

# BAPTIST VIEWpoll

February 1987

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 February 1987

### I. INTRODUCTION

This report is a presentation of the findings from the February 1987 poll of the Baptist VIEWpoll panel.

There are currently 1,382 members (337 pastors, 375 ministers of education, 174 directors of missions, 215 chairmen of deacons, and 281 church clerks) on the Baptist VIEWpoll panel. Of these 74.2 percent (250) of the pastors, 83.5 percent (313) of the ministers of education, 87.4 percent (152) of the directors of missions, 72.6 percent (156) of the chairmen of deacons, and 76.2 percent (214) of the church clerks participated in the February poll.

Items on the February poll involved ten areas of interest:

- o Did panelists attend the annual meeting of the SBC in 1986
- o Do they plan to attend this year
- o Influence of religion on American life
- o Sunday School Board literature prices
- o Attitudes toward the Cooperative Program
- o Evangelistic visitation
- o Language culture groups
- o A formal agenda for deacons' meeting
- o Relationships between the pastor and the chairman of deacons
- o The schedule for deacons' meeting.

### II. COMMENTS ON THE FINDINGS

- A. Sixty-one percent of the directors of missions, 41 percent of the pastors, 37 percent of the ministers of education, 2 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 2 percent of the church clerks attended the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1986.

Cross tabulation of this data by church size reveals that as church size increases so does the likelihood that pastors attended the convention.

- B. When panelists were asked about their plans for attending the 1987 annual meeting in St. Louis, 59 percent of the directors of missions, 49 percent of the pastors, 26 percent of the ministers of education (down 11 percent from last year's attendance), 4 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 6 percent of the church clerks responded in the affirmative. (It is possible that the drop in attendance for ministers of education is due to their having used their budgets on the National Ministers of Education Conference in April, 1987.)

When this item was matched with church size it was learned that as church size increases so does the pastor's stated intention to attend the 1987 annual meeting.

In order to determine how many of those who attended the annual meeting in 1986 planned to attend the annual meeting in 1987, we cross tabulated the two items and discovered the following: 80 percent of the pastors who attended the 1986 meeting plan to attend the 1987 meeting, and 27 percent of those who did not attend the 1986 meeting plan to attend the 1987 meeting; 50 percent of the ministers of education who attended the 1986 meeting plan to attend the 1987 meeting, and 12 percent of those who did not attend the 1986 meeting plan to attend the 1987 meeting; and 75 percent of the directors of missions who attended the 1986 meeting plan to attend the 1987 meeting, and 33 percent of those who did not attend the 1986 meeting plan to attend the 1987 meeting. The number of deacon chairmen and church clerks who attended the 1986 meeting or plan to attend the 1987 meeting is too small for meaningful analysis.

C. At the present time, do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence? The response of panelists to this question was not encouraging. Thirty percent or less (19 percent of the pastors, 30 percent of the ministers of education, 24 percent of the directors of missions, 27 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 27 percent of the church clerks) of each panel felt religion was "increasing" its influence on American life. In fact, the majority of the pastors (53 percent) and the largest portion of each of the other four panels (49 percent of the minister of education, 49 percent of the directors of missions, 45 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 47 percent of the church clerks) indicated that religion was "losing" its influence on American life.

The data from the VIEWpoll panels stands in marked contrast to a report released in December, 1986 by the Princeton Religion Research Center which revealed that 48 percent of a national sample of Americans believe that religion is "increasing" its influence on American life. An additional 39 percent of the national sample, however, did believe that religion is "losing" its influence on American life.

While only 6 percent of the national sample of Americans believe that the influence of religion on American life is "staying the same," between twenty to twenty-five percent of the panelists on each panel feel that the influence of religion on American life is "staying the same."

D. Panelists were asked to record their impressions regarding overall prices of Sunday School Board literature compared with those for similar literature of most other publishers, and the response was mixed. Sixty-four percent of the ministers of education indicated that Sunday School Board prices were either "somewhat lower" (43 percent) or "significantly lower" (21 percent) than other publishers. And, 60 percent of the directors of missions indicated that Sunday School Board prices were either "somewhat lower" (44 percent) or "significantly lower" (16 percent) than other publishers. However, the majority (52 percent) of the church clerks and the largest portion of deacon chairmen (45 percent) and pastors (37 percent) indicated their impressions that there is "no appreciable difference" between Sunday School Board prices and those of other publishers.

