

# BAPTIST VIEWpoll

March, 1983

VIEWpoll is a cooperative effort of the Sunday School Board and Home Mission Board to monitor quarterly certain key areas of Southern Baptists' awareness, thought, and action.

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## BAPTIST VIEWpoll FOR MARCH 1983

### I. INTRODUCTION

This report is a presentation of the findings from the March, 1983 poll of the Baptist VIEWpoll panel.

There are currently 614 members (269 pastors, 217 ministers of education, and 128 directors of missions) on the Baptist VIEWpoll panel. Of these, 78.4 percent (211) of the pastors, 76.5 percent (166) of the ministers of education, and 94.5 percent (121) of the directors of missions participated in the March poll.

Items on the March poll involved four areas of interest:

- Attitudes toward the Cooperative Program
- Mission Service Corps volunteers
- Baptisms
- Presidential poll

### II. COMMENTS ON THE FINDINGS

A. Attitudes toward the Cooperative Program are "about the same" as they were this time last year, according to the majority of the panel members (58% of the pastors, 69% of the ministers of education, and 63% of the directors of missions). However, a sizeable portion (38% of the pastors, 28% of the ministers of education, and 36% of the directors of missions) report that attitudes toward the Cooperative Program are "more favorable" now than they were this time last year.

Table 1 depicts reporting on this item in February 1982 in relationship to the March 1983 poll. Attitudes toward the Cooperative Program are basically stable, but where there has been any change it has been in a positive direction.

B. Nine percent of the pastors and 16 percent of the ministers of education have had someone from their church serve as an assigned Mission Service Corps volunteer, but 47 percent of the directors of missions have had someone from their association(s) serve in this capacity.

TABLE 1  
ATTITUDES IN THE CHURCHES/ASSOCIATIONS TOWARD  
THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

	<u>Pastors</u>			<u>Ministers of Education</u>			<u>Directors of Missions</u>		
	<u>February, 1982</u>			<u>February, 1982</u>			<u>February, 1982</u>		
<u>March, 1983</u>	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>	<u>About the same</u>	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>	<u>About the same</u>	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>	<u>About the same</u>
More favorable	60%	(2)	26%	43%	(1)	23%	51%	(2)	26%
Less favorable	2	(4)	3	4	(1)	1	-	(-)	2
About the same	<u>38</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>(5)</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>(3)</u>	<u>72</u>
Totals	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%
	(73)	(12)	(119)	(47)	(7)	(99)	(45)	(5)	(68)
		(204)			(153)			(118)	

NOTE ON READING THE DATA: Observe that 204 pastors, 153 ministers of education, and 118 directors of missions participated in both polls. Looking only at the 204 pastors involved, observe that for February, 1982, 73 pastors reported "more favorable" attitudes, 12 reported "less favorable" attitudes, and 119 reported that attitudes were "about the same." Of the 73 pastors who reported "more favorable" attitudes in February, 1982, 60 percent reported "more favorable" attitudes in March, 1983 (which would tend to indicate that attitudes are moving consistently in a positive direction), 2 percent reported "less favorable" (which would tend to indicate that attitudes are moving in a negative direction), and 38 percent reported "about the same" (which would tend to indicate that the favorable attitudes of February, 1982 are stable in March, 1983). The rest of the data can be read in the same way that the pastor data has been presented.

When respondents reporting volunteers were asked to indicate what effect individual and church financial support of Mission Service Corps volunteers had had on the Cooperative Program, mission offerings, and mission awareness, the following was learned:

- Giving to the Cooperative Program has increased (44% of the pastors, 23% of the ministers of education, and 40% of the directors of missions), or
- giving to the Cooperative Program has not been affected by Mission Service Corps contributions (50% of the pastors, 69% of the ministers of education, and 47% of the directors of missions); but
- no one reported that giving to the Cooperative Program has decreased.
- Giving to mission offerings (Annie Armstrong and Lottie Moon) has increased (45% of the pastors, 42% of the ministers of education, and 44% of the directors of missions) or
- giving to the mission offerings has not been affected by Mission Service Corps contributions (33% of the pastors, 42% of the ministers of education, and 42% of the directors of missions); however,
- eleven percent of the pastors did report that giving to mission offerings has decreased.
- Missions awareness has increased (83% of the pastors, 89% of the ministers of education, and 79% of the directors of missions).

C. When respondents were asked how baptisms for the period October, 1982-January, 1983 compared to the same period last year, indications are that baptisms this year are ahead of last year's figures, (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

How does the number of baptisms so far  
this year compare to the same period  
last year?

