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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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92-94

**Lottie Moon gifts
total \$81.4 million**

By Marty Croll

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Lottie Moon Christmas Offering receipts for 1991 totaled about \$81.4 million dollars -- an increase of about 2.5 percent over 1990 for the annual Southern Baptist foreign missions offering.

When the financial books closed May 31, Southern Baptists had sent \$81,358,723 -- about \$2 million more than the previous year -- to support foreign mission work throughout the world.

Receipts for 1991 fell about \$2.6 million short of the \$84 million goal. The shortfall means missionaries will have that much less money to spend on capital needs, such as cars and houses overseas. The goal was projected to finance 46 percent of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's \$184 million budget for 1992.

Still, the total is good news for missionaries and mission planners. Some feared economic recession and denominational squabbles might seriously cut into Lottie Moon giving in 1991.

The 1990 offering marked the first year since 1937 that Lottie Moon receipts dropped below the previous year's total, and the first year since 1932 that both Lottie Moon and Cooperative Program giving decreased compared to the previous year.

Most of the Foreign Mission Board budget comes from Lottie Moon gifts and offerings through the Cooperative Program, the denomination's unified giving plan. For the first eight months of Southern Baptists' 1992 fiscal year, Cooperative Program receipts have dipped about 3.4 percent below the total for the same period last year.

Faced with the prospect of decreasing revenues, mission board trustees approved only about a half-percent increase in spending over 1991.

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**Motion on homosexuality delayed
by 3 votes against mail ballot**

By Art Toalston

NASHVILLE (BP)--A mail ballot by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee on the issue of homosexuality has been rendered mute by three votes against the use of the ballot.

The same issue -- whether to declare two North Carolina churches "not in friendly cooperation" with the SBC -- now likely will come before the Executive Committee when it meets June 8, said Harold C. Bennett, the committee's president-treasurer.

The committee will meet in Indianapolis prior to the SBC's annual meeting June 9-11.

As of June 2, Bennett said, three of the Executive Committee's 77 members had voted against the use of a mail ballot on a proposed motion targeting Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh for approving a marriage-like "union" of two homosexual men and Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church for licensing a homosexual man to the gospel ministry earlier this year.

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Use of a mail ballot must be approved unanimously according to Tennessee corporation law regulating use of such ballots.

In addition to declaring the two churches "not in friendly cooperation" with the SBC, the proposed motion specifies the return of funds received by the SBC from Pullen and Binkley churches since Oct. 1, 1990, the start of the SBC's previous fiscal year. According to the SBC business office, Pullen has given \$557.50 in Cooperative Program and foreign and home missions gifts during that period while Binkley has given \$175.85 for the Cooperative Program.

The four-paragraph motion was framed by the Executive Committee's bylaws workgroup May 8 in a conference telephone call then forwarded to the 25-member administrative subcommittee May 11 for a mail ballot vote, which was unanimous. The proposed motion then was mailed to all Executive Committee members May 22.

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Embryos get 'death penalty,'
CLC's Mitchell says

By Tom Strode

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Seven unborn babies essentially received the "death penalty" when the Tennessee Supreme Court recently found a man's right to refuse parenthood exceeds the right of his former wife to donate the frozen embryos to a childless couple, a Southern Baptist ethicist said.

Ben Mitchell, the Christian Life Commission's director of biomedical and life issues, also said the court's decision could provide for the protection of abortion rights in the future.

"This is not one of the 'hard cases' evangelicals sometimes argue over -- rape, incest or danger to the life of the mother," said Mitchell, who does not favor abortion in cases of rape or incest. "This is a situation in which two consenting adults, premeditatedly and at great expense, made a conscious decision to attempt in vitro fertilization. Junior Davis, his former wife and the courts have a moral obligation, whether they recognize it or not, to protect the lives of those seven developing babies. Instead, the babies essentially get the death penalty."

The five-member court ruled unanimously "unwanted parenthood" should not be imposed on a Maryville, Tenn., man, Junior Davis, by allowing his ex-wife, Mary Sue Stowe, to donate seven frozen embryos to another couple. His interest in avoiding parenthood is greater than her interest in donation, the court said.

The court said Davis had the right to procreational autonomy, which includes "two rights of equal significance -- the right to procreate and the right to avoid procreation.

"If she were allowed to donate these preembryos, he would face a lifetime of either wondering about his parental status or knowing about his parental status but having no control over it," the court said.

"Donation, if a child came of it, would rob him twice -- his procreational autonomy would be defeated and his relationship with his offspring would be prohibited."

Mitchell said, "The case is troubling on a number of accounts. First, the question is not will Junior Davis be forced to be a father. He is the biological father of those seven embryos. From our perspective, the question is will Junior Davis accept his responsibility or will he fail in his role as father and protector of his offspring.

