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February 27, 1992

92-36

**Two Texas churches
lead SBC statistics**

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE (BP)--Second Baptist Church of Houston and First Baptist Church of Dallas were the only two Southern Baptist congregations to rank in the top 20 in each of the 10 key reporting areas for 1991, according to figures compiled from the 1991 Uniform Church Letter.

First Baptist Church of Dallas continues to be the largest Southern Baptist congregation with 29,309 members. It also led the denomination in mission expenditures with \$3,339,040 given to all mission causes, including the Cooperative Program, the denomination's method of supporting missions and ministries.

In addition, First Baptist of Dallas, ranked second in Sunday school average attendance (7,412) and Woman's Missionary Union enrollment (1,495), third in baptisms (879) and total receipts (\$13,516,355), fourth in Sunday school enrollment (12,856), sixth in Brotherhood enrollment/participation (442), seventh in music ministry enrollment (1,492) and 10th in discipleship training enrollment/participation (2,624).

Second Baptist Church of Houston led all churches in five of the 10 categories -- total receipts (\$19,570,195), Sunday school enrollment (19,713) and attendance (9,309), Brotherhood enrollment/participation (3,422) and WMU enrollment (2,695).

Second Baptist also ranked second in discipleship training enrollment/ participation (6,919), fifth in baptisms (838), sixth in church membership (18,123), seventh in mission expenditures (\$1,567,561) and ninth in music ministry enrollment (1,421).

Two other churches -- Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla. -- reached the top 20 in nine of 10 categories.

Making the top 20 lists in eight categories were First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., and Prestonwood Baptist Church of Dallas.

First Baptist Church of Houston and First Baptist Church of Atlanta were listed in seven categories each; Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, six; and Champion Forest Baptist Church of Houston, five.

Listed in four categories were First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas; Hickory Grove Baptist Church of Charlotte, N.C.; Park Cities Baptist Church of Dallas; Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas; and First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss.

Six churches were cited in three categories: Trinity Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas; First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga.; Cottage Hill Baptist Church of Mobile, Ala.; First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas; First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas; and Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala.

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A total of 33 churches were listed at least twice in the 10 categories while 48 others made one list.

By state conventions, 30 of the 81 churches on the lists were from Texas; nine each from Georgia and Alabama; five, Florida; four, North Carolina; three, Louisiana, California, South Carolina and Oklahoma; two, Tennessee, Arizona, Virginia, Mississippi and Maryland-Delaware; one, Arkansas and Kentucky.

The information was compiled by the corporate planning and research department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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NOTE: A list of the top 20 churches in the 10 reporting areas and a list of rankings of individual churches in the categories are available on SBCNet. Copies will be faxed or mailed on request by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

Peruvian vice president says
God gives security, not guards

Baptist Press
2/27/92

By Jim Newton & David Winfrey

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Although terrorist groups are a constant threat to his life, Peruvian vice president Carlos Garcia said he depends more on the security of God than on the security guards who try to protect him.

Garcia, a former Baptist pastor who is one of the few evangelical Christians elected to public office in South America, said he lives in a world of danger and violence. Garcia was elected Peru's second vice president last year along with President Alberto Fujimori, a Peruvian of Japanese ancestry.

"The lives of political leaders in my country are in constant danger," Garcia told the language church extension leadership conference sponsored in San Antonio, Texas, by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

In an interview, Garcia said Peruvian evangelicals also are under threat of terrorist attacks from such guerrilla groups as "Sendero Luminoso" (Shining Path) which he said has formed "a diabolical alliance with drug traffickers."

"About 400 Christian evangelicals have been assassinated by this group in the last seven years," he said. "Among them, about 35 to 40 pastors have been killed." Two expatriate staff members of World Vision International, a world relief agency which works with the poor in 90 countries, also have been murdered. An estimated 25,000 terrorist-related deaths have been recorded in Peru in the past 11 years.

Shining Path, whose members embrace Maoist principles, and Tupac Amaru, a group that advocates a Castro-style revolution, blast evangelicals as "agents of American imperialism," Garcia said.

Terrorist groups also say the evangelicals' coordinated aid from outside agencies offers only stop-gap solutions to Peru's poor economy.

About half of Peru's population live in poverty, he said.

