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Mexican Baptists Act Quickly
To Feed, Help Quake Victims

By Jim Jones

MEXICO CITY (BP)—A Baptist church appropriately located on the Avenida de Heroes has set aside preaching and Bible study temporarily to help Mexico City dig out.

"We are doing our preaching first by actions," said Juan Hernando Ortiz, one of a team of pastors at First Baptist Church, Mexico City. "I feel that's the best preaching."

First Baptist, near the center of the earthquakes' worst damage, has been turned into a major shelter where homeless earthquake victims receive food and sleep on church pews. A medical care station has been set up in former Sunday school rooms where doctors volunteer to dress wounds and take care of other problems.

Also the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary, jointly sponsored by the National Baptist Convention of Mexico and Southern Baptists, canceled classes so students could help victims of the earthquake. "The students petitioned us to suspend classes so that they could help," said seminary President Richard Garrett, a Southern Baptist representative.

"Everybody wants to help. They showed up carrying shovels and ropes," Garrett said.

One of the seminary's professors, Mike McAleer, is supervising volunteer activities at the First Baptist shelter. "We fed 1,700 people yesterday," said McAleer, who is a member of First Baptist. "Besides serving food at the church, we are going to the Revolution Monument to feed people and have been providing food for workers who have been at the hotel region (which was demolished)."

Baptists, although a tiny minority in Mexico City, are among several church groups taking a major role in the relief efforts, said James Philpot, who leads the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board representatives in Mexico.

He met at the Jalisco Hotel Sept. 21 with leaders of about 60 Baptist churches to expand the program to help earthquake victims.

"We are hoping to turn many more Baptist churches into shelters," Philpot said.

First Baptist members witnessed the horror of the earthquake when an apartment building near the church was destroyed and 40 people died.

Pastor's wife Martha Nunez de Ortiz was one of the first on the scene as injured victims came out of the building. Ortiz said his wife grabbed a child whose head had been torn away and watched as a man was killed as he went back into the building to try to save his wife.

Injured survivors of the collapse of the apartment building were the first to use the shelter, but now earthquake victims from other areas are finding help at the church. Sergio Carillo, a medical doctor and Baptist layman, has been working daily in the Tlatelolco section where officials say the death toll was high in the collapse of high-rise apartments.

Ortiz said about 150 people were in the church when the second quake struck Sept. 20. "We saw the lights starting to move and felt the earth tremble," he said. "I advised them to stay calm." Some rushed out into the streets; others were afraid to leave the building, he reported.

When the quake was over, the lights came on again and they returned to the building and sang a hymn, thankful that they had not been injured.

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~~Seminary students have formed brigades to do whatever is needed and have assisted at the shelter set up by First Baptist. Some have joined with rescue teams digging into wrecked buildings looking for survivors.~~

Ortiz asked the people of Texas to "first of all pray for us."

Philpot said the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board already has authorized special funds for the effort but more donations will be needed in the future.

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(Jones is religion editor of the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram. This story is adopted from an article in the Star-Telegram.)

Texas Field Kitchen Rolling
To Mexico; Vaccine Flown In

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--An 18-wheel mobile field kitchen rolled out of Dallas Sept. 23 as Texas Baptist Men prepared to feed 10,000 people a day in earthquake-devastated Mexico City.

Meanwhile, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's disaster response task force struggled to obtain information by HAM radio from its representatives in Mexico so that it can respond to any other needs they identify. The quake disrupted all normal methods of communication.

News reports from the U.S. State Department in Washington said more than 3,400 had been killed in two earthquakes that hit Mexico City and neighboring states Sept. 19-20. As many as 6,000 were reported injured.

James Philpot, chairman of Southern Baptists in Mexico, reported by HAM radio that none of the almost 90 Southern Baptist representatives or their children was injured in either the more severe earthquake Sept. 19 or the second quake the following evening. No reports were available yet on whether any Mexican Baptists were among the victims.

The Foreign Mission Board released \$25,000 in disaster relief funds in response to a first request from the field, but was standing by to provide other money as needed. At this point, the disaster task force team said, the best way for Southern Baptists wanting to help is to send donations earmarked for Mexico relief to the board in Richmond.

The board's human needs office said it has received calls from people pledging gifts that will more than cover the \$25,000 already sent.

