



FEATURES

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Baptists Aid Victims Of Mexico Hurricane

LA PAZ, Mexico (BP)--When the winds and damaging floods of Hurricane Liza hit in early October, they left about 500 dead, 500 missing, 1,400 injured and 15,000 or more homeless here and in other parts of Mexico.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board appropriated \$41,000 for relief efforts to assist the stricken hurricane victims.

Part of the money was used for heavy plastic and corrugated tar paper for shelter for over 1,000 families in La Paz, Los Mochis and Navajoa. The materials were distributed by Baptist church members to those most affected by the storm.

Ninety-eight blocks of homes were swept away in La Paz when a river diversion dike broke spilling a 17-foot wall of water on the city, according to Dr. Lee Baggett, Southern Baptist representative physician.

Baggett, along with Mexican Baptist doctors Yolanda Lobato, physician, and Gloria Rodriguez, dentist, composed a medical team from the Baptist hospital in Guadalajara. They surveyed needs and administered medical aid in La Paz and the remote southern tip of the Baja Peninsula by invitation of the Mexican public health officials.

On a five-day trip across the desert south of La Paz, the team worked in 14 villages and towns and treated 256 patients, including 25 dental patients, according to Robert L. Perry, Southern Baptist press representative in Mexico.

A Baptist layman, Jose Crespo, served as their guide to the villages. Most of the patients seen, Baggett said, had respiratory infections, diarrhea, skin infections, parasitosis or heart disease.

"In Las Cuevas," Baggett said, "an unusually dry river had crested six to seven feet deep through the town, emptying houses in exchange for several feet of silt. In La Rivera an entire fishing fleet was destroyed in the surf."

Immediately after the disaster in La Paz, Francisco Marin, a Baptist layman, began providing 220 pounds of tortillas daily from his factory.

"When Southern Baptists decided that relief funds from the board could best be used to buy food, Marin's contacts became invaluable," Baggett continued.

Relief funds were also used to provide heavy plastic for shelter for some 500 families, according to Charles W. Bryan, the board's area secretary for Middle America and the Caribbean.

After a week, La Paz was "saturated with food, medicine, building supplies and clothing," Baggett said. Prefabricated homes were rapidly rising. So, as the pressing material needs in La Paz had been met, Baptists turned their energies more to evangelism in the city and plans for a returned trip to the south.

Southern Baptist representative Wyatt W. Lee also stationed in Guadalajara, directed relief efforts in Los Mochis. Baggett said: "When I arrived in Los Mochis, Lee and other Baptists were actively engaged in administering relief funds to help those who had lost their homes.

"They interviewed each homeowner and inspected the damage to the homes, then gave corrugated tar paper for roofs, as they saw the need. In Los Mochis, 250 families were helped. In Navajoa, 300 families were helped."

Immediate response in Los Mochis consisted of food distribution, according to Perry. A local businessman, Josue Castro, gave away large quantities of food from his company's wholesale stock. Over 150 families received food.

"Local Baptists witnessed throughout the area," Baggett said. "As they distributed food and materials they explained that this help was available because Baptists cared.

"People continue, even now, requesting tracts and gospels to find out what made the Baptists actually do the things they talked about. They are also requesting a government donation of land to build a chapel," Baggett added.

Bryan explained, "The Baptist work, even though small, has ministered in an outstanding way in this time of disaster. Despite the fact that the closest Southern Baptist representatives, Baggett and Lee, do not reside in the area, they were still able to encourage the churches in La Paz and the Los Mochis area during a time when encouragement was needed."

Baggett said he, and Lee had to return to Guadalajara to continue their work, but Baptists in La Paz and Los Mochis continued to minister to those around them.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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Book Stores Host
Children's Fairs

Baptist Press
11/24/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--In all probability, few merchants would relish the idea of entertaining several thousand children for three days.

However, two Baptist Book Store managers hosted nearly 5,000 youngsters in six days during this fall's Children's Book Fairs.

About 3,000 children, teachers, librarians and parents visited the book fair in the New Orleans Baptist Book Store, while almost 2,000 people visited the Norfolk, Va., store.

