



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
Telephone (615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-5461  
**RICHMOND** Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 28, 1972

Property Damage Slight, Personal  
Losses High in East Coast Floods

HARRISBURG, Pa. (BP)--In the wake of the largest area of flooding in the nations history spawned by Hurricane Agnes, Baptist in five states survived extensive damage to their churches but suffered severe losses of personal property among members.

Apparently hardest hit, according to reports received by Baptist Press, were Baptists in the Harrisburg, Pa., area where property damage was estimated at more than \$1 billion.

The death toll was reported at 125 and climbing. No Baptist lives were reported lost, and no church was completely destroyed. But personal property losses of church members was described here as "severe."

The flooding covered parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Florida. It was the largest area hit by flooding in the nation's history, according to news reports.

Only three weeks earlier, devastating flood waters inundated Rapid City, S.D., taking the lives of more than 200 people.

Baptists responded with relief efforts quickly in the Rapid City flooding, but the flooding in the wake of Agnes in the Northeast hit such a broad geographic span, it was difficult to coordinate extensive relief programs.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board department of Christian social ministries in Atlanta quickly responded with \$2,000 each to the New York and Pennsylvania-South Jersey Baptist Conventions.

The SBC Brotherhood Commission in Memphis was standing by, ready to send laymen as volunteers to help in cleanup operations and rebuilding, but no requests for aid had been received.

Several local churches, however, played active roles in aiding the victims of the massive flooding and evacuation.

In Wheaton, Md., a suburb of Washington, D.C., the Viers Mill Baptist Church opened its doors as an evacuation center. More than 2,500 people poured into the church building seeking shelter from the ravaging nearby creeks and the possibility of even worse flooding if the dam of a nearby lake had burst. It did not.

Pastor of the church, Cecil C. Anderson, got out of bed to go to the church and help care for the evacuees. The community and area responded with food.

In fact, there was so much food delivered to the church during the two days it served as an evacuation center that the refugees could not eat it all, the pastor said. Three days after they left, the excess food was still being distributed to needy people in the area.

Harrowing stories of narrow escapes by Baptist people in the raging waters were all too numerous.

Bob Jowanowitch, a newly converted Baptist of Temple Baptist Church in York, Pa., was swept into a swollen stream with his automobile while trying to cross a bridge. He managed to

-more-

DARGAN-CARVER LIBRARY  
S. B. C. HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

get out through a window of the car, and cling for half-an-hour to the trunk of a tree amid the rushing waters before he was rescued.

Jowanowitch was awaiting baptism by the church, but quipped that his dip in the swollen creek would not count.

Southern Baptist pastor Nolan Kennedy and his wife Ina, were evacuated from their home in Middletown, Pa., not only because of the high waters, but because a nearby chemical plant had caught fire.

For four days they stayed at the Valley Baptist Church, Middletown, where Kennedy is pastor. "Last night I cooked supper for 21 families from the flood area who stayed in the church," Kennedy said.

The church held services on the Sunday following the floods. About 45 attended, with attendance down as members and others sought to dig out from the mud and muck remaining after the waters receded.

Otha Winningham, superintendent of missions for the Keystone Baptist Association with offices in Harrisburg, said that at least 17 families affiliated with Southern Baptist churches in the area had suffered severe losses---either their home or furniture, or both.

Financially, many of the churches will be in dire circumstances, since most of them struggle to meet their budgets anyway. With many of their members losing all their personal property, and some their jobs, the financial effect will be devastating, Winningham said.

One 66-year-old deacon lost both his home, and his job. After the flood, his business was closed, Winningham said.

"It means these people are going to have to go heavily into debt," the missions superintendent added. "And some of them are already mortgaged to the hilt."

Despite the hardships, Winningham said all the pastors and church members in the area are thankful there has been no loss of life in their congregations. Many are giving of themselves to help others who are even worse off, he said.

Kennedy said that his church is located in a low income area. Although there are federal loans available for repairs from the flood damage, these loans will have to be paid back. It will take a long time to recover, he said.

Winningham said only about two per cent of the people in Pennsylvania had flood damage insurance, and none of the Baptists had such coverage.

In Arlington, Va., the Glebe Baptist Church suffered extensive flood damage estimated to exceed \$15,000 to \$30,000.

High water from Four Mile Run Creek swept into the building, destroying seven pianos, all office, nursery and kitchen equipment, the air conditioner and furnace, choir robes and the pastor's personal library. Charles Sinclair is pastor.

