

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75C
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355

January 29, 1991

91-14

Southern Baptist schools show
increase for 9th straight year

By Tim Fields

N-CO (Ed. Comm.)

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist colleges and universities showed an overall increase in fall enrollment for the ninth consecutive year according to figures released to the Southern Baptist Education Commission.

Enrollment figures for the 1990 fall semester show 110,605 students attended Southern Baptist junior and senior colleges, a 1.4 percent increase over the 1989 total of 109,035. The 1990 figures show a slowing in the rate of enrollment growth from a 4 percent increase in 1989, and 3.6 percent increase in 1988.

The enrollment figures include both full-time and part-time students in college credit courses, but do not include students enrolled in non-credit courses. Student totals were released to the commission by each school.

A compilation of the figures shows that 34 of the 49 senior colleges had an increase in enrollment ranging from 20.2 percent to 0.1 percent, while only 1 of the 4 junior colleges had an increase in enrollment.

Bluefield (Va.) College had the largest percentage increase with 20.2 percent followed by Williams Baptist College, Walnut Ridge, Ark., 19.8 percent; Averett College, Danville, Va., 18.9 percent; Florida Baptist Theological College, Graceville, Fla., 15.3 percent; East Texas Baptist University, Marshall, 14 percent; and Mobile (Ala.) College, 12 percent.

Baylor University, Waco, Texas, showed the largest numerical increase from fall 1989 to fall 1990, with 245 additional students, followed by Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., with 241; Averett College, with 230; Campbell University, Buies Creek, N.C., with 177; and Mobile College with 142.

The last time overall enrollment in Southern Baptist colleges and universities decreased was in 1981, when enrollment was 91,602, a drop of less than one percent over the previous year.

The increased enrollment for nine straight years means that 19,003 more students attended the 52 Southern Baptist junior and senior colleges during the fall 1990 term than attended in fall 1981 for a net increase of 20.7 percent.

"In times of stress an emphasis on values and the personal concern for students demonstrated by faculty has a special appeal to prospective students," said Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Education Commission.

"Concern for students by faculty members has encouraged non-traditional students to enter or return to college, and many of these are especially interested in the academic programs offered by the Baptist institutions. This, plus quality education undergirded by strong values, has an appeal to all prospective students," Walker continued.

"The emphasis upon the basic mission purpose of Baptist institutions has proven to be of major value in relating to the constituencies of Baptist colleges," Walker said. "The interest in the historic mission of Baptist colleges gives me hope even in the midst of the changes we have recently witnessed."

Baylor University remains the largest Southern Baptist university with 12,019 students; followed by Mercer University, Macon/Atlanta, with 5,887 students and Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., with 5,505 students. All three schools showed increased enrollment from fall 1989 enrollments.

--more--

Following are the 1990 fall enrollment figures and the percentage of increase or decrease from fall 1989 to fall 1990 (rounded to the nearest tenth of one percent) at all Southern Baptist junior and senior colleges by state.

Alabama -- Judson College, 351, (reflects change in reporting); Mobile College, 1,322, up 12 percent; Samford University, 4,164, up 0.1 percent;

Arizona -- Grand Canyon University, 1,846, up 0.3 percent;

Arkansas -- Ouachita Baptist University, 1,313, down 0.2 percent; Williams Baptist College, 690, up 19.8 percent;

California -- California Baptist College, 678, up 0.7 percent;

Florida -- Florida Baptist Theological College, 443, up 15.3 percent; Palm Beach Atlantic College, 1,535, up 8.6 percent; Stetson University, 3,026, down 0.1 percent;

Georgia -- Brewton-Parker College, 1,870, up 3.8 percent; Mercer University, 5,887, up 0.5 percent; Shorter College, 858, down 2.7 percent; Truett-McConnell College, 1,631 up 8.4 percent;

Kentucky -- Campbellsville College, 824 up 8.4 percent; Cumberland College, 1,812, down 2.0 percent; Georgetown College, 1,595, up 2.1 percent;

Louisiana -- Louisiana College, 1,075, up 3.1 percent;

Mississippi -- Blue Mountain College, 357, up 2.9 percent; Mississippi College, 3,666, up 1.7 percent; William Carey College, 1,615, (reflects a change in reporting procedure);

