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August 11, 1972

**Philippine Baptists Active
As Flood Relief Continues**

By Robert L. Stanley

MANILA (BP)--Relief and rescue operations are underway as Philippine Baptists seek to aid members and others isolated by the worst floods in the memory of most Filipinos.

Almost all of central Luzon Island has been flooded as a series of tropical storms and low depression areas have drawn southwest monsoon rains across the island. Overflowing rivers have broken dikes and cut off all highway traffic between Manila and Baguio City.

The death toll in the floods and landslides has been reported at 427, with more expected as additional reports come in.

Food shortages are becoming critical in isolated towns and barrios (rural communities), despite attempts to drop food from helicopters.

President Ferdinand Marcos has ordered seizure of foodstuffs in the flooded areas if owners refuse to sell at government-controlled prices.

The Clark Field Baptist Church, located near Clark Air Force Base in Angeles City, is sending out a specially equipped Air Force truck as often as it is available to take food and medicine to pastors and church members in that area. The truck has its engine encased against water so that it can go through water six feet deep.

"The situation is getting desperate now," said Missionary J. Allen Smith, pastor of the Clark Field Church. "It's almost dangerous to take food into an area because of the danger of being mobbed."

At San Fernando, Pampanga, south of Clark Field, the houses of 90 per cent of the church members are under water, Smith said. A team of Air Force men, accompanied by associate pastor Nardito Manalang, went through water six feet deep to bring the wife and six children of pastor Jose Bautista to safety.

Pastor Bautista and a seventh child stayed at the church, where water was up to the bottom of the windows inside the building. Several other families are also living in the church on platforms built on top of the pulpit area. They did not want to evacuate because all of their possessions were there.

Clark Field Church is spending about \$2,000 to aid in the relief effort, and is seeking donations of foodstuffs, clothing and medicine from its military membership. Members living on the base are in no danger, Smith said, and have adequate food and other supplies.

Missionaries contacted by phone in each of the flooded areas said they have adequate food but fear that many members in their area churches are suffering because of the inability to get food and medicine to them.

The executive committee of the Philippine Baptist Mission, meeting in Manila, made nearly \$1,000 immediately available for food relief from funds on the field, and asked the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for \$5,000 for additional flood relief.

Members of International Baptist Church in Manila are distributing rice and other food and clothing donated by members to needy families in Manila area churches.

A Manila Baptist youth group, the Baptist Youth Movement for Church (BYMC), is making a Philippine-wide appeal for funds.

In Baguio City, members of the Aurora Hill Baptist Church set up a rescue and evacuation center in their church after a landslide near the church which claimed the lives of at least 22 persons. It is feared the casualty list will be higher as digging continues for victims or possible survivors.

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Thus far, no Baptist church members have been among those reported killed in the landslides or drowned in the floodwaters, but there are many outlying mission points and churches which have not yet been heard from.

The church building at Castillo, a barrio north of Clark Field, was reported destroyed by floods. But Smith said he had been told that the people there were experiencing a revival in the midst of the flood.

"The people are really praying," he said, "and many are expressing repentance. Some feel that the Lord has sent this flood for some reason."

Missionary Calvin Fox of Cabanatuan City said that in Capas, Tarlac, the Baptist church was the only building strong enough to withstand the force of floodwaters caused by a shift in the channel of the Urdaneta River. In Tarlac City, several Baptist families have been forced to evacuate their homes and are living in the church building.

In Dagupan City, on the Lingayen Gulf, missionaries Ed and Audrey Gordon reported that floodwaters reached knee level in their home and also rose to about 18 inches in the Dagupan Baptist Church.

Mrs. Gordon said the waters there have subsided now, but they have had no reports from several outlying chapels.

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Flood Victims Tell Awesome
Story of Philippine Slides

8/11/72

By Richard C. Henderson

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines (BP)--It was 6:30 a. m. when Rose, affectionately called the "Bible woman" of Aurora Hill Baptist Church here, was dramatically awakened from a flu-induced, restless attempt at sleep.

An awesome, terror-producing rumble replaced the usual alarm clock that usually awakens the petite "Bible woman."

Making her way to the window, she gazed transfixed at a shock-producing scene not 50 feet away. Seven multi-storied houses were sliding down the monsoon-soaked slope of Aurora Hill.

Rose tried to cry out when she saw one family calmly sitting at the breakfast table window while the hillside came down. But there was no sound.

Up the hill, Mr. Mendoza had also been sleeping restlessly. His house was sitting precariously on the hill's steep slope, and he knew that three weeks of relentless rainfall had eroded the earth from around the foundation.

