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October 21, 1986

86-155

El Salvador Missionaries
Continue Quake Relief

By Erich Bridges

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (BP)--One week after the earthquake that killed hundreds and left thousands injured or homeless, Southern Baptist missionaries continued their efforts to help quake victims.

They have distributed heavy plastic sheeting for temporary shelter to at least 5,000 homeless people, said missionary Bill Stennett. More than \$25,000 in Southern Baptist relief funds also have paid for lanterns, food, medicine, water containers, tin roofing and wood for housing reconstruction.

Stennett reported Baptist and evangelical relief trucks have been mobbed in some parts of the city. "We try to pick out the people who really need the help and send them to the vehicle. But when 10 or 12 get to the truck, other people see it, and almost before we can help the families we've chosen, we're being mobbed by everybody, and we have to move out and come back later," he said.

Beyond aid money, however, missionaries so far have not requested Southern Baptist volunteers and relief materials from the United States. They say most needed supplies can be obtained within El Salvador and effectively distributed by the missionaries themselves and the relief agencies they work with on a regular basis. Also, materials arriving from outside the country are being handled by the government.

"All items now being shipped into the country are being turned over to a relief committee named by the government of El Salvador," said Don Kammerdiener, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's director for Middle America and the Caribbean. "Any supplies we send from outside will be submerged into that process, and we will not be able to participate in the distribution to the people."

The missionaries also report many international volunteers already are there. Although earthquake damage is severe, it is confined within a relatively limited area. "They're receiving so much help and so many people coming in that people are just falling over themselves trying to find things to do," said Stennett.

As reported earlier, the quake damaged First Baptist Church of San Salvador, the offices of the Baptist Association of El Salvador and the Baptist Bookstore. Subsequent reports from American Baptists, who work closely with the association, indicated at least two church members died in the earthquake: an adult member of Emmanuel Baptist Church and a child who attended a mission of First Baptist. Many others are said to have suffered injuries or lost their homes.

Emmanuel Baptist Church also was damaged, along with a Baptist-sponsored orphanage in the city that was evacuated following a strong quake aftershock Oct. 13. The orphanage chapel split in two. The quake also ruined a wing of a Baptist school in the city and heavily damaged the home of Baptist association President Mary Kalil.

Baptist pastors in the city reportedly met and agreed to help 500 families. Their relief efforts include food, medicine, temporary shelter and plans for more permanent housing. Salvadoran Baptists' have provided \$6,000 so far for the efforts.

Stennett said the tin roofing purchased with Southern Baptist aid money would be distributed as soon as damaged areas are cleared and ready for reconstruction. In five years, he predicted, the downtown area will look like a "new city," but he added that many people are moving out of San Salvador. Aftershocks are continuing daily, and city dwellers fear another quake, he said.

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Meanwhile, the homeless continue to crowd the streets. "We're expecting some epidemics," Stennett said. "We don't know just when, but there is no sanitation, and people are drinking bad water. The food may be a bit cleaner, but it isn't all that good. However, markets are reopening in the suburbs, and people are being able to buy their food again without too much trouble. But the water is the real problem, and the sanitation."

The missionaries are putting a priority on distributing as much clean water and medicine as possible to help prevent outbreaks of sickness.

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Court Rejects Widow's
Challenge Against Church

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
10/21/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—The widow of a Christian Science Church member has failed to convince the nation's highest court to review her challenge to whether the First Amendment protects religious faith healers and their churches from liability for causing the death of a patient through wrongful treatment.

John Baumgartner, a member of the Christian Science Church, died in Oct. 23, 1974, at his home near Plano, Ill., of uremic poisoning resulting from prostatitis, a condition that usually can be cured by simple surgery and medication.

Upon becoming ill, Baumgartner retained the services of Paul Erickson, a Christian Science practitioner, to provide him with spiritual healing. Erickson was assisted by Ruth Tanner, a Christian Science nurse who formerly had worked as a medical nurse.

A basic premise of the Christian Science Church is that disease can be cured through prayer, thus making medical treatment unnecessary. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, which is head of and controls the denomination, trains practitioners and nurses in Christian Science healing.

When Erickson arrived at the Baumgartner home, he locked himself and Baumgartner in the bathroom, where he administered hot baths and massaged Baumgartner's prostate gland.

