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April 3, 1984

C-N
84-53

American Theology, Oppression
Linked In Latin America

By Craig Bird

WASHINGTON (BP)--"Christ cares for Latin America and so must Americans if you want to be his faithful servants," an Argentine theologian insists.

Pablo Deiros, a professor at International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, spoke on "A Christian Approach to Human Rights--A Latin American Perspective" at a seminar sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention last month.

He appealed to biblical commands and challenged the audience to work to assure the "human dignity" of people in Latin America in ways appropriate to the native culture. And he didn't mince words in pointing out how American religion has a part in the problem of human rights violations.

"Instead of preaching and living a liberating Gospel we have used that Gospel for the selfish benefit of the oppressors in benumbing the consciousness of the oppressed," he said. "We have smothered God's demands for justice.... In the name of Christ we have persecuted, tortured, despised, manipulated and crushed millions of people."

Many of the things which outrage many American Christians--hunger, child death, political domination and poverty--are but symptoms of the deeper reality of the "total oblivion of human dignity" he explained.

He pointed to five biblical themes, three in the Old Testament (the doctrine of creation, the laws for the Hebrew people and the message of the prophets) and two in the New Testament (the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the apostles) which outline a strong case for a biblical perspective of human rights.

Christians are involved in the sufferings of others through action or indifference and can only take the side of justice, "not because we are just but because through faith in Christ his justice is ours."

While two-thirds of the world's people live under oppression, annual military expenditures amount to \$110 for every man, woman and child alive on earth and 20 percent of the world's scientists and 25 percent of the \$150 billion expended yearly for all research and development are devoted to military work, Deiros said.

"War has become the best business in the world--at the expense of the poor of the world," he added. In Latin America the military ruling class uses "threats to national security" as reasons "to keep themselves in power, abuse laws and impose repressive measures."

He noted both the oppressors and the oppressed are victims and many oppressors suffer guilt because they have been part of the massacre of thousands of persons, "and they also need liberation."

To proclaim the kingdom of God in Latin America means to confront the totalitarian state he said, but the church in America faces other pitfalls.

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"The greatest temptation the church faces today is to understand herself as a mere expression of a Christian culture and consider that the central focus of her mission consists only of symbols, of culture, of mere peripheral issues--forgetting her commitment to God for human dignity."

With that commitment must come understanding the American idea of human rights as individual or civil rights is not a complete answer to Latin American problems, Deiros stressed. "The rights to survival and liberation cannot be postponed for the rights of free elections, liberty of press or private property," he said. "The American democratic idea, with all the virtues it has, cannot take the place of human dignity."

"What we need in Latin America are fewer declarations for human rights and more effective actions and decisions."

Among some "concrete suggestions," Deiros asked Southern Baptists to:

*"Be prophets in your own land. Indifference, fear or selfish preoccupation for their own comfort have made many Christian churches and individuals become silent in the face of unjust and dehumanizing acts or conditions against fellow human beings."

*Pray for Latin America. "We need your intercession rather than solutions produced outside our own sphere of decision."

*Understand that there is not one Latin American, but many. "We are looking for freedom, but not necessarily to follow the ways which have led North America to build its freedom."

*Follow the lead of Jesus who, "for your sake became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9) which could mean choosing a simple life style and a sensible awareness to serve others.

*Undertake a "new kind of preaching" which will bring about a new articulation of the spiritual and the socio-political and stress the awareness of problems and solutions on a worldwide scope.

*Readjust the theological reflection of the church to take seriously the prophetic ministry of the church and express all implications of the Christian gospel.

*And join preaching and theology with actions because, "insofar as there is a specific preaching and a collective commitment is there also a healthy theology."

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Record Budget, No Raises
For New Orleans Seminary

NBTS
(C)-N

Baptist Press
4/3/84

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Trustees of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary adopted a record budget, elected a faculty member and increased fees and rents during its annual meeting.