"Children's Book Fairs are community service projects which we see as a subtle form of ministry," explains Bill Graham, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Book Store division. "We point out that this is not a religious activity, and while some children bring money to buy books, we do not emphasize buying."

"We simply want to encourage reading by exposing local children to quality books and to establish the Baptist Book Store in the non-Baptist community. Many of these children have never been in a bookstore, much less a religious one."

Special guests at the fairs often include award-winning authors and illustrators who talk with the children about their crafts.

This year's fairs, for example, featured such people as William Armstrong, author of "Sounder," the award-winning book which became a popular movie, and Diane Wolkstein, the official Hans Christian Andersen story teller from New York.

The children also see a movie and an exhibit on how a book is made and are invited to browse through a selection of books.

The idea for the book fairs came from a paper prepared for a college course by one of the Book Store Division employees, according to Graham. It was tested in one of the book stores and was so successful that the fairs were planned as annual events.

Book fairs have been held in Atlanta, Nashville, Arlington, Tex.; Savannah, Ga.; Memphis, Oklahoma City and Jacksonville, Fla. Two more fairs are scheduled next year.

"Of course, things are pretty hectic during a book fair," Graham says. "The stores practically bulge with wall-to-wall children. But the children seem to enjoy themselves and the adults are most supportive of our efforts. It's worth it."

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76-200

Carter, Plains Draw State
Baptist Convention Reaction

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE (BP)--If the majority of Southern Baptists, meeting in recently completed annual state conventions across the U.S., agreed on any one thing--it was to pray for their fellow Southern Baptist, President-elect Jimmy Carter.

In fact, Carter and the actions of his church, Plains (Ga.) Baptist Church, drew quite a bit of attention at the conventions.

Of the 33 state-level Southern Baptist annual meetings, 16 voted to pray specifically for Carter and other elected leaders, two resolved to pray for all elected leaders without mentioning the President-elect by name, and five had completed annual sessions before his Nov. 2 victory over Gerald Ford. That left 10 which, according to reports, made no specific mention of praying for the former Georgia governor after his election.

In one state convention, Missouri, which met before the election, a messenger withdrew a resolution which called for prayer for Carter before it was discussed on the convention floor. He did so, reports indicate, after having apparently received heavy criticism behind the scenes for the political ramifications of his action before the election.

The District of Columbia Baptist Convention voted to pray for Carter and also invited the President-elect and his wife to speak at various sessions of the convention's centennial convention, Nov. 10-11, 1977, at Calvary Baptist Church, Washington.

Despite the Baptist tradition of not interfering with the autonomy of a local church, seven state conventions commented in one way or another on the racial confrontation precipitated at the Plains Church by the appearance of Clennon King, the black interdenominational minister from Albany, Ga., who showed up on four occasions seeking membership.

All seven conventions passed statements approving racial openness and/or commending the Plains Church for its eventual decision to end racial discrimination.

Eight state conventions had either completed their annual meetings before the King episode first occurred on Oct. 31 or were on the verge of entering their sessions. That left 18 state conventions which made no direct comment on the incident, although at least four of those were, in other ways, expressing racial positions.

The Colorado Baptist General Convention routinely admitted two black congregations; the New York Baptist Convention, which met before the King episode, elected a black pastor from Harlem as a vice president; the Pennsylvania-South Jersey Baptist Convention selected a black preacher from Germantown, Pa., for the coveted honor of preaching the annual convention sermon; and the Missouri Baptist Convention, which met before the King incident, and the Alabama Baptist Convention each held joint sessions with black Baptist conventions during the course of their annual meetings.

In actions across the 33 state Baptist Conventions, which cover the work of the 12.7-million-member Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 50 states, elected "messengers" resolved against a number of issues, including pornography, government interference in Baptist institutional operations, violence and immorality on television, beverage alcohol and other drugs, various forms of gambling (such as parimutuel and casino), and use of public funds to promote Transcendental Meditation (TM), which they called a Hindu-based religion, in public schools.

