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W.Va. gets speedy response
from Baptist relief teams

By Ellen Walker

Baptist Press
1/29/96

WHEELING ISLAND, W Va. (BP)--Jackie Shriner and her three children heard a commotion outside their house Saturday, Jan. 20. The fire department and police were going through the neighborhood telling people they had one hour to evacuate. The Ohio River was about to engulf the island in the center of Wheeling, W.Va.

Her dilemma, like everyone else's, was to decide what to do. Her 10-year-old took the initiative to "dump some clothes in a bag" while Shriner and her sister tried to move heavy items to an upper floor.

The Shriners were among 150 people served meals Sunday evening by the Ohio Baptist disaster relief kitchen, staffed with 12 trained volunteers who had moved into place after a call for Southern Baptist help went out earlier that day. By Wednesday, the Ohio unit was serving an average of 2,000 meals a day, with the anticipation of totaling 10,000 daily by the end of the week.

Southern Baptist disaster units are normally placed on church properties in an effort to "undergird the ministry of the local church," said Mickey Caison, national disaster relief coordinator for the Brotherhood Commission. But there are not many Southern Baptist churches in the upper panhandle of West Virginia, so the Ohio unit was placed on a school yard in the middle of the flooded area.

"The Lord just worked things out so we would be in the heart of where we were needed," said the unit's coordinator, Van French.

The Ohio team is working with bivocational pastor Tom Rentfrow and the four-year-old Abundant Life Church. The team sleeps in the Southern Baptist church, which is located across the river, and the congregation is providing vans for transportation and volunteers to help serve on the feeding line.

"We had targeted the area (Wheeling Island) for outreach," Rentfrow said. The relief team has provided an "open door we probably would not have had," he added. Two years ago at Thanksgiving, the church had expressed its desire to reach people in the community and minister to their needs, Rentfrow said. Little did they expect at the time to be in the middle of a disaster of such proportions.

"People are just starting to figure out how bad it really is," Rentfrow said. On Wednesday as below-freezing temperatures returned to the region along with the threat of more flooding, efforts were being made to find sources of heat. A large number of residents lost furnaces as well as other appliances. The Red Cross began distributing brooms and cleaning kits on Wednesday, and Southern Baptists were waiting for the invitation to send a "mud-out" team to assist in the Wheeling cleanup.

Twenty-one counties in West Virginia have been declared disaster areas eligible for federal relief. The flooding of small streams and rivers was caused by the rapid melting of snow from the January blizzard and the torrential rains that followed.

More than 2,400 households in 40 out of 50 counties had been assessed by the Red Cross by Jan. 25 as needing help, said Larry Wood, West Virginia Baptist evangelism/stewardship director who is serving as coordinator for Southern Baptist efforts in the state.

Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and North Carolina Baptists have all responded to calls for help by providing kitchens, and Kentucky and North Carolina have sent mud-out teams. Each feeding unit is covering a multi-county region and the Red Cross is transporting much of the food to distribution points and to residents in isolated hollows.

"It's a joint effort (with the Red Cross)," said Etta Butcher, a member of the Kentucky team working in the West Ripley Baptist Church in the western part of the state. "We can't do without each other," she added. The Red Cross provides the food, Southern Baptists prepare it and the Red Cross distributes it to the more remote areas.

West Virginia Baptists also have rallied to meet the need within their own state. WMU members are collecting and assembling hygiene kits, which include toiletries, flashlights and a gospel tract titled "Hope in Crisis." Others have donated truckloads of drinking water, while local pastors and church members are assisting in the distribution of items, cleanup and counseling with victims. One West Virginia Baptist donated a pickup truckload of kerosene heaters which were delivered to the Marlinton area in the eastern part of the state.

The Greater Huntington Baptist Association and Highlawn Baptist Church have spearheaded a community effort in filling two tractor-trailer rigs of blankets, food, diapers and cleaning materials. Immanuel Baptist Association, working with the West Ripley church, has collected a room full of similar items. Tug Valley Baptist Association is gathering items and assembling cleanup crews as are other West Virginia associations.

"There are a number of folks in the affected area who, because of their love for the Lord, are working day and night. Their ministry together is uplifting," Wood said.

"It's awesome to think what can happen when Southern Baptists say, 'This is what we're going to do,'" Caison said. With more than 10,000 trained disaster relief workers across the country, Southern Baptists are ready to mobilize in a matter of hours and often arrive at the scene before the Red Cross, he added.

