



FEATURES
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Raging Flood Cannot
Quench Mountaineer Spirit

By James H. Cox

PINEVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Charles F. Jones, pastor of First Baptist Church here for two decades, never believed the water would overflow the Cumberland River's flood walls that d vastating day last April. But it did.

"As the water began to spill over the edge of the wall it sounded like a thousand freight trains all at once. The noise was unreal," Jones said, recalling in vivid detail the scene he witnessed after his family fled to high ground.

The water migrated rapidly into town, subduing everything in sight. As it reached transformers and electrical lines, one by one they popped, exploded and smoked.

"I stood there on the mountainside and I saw the lights in town begin to go out as the water made its way in, cutting off power. We were helpless to stop it. Within 45 minutes the town was completely engulfed by the water and in total darkness."

This sequence repeated itself many times throughout those same Kentucky mountains that week. The Pineville church was only one of hundreds of Appalachian communities devastated by the worst flooding ever recorded here. And because Baptists are unquestionably the strongest religious body in the region, they personally suffered as much or more than anyone else--and their churches fared no better.

The flood left the people of entire villages in shock, dazed with grief and facing seemingly irreparable damage. What has happened since? Did these proud mountain people, who have traditionally stood together in times of crisis, give up?

Interviews with some of the pastors most affected indicate that most of their people, although battered, have not surrendered because of their own determination, undergirded by outside help from the Kentucky Baptist Convention, which has disbursed about \$181,000 in aid. The disaster has also renewed their dedication to giving in their own churches.

Each local church and community, though affected by the same disaster, seems to be working out its solutions in different ways.

The Allen (Ky.) Baptist Church, for instance, which lost its sanctuary building entirely, has purchased a new building site about a mile away, considerably higher than its present elevation. This is especially significant because "there are no younger people in this church," according to pastor Earl Waugh.

"The flood was a blessing in disguise for us," said Waugh. "We needed to be across the river where the population shift of the community has gone. The flood has helped us to move."

At Loyall, Ky., the people considered as many as eight different options, according to pastor Dean Pack. In the end they voted to stay right where they are.

"We're putting up a two-story educational unit next door with a foundation 14 feet in the air," said Pack. That's 3 1/2 feet above the flood level last spring.

"We'll also buy a lot of insurance," he added.

A few miles west, First Baptist Church, Pineville, won't have to move or build a new building, but it suffered heavy losses. The six-year-old plant was not structurally damaged but almost all of its contents were.

"Depression set in across Pineville like I have never seen it in my life," recalled Charles Jones, church pastor. "People had lost their homes, businesses, jobs and in some cases the will to live. A leading citizen took his own life. Others moved away,

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selling once expensive homes for peanuts. For weeks there was no glimmer of hope whatever.

"I have counseled people almost full time since we began to get on our feet again. We've had perhaps 15 divorces in our church family as a direct result of the flood. Homes have literally broken apart. I don't know how many more we'll have.

"And yet, most who had a strong faith in God have withstood it, not without difficulty, but they have done it and grown spiritually as a result."

The tremendous burdens of recent weeks and months on these pastors have not diminished their gratitude for help, only enhanced it.

"That check from the Kentucky Baptist Convention was our lifesaver," Jones admitted. "It turned everything around for us and let us know that somebody out there cared enough to help when everything seemed darkest. We already owed \$100,000 in indebtedness and the \$160,000 to \$175,000 losses we incurred in the flood were almost too much to bear."

Jones reported that 184 outside persons -- many not from Kentucky and many not Baptists -- have sent checks totaling \$52,354 to the church.

Pack and Waugh also expressed gratitude for financial assistance from numerous sources. Pack, who lost nine tenths of everything he owned, wore clothes purchased with a check from the Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union.

"All these years we've given to the (Southern Baptist) Cooperative Program (unified budget) on a regular basis," he said. "Now we're the direct recipients of it. I believe we'll never have a problem getting money for missions again."

