



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 29, 1972

**Baptist Property Suffers
Damage From Earthquake**

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (BP)--All six Baptist churches in this capital city of Nicaragua were destroyed and the buildings housing the Baptist seminary were seriously damaged in the earthquake which hit two days before Christmas.

The American Baptist hospital in the city was 80 per cent destroyed, according to reports from American Baptist Churches' headquarters in Valley Forge, Pa., USA.

American Baptist Churches (formerly Convention) has had a missionary ministry in Nicaragua for many years, a spokesman said.

From local churches to the Baptist World Alliance, Baptists responded immediately to the mounting needs here with open hearts and hands.

Although the Southern Baptist Convention has no missionaries in Nicaragua, the SBC Foreign Mission Board authorized use of \$5,000 for emergency aid. The SBC board sent A. Clark Scanlon, its field representative for Central America, to assess the needs.

All patients in the American Baptist hospital in Managua were evacuated before it collapsed, said Dr. Gustavo Parajon, an appointee of American Baptist International Ministries who contacted ABC officials in the United States by short-wave radio.

Dr. Parajon said no American Baptist churches missionary personnel or members of their families were among the thousands killed or injured in the quake which devastated the city of 300,000.

Due to scarcity of communications and transportation facilities, information about conditions at the scene was difficult to piece together more than a week after the disaster struck.

As tons of material flowed into Managua from donors the world over, conflicting reports arose concerning the need for doctors and medical supplies.

Amigos Internacionales, an organization of Christian medical practitioners sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was ready to send a plane load of doctors with medical supplies, if needed, according to Baptist leaders in Dallas.

However, a U.S. State Department official told Baptist Press that medical personnel and supplies in the quake-torn area were adequate.

An official from the Nicaraguan state task force group in Washington, D.C., said the number of people injured was not as great as generally assumed compared to the number killed. Apparently most people had sufficient warning to evacuate buildings before they collapsed.

The State Department official said two field hospitals totaling 124 beds had been set up in Managua but few people needed to be hospitalized. Doctors treated about 1,000 people in the first day or two, she said.

Robert C. Campbell, Valley Forge, General Secretary of American Baptist Churches, said a bulletin was being sent to executive ministers of the denomination's regions, states, and cities. He said letters signed by himself and by ABC Associate General Secretary Chester J. Jump were being mailed to all ABC pastors urging churches to receive a special offering for relief of the Managua earthquake victims on the Sundays of Jan. 7 and/or/14.

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W. Hubert Porter, another ABC official, was named to coordinate American Baptist relief efforts. Porter said \$5,000 has been made available for Managua from reserve funds.

A succession of disastrous floods and other catastrophes during the year had depleted the budget of the ABC World Relief Committee, Porter added.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board authorized Jimmy Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., to buy a new jeep-type vehicle and have it flown to Managua for use by American Baptist hospital staff as an ambulance and supply vehicle.

"I'm glad our Foreign Mission Board was ready to move quickly to meet needs in Managua," said Allen.

After meeting emergency needs, aid from Southern Baptists will be channeled through the Nicaraguan National Baptist leaders, said Charles Bryan, Secretary for Middle America for the SBC Foreign Mission Board.

During the first week after the quake, Bryan said, a number of pastors contacted him concerning aid to Managua. Funds for this purpose should be designated "earthquake relief" and sent to the SBC Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Va., he said.

Baptist World Alliance headquarters in Washington, D.C., also is collecting relief donations for Nicaragua.

Plans for rebuilding Baptist facilities were indefinite since Nicaraguan officials had not decided where to relocate the city.

"We're not yet trying to meet emergency needs," said Bryan. "Personal involvement will come later. As soon as we know the situation we will issue information on needs for volunteers to assist in rebuilding churches and other Baptist facilities."

BWA officials also said they had authorized Dr. Robert A. Hingson of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in the USA to confer with the Central American Health Council and with Dr. Ramiro Cruz, administrator of the American Baptist Hospital in Managua. Dr. Hingson is a Baptist layman and physician already well known for medical assistance to developing lands during recent years.

Dr. Hingson's painless "peace gun," an inoculation device that immunizes without a needle, received widespread notice when used to give injections to thousands of people in South America and Africa.

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Dallas Police Chief
Honors Three Baptists

12/29/72

DALLAS (BP)--A staffer and two members of First Baptist Church here were honored by Dallas Police Chief Frank Dyson for helping prevent the rape of a 23-year-old woman at the church.

Dyson presented the citizen's certificate of merit to Mrs. Jessie Jeffers, church staffer; Don T. Cates, local attorney, and A. George Allen, manufacturer's representative.

Police said the young woman was accosted in a fourth floor Sunday School room last November as she practiced piano.

The assailant struck her on the head with a chair, pulled her into a small room, and attempted to rape her, police said.

Mrs. Jeffers heard her scream and called on Cates, a deacon in the church, and Allen, according to police.

The assailant fled but Cates and Allen chased him. They caught him in front of a hotel two blocks away where he was attempting to enter a taxi. They held the assailant for police.

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Annuity Field Worker
For West Announced

FRESNO, Cal. (BP)--B.E. Pitts Jr., superintendent of missions in Portland, Ore., has been named western field representative for the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, succeeding Floyd Looney.

Pitts will begin his new work on Jan. 1. His office will be in the Baptist Building in Fresno. The Annuity Board's western region includes the convention areas of California, Colorado, and Arizona.

From 1962 until 1967 Pitts was area missionary in the East Bay and South Bay areas of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California.

He was chairman of the radio-television commission for Southern Baptists in Oregon and Washington and served on their executive board. Pitts was also moderator of two district associations of churches in that two-state area.



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