Erickson, who also provided Christian Science spiritual treatment to Baumgartner, monitored his patient's condition through daily telephone calls.

A week later, Baumgartner discovered a three-inch hole near his rectum through which internal organs protruded. Toxins trapped in his body by his swollen prostate gland had eaten through his body tissue. Tanner dressed the wound and instructed Baumgartner's wife, Mary, on cleaning and applying dressings to the wound.

At that time, Baumgartner decided to seek medical treatment and asked his wife to obtain a physician and to inform Erickson and Tanner he no longer wanted their services.

After receiving Mary Baumgartner's telephone call, Erickson went to the couple's home. He took the wife into a separate room and ordered her to obey him as the doctor in the case. He forbade her to obtain a physician, saying if she even spoke with a medical doctor her husband would die. After Erickson repeated the threats to Baumgartner, no medical doctor was called.

Erickson and Tanner continued the Christian Science treatment—principally through telephone calls to the Baumgartners—and insisted the treatment was bringing about a cure. Baumgartner died a few days later.

Mary Baumgartner filed a lawsuit in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Ill., to recover money damages from the mother church, Erickson and Tanner for the alleged wrongful death of her husband. She also sought to block a bequest of property to the church that her husband had included in his will.

Attorneys for the defendants argued the issues raised by the complaint would require an inquiry into whether the tenets of the Christian Science Church are valid and such an inquiry would violate the First Amendment.

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The circuit court agreed and dismissed the case. In March 1986, the 1st District Appellate Court for the State of Illinois affirmed the dismissal. Three months later, the Illinois Supreme Court declined to consider the case.

In petitioning the Supreme Court to review the dispute, Mary Baumgartner's attorneys called the case an example of the "growing conflict between the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom claimed by faith healers and the interest of the state in protecting the health and welfare of its citizens."

They also contended other religious denominations that provide health care through sponsoring and operating hospitals are "subject to and must conform with government regulations."

Attorneys for the church, however, argued Baumgartner was an adult and chose Christian Science treatment of his own free will.

"This case concerns nothing more than the established right of a competent adult to forego medical treatment when it conflicts with his religious beliefs," they wrote. (Mary Baumgartner v. First Church of Christ, Scientist)

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Report Indicates Active
Student Missions Role

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
10/21/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Students are a significant force in the Southern Baptist Convention and are playing an active role in the SBC effort to spread the gospel around the globe by the year 2000, the director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministries department claimed.

Charles Johnson cited statistics collected from state student ministries directors that showed students are involved in state and associational missions and ministries in addition to supporting and participating in home and foreign missions efforts.

Johnson released the report for the 1985-86 school year indicating 152,348 students were involved in the 1,086 Baptist Student Unions on campuses throughout the nation. That is an increase of 5,776 students and 47 units from the 146,572 involved in the 1,039 Baptist Student Unions reported in 1984-85.

A total of 10,335 students were involved in missions through the SBC Home Mission Board, SBC Foreign Mission Board and state and local mission projects, almost matching the 1985 report of 10,866 students participating in missions projects.

Gifts to state Baptist Student Union mission totaled \$971,262 with another \$466,397 for local campus-sponsored missions. Student ministries contributed \$87,289 to world hunger relief efforts.

State directors in 1985 reported a total of \$1,216,847 contributed to BSU missions. Comparisons are not possible because the 1985 total included state BSU mission funds and some local campus mission funds. Information on contributions to world hunger relief was not collected in the 1985 report.

Students are not only involved in short-term mission projects but also are actively involved in local churches, said Bill Henry, national student ministries program supervisor.

"Students are involved in churches every week. They are teaching Sunday school, leading music and performing other roles throughout the convention," Henry said.

In addition to working in existing churches, students helped establish 114 new churches in the past year, surpassing the NSM Bold Mission Thrust goal for students to help start 100 churches each year, Henry said.

He said the state directors' statistics show that students also are participating in training and Bible study.

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The report shows 10,818 students involved in witness training, up 765 from the previous year; 136,518 enrolled in Bible study through local church Sunday schools, an increase of 30,303; and 40,948 in campus Bible study groups, an increase of 3,185 from last year.

"They are training and they are doing missions. The key to Southern Baptist student work since it began more than 60 years ago has been a balance of training and involvement," Henry said.

