

(BP)

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) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420.17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, 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 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 Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

January 4, 1994

94-1

NASHVILLE -- SBC Cooperative Program gifts up for month, year to date.
MISSOURI -- Pastors making baptism more of a celebration.
MISSOURI -- Meaningful, upbeat baptisms within reach, author says.
MISSOURI -- Baptism bloopers aplenty recounted by preachers.
OKLAHOMA CITY -- Former Okla. governor was man of 'absolute integrity.'
VIRGINIA -- Anti-Watchtower line: Success is too costly.
NASHVILLE -- Study course enrollment tops 1.6 million in 1993.
DALLAS -- Former youth minister promotes Super Bowl package for churches.

SBC Cooperative Program gifts
up for month, year-to-date

Baptist Press
1/1/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for December were up 14.56 percent over the same month a year ago which also helped the first quarter of the fiscal year to show an increase, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The CP gifts for December 1993 totaled \$12,495,334 compared to December 1992 of \$10,906,778, or a 14.56 percent increase. The year-to-date figure, the first quarter of the 1993-94 fiscal year, shows \$34,367,885 compared to the same period of 1992-93 of \$33,471,798, a 2.68 percent increase.

"This report is extremely encouraging," Chapman said. "Hopefully, we are re-establishing the upward trend in Cooperative Program giving. God has much work for Southern Baptists to accomplish. If we will be faithful our impact for Christ around the world in the coming years will be incalculable."

Designated gifts for December also were up, \$3,162,701 compared to last year of \$3,088,574, a 2.4 percent increase. However, year-to-date designated gifts total \$6,458,758 compared to \$7,573,443 in the previous fiscal year, a 14.72 percent decrease.

The December gifts also surpassed the monthly budget requirement for the SBC Program Allocation budget by \$975,773 or 108.47 percent of the required \$11,519,561. However, for the year to date, total gifts are \$190,798 short (or 99.45 percent) of the budget requirement for the first quarter.

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.

**Pastors making baptism
more of a celebration**

By Laurie A. Lattimore

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--A young woman told pastor Mike Haynes after several youth had been baptized at First Baptist Church in North Kansas City, Mo., she wanted to stand up with her fists in the air and yell, "Yeah!" When Haynes asked why she didn't, she smiled and admitted she didn't want others to think she was crazy.

Haynes instructed her to stand up and yell next time.

"There is never a more appropriate time to cheer and scream and make a fool of ourselves than when someone lets the world know they love Jesus and are sold out to him by their baptism," Haynes wrote in the church newsletter the following week.

The ordinance of baptism sometimes is viewed more as a ritual than a celebration, several Missouri Baptist pastors agreed. But they acknowledged many Baptist churches are highlighting baptism in more celebrative ways to remind congregations of its significance.

"Baptism is what we are all about. It is not just part of our ministry. This is what we are," Haynes said. "Baptism needs to be a celebration. It is such a testimony and addition to the service."

Rick Lay, pastor of Harmony Baptist Church in St. Louis, said too many Baptist churches have relegated baptism to a symbol without meaning.

"Baptism is one of those symbols that defines us as a denomination," he said. "We criticize other denominations for being ritualistic, but we do much of that ourselves."

Dave Bennett, director of evangelism for the Missouri Baptist Convention, noted baptism is one-third of the Great Commission, "the third we left out."

Churches sometimes consider baptism a disruption to the service, Bennett said. "It is so difficult to get the baptistry filled up, and baptism takes so much of our 'valuable' worship time, so we stick it on Sunday nights and save up for three months to do it."

"Baptism should be the first thing every Sunday morning," he said.

Baptist churches traditionally have been fearful of not emphasizing enough that baptism is only a symbol for salvation -- that salvation comes from a personal decision of faith. The danger, Lay said, is baptism tends to become an ordinance that has little significance to the new Christians and to the congregation.

"We are not wanting to make too much of it, but we've made too little. We have lost that celebration," he explained. "There is a trend to move away from that, but most churches are stuck in the tradition vacuum."

