



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 7, 1976

76-80

Guatemalan Church
Starts "New Day"

By Sarah Scanlon

GUATEMALA CITY (BP)--The cement floor marked the spot where the Gethsemani Baptist Church building had once been.

Church benches and beginner-size chairs filled with people as the congregation gathered under the roof of a blanket of stars and a clear full moon. They had come to say "farewell" to the site where their church building had stood for 14 years.

The building was badly damaged by February's earthquake and had already been torn down. The site where they met had once been a bar, but the Baptist people bought the building and made it a place of worship.

For some time before the quake, the church was crowded and needed a larger place to meet. A new city ordinance required that a church building must leave 40 percent of its land for parking. The small site where the Baptists were gathered for the "farewell" service did not have sufficient land for parking.

But the church people, under the leadership of Pastor Jose Estrada, secured a large lot, several blocks from the old site. Although the lot's cost was high, the pastor and people of Gethsemani Baptist Church pledged to make their new building reality before the year is out.

The "farewell" service was characterized by enthusiastic singing, warm testimonies and quiet worship. The pastor challenged his people to dedicate everything they had to God, including their homes, talents and money.

Forty people in the congregation had lost their homes. Nevertheless, the pastor told his congregation, "See how much we have to be thankful for? The people in some villages have no lights, water or food. All you have lost is your homes. You still have lights, water and food."

Youth teams from the church went to three damaged villages where they taught Bible classes and took candy and gifts to the children.

Teams from the church held six worship services in Tecpan, a village where a Baptist pastor was killed.

"Our colleague was killed," one said, "but we are here to continue to preach the gospel to those in need."

During the singing at the "farewell" service some men and boys from the church loaded boards, tin and bricks salvaged for use in a new building.

The church had closed a chapter in its history. But with determination the members' sights were turned to a new lot, a new building and a new day for Gethsemani Baptist Church.

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Sarah (Mrs. A. Clark) Scanlon is a Southern Baptist missionary to Guatemala.

**Earthquake Shakes Eastern
Europe, Deaths Reported**

RICHMOND (BP)--Reports of the major earthquake which struck Italy and other Eastern European countries May 6, do not yet include complete death tolls or damage estimates, but Southern Baptists are standing by to send aid as soon as needs can be established.

The disaster response coordinator of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, W. Eugene Grubbs, was in touch immediately with Bob Clary, director of operations for the U. S. Aid office in Washington, D. C., to get details of the earthquake which measured 6.5 on the Richter Scale.

Police officials in Italy said 460 were known dead and more than 1,000 injured, as their houses and apartment buildings collapsed from the initial shock and the more than 20 aftershocks which began in the evening of May 6. Germany, Belgium, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia also felt the quake.

The Vicenza South European Task Force, a highly mobile U. S. Army unit serving with NATO, dispatched six UHI helicopters to the disaster area in the hills around Udine, Italy. A helicopter shuttle supplied affected areas with water. A platoon of Army medics left by land with medicine and blood plasma.

Southern Baptist missionaries have been stationed in Italy since 1870. Currently, 19 missionaries serve there. One missionary couple is stationed in Turin, Italy, which was hit by the earthquake, but there have been no reports of deaths in Turin.

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Suggestions Needed for
SBC Convention Sermon

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LUTHERVILLE, Md. (BP)--Southern Baptists everywhere will be given an opportunity to make a suggestion for the preacher of the annual Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) sermon in 1977, according to R. G. Puckett, chairman of the SBC committee on order of business.

The committee on order of business will convene in Norfolk during the SBC annual meeting make a decision on the annual sermon preacher. The nomination then goes to the convention, which meets June 15-17, for fund action.

"Preaching the annual sermon is one of the highest honors that can be paid to a minister of the gospel," Puckett said. "As chairman of the committee which has the responsibility for nominating the preacher, I want the Southern Baptist constituency to have a voice in making that selection."

Puckett, editor of the Maryland Baptist, indicated that he already has received some suggestions. "I consider this very much in order and the fact I have already received some suggestions led me to believe we should give anyone the opportunity."

The chairman of the committee asked that those making nominations write a brief statement of the reasons they feel the persons suggested should be considered.

"While only one person can be selected each year for this assignment, we have literally thousands of ministers who can bring a stimulating sermon to Southern Baptists in annual session," Puckett said.

Suggestions for the preacher of the annual sermon should be addressed to R. G. Puckett, chairman, committee on order of business, 1313 York Road, Lutherville, Maryland 21093.

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Retired 'Home Life' Editor
Joe E. Burton, Dies

NASHVILLE (BP)--Joe W. Burton, 69, retired editor of Home Life magazine, died here Thursday, May 6, of a heart attack.

Burton, who was the first and only editor of that Christian family magazine for more than 25 years, retired from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Sept., 1972, after 26½ years service.

For the first eight months of his retirement, Burton served as interim pastor of an English-speaking church in Munich, Germany. In recent months, Burton had served as chaplain at St. Thomas Hospital in Nashville.

Before assuming his position with the board in 1946, Burton served 10 years as secretary of education for the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He also was editor of Southern Baptist Home Missions, its monthly periodical. He held pastorates in Texas, Georgia and Tennessee and was secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1947-1965.

A native Texan, Burton received his B.A. degree from Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Tex., which later conferred on him the D.D. degree. He held the Th.M. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, and did special study at the University of Missouri's School of Journalism in Columbia; School of Pastoral Care, Winston-Salem, N. C.; American Institute of Family Relations, Los Angeles; and the Institute of Advanced Pastoral Studies, Detroit. Burton toured Europe and the near East in his study of family life.

Recipient of a Lambda Lambda Lambda citation for outstanding service in religious journalism, Burton also has been listed since 1952 in "Who's Who in America."

Burton is survived by his wife, Mrs. Lula Grace Burton, one sister, three brothers, three children and ten grandchildren. Funeral services were held Saturday, May 8, at Brook Hollow Baptist Church, Nashville.

Burton was author of several books, the latest of which was Road to Augusta. It was the first of a projected series of biographical studies of famous Baptists. Road to Augusta, released May 1, considered the role of the late R. B. C. Howell, in the foundation of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Va. Beach Hotels Begin
SBC Room Cancellations

Baptist Press
5/7/76

NORFOLK (BP)--Some hotels in Virginia Beach have already begun cancelling reservations on rooms of people attending the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) here, June 15-17, if a one night's deposit was not received in the allotted time (by April 15).

"The cancelled rooms may not be retrievable," a Norfolk Convention Bureau spokesman said, who added that the cancellations were not on a large scale as of May 7. Only about 25 reservations had been cancelled by May 7. The convention bureau asked the hotels to be sure to notify those whose rooms were cancelled.

"Hotels in Norfolk, however, will hold rooms until 6 p.m. of the evening of arrival, although an advance deposit would be appreciated," the spokesman said.

As of May 7, some 5,745 rooms have been booked for the SBC meeting, with 221 rooms--mostly in the higher price range--still available. The remaining rooms includes nine condominiums which rent for about \$400 a week, the spokesman said.

If the rooms are exhausted, the convention bureau will try to get local hotels to commit more, the spokesman added.

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