Pastor John Pennington of Middlesboro's First Baptist Church, which missed the flooding almost altogether, shared the same thought, in reverse.

"Annie Armstrong (Easter Offering for home missions) suddenly became Pineville and Harlan for us," he explained.

Pack, whose church consists of 60 percent college graduates, admitted however, "If something isn't done to eradicate the possibility of flooding here many of the younger, better educated people will move away."

But, all things considered, there seems to be a sense of optimism not present last April. These mountain people have not lost the pride and determination for which they are often remembered. It merely lay dormant for a while.

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Moral Decay Worsens
Colson Declares

By David Wilkinson

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Charles Colson, the former "hatchet man" in the Nixon administration who wrote about his post-Watergate conversion in a best-seller entitled "Born Again", claims something is amiss in America when the nation's moral decay continues to worsen in spite of a dramatic increase in the number of self-professing "born again" Christians.

Speaking to a luncheon gathering sponsored by the Religious Heritage of America during its annual three-day "pilgrimage" here, Colson, who recently became a Southern Baptist, cited several national polls which indicate an upsurge in religious activity.

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He pointed out that in a recent Gallup Poll 60 percent of the Americans surveyed said religious beliefs were "very important" to them, compared to a figure of about 17 percent five years ago.

At the same time, he added, statistics indicate that crime, pornography and other social evils are still on the rise.

"People who are coming to Christ aren't changing the world," Colson emphasized. "What an indictment of the body of believers."

The former special counsel to President Richard Nixon was one of four Southern Baptists honored by the Religious Heritage of America. The interdenominational organization seeks to reaffirm and reestablish the fundamental spiritual values of the nation's founding fathers.

Colson confirmed in an interview following his luncheon presentation that he has joined Columbia Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Falls Church, Va. The church's pastor, Neal Jones, is a close friend and serves on the board of directors of Prison Fellowship, a prison ministry Colson founded with the help of former Iowa senator Harold Hughes. Hughes also spoke during the conference.

Colson, who was honored with the organization's Life Inspiration Award, said that his decision to join a local congregation has not received wide public attention, and he prefers it that way.

"I just didn't want to make it a big media event," he said. Colson said he joined the church alone. His wife is a Roman Catholic.

Jim Rupe, producer of the "Country Crossroads" and "Master-Control" radio programs for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, received a Faith and Freedom Award; Jerry Clower, Southern Baptist entertainer and comedian, was recognized with a Special Award; and W. L. Muncy, a professor at Missouri Baptist College, which he helped to establish, received the Gold Medal Award.

Other faith and freedom awards were given to Lillian Block, editor-in-chief of Religious News Service, New York City, and Everett Parker, director of the office of communications for the United Church of Christ, New York City.

The annual awards are given in recognition of Americans who have made significant contributions in religious and humanitarian service "in the highest tradition" of the country's religious heritage.

Other 1977 awardees were Robert Schuller, pastor of Garden Grove (Calif.) Community Church, clergyman of the year; Paul Brandel, attorney with Brandel, Olson, Johnson and Erickson, Chicago, churchman of the year; Mrs. Henry Cannon (Minnie Pearl), Nashville, entertainer, churchwoman of the year; and Col. Heath Bottomley, former command pilot and now an author and lecturer, Boulder Creek, Calif., special award.

Business awards were presented to Andrew Athens, president of Metron Steel Corp., Chicago; Robert Ayres, acting president of the University of the South, Sewanee, Tenn.; Bob Benson, executive vice president of Benson Co., Nashville; Nathan Hubley, president of Carters Ink Co., Cambridge, Mass.; and Stanford Stoddard, president of Michigan National Corp., Detroit.

In his address, Colson said that shallow Christian teaching is one of the reasons for religion's lack of influence on society. "Much of our Christian teaching does not stress what servitude in Christianity is all about," he claimed. "It involves giving the totality of our lives."

