



-- 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) 742-8918
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 Strode, Chief, 400 North Capital St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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**March Cooperative Program
and designated gifts down**

NASHVILLE (BP)--The SBC Cooperative Program total received by the Executive Committee for March dropped more than 7 percent and designated gifts more than 22 percent, according to Harold C. Bennett, Executive Committee president/treasurer.

However, for the SBC fiscal year -- Oct. 1 through March 31 -- the total for both Cooperative Program and designated gifts remained more than \$1 million ahead of the comparable period of 1990-91.

CP totals for March were \$12,246,492 compared to last year of \$13,219,744. The 7.36 percent drop is \$973,252. Year-to-date for the CP is \$70,200,901 compared to 1990-91 year-to-date of \$71,543,354 which is a 1.88 percent decrease or \$1,342,452.

Designated gifts for the month also fell, 22.59 percent, with March 1992 at \$14,704,765 compared to last year of \$18,995,700. The year-to-date designated totals were still up with \$80,918,178 for this fiscal year compared to \$78,221,160 in 1990-91.

Overall, counting both CP and designated gifts for the year-to-date, the totals are \$151,119,080 compared to the previous year of \$149,764,514.

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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EDITORS' NOTE: This story replaces the story of the same name that ran Monday, March 31.

SBC agencies decide not
to exhibit at Fellowship

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
4/1/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Five Southern Baptist agencies which had earlier indicated they would have exhibits at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship annual meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, April 30-May 2, have decided this week not to do so.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is an organization created last year in Atlanta composed of moderate Southern Baptist churches and individuals who are critical of current conservative Southern Baptist Convention leadership.

The Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary told Baptist Press they have decided not to have an exhibit at the Fellowship's Resource Fair, set for Fort Worth's Tarrant County Convention Center. The Fellowship earlier said more than 100 vendors were expected to display resources for churches and individuals.

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John Hewett, an Asheville, N.C., pastor and moderator of the Fellowship, said "we deeply regret" the decision by the SBC agencies.

"We had hoped to provide those attending the widest possible exposure to Christian resources for ministry, mission, education and evangelism," Hewett said. "We will make the vacated space available to other exhibitors whose publications and ministries fit the overall goals of the Fellowship."

An invitation has been extended to those SBC agencies for the Fellowship's 1993 meeting in Atlanta, Hewett said.

SBC agencies still planning to exhibit are the Annuity Board, Radio and Television Commission, as well as an individual exhibit by Southern Seminary. Four of the six SBC seminaries -- Midwestern, New Orleans, Southern and Southwestern -- had planned to use the large common display exhibited regularly at SBC annual meetings. Woman's Missionary Union, an auxiliary to the SBC, also plans to exhibit at the fair.

James T. Draper Jr., president of the Sunday School Board, said after evaluating "our earlier decision ... I have decided we will not go forward with our exhibit plans."

"Cooperative Baptist Fellowship promotional materials advocate bypassing existing Cooperative Program channels. We want to avoid any misunderstanding that, by our presence, the board would be supporting any avenue of mission support that would erode the Cooperative Program," Draper said in a prepared statement released March 30.

"We further concluded that an exhibit at the meeting would be a duplication of efforts. We are choosing instead to have exhibits at Southern Baptist gatherings where we traditionally have been present. We will continue to give priority to exhibits at the annual meeting of the SBC, at Baptist state convention meetings and associational gatherings," Draper said.

Draper said the SSB would continue to meet needs of churches through conferences, consultations, other exhibits, direct mail and many other means.

The Brotherhood Commission said it had not officially registered as an exhibitor with the CBF, nor sent money for a space.

"We had made an internal decision to be there," Mike Day, director of church and denominational relations, said. However, commission officials decided March 31 not to participate.

"Our decision is based on our historical commitment to and support of the Cooperative Program and our desire to serve the sending agencies of the SBC," Day told Baptist Press. "We stand ready to service all Southern Baptist conventions, associations and churches in strengthening Southern Baptists' commitment to world evangelization and missions."