Mendoza's attention, however, was riveted upon three youths crying for unavailable help. When the slide ended, Mendoza, an active Christian layman, scrambled to the spot where the young people were last seen before being swallowed by the murky mass of mud, water and debris.

Because of such presence of mind, two of the youth were removed alive by the hurriedly assembled neighborhood rescue squad.

A short distance away, Pastor and Mrs. Samuel Comising also heard and responded. They saw rooftops engulfed with mud where once three-story buildings housed 80 to 100 inhabitants.

The pastor jumped into the ravine-filled mass of destruction and spent the day in the tragic pursuit of the landslide victims.

His frail wife, drenched with the flood waters, busied herself with carrying soggy belongings to the church for later use, gathering survivors into the rapidly-filling church building, and taking welcomed coffee to the expanding rescue force.

The strategically located Aurora Hill Church immediately became a disaster center, where the believers and other volunteers were attempting to feed from 100 to 150 rescue workers and evacuees.

Help came from varied sources: university youth, city officials, firemen, police, American servicemen, concerned neighbors, distraught relatives.

Relief operations coordinated by the little congregation were complicated by continuous torrential rains, coupled with the total lack of drinking water, electricity and emergency funds.

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At least one relief worker was injured. One young rescuer was taken to the hospital for a seriously-cut leg, injured while he frantically was digging to find his father buried in a sea of mud.

The driver who took the young man to the hospital, a Christian, sought to tell the injured man and his companion of the love of Jesus Christ. Ironically, the driver discovered he had been in the house of the accompanying youth on several occasions--a house that miraculously had been sheared in half, leaving intact the section where the inhabitants were sleeping.

As in any natural tragedy, conversation in the midst of the church fellowship hall packed with soaked and tired rescue workers turned often to that perplexing question: why? Why did 188 inches of rain deluge Baguio during July? Why were some spared, others killed?

Among some of the superstitious Filipinos, superficial answers came easy: the theft of the Santo Nino, a small statue of the child Jesus from a Manila church, with the resulting angry retribution of God; or the fulfillment of some sects' prophecies. These are the most frequent explanations.

The church-led rescue operations have provided, however, an opportunity for Baptists to proclaim God's message in the midst of tragedy through acts of compassion. Many are more responsive to the message of the church because of its involvement in the relief effort.

"I have been looking for something intellectually tenable to which I may sincerely submit myself," said one ruggedly handsome 22-year-old leader of a rescue team of 30 men who have led in uncovering several slide victims.

"I cannot conscientiously believe much of what I have been taught," he reflected soberly. "But I am eager to discover the real truth concerning God."

Members of the church gave the young man a copy of the Bible, and agreed to lead Bible study sessions in his home after the rescue operation is ended.

Rose, the "Bible woman" of the church, finally got away from the relief center for a brief spell the afternoon after the slide. She made her way to the top of the hill where only a precipice remains to mark the spot of the house where the death-laden slide began.

She sobbed convulsively as she realized who the inhabitants were. She had often been in that home, witnessing of her faith and experience in Christ.

Less than a week before the tragedy, the young mother who lived in the house was agonizingly close to making a decision for Christ, she recalled.

The real tragedy---the most heartrending aspect of the disaster--was the response voiced by the mother: "We'll talk again--not now."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Richard C. Henderson, professor at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City, is a Southern Baptist missionary and member of the Aurora Hill Baptist Church.

President Nixon Asks Ceremonies On Citizenship Responsibilities

8/11/72

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Richard Nixon has proclaimed Sept. 17, 1972 as Citizenship Day and the week following as Constitution Week.

In a proclamation from the White House, the President called on religious groups, along with others, to arrange appropriate programs on citizenship that will "inspire all our citizens to rededicate themselves to the services of their country and to the support and defense of the Constitution."

The President declared: "The Constitution of the United States is no mere impersonal doctrine. It is an instrument of our people. Its vitality and meaning depend upon the purpose and energy of all of our citizens."

The special observance of Citizenship Day was approved by Congress in 1952 to commemorate the signing of the Constitution of the United States on Sept. 17, 1787. In 1956 the Congress approved a second resolution requesting the President to designate the week beginning September 17 of each year as Constitution Week.

This year's proclamation urged appropriate ceremonies in schools and churches, and in other suitable places, "to the end that our citizens, whether they be naturalized or natural-born, may have a better understanding of the Constitution and of the rights and responsibilities of United States citizenship."

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