Lay has strived the last few years to make baptism the central part of the service -- drawing more attention to those being baptized and celebrating their decision to follow Jesus Christ.

He usually preaches a message on baptism, telling the candidates their baptism is the first step of many steps of obedience to God. He also gives a charge to the church for support and encouragement of the new Christians.

Before baptizing each candidate -- usually no more than three are baptized in one service to make it more personal -- Lay speaks about the person's pilgrimage to follow Christ and he usually asks a few questions of testimony.

Haynes often gives a brief explanation of what baptism is, emphasizing to the new Christian it represents the burial of their own sins and a new life with Jesus Christ.

"To the church body, I encourage people to reflect on their own baptism -- to recall the time they said, 'Jesus is the owner of my life' -- to draw them into it," he said. "Baptism is such a wonderful testimony. People tell me all the time, 'The Lord spoke to me through their baptism.'"

--more--

At First Baptist Church in Columbia, Mo., pastor Dan Day has both baptism and communion on the first Sunday of the month. The church began doing the Lord's Supper following baptism to make the first communion for the new Christians more special and meaningful, Day said.

Mark Conyers, pastor of First Baptist Church in Slater, Mo., said part of keeping baptism a celebration is making sure the congregation really understands how baptism is significant. He uses baptism services as a teaching time to explain the witness baptism is and how it reaffirms each person's own belief in Christ.

Bennett, who occasionally serves in interim pastorates, said he likes to preach on baptism from "the tank," explaining its history, theology and practical use. He emphasized what an evangelistic tool a baptism service can be. For that reason, baptism will be theme for Missouri Baptists' 1995 Evangelism Conference, he said.

Bennett added every time he has preached on baptism from the baptistry, at least one person has come forward seeking baptism. Because of its public witness, Bennett schedules baptisms according to which Sunday the candidate can have the most friends and family there.

Haynes pointed out sometimes people who have grown up in the church hear the preacher's words over and over and fail to renew the commitment to Christ in their own lives. A tragedy of such an attitude, he said, is people view baptism mainly as adding a new member to the church.

"We tend to think of it like, 'Oh good, that 13-year-old is joining the church,'" he said. "Baptism is not about joining the church. It is a symbol of a personal walk with the Lord."

Barry Watts, pastor of Woodcrest Chapel in Columbia, said the university setting there brings a lot of people from various backgrounds who often do not understand the Baptist doctrine for baptism. He discovered many people attending the church had an overwhelming number of questions about baptism. He preached a couple of sermons on the topic; they were recorded for all new Christians and for anyone else who requested a tape.

Baptism is observed at the end of the Sunday morning service at Woodcrest because of the structure of the Baptist church -- a converted gymnasium with the baptistry in the back.

The ordinance is not as significant as it should be because it is tacked onto the end, Watts acknowledged, but the church tries to emphasize the importance of baptism by de-emphasizing any pomp and circumstance.

Watts said he is careful to point out baptism is only a symbolic ordinance observed because of a new relationship with Christ. "I usually splash around the water a little and say it is only full of chlorine and dead crickets," he said. "There is no power in the water."

Although baptism is not the center of the worship service at Woodcrest, Watts said the church tries to make it a celebration. He hopes eventually to incorporate having candidates give a personal testimony just before they are baptized.

"We have made a point to applaud every person," he said. "We want the candidate to understand we are excited and we approve."

Lay said churches that are more concerned with statistics than with encouraging and celebrating the new decisions represented by baptism miss out on the powerful witness it has.

A church Lay visited near London, England, has the baptistry outside because the pastor wanted baptism to be a real public witness.

"It was a marvelous thing. It really impressed me," Lay said. "A public display of one's faith is one of the most powerful things to witness. It is the symbol of Christ's burial and resurrection."

**Meaningful, upbeat baptisms
within reach, author says**

By Laurie A. Lattimore

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--What do you remember about your baptism -- does it stick out in your mind as a special occasion or a routine ceremony?

