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92-19

**Cooperative Program has
big upturn in January**

By Herb Hollinger

NASHVILLE (BP)--The SBC Cooperative Program recorded a huge 20.99 percent increase for the month of January 1992 compared to that month a year ago, according to Harold C. Bennett, Executive Committee President/Treasurer.

However, the increase was due, in part, to the 1991 January omission of one of the larger state convention CP checks, SBC business office records indicate. The SBC business office did receive a check from that state convention in January 1992, which basically accounted for the entire increase. Records for 1991 indicate that check was received too late to be counted in the January totals.

Total for January 1992 was \$12,492,681 compared to \$10,325,464 for the comparable month in 1991.

The SBC budget year-to-date, October through January, also revealed an increase: \$45,965,591 compared to the previous year-to-date of \$44,640,953, or an increase of 2.97 percent.

"I am gratified by the year-to-date increase of \$1,324,638 for the four-month period, October 1991 through January 1992," Bennett said. "I really believe that Southern Baptists are committed to funding world missions through the Cooperative Program."

The 1991-92 monthly basic operating budget requirement for the SBC is \$11,725,856.

Designated gifts channeled through the SBC Executive Committee also increased significantly. For January 1992, \$18,495,615 was received compared to January 1991, of \$14,423,372, or an increase of 28.23 percent. Again, the omission of one of the larger state convention checks for January, 1991, skewed the figures somewhat.

Year-to-date designated gifts are also up: \$25,381,613 compared to the previous year of \$21,310,568 or an increase of 19.10 percent.

Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, 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.

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**Talos insists Romanian Baptist
council backed Ruschlikon defunding**

By Mike Creswell & Stanley Crabb

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BUCHAREST, Romania (BP)--A second letter written by Romanian Baptist President Vasile A. Talos insists his union's General Council did indeed endorse "through consensus, not by voting" the decision of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

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His second letter, dated Jan. 27, follows an earlier letter Dec. 10 which said the General Council had "agreed to this decision of the FMB" on Nov. 26.

The Dec. 10 letter, in turn, was cited by FMB trustees as support for their action, and it positioned Romania as the only European country whose Baptist leaders backed the decision. Baptist leaders elsewhere on the continent denounced it. The Dec. 10 letter was cosigned by Roman Baptist General Secretary Nic Gheorghita.

But on Jan. 23 and 24 a question was raised about what actually happened in the Romanian Baptist General Council meeting in November. In January a group of 42 pastors, including some members of the 51-member General Council, confronted Talos about the letter and insisted they had not agreed to the defunding. Some said it wasn't even discussed. They asked him to clarify it with a second letter.

The situation has grown more and more confusing as Romanian Baptists, in the wake of the second letter, seem reluctant to comment further on what they call an internal matter to be settled among themselves.

But Vasile Talpos told European Baptist Press Service that some General Council members are still saying no discussion was held and no consensus was reached. Talpos, president of the Baptist Theological Institute, should not be confused with Talos, the union president.

In his second letter, Talos also blamed Josif Ton, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Oradea, for arousing suspicions of intent to get financial support for his church through a Nov. 1, 1991, letter Ton sent to the Foreign Mission Board. Ton also is chancellor of a Bible school which his church has sponsored in Oradea.

Talos' letter in November "aroused suspicions in Romania, too, among some pastors and (General) Council members who have considered it an intention to orient financial support to the Second Baptist Church of Oradea," Talos wrote.

Talos' second letter also said the Romanian Baptist union leadership had no knowledge of Ton's letter, which commended the Ruschlikon defunding, and did not "entrust pastor Ton" to write it.

The second letter, sent to European Baptists and the Foreign Mission Board, stated, "The BU (Baptist Union) leadership stands by the position expressed in the letter of December 10, 1991, regarding the Seminary of Ruschlikon. If in the future the EBF (European Baptist Federation) and the FMB continue to appreciate the work that God performed in Romania and if they want to offer spiritual and financial support to the Baptist Churches of Romania, we would gladly greet any concrete initiative in this sense," Talos said.

