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SBC Cooperative Program gifts
up for month, down for year

Baptist Press
10/1/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for the SBC 1992-93 fiscal year totaled 1.23 percent below the previous year although September gifts were above the month for the previous year, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

"It is encouraging to see the monthly Cooperative Program receipts above the previous year for the third month in a row," Chapman said. "Although the totals for the past year are down slightly, it appears there is a positive trend which would certainly help the 1993-94 year."

Total CP gifts for the fiscal year, ending Sept. 30, were \$136,539,729 compared to the previous year's total of \$138,234,734 or a decrease of \$1,695,005. The year end totals also missed the budget requirement of \$140,200,395, or 2.61 percent below budget.

Designated gifts, however, were also up for the month of September, compared to a year ago, with \$1,725,343 received compared to 1992 September of \$1,672,470 which is a 3.16 percent increase. Total designated gifts for the 1992-93 year were \$127,036,370 compared to 1991-92 of \$127,916,369, or a .69 percent decrease.

Adding designated and Cooperative Program gifts together for the 1992-93 year, the total of \$263,576,100 compares to the 1991-92 fiscal year of \$266,151,104 or a .97 percent decrease in total gifts.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. 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.

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. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

'True Love Waits' hits
NBC's 'Today' show

By Chip Alford

NEW YORK (BP)--Given today's moral climate, adults might question whether any teen-agers would be willing to take a public vow of sexual abstinence until marriage.

They might also question whether the secular media would give national exposure to a campaign that would encourage them to do so.

Both are happening.

Richard Ross, co-coordinator of the Baptist Sunday School Board-sponsored "True Love Waits" campaign appeared on NBC's "Today" show Sept. 29 along with University of Tennessee students Paul Ballenger and Susan Fitzgerald -- two of the first teens to sign abstinence pledges.

"The sexual revolution of the '60s continues to influence American behavior, but a new call is being made today to teen-agers urging them to return to traditional values and to practice abstinence," "Today" co-host Katie Couric said in her introduction to a five-minute segment on "True Love Waits."

Ross, interviewed live in NBC's New York studio, said teens are getting the message that "adults have given up on them. It has caused them to believe that 'Adults think we are going to be sexually promiscuous. They think we can't control ourselves.' Now we never intended to give them that message, but that's what they've heard."

Abstinence as a responsible and healthy lifestyle choice has been "de-emphasized" to teens in recent years, Ross said. "I think we've been so concerned about the health issues (related to sexual activity) that we've forgotten that teen-agers are very open to choosing abstinence."

Ballenger, a junior at U.T. and Fitzgerald's steady boyfriend, said choosing abstinence wasn't a difficult decision for him.

"My mom taught me all the time that abstinence was the most important thing. She never really taught me the option of condoms and other forms of birth control. (Abstinence) is what God wanted me to do," he said.

Asked if her friends thought she was "weird" for abstaining, Fitzgerald answered: "No, actually most all my friends are real supportive, even if they've already had sex. ... I even hear some people tell me, 'I wish I would have waited.'"

Couric asked Ross if "True Love Waits" takes any political stands against sex education or the distribution of condoms in schools.

"It's not an anti-anything campaign; it's just a clear, positive call to abstinence," he responded. "And the wonderful thing is, teen-agers are actually accepting that call.

"I know that many adults would question whether or not teen-agers would make a commitment like this. But last Sunday morning in one church (Champion Forest in Houston), 500 teen-agers said, 'Yes, this is what we want,' and (this same thing) is happening everywhere."

The NBC show's focus on "True Love Waits" resulted in numerous calls to the Sunday School Board from interested viewers from across the country, Ross said. In addition, media interest continues to grow, with recent inquiries coming from CNN News, USA Today, Associated Press, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the Fort Worth (TX) Star-Telegram and Harper's Magazine.

"Those of us coordinating 'True Love Waits' scarcely have time to keep up with media wanting to carry the story," Ross said. "I am very thankful God opened this wonderful door to let millions know that we are calling teen-agers to abstinence."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Canadian churches to embrace
'True Love Waits' campaign

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
10/1/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--The message of the Baptist Sunday School Board-sponsored "True Love Waits" campaign, already a nationwide phenomenon in the United States, is spreading north of the border.