When panelists were asked to indicate the basis for their view of Sunday School Board prices as compared to other publishers, 60 percent of the ministers of education, 52 percent of the pastors, 47 percent of the directors of missions, 17 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 23 percent of the church clerks reported that the basis for their impressions was "actual comparison of specific prices."

Interestingly, a noticeable portion of each panel had "no basis for knowing" how Sunday School Board prices compared to other publishers (25 percent of the pastors, 19 percent of the ministers of education, 14 percent of the directors

of missions, 33 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 34 percent of the church clerks.)

- E. Attitudes toward the Cooperative Program are "about the same" as they were at this time last year according to the majority of the panel members (68 percent of the pastors, 69 percent of the ministers of education, 65 percent of the directors of missions, 72 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 70 percent of the church clerks). Further, 27 percent of the pastors, 24 percent of the ministers of education, 30 percent of the directors of missions, 23 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 27 percent of the church clerks indicated that attitudes toward the Cooperative Program are "more favorable" now than they were at this time last year.

Figure 1 depicts the relationship between responses from pastors, ministers of education, and directors of missions, to this item in February 1986 and the responses of those panels in February, 1987. (The panels of deacon chairmen and church clerks did not exist in February, 1986; thus, no cooperative data is available for these two panels.)

COMMENTS F AND G RELATE ONLY TO PASTORS, MINISTERS OF EDUCATION, DEACON CHAIRMEN, AND CHURCH CLERKS

- F. The majority of the panel members (69 percent of the pastors, 59 percent of the ministers of education, 70 percent of the deacon chairmen and 66 percent of the church clerks) reported that in their churches, 1 to 9 members take part in evangelistic visitation during a typical week. The second largest portion of each panel indicated that 10 to 24 members take part in evangelistic visitation during a typical week.

- G. The majority of each panel group indicated their churches do not have a ministry to any specific language culture groups (75 percent of the pastors, 59 percent of the ministers of education, 88 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 79 percent of the church clerks). Ministries to Hispanics and Asians account for the bulk of work being done with any language culture groups.

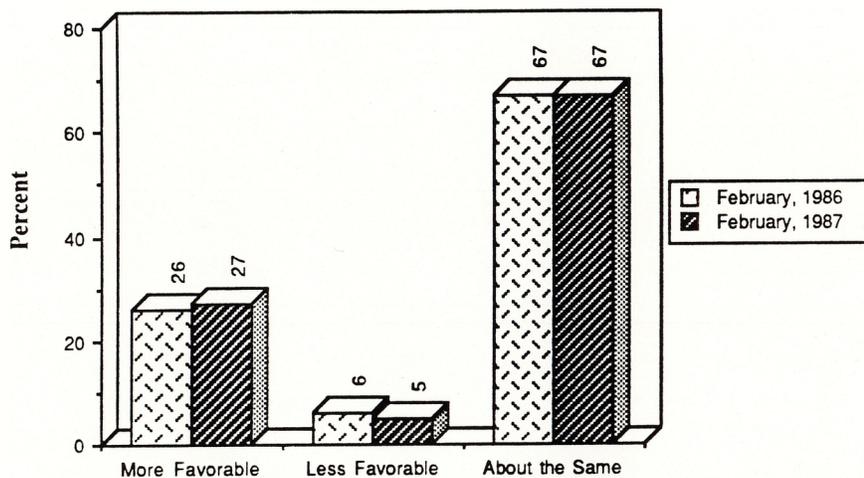
Cross tabulation of this item by church size reveals that as church size increases so does the likelihood that a church will have a ministry to an ethnic group.