"The court claimed that donating the offspring would rob Junior Davis twice. You cannot have it both ways. If he is not a father, then he has no relationship with the offspring. If he is a father, then he has already exercised his procreational autonomy -- he chose to have babies. In my view, the court contradicted itself," Mitchell said.

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"Second, since, as Blount County Circuit Court Judge Dale Young recognized in the case in 1989, human life begins at conception, these embryos should be protected, preserved and donated either to the biological mother or an adoptive mother. Anything less is murder.

"The fact that the fertilized embryos are outside the mother's body or conceived by an assisted reproductive technology does not change the moral status of the developing babies. Cryopreservation [freezing] doesn't alter the genetic identity of these living human embryos.

"Third, clearly more is at stake in the court's ruling than meets the eye," Mitchell said. "The Tennessee Supreme Court has propped open the door for the future protection of abortion even when Roe v. Wade is overturned. The court exercised a decided bias in favor of so-called abortion rights."

The court said Tennessee's interest in "potential human life is insufficient to justify an infringement on ... procreational autonomy." The court admitted a right to privacy was not found in either the federal or state constitution but is grounded in the concept of liberty in both documents.

The embryos, the result of in vitro fertilization performed at a Knoxville clinic, were frozen after two other embryos were implanted in the former Mrs. Davis' uterus. (In vitro fertilization involves the fertilization in a petri dish of ova from a woman with sperm from a man.) Pregnancy did not result after transfer of two embryos to her uterus in December 1988. Davis filed for divorce in February 1989. Both have remarried.

Stowe originally wanted the remaining embryos transferred to her uterus, but Davis objected. A circuit court awarded custody to her. A court of appeals overruled the decision, saying the state did not have a compelling interest justifying "ordering implantation against the will of either party."

Stowe appealed the decision to the Tennessee Supreme Court, seeking authority to donate the embryos to a childless couple.

"In the future," Mitchell said, "fertility clinics ought to require and couples ought to request a contract requiring that all fertilized embryos be implanted and that in the event of a divorce the embryos be put up for adoption."

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Senate passes legislation
to stop sports gambling

By Tom Strode

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Senate overwhelmingly has passed legislation to halt the spread of sports gambling.

The Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act passed by an 88-5 vote June 2. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D.-Ariz., prohibits the authorization and operation of sports lotteries and other forms of sports gambling by states in which such games were not permitted before Oct. 2, 1991. It also bans sports gambling on Indian lands.

Forms of sports gambling were legal before Oct. 2, 1991, in Nevada, Oregon, Delaware, Montana and North Dakota. Some of the 32 states with lotteries have been looking also at legalizing sports lotteries and other forms of sports gambling.

"I understand that many states see sports gambling as a quick fix for budgetary shortfalls," DeConcini said, "but there are other far less destructive ways to generate additional revenue.

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"I cringe when I think of the possibility of the Phoenix Suns or Phoenix Cardinals winning but at the same time being booed because they didn't beat the point spread."

James A. Smith, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission director of government relations, testified in support of the bill last year before a Senate subcommittee.

"There are no winners in sports gambling," Smith said. "Gambling in general, and sports gambling in particular, is especially harmful to the poor and will entice young children into this terrible addiction. In light of the growing popularity of sports gambling, it's absolutely vital Congress take away this enterprise before it's too late.

"We are thrilled the Senate so convincingly approved (the bill)," Smith said. "We commend Sen. DeConcini for his efforts to promote this important legislation. Southern Baptists should urge their representatives to support companion legislation in the House."

It is expected the bill will be introduced in the House of Representatives, a congressional spokesman said. A companion bill, H.R. 74, was approved by the House as part of a crime bill last year but the legislation failed to gain support in the Senate. Supporters hope DeConcini's bill will pass the House as a separate piece of legislation.

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Christian witness still unfolding
amid Russia's venture into freedom By Tim Nicholas

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MOSCOW (BP)--In Moscow Baptist Church at Easter, members hung a lighted sign saying "Christ lives." But that was not the only place in Moscow displaying words about Jesus. Across thoroughfares in the city of 9 million banners proclaimed "Christ truly has arisen."

Before glasnost and the subsequent fall of communism, people being baptized into Moscow Baptist Church had to be approved by the KGB, the Soviet intelligence service, said George Lozuk, who, with his wife, Veda Rae, and Mel and Nancy Skinner comprise Southern Baptists' missionary force in Russia.

Two other Southern Baptist couples serve as missionaries in the former Soviet Union -- Dan and Libby Panter in Minsk in Byelorussia and Stephen and Marilyn Haines in Kiev in the Ukraine.

Under communism, children were not allowed to attend worship services and were taught atheism, Lozuk said. "The result is the younger crowd has fallen by the wayside."

Now, no one is looking over the Christians' shoulders. And how things have changed. "There is a great curiosity as to 'if atheism is not the correct thing, what is?'" said Lozuk, whose father was from Minsk but left before the 1917 revolution that ushered in 75 years of communist oppression.

