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**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**

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**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232  
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**WASHINGTON** Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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May 17, 1993

**NASHVILLE** -- Orlando church tops CP giving but SBC stats down for 6th year.  
**KENTUCKY** -- Southern's Mohler challenges 'fundamentalism of the left.'  
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Orlando church tops CP giving,  
but SBC stats down for 6th year      By Art Toalston

**Baptist Press**  
5/17/93

**NASHVILLE (BP)**--First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., is the top church in total giving to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program for the second straight year, according to a Stewardship Commission study.

The Orlando congregation averaged \$94.44 per member in CP giving during 1992, also among the higher figures for the top 100 churches in total CP giving.

"Eight churches appear on the 1992 list for the first time," said James Powell, Stewardship Commission executive vice president in charge of Cooperative Program promotion. He has conducted the study since 1989.

However, one statistic in the study poses ongoing concern: the 9.19 percent average among all SBC churches for CP giving.

The percentage dropped for the sixth consecutive year: from 10.52 percent in 1987 to 10.32 percent in 1988, 10.16 in 1989, 9.84 percent in 1990 and 9.53 percent in 1991.

The Cooperative Program is the key channel of funding from local churches for each state Baptist convention's missions and ministries programs and for the SBC Home and Foreign Missions boards, SBC agencies such as the Christian Life and Radio and Television commissions and the SBC's six seminaries.

Powell noted, "Some of the factors contributing to this decline" in CP percentage are:

-- "There is less brand loyalty throughout the nation today, including loyalty to the Cooperative Program plan of missions giving."

-- "A state convention or SBC crisis or controversy tends to confuse churches and affects their giving patterns, especially to missions."

-- "There is more competition for the church's mission dollars today both inside and outside our denomination."

-- "Many churches are opting to participate more in their own hands-on mission projects at home and overseas."

-- "Churches are being flooded with requests for their mission dollars."

-- "Churches have greater local budget demands and are keeping more of their money at home."

-- "The national economy is struggling, the jobless rate continues to be high, workers are taking home less money or salaries with less buying power and members are giving less dollars to their churches."

To turn CP giving upward, Powell said; "There will have to be:"

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- "A new boost in the national economy."
- "A resurgence of sacrificial giving by individuals to their churches."
- "Making CP giving a priority in the church budget, a recommitment of all Southern Baptist pastors to the Cooperative Program as Southern Baptists' primary plan of mission support."
- "A stronger personalizing of CP giving for all church members and continued involvement of church members in CP ministries at home and overseas."
- "Increased opportunity for all Southern Baptists in denominational service."

According to the Stewardship Commission study, the top 10 churches in total CP giving were:

- No. 1: First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., \$931,224; with 13.9 percent of undesignated gifts channeled through the Cooperative Program and a per-member average of \$94.44.
- No. 2: First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, \$664,227; 18.7 percent to CP, \$60.43 per member. The church moved up from third on the list in both 1991 and 1990.
- No. 3: First Baptist Church, Midland, Texas, \$597,472, 16.8 percent to CP, \$74.25 per member. The church ranked first in total CP giving in both 1989 and 1990.
- No. 4: Bellevue Baptist Church, suburban Memphis, Tenn., \$576,102, 5.5 percent to CP, \$25.36 per member. The church has moved up one place each year since 1989.
- No. 5: First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., \$513,306, 9.3 percent to CP, \$58.53 per member.
- No. 6: Champion Forest Baptist Church in Houston, \$484,706, 9.9 percent to CP, \$60.86 per member -- up from 14th in 1989.
- No. 7: North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, \$425,545, 8.1 percent to CP, \$19.92 per member. The church was ranked fourth in 1991 and 1992 and second in 1989.
- No. 8: Broadmoor Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., \$424,170, 21.2 percent to CP, \$104.32 per member.
- No. 9: Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., \$424,037, 10.3 percent to CP, \$64.31 per member.
- No. 10: Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., \$415,137, 14.6 percent to CP, \$74.66 per member.