Talos said the leadership of the union did not ask the council to vote because the union "did not want to interfere with the dispute of the Seminary from Ruschlikon that has started several years ago."

"I have no idea what he's talking about," said Southern Baptist missionary Jo Ann Hopper, who works in the administration of the seminary. "We are not aware of any dispute with the Romanian Baptists. About 40 Baptist pastors, including Nic Gheorghita, have attended the Summer Institute of Theological Education (SITE) classes here at Ruschlikon, and as far as we know, their response has always been very positive. In fact, many pastors have told us how much the SITE program means to them," said Mrs. Hopper, whose husband, John David Hopper, is seminary president.

"John David and I respect and love the Romanian Baptists and have worked with them many years. We visited many churches there before the revolution and John David has preached countless times in Baptist churches there," she added.

Seminary leaders said seven Romanians from Oradea had requested applications as of Feb. 3 to attend a two-week Summer Evangelism and Missions Seminar scheduled for August on the Ruschlikon seminary campus.

"Certain persons from the Foreign Mission Board and the EBF Baptist Press (European Baptist Press Service) insinuated such things that received credibility because of a letter written by pastor Josif Ton," Talos wrote in his second letter.

Talos apparently referred to newspaper stories about the resignations of Southern Baptist missionaries Charles "T" and Kathie Thomas, who resigned Jan. 11 after alleging the Romanian Baptists supported the conservative movement within the Southern Baptist Convention and the Foreign Mission Board in return for promises of "massive funding."

"We are sorry that the Baptist Union position was misinterpreted and taken as a desire to get the money allocated for Ruschlikon so far," Talos wrote. "The BU leadership did not entrust pastor Ton to address this letter of congratulations to the FMB Trustees. This initiative of pastor Ton was completely unknown to the BU leadership. This particular letter aroused suspicions in Romania, too, among some pastors and Council members who have considered it an intention to orient financial support to the Second Baptist Church of Oradea."

Ton wrote in his Nov. 1 letter to trustees, which later was made public: "I congratulate the Board of Trustees of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for the decisive action taken to discontinue the financial support of the Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland."

It was, Ton wrote, "a most tragic thing that decades ago that Seminary got in the hands of liberal theologians." He went on to tell of several people who lost faith or came close to it through attending the seminary.

"I know that John David Hopper has tried to steer the school in a new direction. But, as far as we can see, the school is dominated by liberal teachers and the European Baptist Federation itself is still unable to get clear from this deadly disease of unbelief in the Bible," Ton wrote.

European Baptist leaders and seminary leaders deny such allegations. "We deeply love the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible; we do not regard ourselves as liberals," Ruschlikon trustee chairman Wiard Popkes said in an open letter to European and Southern Baptists. "The faculty and administration of Ruschlikon support entirely the purpose statement of the FMB."

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Pro-lifers meet with Skinner;
Baptist rep voices concern

By Tom Strode

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2/3/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Pro-life organizations paid their annual January visit to the White House but some events surrounding the meeting with new chief of staff Samuel Skinner left the Southern Baptist representative "pleased to have the opportunity" -- yet concerned.

"Mr. Skinner assured the group that the president will not waver in his support for the pro-life cause," said James A. Smith, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations. "While we were pleased with Mr. Skinner's assurances, clearly there are forces at play in this White House which seek to water down and dilute the president's support for pro-life efforts.

"It is disturbing that no references were made in the president's State of the Union Address to the value of unborn human life and to the terrible toll abortion takes on our society," Smith said. "Sometimes those things which are not said are heard louder than those which are. The media and the pro-abortion movement noticed this omission."