Gerald Steffy, director of missions in Illinois and former assistant pastor of Tower Grove Baptist Church in St. Louis, has compiled several suggestions for making baptism ceremonies more meaningful in his book, "Baptismal Manual: Making Baptism More Meaningful."

Steffy remembers his baptism but little explanation about its meaning. To help churches have more upbeat baptism services, Steffy gives 135 possibilities for making baptism more significant. He also includes personal baptismal testimonies, hints for baptism sermons and baptismal poetry.

Following are some highlights of Steffy's suggestions for a more meaningful baptism:

- Prepare a Bible study for baptismal candidates to be used prior to the candidate's baptism. The study would answer questions such as who should be baptized and what baptism means.

- Prepare a guidebook that addresses the transition from a life in sin to a new life in Christ, helping new believers follow through with their decision.

- Plan a worship service to include both baptism and the Lord's Supper in the same service. Seat the newly baptized and those recently baptized in the front and serve them first.

- Plan the baptismal service so it will have the greatest witness to the unsaved. Schedule baptisms when non-Christians are most likely to be present. Avoid building up such a large number and creating the impression there is a rush to finish.

- Introduce the person who led the candidate to Christ or was instrumental in the person knowing Christ. Find ways to make the candidate's baptism personal.

Dave Bennett, Missouri Baptists' director of evangelism, encourages pastors to smile, make eye contact and talk to the candidate rather than quoting, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ..." in a liturgical voice.

- Make the baptism a time of celebration. It is something to rejoice about since one who has been saved is following the Lord in baptism. Place emphasis on the specialness of the decision. One church, for example, claps when one comes forward to make a decision or is baptized.

- Consider having occasional outside baptisms in a river, pond or swimming pool and a "press conference" to answer questions afterward. Bennett shared one church held its baptisms every Sunday at a public beach. After the service, he would wade over to where observers gathered and talk about baptism.

"Our attendance at Sunday morning worship grew by more than 100 people in 10 weeks, mainly due to curiosity aroused by these public baptisms," Bennett said.

- Pray with each candidate before and after the baptism.

- Have candidates share their testimony of their new faith in Christ before being baptized.

- When members of a family are baptized at the same time, have them come into the baptistry together and stay until each one is baptized.

- Bring family members into the baptistry when one member is being baptized because often the entire family is instrumental in leading that person to Christ.

- Give each baptism candidate something to remember this special day, such as a certificate from the church or a rose. A videotape of the service also could be done.

- Help the church realize its responsibility toward the new converts, such as a charge to the church of its ongoing responsibility to encourage spiritual maturity of those baptized.

- Have a sharing service where people talk about their baptism and what it meant to them. This could be done in connection with a baptism service.

**Baptism bloopers aplenty
recounted by preachers**

By Laurie A. Lattimore

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Ask a pastor to tell his funniest or most embarrassing baptism story and a nervous laugh followed by hesitation is the typical reaction. With a little coaxing, the stories are rattled off one after another. And if a group of pastors is standing together, the question starts a contest -- who has had the most horrific or hilarious experience with baptism.

Baptism is a serious and celebrative event for new Christians. But there is no denying even Baptists make mistakes in baptisms that didn't go exactly as planned, such as hip-waders filling up with water or choir members feeling as though they're in the first six rows at Sea World.

A few reluctant but nevertheless agreeable pastors recounted their baptism bloopers. The stories were plentiful.

Ranse Oswald, pastor of Greenwood Baptist Church in Joplin, Mo., recalled his first baptism -- as an intern pastor during his years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. The associate pastor had moved, then the senior pastor suddenly died. Oswald was next in line for performing a baptism service.

Knowing Oswald was nervous, the deacons assured him they would be lenient. Oswald stepped into the baptistry, said the prayer and opened his eyes to realize that a huge scorpion had joined him for the baptism.

"I screamed, pushed back the water and cleared everyone out of the baptistry," he recalled, laughing. "The deacons really weren't too lenient about that."

Oswald could not resist telling a baptism blooper he witnessed at a church in Ohio but thankfully had no part in. The baptistry was under the pulpit and rooms for changing were behind the pulpit.

