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Lubbock Tornado Prompts Heart-Rending Vignettes

by Charles Richardson

LUBBOCK, Tex. (BP)--A tearful church secretary told of her congregation's plight after a devastating tornado ripped through this West Texas City.

Meanwhile, a Baptist missions executive, sitting in a candlelighted office in the downtown area began to assess damage to Baptist churches in the city.

Another pastor in the northeast section of the city whose church and parsonage were badly damaged unloaded lumber to begin repairs.

A cocktail waitress volunteered her time to work in an emergency center at Lubbock's First Baptist Church which was virtually free from damage.

A number of high school students and collegeians from Texas Tech joined in providing assistance throughout the city, but particularly at First Baptist which provided shelter for homeless victims of the tornado.

Plans were in the formative stages for a Baptist congregation to invite members of nearby Church of Christ, Methodist and Assembly of God congregations to utilize the Baptist church building, damaged but not as excessively as the others.

These were a few scenes in Lubbock a day or so after the tornado swept through leaving a swath of death and destruction.

At least 21 persons are known to be dead in the wake of the storm. Several hundred were injured and 2,000 or more were left homeless. The death could increase before rescue workers finish their task.

Mrs. Zelma Arend, secretary of the hardest-hit Baptist church in the city, the Mackenzie Terrace Baptist Church, fought back tears as she sat on the steps in the church's auditorium. Overhead, the sky was plainly visible where the room once arched over the pews. The winds ripped it away.

"I feel like it has been a testing time for us, and a method of our being drawn closer together," she said.

"The people of the surrounding area have been so generous with their help and coming to see what we need," she added. "I know that Baptist churches all over the Southern Baptist Convention feel and sympathize with our church and other churches that have had to go through this."

The Mackenzie Terrace congregation lost the roof off its auditorium, suffered heavy damage to its nursery facilities, and found that the force of the winds had lifted the church steeple off and thrown it to the ground.

The pastor of the church, James W. Cooper, said that the congregation will likely meet in a nearby community center. He added the church was previously hard-pressed for finances, and now its problems have multiplied.

Meanwhile, in the downtown section of the city, Doyle Holmes, area missions secretary for the Lubbock Baptist Association, and a staff secretary conducted their business in the flickering light of several candles.

Electric power was paralyzed. Communications by telephone both within and outside the city was limited. Holmes and other Baptist leaders held a strategy meeting to discuss plans for the future.

In the northeast section of the city, the pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Joe Serratt, was making plans to offer his slightly damaged church building to several other churches of other denominations that suffered more extensive destruction.

"Our plans for the very near future are that we will invite all the people from this area, regardless of their denomination...to worship with us," Serratt said. "We plan...to have three separate services, one for Baptists, one for Church of Christ members and one for the Methodists."

The Methodist church near Serratt's pastorate was completely demolished, the Assembly of God across the street was badly damaged and the Church of Christ down the street experienced heavy damage.

Emmanuel Baptist Church suffered less damage, sustaining window breakage and some damage to the exterior walls and the complete destruction of the garage to Serratt's residence next door to the church.

The city's largest congregation, First Baptist Church, experienced virtually no damage but quickly mobilized its members to assist the homeless and injured in the tornado's aftermath.

Jarrell Rial, minister of youth and activities for the church, said that a short time after the tornado struck "we opened our building...to get people in who didn't have a place to stay."

Hospitals in the area were overrun with victims. After many of the injured had been treated, ambulances brought the victims to First Baptist where two doctors and two or three nurses were on duty. "We provided (the injured and homeless) a place to stay and food, Rial said.

"It was a sad thing," he related. "We had wives coming in who didn't know where their husbands were and parents who didn't know where their children were."

A number of high school age youth and collegians from Texas Tech, including some who were active members of the Baptist Student Union, assisted in the volunteer program at First Baptist Church.

"Some had long hair, the hippy type. One girl came in here about midnight. She was a cocktail waitress and she was sorta my right hand man here for a while," Rial said. "She stayed until about 10:30 a.m."

