



-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Small Baptist Group
Harassed in Mexico

By David Daniell

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Nine Baptist families in Santa Maria del Monte have been denied use of municipal lights and water since August, despite promises by authorities to restore service.

Since July, the families in this town 45 miles west of Mexico City have been harassed and persecuted by the local Roman Catholic townspeople, Southern Baptist representatives reported.

Stonings, beatings, imprisonment and denial of the right of public worship have characterized the harassment that began when Baptists refused to contribute financially to the Catholic church as the priest demanded. The Baptists responded by declaring their faithfulness to Jesus Christ only.

On Sunday, Aug. 3, local municipal authorities came to the Baptist mission congregation, obligating the Baptists to go to City Hall to sign a "protection" agreement.

Instead they were met there by a mob estimated at 10,000 who struck and kicked them. To rescue the Baptists, an official put them in jail. One Baptist managed to flee toward the state capital, Toluca, to seek help. When 35 policemen and two ambulances arrived, the mob was threatening to burn down the jail.

The nine injured Baptists were hospitalized, but law enforcement officials refused to press charges against the offenders. Since then, authorities in Santa Maria del Monte have denied the nine Baptist families municipal lights or water. They also cannot pasture or water their farm animals. Neighbors have harassed the Baptists trying to bring home groceries. The Baptists have collected rainwater off the roofs of their homes, but the rainy season tapers off in October.

"Our Baptist brethren—especially the women—are afraid to leave their homes unless they're in groups of at least three persons," said Southern Baptist representative Eldon Sturgeon.

State Governor Jorge Jimenez Cantu listened to the Baptists' complaints, expressed concern for religious liberty, and referred the matter to the county.

A week after the Baptists saw the governor, their lights and water remained cut off.

Meanwhile, the Central Baptist Association, composed of churches in Mexico City and the surrounding area, is seeking to collect \$4,400 to help pay legal fees and to purchase food, water, clothes and medicine for the nine families.

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David Daniell is press representative for Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico.

Annuity Board
Leader Resigns

DALLAS (BP)--B.J. Chenault, senior vice president and director of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board endowment department, has resigned effective Oct. 15.

In his resignation to Darold H. Morgan, president of the board, Chenault said he will enter private business as a tax consultant specializing in estates, trusts, charitable giving and fund-raising.

Morgan expressed appreciation for the more than 17 years of service Chenault has rendered Southern Baptists through the board. He said the resignation is "tempered" by the fact Chenault has agreed to be consultant to the endowment work of the board.

"We are most pleased with this continuing relationship," Morgan said. "The public is aware of the groundwork he has laid in recent months for our endowment effort. We want to use some of this knowledge for improving our efforts in this vital and needed endeavor."

Chenault joined the board in 1963 as comptroller and treasurer, and directed the finance and accounting division as senior vice president for nine years, before being asked to head the endowment department when it was established in 1978.

Morgan said the endowment activities will be directed by the board's staff, with help from a special endowment development council composed of concerned Baptist businessmen and lay leaders.

Chenault joined the board after serving in accounting and financial positions for several different firms in Houston, San Antonio and Dallas.

A graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, Chenault was named a certified public accountant in 1951. He is a native of Mart, Texas.

He and his wife, Helen, have two children--Bob, a pastor in Whittier, Calif., and Cathy, a college student in Dallas.

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(BP) photo will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

State Papers Report Problem,
Washington Chapel Gets Relief

By Marv Knox

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GRAHAM, Wash. (BP)--Let the rain fall; Mt. Rainier Baptist Chapel is ready for winter's onslaught.

Only a month ago, supplies for the chapel's new steel-and-wood building lay on the ground, exposed to the elements. The tiny, pastorless congregation lacked the manpower to construct the building, and the upcoming rainy season threatened to destroy all supplies.

But state Baptist newspapers reported the chapel's plight, and concerned Baptists from throughout the country came to the rescue, said Bill Young, building project coordinator and former pastor.

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"We've got the steel in the air and two-thirds of the roof on," said Young, who had to resign as pastor and building contractor because of health problems.

"We've already started getting some rain, but I believe we will be able to get the building closed in before the weather gets too wet," he added. "Then we can work inside the rest of the winter."

Support that saved the building from ruin came as financial gifts and volunteer labor, he said.

A woman in Mississippi sent \$2,500 to hire a carpenter to help with construction, and a family in Spokane, Wash., sent \$200. A man from California and a man from Texas volunteered to work on the building, and men from three churches in Puget Sound Baptist Association are spending their Saturdays building.

Not only has the aid saved the chapel building, but it also has strengthened the congregation, Young emphasized.