Trustees expressed concern over the anticipated shortfall in Cooperative Program giving and a resulting decline in funds for the seminary. Much of the board's action on fiscal affairs centered on maintenance of the academic program for increasing numbers of students within income expectations.

The \$5,832,260 budget for the 1984-85 fiscal year is the largest in the seminary's history even though salary increases for faculty and staff personnel were not included. In a letter to all faculty and staff, Chairman William M. Hamm Jr., layman from Shreveport, La., relayed the trustees' regrets no salary increases could be included in this budget.

In other actions related to fiscal affairs, trustees:

--Approved increases in the schedule of student fees including a raise in the matriculation fee to \$275 per semester for students in master and associate degree programs;

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--Approved a fee of \$68.75 per course for special, part-time or auditing students with a maximum fee of \$275 per student per semester;

--Approved rate increases for campus housing. Dormitory room rates were raised \$2 per month to \$52 per month for semi-private rooms and \$75 per month for single rooms. Apartment rental rates which ranged from \$115 to \$245 per month have been raised to range from \$120 to \$255 per month depending upon size and utilities provided;

--Approved increases in rates charged at the seminary's preschool center.

James Everette Reed was elected to the faculty as assistant professor of history and philosophy of religious education in the division of religious education ministries, effective June 1, 1984. He has been assistant professor of religious education at Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss., since 1981.

James L. Minton was promoted to associate professor of youth education and recreation from assistant professor of youth education. He has been a member of the seminary faculty since 1978.

Hamm, president of Berg Mechanical, Inc. of Shreveport, La., was reelected president of the trustees. Carl A. Hudson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Natchitoches, La., was elected vice president. Fred J. Vogel, professor emeritus at the University of New Orleans and Mrs. Walter M. (Joyce) Fox, Lafayette, La., were reelected secretary and treasurer respectively.

Final approval was given for leaves during the 1984-85 academic year for D. Waylon Bailey, associate professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, and J. Terry Young, professor of theology. During his sabbatical Bailey will study at Yale University Divinity School as a research fellow in Old Testament and Hebrew during the fall semester. He also will complete preparation of a biblical Hebrew grammar for beginning students with J. Olen Strange, NOBTS professor emeritus of Old Testament and Hebrew.

Young will attend the annual Summer Institute of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and work at the Princeton Center for Continuing Education for the remainder of the summer. During the fall and spring semesters he will be engaged in studies of the doctrine of God and the broader scope of systematic theology in New Orleans. During the summer of 1985 he will participate in the Graduate Theological Union in San Francisco.

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Southwestern Seminary Names
Six Distinguished Alumni

Baptist Press
4/3/84

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Pastors, a state convention executive, a former president's wife and retired denominational executives are being honored as Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's 1984 distinguished alumni.

The recipients, who will be recognized at the national alumni luncheon June 13 in Kansas City, Mo., are: Kenneth L. Chafin, Houston; Floy Williams Ferguson, Amarillo, Texas; C. Bruce McIver, Dallas; Guy D. Newman, Waco, Texas; Chester O'Brien Jr., Albuquerque, N.M., and C.E. Wilbanks, Las Vegas, Nev.

Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church in Houston since 1972, earned the bachelor of divinity degree in 1955 and the doctor of theology degree in 1959. He is a former professor of evangelism at Southwestern and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. Chafin has been a member of Southwestern's board of trustees since 1972.

Ferguson, who earned the bachelor of missions training degree in 1921, and the master of religious education degree in 1955, was married to J. Howard Williams, Southwestern's fourth president, who died in 1958.

McIver, pastor of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas since 1958, earned the bachelor of divinity degree in 1949 and the doctor of theology degree in 1973.

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Newman, an administrative consultant at Baylor University in Waco, earned his master of theology degree in 1946 and his doctor of theology degree in 1952.

O'Brien, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico since 1975, earned the bachelor of divinity degree in 1951.

Wilbanks, retired associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's evangelism division, earned the master of theology degree in 1924.