Missouri -- Hannibal-LaGrange College, 1,008, up 5.7 percent; Missouri Baptist College, 1,061, down 2.1 percent; Southwest Baptist University, 2,925, up 0.2 percent; William Jewell College, 2,056, up 4.4 percent;

North Carolina -- Campbell University, 4,997, up 3.7 percent; Chowan College, 892, down 12.1 percent; Gardner-Webb College, 2,074, down 5.3 percent; Mars Hill College, 1,331 down 0.9 percent; Meredith College, 2,305, up 1.8 percent; Wake Forest University, 5,505, up 4.6 percent; Wingate College, 1,649, down 9.8 percent;

Oklahoma -- Oklahoma Baptist University, 2,208, up 1.6 percent;

South Carolina -- Anderson College, 968, down 6.7 percent; Charleston Southern University, 2,158, up 5.2 percent; Furman University; 3,312, down 0.8 percent; North Greenville College, 392, down 22.7 percent;

Tennessee -- Belmont College, 2,812, up 4.9 percent; Carson-Newman College 2,097, up 5.2 percent; Union University, 2,106, down 4.7 percent;

Texas -- Baylor University, 12,019, up 2.1 percent; Dallas Baptist University, 2,333, up 2.8 percent; East Texas Baptist University, 924, up 14 percent; Hardin-Simmons University, 1,930, up 3.6 percent; Houston Baptist University, 2,252 down 5.9 percent; Howard Payne University, 1,355, up 5.6 percent; University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, 1,808, up 2.6 percent; Wayland Baptist University, 2,082, up 1.5 percent;

Virginia -- Averett College, 1,446, up 18.9 percent; Bluefield College, 523, up 20.2 percent; University of Richmond, 4,859, down 0.01 percent; Virginia Intermont College, 562, up 7.9 percent.

Historians assess present,
future for SBC moderates

By Larry Chesser

N-CO
CIC

KENSINGTON, Md. (BP)--Southern Baptist moderates weighing alternatives to business-as-usual participation in the conservative-dominated denomination face no quick, easy or certain answers, two American church historians told participants at a regional gathering of the Southern Baptist Alliance, meeting at Kensington Baptist Church.

Bill Leonard, William Walker Brookes Professor of American Christianity at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and SBA Executive Director Stan Hastey, who holds a doctorate in American church history, told a gathering of the Northeast Region of the alliance they had revised earlier assessments and now believe a formal schism within the SBC or the establishment of an alternative denominational structure appears more distant and less certain than previously thought.

For the immediate future, Leonard said, the SBC "doubtless will continue to experience conflict and fragmentation, though probably without a major immediate schism." Some churches may break away, he said, but not in significant numbers.

"The lines are still too blurred, the assets too extensive and the Southern Baptist identity too strong for any large scale schism or neatly ordered split."

Also for the immediate future, he said, moderates will continue to relate through local networks, coalitions and state Baptist conventions, while the conservatives will continue to factionalize.

Because of the long-running controversy, Southern Baptists, "particularly moderates, are even now losing a generation of ministers," Leonard warned. Unless viable alternatives are developed, he said, increasing numbers of moderate churches will be drawn into the new mainstream as the pool of moderate ministers declines and churches inevitably turn to more conservative ministers.

In sketching further what he acknowledged was a bleak forecast, Leonard said, "Finances are even now a major problem and major cutbacks in funding for denominational institutions will occur. Numerical declines, already evident, will deepen. SBC educational institutions will struggle to maintain academic integrity and credibility."

He listed a range of denominational alignment options for moderates, beginning with a new alliance of Baptists that would include American Baptists, Southern Baptists, various African-American Baptist groups and others.

"Such unity seems impossible, but it is a dream we should not hesitate to pursue," he said.

Some moderate churches may pursue dual or outright affiliation with existing Baptist denominations, he suggested.

Another option is the creation of a new Baptist entity formed by moderate churches leaving the SBC. "Some believe that this will be the outcome of recent developments within the so-called 'fellowship' which convened in Atlanta last August," he said. "While that is a possibility, the 'fellowship' has a long way to go before it is able or willing to call itself a new denomination. Many who now participate in it no doubt will be unable to go that far."

