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Mexican Baptists Aid
Hungry Quake Victims

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Moved with compassion when they heard of the plight of the starving citizens of Ciudad, Serdan, Puebla, and surrounding rural villages, Baptist churches here responded by distributing food.

The towns and villages, located about 100 miles southeast of Mexico City, were in the epicenter of the recent earthquake that swept through Central Mexico, leaving thousands of Mexicans homeless and hungry. Of the larger towns, Serdan, with a population of about 25,000, was the hardest hit.

"Citizens are still in a state of shock," said Baptist field representative, H. Eldon Sturgeon Sr. "There is a certain look of despair on their faces."

"The people complained that food was scarce and pleaded with us to use our influence in the press to get them food," said David P. Daniell, Baptist representative in Mexico. "We saw a tank truck dispersing drinking water to the people, but no food was available--and it was 6 p.m."

As a result, the Baptists here collected a special offering, bought food and distributed it to the hungry victims.

About 40 per cent of the adobe houses in Serdan were destroyed. The secretary of public works has marked with paint all condemned homes to be leveled by bulldozers, which are already clearing the debris.

Meanwhile, a Baptist architect-contractor, Jaime Zea, was scheduled to visit Calipan, San Gabriel, Chilac and Tehuacan in the state of Puebla, where Baptist churches were damaged by the quake.

All the church buildings are still standing but have structural damage. Zea will determine whether these buildings can be saved and repaired. He will also advise and consult with Baptist families whose homes were severely damaged in the quake.

A general scarcity of building materials is likely to slow down repair and reconstruction efforts, according to Zea.

Church buildings, for the most part, are in ruins. More than 200 Catholic churches, some dating back to the days of Cortez in the 1520's, were destroyed. The government has decided to leave some ruins as testimony of the earthquake of 1973.

Impressions of the quake varied, with many attaching religious overtones. The first impression of many Baptists, according to a Baptist national, was the quake might be signalling the second coming of Christ.

In the epicenter of the earthquake--Orizaba, Rio Blanco and Serdan--the people generally regarded the quake as the wrath of God, punishing them for sins they had committed or for a lack of faithfulness in attending mass.

"One Catholic priest in Orizaba told me that the quake has inspired a spiritual awakening," said Daniell.

"The people now feel the need to search for God," the priest said. "I think this is a call of God to all people. There is a spiritual renovation and a drawing nearer to God."

One Catholic woman said, "We used to run to the movies and the bars, but now we are running to the churches."

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BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist paper editors

Mission Agency to Enlist
High School Volunteers

9/18/73

ATLANTA (BP)--In an attempt to tap an unused missions resource, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board here is developing two mission opportunities for high school juniors and seniors.

The board will use high school students in a 10-week assignment in youth summer missions and high school graduates in one-year ministry called "Sojourner."

In both instances, the parents, home church or the individual must provide all expenses.

To develop the mission opportunities, the Home Mission Board has appointed Clay Price, 24, to a one-year missionary associate position to plan and coordinate the program.

A native of Fort Worth, Tex., and graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, Price served for two years in the board's US-2 program, where he worked as student coordinator for the San Jose Baptist Association in California.

"I understand the Mormons have 15,000 young people out as volunteers for up to two years," said Price. "I think Baptists will respond also."

Don Hammonds, head of the special missions ministries department out of which Price will work, said, "We've had mission personnel ask us for years why we didn't get into this."

"And young people returning from special youth projects have written us."

Price said he expects no conflict between his work and that of Barry St. Clair, who works in high school evangelism for the Home Mission Board. "St. Clair recruits for work in high schools themselves. I will recruit young people from the high schools to work in other missions fields," Price said.

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South Carolina Baptists
Approve Reorganization

9/18/73

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--The general board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention has approved the first phase of a major reorganization of the convention structure which calls for creation of three new divisions of work.

Delos Miles, present evangelism department director, will head the division of evangelism and church services, encompassing the campus ministries, evangelism, church music, church training and Sunday School departments.

E.C. Watson, current head of the missions department, will direct a missions division which includes associational missions and the missions and Brotherhood (Baptist Men and Royal Ambassadors) department.

Business Manager Flynn T. Harrell will direct the new business services division.

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CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story mailed 9-17-73, headlined "Home Board Appoints 10 Staffers, Promotes 3," please change first line of head to read "Home Board Appoints 16." Thanks.

--Baptist Press