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*Wayland Bpt. Univ.
(C)-N*

Wayland Baptist Records
Oral History Of Vietnam

Baptist Press
4/3/84

PLAINVIEW, Texas (BP)--A major research effort to record an oral history of the Vietnam era has won honors for Wayland Baptist University.

Under the direction of Wayland history professors Estelle Owens and George Sims, the oral history project won first place in statewide competition sponsored by the Walter Prescott Webb Society during the annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association.

The project, launched in October 1983 and designed to continue several years, will provide historical source material of the Vietnam experience through taped interviews.

According to Sims, very little oral history has been done for the Vietnam period and what has been done centers on the experiences of "white, middle-class, Protestant young men" and the military. The Wayland researchers will go a step further, he said. Instead of recording the experiences of Vietnam veterans only, they will also interview civilians caught up in the war.

Some 15 to 20 volunteers already have agreed to be interviewed about their Vietnam experiences. They cover a wide range of experiences and include white, black and Hispanic subjects, civilian as well as military.

The military participants range from enlisted men to high ranking officers in all branches of the armed services. They include helicopter pilots and gunners, military policemen, intelligence officers, a medic and a Green Beret.

The civilians include an American citizen who was a student in Vietnam at the time the Diem government fell, a missionary journeyman, an American doctor who volunteered to serve the civilian population in 1967 and a Vietnamese physician who fled the country.

All interviews will be done on a strictly voluntary basis. "We would never attempt to force persons to talk about their experiences in Vietnam," Owens said.

Finding interviewees should not pose any problems as Owens estimates there are 40,000 Vietnam veterans in the area surrounding Plainview.

Funded in part by Wayland's American Heritage Program, the Vietnam project will involve numerous groups of students.

"In addition to the splendid accomplishment of gathering and making available historical source material, a program like this is an excellent voluntary project for many of our students," Owens said.

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BSSB-N

Choirs Pageant
Highlight BSU Retreat

By Gail Rothwell

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--More than 1,800 black college students at the 39th annual National Baptist Student Union Retreat heard a challenge by Baptist World Alliance President Duk McCall, crowned a new Miss BSU, elected officers and participated in a gospel choir competition.

Speaking on the theme, "Confession, Commitment and Contentment--In Christ," McCall told students, "Our Christianity should give us the power to melt our diverse heritages into one people for the cause of making the kingdoms of this world the kingdom of Christ."

He told students, "If you are committed to God then you need to have concern for the world in your heart. Your commitment is to say to Christ, 'I'm available to help make the kingdoms of this world into one kingdom for Christ.'"

McCall, chancellor of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., told students being president of the Baptist World Alliance since 1980 has helped him see all Christians are first "part of the body of Christ."

"If we believe we are all members of the church of God then this should change our relationships with others," he said.

McCall challenged students to "review your confession and commitment to Christ and declare your faith--therein will you find your contentment."

During the Miss BSU pageant, held to encourage Christian development cultural growth among black women, Michelle Archangel was crowned "Miss BSU 1984-85." Archangel is a sophomore, business communications major at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette. The pageant was coordinated by Jessie Dawson, BSU advisor at Utica Junior College, Utica, Miss.

Winners of the annual gospel choir competition were the University of Houston (downtown), Texas, small choir division; University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, medium choir division; and University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, large choir division.

Winners of the choir competition will present a concert during Mission 85, a student conference on the world missions Dec. 28-31, 1984, in Nashville, Tenn.

Elected were: president, Timothy Sims, University of Kansas, Lawrence; vice president, Arlyn Jackson, Prairie View A & M, Prairie View, Texas; treasurer, Robert A. Cain, American Baptist College, Nashville, Tenn; secretary, Limmie Taylor, University of Arkansas, Little Rock; music director, Barron K. McGlothlin, Southern University, Baton Rouge, La., and pianist, Gaye Y. Arbuckle, Prairie View A & M.

John Corbitt, pastor of Springfield Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., and part-time ethnic ministries consultant for national student ministries of the Baptist Sunday School Board, directs the annual retreat. Founded in 1946, the retreat is thought to be the largest gathering of black Christian college students in the United States.