Although it is not very large, Shining Path attempts to implement its "new democracy" through selected killings, Garcia said.

"They have used the extortion of business people for money and they have killed politicians and farmers and poor people who are not of their philosophy.

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The new slate of elected leaders in Peru has given Peruvian evangelicals a high visibility and important role in government after 500 years of Catholic control of the country, Garcia said.

He told about plans to distribute more than 1 million Bibles and New Testaments this year in Peru. He said he had been successful in getting written permission from Peru's minister of education to distribute six million Spanish-language copies of the "Harmony of the Gospel" and "The Book of Life" to students enrolled in Peru's public schools.

"This could be a year of tremendous spiritual impact on my country, a year when we celebrate the 500th anniversary of two continents coming (into contact)."

Garcia said the emphasis on Bible reading and distribution marks the first time evangelicals and Catholics in Peru have formed a committee to work together on a project. The committee is urging all Peruvians to read the Bible for 15 minutes each day and to read the Bible through in one year.

"We hope everyone in Peru will be reading the Bible -- the president, the governors, the cabinet ministers, the members of congress, the police, the military, the university professors -- everyone."

The committee has sent to all evangelical pastors and Catholic priests a list of 25 suggestions on how to emphasize reading the Bible in local churches and parishes.

"In my country," Garcia said, "there is a tremendous crisis. The primary source of the problem is spiritual. The people are looking for something beyond themselves. God is opening the door to say to them, 'There is hope.'"

He urged Baptists in the United States to pray for the people of Peru. "Without spiritual change, no change in any country is permanent," he said.

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Church works against clock
in Spain, volunteers needed

By Linda Fisher

Baptist Press
2/27/92

SEVILLE, Spain (BP)--Just like Nehemiah in ancient Israel, Seville Baptist Church is working against the clock.

Nehemiah and the Israelites rushed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem before its enemies descended on it.

The Seville church doesn't face an enemy but it could lose the very property on which its new building stands, plus the congregation's reputation in the community in Seville, Spain.

When Seville was chosen as host city for an international exposition called "Expo '92," the city's leaders offered Seville Baptist Church a choice piece of land. But there was a condition: A church building had to be completed before the exposition opens in April 1992.

That deadline has left the church in jeopardy.

The Baptist Brotherhood of Alabama entered into a partnership agreement with the church and projected plans for volunteer construction teams and financial help with materials. Church members in Seville geared up to house and feed the volunteers and work alongside them.

But so far the response of volunteers has not kept up with projections; construction is behind schedule. Apartments rented to house volunteers stand empty, using church funds they could have directed to the building project.

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Now the church faces the possibility of having to hire professional workers to complete the building -- more unanticipated financial burden. Already the church carries the financial responsibility for a drug abuse treatment center that has gained community respect and recognition.

"This church can be a tremendous witness to the community," said Henry Langford, team leader of the first group of Alabama volunteer builders. "It's ideally located and will be a beautiful building. But unless the urgent labor needs are met, they stand a chance of being fined to the extent of not having funds to complete the project."

Langford and his wife own a contracting business in Foley, Ala. They came to Spain to work with a team of seven volunteers for two weeks. But they agreed, along with one of the other volunteers, to stay an extra week.

The building project requires experienced bricklayers, plumbers, electricians, tile layers and stucco workers. Meals and housing are available at a daily rate of \$23 per person.

People interested in helping with the Seville project may contact Tommy Puckett, Brotherhood director, Alabama Baptist State Convention, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, Ala. 36111-0870, telephone (205) 288-2460, fax (205) 288-2461.

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Linda Fisher is press representative for the Spanish Baptist mission, organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Spain.

Houston pastor asked to be
nominee for SBC president

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
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DALLAS (BP)--Houston pastor H. Edwin Young is considering a request from Joel Gregory that Young permit himself to be nominated as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis June 9-11.

"I am just trying to seek the mind and will of God; that is all I am doing," said Young, who said he has no timetable for giving Gregory an answer.

Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, told the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Feb. 24, he had approached Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, to invite him to be a presidential nominee.

"If he acquiesces in that invitation, I will nominate him for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis," Gregory said.

