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91-49

March CP receipts are  
fourth highest for month

NCO

**NASHVILLE (BP)**--The fourth highest total for a month and a six-month total which now exceeds the previous year were two of the marks set by Cooperative Program gifts received in March by the SBC Executive Committee.

The total received for the Cooperative Program unified budget for March was \$13,219,744, a 20.18 percent increase over March of 1990 (\$11,000,029). That is the fourth highest CP month total on record and compares to the budget need for a month of \$11,444,377.

"I am highly pleased that CP receipts for March exceeded \$13.2 million," said Harold C. Bennett, Executive Committee president/treasurer. "I commend all Southern Baptists for their commitment. This means that the state conventions had one of their highest months in CP mission receipts.

"We can only give as God blesses us ... I hope we will give to world missions as God blesses us," Bennett said.

Halfway through the 1990-91 SBC budget year, CP receipts total \$71,543,354 compared to \$70,872,526 for the previous year six months. The 1990-91 basic operating budget need for six months was \$68,666,262.

However, designated gifts still lag, slightly, behind the previous year at the halfway mark. For March 1991, designated gifts totaled \$18,995,700 compared to \$15,071,959 in 1990. But the year-to-date total of \$78,221,160 is 2.15 percent below the corresponding period of last year of \$79,937,100.

Designated contributions include the Foreign Mission Board's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Home Mission Board's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, and world hunger.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' way of supporting ministry and missions through state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. State and regional conventions retain a percentage of CP contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining percentage to the SBC Executive Committee for national and international ministries.

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Survey team heads to Kuwait  
still needing entry visas

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
4/2/91

**RICHMOND, Va. (BP)**--Still needing permission to enter Kuwait, a Christian survey team nevertheless departed for the ransacked country April 1.

They believe they can get visas on the island nation of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, said John Cheyne, one of three team members who will assess opportunities for Christian ministry in Kuwait. Cheyne coordinates human needs ministry for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The other team members are Maurice Graham, a Southern Baptist worker stranded in the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait for more than four months after the Iraqi invasion, and Jerry Zandstra, pastor of the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait. Zandstra was in the United States during the invasion. Graham was associate pastor of the church after he arrived in Kuwait last summer.

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Exploring ways Southern Baptists and other Christians can meet the physical and emotional needs of foreign laborers stranded in Kuwait will be a high priority for the survey team, Cheyne said. An estimated 80,000 workers from Bangladesh, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka and other Third World countries endured the Iraqi occupation, he said.

"We don't know what their condition is," Cheyne said, or what sorts of food supplies, medical assistance or emotional ministry they might need.

Once the team members secure visas in Bahrain, they will travel to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to reclaim the car Graham and his family used in Kuwait before the invasion. The car, bullet-riddled but with a new windshield, was used by a Texas Baptist couple and an Australian to escape from Kuwait Aug. 13.

The drive from Riyadh to Kuwait normally takes about five hours, Graham noted, "but I don't know what it will be under this kind of situation."

The team will pack the car with all the water and food they will need for a week's stay in Kuwait, along with such supplies as surgical masks to protect against polluted air from the hundreds of oil wells set ablaze by the Iraqis.

After the trip to Kuwait, Cheyne will visit Egypt and possibly Jordan to explore ministry opportunities among people made refugees by the war.

Already, Cheyne noted, the Foreign Mission Board has had numerous offers of assistance from various groups interested in helping.

Displaced people "are particularly receptive to compassionate concern and hence to the gospel," Cheyne commented. "Ultimately some refugees may become instruments of the Lord to go back to their own people and share the gospel."

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CLC speaker urges Christians  
to practice less affluent lifestyle

By Tom Strode

*N-CO CLC*

Baptist Press  
4/2/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--American Christians desiring to apply biblical principles to environmental issues must be prepared to practice a less affluent lifestyle, an evangelical theologian said at the 1991 seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"As Christians, we must be willing to accept a lower standard of living for our ourselves for the sake of the standard of the whole, whether of society or of the entire creation," said Millard Erickson of Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. "Our standard of material consumption will need to decline ... the quality of life will increase in the process."

Erickson's challenge to Southern Baptists and other evangelicals was delivered at the CLC's 24th annual seminar, which was entitled "Christians and the Environment: Finding a Biblical Balance Between Idolatry and Irresponsibility." His two addresses dealt separately with the biblical theology and biblical ethics of ecology.

An improvement in life's quality because Christians change their lifestyles will include such benefits as clean air and water, said Erickson, who is executive vice president and dean at the school. Followers of Christ should adopt simpler lives because of what it will do for the creation, for others and for themselves, he said.

