

October 28, 1974

Gaza Baptist Hospital
An Oasis of Compassion

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By Jim Newton
for Baptist Press

Suhaila had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the Baptist Hospital in Gaza, but she could kick with only one leg.

The other leg was so badly mangled that missionary surgeon Merrell D. Moore Jr. had to amputate to save the 12-year-old Arab girl's life.

A land mine had exploded not far from the hospital, and Suhaila's father, hit in the neck by shrapnel, bled to death on the spot.

Suhaila managed to crawl to an Arab house about 75 yards away, but the people there refused to help her. Apparently they did not want to get involved.

Meanwhile, a medical team from the Baptist Hospital arrived at the scene of the explosion, found Suhaila's dead father, and noticed the trail of blood leading to the Arab house.

For three days, missionary journeyman nurse Jane Yates sat by Suhaila's bed and sang choruses to her. Finally, the girl stopped screaming and began to sing along with the journeyman.

As she began to recover, she also began to wonder why her own people had rejected her when she needed help, and why the people at Baptist hospital seemed to care so much.

"It was a unique opportunity to share an effective witness for the love of Jesus Christ," said Dr. Moore.

Like an oasis in the desert, the Baptist Hospital in Gaza stands as a towering testimony to the compassion Baptists are demonstrating toward the victims of the war in the Middle East.

Probably 30 to 40 per cent of the patients treated at the hospital are casualties of the continuing conflict in the Middle East, Dr. Moore estimated.

Most of the patients come to the hospital for surgery, and most are Palestinian refugees.

There are more than 360,000 Palestinians living in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, a narrow sliver of land about 30 miles long and less than 10 miles wide between Egypt and Israel. Total population of the Gaza Strip is about 420,000.

Southern Baptists have been operating the hospital since 1954, when the Foreign Mission Board purchased it from the Christian Missionary Society which founded it in 1891.

Even though fierce battles have raged all around the hospital, the buildings and personnel have survived virtually unscathed. There has been one major tragedy, however, the death of missionary nurse Mavis Pate who was killed in a January 1972 ambush.

At times during the 1967 war, there were 450 patients and their dependents staying at the 92-bed hospital. Almost 100 per cent of the patients were war casualties during those days.

Although the hospital sustained some damage in 1967, it was almost totally unaffected by the Yom Kipper war in October 1973.

Although most of the buildings in the compound are old, the physical facilities are adequate by Middle East standards, according to Dr. Moore.

Since 1968, a number of improvements in the facilities have been made, including remodeling of the X-Ray unit laboratories and women's and children's wards, addition of an outpatient building and lab, and addition of several apartments.

Dr. Moore said the hospital's greatest need is personnel, not buildings.

Today there are only two surgeons on duty at the Gaza hospital--Dr. Jean Dickman of Florida, and Dr. Sylvia Tarazi, native of Gaza whose father taught the missionaries to speak Arabic.

Two missionary doctors, Dr. Moore and Dr. Roy McGlamery, are on furlough in the United States.

Dr. Moore said there is a tremendous need for dedicated Christian physicians to go to Gaza, even on a short-term volunteer basis, to relieve the pressure on the two women surgeons who are now staffing the hospital alone.

The patient load is tremendous for only two surgeons, said Dr. Moore. Last year the hospital cared for more than 25,000 outpatients and about 2,100 inpatients. Probably 80 per cent of the patients are Palestinian refugees who moved into Gaza following the creation of the State of Israel.

Some of them are bitter and hostile toward the world in general, and toward Americans specifically, but the hospital provides an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ and the compassion of Baptist missionaries from America who do care, said Dr. Moore.

The patients respond in dramatically different ways at times, some praising the hospital and others reacting with hostility.

Describing the difference in response with what he called a "Tale of Two Fingers," Dr. Moore told the story of two young men who were patients at different times at the hospital.

One young man, call him Hassan, had acute appendicitis and was treated by the hospital. Exactly two weeks after he was dismissed, the same boy was in the emergency room suffering the agony of a bomb explosion.

A member of a commando group, the young man had been making a bomb, and it had blown up in his hands.

"During the entire time he was in our hospital, nothing changed his feelings of hostility and anger...

"We had an opportunity to alter his life with the saving, healing love of Jesus Christ, but he refused to respond," Dr. Moore said.

Not long afterwards, another young man, call him Ibrahim, was involved in a freakish accident at his work. The end of his finger was cut off, and the skin was stripped from his finger. Like Hassan, he was a Muslim by heritage.

Two years later, a new student nurse walked up to Dr. Moore and asked if the surgeon remembered him. It was Ibrahim.

He said later that while he was in the hospital as a patient, he saw something in the lives of the nurses that made him want to be a nurse.