The conventions voted record annual budgets and generally called for increased support of Southern Baptist efforts to evangelize and congregationalize the U.S. by 1980 and make it possible for everyone in the world to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ by 2000.

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Meanwhile, the nine-year-old Baptist General Association of New England, which covers six states, announced plans to aim for 1981 as a target date for gaining status as a state Baptist convention. Southern Baptist work in New England is currently under the wing of the Maryland Convention.

Several state conventions took action which raised interesting points of Baptist polity:

Two conventions--Arkansas and the Northwest (covering mainly Oregon and Washington)--took actions opposing acceptance by their churches of "alien immersions" from other denominations.

Two others--Florida and Georgia--addressed themselves to the Baptist principle of autonomy of various levels (church, association, state convention, national) by eliminating policies or proposals which would give associations of churches either authority or consultation rights in naming members of state boards.

Meanwhile, the Ohio convention was leaning in the opposite direction in agreeing to consider, at its 1977 meeting, a proposal under which churches losing their membership in a local association would also lose state convention participation.

The motion, made by outgoing President Paul Payne, reportedly stems from the eviction of two churches by the Greater Cincinnati Baptist Association in 1975--one over the charismatic issue and one over both the charismatic issue and acceptance of alien immersions.

Still another convention, Texas Baptists, voted to deny seats to messengers from two churches which sanction charismatic practices. The two congregations, Beverly Hills Baptist Church, Dallas, and Shady Grove Baptist Church, Grand Prairie, had been expelled the previous year by the Dallas Baptist Association for the same reason.

The Northwest Convention elected the pastor of a Baptist church in Canada as convention president. The pastor, Allen E. Schmidt of Royal Heights Baptist Church, Delta, British Columbia, Canada, although a member of a church affiliated with the Northwest Convention, is not eligible, under Southern Baptist Convention bylaws to serve as a messenger to annual, national SBC meetings.

Only messengers from churches inside U.S. borders or its territories may serve as messengers at SBC meetings. The Northwest Convention, however, in an exercise of its own autonomy, has admitted some 25 churches from Canada.

Two conventions--South Carolina and Louisiana--resolved against intrusion of government into Baptist institutional life.

South Carolina declared that interference by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) has "made it impossible to carry out the functions" of the Baptist College at Charleston as it relates to the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Earlier HEW had called for ending of "sectarian" teaching and worship in facilities at the college funded by federal loans.

The South Carolina convention, adopting a report of its Government Funds Evaluation Committee, asked the trustees to take corrective steps and said, "None of our educational institutions should accept any further funds for acquisition or construction of buildings which could cause restriction of purpose."

Baptist College at Charleston is raising funds to construct a building which would remove its teaching of religion and worship from government-funded facilities.

Virginia and Illinois took actions relating to ordination of women.

Virginia Baptists commended Virginia churches which have set aside "traditional patterns" and have "given official recognition to women as ordained ministers (and deacons) and... (provided) opportunities for employment of women as pastors." Illinois Baptists refused to deny seats to messengers from churches which believe in ordaining women on grounds that it should not be a test of fellowship in a state convention. Most Southern Baptists do not accept ordination of women as ministers but their ordination as deacons or deaconesses, lay leadership positions, is more widespread.

North Carolina and Virginia elected pastors' wives to vice presidencies--Mrs. A. Leroy Parker of Greensboro, N.C., and Mrs. Walter Bradley of Haymarket, Va.

~~These states--Ohio, Illinois and Tennessee--~~passed actions which either reaffirmed, launched efforts for or called for study of ministries to the elderly.

Another convention, New York, among other resolutions, resolved to affirm homosexuals as persons while condemning the practice of homosexuality as a sin. It declared that Christians should help homosexuals but that churches and the state convention offices should not hire them in ministerial or staff roles.

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Naylor Announces 1978 Retirement from Seminary

FORT WORTH(BP)--Robert E. Naylor, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological since 1958, announced his retirement plans during the fall meeting of the seminary's board of trustees here.

The retirement will become effective in August 1978, climaxing 20 years as president and 50 years since entering the 68-year-old seminary as a student.