"I feel that Edwin has demonstrated in this generation that he is one of the most creative and effective church builders and leaders in America. He has demonstrated that leadership at Second Baptist Church, Houston, in an exemplary way, and as well at First Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C. (Young's previous pastorate).

"I feel that he is a man whose spirit in an exemplary way can bring us together."

Gregory said the decision to nominate Young was his alone but added he and "some of the fellows have talked together" about it in informal conversation over "a period of some months."

In recent years, the conservative element of the SBC has come forward with one nominee and has successfully elected the president of the convention since 1979.

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Asked about being identified as the "fundamentalist" nominee, Young said he would fight the term and believes "all labels we put on Baptists are pejorative. I don't identify with any of them. I am a Southern Baptist, theologically a thorough-going conservative who believes in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement. I am not for theological pluralism. I am a Southern Baptist. I believe in the Cooperative Program, and I won't change."

"It is time we move on" beyond the politics of the last dozen years, he said. "If we spend any more time with all our labeling and divisiveness, we are making a serious mistake."

His agenda, whether it be as pastor of Second Baptist Church or as president of the SBC, should he permit his nomination, he said, "is strictly two things -- missions and evangelism around this world."

Young has been pastor at Second Baptist since 1978. Under his leadership it has been one of the fastest growing congregations in the SBC, moving from a membership of 4,431 in 1978 to more than 18,000 in 1991.

The church led the SBC in baptisms in 1990 with 1,007 and last year baptized 838. Gifts to the Cooperative Program in the 1990-91 church year totaled \$400,000 out of total receipts of \$12,345,655, which includes money for debt service. The church gives 2.35 percent of total receipts to the Cooperative Program, according to its Uniform Church Letter.

Second Baptist, which in 1984 moved into new and remodeled facilities in Houston costing \$34 million, voted recently to purchase 180 acres about 15 miles west for a second location. No date has been set for construction.

Young frequently has been mentioned as a possible nominee of conservatives for the SBC presidency, but heretofore has declined the opportunity. He told the Standard several years ago the office should go to older men who have served the denomination well. Whether he now fills that description remains to be seen, he told the Baptist Standard last week. Young was a trustee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board before rotating off in 1991 and was a member of the Southern Baptist Peace Committee.

His would be the third nomination expected at the Indianapolis meeting. Jess Moody, pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Church in Van Nuys, Calif., announced last September that a group of non-aligned pastors and others had asked for permission to nominate him. Nelson Price, pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., current first vice president of the SBC, and identified with the conservative movement, announced Feb. 21 he would permit his nomination.

Gregory said he was unaware of Price's announcement.

Should Young agree to his nomination, it will be Gregory's first nomination on the SBC level. However, Gregory injected himself into SBC presidential politics in 1990 when he and several other conservative leaders endorsed Chapman for the presidency.

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Annuity Board votes increase
for 22,000 SBC annuitants July 1 By Thomas E. Miller Jr.

Baptist Press
2/27/92

DALLAS (BP)--Trustees of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention voted a 5 percent increase in benefits for 22,000 annuitants effective July 1, 1992. Both Plan A and defined contribution plan participants will receive the raise. Annuitants will see the increase in checks at the end of July.

William A. Willis of Little Rock, Ark., was elected chairman of the board, succeeding B.J. Martin of Pasadena, Texas, who served four one-year terms. S.A. Adkins of Forest, Miss., was elected vice chairman.

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Willis retired last year as general manager of the Little Rock agency of the Prudential Insurance Company of America. He has been a trustee since 1986.

The trustee insurance committee reported improvement in the financial condition of the church comprehensive medical plan -- including a less-than-predicted rate increase July 1. Trustees also heard about lower-cost options planned for Jan. 1, 1993. The group comprehensive medical plan, however, did not fare as well in 1991. Its \$2.4 million loss resulted in large increases for groups with bad claims experience. Some agencies' rates more than doubled.

The property and casualty department reported significant growth with its new carrier, Preferred Risk Mutual Insurance Company. Doug Day, vice president for property and casualty, reported that the gross premium of about \$1 million written in the first two months of 1992 exceeded all of 1991.

Leading the list of reports and actions was the annuitants' benefit increase. Unlike the 10 percent increase of Jan. 1, 1992, for Plan A participants only, the July 1 raise also will apply to benefits received through the board's defined contribution plans. The increase will not apply to variable annuities which are already reviewed each year, with benefits adjusted based on the prior year's experience.