The Stewardship Commission study found four churches in the top 20 that gave 20 percent or more of their members' undesignated gifts to the CP in 1992:

- Broadmoor Baptist, Jackson, Miss., 21.2, eighth on the list.
- Severns Valley Baptist Church in Kentucky's Severns Valley Baptist Association, 21.8 percent -- 16th on the list, with \$395,721 in CP gifts and a per-member average of \$107.01.
- First Baptist Church in Lake Jackson, in Mississippi's Gulf Coast Baptist Association, 23.9 percent -- 19th on the list, with \$354,598 in CP gifts and a per-member average of \$92.18.

One church -- First Baptist in Crossett, Ark. -- gave 30 percent of its undesignated gifts through the Cooperative Program. The church's \$210,269 total placed it 88th on the list. Its per-member giving averaged \$115.66.

Other churches among the CP's top 100 giving 20 percent or more of their undesignated offering receipts in 1992 were Synder Memorial Baptist Church in North Carolina's New South River Baptist Association; First Baptist Church, Dalton, Ga.; Ingleside Baptist Church in Georgia's Macon Baptist Association; Central Baptist Church in Georgia's Rehoboth Baptist Association; First Baptist Church, Brandon, Miss.; Calvary Baptist Church, Tupelo, Miss.; First Baptist Church, Columbus, Miss.; First Baptist Church, New Orleans; and First Baptist Church, Zachary, La.

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Noting the study focused only on the top 100 churches in total CP gifts, Powell added numerous SBC churches with 20 percent or higher CP budget designations, but with smaller overall dollar totals because of their smaller size, were not ranked in the study.

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Southern's Mohler challenges  
'fundamentalism of the left'

By Mark McCormick

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5/17/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Though he had planned to stay in the background until he took over Aug. 1, the newly elected president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has gone on the offensive, accusing his detractors of clinging to their own agendas at the expense of the seminary.

In an interview the week of May 10, R. Albert Mohler Jr. blasted the intolerance of moderates who claim that conservatives like him are unwilling to listen to differing views.

"If there is fundamentalism here, it is the fundamentalism of the left which will not allow for a diversity of opinion," Mohler said.

And referring to numerous resignations since his appointment was announced in March, he said:

"Those who have left, citing differences with my convictions, have said they have left of their own decision. It was they who determined that they could not work with me."

Mohler, 33-year-old editor of Georgia Baptists' Christian Index, said he has been stung by criticism that he is a fundamentalist pawn, narrow minded, an opportunist and one who lacks the integrity and experience to lead the institution.

In light of such criticism and his realization that the "integrity of the church is on the line," Mohler said he decided to share some of his vision for the seminary.

The fact that conservatives now control the denomination is a clear sign the majority of Southern Baptists felt a course correction was in order, and the seminary is only returning to its roots, he said.

But Mohler says he intends to work with those with whom he has ideological differences.

"I don't come with an angry agenda; I don't come with a negative agenda," Mohler said. "I come with a very positive agenda. I don't come as an outsider. I come as one who knows this institution and knows it well."

But he says there are issues on which he will not compromise.

"We are not an uncommitted institution where academic freedom means the ability or right to advocate any position."

He said when faculty members join the seminary they sign the Abstract of Principles -- the seminary's guiding document -- with the understanding "that in so doing they pledge to teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, that confession."

Mohler said it frustrates him that the seminary's heritage of theological conservatism is being compromised to keep pace with expectations of "secular society."

An example of this, he said, has been the attention given to the issues of the ordination of women as pastors, which he said has eclipsed other important issues, such as enhancing academic excellence.

Mohler said he has stated that he finds no biblical support for women as pastors, and he expressed concern that the seminary could be deluding female students into believing that many Southern Baptist churches are calling women as ministers. Since the Abstract of Principles doesn't address the issue, it is not one the seminary can act on, he said.

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Mohler added that "women are welcome within all of the degree programs of this seminary," and noted that the seminary doesn't call ministers, it only trains them.

