn't know any better, so I told them we could be a great church.

"The thing people run up against in small towns is a small-town mentality, that we're just a small church and we can only do small things," he said. "That's just the lie of the devil."

A similar story is told by Steve Curtis, pastor of Providence Baptist Church in rural Franklin, Ky. In eight years the church has grown from an average Sunday school attendance of 54 to 440.

The difference is the church has "changed from being a negative, dying type atmosphere to being one where we believe we can accomplish what God wants us to," Curtis said. "It had something to do with realizing our potential.

"We constantly remind our folks that the best days in the life of the church are never in the past, they're always in the future. You've got to believe God can take a country church or an inner city church and still do something good with it."

The same story is repeated by urban churches. When Dan Yeary arrived at University Baptist Church in Coral Gables, Fla., Sunday attendance had dropped from 1,100 to 300.

University Baptist Church was not located in a transitional community, was not disrupted by racial issues, but had simply lost sight of its purpose, Yeary explained. "In our situation there was no reason for decline except for loss of vision."

He began his work with that mission. "I believe if the pastor doesn't have a vision, it's going to be difficult for the people to have one."

From that point, there were no secret formulas to success. "We didn't have any magic wands," Yeary claimed. "We just worked hard." As a result that dwindling congregation of 300 now numbers more than 1,300 in attendance.

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(BP) chart mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Brotherhood search committee
announces procedures

Baptist Press
11/19/90

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The Brotherhood Commission's presidential search committee confirmed at its first meeting Nov. 10, the procedure for seeking the replacement of retiring president James H. Smith.

Committee chairman Wendell Reed, a computer systems manager from Salem, Va., said the search committee will be open to recommendations from throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

"All correspondence will be kept in the strictest of confidence," Reed said.

People wishing to recommend a candidate for president of the Brotherhood Commission should submit the candidate's name in writing to Wendell Reed, Presidential Search Chairman, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104.

The search committee then will notify the potential candidate of their recommendation to the committee. The name of the person making that recommendation will not be revealed to the candidate. The candidate will be invited to submit a resume.

Candidate's resumes will be evaluated thoroughly, Reed said. The committee then will interview leading prospects.

Anyone making a nomination will receive a confirmation letter from the committee that the prospective candidate has been notified.

Verbal recommendations will not be considered under any circumstances, Reed said.

Smith's tenure at the Brotherhood Commission will end June 30, 1991, if a successor has been chosen by then. If necessary, he will remain as president beyond then until another person is appointed.

The five member search committee includes: Tommy Knotts, director of missions, Aiken, S.C.; Robert Hill, pastor, Cleveland, Miss.; Joe Lenamon, banker, Fort Worth, Texas; Billy Summerlin, hospital administrator, Gadsden, Ala.; and Reed.

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Ex officio members are: Don Varnado, medical administrator and newly elected trustee chairman, Alexandria, Va.; Cameron Byler, Tennessee Brotherhood director, Brentwood, Tenn.; and Grace Atchley, Brotherhood Commission administrative assistant, Memphis.

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Kuwait refugee thankful
for Baptist shelter, aid

Baptist Press
11/19/90

DAVAO DEL SUR, Philippines (BP)--Safe and sound back home in the Philippines, a refugee from the destruction of Kuwait took time during the Thanksgiving season to thank Baptists who helped her survive the exodus.

"I want to thank you for the kind and special attention you extended to me while I was a refugee at the Baptist gymnasium," wrote Adjurgita Tanquion in a recent letter to Southern Baptist workers Gerry and Arylis Milligan in Jordan. "Had it not been because of you, I would have suffered severe bronchitis."

Tanquion was one of several hundred Philippine workers who found food and shelter at the Amman Baptist School gymnasium in Jordan after fleeing Iraqi-occupied Kuwait in August and September. Thousands of Filipinos and other Asian workers living in Kuwait passed through Jordan on their way home.

Both the Milligans, of Tulsa, Okla., are trained as nurses. They worked with the school doctor to care for refugees who became ill during their exhausting trek from Kuwait to Jordan.

When the doctor prescribed a series of six injections to treat her bronchitis, Tanquion recalled, "Mrs. Milligan patiently tried to find the (the medicine) from the pharmacy. You, Mr. Milligan, injected the medicine and every time you finished you said, 'Oh, I'm so sorry to cause you pain, but I want you to get well soon.' Both of you were too concerned about the pain I felt. That's why you asked the doctor to prescribe capsules for me instead of the injections. The doctor agreed and I fully recovered."

Getting home safely was like the beginning of "a second life for me," Tanquion said.

"I'm now here in the Philippines with my family. They are very happy to see me alive back home. As of now, I'm resting for I am so tired. My escape from Kuwait back home was a hellish experience. Yet I thank God for courage he has given me. Above all, I thank him for his unending love manifested to me through people who are as kindhearted as you and all the rest who made my escape back home possible."

Refugee aid at the Baptist school ended when the Jordanian government moved most of the refugees in Jordan to a large camp northeast of Amman. Most refugees now have returned to their own countries.

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Hungry, homeless need
year-round assistance

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
11/19/90

ATLANTA (BP)--With food baskets and prison packets, Southern Baptists make Christmas more cheerful for the nation's hungry and homeless.

Home missionaries working with the needy say without the help of church groups, Christmas is a headache rather than a holiday.

"No one comes knocking on our door at Christmas or any other time of year volunteering to help," said Larry Miguez, director of the Rachel Sims Baptist Mission in New Orleans. "Christmas becomes a real struggle for us."

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The mission provides weekday ministries to every age group, from preschoolers to senior adults. Miguez said he tries to have Christmas parties for each group. Churches are asked to provide refreshments for the party, a \$5 gift for each participant and a Bible story during the party.

He said last year one church sponsored all the parties. This year more churches are involved, but only one church is a Louisiana congregation.

In Gainesville, Ga., area churches donate food and their time to feed 2,000 people on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Jack Little, director of church and community ministries for Chattahoochee Baptist Association, said they also participate in a "Secret Santa" program to provide toys, clothing and food to needy families.

Little said his support is "fairly constant." He added, "I'm thankful to have such a great outpouring during the holidays, but the need is really there all year long."

Marilyn Prickett, director of the Johanning Mission Center in Washington, said churches provide Christmas gifts for the children and senior adults involved in the center's programs. Churches also provide baskets of food to distribute at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In South Carolina, churches work through the state missions department to provide prisoners with toiletry items and stationery at Christmas. The program began in 1976, and this year plans are to prepare 20,000 packets for distribution by prison chaplains.

Given the chance to make a Christmas wish list for their centers, home missionaries unanimously requested volunteers. They also asked that Baptist churches keep the less fortunate on their gift list all year.

In addition to spiritual growth for program participants, some of their most common year-round requests include:

-- Pre-school programs and job counseling. Prickett said the center in the nation's capital had operated a preschool day care, but closed it when it became an economic burden. She would like to see it reopen. She would also like to have an employment counselor on staff to help match people with prospective jobs.

-- Repair work. Miguez said the New Orleans center, built in 1949, needs plumbing repairs and reinforcement in the pre-school area which is plagued with termites.

-- Transportation. Prickett said her center has two vans which constantly need work. Miguez said the New Orleans center uses a station wagon that needs to be replaced.

-- Help with the homeless. In the county of 95,000 people where Little works, 140 families have been identified as homeless. A proposed transitional living center would provide housing for families up to 90 days while they seek employment and are trained in living skills.

-- Understanding. "I would wish for the middle and upper classes to understand those who are less fortunate and why they are there," Little said.

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