

Albert BARNETT

Report Shows All-Time High For Financial Support Of Our Churches

A NOVEMBER REPORT, released by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., with headquarters in New York City, reveals that Americans, last year, gave more to their churches than ever before in history.

The Council, America's largest religious body, is a federation of churches, with more than 48 million members, carrying on the work of 13 interdenominational agencies, at home and abroad.

Figures, most times are dull, but occasionally, are interesting. Here's the exception: Church contributions, totaling \$1,842,592,260, have been reported for 1955, by the 48 Protestant and two Eastern Orthodox church bodies. This vast sum, approaching the two billion dollar mark, represents an overall increase of 11 per cent over 1944.

The congregation breakdown shows a per capita increase in contributions of 8 per cent — from \$49.96 in 1954, to an all-time high of \$53.94.

The new figures were announced by the Rev. T. K. Thompson, executive director of the department of stewardship and benevolence of the National Council of Churches. The survey was compiled by the department in cooperation with the Council's Bureau of research and survey.

The Thompson report shows that this vast sum of nearly 2 billion dollars went to pay ministers' salaries, church building maintenance and repairs, fuel, lighting and other expenses. The contribution for congregational expenses was \$43.46, per person.

Highest giving per member for all purposes, was recorded by the Free Methodist church, with \$193.45. Ten other denominations also recorded total annual giving

of more than \$100 per member. They are: Seventh Day Adventist; Wesleyan Methodist; Evangelical Free Church; Evangelical Mission Covenant Church; Brethren in Christ; Church of the Nazarene; Orthodox Presbyterian; Friends, Ohio Year Meeting; Conference of Evangelical Mennonities and the Church of God, Anderson, Ind.

There are two churches in the Chicago area, where no plates are passed and where there is no solicitation of funds before, during or after the Sunday service. One is the famous Baha'i Temple of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois and Everybody's Church in Chicago, at 60th and South Wabash, founded by Dr. James M. Scott, Frank (Fay) Young, sports editor emeritus of the Chicago Defender, and this writer.

At Baha'i Temple, only members are permitted to contribute to expenses of the church. It was built at a cost of nearly 3 million dollars and all items of expense, from foundation to the majestic, illuminated Tower, were paid for by faithful Baha'i communicants.

At Everybody's Church there is no solicitation of funds for the Pastor's Aid, domestic or foreign missions, the building fund or for other purposes. Members built the church and pay all expenses for maintenance.

Locked Boxes, under guard, are placed at the entrance, for voluntary contributions to the church program. No political speeches are permitted from the rostrum, and three special church-sponsored events are given annually, to help balance the budget.

They are the Musical Concert by the choir; the Woman's Day program and the colorful Fashion Show and Style Revue, which this year was attended by more than 2,000 persons.