The retreat is sponsored by the national student ministries and the department of black church relations, Home Mission Board.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Sunday School Board

EDITOR'S NOTE-- (BP) news analysis, "School Prayer: Reviewing 22 Years of Turbulence" by Stan Hastey, mailed March 28, 1984, should have carried the credit line "adapted from South Carolina Baptist Courier."

Thanks, Baptist Press

High Court Will Decide
'Moment-Of-Silence' Law

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has reopened the 22-year-old debate over the proper place of religion in public school classrooms by ruling on an Alabama law providing for a moment of silent prayer or meditation at the beginning of the school day.

At the same time, the high court affirmed a lower federal court in striking down a separate Alabama law authorizing classroom teachers to lead their pupils in oral prayers.

Combined, the two actions indicate the nation's highest tribunal, while standing firmly by its 1962 and 1963 decisions barring state-prescribed school prayer, is now willing to consider the silent prayer alternative as enacted by Alabama and 21 other states. The Supreme Court has never considered the question until now.

Lower federal courts have divided, one tribunal upholding a Massachusetts silence statute but others striking down similar laws in Tennessee, New Jersey and Alabama.

The Alabama law the high court will consider reads: "At the commencement of the first class of each day in all grades in all public schools, the teacher in charge of the room in which such class is held may announce that a period of silence not to exceed one minute in duration shall be observed for meditation or voluntary prayer, and during any such period no other activities shall be engaged in."

After the state legislature passed the law, a group of Mobile, Ala., parents led by Ishmael Jaffree, an agnostic with three children in public schools, challenged it. But U.S. District Court Judge Brevard Hand last year upheld the law in an opinion which said the Supreme Court had misinterpreted the Constitution in its 1962 and 1963 school prayer decisions.

On appeal to a federal circuit court, however, the law was struck down as a violation of the First Amendment's establishment clause.

Because the Supreme Court's calendar for hearing cases in its current term is already full, the Alabama case will not be argued until sometime after the 1984-85 term begins next October. A decision is expected by the spring of 1985.

While agreeing to decide on the silent prayer issue, the high court nevertheless voted without dissent to affirm the appeals court decision striking down the Alabama law providing for teacher-led prayers.

That statute, also challenged by Jaffree, authorized but did not require teachers to lead "willing" students in oral prayers. In enacting the law, the Alabama legislature suggested a prayer composed by the son of former governor Fob James.

Judge Hand, in upholding the law, attracted national attention by accusing the Supreme Court of ignoring the intent of Congress by applying the establishment clause to the states. States, unlike the federal government, he said, are free under the Constitution to enact official religions if they wish.

But the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Hand's ruling, declaring the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution makes applicable to the states the constraints on the federal government set forth in the First Amendment. (83-812, Wallace v. Jaffree; 83-929, Smith v. Jaffree; 83-804, Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County, Ala. v. Jaffree)

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Hong Kong Scripture Calendars
Reach All the Way to Shanghai

By Lynn Barrett

Baptist Press
4/3/84

HONG KONG (BP)--Ida Lusk could hardly believe her eyes. A friend was showing slides of a visit to Shanghai, China, and there on the wall of a Shanghai home hung a Scripture calendar produced by her own Scripture ministry.

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It wasn't the first time one of the calendars found its way into China. But Southern Baptist missionaries Dick and Ida Lusk never dreamed that could happen when they started their Scripture distribution plan 18 years ago. Now their calendars turn up almost everywhere.

A new phase of the ministry began after Mrs. Lusk noticed most taxi drivers in Hong Kong hang daily calendars on their dashboards. Each driver has a calendar in front of him all day, she thought. A check revealed nearly 13,000 taxis registered in the crowded colony.

With her usual tenacity, she plunged into a Scripture search for 365 verses to compile a taxi calendar. But "publishing, printing and distribution problems bogged me down," she admitted. Alabama missionary Barton Starr, still in language school, saw the evangelistic potential and responded to her cries for help.