"In these days, we would encourage all people of God called Southern Baptists to lay aside differences and refocus on our need to get the gospel to every person," Day said. Asked if the commission's decision change was prompted by pressure from other sources, Day said, "We do not feel pressure (to change the decision) outside the Brotherhood Commission."

A spokesman for New Orleans Seminary told Baptist Press simply, "We have changed our minds. We no longer plan to exhibit at the CBF meeting."

A spokesman for Southwestern first told Baptist Press the seminary would have some kind of exhibit but later called to say the seminary would not have an exhibit at all. Southwestern's national alumni association does plan to host a breakfast during the CBF meeting.

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Southern Seminary officials told Baptist Press, as of March 31, their plans remain the same.

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CORRECTION: In the (BP) story titled "BJC hires law firm in dispute over \$300,000 in SBC funds," dated 3/31/92, please correct the last paragraph to read:

The \$300,000 fund was created by SBC action in 1964 and the BJC has received interest on the sum since, totaling more than \$560,000. A dispute over the funds erupted last year between the BJC and CLC over ownership of the funds. The BJC requested the funds June 27, 1991, with the intent to purchase a building in Washington, but foundation trustees in July asked the BJC to provide a copy of a contract on a building to be purchased and also referred the matter to the Executive Committee. A special committee appointed to research the matter framed the recommendation adopted by the Executive Committee in February.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

New inner-agency task force
to study needs of the blind

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
4/1/92

ATLANTA (BP)--The major need of blind and visually impaired Southern Baptists is literature in braille, Charles Couey of Nashville told a new inner-agency task force studying ministries to the blind.

Couey is president of the Southern Baptist Conference of the Blind. Last year the conference adopted a resolution which resulted in creation of the task force to study the needs of blind Southern Baptists.

The task force is composed of representatives from the Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

During the task force's first meeting March 31, Couey noted the Sunday School Board quit producing Sunday school literature in braille in 1987. The Sunday School Board continues to produce some Bible study material and devotional guides on cassette tapes. WMU also produces some of its publications on cassette tapes.

Couey, who is legally blind, said tapes are good for leisure listening but it is difficult to study from a tape.

"I'm anxious to see the convention start ministering to these publication needs," said Couey, a computer programmer for the state of Tennessee. Couey also is volunteer director of ministries with the blind for Park Avenue Baptist Church in Nashville and a Sunday school teacher for 4- and 5-year-olds.

A braille screen reading machine allows Couey to translate material from a computer disk into braille. But he said the process is time-consuming and too expensive to do on a large-scale basis.

Couey said it is estimated 285 out of 100,000 people in the United States are legally blind and another 15 people per 100,000 are visually impaired. If those estimates are true for the 15 million members of Southern Baptist churches, the convention has 42,750 church members who are legally blind and 2,250 who are visually impaired.

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Bob Banks, Home Mission Board executive vice president and chairman of the task force, said the task force will ask the Sunday School Board to do a research project about ministry among the blind.

Other objectives of the task force are to:

-- encourage agencies to include pictures of people with disabilities in their publications to foster acceptance of people with disabilities.

-- promote materials currently available for the blind and for people working with the blind. The Home Mission Board and Sunday School Board both have resources to help churches develop ministries for the blind.

-- explore ways to adapt current materials for use by the blind.

-- urge agencies and churches to hire people with disabilities and allow people with disabilities to have leadership roles.

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Baptist volunteers send thousands
of teaching pictures to Russia

By Teresa Dickens

Baptist Press
4/1/92

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--"Sunday school teaching pictures" and "mission action projects" are two phrases seldom used in the same sentence. But for several Missouri Baptist congregations the two phrases came together recently to form a beautiful expression of Christian generosity.

The story begins with Nataly, a Russian immigrant living in Vancouver, British Columbia. Nataly's husband is a medical doctor and pastor of one of the two Russian churches in Vancouver.

Through a mutual friend, Nataly learned of Osa Marie Wittenmyer, who with her husband Jerry serves in Vancouver as a Southern Baptist home missionary. Mrs. Wittenmyer, a graduate of William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., also is a veteran children's Sunday school curriculum writer with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and frequent conference leader.