Judge Oswin Chrisman of Dallas, chairman of the 36 member board, and vice chairman T. Earl Ogg, Monroe, La., will appoint a presidential search committee in early 1977. The committee will be composed of seven trustees and a student and a faculty representative.

The board voted to re-elect Chrisman and Ogg as officers of the board for another 12 month term, elected two new faculty members, added courses to the curriculum, approved campaign plans for the seminary's "Eight by Eighty" fund drive, and heard reports.

Two persons were added to the faculty of the seminary's school of religious education. Paula Brooks was named an instructor in communication art. A graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and Texas Christian University, Mrs. Brooks is the wife of Hal Brooks, pastor of the North Richland Hills Baptist Church, Fort Worth.

Chester D. Grounds was elected an instructor in psychology of religion and personality. Grounds, pastor of the Woodridge Baptist Church in Irving, Tex., is a graduate of the University of Houston and Southwestern Seminary.

In other action, the trustees heard a report on the current status of the seminary's Eight by Eighty drive, which seeks to raise \$8 million by 1980 for capital improvements and endowment needs. It was reported that over \$2 million has been raised during the first year of the drive. Trustees approved plans for 14 area campaigns to be held in 1977 and 1978. Campaigns selected in Texas cities were approved for 1977, with fund raising efforts planned in other states for 1978.

The trustees also received the official audit report for the 1975-76 fiscal year and learned the total assets of the seminary stood at \$30.8 million. In related reports presented by the seminary's business affairs division, progress reports were made on the status of construction of a additional 48 units of student housing and of plans to upgrade the seminary's computer system.

In a statement to the trustees, Naylor expressed his indebtedness to the trustees, to Southern Baptists and to God. "I am filled with gratitude for the privilege that is mine and feel blessed beyond measure by God. My retirement plans are made with joy--a joy shared with trustees, faculty, staff and students--every day it has been a joy," he noted.

A native of Oklahoma, Naylor served as a pastor in Arkansas, Oklahoma and South Carolina before moving to Fort Worth in 1952 to become pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church. He was a member of the seminary's board of trustees for 17 years prior to his election to the Southwestern Seminary presidency in 1958.

During his tenure as president, a president's home, a student center, a children's center, a medical center, and 350 housing units have been added and every building on campus has been renovated.

Full time faculty members have increased from 54 in 1958 to 103 today, the operating budget has increased from \$2.2 million to \$5.6 million and endowment funds have grown from nearly \$3 million to \$10 million.

Carter Names Cooper
To Advisory Committee

CO NEWS

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--Owen Cooper, retired president of the Mississippi Chemical Corp. and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), has been named to a committee of prominent citizens who will advise President-elect Jimmy Carter on potential governmental leaders.

"I don't know the scope or the depth of the committee, but I'm available to serve as I'm needed on an individual and selective basis," Cooper said of the appointment.

Cooper, of Yazoo City, Miss., who has known Carter for several years and supported him in the tightly contested presidential race in Mississippi, which put Carter over the top in electoral votes required for victory, was president of the 12.7-million-member SBC for two terms, 1973-74.

President-elect Carter's press secretary, Jody Powell, said in Plains the committee members would not be eliminated from consideration for federal jobs in their own right, but Cooper told Baptist Press he doesn't anticipate taking a federal job.

Others on the committee include Robert Strauss, current chairman of the Democratic National Committee; Theodore M. Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University; Lane Kirkland, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO; Vernon Jordan, executive director of the Urban League; Mrs. Marian Wright Edelman, executive director of the Children's Defense Fund; Hank La Coya, chairman of the Hispanic division of the Carter-Mondale campaign; Irvin Shapiro, chairman of the board of the Business Round Table and chairman of the E.I. duPont DeNemours Co.; Patricia Roberts Harris, a prominent Washington attorney and chairperson of the 1972 Democratic national convention; and Lucy Benson, former director of the League of Women Voters.