Erickson said the purpose of life for human beings is not the acquisition of wealth or any form of pleasure.

"Jesus himself was not a well-to-do person," he said. "If the good life is having possessions, then Jesus missed the good life."

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"Quality of life is not a direct function of quantity of possessions. Wealth is not to be a major goal of one's life, and in particular, wealth acquired with disregard of the needs and welfare of the rest of the creation, especially of other humans, is wrong. The possession of wealth imposes special responsibilities upon those who have it, especially to use it to care for those less fortunate."

Southern Baptists and other evangelicals also should develop a biblical theology of reproduction and population, Erickson said.

God's command to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28) probably has been fulfilled, he said. It appears that this command was a limited, temporary one and not a universal, permanent one, Erickson said. It is similar to a biblical understanding of wealth, which appears to be a sign of God's blessing early in Scripture but is not handled in the same way in the whole of God's word. He said the directive to populate was given to two persons and was necessary for many centuries to enable human beings to "have dominion," as Genesis 1:28 also states.

"The opposite tendency, to overpopulate the earth, is now the great problem," Erickson said. "Dominion-having is a much less labor-intensive matter."

The Bible "does not require unlimited ... multiplication," he said. Christians should weigh their responsibility to other children than their own and the limited resources of earth when considering the size of their families, Erickson said. When questioned after his addresses, Erickson said he does not include abortion as an option in birth control.

Evangelical Christianity has been blamed frequently for the environmental crisis, Erickson said. He cited four common charges:

-- "The call to have dominion over the earth, in Genesis 1:28, entails treating the earth as having importance only as supportive of the good of the human, and therefore that doctrine leads to exploitation and rape of the earth.

-- "Modern science and technology's exploitation of the earth has been condoned by Christianity.

-- "Christianity has promoted a dualism, according to which the natural or the physical or the secular is of less value, or even is negative in character, as compared with the spiritual or the otherworldly.

-- Belief in the second coming, which will usher in the complete and perfect reign of Christ, effectively removes any sense of need for ecological concern."

Erickson said Christians have two reasons for seeking a biblical theology on environmental issues:

-- An evangelistic one that will enable persons who are concerned about ecology to be reached with the gospel,

-- A discipleship one that will enable believers to learn and to do what the Lord has commanded.

In presenting a biblical ethic of ecology the "issues are not always simple," Erickson said. His seven ethical principles for application were:

-- Christians should attempt to eliminate pollution, thereby preserving "the purity, the beauty and the integrity of the whole of creation.

-- Believers must seek to maintain their health in all areas for God's glory.

-- There should be a "careful conservation and consumption" of creation's resources.

-- Christians must have a less materialistic lifestyle.

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-- Believers should attempt "to prevent war" because of its impact on the environment.

-- There should be a recognition of humanity's responsibility to care for other members of the creation.

"Long-range concerns need to dominate our thinking and action. We must realize that the problems are not going to be solved overnight, the reward ultimately will be long range," Erickson warned.

In another speech at the seminar, a scientist in environmental studies told participants progress is being made in the effort to produce a healthier environment.

"Is our environment becoming cleaner? I think personally and professionally I've come to the conclusion that it is, if for no other reason than we're managing the problems that we're finding a lot better," said Rick Irvin, associate professor of the Louisiana State University Institute for Environmental Studies and research director of LSU's Center for Energy Studies.

Irvin, a Southern Baptist, included the following as illustrations of the progress:

-- Most industrial and chemical companies are creating and filling environmental staff positions (Exxon recently named its first vice president of environment and safety, he said).

-- Government and industry are "rethinking manufacturing operations," considering such aspects as waste minimization.

-- There is an increased understanding of how disease occurs in human beings, including in relation to environmental factors.

-- Knowledge of development processes at the molecular level is growing, enabling scientists to plan for the protection of persons exposed to toxic chemicals.

Irvin, whose specialty is environmental toxicology, said hazardous waste sites and nuclear material production sites present major problems. There are 5,000 to 10,000 chemical waste sites in the United States that could threaten public health, he said. The 16 major Department of Energy radioactive material sites could require anywhere from \$50 to \$500 billion during the next 20 years in order to be cleaned, Irvin said.

In another speech, Christian ethicist William Tillman of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary said Christians should prepare to have a "missionary mindset" that approaches the environment and other issues with patience in seeking to move people toward a proper lifestyle.