And many moderates, he said, will "simply hunker down" and remain SBC participants, hoping things will change.

"Frankly, I find that many churches and ministers are apt to remain in that mold for some time to come because it is the least controversial and most comfortable option."

Hastey, a member of the 70-member interim steering committee of the "fellowship," also expressed doubt that the organization is anywhere close to evolving into an alternative denominational structure for moderate Southern Baptists.

--more--

"I do not sense at this point that there is a clear vision of what the 'fellowship' ought to become," he said.

The steering committee is expected to propose at a May meeting of the "fellowship" in Atlanta that it be named the Baptist Fellowship and that a search committee be authorized to seek an executive director for the organization. Also a proposal will be made for the establishment of Center for World Missions as a think-tank at its inception.

"My sense is that the meeting in May is absolutely critical to whether the fellowship gets off the ground," Hasteley said.

Despite the moderates' dissatisfaction with such actions as the July firing of the director and news editor of Baptist Press and the recent forced retirement of Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder, he predicted many moderates will "hunker down" and "remain the loyal opposition."

"I believe that to be shortsighted," he said. "I believe all of us would be better off if somehow there would be a formal division."

Should the "fellowship" become a new body of Baptists in the South, it would represent no more than 10 percent to 20 percent of existing SBC churches, Hasteley said.

"Most Southern Baptists are too culturally rooted in the South to think about being anything other than Southern Baptist," he said.

If no formal split occurs, he said, the SBA will be faced either with maintaining a loyal opposition role or becoming the vehicle that would lead a small number of congregations out of the SBC into American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.

"What is becoming more apparent to me daily is that the dissolution of the old body (SBC) will take longer than many of us believed, even a few months ago," Hasteley said. "Not many churches, not even alliance churches, are yet ready to leave the old body."

While acknowledging the difficulty of the goal, Hasteley joined Leonard in calling for a reunification of Baptists in America.

"My fondest hope is that somehow God might lead us out of the chaos of the present moment into a new day that is characterized by a renewed sense of unity among Baptists of good will, including American Baptists, African-American Baptists, hispanic Baptists and, yes, a remnant of Southern Baptists, who are committed to being true to our common Baptist heritage," he said.

But before reaching issues involved in restructuring, he said, moderate Southern Baptists face a more important issue.

"The issue is that of spiritual preparedness. Are we ready to repent of the arrogance of our presumed indispensability to the God of the ages in the discharge of God's mission in the world? Will we repent from the limitless arrogance that we Southern Baptists were, in the words of Bill Leonard's book, 'God's Last and Only Hope'?" And will we confess the sin of racism in which we were born and which has characterized so much of our history?"

Many Southern Baptists cannot conceive of themselves as being anything else, he said.

"While some of us long ago realized that our roots in the Baptist denomination go back far beyond the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 over the question of whether slave owners should be appointed as missionaries by the Triennial Convention, many other Southern Baptists would rather be Adrian Rogers Baptists than Roger Williams Baptists," he said.

As risky and uncertain as the future may appear for moderates, Leonard said conservatives now in power face mounting problems of their own.

--more--

"If we must be patient as a denomination, if the ties are too deep, the assets too high, the tradition too strong, then we have to realize that conservatives as well as moderates are in a precarious position."

Today's SBC scene contains images of churches across the denomination splitting "because we have made conflict normative," he said, noting that in the environment of hostility, conservative pastors are more likely than moderates to be terminated.

He sketched an uneasy and troubled future for conservative-captured SBC institutions.

"Fundamentalists own a publishing house," he said. "But what if sales continue to decline? And what if the bills can't be paid? Moderates are wondering what kind of publishing house to develop. Fundamentalists have to pay the bills for the one that they have."

He noted that he has been approached by several non-SBC publishing houses who think there is a publishing vacuum within the SBC.

"Fundamentalists have eight seminaries, six Southern Baptist and two they formed beforehand," he said. "And they are going to have to pay for them in the same way that any moderate endeavor to start a seminary needs financial support. And paying for eight with one kind of student and one kind of constituency ... could prove very difficult."

