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September 6, 1967

Baptist Laymen Race Against  
Alaska Winter, Flood Damage

By Dallas M. Lee  
Baptist Press Staff Writer

FAIRBANKS, Alaska (BP)--Ninety-three Baptist men with strong calloused hands and innovative minds are racing against time here, fighting muck and mud that flooded seven Baptist churches in their efforts to repair them before the hard winter immobilizes Alaska.

Time is running out. They have only until about Oct. 1 before the long winter freeze sets in.

After the rampaging waters of the Chena River flooded Fairbanks on Aug. 14, Baptists in Alaska appealed for volunteers to help them pump the water out of homes, repair furnaces and plumbing equipment, and re-wire electrical equipment.

Few people in the community had time to give much attention to the churches. Many had lost their homes or businesses, or saw them badly damaged by the flood waters.

Adding to the tragedy, an estimated 98 per cent of the damage was not covered by insurance.

The result of the appeal was a flood of skilled craftsmen from throughout the "lower 48" states--electricians, carpenters, plumbers, furnace workers and masons.

The first impression was: too many chiefs.

When the vanguard of the volunteer workers took their first look at the basements full of muck and water, minds thinking out loud challenged and contradicted each other. They settled on one innovation, then jumped to another. Yet the exchange obviously represented the instant comradeship among working men and fellow Christians.

When work began, however, assembly lines formed to take apart water-soaked furnace equipment, workers grabbed shovels to throw out the thick, sticky mud and reached for hammers to slam at sheetrock walls so that studs could dry out.

The first plane-loads of men began arriving in Fairbanks on Labor Day weekend. For the first few, it truly was a weekend of labor.

Two furnace workers stayed up all night on Saturday, and before Sunday School began at 9:40 a.m., they had the furnace operating at the First Baptist Church of Fairbanks.

The rest were up before 5:00 a.m. to examine other buildings, and after the services at First Baptist Church that morning, they tackled the muddy, still slightly-flooded basement of nearby Calvary Baptist Church.

Temperatures that weekend were already dropping below freezing at night. Snow had been reported in outlying areas.

The threat of the freezing weather had local men, who normally could spend time on the churches, working mandatory 12-hour shifts, seven days a week.

At nearby Fort Wainwright, the floods had wiped out all heating, electrical and communications equipment at the U.S. Army base. If the freeze hits before heating and communications equipment can be restored, hundreds of military families may be evacuated before winter.

Perhaps 50 per cent or more of the Fairbanks residents are military people, mostly from Fort Wainwright.

Most of the voluntary work crew is staying dormitory-style at the First Baptist Church. Others are staying in the homes of Baptist people.

-more-

755

September 6, 1967

2

Baptist Press

One of the first volunteers to arrive was Don Myers of St. Louis, a 25-year-old plumber who had been working since May without pay on the construction of a small church building in a small village south of Fairbanks. Myers, a Christian Service Corps volunteer of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, went immediately to Fairbanks and had been working for three weeks when the first volunteers from the "lower 48" states began arriving.

University Baptist Church and Hamilton Acres Baptist Church were hit hardest by the flood.

University Baptist Church had been partially completed with the assistance of summer missionaries. The basement was completely flooded and ten inches of water covered the new floor upstairs. Efforts to pump out the basement were constantly thwarted. Water kept rising in the basement as fast as it could be pumped out during the first week.

Hamilton Acres Church was totally wrecked on the lower level. Walls were sagging and leaning precariously, washed out of line by flood waters.

Baby cribs, chairs and tables were scattered and covered with mud. Crayons and hymnals were found in the ceilings of basements. Many pianos and organs had to be smashed and hauled out as trash.

In the basement of First Baptist Church, pictures and maps taped to the walls in children's classrooms were washed away, except for one--a picture showing Noah and the rainbow after the flood.

After three days on the job, the volunteer workers had furnaces roaring in three of the seven stricken Baptist churches. Three of the six buildings had been cleared of wall material and trash and were drying out quickly. Carpenters and electricians would be able to start the rebuilding job soon.

Most of the men were planning to stay two weeks. Some would stay as many as six weeks.

-30-

NOTE TO EDITORS: Dallas Lee is in Fairbanks, shooting pictures and developing stories on the work of the volunteer construction workers. The Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press will try when possible to provide special stories and photos to Baptist state papers concerning the work of men from those states. Photos available to others on request from the Atlanta Bureau.

--Baptist Press

Baptist Pastor's Wife  
Directs Poverty Center

756

9/6/67

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By Bert O. Tucker  
Associate Editor, The Christian Index

JASPER, Ga. (BP)--A creative Georgia Baptist pastor's wife has fashioned a county Head Start program into "one of the best operated child development centers in the state," according to an official in the regional Office of Economic Opportunity in Atlanta.