"Whenever one takes Christian ethics seriously, wherever he or she works and lives -- even if in a Christian agency or institution, that pattern of ethics constrains him or her toward a missionary mindset in this world," said Tillman. "The first time that dawned on me, it became a despairing, frustrating feeling. This is the calling of the Christian life -- to follow the pioneer of our faith, or our trailblazer, as the writer of Hebrews speaks of Jesus Christ.

Tillman, who was on the staff of the Christian Life Commission from 1977-81, dealt with constructing a proper ethical pattern for approaching ecological and other issues. He discussed how Christians can change from an adoption of social to biblical paradigms. Tillman defined paradigms as "large presuppositional frameworks which shape our world."

An example of a social paradigm, whose expression he described as "getting, having and using," is "the law of the code of the West," Tillman said. He said this paradigm declares, "You never turn a cheek; you never forgive a wrong; there is no due process ever; form a vigilante committee and hunt the felon down -- hang him when you find him."

One of the biblical paradigms, which Tillman said are not popular in this culture, is community. This scriptural imagery is needed today "to confront our overt individualism," he said.

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Christians must "go public with addressing and living these values in the community of believers each of us calls church," Tillman said. "For it may be there we have to be first and fully convinced that acts of caring, peace and justice are important."

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Speakers: SBC should  
focus on environment

By Tom Strode

N-CO (CC)

Baptist Press  
4/2/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists should not shy away from proclaiming their perspective on the environment to the media despite their tardiness in addressing the issue, participants were told at the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's 1991 seminar.

Louis Moore, director of media and product development for the CLC, warned that Southern Baptists "are Johnny-come-latelies to the issue of environmental concerns ... we are subject to the charge of being 'old news.'"

Members of the SBC "should not back away from the issue just because we are Johnny-come-latelies," said Moore. "And besides, we really do bring a fresh perspective, a newsworthy angle, to the issue. Much of the environmental movement today lacks a solid Christian theological foundation. Seldom is earth care ever presented as a mandate from God, the creator and sustainer of all life."

His address on dealing with the media on environmental issues was made at the annual CLC seminar, this year entitled "Christians and the Environment: Finding a Biblical Balance Between Idolatry and Irresponsibility."

The media should not be blamed for "failing to report a story that is not there," said Moore, who was religion editor of the Houston Chronicle for 14 years and joined the CLC staff in 1989. Rather than debate whether "we've been ignored," pastors and other Southern Baptists should begin to express their viewpoints, he said.

"We should ask ourselves some important questions," Moore said. "When was the last time we preached on the subject of the environment? ... When are we going to write our columns in our church newsletters on the environment?"

Moore challenged participants to lead their churches to be involved in such activities as recycling, developing a theology of ecology and taking advantage of environmental events.

"Rather than retreat from Earth Day because of its non-Christian underpinnings, is it not possible to somehow adopt what is good in it and insert into it the foundational message of concern for the environment, that God is the author of creation?" he asked.

He quoted Pat Pattillo, president of the Religious Public Relations Association, who said, "One of my favorite short definitions of PR is: Do good, then get the credit for it. There is nothing wrong with wanting to share the good news about what we are doing with others."

The media are so pervasive that they have to be dealt with, but there is another major problem facing Christians when they attempt to do so, Moore said.

He said the mass media "has some inherent weaknesses. One of these is its failure to come to grips with religious faith and morality. The media does not know what to do with the religious message. Defenses go up when one says the media is biased against religion, yet the evidence is overwhelming."

Studies have shown that most leaders in the media range "between are-religious and anti-religious in their personal perspective," he said. About six percent of the news media regularly attend church or a synagogue, according to studies, Moore said.

"But this reality is not nearly as important as the attitude held by many in the media that religion simply does not belong in the public medium," Moore said. "To many, religion is a private subject, one that is best left unreported, unacknowledged, left out in the cold, if you will."

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Moore advised those who seek to work with the media to:

- See the media not as part of "some great monolith" but as individuals competing against one another;
- Refuse to stereotype media members, since some are conservative as well as liberal;
- Meet local reporters and develop relationships that are helpful to them.

"We've got to be articulate," Moore said. "We've got to be consistent, and we've got to be persistent."

Lamar E. Cooper, director of denominational relations at the CLC, urged local Southern Baptists congregations to develop recycling programs and to train their members to develop these in their homes.

"Landfills are not the answer to our garbage problem," Cooper said. "They contaminate ground water and create methane and other gases harmful to the atmosphere, humans, animals and plants. They are not hotbeds of composting as many people have thought. Little of the garbage buried over the last 20 years has decomposed."

