



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 10, 1979

79-77

Wrapup

Disaster Aid Network
Responds to Tragedies

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On the evening of April 10, tornadoes devastated Wichita Falls and Vernon in north Texas, and Lawton in Southern Oklahoma, weaving a 50-mile triangle of death and destruction.

On Friday the 13th, the Pearl River in Mississippi swamped 8,000 homes in towns near its banks from Jackson south to the Gulf Coast. May 3, seven to 10 inches of rain pushed water from Mill Creek into hundreds of homes and churches in Nashville.

Within hours after the tragedies, the Southern Baptist Convention disaster relief network swung into action. Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Arkansas Baptists offered aid to the staggering north Texans. Louisiana and Arkansas offered help to Mississippians hit by the rampaging river.

Oklahoma, with less major damage, did not require special aid and offered to help harder hit north Texas. Members of sister churches in Tennessee leaped to help churches like Concord Baptist that had 40 inches of water in its auditorium, and First Baptist, Antioch, that was under four feet of water.

"Southern Baptists showed the concern and caring aspect of its various components," said Paul Adkins, the Home Mission Board's coordinator of disaster relief.

"The response showed that we really are a family," he added. "When any part of the family is hurting and in need, Southern Baptists respond with love and tangible help."

For several years, disaster relief workers in state conventions have worked to coordinate their efforts in order to be more effective when major disasters strike, Adkins said.

Now, each of the 33 state conventions has named disaster relief coordinators and 22 conventions have specific task forces with trained personnel to respond to disaster.

Adkins said each of the task forces is capable of providing mass shelter, mass feeding, clothing, medical assistance, communications, funding for immediate emergency needs, followup and cleanup.

In the spring disasters, the network functioned, Adkins said. Nearby conventions offered assistance, workers, money, materials and prayers for the stricken areas.

"This was the first time cooperative help has been offered to Texas by other state conventions," said Charles McLaughlin, coordinator of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Disaster Relief Task Force. Louisiana and Oklahoma both offered to send their disaster relief units and Arkansas offered help.

On the morning following the tornado, Florida Baptist Convention leaders sent their disaster relief coordinator, Charles Ragland, to Wichita Falls to assist.

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"The sensitivity of Southern Baptists to disaster relief has grown in a very commendable way," McLaughlin said. "We have received help from churches in distant places, as well as in Texas."

He said one small church far from Texas "sent a letter to express their compassion and concern and they included a \$100 check."

Adkins noted that the response of Southern Baptists from across the nation to the Texas and Mississippi disasters "demonstrated our sense of family and compassion. Jesus asked on one occasion, 'Who is your neighbor?' and the response has indicated that Southern Baptists know that geographical or jurisdictional boundaries make no difference when another person is in need."

He commented that Texans and Oklahomans often "say they want to do all kinds of bad things to each other at the time of the annual Texas-Oklahoma football game, but they come together as brothers and sisters in a time of need."

Within three weeks after the tornado, contributions to disaster relief through the Baptist General Convention of Texas amounted to \$40,000. Many churches and associations sent other help in the form of truckloads of clothing, foodstuffs, work crews and other personnel.

Color photographic slides of the disaster were sent to the 23 churches in Texas which televise Sunday morning worship services and the appeal boosted gifts.

The Home Mission Board has earmarked funds to be sent to Texas to help pay costs of the disaster relief, but the money will not be sent until final costs are tallied.

The Home Mission Board did send \$10,000 to assist in relief operations in Mississippi at the request of Earl Kelly, executive secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Disaster relief workers praised Southern Baptists for their concern, care and prayers in the aftermath of the disasters. However, officials request that churches, individuals and associations who wish to contribute to the effort--and to future disasters--use established channels of aid.

One relief official said: "When the relief aid--money, food, personnel and materials--is channeled through the Home Mission Board or through the state convention, it can be put more quickly to use and sent where the needs are the greatest. With a coordinated effort, we can avoid overlapping and prevent some areas from going unaided."

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Missions Just
A Step Away

Baptist Press
5/10/79

PONCHATOULA, La. (BP)--When Jill heard the speaker say missions is just a step away, she didn't realize how close the step was.

Jill had told Benny, who hit her in the head with his flag pole as the two marched in the parade of flags during a missions conference, "That's not the way a Christian should act."

Just as Benny responded "I'm not a Christian," speaker Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, said "Missions is just a step away."

Jill looked over and sure enough Benny was just a step away. She shared with him how to become a Christian even as the speaker continued her message and then silently prayed for God to do the rest.

As the closing prayer was being offered Jill heard Benny snifle. She asked him if he would ask Jesus to come into his heart "right now."

Benny prayed out loud even as the closing prayer was being given. Then he began to cry.

Jill leaned over and said "I didn't mean to make you cry."

"I'm crying because I'm happy."

John Gilbert, director of missions with whom Jill shared her experience, said "Missions is just a step away, but we must make that step."