Southern Baptist relief efforts will continue for quite a while as teams help residents dig out and rebuild. "Southern Baptists together are building bridges of love," Wood said.

The Baptist volunteers are letting people know "there's people out there who care," said volunteer Vernon Schumacher of First Baptist Church, Groveport, Ohio. Having worked with the Ohio team in 11 different disasters, he said his motivation is to "get the chance to witness."

Red Cross distribution service areas are being set up across the state, with several located in West Virginia Baptist churches.

Those wishing to send relief items should contact Wood at the West Virginia Baptist convention office at (304) 757-0944 for information on specific needs and instructions. Financial assistance should be designated for West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, Disaster Relief, and sent to Number One Mission Way, Scott Depot, WV 25560.

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Walker is a free-lance writer in Barboursville, W.Va.

**Baptist vols encounter
flood victims' trauma**

By Ellen Walker

WHEELING ISLAND, W.Va. (BP)--As large snow flakes began to fall and the wind picked up, Elizabeth Kemp folded her arms, pulled her sweater tighter and prepared to wait. Standing in below-freezing weather, these were the only clothes she had. Her neighbor had given her the sweater.

She was at the local school on Wheeling Island, W.Va., where the Ohio Baptist disaster relief unit was serving meals. She had been there to eat and was now waiting for a broom and a box of cleaning materials.

Kemp, her husband and their 4-year-old left their basement apartment, which faced the Ohio River, to run some errands on Saturday, Jan. 20. When they returned a few hours later, they were told they could not go back to their home. The area had been evacuated. "It was too late to get anything," Kemp said.

After the water receded and the Kemps were allowed to return, they found the water mark in their apartment was six inches from the ceiling, and there was mud up to their kneecaps. The National Guard was on the scene, tearing out the carpet and removing furniture to the middle of the street. Nothing was salvageable.

An old family desk had been torn to shreds by the swirling water. Her Bible, given to her by her mother, was covered with mud. Guardsmen advised they not even try to salvage their pots and pans because they were covered with petroleum and were unsafe for use.

"I've been crying for three days," Kemp said. The couple has lived on the island for two years, but their only friend is his employer, who "found us an apartment to move into, but there are no walls or electricity yet," she said. "We're sleeping on hardwood floors."

Their preschooler is staying with Kemp's mother several hours away while the couple tries to get their lives back together. With the threat of water rising again from recent rains, Kemp commented, "Go ahead. Let it flood. It can't get no worse."

The story of the Kemps could be repeated over and over by the victims of the recent West Virginia floods. Southern Baptists are there -- feeding, cleaning, listening, caring and proclaiming the love of Christ.

"These people are having a struggle," said Van French, coordinator of the Ohio Baptist disaster relief unit stationed in Wheeling. He's seen the tired look and the tear-stained eyes before, having served in other disaster relief operations since 1987.

The personal needs of victims can be overwhelming to those who try to minister, especially to those who have a "servant heart," said Mickey Caison, Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission national disaster relief coordinator. Part of the disaster relief training received by the 10,000 volunteers across the convention is designed to help them deal with the emotion, stress and strain of what they see, hear and feel on site. They are encouraged to debrief, to share their feelings each night, Caison added.

Mary McCardle, a member of Abundant Life Church in Wheeling, has been helping the Ohio team serve meals. "I wouldn't have done this three years ago," she explained on her second day of volunteering. She is a new Christian. Four years ago, she was severely depressed; the thought of helping someone else would have never crossed her mind. Today she has a vital faith, Christian friends and can share hope with flood victims in the midst of their own depression.

"We're here to help supply needs and to share Christ when we have the opportunity," said Michael Klein, coordinator of the Kentucky Baptist disaster relief unit, reflecting an attitude representative of the several hundred Southern Baptist volunteers serving in the state.

**Arkansas pastors affirm
Midwestern, questionnaire**

By Tammi Ledbetter

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (BP)--A new Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty questionnaire received enthusiastic support from pastors in northwest Arkansas who gathered to hear seminary President Mark Coppenger explain the document.

Jim Richards, director of missions for Northwest Baptist Association, invited Coppenger to address the weekly meeting of Bentonville-area pastors "because we are very excited about his vision for Midwestern Seminary."

After assuming the Midwestern presidency last August, Coppenger recommended changes to the process of hiring seminary faculty members. Trustees approved a faculty questionnaire Coppenger said positions the seminary "squarely within the Southern Baptist Convention."

