

America's Racial Pluralism and SBC Growth

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Associational Bulletin

Volume 15, No. 5

September 1981

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Racial/ethnic identification in the 1980 Census has undergone extraordinary change during the past decade. In 1970, Hispanic persons who had not identified themselves as Negro, were automatically assumed to be white by the Census Bureau. In 1980, a large segment of Hispanics self-identified themselves in the racial category "other" rather than "white," thus the category "other" has grown substantially. In 1980, 40.0 percent of the Hispanics classified themselves as "other" compared to 1.0 percent in 1970, a rise from 87,930 to 5,840,648 persons. According to the 1980 Census, 86.4 percent of the "other" races are Hispanic, compared to 4.3 percent of the white, 1.5 percent of the

black and 4.7 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander category.

The 1980 data were also affected by a new interest in reestablishing one's native American heritage. The American Indian population increased by nearly two million, from 1,538,721 to 3,500,636.

Despite some of the changes in reclassification, from 1970 to 1980 the white population increased from 177.7 to 188.3 million. The black population grew from 22.6 to 26.5 million, up 3.9 million or 17.3 percent. In 1970 whites represented 87.5 percent of the U.S. population, while in 1980 their proportion dropped to 83.2 percent, partially because of the statistical phenomenon. Blacks remained about the

same, 11.1 in 1970 and 11.7 percent in 1980.

The report *Comparison of Racial Ethnic Change to SBC Growth by States, 1970-1980*, published by the Research Division, HMB, June 1981, compares SBC growth to the change in white population. Seven states in the South did not increase in members as rapidly as the actual growth in white population. The section of the report on SBC members also includes estimates of 80,000 black and 120,000 Hispanic members of SBC churches. These figures herald a new day for SBC pluralism but should be greeted only as a beginning.

Morris is director, Research Division, HMB.

Guidelines for Messengers

Russell Bennett

Messengers to the annual meeting should be selected with prayerful concern by the local church. Here are specific recommendations.

1. Ask the church nominating committee to include the positions of messengers and alternates in its annual report. Elect associational messengers and alternates along with other church officers. Communication with neighboring churches deserves that consideration.
2. Elect messengers and alternates to serve an entire year for semi-annual and called, as well as annual, meetings. Such advance election also allows messengers time to prepare mind and spirit.
3. Elect the most capable church leaders because the association de-

serves the best.

4. Let the messengers represent the entire congregation by selecting men, women and youth from various church organizations.
5. Be sure associational executive board members are also elected messengers to the annual meeting.
6. Be sure to elect the number of messengers to which your church is entitled by the constitution of the association.
7. Provide each messenger with a copy of these guidelines.
8. Be sure the messengers have copies of the associational minutes, constitution and available advance reports.
9. Support the office of messenger by bringing the messengers before

- the congregation for dedicatory prayer by the pastor on Sunday before the associational meeting.
10. Provide each messenger with a credentials card (or letter) verifying his election by the church to that position.
11. Provide time in one or more regularly scheduled church services for the messengers to report on the results of the meeting.

This is an excerpt from the brochure, *Guidelines for Messengers* available from the Home Mission Board.

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