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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

August 22, 1983

83-125

Five State Conventions
Send Aid Units To Texas

By Terry Barone

HOUSTON (BP)--Disaster relief units from five Baptist state conventions moved into four coastal areas of Texas Aug. 19 to respond to victims of Hurricane Alicia.

Units from Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma set up the morning of Aug. 19 to serve meals to persons in areas where there was no available electrical power. That afternoon Mississippi's Disaster Relief Unit was on its way to set up in Baytown.

Alicia came ashore Galveston Island early Aug. 18 packing winds of more than 115 miles an hour then moved inland causing flooding and widespread electrical and telephone outages. Much of the city of Houston and most areas south of the city were left without power.

Galveston Island was completely without electrical power and telephone service and only residents of the island and disaster relief units were being permitted to enter the city.

The disaster relief units from Texas and Louisiana were stationed on the island to begin feeding those persons who remained and those who were returning to begin the cleanup process.

Texas Baptist's Temporary Emergency Child Care Unit was requested by Austin's Department of Human Resources to base its operation in Galveston. Headed by Jerry Vogel, director of childcare for Champion Forest Church in Houston, the unit is equipped and staffed with personnel prepared to care for children of victims from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Trained volunteers use carefully developed instructional modules to help children cope with the traumatic ordeal of disaster.

The Arkansas unit set up at LaPorte and the Oklahoma units at Seabrook and Kemah.

Although Alicia was the worst storm to hit the Texas coast since Carla 22 years ago, most Baptist leaders in the area were amazed more damage and more fatalities did not occur.

Even though damage is expected to top the \$1 billion mark, loss of property to Baptist churches and institutions in the area was minimal according to initial reports.

Because of communication and transportation difficulties, the damage to churches in Galveston Association was not immediately known. The western end of the island was worst hit, but because of debris it was difficult to get into the area for surveys. Don Peak, Red Cross director for Galveston Island, said he was unable to survey the western end of the island Thursday because of "four flat tires" in attempting to get into the area.

The western end of the island, heavily dotted with condominiums and beach houses, was severely damaged, with many homes being completely blown away.

Dick Camp, director of missions for Galveston Association, could not be contacted to receive reports concerning damage to churches in the area.

Mack Smoke, Baytown Association director of missions, said the biggest problem was "lack of electricity" and downed trees. He said flooding in the association had subsided except in the Brownwood area of Baytown.

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Disaster officials said flooding was not as serious because rainfall from Alicia was substantially below the 10-15 inches initially expected. From three to five inches fell in the Houston area with about seven inches falling in the Baytown area.

Smoke said probably all churches in his association experienced some damage, but said he would not consider the damage severe in light of the intensity of the hurricane.

Smoke said he had reports that First Church, LaPorte, had lost its steeple, had windows blown out and had received some water damage from blowing rain.

He also reported that Trinity Church, Baytown, which recently was constituted as a church, had a severe damage to portable buildings which were being used for educational space.

The Texas Baptist Disaster Unit was originally assigned to Angleton in Brazoria County where more than 4,000 persons were in shelters the night before the hurricane struck. However, by the next day all but 600 had returned home and the unit was reassigned.

In Angleton, at the associational offices, the roof was partially torn off of an auxiliary building used to house summer workers. The building also was being used for services of an Anglo mission.

Jack Chastain, director of missions for the Gulf Coast Association, said, "we are grateful for the disaster team coming our way, but we are thankful they didn't have to set up and we give the Lord the credit for it."

Damage in Houston was minimal according to initial reports. John Witte, Union Association director of missions, said he was unable to survey damaged areas on Thursday because of high water, downed power lines and debris. "Given the potential for destruction and injury, what happened was minimal and I think the Lord was watching over us," Witte said.

Representatives from the BGCT's Family Recovery Task Force and the Church Recovery Task Force met on Friday afternoon with directors of missions from the four associations which suffered the brunt of the storm.