After distributing copies of the document to the 41 present for the Jan. 15 meeting, Coppenger guided them through each item to explain how it would help the seminary be "a faithful steward of the denomination's trust."

With a number of faculty vacancies to be filled, copies of the questionnaire were distributed nationally in SBC Life, the monthly publication of the SBC Executive Committee. Coppenger said the response has been encouraging as completed questionnaires have provided the administration with qualified applicants to consider.

"We have identified a host of solid folks, the ones some said we'd never find," he added. "We have dozens of names on hand and are several deep for most positions."

Among the questions faculty applicants are asked: whether they agree with the content and use of the 1985 SBC Peace Committee's four examples concerning Scripture, such as Adam and Eve as historical people. Coppenger described those illustrations as a means of "making concrete 'truth without mixture of error,'" a key description of Scripture in the Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Other concerns addressed by the faculty questionnaire include abortion, homosexual behavior and the ordination of women to serve as pastors.

Coppenger said "nothing can be taken for granted" when dealing with potential faculty. Such concerns are "hot issues in evangelicalism" which have been addressed by convention messengers, he said. "We must avoid letting the world into the church more than we take the church into the world."

Coppenger, an Arkansas native and former pastor, acknowledged that a question which asks whether the applicant is a soul-winner brings a "fingers on the blackboard response" from some. Still, he said he expects faculty to be "player-coaches who are practitioners of the gospel."

Additional sections of the questionnaire seek answers regarding teaching strengths, scholarship, teamwork with fellow employees, participation in community life, involvement in the life of the local church, support of doctrinal integrity and of the SBC Cooperative Program.

While many seminaries wait until the interview stage to sort through some of the same questions, Coppenger said he believes a clear presentation of concerns up front "saves a lot of spadework in seeking faculty."

It also "honors our accreditors," he said, "by putting in writing" the particular mission and purpose of the school.

Furthermore, students are "alerted to what is desired by the seminary of the faculty," Coppenger said.

The questionnaire is being used with faculty considered for the Kansas City, Mo., campus as well as adjunct professors, theological field education advisors and branch faculty. "That keeps the ends from being frayed," Coppenger said when speaking to the need for integrity throughout the institution.

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Richards said the reception to Coppenger's presentation was enthusiastic. "There's a natural marriage between northwest Arkansas and Midwestern Seminary," he said, referring both to proximity and convictions. Richards said he looks forward to Midwestern "bringing revival fire across this region of the country by putting fire in the hearts of the pastors and other ministers who go there to be trained."

Pastor Benny Thompson of First Baptist Church, Garfield, Ark., said he found it difficult to put into words "how strongly" he approved of Coppenger's vision. For Thompson, it's an answer to prayer. "Who'd have ever thought I would see the day when our seminaries would take a stand such as this?"

Pastor Ben Rowell of Rogers, Ark., said he expects the questionnaire to provide a stabilizing influence at Midwestern. "There are some needed things said in it that we've never said before," Rowell noted. "We're actually following what the (Southern Baptist) Convention believes."

He said he has no problem with targeting specific issues such as abortion, homosexuality and women's ordination for comment by prospective faculty. "In the past that would have never come up, but in our time it is different. We now must draw a line."

Similar questions are asked of staff members when interviewed by his church of 3,000 members, Rowell said. "The vast majority of my members would expect those things to be asked."

Pastor Al Mains of Open Door Baptist in Rogers, Ark., described the reception by northwest Arkansas pastors to Coppenger's presentation "as pretty much all of them cheering and amen-ing."

"I feel like there are enough seminaries in the country that will teach a middle-of-the road or liberal approach to interpreting the Bible. We as Southern Baptists need a seminary as conservative as this."

The faculty questionnaire "brings integrity to bear on the school," said Tom Hatley, pastor of Immanuel Baptist in Rogers, Ark. "It's a wonderful way to send a message to prospective faculty about what the school is going to expect, going to insist upon, without hurting anyone's feelings. If you can't line up with this, don't bother to apply."

He said he regards "the blend of the Baptist Faith and Message statement along with the resolutions passed in recent years" as "very appropriate." The doctrinal stand "aligns the school with the convention," he added, "reflecting the heart of the denomination."

Hatley said he rejects the arguments of critics who see the questionnaire as creedal. Conservatives have "insisted on a real commitment to the Bible which is our creed," Hatley said. And if that offends prospective seminary faculty, then he believes "they don't have enough conviction to be there."