On a particular Sunday, the pastor baptized a young man in the Air Force. Once he was baptized he exited to the rooms to change. The woman who followed panicked once she stepped into the water. In the midst of her thrashing, she grabbed the curtain behind the baptistry, exposing the young Air Force man who was pulling on his pants.

"He dove into the baptistry immediately and then never showed up at that church again," Oswald said.

Steve Davenport, pastor of Oakridge Baptist Church in St. Peters, Mo., had a bad experience with his baptistry, which had a drain built at a slant. He walked into church one Sunday morning to the worst stench he had ever smelled.

"The trap in the drain had dried out because of the slant and because we hadn't been baptizing regularly to have water running through it," he explained. "So the church stunk."

A plumber told the pastor he had two options: Build a new baptistry with a new drain or baptize regularly to avoid having the "stinkiest church in the world," Davenport said.

"We decided to keep baptizing people," Davenport reported. "And we have only had a stinky church one time since in the last eight years."

Early in his ministry, Dan Day, pastor of First Baptist Church in Columbia, Mo., baptized a husband and wife who were both rather hefty. Day said it was the first time he had baptized adults and he did not know how to distribute the weight while lowering the person.

"I was quoting Romans 6 as I lowered her down into the water, which is no problem with a little kid because there is no stress," Day admitted. "About midway, I was losing grip and my voice was getting higher and higher ... until I slap-dead dropped her."

"I splashed everything, including the choir, and then did the same thing with her husband. I never quoted Romans 6 like that again."

Former Okla. governor was
man of 'absolute integrity'

By Bob E. Matthews

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--"I have made a lot of money over the years, and I have lost a lot of money over the years, but what I have given away I can never lose."

That's one statement attributed to the late Raymond Gary, former Oklahoma governor and longtime Baptist layman who died at age 85 at his Madill Baptist Village residence Dec. 11. He donated the land for the village in 1976 and financed one of its first buildings. Gary's body lay in state in the state capitol where a memorial service was held Dec. 14. His funeral was Dec. 16 at First Baptist Church in Kingston, where he was a longtime member.

Joe L. Ingram, former executive director-treasurer of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and a close friend to Gary, gave the benediction, thanking God for Gary's "personal qualities of honesty, truthfulness, absolute integrity and for his vision and willingness to live by principles."

Gary's political achievements have been well documented in the media, with mention usually made of his Christian commitment and involvements as a Baptist layman.

Gary, the churchman, are among the reflections of one of his former pastors, David C. Hall.

"It was a great day when Oklahoma's new governor, Raymond Gary, and his wife, Emma, joined Kelham Avenue Church where I was pastor," Hall said. "As we remember his support of Oklahoma Baptist work, his chairmanship of the 30-day Billy Graham crusade in Oklahoma City and his service as a trustee of Southwestern (Baptist Theological) Seminary, it is important to recall his love for his church.

"Many were surprised the Garys joined a declining church in a racially changing area. Members were scattered, the building fund had been spent on a massive remodeling program and debt had been incurred.

"The Garys were welcome assistance to those working to save the church. By 1959, associational minutes recorded an average of more than 800 in Sunday school and nearly 400 in training union. Baptisms were more than 100 per year; two missions were started; and Cooperative Program gifts increased by 50 percent."

Hall said the Garys taught Sunday school, led training union, hosted Girls' Auxiliary meetings at the governor's mansion and were faithful in tithing and visitation.

The retired pastor related an oft-told story about a newcomer who told her neighbor two men from Kelham Avenue had visited and invited her to the church. She told the neighbor one of them gave his name as Raymond Gary. When told he was governor of the state, she didn't believe it.

The next Sunday she visited Kelham Avenue to confirm his identification. Pointing out Gary, she asked a member who he was. "Oh, that's Raymond Gary, our governor."

Another story Hall tells stemmed from a long period without rain in 1956 that prompted Gary to call for a day of prayer for rain. The governor led the prayer at Kelham Avenue and during his prayer, lightning flashed, thunder rolled and rain fell.