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The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada recently endorsed the sexual abstinence campaign aimed at teen-agers and colleg students and will encourage its members to deliver the message across Canada. The EFC is an association of more than 100 Canadian Protestant denominations, para-church groups and mission agencies representing more than 7,000 churches.

"We're excited about this campaign because it gives young people a chance to overcome the myth that 'safe-sex' is the best solution. It draws them to a point of commitment and encourages them to stay sexually pure," said Don Simmonds, national youth coordinator for the Canadian Baptist Federation.

Simmonds, who will coordinate the Canadian campaign, said a "True Love Waits" guide will be made available to Canadian youth leaders and pastors through EFC's member churches and organizations. It will contain a two-week study for youth on God's intentions for sexuality and a parent-teen commitment service for use by churches. Also included will be practical ideas to help young people maintain a commitment to remain sexually abstinent until marriage.

All EFC churches will be encouraged to challenge their youth to make the "True Love Waits" pledge of sexual abstinence at some point between Jan. 1 and May 28, 1994. Young people who decide to make their commitments public will sign pledge cards which will be collected from across Canada and presented to the office of the Canadian prime minister in Ottawa on July 29 -- the same day approximately 500,000 signed covenant cards signed by American teen-agers are expected to be displayed in Washington, D.C. Plans also are underway to link a large number of Canadian youth who will be attending a meeting in Ottawa on the same date with American youth attending the Washington, D.C. event.

Jimmy Hester, co-coordinator of "True Love Waits" in the U.S., said he is "thrilled" about the Canadians' involvement in the campaign.

"When we started out, we were just hoping Southern Baptists would get involved. But then other religious groups became interested and it began to spread across denominational lines in the United States. Now, with the Canadians' involvement, we have the potential to impact the entire North American continent," he said.

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Holly brings new challenge
to Freemasonry report

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
10/1/93

ATLANTA (BP)--The man who spearheaded the campaign for Southern Baptists to investigate Freemasonry has brought a new challenge to a Home Mission Board report on the matter.

Larry Holly, a Beaumont, Texas, physician, claims the board "published a report which they knew was not true." Holly further cites a recent article in a masonic publication he claims links Southern Baptists with the masonic lodge, which he called a part of the occult.

Holly, who had previously said he would devote no more time to this matter, mailed letters to several Southern Baptist Convention leaders asking them to reconsider the HMB's report and to "issue a statement correcting the lie that Southern Baptists are in alliance with the Masonic Lodge."

HMB president Larry Lewis defended the board's report, and rejected any responsibility for "policing every characterization of the report."

"It is my prayer, and I believe the heart of Southern Baptists, that we stop devoting time and energy to this issue in order that we might focus on reaching the estimated 180 million lost people in the United States," Lewis said in a statement released Oct. 1.

Holly cites a September letter from Tal Davis, director of the HMB's Interfaith Witness department, to someone who wrote Lewis about Freemasonry.

The letter to Lewis asks for information concerning a portion of the HMB's board of directors six-page report that states: "not all Grand Lodges affirm Christian doctrine, and many do not declare Jesus as the unique Son of God; but many do, and for this we commend them."

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"I'd like to know which lodges declare Jesus as the unique Son of God," states the letter, to which Lewis asked Davis to respond.

In his response, Davis stated the report might be more clear if it had commended many individual masons, not lodges, for affirming Jesus as the unique Son of God.

"Our research did not find any local Masonic lodge nor any Grand Lodge which has taken a position for or against the biblical teaching affirming the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God," Davis' letter states.

Holly, in his letter, claims the Home Mission Board "led Southern Baptists to believe that Masonry is not so bad because 'many' Grand Lodges and local lodges affirm Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God."

Lewis countered, "Any implication that the Home Mission Board deliberately attempted to mislead Southern Baptists is patently untrue and certainly unfortunate."

Lewis noted that while they could find no lodge that specifically refers to Jesus as the Son of God, "there are multiple references to the concept of Jesus as the Son of God." Among those references is the cornerstone laying ceremony of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, which states, "For other foundation can no man lay, that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

During the SBC's annual meeting in Houston this summer, messengers accepted the HMB report, which claims some tenets of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity, but others are. The report recommended that membership in a Masonic lodge be a matter of personal conscience.

In an interview with Baptist Press, Holly said he intended to be done with the matter but felt the need to respond based on Masons' reporting on the vote taken in Houston.