During the three years he studied at the hospital's nursing school, he came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ through the witness of Miss Pate and a missionary Journeyman.

He became one of the hospital's outstanding nursing graduates, an active witnessing Christian whose life had been changed, all because he hurt his finger.

He is now the nurse in charge of a cardiac unit at a major hospital in a large city of the United States."

It's testimonies like that of Ibrahim for which the Baptist hospital of Gaza exists. (BP)



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Conference Speaker Urges SBC "Council on Aging"

By James Lee Young

NASHVILLE (BP)--A "Southern Baptist Council on Aging," patterned after governors' councils on aging, was called for here in the final hours of the Southern Baptist Conference on Aging.

James D. Williams, professor of adult education at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, said in the final session he saw the need for a national task force or "council" on aging in the denomination, with agency and health care facilities representation and professional staff.

Sparked by challenges from keynotes speakers to join the fight for recognition of the aging, about 200 conferees called (in reports) for convention-wide action at every level in developing a total ministry in an area largely neglected by Baptists.

And a 25-year-old seminary student, Gary Cook, who provided the impetus that led to the conference, was given a standing ovation in the final general session.

The student from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville participated with his gerontology classmates in a study on Baptists and aging that resulted in a resolution passed by the 1973 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) messengers and eventually led to the three-day Conference on Aging.

Williams' suggestion for a denominational council on aging was echoed several times as reports from nine "creative workshops," dealing with the various major areas of aging, reported in the final session.

The workshops noted the multiplied problems of stereotyping, neglect of the aging, a youth "mind-set" in society, failure of the government and Baptists, in particular, to become involved in problems concerning aging, lack of coordinated efforts between church and community, the need for a Baptist publication of aging and a gross lack of information in all areas concerning aging.

Williams, providing a general wrapup of the symptoms, problems and some solutions surrounding the issues of aging, said the Baptist council on aging he and others proposed would probably be "related to the (Southern Baptist) Executive Committee."

As Williams envisioned it, the council would work with all agencies and programs in the convention to provide support, to lead in the coordination and development of curriculum materials on aging, and would cooperate with other national bodies on aging.

The council could also provide technical assistance and evaluation, public relations and information input, and special projects--such as leadership training at all levels of the denomination structure, he said.

"Perhaps," Williams added, "from this first and immediate response to such a challenging need could surface insights that would lead to a more permanent structure."

But, Williams advised, "It seems to me that the primary responsibility for this ministry (to the aging) rests on the local church in the particular community."

Conferees, in their workshop reports, encouraged local churches, along with the various state conventions and SBC-wide agencies, to name qualified persons in their various organizations to work specifically with the aging in ministry and dealing with problems.

A critical need for widespread dissemination of resources available, greater publicity and interpretation of problems concerning aging through the Baptist and mass media were emphasized.

"If you please," Williams noted, "we need convention-wide exposure" on aging. Let all who have responsibility for publications and media hear this now. Expand the content of materials related to the needs and problems of the elderly."

Williams, continuing on the local church, said, "churches need trained leaders who understand the elderly and their needs," and "materials that point up the biblical responsibility to minister to those needs."

"Churches need strategies of evangelism that reflect the special needs of older persons. And they need "flexible and practical suggestions (in printed form) on how to organize and implement ministries."

Williams also called for, as did the workshops, establishment of cooperative commitment with ongoing community services--especially those of a professional nature--that are already at work in behalf of older persons.

The seminary professor then made a strong appeal "for all of you who have an advocacy role to step up the pace."

Strongly evident in reports and addresses during the conference were bids for the six Southern Baptist seminaries to equip and train leaders to competently function in ministries with the aging.

Specifically mentioned was the training and retraining of chaplains, counselors, geriatrics staff, administrators and local church ministers.

Cited also was the need to encourage young people in the denomination to consider an orientation toward ministry with the aging and the need to break down generation barriers, prepare for old age and family orientation on aging and prepare for death and its acceptance.

Baptists were also encouraged to enter the arena of politics more actively on behalf of senior citizens, to reconsider the widely practiced policy of retirement at age 65, to involve senior citizens more in the leadership and planning process at every level in the denomination.

The Southern Baptist Inter-Agency Council, which sponsored the Conference on Aging, will review the findings of the conference and report to the SBC Executive Committee for further action.

"A perusal of many of our church programs suggests a misconception has been perpetrated in our churches that older adulthood is an idyllic period because the older adult has been freed from the burdens of work and community activities.

"This misconception has had its effects upon the resultant kinds of programs offered to older adults," Williams noted.

He encouraged definite assignments to be made at all levels--SBC-wide and others--to begin correcting problems of aging and the lack of active involvement in dealing with problems of aging among Baptists.