People are beginning to investigate religion and the public schools are requesting teachers for the Bible, Lozuk said. So Moscow Baptist Church is sending its Sunday school teachers into the public schools in Moscow to teach the Bible.

Mel and Nancy Skinner's Russian language teacher, Julia Solovjova, a new Christian herself, said Russians are not rushing to be Christians because of their new freedoms. They are not ready for someone to be lord of their lives, she said. A Christian witness, she said, needs to be a Christian lifestyle that can be observed by others.

But this does not mean Russians will not listen to the gospel message. Two members of Moscow Baptist Church helping Southern Baptist volunteers in a Brotherhood Commission-coordinated food distribution project, working to sack flour in a Moscow warehouse, witnessed to three employees of the warehouse where Baptists were storing their supplies of U.S.D.A. rice, flour, powdered milk and lentils.

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As Zina Klimkina spoke to the workers, her niece Inna said communists told bad stories about Baptists, that Baptists would kill their children.

No one refused to accept gospel tracts from a five-member volunteer team from Mississippi, not even the kids who hawk souvenirs around Red Square. In a flea market where anything from Gorbachev dolls to delicious brazier-roasted meat could be found, a woman accepted a tract from a Mississippian. "Is this about God?" she asked. "Yes, about Jesus Christ" came the answer. She nodded her acceptance.

In that flea market the Mississippians, who were in Moscow for the "Project Brotherhood" food project, met with representatives of three other evangelical groups from America, showing the proliferation of Christian work already occurring in Russia.

"Groups come in, pass out tracts, sing in a choir, make a movie and go home," Lozuk said. That is not the Southern Baptist way of missions, he noted. "We say we are here to help you do what you want done."

Lozuk said he spent his first six months after arriving in February 1991 explaining to the various Baptist unions of the former Soviet Union who Southern Baptists are, what the Foreign Mission Board is and what Southern Baptists' missions purpose is.

"We have several basics," Lozuk said. "We work strictly with the local church and its organizations. Their goals are our goals and we try to understand things through their eyes."

With numerous religious groups coming through Russia now, Lozuk asked, "When they're gone, if a teacher has a question, who will answer it?" Southern Baptist missionaries will be there, he said, doing what they always do, pouring their lives into a people.

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Mother of WMU president
dies June 3 in Alabama

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Gladys Hales Downes, 84, of Huntsville, Ala., died at home June 3 after an extended illness. Her daughter, Carolyn Miller, is national president of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Friday, June 5, at First Baptist Church in Boaz, Ala.

Miller will preside over the June 7-8 WMU annual meeting in Indianapolis.

Mrs. Downes, a retired school teacher, lived most of her life in Boaz. She moved to Huntsville a few years ago to be closer to her daughter.

Mrs. Downes has one other daughter -- Gwen Reece, who with her husband, Don, is a Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria.

Other survivors include six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The family has asked that memorials be given to the WMU Second Century Fund.

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'Army' prepares to capture
nation, Lewis tells leaders

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--More than 300 adult leaders in the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission's Royal Ambassador program for boys have been alerted that an "army" is preparing to "totally capture" the nation.

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Larry L. Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, told participants at a national training event that this "army" will "march on Washington, D.C., into every state capitol, into every courthouse" in the United States in the next 10 to 20 years.

"You say, who is this army?" Lewis asked. "They are the children and youth of today. Soon they will stand in pulpits, teach in classrooms and lead the government. I thank the Lord that thousands and thousands of them are going to know Jesus as Lord."

"How many of them will know God and are in his will," Lewis added, "will be totally dependent on the work and ministry of folks like you."

Lewis' comments came during a "Royal Ambassador University" May 28-31 on the campus of Memphis' Rhodes College.

The participants also heard remarks from Brotherhood Commission President James D. Williams, WMU churchwide involvement director Karen Simons and Joseph Gbana Hall, past executive director of RA work in his native Liberia.

All stressed the importance of missions education for boys as fundamental for world evangelization.

"We need to help young boys whose lives are marked by sin to find the beauty and symmetry and unity that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as Savior," Williams said. "If we are going to reach our full potential as Royal Ambassador leaders, we must be obedient to what Jesus says to reach the world for Christ."

Much of the enrollees' time was spent as "students" in classes covering more than 30 subject areas ranging from "How to Enlist Counselors" to "Chapter Meeting Settings that Motivate."

Special events included a memorabilia fair where embroidered patches, old photographs and other artifacts from the last 80 years were admired and traded. Also on the agenda was the first nationwide competition with RA Racer cars, won by Jerry McGuirt of Acworth, Ga.

The 1992 "RAU" event marked the start of a second, three-year cycle of training for leaders in Brotherhood programs that included the first RAU in 1989, Baptist Men's University in 1990, and National Brotherhood Certification last year. In all, more than 1,000 have been trained for service at these events.

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State Baptist newsjournals will receive photos of their participants in Royal Ambassador University from the Brotherhood Commission.