COMMENTS H THROUGH J RELATE ONLY TO DEACON CHAIRMEN

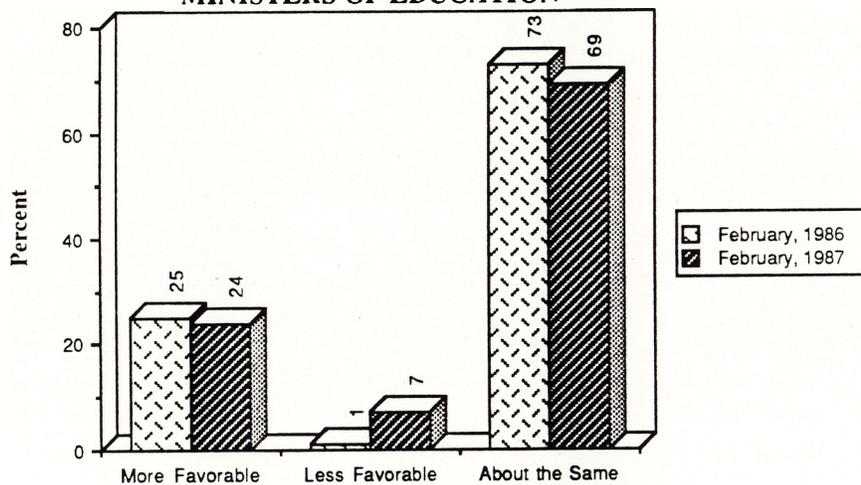
- H. Sixty percent of the deacon chairmen report that their deacons' meetings are not kept moving along by the use of a formal agenda; 38 percent do report the use of a formal agenda in the deacons' meeting. Cross tabulation of this item by church size reveals that as church size increases so does the likelihood that a formal agenda will be used in the deacons' meeting.
- I. The majority (52 percent) of the deacon chairmen report "a very warm and personal relationship" with their pastor. An additional 29 percent report "a good working relationship." Ten percent report a "so-so relationship," and two percent report that "the relationship breaks down at times." Finally, one percent report "a very poor relationship" with the pastor.
- J. Fifty-seven percent of the deacon chairmen report that their deacons' meetings are scheduled for Sunday, either morning (5 percent), afternoon (29 percent), or evening (23 percent). Thirty-eight percent schedule their meetings on a weekday evening.

FIGURE 1

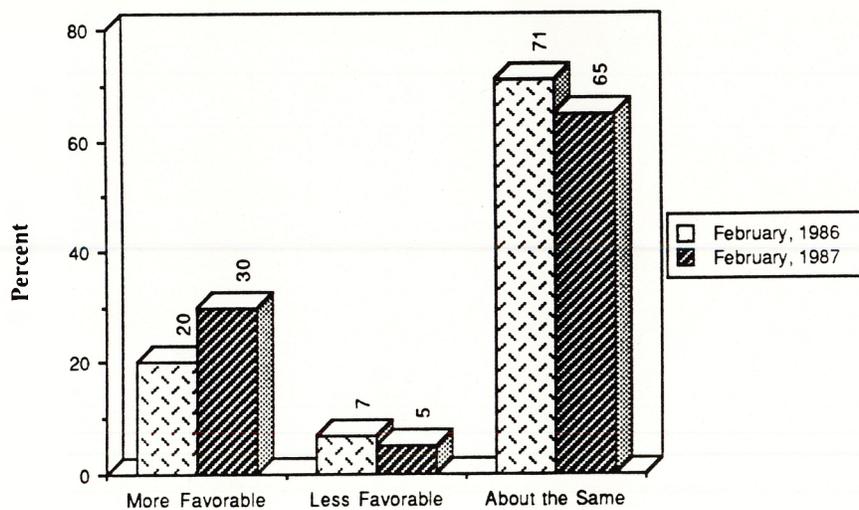
## PASTORS



## MINISTERS OF EDUCATION



## DIRECTORS OF MISSIONS



III. Summary of Findings\*

1. Did you attend the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, Georgia last year (June 10-12, 1986)?

	Pastors <sup>1</sup>	Ministers of Education <sup>2</sup>	Directors of Missions <sup>3</sup>	Deacon Chairmen <sup>4</sup>	Church Clerks <sup>5</sup>
Yes	41%	37%	61%	2%	2%
No	59	63	39	98	98
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

2. Do you plan to attend the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis Missouri this year (June 16-18, 1987)?