The document gives Hatley reason to consider hiring Midwestern graduates for his church. "He said his confidence extends to the leadership assembled at Midwestern, describing them as "top-notch with a proven record and commitment to the Word." And he said he has "every intention of sending students there in the future."

"I like what some of the other seminaries are doing as well," Hatley added, "but Midwestern is a lot closer. They could drive to school during the week and come home and see Mama on the weekend."

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Olympic athletes say Christ
more valued than gold medals

By Sarah Zimmerman

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1/29/96

ATLANTA (BP)--Winning a gold medal is not life's highest achievement, five track and field stars told Atlanta area media Jan. 25.

During a press conference to announce four "More Than Gold" rallies in conjunction with the 1996 Summer Olympics, the athletes said a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is more valuable than a world record.

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"I'm happy to be here in an athletic endeavor, and I'm happy to be here in a Christian endeavor," said Leroy Burrell, gold medalist who set 10 world records. "We're more than athletes; we're Christians. We believe that Jesus Christ died for us and he is our salvation."

Burrell's wife, Michelle, won a gold medal in the 1992 Olympics in the 4 x 100 relay. Three weeks into training for the 1996 Olympics, she learned she was pregnant. She was disappointed that she would not be able to compete in the Atlanta games, she said, "but there's something bigger than track and field, and that's a new life."

Clyde Duncan Jr., who broke the age-group long jump record when he was 13, said he hopes to be able to influence youth for Christ.

"Today's youth are impressed with a false dream, a vision of instant success," Duncan said. "The secret of being content is knowing that no matter what comes my way, I can do all things through him who loves me."

Joe DeLoach, who won an Olympic gold medal in the 200-meter event in 1988, said God has called him to Christian ministry. "My athletic gifts have been given to me so I could draw others to the well of Jesus Christ Nothing is more important than my faith."

Mike Marsh who set Olympic and American records in the 100-meter race during the 1992 Olympics, said, "God is the driving force in my life. I've been through a lot in pursuit of a gold medal. Hardships help shape you. I'm a stronger man now."

During the Olympics, Christian athletes will lead rallies in four Atlanta area churches. The rallies will be free and open to the public.

"Many people are searching for something beyond the excitement of the games," said Tom McEachin, associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's mass evangelism department. The message these athletes have to offer may be the very answer they're looking for."

The rallies will each begin at 7 p.m. The dates and locations are July 21, New Hope Baptist Church, Fayetteville; July 24, Greenforest Baptist Church, Decatur; July 27, Roswell Street Baptist Church, Marietta; and July 30, First Baptist Church, Atlanta.

The "More Than Gold" rallies are coordinated by Atlanta International Ministries, a Southern Baptist group planning Olympic ministries, and Lay Witnesses for Christ International, based in Hurst, Texas.

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(BP) color slides and black and white photos available by calling the HMB news office, (770) 410-6533.

Dallas Cowboys offer lesson
to seminarians, Hemphill says

By Dena Dyer

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The Dallas Cowboys succeeded in their goal of going to the Super Bowl because they had that goal in mind from the start.

Seminary students, faculty and staff can learn from the frequent Super Bowl contenders, said Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in the first chapel address of the spring semester, Jan. 24.

(Dallas won the Jan. 28 game against the Pittsburgh Steelers, 27-17.)

"What is your number one goal? And do your actions and priorities match what you say?" he asked.

"Is your goal to pay the bills this month? Finish your degree? Pastor a great church? Or just pass Hebrew? Your ultimate goal will determine how you view life.

"If our ultimate goal is to be like Jesus, even difficult circumstances have a different interpretation," he explained, quoting Romans 8:28, in which Paul states that God works all things together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

Hemphill cited the Cowboys' actions during the season as an example of a long-term goal that reinterpreted short-term events.

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"They rationalized paying Deion Sanders \$35 million even though he couldn't play until later in the season because of their ultimate goal, and they did the same thing with the infamous fourth-and-one call," he said. "Those things were reinterpreted in light of the integrity of building the team for the Super Bowl."

In the same way, Christians need to have a goal from the start -- one they will not deviate from, he said.

In Matthew 6:23-30, Jesus says, "Do not be anxious about your life Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you," Hemphill recounted.

"Jesus turns his message to earthly treasures and the attitudes we have towards them," Hemphill noted. "You may be thinking, 'I don't have any earthly treasures,' but anything that distracts us from our goal -- be it grades, power or even getting a seminary degree -- can be a treasure.