"Recycling is a viable alternative to burying garbage that immediately can reduce disposable waste by 60 to 80 percent," he said.

"Most people are aware of the big three recycling items: paper, aluminum cans and glass," he said. "There are many other items that can be recycled, as well as items in these three categories, that may not normally occur to most people."

"Currently, we are recycling only about 10 percent of our solid waste," he said. "Of the remaining garbage, 80 percent is buried in landfills and 10 percent is incinerated. We must become much more conscious about what can be recycled and commit ourselves to take the extra time and effort to rescue these items from our nation's garbage cans."

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'Pictures of the Year'  
honors mission mag again

F-① JMB

Baptist Press  
4/2/91

COLUMBIA, Mo. (BP)--For the second year in a row, The Commission magazine has received a third-place award for best use of photography by a magazine in the annual Pictures of the Year competition.

The Southern Baptist journal of foreign missions finished behind National Geographic and Life magazines in the national competition sponsored by the University of Missouri at Columbia, the National Press Photographers Association, Canon U.S.A. and Eastman Kodak. The contest attracts thousands of photographic entries each year to be judged by photographers and editors from newspapers, national magazines and international news photo services.

The award marked the fourth time overall The Commission has been recognized in the competition. The magazine earlier received awards of excellence in two consecutive years.

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Dallas man finds open  
door for prison ministry

By Mark Wingfield

F-HMB

Baptist Press  
4/2/91

DALLAS (BP)--David Umfreville has led an estimated 10,000 people to faith in Jesus Christ by going where most Christians won't go -- to jail.

Umfreville has spent nearly every weekday of the past 10 years visiting prisoners in the Dallas County jail and weekends preaching in state prisons and juvenile homes across Texas. Before that, he led a street ministry in downtown Dallas.

Umfreville estimates he personally has seen 10,000 people trust Jesus Christ as savior in the past 13 years.

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Of that number, about 4,000 have been baptized, many in an antique bathtub in the Dallas County jail. Umfreville, prison minister with First Baptist Church of Dallas, baptizes inmates there every Wednesday.

It's not uncommon for Umfreville to lead five people in a row to receive Christ while making one-on-one visits in the tiny lawyer's booths of the Dallas County jail. Umfreville sits on one side of a large glass window and talks by telephone to inmates who are locked in a tiny room on the other side of the glass.

The county jail system includes five separate units with an average population of more than 5,000. Last year 106,000 inmates passed through the barred doors of Dallas County jails.

On weekends, Umfreville preaches in state prisons and juvenile homes, where he routinely leads 20 to 30 inmates to profess faith in Christ each day.

As time allows, he also ministers in smaller city jails around Dallas.

Umfreville recalls the first time he went to the Irving city jail. The guard called out to the inmates, "Hey, anybody here want to see a minister?" Every one of the 20 prisoners who lined up to talk with Umfreville made a profession of faith that day.

"Pastor Dave," as he is known in the jails, doesn't use heavy-handed tactics to gain converts. He delivers a straightforward presentation of the gospel with a big smile and a listening ear.

The Texas minister enters jails armed with Bibles, gospel tracts and enrollment cards for the Correspondence Bible Course offered by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Correspondence Bible Course is a series of 19 volumes of Bible study materials mailed to participants one volume at a time. Students receive a certificate for each volume completed. Umfreville says inmates take pride in the certificates and often line the walls of their bunks with them.

Because the program is administered by mail, inmates can keep up with their studies as they move from county jail to prison or back home.

Also, Umfreville recently launched a project to establish libraries in prisons. With donations from other Christians, he placed 900 Christian books in the state prison at Palestine, Texas, where Southern Baptist chaplain Albert Holmes serves.

More inmates would accept the gospel if Christians would take the time to minister in prisons, he believes. "These people are in an excruciating time in their lives. It can be a turning point either for God or for the devil.

"Incarceration gets your attention. You're stripped of dignity. There's a helplessness and hopelessness that pervades. Many people turn to God. It's the church's precious moment."

If Christians don't seize the opportunity, other religious groups will, he claims. Umfreville is the only Southern Baptist who ministers regularly in the Dallas County jail, but he is joined by representatives of cults and the flock of a local televangelist.

Umfreville was a salesman with an up-and-coming career when he was called to full-time ministry. He quit his job and enrolled in Criswell Bible College in Dallas and later Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

When he quit his job, Umfreville had just won a national sales contest with a free trip as the reward. "The joy I experience in winning people to Christ far exceeds any trip to Puerto Rico," he says.

