

# **Southern Baptists fall short of baptism goal: "Life-changing" results nevertheless**

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Southern Baptist churches fell significantly short in a campaign to baptize 1 million people and saw a slight drop in baptisms from 2005 to 2006, statistics show.

Baptisms in 2006 totaled 364,826, down 1.89 percent from the 2005 total of 371,850, according to the denomination's Annual Church Profile.

Former Southern Baptist Convention president Bobby Welch led an "Everyone Can!" campaign seeking 1 million baptisms between October 2005 and October 2006. Specific figures for baptisms from all Southern Baptist churches during those dates are not available, since the denomination tallies baptisms on a calendar-year basis.

In a commentary in Baptist Press, the denomination's news service, Welch said the 1 million goal was a "target that would challenge everyone to do their very best." He said "life-changing" results came from some congregations that broke "recent history records in baptisms," but the overall results show the need for a more unified effort.

Overall, the denomination reported a 2006 membership of 16,306,246, an increase of .22 percent from the previous year. The number of churches totaled 44,223, a 1.2 percent increase from 2005. -*Religion News Service*