"The size of the treasure is not as important as our focus and our priorities," Hemphill reminded as he gave three guidelines for interpreting the passage and applying it to life: A father knows, faith assures and first commit.

"We have a personal relationship with the Father of the universe. He knows our need for clothes, food and shelter," he said.

"Sometimes we say, 'If I had more, I wouldn't worry!' But that's not true. There is never enough if you're trusting in wealth."

He said since the Father knows and Jesus is the authority over forces of nature and life itself, "so faith assures."

Hemphill then explained that during his junior year at Wake Forest University, his doctor told him he should not play football any longer because of health problems. Instead of fighting the athletic department in court to keep his full scholarship, as many players were doing, he gave it up willingly.

He was planning to get married and the impending financial crisis hovered over him, yet he did what he knew was right.

"The next week, I received an academic scholarship that was better than the football scholarship, and they usually didn't give those academic scholarships to upperclassmen," he recalled. "In the same way, the Father would not have called you here if he didn't have the resources to help you complete the task."

Hemphill concluded by noting the importance of commitment.

"We must seek his kingdom through immediate obedience to his will. That unleashes faith and allows us to see God's provision," he said. "Seeking righteousness means that we commit to holy living. The first priority of any disciple is to align himself with God's purpose and refuse to allow anything to crowd it out.

"Jesus said that 'if you seek my kingdom, I'll take care of your kingdom.'"

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CBF coordinating council
leaves questions unanswered

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
1/29/96

ATLANTA (BP)--The questions of who will be the next Cooperative Baptist Fellowship coordinator and whether the group will become a separate denomination remained unanswered as the CBF coordinating council met in Atlanta Jan. 25-27.

Organized in 1991, the fellowship is a group of Baptists opposed to the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention. The 76-member coordinating council meets three times a year, and the fellowship has a summer general assembly.

During the January meeting, the council elected a coordinator of Baptist principles to lead the CBF on such issues as theological education, religious liberty and ethnic inclusion, said search committee chairman John Tyler of Webster Grove, Mo. The council also learned of a 26 percent increase in annual receipts.

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Cecil Sherman, coordinator since 1992, will retire in June. The coordinator search committee hopes to present a nominee during the April 18-20 coordinating council meeting, "but we will not press ourselves to do so," said Carolyn Crumpler of Ohio, coordinator search committee chairman and former CBF moderator.

Crumpler denied rumors that the position has been offered to someone and rejected.

The committee received more than 300 suggestions for the type of leader CBF needs, Crumpler said. She said 34 people were recommended for the post.

Last summer the general assembly created a commission to consider whether CBF should become an independent denomination.

"Our assignment is not to bring recommendations," Randall Lolley, study commission chairman, told the coordinating council. "The report will be disappointing to those people wanting a specific road map" for the CBF's future, said Lolley, of North Carolina.

The commission is seeking a consensus of opinion on the issue, Lolley said. Its research will be compiled and discussed during the April coordinating council meeting and published in time for the CBF general assembly, June 27-29, he said.

The commission received more than 200 written comments, ranging from a one-sentence letter urging the CBF to not become a denomination to a five-page letter from the opposite point of view. The committee also has commissioned 12 opinion papers on the subject.

In other business, the council elected Gary Parker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Mo., coordinator of Baptist principles effective, Feb. 26.

A South Carolina native, Parker is former pastor of churches in Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina and Missouri. He is the author of mystery novels as well as the book, "Principles Worth Protecting." He received his bachelor's degree from Furman University, master's degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and doctorate from Baylor University.

Parker described leaving the pastorate as a frightening time but added he is excited about beginning this "significant, vital and holy work."

In a financial report, Sherman said 1995 CBF gifts were up 26.7 percent from the previous year. Last year's receipts included \$9.9 million from churches and \$1.3 million from individuals, he said. The number of contributing churches increased from 1,377 to 1,450.

The 1995-96 CBF budget allocates 59 percent for global missions, 23.62 percent for Baptist principles, 12.98 percent for administration and 4.4 percent for church resources.

Currently the CBF supports 100 missionaries and 25 staff positions.

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EDITORS' NOTE: In the (BP) story, "Southern Baptists will aid famine-stricken North Koreans," dated 1/25/96, please replaced the 17th paragraph with the following:

A special telephone number, (405) 357-2437, is expected to be in service by the end of January that Southern Baptists and others can call to learn how to get involved in the North Korean relief project.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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