The task force will be surveying the areas and assessing the damage for the next few days. They took \$25,000 with them to respond to immediate needs and will help administer funds donated by Texas Baptist churches later.

After the hurricane, about 750,000 people were without power in Houston. By the next morning more than 250,000 remained without electricity. It was reported that it could be two or more days before power was restored to some parts of the city. On Galveston Island, it could take as long as a week to restore power.

There was no damage to buildings, but several trees were downed at Buckner Baptist Haven in the Memorial area of Houston. Tom J. Drewett, administrator, said the residents of the home are fine. "We've been a little inconvenienced," but said they were "well-covered" and "thankful we didn't receive any structural damage."

Houston Baptist University received some roof damage and downed trees. W.H. Hinton, president, said everything at the university was operating fine except for the air conditioning due to low water pressure.

Damage to the two Baptist Book Stores in Houston was minimal, limited to minor water damage at the downtown store and water-damaged carpet at the southeast store. The sign at the southeast store was lost, but neither had broken windows.

According to Joe Roberts, manager of both stores for the Sunday School Board's book store division, none of the stores' employees were injured.

Former Pastor To Manage
Black Church Relations

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Willie Simmons, who led an inner-city California church through its rocky but victorious transition from white to mostly black membership, will manage a new black church relations section for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, beginning Aug. 31.

Simmons will seek to strengthen the foreign board's relationship with more than 300,000 black Southern Baptists, including members of predominately white churches. Simmons will work closely with more than 700 black churches to increase their awareness of world missions.

Blacks and black churches have been joining Southern Baptists in growing numbers during recent years. In 1951 only two black churches were affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. By 1981, the number had grown to about 600.

For years the Foreign Mission Board has been responsive to qualified black candidates seeking to be missionaries. Much of Southern Baptist work overseas is with black populations.

To help blacks make missions a priority, the Foreign Mission Board in 1981 named its special ministries director, Elmer West, as a liaison to work with them. Simmons' position was created in West's department last spring.

Simmons, 50, was asked to become pastor at First Southern Baptist Church of Compton, Calif., 11 years ago when the city and the church found themselves in a white-to-black transition. It was Simmons' first pastorate, and he was the church's first black pastor.

Simmons saw the church through a saga of struggle and victory. Many members had left, and at one time it looked as though the church would be forced to disband. But under Simmons' leadership First Southern hung together and became a 350-member, missions-giving church involved also in community ministries.

As a bivocational pastor, Simmons worked for the City of Los Angeles, about 15 miles from Compton, during his pastorate.

He has been president of the Los Angeles Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference and a member of the executive board of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California. He has been involved in Compton area Christian groups.

Simmons received the bachelor of arts degree from Biola University, La Mirada, Calif., in 1972, and the master of divinity degree from Talbot Theological Seminary, La Mirada, in 1978. He expects to receive his doctor of ministries degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., in December.

His wife, Marva, is a gifted vocalist well known throughout Baptist life in California. They have four grown children.

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

Hispanic Pastor Assaulted
By Armed Texas Farmer

By Jerilynn Armstrong

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GRAND SALINE, Tex. (BP)--Jose Amaya, a Hispanic pastor of two East Texas missions, was assaulted and his life threatened while picking up members of his congregation on Sunday afternoon, July 31.

Amaya, 30, who has served as the pastor for the Hispanic missions of Main Street Church in Grand Saline and First Church in Ben Wheeler, was making his regular runs in the Hispanic church van for the 2 p.m. service.

While stopping at the home of Bobby Thompson, a local farmer, Amaya said he was met by Thompson in his pick-up truck armed with a rifle.

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Amaya left the van to speak with Thompson and ask for the location of the church members when he allegedly was hit by Thompson several times with the barrel of the gun and threatened at gunpoint.

Thompson then reportedly shot out the tires on the left side of the van and continued to kick and hit Amaya as he ran toward the vehicle.

Amaya suffered several lacerations to his hands and head with stitches required for the head wounds. The van's damage and medical costs are estimated between \$750-\$1,000.