	Pastors	Ministers of Education	Directors of Missions	Deacon Chairmen	Church Clerks
Yes	49%	26%	59%	4%	6%
No	51	73	40	94	94
Not Indicated		1	1	2	
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3. At the present time, do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?

	Pastors	Ministers of Education	Directors of Missions	Deacon Chairmen	Church Clerks
Increasing	19%	30%	24%	27%	27%
Losing	53	49	49	45	47
Staying the same	25	20	24	24	20
No opinion	2	1	3	4	4
Not indicated	1				2
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

\* All of the data in the Summary of Findings for Pastors, Deacon Chairmen, and Church Clerks have been weighted by church size. The data for ministers of education has been weighted by the distribution of this group within the various church size categories.

<sup>1</sup>Base of 250  
<sup>2</sup>Base of 313

<sup>3</sup>Base of 152  
<sup>4</sup>Base of 156

<sup>5</sup>Base of 214

4a. What is your impression regarding overall prices of Sunday School Board literature compared with those for similar literature of most other publishers? Check One.

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Ministers of Education</u>	<u>Directors of Missions</u>	<u>Deacon Chairmen</u>	<u>Church Clerks</u>
Other publishers significantly lower	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%
Other publishers somewhat lower	20	8	10	13	10
No appreciable difference	37	21	21	45	52
Sunday School Board somewhat lower	23	43	44	15	14%
Sunday School Board significantly lower	8	21	16	2	1
Not Indicated	9	5	7	22	21
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

b. Indicate the basis for your view as expressed above:

Actual comparison of specific prices	52%	60%	47%	17%	23%
Secondary information; word of mouth	12	9	22	25	20
Have no basis for knowing; impression only	25	19	14	33	34
Other: (Voluntary response)					
Information shared by the Sunday School Board	1	4	8	1	--
Not indicated	10	8	9	24	23
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

5. 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>	<u>Deacon Chairmen</u>	<u>Church Clerks</u>
More favorable	27%	24%	30%	23%	27%
Less favorable	5	7	5	4	3
About the same	68	69	65	72	70
Not indicated	--	--	--	1	--
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 WERE ASKED ONLY OF PASTORS, MINISTERS OF EDUCATION, DEACON CHAIRMEN, AND CHURCH CLERKS

6. In your church, approximately how many of your members take part in evangelistic visitation during a typical week?

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Ministers of Education</u>	<u>Deacon Chairmen</u>	<u>Church Clerks</u>
Over 100	--%	1%	--%	1%
50 to 100	1	7	1	1
25 to 49	3	13	3	3
10 to 24	16	16	19	12
1 to 9	69	59	70	66
None	8	2	4	13
Not indicated	3	2	3	4
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%

7. Please indicate below any specific language culture groups to which your church ministers.

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Ministers of Education</u>	<u>Deacon Chairmen</u>	<u>Church Clerks</u>
None 75%	59%	88%	79%	
Hispanic	14	18	7	10
Asian	6	20	2	4
European	-	3	3	1
Middle Eastern	1	6	-	1
Caribbean	1	2	2	1
American Indian	2	1	-	1
Other	2	2	-	-
Not indicated	5	5	-	8
Total	*	*	*	*

\* Total does not add to 100 due to multiple answers.

QUESTIONS 8 THROUGH 10 WERE ASKED ONLY OF DEACON CHAIRMEN

8. Do you use a formal agenda to keep you deacons' meeting moving along?

	<u>Deacon Chairmen</u>
Yes	38%
No	60
Not indicated	<u>2</u>
Total	100%

9. What kind of relationship do you personally have with your pastor?

A very warm and personal relationship	52%
A good working relationship	29
A so-so relationship	10
The relationship breaks down at times	2
A very poor relationship	1
Not indicated	<u>6</u>
Total	100%

10. Are your deacons' meetings scheduled for . . .

Sunday afternoon	29%
Sunday evening	23
Weekday evening	38
Sunday morning (Voluntary response)	5
Not indicated	<u>5</u>
Total	100%