"This was the shot in the arm we needed to make our people up here dig in," he said. When they realized they were being lifted up by a national chain of prayer and support, they got more excited about the work of this chapel."

Attendance at Sunday morning worship service has increased from an average of about 40 persons to more than 60. Young said people are increasing pledges to the building fund, too.

Women from the chapel and sponsoring First Baptist Church of Parkland, Wash., are having garage sales and a home crafts bazaar. The men are planning a fish fry, and some kids are gathering recyclable materials—all to raise money for the chapel.

"It's been a real blessing all the way through," Young said. "Our church is just real thrilled."

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National Committee Named
To Develop Rice Property

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ATLANTA (BP)--A national committee has been formed to develop the Northborough, Mass., birthplace and childhood homesite of pioneer Baptist missionary Luther Rice, according to William G. Tanner, executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"From his humble birth in 1783, Luther Rice grew to be one of the first foreign missionaries and a lifetime supporter of missions," Tanner said. "We are excited about the Luther Rice Missions Library and Resource Center, for we believe it can become a permanent tribute to this great Baptist and a constant reminder of the importance of missions."

Rice was born and reared on the property, which now is owned by the board, said M. Wendell Belew, director of the board's missions ministries division and chairman of the committee.

The Rice homesite has been divided into three parcels, Belew said. One part was given to Luther Rice Memorial Baptist Church, and another was made available to the Baptist General Association of New England for its regional office building.

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The third part will be the site of the library and resource center, he said. It contains a house which has been redecorated in the style of the federal period, to coincide with Rice's lifetime. It also contains a large barn and a shop, both of which will be refurbished.

The barn, already home for seminary extension courses, will be turned into a library, which will provide information for seminary extension courses and special mission lectures. It also will have sections dedicated to the history and activities of Rice and his counterparts.

"The center will be much like a state park with a Christian witness," Belew said.

Home missions money is not available to expend for development of the project.

In addition to the national committee, committees from states where Rice primarily worked—the District of Columbia, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky—have been formed to investigate the historical implications of his work in their states and support the library and research center in "such ways as are possible," Belew said.

Support for the library and resource center already has begun, Belew noted. The Day Foundation of Atlanta, Ga., has provided some period furnishings for the house, and Mrs. Robert Smith of Conroe, Texas, has donated more than \$1,500 in memory of her late husband, who was a home missionary.

"We hope to get copies of some of Rice's original manuscripts, and we are seeking any of his personal belongings or additional information about his life," Belew said.

When the center is more fully developed, a Mission Service Corps volunteer probably will be assigned to serve as curator, he said.

Target date for completion of the project is 1983, the bicentennial of Rice's birth, Belew said.

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Good News, Bad News
About Housing At SBC

Baptist Press
10/14/80

LOS ANGELES (BP)—About 550 persons will receive good news from the Los Angeles Convention Bureau within a few weeks, but another 150 will get a bit of bad news.

The convention bureau opened the first day's requests for housing and assigned rooms to some 550 persons. The requests completely filled the five hotels and nearly filled a sixth.

The first assignments were to smaller, more inexpensive hotels within easy walking distance of the convention center where the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention will be held in June.

"The Los Angeles Convention Bureau will be sending cards to those who submitted their request forms Oct. 1, within the next eight weeks," said Tim Hedquist, who handles convention arrangements for the SBC Executive Committee.

"The cards will specify the hotel assignment, in most cases one of the ones the person requested."

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Hedquist said the hotels already filled are the Holiday Inn Downtown, Holiday Inn Convention Center, Gala Motor Inn, Kent Inn and the Figueroa Hotel. Most of the rooms in the Mayflower Hotel also are filled.

The convention bureau and Hedquist had some bad news for about 150 other persons. They will be getting their housing request forms back and will have to go through the whole process all over again.

"They jumped the gun," Hedquist said. "They did not pay attention to the information which specified the requests must not be sent in before Oct. 1. Those with earlier postmarks were sent back."

He added: "The convention bureau is doing the room assignment in the fairest manner I have ever seen. They waited until Oct. 8 to open the requests, to make sure all of those post-marked Oct. 1 had arrived. They did not consider those with earlier postmarks, and returned them."

"They did it entirely by postmark. Therefore, no one could receive unfair advantage by sending the cards in earlier."

Hedquist said requests currently are being received at the rate of "100 or so a day" but added "plenty of rooms are still available for the convention."

Request forms are available in the September issue of Baptist Program, or from the Executive Committee. Persons needing additional information are asked to call Hedquist at the Executive Committee in Nashville rather than the LACB.