



--FEATURES

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The Winds Blew,
But Church Stands

By John Green

VENICE, La. (BP)--Children played in the dust about the mobile homes as Jean Ellzey came near the end of the road, or as she puts it, "the beginning."

"We would not be faithful Christians if we did not try to keep a lively church here," she said of her church, First Baptist of Venice, which was wiped out completely by Hurricane Camille in 1969.

Even worse damage was inflicted on some First Baptist members. Scattered by Camille, they have never returned.

"After Betsy (the hurricane that simply dumped the Mississippi River over its levees from the river mouth to New Orleans) in 1965, there was a real togetherness in our church. Though the water rose several feet in the church buildings, we still had the major structure. We re-floored it, bought new pews, did a little painting and soon got it going," Mrs. Ellzey said.

It was different after Camille. The Ellzeys, like everybody else, lost everything. The worst storm of America's recorded history simply removed every structure.

Residents, who had all fled the scene prior to the hurricane, couldn't get back in for days. Some have never returned.

Aubrey Veuleman, pastor during Hurricanes Betsy and Camille, didn't return. He received word that the church might never rebuild, so he accepted another pastorate.

But in the hearts and minds of the Ellzeys and several others of the church, there was never a thought of not rebuilding. They worshipped and worked in Riverview Baptist Church in Buras for a few months, combining services with two other congregations. Some wanted the churches to combine permanently, but a hardy group from Venice never accepted.

If we join another group, we cannot meet in Venice and vote to regroup and rebuild, they reasoned. So they held firm and eventually, when enough people moved back to Venice to make it feasible, began to worship in homes. Then they met in the firehouse. Things were good. They talked of building.

Jean Ellzey called the spirit of the church "extra ordinary" then. She credits Camille with bringing the people closer together than ever before. They have moved in that spirit to victories that include 196 enrolled in Sunday School and 159 resident church members.

A new auditorium is planned. The educational unit, which serves both worship and education, is overcrowded now.

Few permanent-type homes can be found in Venice now. Too chancey. Mostly mobile homes house the Venice area's 6,000 inhabitants. Permanent homes must have been popular once because "back in the grass where the mobile homes are, you can find many, many concrete slabs on which homes once rested," Mrs. Ellzey says.

Some people now in Venice don't believe that it was that bad after Camille. So, they've come here completely unafraid. It's like the depression, or your trying to explain it to your kids. They don't understand, can't understand. Time heals.

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"I just don't think we'll ever have another Camille," Mrs. Ellzey says, " but I don't think we're ever completely safe from weather anywhere we live. I got blown away by a tornado in Oklahoma (her native state) and I was in an earthquake in California. I think I attract storms. I simply have no fear whatsoever about living here, especially since I feel this is where the Lord wants us."

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Volunteer Needs
Strong in Brazil

By Jim Lowry

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--"Volunteer missions work can be the greatest experience of a person's life, and service can be in any area where God has given you gifts," stated Philip B. Harris following his return from nine months volunteer service in Brazil.

Harris, retired secretary of the church training department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said the needs are tremendous in Brazil, and anyone with a good mind and a warm heart could find opportunity to work.

"Not all needs in mission fields are for work in evangelism," Harris said. "I know of one church in Brazil that needs a brick mason to help erect a building. The Brazilian Baptist Convention has established goals to double their 3,300 churches and 600,000 members and they need help to build New Testament churches."

Harris was invited by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to work in Brazil with the publishing house in Rio De Janerio. He was an advisor to both the president of the publishing house and the religious education director, and taught some classes at the seminary.

"I traveled with Southern Baptist missionaries from the seminaries and large churches to outlying areas to visit with people whose homes had dirt floors," he related. "And always, the people were warm and friendly."

"The opportunity is there, to teach them how to build New Testament churches," Harris continued. "1980 will be the 100th year of the Brazilian Baptist Convention, and I feel that Brazil is on the verge of it's greatest era. Laymen are beginning to come to the front of church work, and there is a new breed of pastors developing who are motivators, statesmen and educators to lead Brazil to a new time of progress."

"I was there to help them and they took me in, blemishes and all, and I learned far more than I shared. I did not try to make another Southern Baptist Convention in Brazil. I sought to understand the Brazilian people and discover the needs of adults and youth so I could make practical suggestions to help."

"When I left for Brazil, I didn't plan to go back, but I probably will, because it's in my blood," he said. "I want to give the next five years of my life to serve on a volunteer basis, wherever I am invited."

"Brazil and Argentina are beginning to work closely together now, consulting, correlating their work on an inter-agency basis, to do as much as they can to further God's work," Harris said.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist newspapers by the Sunday School Board Bureau of Baptist Press.

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**BWA Leader Sees
New Family Spirit**

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--There is a "remarkable spirit of oneness" among Baptists around the world, Baptist World Alliance President David Y. K. Wong told the BWA General Council at its annual meeting in Manila.

