

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strade, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

September 4, 1991

91-133

Cooperative Program gifts
up 10 percent for August

NASHVILLE (BP)--Cooperative Program unified gifts received by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee for the month of August were up nearly 10 percent compared to last year, according to Harold C. Bennett, Executive Committee president/treasurer.

The August gifts totaled \$12,165,114 for August compared to last year of \$11,106,229, or a 9.53 percent increase of \$1,058,884. The required basic budget monthly figure is \$11,444,377.

"This is good news and we are praying that September will be a high Cooperative Program month," said Bennett.

For the 11 months of the SBC fiscal year, Oct. 1 to Sept. 30, the totals are \$129,399,470 compared to the previous year's 11 months of \$128,846,936 or a .43 percent increase.

Designated gifts for August also showed an increase, although just under two percent. August 1991 totals: \$2,284,771 compared to 1990 of \$2,241,089. The year-to-date designated gifts were still under last year, however, with \$122,410,610 compared to 1990 of \$123,153,814.

Designated contributions include the Southern Baptist Foreign Missions Board's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Home Mission Board's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, world hunger and other special gifts.

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

--30--

Baptist Men disaster relief
goes into second week

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
9/4/91

FALMOUTH, Mass. (BP)--Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers were on the job in New England over the Labor Day weekend offering hot meals and cleanup assistance to the victims of Hurricane Bob, which struck the northeastern U.S. Aug. 19.

The workers were being well received throughout the Cape Cod area of Massachusetts where disaster relief efforts were centered, according to Robert Simpkins, relief coordinator and director of Brotherhood for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

"The people in this area are some of the most gracious we've ever seen in any of the places we've ever been," Simpkins said.

A community band concert in Falmouth Thursday evening was indicative.

--more--

"They had 700 people in an outdoor amphitheater who cheered while we went to the stage to receive 'I Survived Hurricane Bob' tee shirts," Simpkins said.

"I told them right there that we served in the name of Jesus."

As of Aug. 30, 116 Southern Baptist volunteers from 10 states -- Kentucky, Ohio, Maryland, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee and South Carolina -- had served in the effort, which included providing more than 12,000 hot meals and cleaning up more than 1,400 dump truck loads of debris.

More volunteers arrived late Friday and early Saturday morning from Arkansas, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Tennessee and Vermont.

Since the mobilization began, Kentucky has had 48 total volunteers and Ohio has had 24. The two state conventions' Brotherhood departments sent mobile feeding units that served as hubs of activity for volunteers from other states.

Simpkins said the operation plans to close down on Sept. 4, but made it clear the volunteers' witness would be felt in the area for months and years to come.

"This is suddenly a great place for starting a Southern Baptist work, and soon," he said. "Lots of people are interested."

--30--

National sports fellowship
plans national tournament

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
9/4/91

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The National Fellowship of Baptists in Sports has announced details regarding its fifth annual National Softball Tournament.

The tournament, involving teams from 11 states, will begin Sept. 6 at Houston Levee Park in Germantown, Tenn., in suburban Memphis, and will run through Sept. 7.

Teams will be attending from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland-Delaware, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

"We have more states participating this year than ever before," according to Bob Salley, director of the National Fellowship of Baptist Men. "More and more state tournaments are being held in preparation for this national event and we are very pleased with this year's turnout."

The National Fellowship of Baptists in Sports is one of 14 fellowships comprising the National Fellowship of Baptist Men, which is under the sponsorship of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

The sports fellowship seeks to involve laymen in using sports as a platform for presenting the gospel in the United States and overseas.

--30--

SBC's success shattered
commonalities: Agee

By Marty O'Gwynn

Baptist Press
9/4/91

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--Social and cultural commonalities that shaped the Southern Baptist Convention for over a century have been shattered in recent decades by the denomination's own success. Communication to find "new grounds of commonality" is essential for the convention's continued effectiveness in ministry.