A national student ministries goal is to have 1,500 campus organizations by 1990. The 1986 report includes 78 new campus ministries, with a net increase of 47.

"While we work to establish organizations, we need to strengthen existing ones," Henry said.

He cited efforts to train and support volunteer directors as an attempt to develop stronger campus organizations.

State directors have identified 768 campuses as possible locations for Baptist campus ministries.

"We need to find directors and students with an interest to get things going on those campuses," Henry said.

The target campuses include many in the South which do not have Baptist student organizations, Henry said.

"We have a plan to meet our goals but it's not going to just happen. We need to work hard to develop the plan," he said.

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WMU Members Urged To Consider
Broad Meaning Of Mission Action

By Karen Benson

Baptist Press
10/21/86

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Mission action—one of the main reasons Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union exists—could call for Baptist women to become involved in social and moral concerns, a WMU leader from Knob Noster, Mo., claimed.

Barbara Bray, former state WMU president and a current WMU officer in her church, recently urged WMU members to consider women's roles in dealing with social and moral issues.

"We are fortunate. We have the freedom to express ourselves in this country, but we don't use that freedom. We don't even use the power to vote," Bray said.

It is all right for Christians to get angry, she said, especially about drug abuse, drunk driving, gambling, child or spouse abuse, pornography or a host of other social or moral issues.

"We tend to get really upset and let our anger churn around inside of us, but we don't do anything about it. Preachers often decry what's happening, but they don't often offer you anything to show what you can do about it."

What Southern Baptist women can do about it, she advised, is to translate mission action into political action, economic action, consciousness-raising action and advocacy action.

However, some biblical guidelines need to undergird any such action, she said: "Our first allegiance is always to God. We are to support the government and to obey the laws. We are to pray to God on behalf of all our government leaders, but we cannot allow prayer to be a substitute for becoming involved."

Paying taxes is another biblical commandment, she said. "I have never complained about paying taxes when I consider what I do have in this country."

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Finally, the Bible commands that Christians "work for justice—to establish justice and righteousness and peace," Bray said. "The moral quality of our government is what the people choose to make it."

There are appropriate ways to effect change, Bray noted. For starters, "do your homework," she advised. "Find out everything you can about the issue. Find out what the law is."

Contact appropriate political representatives, depending upon whether the laws governing the issue are federal, state or local laws, she said. "Say, 'I'm concerned, and I want to know everything you can tell me about this.' Ask for copies of laws or ordinances that might apply to that subject."

Then, talk with people responsible for enforcing the law. Find other people who are interested in the same issue, even if they are against it while you are for it, or vice versa, she said, noting, "They're still valuable sources of information."

Also, contact the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission in Nashville, Tenn., or the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, she said. These agencies are watchdog organizations that keep close tabs on social and moral concerns and on what's happening in the political arena, respectively, and can provide valuable information, she said.

Additionally, keep in touch with elected representatives and how they voted or how they stood on the issues, she advised.

Then, with the homework done, gear up for political action, she said: "Talk personally with people who are in government. When your congressman or congresswoman is at home, go see him or her. Write ahead of time and request an appointment, specifying what you want to talk about. When you get there, state your view and tell what action you want him or her to take."

Go to local council meetings regularly and encourage local officials to enforce existing laws, she added. "Spread the word about officials who don't do what they're suppose to do."

On the other hand, praise officials who are doing what they're supposed to do, she said. "Don't just contact them when you're angry about something."

Become a familiar name to your representatives, she said: "Write your representatives. They need and want to know how you feel on issues. Writing letters is one of the best ways to develop an ongoing relationship with them."

Next, be ready to take economic action, she advised, adding, "That is where it hurts—when it affects the pocketbook." Boycott stores, where appropriate, "but first tell business owners why you will not shop there." If the store takes corrective action, thank them and return there to shop, she said, pointing out, "Combine the power of talk and the power of the pen with the power of the pocketbook,"

Finally, involve others in the issue through consciousness-raising actions, she said: "Start with your Baptist Women organization, then get the people in your church concerned about it. Raise their consciousness up to yours."

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CORRECTION: Please change third graf of the 10/16/86 story titled "Midwestern Trustees Find Sparkman's Views Acceptable" to read:

Following the crucial vote about Sparkman's teachings, the trustees voted without opposition to request...

Thanks,
Baptist Press



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