Letters went to all Hong Kong taxi companies. Though the printer hesitated to tackle the project and distribution was complicated, the 1983 calendars were placed in 3,000 taxis. One taxi company owner, who had earlier said he was a Buddhist, ordered 300 calendars for 1984. He wrote, "Kindly do pray for those who carry the Scripture calendars, that our Lord bless them as 'I rejoice at thy word, as one that finds great treasure.'" (Psalm 119:162)

While working on the taxi calendar, Starr thought about the countless offices in Hong Kong and launched yet another evangelistic vehicle: a daily desk calendar. The 1984 calendar, featuring the theme "Peace," has been delivered to 5,000 taxis, and 5,000 office desks. The original wall version continued in a printing of 10,000. Hong Kong's Baptist Communications Center has begun advertising Bible correspondence courses through the calendars. Last year saw more than 90 responses, including requests from Thailand and Australia.

The Lusks' Scripture ministry began during a furlough in 1966 when Mrs. Lusk, a Tennessean, began feeling strongly she and her husband should start a Scripture distribution ministry as soon as they got back to Hong Kong. Her husband had gotten the same impression.

They distributed Bibles to Hong Kong grade-school students for several years, using Foreign Mission Board funds designated for Scripture distribution. Then Mrs. Lusk hit on the idea of a daily wall calendar with an evangelistic Bible passage on each page. The first edition appeared in 1968.

The calendar designs change as the missionaries search for the most effective way to reach hearts and minds. Mrs. Lusk is now developing a four-year-cycle of Bible verses to make the project more manageable with less personnel.

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(Lynn Barrett is press representative for the Hong Kong-Macao Baptist Mission.)
(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Baptists Respond
To Carolina Storms

C-N

Baptist Press
4/3/84

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Baptists responded with men, material and ministry in the wake of the March 29 killer tornadoes which cut a 300 mile wide band of death and destruction through North and South Carolina.

Disaster relief teams from six states--North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama Georgia and Mississippi--responded quickly after the storms hit, leaving at least 60 persons dead, hundreds injured, thousands homeless and property damage in the millions of dollars.

In addition, Baptists contributed foodstuffs, clothing, bedding and other items to help those whose lives were changed by the dance of death and destruction across the two-state area.

North Carolina Gov. James B. Hunt Jr., said of the disaster: "This is the worst disaster I've ever seen in my life. We apparently have had the worst disaster in 100 years."

Archie King, director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Brotherhood department and coordinator of the Tennessee part of the relief operation, said: "This is the worst disaster I believe we have ever worked in. The devastation is sickening."

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Eddie Pettit, disaster relief coordinator for the North Carolina Brotherhood Department, said Red Springs, Mt. Olive and Maxton in the southeastern part of the state were hardest hit.

The North Carolina disaster unit was stationed at Red Springs, a town of 2,000. Police estimated 85 percent of the business district was damaged or destroyed.

A team mobilized by the Tennessee Baptist Brotherhood department first went to Greenville, N.C., but was sent to Grey Pond Baptist Church in Johns Station, a Lumbee Indian community near Maxton. A satellite feeding station was established at a baseball park concession stand in Maxton.

In South Carolina, Newberry, Winnsboro, McColl and Bennettsville, where tornadoes tore a two mile by 12 mile long path, were the hardest hit areas.

Mississippi Brotherhood officials sent two men to help in South Carolina with coordination efforts. Some 60 to 70 Georgia Baptist Men went in during the weekend to help with cleanup efforts in the Bennettsville and McColl areas.

The Alabama Brotherhood provided meals from a disaster relief unit which arrived Friday morning with seven volunteers, and by the end of the day served 750 meals to victims, workers, law enforcement officials, and National Guardsmen patrolling to prevent looting.

While the Baptists from Alabama were serving meals almost continuously outside First Baptist Church Saturday, inside church members and volunteers of all denominations were at work distributing food and clothing. Pastor Dallas Redding was coordinating the effort and had not stopped almost since the storm hit Wednesday night.