	<u>Pastors</u>		<u>Ministers of Education</u>		<u>Directors of Missions</u>	
	<u>January, 1982</u>	<u>January, 1983</u>	<u>January, 1982</u>	<u>January, 1983</u>	<u>January, 1982</u>	<u>January, 1983</u>
Many more	7%	7%	6%	9%	3%	4%
A few more	22	25	29	38	32	48
About the same	48	43	34	34	50	36
A few less	18	18	25	14	15	10
Dropped greatly	5	7	6	5	-	2
	(Base of 202)		(Base of 154)		(Base of 118)	

D. The majority of the pastors (59%) and ministers of education (63%) "approve" of the way Ronald Reagan is handling his job as president, and the largest portion (45%) of the directors of missions concur. On the other hand, 26 percent of the panelists "disapprove" of the way the president is handling his job.

The latest Gallup poll (March/April, 1983) reveals that nationally 41 percent "approve" of the way the President is handling his job, while 49 percent "disapprove." Thus, Southern Baptists' leaders, on the whole, appear to be significantly more favorable toward the way President Reagan is handling his job than is the general population.

Table 3 reveals that the percentage of those approving the way President Reagan is handling his job has not changed much over the period August, 1982-March, 1983. However, the percentage who disapprove of his handling of his job has declined noticeably in this period for all three groups on the panel. On the other hand, those who have "no opinion" on his handling of his job has noticeably increased during this period. And, cross-tabulation data reveals that this "shifting" follows no general pattern. That is, some who "approved" in 1982 now either "disapprove" or have "no opinion," while some who disapproved in 1982 now either "approve" or have "no opinion." There seems to be no pattern to the switching.

TABLE 3

## PRESIDENTIAL POLL

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling his job as president?

	<u>Pastors</u>		<u>Ministers of Education</u>		<u>Directors of Missions</u>	
	<u>August, 1982</u>	<u>March, 1983</u>	<u>August, 1982</u>	<u>March, 1983</u>	<u>August, 1982</u>	<u>March, 1983</u>
Approve	59%	60%	70%	68%	54%	48%
Disapprove	40	31	30	21	46	37
No opinion	<u>1</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15</u>
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(Base of 181)		(Base of 148)		(Base of 103)	

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Would you say that attitudes in your church/association toward the Cooperative Program are more favorable, less favorable, or about the same as they were this time last year?

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Ministers of Education</u>	<u>Directors of Missions</u>
More favorable	38%	28%	36%
Less favorable	4	3	1
About the same	<u>58</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>63</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	(211)	(166)	(121)

2. Mission Service Corps workers are adult volunteers who provide their own expenses and who serve full time for one or two years in missions and evangelism in the home and foreign areas (approved and assigned by missions agencies involved and supported by financial giving over and beyond present mission contributions). Has anyone from your church/association served as an assigned Mission Service Corps volunteer?

Yes	9%	16%	47%
No	91	84	44
Don't know	-	-	7
N.I.	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	(211)	(166)	(121)

Question 2 (continued)

If "YES,"

- a. In your opinion, how has individual and church financial support of Mission Service Corps volunteers affected the support of the Cooperative Program?

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Ministers of Education</u>	<u>Directors of Missions</u>
Giving to the Cooperative Program has increased . . . . .	44%	23%	40%
Giving to the Cooperative Program has decreased . . . . .	-	-	-
Giving to the Cooperative Program has not been affected by Mission Service Corps contributions . . . . .	50	69	47
Don't know . . . . .	-	8	11
N.I. . . . .	<u>6</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	(18)	(26)	(57)

- b. In your opinion, how has individual and church financial support of Mission Service Corps volunteers affected the support of the Annie Armstrong (Home) and Lottie Moon (Foreign) mission offerings?

Giving to these mission offerings has increased . . . . .	45%	42%	44%
Giving to these mission offerings has decreased . . . . .	11	-	-
Giving to these mission offerings has not been affected by Mission Services Corps contributions . . . . .	33	42	42
Don't know . . . . .	-	16	12
N.I. . . . .	<u>11</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	(18)	(26)	(57)

Question 2 (continued)

c. In your opinion, how has individual and church financial support of Mission Service Corps volunteers affected your church's/association's awareness (knowledge) of missions and missionary needs?

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Ministers of Education</u>	<u>Directors of Missions</u>
Awareness has increased . . . . .	83%	89%	79%
Awareness has decreased . . . . .	-	-	-
Awareness has not been affected by Mission Service Corps contributions . . . .	6	11	19
Don't know . . . . .	-	-	2
N.I. . . . .	<u>11</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	(18)	(26)	(57)

3. Based on your church's records (based on what you hear from the churches in your association), how does the number of baptisms so far this year compare to the same period last year (October, 1982-January 1983 compared to October, 1981-January, 1982)?

Many more . . . . .	7%	10%	4%
A few more . . . . .	25	37	49
About the same as last year . . . . .	43	33	36
A few less . . . . .	18	15	9
The number of baptisms has dropped greatly . . . . .	7	4	2
N.I. . . . .	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	(211)	(166)	(121)

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling his job as president?

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Ministers of Education</u>	<u>Directors of Missions</u>	<u>Total</u>
Approve	59%	63%	45%	57%
Disapprove	28	21	31	26
No opinion	10	13	17	13
N.I.	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	(211)	(166)	(121)	(498)