But William B. Rogers, who stepped down in April as dean of the school of Christian education because of ideological differences with Mohler on this issue, said the issue comes down to leadership.

Rogers noted that the current president, Roy Honeycutt, who favors women as pastors, appointed the seminary's first female dean, vice president, professor of theology and professor of Old Testament. He said a president's attitude could permeate the seminary.

What is unfair, Rogers said, is that the seminary might suggest to female students that there are opportunities for them as pastors in Southern Baptist churches, but the acceptance of "females into the life of the church by baptism and then telling them that God cannot grant gifts to them precisely because they are women."

"How we respond to persons who are wanting to be trained in ministry and are not men is a crucial issue," Rogers said. "I can't think of anything more pivotal."

Aside from the issue of women in ministry, Mohler also disputed some student and faculty claims that Southern has sacrificed academic integrity for doctrinal purity. Some students said they were transferring to other universities because of what they called Southern's "dogma factory" mentality.

"That is absolutely ridiculous to suggest that academic freedom within a theological seminary established by and funded by the Southern Baptist Convention means an unrestricted freedom to do virtually anything and advocate any position or possibility within the classroom," he said. "Frankly, that is an abstract and radical notion of academic freedom which even the most broad-minded, secular, public university finds difficult to accommodate."

Mohler said some issues are not germane to the programs of study at the seminary and that other issues "must be handled in a way that maintains our Christian commitment and the standards of conduct and demeanor."

"We will not be intimidated nor distracted by those who will hold that secular norm of radical and absolute academic freedom as the essential characteristic of academic excellence," he said.

"I clearly represent, and unashamedly represent, a call for the denomination to recover its theological roots and to return to its evangelistic commitment."

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#### WRAPUP

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship OKs  
new constitution, \$5 million budget

Baptist Press  
5/17/93

By Herb Hollinger

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship concluded its third annual assembly May 13-15 with a new constitution, a \$5 million 1994 budget and 22 missionaries "blessed" but, apparently, not as a new denomination.

The CBF is an organization of moderate Southern Baptists critical of the conservative leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention.

About 5,000 people registered for the meeting, with "Faith and Freedom in Christ" as its theme, at the Birmingham/Jefferson Civic Center in downtown Birmingham, Ala., but about 6,000 came the first night to hear former U.S. President Jimmy Carter "cast his lot with the CBF." The figures are about the same as the CBF drew in Fort Worth, Texas, last year although organizers in Birmingham had hoped for 10,000.

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Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, wife of a retired Cincinnati pastor and former executive director of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union, was voted moderator-elect, which means she will be named moderator next year. Assuming the moderator's post for 1993-94, the CBF's equivalent to a national president, was Hardy Clemons, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C.

The CBF had to adopt a new constitution or ratify the initial document voted in 1991 because of a "sunset clause" in the previous document. The new document does contain most of the language used by denominations. However, there are significant differences with the Southern Baptist Convention.

For the first three annual meetings of the CBF anyone attending could, and was urged to, register.

But now membership in the CBF "will be limited to Baptist individuals and Baptist churches who contribute annually to the ministries and operations of the Fellowship." A church is counted as a CBF contributor even if one family designates a portion of its offering for the CBF budget -- and all members of that church become eligible to vote at the CBF General Assembly. That will require a credentials committee, officials said, which will be in place at the 1994 meeting in Greensboro, N.C.

A revamped Coordinating Council, following the 1994 assembly, will be based on a formula for representatives from each state and regional cluster. The council will have 69 members, representation to be redetermined every three years based on the formula. The Coordinating Council meets three times a year and acts on behalf of the CBF, much like the Executive Committee does for the SBC.

States to be represented in the council are from Texas to Virginia, Kentucky to Florida while regional clusters represent the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Mid-West and West.