Damage to churches in Pennsylvania was less extensive. Winningham estimated damage to several churches at several hundred dollars, but said the worst loss was in terms of personal property owned by members, many of them strong church supporters.

In West Virginia, where floods ravaged Logan County last May, and struck again in June, extensive damage was suffered by White Sulpher Springs Baptist Church, White Sulpher Springs, W. Va.

"All of the Sunday School material, records and nursery and kitchen equipment, were destroyed by the flood," said John I. Snedden, executive secretary of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists.

"The water came up to the ceiling of the lower level, which would amount to the basement level. Three of the families in the church lost everything they had," he said.

The West Virginia Convention had received considerable relief funds during the Logan County flood. Because all funds were not depleted, money was available in the recent flooding.

"We also sent a portion of this money to the Rapid City people a few weeks ago. It wasn't a great amount but we felt the people who gave would feel the spirit of this need and want us to do it," Sneed said.

Meanwhile, in Richmond, a Baptist Good Will Center was gearing up to help victims of the inundated Fulton section of the city. As flood waters receded and residents returned to their homes for the first time in four days, they found a thick layer of slimy mud on floors and walls.

Miss Carolyn Roberts, director of the Fulton Center, said that in a few cases the problem was not one of cleaning up; there simply was nothing left to clean. The houses, already condemned in preparation for an Urban Renewal project, were rendered completely unlivable by flood waters.

At first she considered cancelling the center's program for the week but decided that "if they ever needed the group it was now." Besides the regular program, she took on the additional tasks of providing meals for some who had no way to cook, boiling water for those who could not get to the water distribution center, and offering individual counsel as to what assistance the center could offer and where outside help could be obtained.

There was little or no damage to Baptist churches in Richmond, although flooding in downtown Richmond destroyed businesses and poverty-stricken areas.

In Pennsylvania, Winningham said that financial aid was needed more than anything, not food or clothing.

Plumbers, electricians, carpenters or other such workers have not been needed to rebuild homes in the northeast, although following the Rapid City floods, four electricians were dispatched to help.

Nine other workers were ready to go, but were not needed. John Baker, executive secretary of the Northern Plains Convention with headquarters in Rapid City, said the workers were not needed until the Corps of Engineers gave permission for rebuilding homes in the low-lying areas.

"Sending small emergency relief funds for immediate help is the best way I see for disaster relief from our department," said Paul Adkins, secretary of the SBC Home Mission Board's Christian social ministries department.

"Our relief efforts can not be in large sums, for these will come from other sources," Adkins said. "We need to meet the immediate needs of those who have been overwhelmed and immobilized because of the disaster, . . . by giving \$50 or \$100 and saying we care."

-30-

Story compiled by Jim Newton of Nashville and Sandy Simmons of the Atlanta BP Bureau; with assistance from Barry Garrett, Washington BP Bureau; and June Carter, Richmond BP Bureau.

\*\*\*

Laughon Named To Radio-TV  
Commission Richmond Post

6/28/72

FORT WORTH (BP) --Fred T. Laughon, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Fla., since 1957, has been named special assistant to the director of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, the commission here has announced.

In a newly created position, Laughon will open a new office for the commission in Richmond, Va., where he will explore new opportunities of service for the commission in countries where Southern Baptists have no missionaries or in countries presently closed to mission work.

He will also meet with Southern Baptist missionaries on furlough to discover what they are doing in the field of broadcasting in their areas, and to thoroughly acquaint them with the commission's materials and services.

-more-

Richmond is also the headquarters city for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, expressed delight at Laughon's appointment, saying his new office in Richmond would significantly provide for closer liaison between the commission and the Foreign Mission Board.

Laughon will be directly responsible to Paul M. Stevens, executive director of the Radio-TV Commission in Fort Worth.

Laughon, a Tennessee native reared in Portsmouth, Va., has been a member of the board of directors for the Radio-TV Commission for eight years. For two years, he was chairman of the commission's board.

He also has been a member of the state mission boards for the Virginia and Florida Baptist state conventions, and a trustee for the Baptist Foundation of South Carolina. Active in local and civic affairs, he is past president of the Gainesville Ministerial Association and the Gainesville Rotary Club.

He is a graduate of University of Richmond and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and holds honorary doctorates from both the University of Richmond and Stetson University, DeLand, Fla.

After several month's orientation in Fort Worth, he and his family will move to Richmond to open the new commission office there.



**BAPTIST PRESS**

*460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

RECEIVED  
JUN 30 1972

HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC

LYNN MAY HO  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
127 9TH AVE. NO.  
NASHVILLE TN 37203