A Foreign Mission Board news team, Martha Skelton and Don Rutledge, carried 200 units of tetanus vaccine and 200 face masks for use by rescue workers as they flew to Mexico City Sept. 22. The supplies were obtained on an emergency basis from the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond.

Bob Dixon, head of Texas Baptist Men, accompanied the 18-wheel mobile field kitchen to Mexico. Bill Gray, a representative to Mexico who has been coordinating Texas volunteers in Dallas, also left for Mexico.

Ed Brown, director of men's ministries for California Baptists, said he's already had more than a dozen calls from trained relief volunteers who are ready to go to Mexico if needed. Several California Baptist churches took up special offerings for the earthquake victims, he reported.

Alabama also reported it had a mobile unit capable of feeding 5,000 daily that is available if needed.

Jose Missena, church growth and evangelism consultant for Latin America, told Don Kammerdiener, area director for Middle America and the Caribbean, in a phone report from Monterrey that a preliminary survey indicated damage to Baptist church buildings was relatively light.

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Missena was in a Mexico-City hotel at the time of the first quake but was evacuated without injury. Two volunteers, Minerva Serna of Alice, Texas, and Kent Lucas of Trinity, Texas, also were evacuated uninjured from hotels in the downtown area.

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China Projects Shaping Up
For Southern Baptists

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Almost 30 potential projects and assignments involving Southern Baptists in China, ranging from nutrition training to ceramics engineering, are on the drawing board.

Lewis Myers, director of Southern Baptists' Cooperative Services International office, reported that progress when he returned in mid-September from a three-week survey trip to China. Cooperative Services International was formed in April by the denomination's Foreign Mission Board to respond to the rapidly expanding professional and social service opportunities in China and other countries where missionary service isn't possible.

Myers and several Southern Baptist colleagues met with leaders of the Three Self Patriotic Movement (China's Protestant movement), the China Christian Council and the Amity Foundation, the new Chinese Christian social service foundation. They also met Christians, academic and institutional leaders and government officials in Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, Xian and several areas of Shandong and Henan Provinces.

"What we do in China is limited only by our vision, energy and commitment," Myers said. While acknowledging China's firm and ongoing policy against missionaries or outside interference in religious affairs, he expressed surprise at the open attitudes he found nearly everywhere he went. "The opportunities are there. I sure hope we don't default because of a lack of vision."

Myers and his colleagues returned with a list of nearly 30 possible projects calling for Southern Baptist personnel or resources. Some of these are:

--Provide a Southern Baptist nutritionist and 30 scholarships for Chinese students in a model child nutrition project sponsored by the Amity Foundation.

--Enlist English teachers for universities in the Nanjing area, the Foreign Language Institute in Xian, Henan University, Yantai University and the Yu Huang Ding Hospital in Yantai, Shandong Province.

--Provide theological reference books for graduates of the Christian seminary in Nanjing and some 300 library books for the new seminary in Shanghai.

--Help establish partnerships between several Chinese universities and Southern Baptist schools in the United States (including a Southern Baptist nursing school to assist Henan Medical University as it establishes a new nursing school).

--Enlist a Southern Baptist hospital to establish a partnership with Third Hospital in Zhengzhou, Henan, and locate an orthopedic surgeon and eye surgeon for short terms at the Yu Huang Ding Hospital in Yantai.

--Provide a ceramics engineer to be placed by the petroleum and coal section of the government energy ministry.

Opportunities like these aren't new. Southern Baptist China observers are aware of as many as 50 individual Southern Baptists who've already joined the growing ranks of "foreign experts" teaching and working in Chinese education and industry. Several Southern Baptist schools, including Baylor University in Texas and Wake Forest University in North Carolina, have established a variety of academic partnerships with Chinese institutions.

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Cooperative Services International is a vehicle for encouraging and facilitating increased Southern Baptist involvement, Myers said. The office will focus on three priorities: 1) projects which enhance leadership training at all levels of society; 2) "people intensive" projects which provide opportunities for personal interaction and relationships; and 3) involvements which support Chinese Christians and their ministries.

"Interaction among people is our greatest hope for maximum understanding of the Chinese church and the arena for maximum contribution of Southern Baptists to China," Myers said. "We will, no doubt, be involved in projects that require capital and other financial or equipment contributions, but our priority must be people to people."