President George Bush delivered his State of the Union speech Jan. 28, four days after the pro-life meeting at the White House. Among participants at the 30-minute meeting were representatives from the National Right to Life Committee, National Association of Evangelicals, Family Research Council, Eagle Forum, Christian Action Council, Americans United for Life, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Lutherans for Life and Knights of Columbus.

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The meeting was held three days after the Supreme Court announced it would hear *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which involves the Pennsylvania Abortion Control Act. Most of the law's provisions, including parental consent for minors, informed consent for the woman and a 24-hour waiting period, were upheld by the lower court. Some observers believe the court may use this case to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision legalizing abortion on demand.

On the same day, the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Abortion Rights Action League announced campaigns to pass the Freedom of Choice Act. The following day, several senators and representatives spoke from the floor of their chambers in favor of the bill. The Freedom of Choice Act, Bill No. 25 in both the Senate and House of Representatives, would not only legislatively legalize abortion for any reason throughout all stages of pregnancy, but it would surpass the *Roe* decision by invalidating state restrictions such as parental consent, abortion observers say.

"We urged Mr. Skinner to start preparing for the hysteria which will be created over the impending decision of the Supreme Court early this summer on the Pennsylvania abortion case, by exposing the Freedom of Choice Act," Smith said. "Mr. Skinner seemed generally receptive to our suggestions."

In recent years, the White House has hosted pro-life organizations in conjunction with the March for Life, which is held Jan. 22 in Washington. This year, the march attracted about 70,000 participants, according to police estimates. Jan. 22 is the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

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Disaster relief volunteers
clear the way for church start

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
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FALMOUTH, Mass. (BP)--A new Southern Baptist witness in the Cape Cod area is now under way here thanks in large measure to the work of disaster relief crews who arrived in the wake of Hurricane Bob last August.

Their involvement is credited for the "positive, receptive atmosphere" that greeted D.J. and Jeannette Omarkhail as Home Mission Board church planter apprentices in Falmouth, according to Larry Martin, director of missions for the Greater Boston Baptist Association.

Last Aug. 20, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief units involving volunteers from 12 states headed for New England after Hurricane Bob hit the coast with winds in excess of 115 miles per hour. With their mobile feeding units and other equipment in tow, they served more than 12,000 hot meals and cleaned up 1,500 truck loads of debris in two weeks.

"The efforts of the disaster relief workers really prepared the climate that allowed this effort at church planting to occur," Martin said. "I am asking all Southern Baptists to pray for the Omarkhails as they begin this effort, for additional funding which is needed and for the receptivity of people in the area."

The Omarkhails, both recent graduates of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, officially started their work Feb. 1. Prayer was answered before then, however, as the couple located a "more than adequate house at a very attractive price" to rent on their first day in town, according to Martin. They also were able to secure a year-round lease, a rarity in this resort area.

The couple will begin with Bible study classes in their home in hopes of establishing a mission chapel. Two families from Falmouth and two more from Faith Baptist Church in Carver, Mass., are expected to form the nucleus of the effort.

They receive support from the Carver church and from the Home Mission Board, the New England Baptist Convention and the Boston association. Additional funding is needed to complete their salary package, Martin said.

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Last August's efforts by Southern Baptist disaster relief units drew praise from local selectmen (town councilmen) in Falmouth.

"I had been losing faith in society," one said, "but I have regained it," while another told the workers they had enabled the town's own crews to return to their everyday work. "The schools will open on time, thanks to you, on Sept. 6," he said.

And another said, "If there's not a Southern Baptist church in Falmouth after seeing you people, there should be."

"What is happening in Falmouth is the best endorsement I know for our disaster relief volunteers. They reach people for Jesus Christ and enable others to do so long after the emergency relief work is over," said James Williams, president of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. "These volunteers have taken the banner of Christ into countless situations where physical needs of people are greatest and where their need for the gospel message is clearest."

The Brotherhood Commission coordinates the work of disaster relief units, directed by state Brotherhood staff, in 28 state conventions.