Nataly had seen copies of Sunday school teaching pictures produced by the BSSB and wanted to know how she could get some to send to churches in her hometown of St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), Russia. The new freedom of religion in her homeland had provided churches the opportunity to teach children in church. Earlier children were not allowed to participate in church life. While the Bible provided the stories, the churches had no resources to aid teachers in the classroom. Nataly was convinced the Sunday school teaching pictures would be of great assistance.

At her friend's suggestion, Nataly called Mrs. Wittenmyer last spring. She told her she needed "lots" of those "beautiful teaching pictures you Southern Baptists have," the home missionary recalled. "I asked her, 'How many is lots? If you need 100, I'll get you 100. If you need 10,000, I'll get you 10,000.'"

Nataly's question, "How can you do that?" prompted Mrs. Wittenmyer to explain Southern Baptists are willing to work together to accomplish such a task. "She was amazed I could get however many pictures she needed," Mrs. Wittenmyer recounted.

Through Southern Baptist churches in the Seattle area, Mrs. Wittenmyer collected nearly 3,000 pictures to give to Nataly to send to churches in St. Petersburg. The Wittenmyers worked in the Seattle area before moving to Vancouver.

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Last fall, Nataly called Mrs. Wittenmyer again to say, "I need more pictures." A Ukrainian pastor learned of the teaching picture project for the Russian congregations and asked if the churches in his country -- also a former Soviet republic -- could get some.

At this request from Nataly, Mrs. Wittenmyer called her longtime friend Margaret Woolley, an associate in the Missouri Baptist Convention Sunday school department. She asked Mrs. Woolley if she knew of any Missouri Baptist churches that would be willing to give some of their teaching pictures to the Ukrainian churches.

Mrs. Woolley's contact with children's Sunday school workers across Missouri resulted in some 5,000 teaching pictures being collected for the churches in Ukraine. Mrs. Wittenmyer was scheduled to deliver the packaged teaching pictures to Nataly last week. The Ukrainian pastor, who is visiting in Vancouver, will take the pictures with him when he returns home this month.

"It was a simple request," Mrs. Woolley pointed out. "Most every church has far more teaching pictures than they need. The most time-consuming part of the project was sorting the pictures into sets."

Church children's workers who participated in the project also spoke of the simplicity of the request, but enthusiastically emphasized the opportunity it presented.

"It was an excellent opportunity to gather our extra pictures and put them to good use," remarked Sharon Land, a Sunday school teacher at Fee Fee Baptist Church in Bridgeton, Mo. Noting the church "had more than we can ever use," she continued, "To have our plenty and not share is unspeakable."

Rick Jackson, children's division director for Second Baptist Church in Springfield, Mo., added, "It was a tremendous missions activity. We talk about missions but seldom have a chance for hands-on activities.

"It also was a tremendous teaching opportunity with the children," he noted. "We explained to them what we were doing and why. We are always looking for new ways to get the children involved and teach them about missions."

Mrs. Wittenmyer said the simple task of collecting and distributing teaching pictures is becoming a regular part of her routine. In November, she worked with North Carolina Baptist churches in gathering teaching pictures for 11 Haitian churches in Quebec, and Nataly called again last week requesting pictures for churches in two other Soviet republics. Sunday school workers from two other state conventions had contacted Mrs. Wittenmyer earlier, volunteering to help respond to any future requests for teaching pictures.

"It seems people have gone crazy over our beautiful teaching pictures," Mrs. Wittenmyer quipped. "I'm just glad it is a resource God has setting in churches everywhere."

Noting Sunday school teaching pictures are a resource Southern Baptists "often take for granted," Mrs. Wittenmyer said, "We just don't know how precious they are until we are reminded by those who have never had anything like this that they help make the Bible come alive."

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California college takes steps
to aid international students

By Brenda Flowers

Baptist Press
4/1/92

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--After a long ride from the Los Angeles Airport, the student found it difficult to know where to go, how to check into the residence hall and where to get a meal. But what really complicated things was the incredible communication gap -- because this student was from Asia.