Southern Baptists will also seek to work with other international Christian agencies involved in China, Myers stated. And he emphasized that Chinese officials will be informed of the Christian identity and motivation of each person or project. Such motivation is generally respected in China, he said, as long as foreigners seek to serve and support China's modernization, and not attempt to control or manipulate Chinese.

Two events during the journey especially moved Myers and his group. The first was a visit to the former Monument Street Baptist Church building in Penglai, Shandong Province. Now used as a warehouse, the church once played a role in the ministry of legendary Southern Baptist missionary Lottie Moon, who died in 1912.

In a corner of the church courtyard, under a pile of debris and trash, a small stone monument to Moon had been found, dusted off and moved back into the open. The Southern Baptists joined hands around it and sang a hymn, attracting a crowd of curious onlookers.

Myers is working with local officials investigating possible restoration of the church building, which could then be used for worship by Christians in Penglai. "Cooperative Services International is committed to looking into the possibility of restoring this 'Lottie Moon' building to mark an important point in our Baptist history and to make a contribution to further the growth of the Christian church in China today," he said.

The second event was a short visit in rural Henan Province with a group of Christians who numbered 18 at the end of the difficult years of the Cultural Revolution. Now they count some 4,000 believers in 12 meeting places. Two ordained pastors and numerous lay leaders guide these Christians, many of whom, though illiterate, memorize large blocks of Scripture by rote.

Myers said healings and other miracles, reportedly substantiated by independent authorities, were said to have occurred among these congregations. Similar accounts frequently emerge from populous Henan, where whole counties reportedly have become heavily Christian.

Fellowship with Christians there, said Myers, was "absolutely glorious."

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Baptist Educator Questions
Proposed 'Grove City' Law

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
9/23/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--Two bills before the U.S. Senate could force private college into a quasi-public status, a Southern Baptist college president testified during a recent Senate hearing.

Lewis Nobles, president of Mississippi College, appeared before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee during a hearing on the impact of so-called Grove City legislation upon private education.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in February 1984 that Grove City (Pa.) College--and in essence all private colleges and universities--must indicate compliance with federal anti-sex discrimination laws or lose indirect, as well as direct, federal aid. The court stated financial grants to students--such as Guaranteed Student Loans--amount to subsidies of a college, placing that school under federal anti-sex discrimination laws and regulations.

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The Supreme Court added, however, that the college must show anti-sex discrimination compliance only in the specific programs receiving federal assistance rather than in all of its programs.

Two current Senate bills, the "Civil Rights Amendments Act" and the "Civil Rights Restoration Act," propose to overturn the high court's Grove City decision.

Nobles testified the Civil Rights Restoration Act "invents, attempts to legitimate and threatens to impose, an unprecedented and pervasive regulatory scheme upon private institutions on grounds that they have been extended 'federal financial assistance.'"

He said the bill's title is inappropriate in that it "does not 'restore' anyone's civil rights" and that it indicates there had been a legal consensus about Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1972 prior to the Grove City decision. He added the bill also employs "extremely loose and confused wording."

The proposed bills would broaden the coverage of Title IX from "program specific" to "institution wide." In addition, the bills would broaden the coverage of Title IX without also broadening the existing exemption where Title IX is in direct conflict with religious tenets of a covered school.

Nobles testified a broadened religious exemption is needed. He said the proposed phrase "institution which is controlled by a religious organization" should be amended to encompass any educational institution "which is an integral part of the religious mission of a church, or which ...is religious in purpose and character." He added the term "tenet" leaves broad areas of religious life unprotected and should be amended to include "religious tenets, convictions, practices or ministry" of the institution.

Addressing the issue of "sex discrimination" in the special context of religious institutions, Nobles said: "The observance of a religious tenet or conviction commanding sexual differentiation is a matter of fundamental religious liberty."

During his testimony, Nobles submitted resolutions adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention and Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools relating to the proposed legislation.

He concluded with an argument against the "expansion of the spending power of the federal government as a tool of coercion."

"American colleges and universities may not have a 'right' to receive government-provided aid to subsidize education," Nobles stated, "but, once the government decides to do that, it may not condition the receipt of such aid upon the surrender of the schools' First Amendment rights without a clear nexus between the imposition of the condition and the intent of the program itself."

Nobles appeared before the Senate committee as part of a three-member panel. Other panel members were Charles McKenzie, president of Grove City College, and Bruce Hafen, dean of Brigham Young University Law School and president of the American Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities.



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