Betty Anne Hulsey Walker, wife of the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jasper, Charles O. Walker, drew the War on Poverty spokesman's commendation for her administration since 1965 of the outstanding Head Start project in Pickens County, Ga.

She directs a mountain center which now has some 90 four-and five-year-old children in six full-time classes geared toward "total development" of the individual child, in such areas as nutrition, medical services, formative recreation, education, development of skills and personality growth.

Mrs. Walker gained much of her background for successful work with children from serving as youth and education director in two churches, from education studies at Mercer University (Baptist) in Macon, Ga., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and from six years management and teaching in the full-time Jasper Baptist Kindergarten.

Although she makes no effort to inject religious teaching into the creative classroom activities, Mrs. Walker's influence as a known Christian touches her acquaintances among children, parents and teachers alike.

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756

Her major efforts are directed toward bringing to the children activities and learning experiences which will provide opportunities for creativity and growth.

Even when criticism of Head Start programs and other phases of the War on Poverty confront her, Mrs. Walker states her pleasure in work at the center and continues to focus her attention on what should be done to further the development of the children.

Further than education in the classroom, the program includes comprehensive and continuing medical examination and treatment for all children, a planned menu by a professional dietitian providing two meals a day, structured recreation periods and time for rest.

Not content with building a strong program for children, Mrs. Walker is working to arrange successful "parents day" emphases through which the child's life at his home also may be more suitable for development.

She firmly believes that whatever can be used to contribute to the growth of a child is good, and is practicing this belief in her daily work with the children.

-30-

Crusade of Americas Gets  
Emphasis at County Fair

757

9/6/67  
140 wds.

ADRIAN, Mich. (BP)--The Baptist-planned Crusade of the Americas broke out of denominational lines here when a Michigan pastor was invited to speak on the 1969 evangelistic effort during the Lenawee County Fair.

Talmadge R. Amberson, pastor of Friendship Baptist Church of Lincoln Park, Mich., was the speaker for a special worship service at the fair attended by people of all faiths. The committee in charge of arrangements for the fair had requested him to speak on the crusade.

Amberson challenged all who are Christians, no matter what their denomination, to emphasize the crusade's theme, "Christ the Only Hope," and to make that theme a reality.

He said the recent upheaval in his city of Detroit proved to him that the answer to the world's problems of today is not in government power or black power, but in "Christ, the Only Hope."

-30-

James Austin Resigns Post  
With Kentucky Foundation

758

280 wds.

9/6/67

LOUISVILLE (BP)--James C. Austin, executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation for the past three years, has resigned effective Aug. 31.

Asked the reason for his resignation, Austin said it was because of "...conflicting ideas with foundation directors regarding methods, policies and procedures."

Austin said he had several attractive opportunities for other service, but added "I am not at this time ready to share my future plans."

Although his resignation was effective Aug. 31, Austin offered his services on a consulting basis for a limited time.

The Foundation Executive Committee and the administrative committee of the Kentucky Baptist Executive Board accepted the resignation "with regret and with appreciation for his productive ministry." Austin's salary will be continued to Dec. 1.

Both Harold Sanders, the convention's executive secretary, and John C. Huffman of Mayfield, Ky., president of the convention, praised Austin for his "brilliant career" with the foundation. During the three years he was executive secretary, the assets more than doubled, said Sanders.

Sanders said that Austin's resignation was prompted by "a basic conflict in personality and disagreement in policy of handling assets and investments" with one or more of the directors.

A native of Virginia, Austin was director of endowment and capital giving for the Stewardship Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention before joining the Kentucky Foundation.

Previously, he was development officer for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and earlier had been a pastor of churches in Oklahoma, Tennessee and Kentucky.

-30-

758-758

September 6, 1967

Baptist Press

SBC Mission Gifts Top  
\$35 Million For '67

224,000,000

NASHVILLE (BP)--Contributions to Southern Baptist Convention world missions causes passed the \$35 million mark at the end of August, surpassing missions gifts for the same period last year by more than \$1.7 million.

A monthly financial report from the SBC Executive Committee here listed total Cooperative Program contributions benefiting 20 different agencies and organizations of the convention so far this year at \$16,644,642, an increase of \$1 million or nearly 7 per cent over last year's gifts for the same period.

An additional \$18,919,444 was contributed to designated, specific Southern Baptist causes, bringing the total to \$35,564,086 for the year. Designations were up 3.72 per cent or \$678,921, for overall grand total increase of 5.21 per cent.

During the month of August alone, contributions totaled \$2.2 million, including \$1,985,115 through the Cooperative Program unified budget plan.

Most of the \$35½ million has gone to support Southern Baptist foreign mission efforts, which has received \$22.8 million so far this year. SBC home missions efforts have received \$7½ million.

The total contributions reported by the SBC Executive Committee includes amounts given to SBC causes, but does not include contributions to support local or state-wide missions programs.

768