Wong, who has traveled extensively and spoken to thousands of people across the globe since his election in 1975, said Baptists "are beginning to realize that they are members of a worldwide family."

One hundred fifty-eight leaders of that "family" gathered in Manila from 30 countries for annual sessions of their General Council and related committees and study commissions.

While there, they visited Baptist work, led training sessions, adopted resolutions that supported human rights, religious freedom and world peace and condemned the interracial conflicts in central and southern Africa.

They also "received" rather than adopted a statement by a BWA study group that says the modern "charismatic" movement has both positive and negative aspects, and has value when not carried to extremes.

The Baptist World Alliance is a fellowship of 111 Baptist conventions and unions representing 115,000 churches with 29 million members in 121 countries with headquarters in 81 countries.

"Celebrating Christ's Presence Through the Spirit" was voted as the theme for the 14th Baptist World Congress in Toronto, Canada, July 8-13, 1980. That congress will be during BWA's 75th anniversary year.

In business sessions, the council elected Charles F. Wills of Valley Forge, Pa., as associate secretary, replacing Carl W. Tiller who resigned in January. The group adopted a 1979 operating budget of \$579,640 and set a goal to raise \$1,193,700 to fund 44 relief and development projects in 35 countries during 1979.

President Wong said he has observed a new emphasis on evangelism and that "more diversified and effective evangelistic outreach programs are being utilized by local churches." He said that this evangelistic approach is "bringing about a much needed balance between the proclamation of the gospel and a concrete expression of Christlike compassion and concern where human need cries out for Christian response."

Wong praised the increased activity by Baptist laymen who are "going outside the churches to serve in many capacities to reach people for Christ."

Similar observations of growth were noted in reports by eight of the Alliance's 12 vice presidents. Advertus Hoff of Liberia told of plans for a pan-African Baptist Fellowship, similar to other regional fellowships in Europe, North America, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. Akiko Matsumura of Japan recited plans for holding the first Asian Baptist Congress in India in January 1979. Nilson Fanini of Brazil told of unprecedented Baptist growth on that continent.

James L. Sullivan of the United States, who serves as chairman of BWA's division on evangelism and outreach, told of evangelism workshops on every continent and rejoiced that "God has brought us this far so quickly...as we share with each other and with the world the great things God has done and can do through committed believers in Christ."

Growth Rate Slowing Planning Expert Says

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)-- The growth rate of Southern Baptist churches is "definitely in a downward trend," the Home Mission Board's planning section director told participants at the 33rd annual meeting of the Eastern Baptist Religious Education Association.

Leonard Irwin, also president of the newly formed Southern Baptist research fellowship, said the ratio of Southern Baptist church membership to baptisms shows that "our efficiency has been decreasing, particularly since 1960." In addition, he said "we are probably on the losing end of transfer between denominations."

Such trends indicate an urgent need to become totally involved in Bold Mission Thrust (SBC goal to evangelize the world by the year 2000) Irwin told the educators. Currently, increases in the pioneer areas are not enough to offset the lag in the south.

He challenged the religious educators to reverse the trends, not for the sake of numbers, but "for the evidence of a product of committed people." Irwin cited migration statistics that show the south increasing in population faster than even the west, rural populations growing, and that 40 percent of the population increase in the U. S. last year was due to ethnic immigration.

Those statistics show where the need for work is, Irwin said. About the South's growth, he said "this is the first time Southern Baptists have had the chance to be on the cutting edge with a great number of churches where the population will increase."

Carolyn Weatherford, Woman's Missionary Union executive director, told the educators that churchmen need a "global perspective on today's world, to know and care and to engage in the practical doing of missions." She said that can be accomplished by praying, giving and "creating an environment in which persons may hear and respond to God's calling."

William R. Cromer Jr., professor of religious education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., was elected president of the group.

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Houston Association
Refuses School Offer

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HOUSTON (BP)--Union Baptist Association in Houston has turned down a proposal that it sponsor a private junior-senior high school.

None of the approximately 1,200 associations in the 33 state conventions of the Southern Baptist Convention is known to operate a high school program. The proposed takeover of Northwest Academy was recommended by the association's Christian Education Committee but lost 50-45 before the executive board.

The academy was established in 1970 in the facilities of Garden Oaks Baptist Church but is now located on 15 acres with property said valued at \$1.5 million. Enrollment is down from a peak of about 550 to around 300 and it has reportedly operated at a deficit of \$30,000 to \$35,000 the past two or three years.

About 28 individual churches in the Union Association have some type of weekday education program and 10 or 11 have elementary schools. Broadway Baptist has a high school. But none of the several churches approached would assume control of the academy. Houston Baptist University also turned it down.

Some support for associational sponsorship of the high school came from those who urged a place be secured for students coming out of church sponsored elementary schools. Opponents claimed that although the school is now and would be open to all races and creeds, it would be seen as an attempt to operate a "lily white" school.

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