Plan A, which was closed to contributions Jan. 1, 1988, pays a defined benefit based on a formula involving the member's salary and years of service, with a maximum of \$4,000 per year for the salary part of the formula.

Defined contribution plans result in individual accumulations based on varying contributions. At retirement, the accumulations are used to purchase an annuity under any of several benefit options.

"We are absolutely delighted to give this increase to all our defined benefits and purchased annuity retirees and those still active with deferred vested benefits," said Paul W. Powell, Annuity Board president.

"Those who retired with purchased annuities have suffered the same erosion of their benefits by inflation as Plan A members. Now we can give some adjustment," Powell said.

"Unlike for-profit businesses," he continued, "when we have good experience, we say it belongs to the members. We don't have stockholders who must be paid; just ministers, missionaries, teachers, secretaries, doctors, nurses, administrators, widows and surviving children who need the money."

A key to the mid-year increase was a move by trustees that combined, for investment purposes, the assets of the defined benefit plan with those of the annuitant fund. From now on, any year in which earnings create a margin (surplus) beyond actuarial requirements for benefits and contingencies, a general increase will be considered.

Actuary Terry Wade explained that the defined benefit fund backed obligations under Plan A (non-retired) and pooled annuities (those in pay status). The annuitant fund backed obligations under the purchased annuities.

Over the years, significant surpluses have occurred in the defined benefit fund and have been used for members through "13th checks," good experience credits and permanent increases. Until now, however, the funding status of the annuitant fund has not allowed meaningful increases to purchased annuities.

In 1991 the defined benefit fund experienced an investment yield of 20.5 percent and the annuitant fund had a yield of 18.3 percent. The results of the fourth quarter recovered much of the excess margin in the defined benefit fund that was used to grant the 10 percent Plan A increase Jan. 1.

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Wade said by combining the two funds for investment purposes, the board will be able to control a safe margin of surplus and identify when increases are possible.

Wade noted that a margin in reserves will always be maintained to allow for mortality improvement (annuitants living longer than expected), asset fluctuation (years of decreased investment results) and other contingencies. It is when these reserves and margin are exceeded by assets in the combined fund that an increase in benefits will be considered.

"While there is no obligation under the plans ever to increase benefits," Powell said, "I am happy when the board can pass the proceeds of investment success back to the members."

The July 1 increase is not expected to be repeated. New guidelines provide for automatic annual review of funding status, with any future increases occurring on Jan. 1.

Board treasurer Harold D. Richardson reported record assets and earnings of \$466 million during 1991. Audited figures marked total assets of \$3.544 billion, with growth of \$1.5 million a day.

The variable fund (common stock) earned 28.27 percent; the balanced fund (stocks and bonds) earned 22.42 percent; and the fixed fund earned 8.8 percent in 1991. The short-term fund earned 5.71 percent.

A rate increase of 6.2 percent for the church comprehensive medical plan July 1, 1992, will result in a total increase of 8.5 percent for the year. In the fall of 1991 churches were advised to budget for an 11 percent increase. A 4.9 percent increase on Jan. 1 was the lowest aggregate increase in four years. The July 1 increase will mean churches that budgeted 11 percent will have excess funds in their budgets for staff medical care. Participants changing churches, age brackets or family status may have different percentages of change.

Joel H. Mathis, senior vice president for insurance administration, credited new managed care procedures and other plan design changes with the first positive cash flow in the church comprehensive medical plan since 1986.

Mathis told trustees that work is proceeding on plans to offer options on Jan. 1, 1993, to allow participants to choose plans with lower rates and higher deductibles and copayment. Details of the new plans are expected to be ready in late spring.

In the insurance administration division under legal and benefit services, Mac H. Perkins was promoted to vice president to head the life and health department and John L. Dudley became head of marketing group plans for institutions, agencies, state conventions and large churches.

The relief committee of the board considered 31 applications and made six two-year monthly grants, five one-time grants, four two-year expense grants, three six-month monthly grants and one two-month monthly grant. Twelve applications were declined for being outside guidelines for relief. Relief is funded by the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

The Annuity Board reported relief expenditures of \$726,312 in 1991 plus another \$479,468 in its "Adopt An Annuitant" program. The latter program, supported with funds raised by the board, provided a \$50 per month supplement to 899 annuitants as of Dec. 31, 1991.