After struggling last year with a resolution "confessing, repenting and renouncing Southern Baptists' legacy of racism" which was hotly debated and narrowly approved, the CBF's new constitution will not permit resolutions and similar motions from the floor. They must "pass through and survive a stringent process before being presented to the General Assembly for action," said the report of the constitution committee.

"(It) is designed to discourage hastily conceived and highly volatile resolutions being presented for action without the benefit of more deliberate consideration..." said the committee's report, which also noted "the fact that each church is autonomous and resolutions passed ... are not binding on any church."

A motion from last year's assembly which would have sought from the SBC "auxiliary status for the CBF" had been referred to the constitution and bylaws committee which reported it "declined the opportunity at this time."

Patricia Ayres, a member of First Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas, and presiding moderator at the Birmingham meeting, informed the assembly the Coordinating Council had approved the move of the 1993 meeting from Atlanta to Birmingham and that David Wilkinson, former public relations executive at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., had been hired as communications coordinator/interim staff administrator. She said "necessary documents" concerning benefits for the Atlanta staff and missionaries were executed with the SBC Annuity Board.

A vote to approve a \$5,080,000 budget for 1994 included formal approval of a 1993 budget of \$3,699,500. The CBF anticipates receipts of \$9.5 million this year and \$12.5 million in 1994 but nearly \$6 million this year and \$7.5 million in 1994 will go to SBC agencies or other Baptist causes.

Of the CBF's portion of the budgets, most will go to support the group's global missions efforts: \$2.7 million in 1993 and \$3.8 million in 1994.

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The CBF retained its three plans of giving through which churches and individuals can participate. The Vision 2000 plan is all CBF expenditures; the Ventures plan drops to 42 percent for SBC causes (from the original 54.5 percent) and the rest to CBF approved causes; and the "regular" plan was changed to "Transition Plan," of which more than 80 percent goes to SBC causes.

Carter spoke to the assembly May 13 in front of the largest CBF crowd, estimated by center officials at about 6,000, at which he "cast his lot" with the CBF. When he finished the crowd gave him a standing ovation.

Former SBC Foreign Mission Board executive R. Keith Parks spoke May 14 in much the same manner he did for more than a decade in reporting to the SBC annual meeting -- emphasizing missions. The assembly then "blessed," a procedure similar to a church commissioning or ordination service, its 22 missionaries.

At the final session Saturday morning about half of the attendees came to approve final business matters, including the constitution and budgets.

Cecil Sherman, finishing his first year as CBF chief executive, told the assembly in his report he had three heroes: national WMU leaders, missions and finance committee chairmen in local churches who championed the CBF cause and pastors "who dared to tell their churches what they really believe."

"You can't believe the number of pastors who believe (in the CBF) but won't tell," Sherman said. "Not everybody is afraid ... some have the courage of Old Testament prophets."

Sherman said the CBF now has 900 participating churches, up from 400 last year, and 3,000 individuals gave \$700,000 last year to the CBF.

The CBF, Sherman said, is the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs' largest contributor. The SBC, one of the founders of the BJC, has discontinued its support.

Speaking to the growing number of state Baptist colleges beginning divinity schools, Sherman said they are "our children."

"We are not putting together theological education as fast as some are dismantling it," Sherman said in a reference to SBC seminaries.

In many respects, the CBF annual assembly was like denominational annual meetings: much time for fellowship and inspirational speakers and some for business. However, most of the discussion of business items was held in "break out" groups, with only the groups' findings reported at the business sessions. Also, special interest sessions were held, ranging from "In the Name of the Father: The Rhetoric of Exclusion in the SBC" and "Evangelism: Is It Only for Penguins?" to "Leading a Church to Consider the Ordination of Women" plus others focusing on typical church programs and interests.

There were more than 90 exhibitors at the CBF Resource Fair but, unlike the controversy sparked last year when some SBC agencies planned exhibits, only Midwestern, Southern and Southwestern Baptist theological seminaries and Woman's Missionary Union were represented in Birmingham. A number of Baptist state colleges, as well as some non-Baptist, and some state convention agencies also exhibited.