Thompson was charged with two felonies for criminal assault and destruction of property. The next day Thompson filed counter charges toward Amaya for criminal trespassing.

"At this time we are waiting to see if some understanding can be reached so that the charges can be dropped," said Tom Pesnell, pastor of Main Street Church. "It is really an unfortunate situation and one that has caused us a great deal of concern among our communities."

Pesnell added Thompson erroneously accused Amaya of transporting Hispanic workers to other locations. "Other men have done that but never Jose," Pesnell said.

"He has been working with us for about a year and a half and has done a tremendous work among the Hispanics. Prior to his coming we had a man which caused a great deal of trouble and left our work with a black mark.

"Jose has done a great deal to restore trust and build the work so we are very distressed this situation is opening up some old wounds," he said.

Following the incident there was a meeting with local pastors and a decision was reached all charges would be dropped if "Thompson paid for the damages, gave a public, written apology to Jose and allowed his workers to continue attending the mission."

At this time Thompson has refused these terms and will be brought to trial.

"We also have met with the district attorney who informed us that Jose's charge of criminal trespassing would not hold up in court since he was making a regular run and there were no signs posted, Pesnell said.

"We are not seeking revenge for Thompson's actions but feel it is imperative to receive a written apology because of the damage done to Jose's reputation and the work of our mission."

"We are all behind Jose and are supporting him," he continued. "Jose has shown to be a strong Christian with a great love toward his people. He graduated from Dallas Baptist College in May where he was a Latin American Scholarship recipient and plans to enter Southwestern Seminary in January."

"This whole episode has shaken us up," said Sam Tullock, associational missionary, "but I have been pleased with the way it has been handled and the conduct of Jose and the local pastors."

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Georgia Church Grows
By Multiplication, Not Addition

By Pat Yount

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--In the age of the modern super-church, Dunwoody Baptist Church has an unusual idea about growth; it doesn't necessarily mean getting bigger.

Though located in an affluent Atlanta suburb with potential for a burgeoning church roster, Dunwoody has chosen to give part of its growth away.

Pastor Jim Chavis and his staff have led the 23-year-old church into the Decade of Destiny, a plan that includes starting three new churches in the 10-year period, 1980-1990.

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Starting new churches is only one of seven programs in Dunwoody's total plan. Other programs include counseling services, Christian education facilities, a conference center, a media center, even a retirement community.

The dream which produced the Decade of Destiny began for Chavis on a 1977 Holy Land trip. At the Garden Tomb, he saw in a new way "the reality of what I had been teaching and preaching, and it literally overwhelmed me," he said.

Once home, Chavis turned his reality into a vision for an entire congregation. "It was a question of building an ecclesiastical empire at Dunwoody, or going in another direction," he explained. "And I knew the Lord wanted us to go the other direction."

Over the next two years the church staff shaped the dream, and in 1979 the congregation adopted their Decade of Destiny proposal. The church called Marion Hayes, home missionary in Providence, R.I., to serve in a newly-created minister of missions position. Prime responsibility: the beginning and development of new congregations.

On March 22, 1982, the first meeting of Peachtree Corners church was held in the Hayes' living room with 15 people attending. On October 31, newly-called pastor Doug Turner led 180 in worship. Hayes recalled, "One man said this was the first church he had ever seen born standing up and running."

With the first mission on its feet, Hayes was ready to launch the second mission. On Jan. 16, 1983, another group met in the Hayes' living room to discuss start-up plans. For Hayes, the transition is "a bittersweet situation in that you develop a relationship, and then all of a sudden that relationship is severed."

Hayes' work as church-starter opens doors for Dunwoody members to minister. Chavis explained, "Within every congregation, I believe God has people who are church-starters. They like the excitement of a new church. The church-starter just locates them."

Jack Redford, director of the Home Mission Board's Church Extension Division, praises Dunwoody's efforts in church-starting. "Here is a strong church that reached over, started a new church, supplied a pastor, and did it!" he declared. "It's something we'd like to see multiplied a thousand times."