After the service, Gary went to a closet and retrieved galoshes, a raincoat and umbrella he had had his driver bring to church. Hall asked, "'Governor, what would you have done if it hadn't rained?' He said, 'Nobody but the driver and I would have ever known those were in there.'"

Gary once insisted his speech to a national convention in Oklahoma City be rescheduled so he could attend revival services at church.

Hall recalled that Gary's Christian walk extended to the governor's mansion where he refused to serve alcoholic beverages and he witnessed to and won to Christ prison trustees assigned to work there.

Gary once informed Hall he would have a visitor with him in a Sunday morning service. It turned out to be New York Gov. Averell Harriman who Hall invited to the platform and asked to relate his personal experience with Christ.

--more--

In a 1985 Tulsa Tribune article, writer Joseph E. Howell noted: "He (Gary) was a Baptist at a time when the Baptist church was regarded by many as the state's most powerful political party, stronger than either the Democratic or the Republican party."

The Associated Press reported in 1957, "Gary spends 9 to 12 hours a day in his Capitol office and averages six night meetings a week, including two evening church services."

In 1978, Gary told a state Brotherhood-sponsored lunch that when he was a youth his father instructed him to "unhitch your plowing team early enough today to go to the brush arbor meeting and hear the preaching."

Gary said he followed his father's instructions and was converted at age 19. His father was saved in the same meeting. Then he made an application: "If people would unhitch from daily chores and unhitch from the TV set and go to the Lord's house and worship, our churches would fill up and there'd be a new spirit. People would feel better toward each other and this spirit would spread throughout the land, even to the seat of government, and our nation's problems could be solved and we could march forward."

--30--

Anti-Watchtower line:
Success is too costly

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
1/4/94

DANVILLE, Va. (BP)--A toll-free phone line offering recorded criticisms of Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs was too successful to continue because of rising phone bills, said its sponsor.

The line received more than 20,000 calls from almost every area code in the nation during its 15 months of operation, said George Kesterson, director of Watching the Watchtower.

A lack of financial support, however, failed to pay more than \$6,000 worth of phone bills, said Kesterson, a former Jehovah's Witness. "The phone line was more successful than one person could handle."

Kesterson, a Mission Service Corps volunteer with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department, had worked full time in the ministry he set up with the help of inheritance money.

"I'm still wanting to do the ministry full time but the economics of the thing will require that I get a job," he said, adding that he recently took a job with a tax preparation company.

Established in September 1991, the line had weekly messages challenging the teachings and beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses, also known as members of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

The society, based in Brooklyn, N.Y., is considered a cult, or Christian deviation, because it rejects traditional Christian concepts of the nature of God, Jesus Christ, humanity and salvation, said Maurice Smith, associate director of the HMB's interfaith witness department.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe salvation is only possible for members of the Watchtower Society, Smith said. They also believe in two classes of saved citizens: 144,000 who will go to heaven and the rest who will live in a paradise earth, he said.

Five different predictions for Armageddon, when the society claimed all non-Jehovah's Witnesses would be destroyed, have gone unfulfilled.

Kesterson said the group appeals to people because it claims to have concrete answers to biblical questions.

"People want to understand what happens to us when we die. People want to understand the nature of God," he said. "We tend to linger on the salvation message rather than giving them hard doctrinal truths."

Of the 3,000 people weekly who are baptized into the Watchtower Society, at least 65 percent come from traditional Christian backgrounds, Kesterson said.

--more--

"I never won anybody (to the Watchtower) who wasn't a church member anywhere," he said, adding one of his converts was a Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher.

Once a member of the society, the group forbids any questioning of Watchtower teachings, he said.

The group claims to be God's only true prophet to earth, and members are taught they are questioning the voice of God when they question Watchtower teachings, he said. Members could be expelled simply for calling a counter-cult phone line, he said.

"I was in my 30s when I picked up the telephone five times with sweaty palms and shaking hands, afraid to dial the number of somebody who had left because I was afraid Jehovah was going to get me."

One reason the toll-free line was so successful was because Witnesses from anywhere in the country could call in confidentiality, he said.