At least a half dozen publishing houses exhibited their wares at the fair, which resembled an ecumenical gathering, with the National Council of Churches promoting its New Revised Standard Version of the Bible and some interesting exhibitors including Puppets with Personality, Postal Church Service, Sports Travel, Inc., and Pilgrim's Rest Retreat Center.

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EDITORS' NOTE: A list of 1993-94 Coordinating Council members is available upon request from Baptist Press.

**Ministers should embrace truth,  
Southwestern graduates told**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The world needs a generation of ministers to internalize the truth of the Bible, D.L. Lowrie, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lubbock, Texas, told graduates at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's spring commencement May 14.

President Russell H. Dilday awarded degrees to 370 graduates during the ceremony in Fort Worth, Texas.

Lowrie told graduates:

"You've come through seminary education in a time of denominational confusion, a lot of denominational anger and divisiveness, and a lot of it has focused on this book I hold in my hand.

"I come with a prayer in my heart that you have no confusion at this point. You and I are sent to this broken, dark world with a word -- God's Word."

Lowrie also challenged students to live out biblical truth in their own lives.

"It's a whole lot easier to give sanctimonious, high-sounding statements about this Word than it is to internalize it and let it sanctify you," he said. "There needs to be a return to old-fashioned holiness. It's going to come when we stop arguing about the Bible and start obeying the Bible."

He also told students to guard against embracing new techniques in church growth and approaches to ministry over truth. "Most of them will be out of date before you get your diploma hung on the office wall," he said. He urged them to consider the simplicity of "the old, old story."

Lowrie is a 1962 graduate of Southwestern and a distinguished alumnus of the seminary. He has served as pastor of churches in Texas and Tennessee and has been at First Baptist in Lubbock since 1992. He previously was executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

The 370 students earned a total of 395 degrees during the ceremony, which was held at Fort Worth's Travis Avenue Baptist Church.

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**Sunday school workers advised  
of ways of reaching visitors**

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
5/17/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Helping Sunday morning guests in Southern Baptist churches feel welcome and wanting to return requires dealing with both perception and reality.

"We must do all we can to create the perception that something is going on and all we can to make sure something is going on," Tom Lee told more than 100 Sunday school directors and ministers of education attending a regional seminar at the Baptist Sunday School Board May 14-15.

Lee, growth consultant in the church growth-Sunday school division, said guests need to feel acceptance through simple actions such as smiling and making eye contact. Logistically, he urged, be aware that guests don't know their way around the building and need simple, clear directions.

He cited what he termed the "5 P's" of Sunday school growth, beginning with providing adequate parking.

A rule of thumb, Lee said, is one parking place for every 2.5 persons expected to attend. He urged directors to determine their own ratio of cars to attendance by dividing attendance by the number of cars parked at the church on Sunday morning.

The second key, preschool ministry, is vital in reaching parents, Lee said.

"Parents want to know their preschoolers will have a clean, safe, secure place for Sunday school," he said.

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Publicity, productive Bible study and persistent outreach are the remaining priorities for growth through the Sunday school, he noted.

"In America, the church growth movement boils down to publicity. This is not marketing the gospel but marketing the benefits of attending the services," Lee said. "Publicity is imaging your church in the community."

To provide productive Bible study, Lee urged directors to conduct weekly workers meetings that emphasize the Bible background, the central Bible truth of the lesson, the teaching aim for the session and the teaching procedures.

To have persistent, consistent outreach, Lee suggested conducting short-term projects no longer than two months in length to keep motivation for participating at a high level.

To administer a successful visitation program, he said directors should be realistic in not expecting everyone to participate but optimistic and determined to generate involvement by some.

He recommended structured weekly visitation while affirming actions by those who visit at other times. A definite time and place, specific assignments and reports after visits should be part of visitation, he said.

"Variety, enlistment and attention are the keys to successful visitation," Lee said.

Similar seminars will be conducted in other regions in 1993 and 1994.

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