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Fortunately, there was someone around who understood the confusion, loneliness and frustration. One of California Baptist College's two new international residence assistants was prepared to welcome the international student using her own personal experience as a resource.

"I see my role as an international residence assistant as a bridge between two groups, the international and the American, said Eunhee Lee, a master of counseling student from Kwang Ju, South Korea. "I am here to help them understand each other."

The IRA program, initiated this year, was created as a support system for internationals, who comprise about one-fifth of the residence hall population.

"We saw an incredible gap of representation for this large student population," Willie Hamlett, associate dean of students, said. "We felt these students could be empowered by student leadership which represented their needs."

The IRA program also has given the American residence assistants someone in their midst who can help them understand the plight of international students.

These students benefit not only from representatives who act as liaisons for their concerns but also from programming geared to their interests.

Lee and fellow IRA Juliana Wiriasantosa, a music major from Indonesia, plan activities for the internationals which have included an international cooking contest in which students from different countries, including Americans, were put on teams to prepare various dishes,

"The students feel much more comfortable, more interested in school activities and seem happy," Lee said as she described international students who have been involved in a number of activities including a volleyball league and trips to famous southern California locations.

In addition to planning activities and listening to problems, Lee and Wiriasantosa lead a Bible study which many international students, both Christian and non-Christian, attend.

"As a result of the IRA program we have had strong positive feedback from our international students and curbed the criticism from this group that we are sometimes not caring," Hamlett added.

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Broadman, Holman products
named Gold Medallion finalists

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Four books published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman Press and Holman Bible Publishers have been selected as finalists for one of Christian publishing's top honors.

The Gold Medallion Awards, given by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, will be presented June 27 at a banquet in Dallas.

The awards are given in several categories. Broadman finalists include "Talking to the World in the Days to Come," by Bob Hughes, associate professor of communication and mass media at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., nominated in the missions/evangelism category; and "Journey to Amanah," by Columbus, Ohio, writer Colleen Snyder, nominated in the youth category. "Journey to Amanah" also was recently named a semifinalist in Campus Life magazine's annual Book of the Year contest.

The "Holman Bible Dictionary" was named a finalist in the Gold Medallion reference texts category and Holman's "Family Worship Bible" is up for the award in the Bibles category.

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"Because these books have been named finalists they will get plenty of added exposure at the Christian Booksellers Association convention this year," Broadman publicist Sharon Wegman said. "Book store buyers will check this list of finalists to make decisions of books to place in their stores."

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Americans United begins search
for Robert Maddox successor

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
4/1/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Americans United for Separation of Church and State is seeking a person committed to church-state separation and not necessarily a Southern Baptist as its new executive director, said AU President Foy Valentine.

Robert Maddox, AU's executive director since 1984 and a Southern Baptist minister, recently announced his resignation to become pastor of Briggs Memorial Baptist Church in Bethesda, Md. His resignation was effective April 1.

While he is a Southern Baptist and there are two more on the board of trustees and several more on AU's national advisory council, Valentine said in a telephone interview the primary requirement for a new executive director is a "commitment to the principle of separation of church and state." As president of the board, Valentine is a member of the seven-person search committee.

Southern Baptists have been intimately involved with AU since its founding in 1947. SBC President Louie Newton and Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director J.M. Dawson were integral in its inception.

Maddox was a pastor for 20 years in Georgia and Texas before serving as a speechwriter and religious liaison for President Jimmy Carter from 1979-81.

"Dr. Maddox guided Americans United through a tumultuous period in American church-state relations," Valentine said in a written statement. "Under his leadership, Americans United rightfully maintained its place as the nation's leading organization dedicated solely to defending the wall of separation between church and state."

Valentine was executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission from 1960-87.

Maddox, 54, said he remains a supporter of AU. "The group's work is more important today than ever before," Maddox said in a written statement.

Briggs Memorial is affiliated with both the Southern Baptist Convention and American Baptist Churches, USA.

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