"They still did that with trepidation, but at least they could do it with the security of knowing the phone line wasn't going to show up on the phone bill so they'd have to make an explanation to somebody else in their family."

In 1991, the Watchtower Society had about 901,000 active participants in America and 4.2 million worldwide. The organization's growth, however, is about 1 percent annually, Kesterson said.

"They've got more and more Jehovah's Witnesses working door-to-door more and more to get less and less," he said, adding the society is losing the equivalent of three congregations (about 60 people each) daily.

Kesterson said he will continue to offer a local anti-Watchtower phone line while working with other groups to offer similar ministries. His local line for taped messages is (804) 793-1554.

Smith praised Kesterson's ministry as a model that could be duplicated by churches or associations willing to set up a local line and train local pastors or volunteers to counsel Jehovah's Witnesses.

Meanwhile, Kesterson said another need is for counter-cult work in other countries.

"Unfortunately the Jehovah's Witness movement is growing bountifully in the foreign countries because they do not have access to the early Watchtower writings," he said.

"For people who have nothing with which to compare, it sounds like a really good deal. It's only after you've been in that you start getting doubts."

--30--

Study course enrollment
tops 1.6 million in 1993

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
1/4/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Church Study Course, a Southern Baptist educational system designed to support the training efforts of local churches, reached a record enrollment of 1,674,671 in 1993. That total is a 5 percent increase over the previous year's 1,588,363, according to figures released by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

Topping the list of earned awards by Southern Baptists in 1993 were Texas Baptists, with 104,636. They also achieved the largest numerical increase with 11,727 more awards than in 1992. Other top-ranking states were Florida, with 64,048; Georgia, with 50,956; North Carolina, with 45,604; Tennessee, with 44,925; and Alabama, with 41,800.

Following Texas in numerical increases for 1993 were California, with 3,735; Kansas-Nebraska, with 2,999; Kentucky, with 1,569; Illinois, with 1,425; and Utah-Idaho, with 1,231.

The largest percentage increases in awards for the year were in the Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship, with 70.70 percent increase; Utah-Idaho, 65.58 percent; Nevada, 43.79 percent; Wyoming, 42.12 percent; Hawaii, 36.15 percent; and Kansas-Nebraska, 30.62 percent.

--more--

According to Jerry L. Chapman, supervisor of the Church Study Course (CSC) resources section at the Sunday School Board, 86,308 persons entered the CSC system in 1993, an average of 1,660 new students each week.

More than 710,000 awards, down from 714,247 in 1992, and 175,000 diplomas, an increase from 161,311 in 1992, were earned during the year by participants who selected from more than 600 courses in 24 subject areas. And while the heart of CSC is leadership training, Chapman said many courses are available for all persons in personal Christian growth. In 1993, diplomas for leadership studies totaled 42,250; diplomas issued by subject areas reached 19,351; and Christian development diplomas totaled 113,446.

Chapman said the most popular courses for the year included "Experiencing God," with 138,319 awards, followed by the Adult Winter Bible study book for 1993, "Matthew 5-7: Design for Discipleship," with 67,526 awards. Other top subject areas in popularity were "MasterLife," "Survival Kit" and "PrayerLife."

Since its beginning in 1902, CSC has expanded from two courses related to Sunday school to studies representing all church programs. Sponsorship includes a variety of Southern Baptist national agencies, including the Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood Commission, Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Stewardship Commission and Education Commission. Additional support comes from related departments of state Baptist conventions and associations.

Computerized records are maintained for all agencies, and reports were provided on the progress of students to the more than 17,000 participating SBC churches in 1993. Of the persons participating last year, approximately 400,000 are non-Southern Baptists, Chapman estimated. Southern Baptists from Europe, Canada and the Caribbean also participate, he said.

Subject areas include the church, evangelism and witnessing, Christian growth and service, Bible studies, Baptist doctrine, Christian ethics, Christian history, missions, church music, Sunday school, discipleship, leadership studies for WMU and Brotherhood organizations, the Christian family, deacon ministry, administrative leadership, recreation leadership, church media library, stewardship, pastoral ministries and weekday education.