Each of these personalities in their own way expressed a courageous attitude, with smiles on their lips, but sorrow in their hearts because of the tragedy which had struck their neighbors, their homes and some of their churches.

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May 13, 1970

**Tornado Rips Through
Four Lubbock Churches**

by Charles Richardson

LUBBOCK, Tex. (BP)--The devastating tornado that ripped through this West Texas City killing at least 21 persons left a number of churches with heavy damage in its wake.

Though damage was heavy at least four Texas Baptist congregations here, most other Baptist churches escaped with light or virtually no damage.

Individual members of the churches in some instances received heavy losses in property, but none of the listed dead were known to be active Baptists.

In terms of dollars and cents, the total estimated damage to Baptist property was not immediately available. Early estimates to total city property amounted to at least \$100 million.

The building which houses the office of the Lubbock Baptist Association at 1214 18th St., received some damage on the outside and window breakage.

Doyle Holmes, area missions superintendent for the Lubbock Baptist Association, said his office will coordinate assistance to those in need within Baptist ranks and others in the city who have lost their homes and personal possessions.

Holmes said that Charles McLaughlin, secretary of the State Missions Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, had been in contact with him for a survey of the needs with the Lubbock Baptist Association.

"The Mackenzie Terrace Baptist Church lost its roof over the church auditorium and a modern nursery building was heavily damaged," Holmes reported. It was the most severely damaged Baptist church in the city, he said.

Among other congregations in Lubbock which received fairly heavy damage were:

--Emmanuel Baptist Church, where damage was inflicted to the outside structure and roof and windows broken. The parsonage where the pastor, Joe Serratt and family, resides also sustained damage and an attached garage was completely demolished.

--Skyline Baptist Church which sustained the loss of nearly half a side of its auditorium and nearly lost the upper section of the roof and steeple.

--College Avenue Baptist Church where the twister and its powerful wind ripped loose bricks at an entrance of the church.

A Latin-American Baptist evangelistic crusade was underway in a tent on the night the tornado struck. Carlos Parades, a member of the Texas Baptist Evangelism Division in Dallas, was the evangelist.

Holmes, who was present in the tent meeting at the time, said it began to hail and rain heavily at the time the service began, but the revival continued in a normal way, with several professions of faith at the end of the meeting.

During the service some of the men were holding the poles of the tent because the wind was getting rather strong," he said. "By the time the services had ended the storm had gotten pretty heavy and the people could not get out because of large hail and tremendous rain."

Some of the people, he said, made their way to their automobiles and went on home. It was decided that it would be best if the 150 people who were remaining in the tent try to make it across the street to the basement of the Arnett Benson Baptist Church, Holmes related.

"The people were calm even though there were several children...no one was in panic."

Holmes said that arrangements were made for the revival among the Latin-Americans to be moved from the tent location to the Arnett Benson Church.

The mission executive was among those who left the tent meeting to return home during the rain and hail storm. Though he thought at the time the worst was over, Holmes said he was on the edge of the area hit hardest by the tornado when it hit.

"It was comforting feeling to get out of the area, although it made one realize he is God's child, and to be committed to him and trust his protection as he has promised," Holmes said.

It was not until 36 hours later that the missions superintendent was able to go to his association's office in downtown Lubbock in an area where there was much destruction.

Holmes, who indicated he had been in contact with state convention officials, said that strategy meetings will be held to discuss the role that local congregations may play as well as the help which will be necessary from the state convention and others within the Southern Baptist Convention.

"We do not know at this point how many of our people have lost (property)...and to what extent. We do not know of any at this moment that have suffered personal injuries," Holmes said.

First Baptist Church, largest congregation in the city, was not damaged in the storm, and was among the first institutions to set up facilities to aid the people stricken by the tornado.

The church opened its building for persons left homeless by the destructive winds, and served as an over-flow center for slightly injured persons after they had been treated by hospitals, all of which were crammed beyond capacity by an estimated 2,000 persons who suffered injuries.