Leonard said conservatives seem united, "but we are finding that the longer it lasts -- this controversy -- the more factionalized they become."

"It becomes deeply disturbing as to what we have done to each other," he said. "We have taken an organization that always was in need of fine-tuning and we have torn it to shreds. And we will all be judged for that, because whatever was wrong with us was not that wrong."

The meeting included small-group discussions on organizational structure, theological education, missions, literature and finances. Jim Woody, pastor of Gregory Memorial Baptist Church in Baltimore, was elected president of the chapter.

--30--

Also contributing to this report was Tom Strode of the Christian Life Commission Washington office.

Persian Gulf war opportunity
for witness, scholar says

By Tim McKeown

F-CC
Texas

Baptist Press
1/29/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Christians should view war in the Persian Gulf as an opportunity to share the first coming of Jesus Christ, rather than focusing on the Second Coming, according to a Southern Baptist scholar.

"It's a time to share Christ and his first coming. We need to be careful not to set dates but share the good news ... the hope, strength, peace for man right now," said John Newport, emeritus professor of philosophy of religion and vice president for academic affairs at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Newport, author of numerous books including a 1988 book about the Second Coming titled *The Lion and the Lamb*, has been to the Middle East 25 times and said crisis situations like the Persian Gulf war remind people of life's fragility.

"We are finite beings," he said. "We need to be obedient, combining justice and love and forgiveness -- recognizing all humanity is caught in the fall of man," he said.

Newport said the heightened interest in biblical prophecy provides a good opportunity for Christians to witness.

Newport said several people, including newspapers reporters, have asked him how Saddam Hussein fits in with biblical prophecy. Newport's answer is that every generation has had the spirit of anti-Christ, from the Apostle John's generation through this generation.

--more--

"The spirit of anti-Christ is always with us. We can see its diluted influence in every epoch in history," he said.

But Newport cautioned against over-excitement among Christians about relating the Bible's end times and events in the Persian Gulf.

"We must be alert that we do not make the Bible into a device for divination, instead of a tool for spiritual discernment.

"In the meantime, we are to be busy in our calling. End time theories arise often," Newport said. But he added "none of them should cause us to put down the sickle and pick up the spyglass."

God uses man's rebellion for his redemptive plans in the midst of the circumstances, Newport said, adding he foresees that out of the Iraq situation, there could become a new openness to God both in the United States and in the Arab world now dominated by Islam.

--30--

Southwestern student joins
Uncle Sam's call up

By Pam Alewine

Baptist Press

1/29/91

F-10
News
FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--In a matter of a few hours, bright yellow ribbons hung all around Barnard Hall on the campus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Goodbye parties were planned instantly and prayers were said for Beverly Gambrell.

Gambrell, a master of communications student at Southwestern Seminary left her studies, her friends and her role in The Company, Southwestern's drama troupe, to fill her role as a senior airman in the Air Force Reserves.

Gambrell's unit is leaving the continental United States from Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, to an unknown destination. She will serve as a bio-medical equipment maintenance specialist, repairing medical equipment.

"My unit's kind of like an Air Force MASH unit," she said.

Gambrell's unit was to report in fatigues to the Air Force hospital Jan. 26 for a briefing on where her unit will be sent.

"I can take one suitcase, a carry-on bag, a tool kit, a duffle bag and my chemical warfare bag," Gambrell said. The length of her stay could be anywhere from three months to a year, she said.

She has been in the Air Force reserves for three years and soon will receive the status of a non-commissioned officer. She said she joined the reserves to earn money for seminary.

While friends tried to console her, Gambrell said she felt no sadness, but admitted to having butterflies in her stomach.

"I've ended up consoling some of my friends," she said with a laugh.

After being called up, Gambrell told fellow students of her excitement for the ministry opportunity she will have among the other reservists.

"I'm excited because this will give me a chance to be a much bolder witness. If I'm really serious about mission action, then I've got to be the one challenging people about God," she said.

Gambrell knows people will be praying for her. And already prayers are being answered, she said, because her butterflies are gone.

"What I'm telling people to pray for is that I'll be a more vocal witness," she said.

--30--