"Everybody has responded overwhelmingly," he said. "There's no way we can name everybody." Redding said 50 percent of the homes in McColl were damaged and 15 percent were destroyed. The church's Sunday school rooms were filled with clothing and food that had been sent from near and far.

South Carolina Baptist Convention employees activated a temporary relief income and dispersement account which is used periodically to aid victims of emergency and natural disasters, according to Ray P. Rust, executive secretary-treasurer.

Rust said members of the Baptist Building staff are working with Southern Baptist churches in the state and with designated Southern Baptist ministers in helping provide money in areas hit hardest by tornadoes. "I am highly gratified by the ground swell of the response among Southern Baptists to the needs of people," Rust said. "Southern Baptists from other states also have joined hands with us by providing money, facilities and expertise.

"We believe in working from our churches in cases like this, because it not only gives us a chance to meet real human needs, but also provides the opportunity to render a Christian witness," said Rust.

White Oak Conference Center, the South Carolina Baptist Convention educational and training facility located near Winnsboro, has provided shelter for homeless victims and Red Cross volunteers. The conference center also has fed storm victims and volunteers.

The immediate response to the tornadoes is the result of a SBC-wide disaster relief program established several years ago to coordinate Baptist ministry to disaster victims. The Brotherhood Commission and state Brotherhood departments have taken the lead in developing disaster relief teams and equipment.

Norman Godfrey, Brotherhood Commission first vice president, has been coordinating overall relief efforts. Two other staffers of the agency have given on-site assistance. Pioneer Royal Ambassador director, Rusty Griffin, is helping coordinate relief efforts in South Carolina and Baptist Men's Director Douglas Beggs is working with Brotherhood groups in North Carolina.

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(This report prepared with assistance from Mike Davis, Brotherhood Commission; Larry E. High, associate editor of the North Carolina Biblical Recorder; Steven L. Higdon, assistant editor of the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector; Sue Harper, assistant editor of the South Carolina Baptist Courier, and Larry Crisman, public relations director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: High and Higdon visited two churches in North Carolina struck by the March 28 tornadoes. One was damaged; the other was not. Here are the stories of two churches. High is mailing a photo.)

Tornadoes Devastate
Red Springs

*N.C. Paper
(C)-F*
By Larry E. High

RED SPRINGS, N.C. (BP)--Red Springs, a small community in southeastern North Carolina, was devastated when a tornado roared down the town's main business district March 28.

At First Baptist Church, prayer meeting was underway. Pastor Olin O. Hefner, was "just finishing the Bible study when the lights went out. I noticed that the clock was at 7:27.

"We had GAs, RAs and Acteens so we just gathered to the center of the building and had our prayer meeting there. It was so devastating that we really couldn't leave here," he said.

Hefner said many of the children were crying and the parents could not get to the church.

"Some of the parents ran through the rain to get here. Finally, the National Guard arrived and cleared downed trees from the streets so our people could get home."

The First Baptist Church building was the only church facility in Red Springs, a town of 2,000, not damaged by the tornado. The church property is located several blocks east of the town's business district in an area not heavily damaged by the tornado.

Because First church was the only large facility not damaged it became the town's relief shelter headquarters.

Westside Church, the other Southern Baptist congregation in Red Springs, suffered severe property damage and several members were slightly injured. Windows were blown out of the sanctuary, the steeple was lifted from the building and thrown to the ground and a large portion of the church roof destroyed.

The Presbyterian church, a large stone building, was leveled and one of the town's two fatalities, a two-year-old child, was killed when the tornado destroyed a pentecostal church.

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Pastor Glad Lives
Not Lost In Storm

*Tom. Paper
(C)-F*
By Steven L. Higdon

JOHNS STATION, N.C. (BP)--The recently completed fellowship hall of Grey Pond Baptist Church was to have been dedicated March 31.

But that was before one of the 45 tornadoes which rampaged across North and South Carolina March 28 demolished the hall and damaged the rest of the church.