After treatment at a hospital, ambulances brought many of the injured to First Baptist Church where two doctors and two or three nurses were on duty.

They were given food, and a place to stay. A clothing bank was also set up for those needing assistance.

College and high school youth, including some described by the church's minister of youth and activities as "hippie types" assisted in the church's effort to help the storm's refugees.

Some were members of First Baptist, some were active in the Baptist Student Union at Texas Tech, and others were "just friends," said Jarrell Rial. One was a cocktail waitress, who worked all night long and "was sorta my right hand man here for awhile," Rial added.

The pastor of another congregation, Emmanuel Baptist Church in northeast Lubbock, came to the aid of three nearby churches of other denominations badly damaged by the storm by offering its building for their services.

Joe Serratt, pastor of the church, said the church would invite all the people of the area to worship at Emmanuel, regardless of their denomination, and said they planned to have three separate services--for Baptists, Church of Christ members, and for Methodists, whose churches nearby had more extensive ~~damage~~ than Emmanuel.

The prevailing attitude here several days after the storm seemed to be a determination to rebuild demolished homes, businesses and churches, and to help neighbors in need.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Charles Richardson is director of public relations for Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Tex., and covered the tornado damage on assignment from Baptist Press. He is a former press representative for Texas Baptists and former Dallas Baptist Press Bureau staff writer.

Two Hospitals Recommend Plan For Severing SBC Ties

FORT SUMTER, S.C. (BP)--The board of directors for Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc., meeting here approved a detailed plan which would immediately sever ties between the SBC and two SBC hospitals if the convention in Denver approves, but would continue the hospital agency for an additional year.

The plan must be ratified by both the SBC Executive Committee in its pre-convention session in Denver, and by the convention messengers on June 1, before it could go into effect.

Briefly, here is the way the plan works:

--In the listing of agencies of the convention in the SBC Bylaws and other legal documents, the name of Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc., (the governing body of the hospitals in New Orleans and Jacksonville, Fla.) will be deleted and changed to read, "The Hospital Agency of the Southern Baptist Convention," a new corporation which legally will be the continuation of the agency.

--Of the four "programs" assigned to the current hospital board, the three dealing with hospital operation will be dropped from the program statements, and the program dealing with "assistance to other Baptist hospitals and groups" will be assigned to the new, yet continuing organization, the Hospital Agency of the SBC.

--Trustees of the Hospital Agency of the SBC will be elected by the convention, and will receive the Cooperative Program budget allocation previously recommended for the hospitals, effective June 1, 1970 (immediately upon SBC approval).

--Trustees of Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc., will be authorized to change their charter to eliminate provisions that require election of board members by the SBC each year and adherence to the SBC Business and Financial Plan, (this severing ties with the SBC).

--The Hospital Agency of the Southern Baptist Convention will be dissolved and discontinued as an agency of the SBC upon the approval of the 1971 convention.

--Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc., will continue as a private, Baptist-oriented institution of Christian healing with a self-perpetuating board of trustees.

These detailed steps outlined in the recommendations approved by the hospital board for submission to the SBC and its Executive Committee would enable the SBC to release the two hospitals immediately so trustees could make necessary financial commitments for expansion programs, officials said.

The legal steps were necessary because of the complex laws dealing with transfer of one private corporation to another in Louisiana, where Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc., was chartered and incorporated, and because of a SBC Bylaw stipulation which requires approval by two successive conventions to dissolve an agency of the SBC.

Hardy M. Harrell, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc., explained that legally, the convention is not dissolving the agency--it is changing the program assignments and continuing the agency under a new name, the Hospital Agency of the Southern Baptist Convention.

It will still be operating, but it will only carry out one of the four programs previously assigned to Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc. Both organizations will continue with the same board members and officers next year, he added.

Harrell pointed out that severing ties was not the idea of the hospital board but rather the proposal of a special study committee of the SBC Executive Committee. In February, the Executive Committee approved of the study committee's recommendation to get out of the hospital business, and authorized officials to work out a detailed plan with the hospital trustees.