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'You, Me, God' TV Series
Aims Gospel at Latins

By Jennifer Hall Anderson

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist media specialists in South America are producing the pilot series for an upbeat, weekly television program they believe can reach millions of middle-income Latins with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Circulo Tres--translated as circle three--follows years of study and survey by a team of media missionaries, two of whom are John G. Magyar and Alan W. Compton.

Its logo--three interlocking circles--captures the program's purpose to present an integrated and balanced relationship each person can develop between himself, God and his neighbor. Or, as Magyar says: "You, me and God--when all three are locked together, life works best."

"It's a 'live' possibility for foreign missions," says Magyar, Circulo Tres producer, and missionary in Colombia. "We've never done this type of thing before. It's an unparalleled opportunity."

Material for the 13 half-hour weekly programs is being produced with Colombian pastor Harold Garcia as host, and the completed pilot could be on the air by early 1980. The first pilot will be shown in Ecuador and Chile.

"We never thought we could do anything this bold. It's been like building blocks," says Magyar, who's been in on the project since its inception in 1975.

Surveys revealed that although the physical manifestations of God such as the priest, evangelical pastor, or Bible, are perceived negatively, most people would look first to God for help in a crisis. The team concluded that if the gospel were presented in contemporary terms relating to everyday life--through music and drama--with a more positive image of Baptists, a new ministry with creative overtones could be possible. Circulo Tres was born.

The appeal is purposely directed toward those in the middle-income bracket because much Southern Baptist work is with those having lower incomes.

"We'll be attempting to get a healthy combination of entertainment combined with items to make people think," says Compton, Southern Baptist mass media representative in Latin America.

"What we're trying to do is put the viewer alongside a person who's walked with Jesus," interjects Magyar. The series will include contemporary Christian music, much to be written and performed by up-and-coming Latin Christian musicians; drama dealing with ethical issues; interviews with an anchorman news format; "eyewitnesses to Jesus," which cite personal encounters with Christ; and short documentaries focusing on common social and personal problems, such as alcoholism and adultery, and how a relationship with Jesus Christ can be a solution.

The team stresses follow-up for those attracted by its programs. Booklets are offered to interest non-Christian viewers; on-the-air reading of a viewer's letter describing a problem is followed by explanations of how Christ can help; telephone counseling by pastors and laymen, plus other counseling methods and Bible correspondence courses, are also used.

For now, Circulo Tres production has been heavily dependent on the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth, Texas. The first pilot was filmed in Latin America with equipment leased from the commission, but pre-production and editing was done in Fort Worth.

Needs are great--for not only career missionaries with audio and video engineering abilities and Christian commitment, but for Latin Baptists with similar skills and counseling backgrounds. Also, sophisticated equipment is a must. Production facilities will be needed in Latin America to relieve the Radio-TV Commission. And money. For production, marketing and follow-up for one year in two cities, Circulo Tres would cost \$338,000.

The Foreign Mission Board has granted \$92,000 for Circulo Tres from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. But more is needed. J. Bryan Brasington, the board's secretary for western South America, says it is his "hope and prayer" that there will be additional funds obtainable through the annual offering.

"We've needed something like Circulo Tres for some time now," says Brasington, a 20-year veteran of mission work in Latin America. "My prediction is we'll be able to reach a large constituency with Circulo Tres--especially working professional people."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Southern Seminary Student
Translating Bible to Yoruba

Baptist Press
5/10/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Solomon Abegunde is studying Hebrew at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary because he is translating the Old Testament into his native Yoruba language.

During his absence from his native Nigeria, he's gained additional responsibilities from the death of Emanuel A. Dahunsi. The secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and Bible society of Nigeria translator was killed in an automobile accident Jan. 30. His successor as convention secretary is Samuel T. Ola Akande, a Southern Seminary graduate, as was Dahunsi.

Abegunde will assume the late Dahunsi's responsibilities with the Bible society when he returns to Nigeria.

Some additional responsibilities in this area have already come his way. He received photocopies in the mail of Dahunsi's New Testament translation work, which he proofreads and revises as time permits.

The language student began translating a few years ago on his own, without tutoring.

"At first, I translated literally. I was shackled by trying to make the Yoruba phrases parallel. But now I've discovered the real thing is to say something as I would to another person with smooth, idiomatic usage," he said.

Cultural differences are giving Abegunde some translation headaches. For example, the utensils--shovel and ash net, tray and spade--in the building of the temple in Exodus are hard to describe so Nigerians will understand. "We just don't have anything like that," he said.

Other problematic areas are the tax collector and the publican hitting his chest in repentance. "In Yoruba when someone hits his chest he is boasting or bragging," he said.

Abegunde has worked with the Bible society for about two years. He came to that organization from Lagos, where he had succeeded Dahunsi as pastor of First Baptist Church.

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