Furniture store executive
writes commentary volume

By Chip Alford

GREER, S.C. (BP)--Detecting the intense, reflective side of Hayne Griffin's personality isn't difficult, even for those who might watch him contentedly ride his horse, "Diamond," through the picturesque pasture behind his South Carolina home.

His questioning nature led him to seek and earn a master of divinity degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., and a doctorate in New Testament exegesis and biblical criticism from the University of Aberdeen in Aberdeen, Scotland.

What it hasn't led him to is a ministerial career.

"I've often been asked why, with my educational background, am I not a preacher, minister of education or some other kind of church staff member," the 44-year-old vice president and merchandising manager of a South Carolina furniture store chain said. "But I never felt called to be a preacher or minister. I do feel, though, that this project is part of God's calling for my life."

This "project" is "The New American Commentary" and Griffin is the only layman writing for the 40-volume series. His contribution is a commentary on Titus, which will be released in April as part of a combined volume on the pastoral epistles. Tommy Lea, professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, is writing the portion on 1 and 2 Timothy.

When first asked to join the team of NAC authors, Griffin was a little concerned whether he could make a legitimate contribution.

"I had not been engaged in academic biblical studies as a student or teacher for quite a few years. However, the editors expressed their strong desire to have a qualified layman contribute to a series which could be used by serious Bible students, whether in a college, seminary or local church setting," Griffin explained.

Realizing the project was an excellent opportunity to use his theological training, he committed himself to "sharpening up some old tools" and accepted the assignment as a challenge.

He wrote the bulk of the manuscript in five months -- working most mornings from 5:30 to 8 a.m. Many of his days off from work also were spent closed off in his basement study, diligently working through piles of articles and books on Titus he had collected from various libraries and reading through rough drafts with his wife, Virginia, whom he described as a "serious Bible student and teacher herself" and "a wonderful theological editor."

"It was technical and difficult at times but I really enjoyed getting into it," Griffin said about the job of preparing the manuscript. "Titus is a small book but it is packed with basic Christian doctrine and relevant teaching for today's church."

Among the most interesting issues dealt with in pastoral epistles, Griffin said, are the qualifications for elders -- an office that is receiving increased attention among some Southern Baptists -- and Paul's admonition that sound faith must be based on sound doctrine.

Griffin said he came away from the project with an even firmer conviction that "our whole motivation to serve the Lord has got to come from the knowledge of what God has done for us by his grace through his Son, Jesus Christ."

A self-described "Southern Baptist with a small 's' and a small 'b,'" Griffin grew up in the Presbyterian church and later attended an interdenominational seminary. However, he began attending First Baptist Church in Greer, S.C., as a 12-year-old boy and he currently serves as both a deacon and Sunday school teacher.

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Driving a delivery truck by the time he was 14, he also grew up helping out at Mutual Home Stores -- a chain of furniture stores his father started in Greenville, S.C., and surrounding areas in the early 1940s.

"In the back of my mind, I was always considering going into the family business," he said. "My father spent his life building the business and I knew he wanted me to stay, but he never pressured me. He told me he would do whatever it took to help me become the best in whatever I wanted to do. I just had to be sure whatever I chose was the right thing for me."

The decision to make the furniture business his career came after a distinguished collegiate and seminary career. And though most of his time was spent studying Scripture and theology, he never seriously considered a ministerial career. (The closest he came might be brief stints as an instructor at Trinity and Columbia Biblical Seminary in Columbia, S.C.) Instead, he viewed his years of study as a time to examine his Christian beliefs and "learn things for the simple joy of learning them."

"For me it was a time when I was asking questions," Griffin recalled. "Is the Bible really true? How can I defend Christianity? I was looking for an intellectual approach for matters of Christian faith."

While not everyone can attend college and seminary, Griffin said all Christians are responsible for learning and applying biblical truths and doctrine taught throughout Scripture.

"Baptists have often been criticized for being theologically shallow," he said. "Through our teaching, we need to make sure that a foundation of correct theology is constantly being laid."

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