Chapman said course offerings for 1994 include 79 new courses, 29 video courses and a wide selection of courses in Spanish. Catalogs for the Church Study Course may be obtained by calling the Sunday School Board at 1-800-458-2772. Questions regarding CSC may be directed to Chapman at the Sunday School Board, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, TN 37234 or by calling (615)251-2325.

--30--

Lists of states ranked by total Church Study Course awards, the top 25 churches in CSC participation and the top 25 associations in CSC awards have been faxed to state Baptist newspapers by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

Former youth minister promotes
Super Bowl package for churches By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
1/4/94

DALLAS (BP)--A former Baptist youth minister hopes to help churches nationwide use the Jan. 30 Super Bowl to score a touchdown in youth ministry.

Mitch Beckman of Compass Communications in Dallas is directing an effort called "Let's Party Super Bowl Sunday."

The company is selling a package of videotapes, promotional items and party guides for churches to create a Christian emphasis on the highest holy day of America's favorite armchair religion. Cost is \$95.

The foundation of the program is a one-hour pre-game video featuring such sports celebrities as Herschel Walker, Bobby Bowden, Bill Bates and Gene Stallings, along with Christian entertainers such as 4-Him and Stephen Curtis Chapman. The sports figures and entertainers will offer humor, music and testimonies about their faith in Jesus Christ.

--more--

A 12-minute video for use at half time features Spencer Tillman, Houston Oilers running back, talking specifically about what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The kit also includes a planning guide with suggested activities for non-sports fans.

The "Let's Party" program is being produced and packaged by the same folks who delivered Ross Perot into America's living rooms with his charts and graphs during last year's presidential campaign. Compass Communications is a for-profit production company owned by Lee Martin, brother of Larry Martin, ministry section vice president with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Beckman, the company's new specialist in religious marketing, is a graduate of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn. The Lake City, Fla., native has served Southern Baptist churches in Texas and Mississippi as youth minister and currently is a member of First Baptist Church of Coppell, Texas.

"The major influence on American teens today is media," Beckman explained. "They're selling everything."

Instead of complaining about this, the church should find a way to capitalize on it, he said. "Why don't we take where kids are anyway and create something positive?"

The Super Bowl is an event in itself -- and one that's likely to draw teens and their families away from Sunday night church, Beckman said. "All we're doing is tagging something in front of it and in the middle of it."

This is the first year for Beckman's company to produce a teen-oriented Super Bowl package for churches. A different organization, Sports Outreach America, began offering a Super Bowl outreach emphasis to churches last year.

But Beckman says the two organizations aren't competing in the same market. Beckman's program specifically targets youth groups, while the other program is more adult-oriented, he said.

Compass Communications offered a similar package for churches to use last Halloween. About 100 churches paid to participate, Beckman said.

The Halloween event was different in that the program aired on a cable channel available to anyone who could receive that signal, regardless of whether they bought the kit or not. "We lost our shirts and everybody enjoyed it," he said. "A lot of other people wanted to do it, but it wasn't broadcast in their area. That's why we've gone to video."

Similar projects could be developed for Valentine's Day and New Year's Eve programs, Beckman said.

The Super Bowl program has some sponsorship from Rapha Treatment Centers, a chain of Christian-based counseling and substance-abuse treatment services. The video presentation includes mention of Rapha's toll-free help line.

Although the package is being marketed by a for-profit company, the goal is not to make money, Beckman said. "We have enough other things that are working that we're not depending on this to put the company over."

The company is concerned about helping Christians have an influence in the secular marketplace, he explained. "If Christ is going to do anything with America again, it's going to come out of our teen-agers. ... We're just a tool for these youth ministers to bring teen-agers together again."

The company promises to ship the "Let's Party" kit to any church within 48 hours of receiving the order. The delivery cost for orders placed after Jan. 15 is slightly higher.

More information can be obtained by calling 1-800-947-6411.

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37203

Southern Baptist Library and
Archives