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Mexican Seminary Relocates;
New Witness Opportunities

10/28/74

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Students at the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary will have more opportunities for evangelism and missions now that the school has moved from Torreon to a new \$550,000 campus here.

"The seminary's move to Mexico City was based on a conviction that the capital city's 12 million people and great industrial complex afforded increased student participation in evangelism and missions and more job opportunities," said David P. Daniell, Southern Baptist press representative in Mexico.

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The new facilities include a chapel and a multi-purpose building. The chapel, which seats 450, has a basement that houses five classrooms, a choir rehearsal room, offices and a day care nursery.

The other building houses a dormitory, library, cafeteria, administrative offices and living quarters for families of three faculty members. Construction will begin in 1975 on a circular multi-media building.

The seminary's library is named after Southern Baptist representative, Marian Sanders, the school's librarian for 18 years, who died in 1973. Her mother, Mrs. Guy Sanders Sr., was present for the dedication of new seminary campus.

The seminary has a record enrollment of 86 students this fall, despite the fact that a drop was expected because of the move, according to seminary president, Pat H. Carter, a Southern Baptist representative to Mexico.

Each student is involved in weekend missionary work. "A group of 10 seminary students go each weekend to Izcalli Cuautitlan, a new government-sponsored residential development that eventually will have a population of one million people," said Daniell.

Others give pastoral leadership to 12 churches without a pastor in Campo Mazahua in the mountains, a three-hour drive from Mexico City. Baptist work began among the Mazahua Indians, one of Mexico's greatest indigenous tribes, in the late 1930s, Daniell said.

Comparing Mexico City with Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Carter said, "in the greater Rio area, there are about 600 Baptist churches. In Mexico City with more or less the same population, 12 million, we have only 29 churches. The missionary potential here in Mexico City is tremendous, and we have just barely begun to tap the possibilities of missionary outreach."

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"PraiSing 75" Will
Premiere New Hymnal

10/28/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--Performers ranging from the Singing Speer Family to the Nashville Symphony Orchestra will bridge the music gap when they appear before 10,000 Southern Baptists at "PraiSing 75," the premiere here of the new "Baptist Hymnal," March 10-13, 1975.

Grand Old Opry buffs and New York City Opera enthusiasts both will hear music to suit their fancies at the four-night and three-day meeting in Music City, U.S.A.

The program also includes choirs and ensembles from 15 colleges and universities in 10 states. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, will bring three singing groups. Singing groups of ministers of music will come from 12 state Baptist conventions.

PraiSing 75 opens Monday night, March 10, featuring George Beverly Shea, soloist for the Billy Graham crusade team, and Robert Hale and Dean Wilder, concert artists from New York.

"This We Believe," a commissioned choral work by Cecil Effinger, will be performed Tuesday night by a massed chorus of college and seminary choirs, accompanied by the Nashville Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Thor Johnson. Effinger is on the faculty of the University of Colorado, Boulder.

The choral work is based on Scriptures selected from the Baptist Faith and Message statement by Herschel H. Hobbs, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Wednesday night will spotlight the famous Nashville country music sound. Singer Jeannie C. Riley will join Grand Old Opry stars Connie Smith and Jerry Clower, Myrtle Hall, soloist for the Billy Graham team, and Cynthia Clawson, noted contemporary Christian soloist from Dallas.

The Singing Speer Family, recipients of the 1974 Dove Award from the Gospel Music Association for the best gospel group, will be there, along with the Jake Hess Sound, an ensemble from Nashville. Yazoo City, Miss., comedian Clower will be the master of

ceremonies.

On Thursday night, in Nashville's Municipal Auditorium, where all four evening sessions will be held, the 1975 edition of "Baptist Hymnal" will be premiered.

Everyone attending that night will receive a special edition of the new hymnal. The Centurymen, national Southern Baptist group made up of 100 ministers of music, and all of the state ministers of music groups will appear on the program.

The Nashville Symphony Orchestra will perform special commissioned improvisations that night of "Amazing Grace," "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand," "Brethren, We Have Met to Worship," "How Firm a Foundation" and "I Will Arise and Go to Jesus."

An all night singing will begin Wednesday at noon in Van Ness Auditorium at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Sixty choir groups will be scheduled over a 30 hour period to sing selected hymns until late Thursday afternoon.

By the time of the final session on Thursday evening, every note and every word of every stanza of every hymn will have been sung and all the Scripture selections will have been read aloud.

Simultaneous music programs will be going on during the day at five locations. These will feature college and seminary choirs, instrumental ensembles, organ recitals, solo artists, youth choirs and a sacred harp singing.

The church music department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board is sponsoring "PraiSing 75."