After the plan was drafted, the hospital board met here at the Sheraton Hotel in a called session and approved the plan unanimously.

Harrell said that the main reason the board wanted to work out the details to allow immediate legal severance was to free the hospital in Jacksonville from restrictions in the SBC Business and Financial Plan.

Trustees of Baptist Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville earlier had adopted a resolution stating that "it is extremely difficult, if not impossible" to obtain commercial financing for their \$27 million expansion program because of restrictions in the hospital's articles of incorporation requiring adherence to the SBC Business and Financial Plan and SBC Executive Committee approval of loans, expansion programs, and capital needs.

Harrell pointed out that the hospital trustees in both Jacksonville and New Orleans do not have any intention, now or in the future, of applying for or accepting government funds. This was never a factor in the decision to sever ties with the SBC, he added.

The plan was worked out jointly by representatives of the hospitals and a committee appointed by the SBC Executive Committee.

The committee, which recommended in February that the SBC divest itself of the hospitals, cited financial response for the proposal.

Included among the reasons were: (1) the hospitals must operate under the financial restrictions of the SBC including Executive Committee approval of expansions and loan requests, causing delays in expansions; (2) indebtedness of the hospitals accounts for \$20.5 million of the SBC's \$29 million indebtedness in 1970; (3) the bulk of financial support for the hospitals must be raised locally, since the SBC has provided only about \$1½ million of the hospitals' \$50 million in assets; (4) the two hospitals serve a local area, rather than being national in scope; (5) many Baptists feel that the state conventions, which operate a total of 41 hospitals, should be responsible for hospital ministries, not the SBC, just as the states, not the SBC, operate colleges and universities; and (6) in the opinion of attorneys for the Jacksonville Hospital, the SBC has the ultimate responsibility for debts and obligations incurred by the hospitals, and the change would place sole financial responsibility upon the hospitals themselves.

If the SBC in Denver approves the recommendations to sever ties with the Jacksonville and New Orleans hospitals, it would not affect the operation of the other 41 Baptist hospitals owned by 13 Baptist state conventions in the SBC.

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Radio-TV Commission Gets
Award For "JOT" Program

5/13/70

NASHVILLE (BP)--The chairman of the board for the National Association of Broadcasters presented a citation to the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission on behalf of "the responsible broadcasters of America" for the commission's children's television program, "JOT."

The citation was awarded to the commission by the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here at a luncheon announcing the marketing of "JOT" products by Broadman Press. The products are designed as teaching tools for children's work in the church.

Willard E. Walbridge, senior vice president for corporate affairs of Capital Cities Broadcasting Corp., and board chairman for the National Association of Broadcasters, presented the engraved plaque to SBC Radio-Television Commission Executive Director Paul M. Stevens.

Entitled a "Life Enrichment Citation," the plaque praised the commission for "outstanding contribution to the moral and spiritual life of the children of America through 'JOT' television cartoon series."

Walbridge, former general manager for KTRK-TV in Houston for 15 years, made the presentation, which came as a surprise to Stevens, at the conclusion of the luncheon speech.

In the speech, Walbridge noted that the "spirit of destructive revolution seems to be all about us," and observed that "the need for a great spiritual renewal and moral reawakening in this land must be upon us."

Stating that only the force which can accomplish this is the church, Walbridge pledged "that broadcasters everywhere stand ready to help the church to achieve the great spiritual and moral reawakening in our land. We are in this together, and with common objective," he said.

"If the church does not rise to this greatest challenge to man's spirit in 3,000 years, then broadcasting doesn't really matter much," Walbridge said. "Nothing does. But if you are ready to lead the crusade, then we are ready to help you if you tell us what to do."

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He suggested that the church must become concerned with the eroding challenges to man's freedoms, "...because we know that freedom is a fragile thing...and those who have lost it tell us that it was also a subtle thing...and that they did not know they were losing it...until it was gone."

He cited threats on the freedoms of broadcasting, saying that "the conflict lies in the single premise of whether the people govern themselves or whether they are to be governed by an elite."