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Texas Baptists Call Uncle
Sam A 'Meddling Intruder'

CO NEWS

BROWNWOOD, Tex. (BP)--Uncle Sam has forsaken the role of a helpful relative and become instead a demanding, meddling intruder causing increasing trouble for Texas Baptist institutions.

That picture emerged from reports made at the semi-annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Council--organization of Texas Baptist educational and human welfare institutions--at Howard Payne University.

Council members said that regulatory agencies of the federal government are making their operations difficult by:

- financial domination through government rate regulation;
- requests for photo copies of all records for periods of time based on alleged discrimination;
- bureaucratic interpretation of laws;
- demands for immediate compliance to voluminous, complex regulations.

Phil Strickland of Dallas, an associate director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, told the council that power tends to beget power. And the power in the United States, he added, is not in the Congress but in the regulatory institutions of the nation.

Abner McCall, president of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., said government control is no longer dependent upon whether an institution accepts government aid.

"The government has made it very clear that whether we get federal aid or not, we're going to get federal control," said the president of the Southern Baptist school.

Texas Baptist Executive Director James H. Landes, chairman of the council, said Baptists have properly been concerned about the legislative process. Now there is increasing concern for the convention's institutions in the administrative process of requirements imposed by federal regulatory bodies, he added.

Administrators of the hospitals and schools said they will continue to study the problems at meetings of their separate groups and seek to present some recommendations to the Feb. 4 meeting of the Inter-Agency Council.

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They also suggested that Texas Baptists be informed of the threats to their institutions in order that they can help combat the problems.

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Brown, White Baptist
Churches Merge in Houston

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By Louis Moore

CO NEWS

HOUSTON (BP)--For the first time in Houston, a Mexican-American Baptist congregation will merge with a predominantly white Baptist congregation.

West End Baptist Church will merge with the Iglesia Bautista Central (Central Baptist Church). The united church will use the name West End Baptist Church.

Both churches are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Houston's Union Baptist Association.

Merger discussions began when Aurelio Gutierrez, Central's pastor, approached the leadership of West End Church about providing some type of assistance for the Central congregation.

Because of the merger, Central Church's property will be sold and Gutierrez will become associate pastor of West End Church. Donald J. Richards will remain as pastor of West End Church.

Both Richards and Gutierrez have worked as Southern Baptist missionaries. Gutierrez worked in Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala and Richards worked in Brazil.

The West End Church will offer two worship services on Sundays. Richards says one worship service will be conducted in English and the other will be conducted in Spanish. The Sunday Schools will be merged, but three special classes for adults wanting their lessons in Spanish will be established.

Richards says the churches decided to merge because the West End Church is "in the middle of a neighborhood that needs this type of ministry. You can't minister to Spanish-speaking people (who are moving into the church's neighborhood) without Spanish-speaking people helping you.

He says there was no opposition in the West End congregation to the merger. He says attendance at the church on Sundays averages around 300. The church has some 850 members.

Gutierrez says his church is equally enthusiastic about the merger. He says the church has a membership of 70, but has an average Sunday attendance of 75.

The Central Church was formed in 1950 and has been relatively small and predominantly Mexican-American throughout its history.

The West End Church reached its zenith in 1954 when it had a membership of 2,000 and erected a new 1,100-seat auditorium.

But not long after the building was completed, the neighborhood began changing. Many of the families in the church moved to Houston's bustling suburban areas. The neighborhood surrounding the church began to change racially as Mexican-American families began moving in.

The church in the 1960s went through the traditional "shall we move or shall we stay?" debate that characterizes many churches in racially-changing neighborhoods.

Eventually the church decided to stay and change with its neighborhood.

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'Carter's Ford'
Is in Lodge

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CO NEWS

LODGE, S.C. (BP)--If the town's name sounds political, get a load the local Baptist church's name. It's Carter's Ford Baptist Church.

Members of the church in Colleton (S.C.) Baptist Association are still trying to manage a frozen smile when people link the name of the Southern Baptist congregation with the recent presidential campaign and election.

In fact, they probably haven't had as many cracks about presidential politics in Lodge since Henry Cabot Lodge ran for vice president.

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