Those observations were shared recently by Bob R. Agee, president of Oklahoma Baptist University, during the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's In-Service Guidance Directors' Conference in Shawnee, Okla.

--more--

Agee delivered the Baptist Heritage Address at the national conference, which focused on cross-cultural ministry. In-service guidance directors faculty and staff members at colleges, universities and seminaries plan and evaluate practical ministry experience for their students.

"We are a people born in tension who tend to stay alive and fresh because we insist on asking ourselves questions and because we create an on-going atmosphere of tension in which we work," said Agee. "The true genius of Southern Baptists may be found in the reality that we are a people who have been born out of tension and who have chosen to be a people who create tension for ourselves and for our world."

Referring to the SBC prior to World War II, Agee said, "We shared enough in common because of a fairly narrow range of socio-economic conditions among us. Our value systems had been forged over similar fires and hammered out on similar anvils."

As Americans moved from the farm to the city following World War II, Southern Baptists "rode a tide of spiritual renewal into one of the most phenomenal periods of church success," said Agee. The denomination moved from preaching in "Southernese" to a point where the gospel is preached by Southern Baptists in 74 languages in the United States alone, Agee said.

"We were never united or uniform as a denomination," Agee agreed. "We had simply agreed on a vision and a mission that caused this disparate and diverse group of people to stand alongside each other, share our resources, work beyond our disagreements, and find enough commonality in our belief systems to consider ourselves brothers and sisters."

Reaching people of all races and backgrounds in the inner-city, suburbs, and rural areas has forced change in the SBC, said the university president. "The mobility of America will result in the continuing break-up of the socio-cultural commonality of our denomination," he said.

"To reach people with the gospel during the next quarter century will require a concerted effort to re-earn the respect of a lost world so they will listen to the gospel we preach," said Agee. "It will call for a new level of creativity and energy like none we have seen for a long time, and will demand that we talk to one another long enough to find some new grounds of commonality."

The number of men and women entering church-related ministries reflects the climate in the denomination and churches, Agee said. "God is still calling people," he asserted. "There seems to be a correlation between the dynamic in the life of the church and the willingness of people to hear and respond to God's call."

The majority of students on Baptist seminary campus in recent years are graduates of state colleges and universities, Agee said. Growing suspicion of the theological integrity of Southern Baptist higher education may result in more students who feel called to ministry studying outside the convention's schools, he said: "That in itself will simply add to the growing lack of commonality within our ranks."

Agee, who worked with ministry-related field education while vice president for religious affairs at Union University, offered the in-service guidance directors a four-point agenda for the coming years.

1. Develop a renewed emphasis on spiritual formation on the college and seminary campus. "Those of us who touch students at the most formative time of their lives need to model what it is to be growing Christians," he urged.

2. Launch a renewed serious quest for ministry involvement for both faculty and students. "If we could ever figure out how to effectively harness the energy, the hunger to serve, the romance with the call that still resides in the hearts of students, we could turn the world upside down," he said. "There are so many settings that need what we have to offer."

Agee encouraged the directors to be sensitive to opportunities for ministry and cited a variety of annual ministries sponsored by OBU, including overseas involvements by OBU faculty in China, Venezuela and Hungary. "The fact that these provide excellent contexts to help students develop and sharpen ministry skills is incidental to the fact that we are living out our call to be a partner with the local church in doing ministry and missions," he said.

3. Focus efforts on developing cross-cultural experiences for those who are seeking to understand God's call for their lives. Students should have opportunity to "experience living with and working with a people group long enough to be captured by the spirit and heartbeat of those people in a context totally different from the students' own comfort zones," Agee said.

4. Be a bridge builder between the mission and purpose of the educational institution and the churches and their ministers. Pastors and members of Southern Baptist churches want to be in partnership with their educational institutions in mission and ministry, Agee said. "They want to have confidence that those who study with us will be encouraged to love and believe and teach the Bible as God's authentic and authoritative word," said the former pastor. People in the churches can gain greater confidence in the institutions, he said, through effective field education work by college, university and seminary representatives.