Holly pointed to the August issue of the Scottish Rite Journal, which called the convention's vote "historic," joining Southern Baptists with Freemasons in their "elevation of individual conscience as the final guide to personal belief and action."

Lewis said in his statement that the board will not accept responsibility for "policing every characterization of the report."

"It would be impossible to write any document which could not be misinterpreted, misunderstood or misapplied by those who wish to do so," he said.

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Children of CBF missionaries
eligible for HSU scholarships

Baptist Press
10/1/93

ABILENE, Texas (BP)--An endowed scholarship at Hardin-Simmons University for children of missionaries serving with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has been established with a \$94,000 gift.

The CBF is the two-year-old organization of Baptist moderates which has begun appointing missionaries.

The endowed fund was established with a bequest from the estate of the late Mrs. Hollis Bond as a memorial to her sister-in-law, the late Mrs. W.D. Bond, the mother of Helen Jean (Bond) Parks, and wife of "Prof." Bond who taught English at HSU for many years. Mrs. Parks is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University.

The donor requested that the bequest be used for missions and that Mrs. Parks and her brother, Hall Bond, determine the specific use.

Mrs. Parks is the wife of Keith Parks, CBF missions coordinator and retired president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Lanny Hall, HSU president, said the scholarships will be awarded to children of missionaries now under CBF appointment. Recipients must maintain a 2.5 grade point average and will be selected by the financial aid office.

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**Flexible volunteers still needed
for flood rebuilding projects**

By Sarah Zimmerman

ATLANTA (BP)--Additional flooding in the Midwest has renewed the Home Mission Board's call for volunteers to help in rebuilding efforts.

Rebuilding projects will continue through next year, predicted Ray Gilliland, retired home missionary and coordinator of the Home Mission Board's disaster relief office.

Some areas flooded this summer were flooded again in September. Additional rain puts rebuilding projects on hold, so volunteers with flexible dates of service are especially needed, Gilliland said.

In September, Jim Keller, Allie Byrd and Manuel Shelton, members of Bethel View Baptist Church in Bristol, Tenn., tore bent siding off a house in West Des Moines, Iowa, and replaced it with new siding. The siding needed to be replaced because debris carried in the flood bent it out of shape, said Keller, a contractor and licensed electrician.

An Iowa resident made a profession of faith during the team's volunteer stint. Keller said Christians giving their time to the relief efforts was a positive witness in the community.

"I really got a blessing from it," Keller said. "We definitely got the best end of the deal. We'd all do it again."

Flood waters had reached above the windows, and the house needed to be rebuilt from the studs out, Keller said. Sheetrock and insulation had to be torn out and replaced. Mud had to be cleaned out of electrical panels.

In this case, the homeowners paid for most of the supplies with a grant from the federal government, Keller said. The money would not have covered the repairs if the owners had to pay for labor as well, he added.

Local relief organizations "did a fine job of evaluating people's needs," Keller said. "Every house on the street where we worked was assisted in some way."

All volunteers do not have to be skilled in construction, but coordinators suggest having one skilled volunteer for every two or three volunteers.

In addition to Iowa, volunteers are needed in Missouri and Illinois and in Florida where rebuilding after Hurricane Andrew continues. Gilliland works with state convention leaders in each state convention to place volunteers.

The toll-free number for the Home Mission Board's disaster relief office is 1-800-4SBC-AID. The office is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time.

Financial contributions for rebuilding efforts can be sent to the Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30367-5601. Checks should be made payable to the Home Mission Board and earmarked disaster relief.

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NEWS ADVISORY FROM FOREIGN MISSION BOARD

Southern Baptist personnel and Indian Baptists who work with them escaped harm during this week's earthquake in India, which killed at least 20,000 people. Bangalore Baptist Hospital, where Southern Baptist missionary physician Rebekah Naylor works, is about 500 miles away from the earthquake site. Naylor, of Fort Worth, Texas, is the only Southern Baptist missionary now living in India, although itinerant missionaries and volunteers travel in and out. Because of the long distances between Baptists and the devastated area, mission administrators do not currently plan to initiate relief operations. However, the Foreign Mission Board's prayer office has sent out calls for prayer for those suffering the effects of the quake. The prayer office also plans to devote all of next week's telephone Prayerline (1-800-395-7729) to calls for prayer for India.

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