"I am just glad we are not going to be having funeral services," said Pastor Limburg Chavis.

"It could have been much worse. It could have been the people, not the building."

Twenty families in the 100-member church had homes damaged, and of those, 14 were totaled.

As the storm was brewing that Wednesday night, deacon John L. Chavis was preparing the building for prayer meeting.

"I had come to unlock the doors and turn on the lights," he said.

"We were to have another session of our doctrinal study on the Holy Spirit, so when I was through, I sat down to look through the book.

"In a few moments, I heard a voice that I believe must have been the Holy Spirit telling me to walk to the other end of the church," he said.

"Without really stopping to think about it, I did. As soon as I had, the stairwell opened up and the wind burst through the church. I said, 'Well Lord, are You coming?'"

There was a sudden quiet, then another sound and the church porch roof fell.

"This time I called out, 'Lord, are you here to take me? I am ready if it is your will,'" Chavis recalled.

When the noise died down, Chavis surveyed the damage to find it was worse than he had thought.

---HIGH CONTINUED---

Carolyn Ratley, director of child development at First Baptist Church, said the church sanctuary became a temporary shelter for many residents who lost homes to the storm. Pews became beds and the fellowship hall served as a dining room as church members quickly organized to feed and house up to 500 homeless victims.

Dozens of volunteers from nearby churches brought sandwiches, canned goods, blankets and clothing for the displaced storm victims.

Southern Baptists in the immediate vicinity were quick to offer assistance to the tornado victims, bringing kerosene heaters, blankets, food and clothing to a relief shelter. The North Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief Van was dispatched to Red Springs to help feed the homeless.

The day after the storm struck, Hefner was able to visit members of his congregation who lost their businesses or suffered damage to their homes.

In town he saw the destruction caused by the tornado. All power lines were down and residents had no electricity, lights or operating telephones. Main Street looked like a war zone, he said, with houses, offices and businesses reduced to rubble. The noise of chain saws clearing fallen trees from buildings, cars and streets filled the air.

Trees with trunks measuring 40 inches around were snapped like toothpicks. Family after family told of the horror they experienced when the tornado hit their home. Eighteen hours after the tornado struck Red Springs, most residents were still not able to vocalize the full impact the storm would have on their lives.

"Red Springs will be a long time getting over this--but we will," said Ron Helms, a deacon at First Church and a state wildlife resources officer.

Red Springs was but one of a dozen communities suffering the effects of the March 28 tornado in North Carolina. Scenes from Red Springs were repeated across eastern North Carolina. And in each instance, Southern Baptists rushed to help neighbors recover from an experience most said they had never seen before and prayed wouldn't see again.

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---HIGDON CONTINUED---

The roof over the front of the sanctuary had been sucked off by the winds and insulation and hymn books were strewn across the floor.

Then Chavis cautiously hurried down the street to see if others needed help.

One member, Katie Harris and her family were hiding in a hall closet as the entire roof was lifted from their home.

"The storm must have really be n powerful to have done this much damage," Mrs. Harris said.

"The amazing thing is that our three week old grandbaby did not even wake up during the tornado."

Despite the brutality of the storm, the only fatality in the small town was not a resident but a man who had come from nearby Laurinburg to dump trash.

Among the church fellowship, only three persons were hospitalized. Two of them were soon released while the third was in good condition with a fractured breastbone.

On Sunday, April 1, a praise celebration for the safety of the Grey Pond church was held outdoors, near the disaster relief van sent by Tennessee Baptists in the aftermath of the storm.

The disaster relief teams provided the church members and their neighbors with hot meals and assistance as they attempted to salvage their storm-ripped homes.

In his message, Chavis reminded the congregation of the urgency of reaching others for Christ, as the tornado had shown how easily life could end.

At the invitation, one person made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as personal savior, two others inquired about salvation and many rededicated their lives.

A week after the devastating storm, a team of North Carolina Baptist Men under the leadership of David Langford, state director, moved in with construction equipment.

Soon, Grey Pond Baptist Church can have its dedication service.

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