What those who are attacking and harassing broadcasting really are saying, he added, is "that they know better what the public should have than the public does itself...They don't trust the public to evaluate its information and make up its collective mind into the paths of progress" as broadcasters do.

Of the Kent State University tragedy, Walbridge said broadcasters have a responsibility to cover "classic confrontation."

"Knowing of it, we can pray for the families of the young people who died in the tragic and mindless violence. We can pray as well for the confused and frightened young people who pulled the triggers in panic and will be haunted the rest of their lives. But even more importantly, we can pray that the incident will be a catharsis which will shock the nation into a new era of understanding..." he said.

Following his appeal for a church-led spiritual and moral reawakening, Walbridge said that the SBC Radio-Television Commission headed by Stevens "put the tools into the hands of the broadcasters" to help bring spiritual renewal. He noted that commission's programs are reaching 3,000 stations.

He specifically praised the television cartoon series, "JOT," for teaching great lessons in morality to children.

Earlier, one of the "JOT" programs was shown to the nearly 100 guests of the luncheon and Mrs. Ruth Byers of Houston, writer-producer and creator of "JOT," spoke briefly, stating that the new "JOT" products being marketed by the Baptist board's Broadman Press were designed, like the "JOT" television programs, to develop creative imagination and spiritual growth in children.

"JOT" products include picture story books, frame puzzles, activity book and a JOT doll, based on and using the "JOT" cartoon character.

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Baptist-Catholic Dialogue
Socks Cooperative Efforts

5/18/70

LOUISVILLE (BP)--About 20 Southern Baptists and 20 Roman Catholics, in a three-day dialogue session here, sought to find ways of promoting cooperative efforts on the part of Catholics and Baptists on the regional and local level, conference participants have reported.

During the meeting no resolutions were passed and no action was taken that binds either group.

"Nobody came to this meeting hoping to solve theological problems like the infallibility of the Pope or the place of Mary in Christian worship," Claude U. Broach, pastor of St. John's Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., told a news conference.

The participants, however, did come to the meeting, Broach said, to improve communications between members of the nation's two largest religious bodies.

"I see no reason why we cannot find areas--like meeting human needs-- in which we can both work," said Willis Bennett, professor of church and community at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said. To this end, Bennett acknowledged that the dialogue had produced an awareness of common interest in work in the Louisville area.

The meeting, the third in a series of regional Southern Baptist-Catholic dialogue sessions, was jointly sponsored by the Ecumenical Institute of Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., and the U.S. Catholic Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in Washington, D.C.

The two previous dialogue sessions were held at the Wake Forest Institute in May 1969, and at the St. Joseph Abbey in St. Benedict, La., in February of 1970.

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The Louisville meeting was co-chaired by Brooks Hays, director of the Wake Forest Ecumenical Institute, and Msg. Bernard Law, executive director of the U.S. Bishops' Committee. Hays, former U.S. Congressman from Arkansas, is a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

During the press conference, Law said that the group of about 20 Baptists and 20 Catholics talked about actual and potential problems involved in their cooperation.

Acknowledging that the dialogue session did not come up with any specific action, Law said, "The real action is where individuals are out doing their thing regardless of what the institutions may think."

For the Catholics, the meeting was officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. For the Baptists, it was unofficial.

Referring to the difference in status of the two, Hays said that official recognition by the Southern Baptist Convention or its agencies is "not necessary."

"We just don't need it," Hays said. "Little by little we will be building an atmosphere of friendship without official sanction," he said.

During the dialogue session participants discussed four papers which were presented during the sessions.

The papers were given by James Leo Garrett, Jr., professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary, who spoke on "The Priesthood of All Christians;" Broach, who discussed "The Ecumenical Tide: A Pastoral Perspective;" Bruce Vawter, C.M. professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, who presented the paper "The Enduring Meaning of the Old Testament;" and Kilian McDonnell of the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in Collegeville, Minn., who spoke on "Retreat, Revival, and Monasticism."



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