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Christians should be motivated to help inmates both for the sake of their spiritual needs and as a civic responsibility, he believes. "It behooves us as Christians to minister to and disciple these inmates so they'll be better citizens.

"Today's inmates are tomorrow's neighbors."

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

Nebraska leads convention  
in unreached counties

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
4/2/91

OMAHA, Neb. (BP)--While Nebraska prides itself on its university football program, it holds another, less notorious rank in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Nebraska leads the SBC in the number of counties without a Southern Baptist ministry.

Granted, western Nebraska may have more cattle than people. Yet only 14 of the 49 counties in the more populated eastern region of Nebraska have a Southern Baptist church. Those 14 counties have a total of 34 churches and missions, serving more than half of the state's 1.8 million people.

With the exception of one large Omaha church, Nebraska Southern Baptist churches are small and isolated says Harold Manahan, director of missions for Eastern Nebraska Baptist Association. Some churches have never had anyone join by transferring their letter from another Southern Baptist congregation.

Yet Manahan's challenge to his association is for each church to start a church this decade. The home missionary's invitation to fellow Southern Baptists is just as clear: "We need Praxis teams and church starters and pastoral leadership. We need a whole bunch of people with Southern Baptist knowledge."

One reason Southern Baptist growth is slow is the dominance of Catholic and Lutheran churches. Manahan notes with 500,000 residents, Omaha has more Roman Catholic high schools than public high schools.

Brett Yohn, director of Baptist student ministries at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, says of the 25,000 students, only an average of 35 cite Baptists as their religious preference when they enroll.

Yohn says many students have been in church all their lives, but they have not been challenged to establish a personal relationship with Christ.

That need for evangelism drives Nebraska Southern Baptist leaders to remain committed to their calling though they are a minority religious group. Manahan has been at his job for 15 years. Yohn has worked with UNL students for 19 years. Duane and Betty McCormick have been directors of the Baptist Mission Center in Omaha for 23 years.

"Tenure is essential," Manahan says, because Southern Baptists have to prove themselves to the community.

Omaha's mission center is one example of growth stemming from patience.

When the mission center began in 1963, it was surrounded by apartments which have since been replaced by an interstate. The McCormicks drive vans to nearby neighborhoods to pick up people for children, youth and adult programs, including Sunday school and worship services.

Last November, the property was sold to Creighton University. Moving to a new 4,500 square foot building this fall will put the mission center back in the heart of a multi-ethnic, low-income neighborhood.

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Another milestone for Nebraska Southern Baptists is the work of Ron and Alpha Goombi. They moved to Omaha this spring where he will be pastor of a congregation of 20 to 25 American Indians.

The Goombis began the church while they were students at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. He hopes working in Omaha full time will help the church grow. His dream is for the church to expand its ministry to at least two Indian reservations north of Omaha.

In addition to the Goombis' work with native Americans, Eastern Nebraska Baptist Association includes work with Koreans, Filipinos, Hispanics and blacks. Along with the Anglo congregations, they strive to share their message in Nebraska's unreached counties.

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

Inner city called  
modern-day Samaria

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-AMB

Baptist Press  
4/2/91

OMAHA, Neb. (BP)--The inner city is America's "modern-day Samaria," says a home missionary whose ministry evolves around the inner city.

Just as Samaria was avoided in biblical times, Duane McCormick says today's Christians "don't want to go to the inner city. They drive around it. They don't know what it's like to live in the ghetto."

After 23 years as directors of the Baptist Mission Center in Omaha, Neb., McCormick and his wife, Betty, say life in the ghetto can be a life of fear and frustration.

McCormick describes Omaha's inner city as a place where blacks, Anglos and native Americans "live on the public dole." Single parent households are the norm.

"We've seen the second and third generation of families here. The common lifestyle is a parade of men in those homes. They accept that as normal."

In that environment, the McCormicks are role models. "It's not uncommon for children to say, 'I want to go home with you.' Occasionally they do."

McCormick tells of one family where the father was an alcoholic. The mother "was as tough as a tiger. She had to be. It was the only way she could survive."

The couple had five sons and two daughters whom McCormick says "grew up in fear -- fear of their father and their neighborhood." But four of the children went through the Bible program at the mission center. They became Christians and were baptized and are now leading productive lives.

Such success stories are rare, however. "We experience a lot of failure if you look at it from the eyes of the world."

Yet McCormick's commitment to his Samaria is as clear as his deep blue eyes. "I get discouraged, but I don't want to do anything else."

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