Another problem, he said, is that Americans have a tendency to look to government for answers. He recalled that many times former secretary of state Henry Kissinger, in a meeting with top government officials, would begin with a comment that what was to be decided that day would change the course of history.

"As I look back on it now," he said, "we weren't changing the course of human history--at least not the way we thought we were. I stood at the side of the man who holds the highest office in this country and, believe me, I know the total futility of man to change the course of human history."

Colson recounted his conversion experience and the ensuing events that led him to found Prison Fellowship, a ministry that has taken him to hundreds of prisons throughout the country.

"I see the power of Christ in the darkest dungeons," he said. "I know where man's ways fail, God's ways succeed. God can do what man cannot."

Christians today, he challenged, must have the courage to "stand against the culture of our times." "With nothing short of that," he added, "can we in any way hope to save the world in which we live."

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President Proclaims
National Prayer Day

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WASHINGTON (BP)--President Jimmy Carter has designated December 15, 1977, as a National Day of Prayer as requested by the Congress.

In his proclamation Carter suggested that all Americans "ask the Almighty for the vision to see our duty as individuals and as a nation for the courage to pursue it, even at the cost of personal or collective sacrifice."

The Senate passed a resolution earlier this year suggesting December 15 because of its historic significance. The First Continental Congress proclaimed the third Thursday of December as a Day of Prayer for the Continental Army and Thanksgiving for its victory at Saratoga in 1777.

Action on the resolution in the House of Representatives is pending while the leadership decides if further action is necessary since the President has already issued his proclamation.

Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has endorsed the resolution as have the leaders of 11 other religious groups in the United States.

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Missouri Baptists Decline
Action on Student Grants

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SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (BP)--Missouri Baptists declined to take any action on a report from a special study committee which recommended that two of the convention's four colleges withdraw from a state sponsored student aid program.

During the annual meeting of the Missouri Baptist Convention, the Public Aid Study Committee recommended the withdrawal after advising the 2,147 registered "messengers" and visitors that the state law requires schools not to discriminate on religious grounds in hiring faculty, staff and administrators.

"The law says our schools cannot discriminate on religious grounds," said one committee member. "Our convention policies say the schools must. The two are not compatible."

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Messengers, however, opted to refer the public aid question to a new committee for additional study and expanded the scope to include all "Missouri Baptist agencies, institutions, churches and individuals." The original study committee had been limited to public aid and the colleges.

The two participating schools, William Jewel College at Liberty and Southwest College at Bolivar, have about 600 students in state grant programs. William Jewel reported \$202,022 in Missouri grant funds. Southwest reported \$162,000.

Two other Missouri Baptist schools voted not to participate in the Missouri grant program. Trustees of Missouri Baptist College, St. Louis, and Hannibal-LaGrange College, Hannibal, said the program was not in accord with Baptist principles.

In other action, the convention adopted a record \$7.9 million budget, 33.3 percent of which will go to national Southern Baptist causes, and approved resolutions on abortion, decriminalization of marijuana and Sunday sales.

Messengers pledged support for "banning abortion" except in cases of proven incest or rape or to save the life of a mother. An amendment supporting a constitutional amendment banning abortion failed.

The resolution on decriminalization of marijuana cited "increasing medical research" indicating its harm to the body and potential damage to children born to marijuana users. It also mentioned that death due to drug overdose had doubled in California since marijuana was decriminalized last year. The resolution pledges opposition to decriminalization efforts in Missouri and support for drug education programs.

The Sunday sales resolution commended a "Save our Sundays" organization in Kansas City. This group, led by Independence pastor, John Hughes of First Baptist Church, is fighting a local referendum to permit general Sunday sales in that area. The resolution contended that Sunday sales would result in higher prices, increased crime, waste of energy and additional strain on family life.

Unanimously elected president of the convention was Paul Swadley, pastor of South Haven Baptist Church in Springfield. Next year's convention is set for Oct. 23-25, 1978, St. John's Baptist Church, St. Louis.