--30--

(O'Gwynn is public relations director at Oklahoma Baptist University.)

Future success of WMU and SBC can't
be based on past, researcher says By Susan Todd Doyle

Baptist Press
9/4/91

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptists in general and Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in particular must begin operating in a '90s style, not a '50s style, in order to survive, said a leading researcher.

"We find ourselves an aging denomination of aging churches with an aging constituency operating from a set of paradigms that are largely irrelevant to ministry in the '90s," said Carol S. Childress, research and program information consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"It's not that the gospel is irrelevant. It's that the method is irrelevant," she said.

Paradigms are mental filters or parameters within an organization such as WMU sees the world and then operates, according to Childress.

"In times of rapid changes -- the kind we are in now -- you can't predict the future simply based on the paradigms of the past," she said.

Childress recently researched "paradigm shifts" within WMU for the organization's top leadership to use in planning.

"One of the common perceptions about WMU is that you are a declining organization -- not reaching younger women," she said. "When you look at the data, actually the reverse is true."

Baptist Young Women, the missions organization for Baptist women ages 18-34, has steadily increased in enrollment since the organization's creation in 1971.

Another misperception centers on the total enrollment of WMU. While WMU total enrollment declined in 1990 by 4,476 members, a look at membership over the last 40 years shows the organization's upward trend exactly parallels increases in the Southern Baptist Convention and the nation's population.

--more--

"Demography is destiny," Childress said as she explained the losses and gains. "WMU organizations are merely a reflection of who is in the churches. The churches are a reflection of our population."

A closer look at the population reveals:

-- Southern Baptists born between 1915 and 1930 have traditionally been "the strongest givers, the strongest proponents of organized religion, the strongest proponents of missions, and have provided a solid base of support both in membership and in giving," she said.

Organizations such as WMU must brace for the loss of these members' influence during the next decade as they die or become unable to be as active as they have been, she said.

-- Following them, the group which was born between 1930 and 1940 also will have a marked impact on WMU. The lowest birth rate to occur in the nation from 1915 to 1974 happened between 1930 and 1940. Therefore, fewer people are following the 1915-30 group to take up their role in mission support.

-- Baby boomers have a different attitude toward church from what their parents had.

"The era of loyalty to denomination-oriented, program-driven churches is waning," Childress said. "It's not that the denomination is not important. What's more important to young adults is 'Where can I go to get my needs met?'"

Churches reaching the young adult of today must respond to their spiritual needs and provide quality religious education for their children, but in a different way from the church of the 1950s, Childress said.

Some of the factors WMU leaders must remember as they reach out to this group are most women in this age range work; they are not readers, but rely on video for information; and they are looking for programs relevant to their lives, she said.

The demographics of WMU today give hope for the future, Childress said.

"This is a very, very positive picture," she said.

But the future cannot be viewed based on the successes of the past, she cautioned. Childress cited examples of things WMU must do to continue to be a viable and growing organization. Two of them are: retaining the members now in WMU and continuing to involve members in each age-level organization as they grow older.

Handling change rapidly is probably the most important thing WMU can do to remain viable, she said.

"You've got to deal with the issues that people are dealing with in their lives -- programmatically, organizationally and structurally, you've got to respond," she said.

"One of the key dangers of being so bureaucratic and hierarchical and program-driven is that in times of rapid change when you need to make those adjustments in a timely fashion, you can't do it. We could get by with this in the 1960s when things didn't change. But we can't get by with it today," she said.

"One of the real keys to being a relevant WMU organization in the future is to be able to respond in a timely fashion -- not compromising the message, but adapting the methodology."

The challenge for churches and religious organizations today is to be able to discern the signs of the times and then to be equipped to meet the needs found there, she said.

"WMU -- as well as the denomination and individual churches -- has a choice," she said. "We have a choice between being driven into the future by fear, or we can be drawn into the future by a vision."