



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
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. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

October 2, 1987

87-148

Appellate Court Rules
In Favor Of Convention

N-CO
By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (BP)--The 11th U.S. Court of Appeals has upheld a lower court's decision favoring the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee in a federal lawsuit.

The suit was filed Dec. 5, 1985, by four messengers to the 1985 SBC annual meeting who claimed their rights had been violated by parliamentary rulings made concerning the election of the convention's 1986 Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees.

Judge Robert Hall of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia first ruled in the SBC's favor May 5, 1986. Plaintiffs Robert S. and Julia Crowder of Birmingham, Ala.; Henry Cooper of Windsor, Mo.; and H. Allen McCartney of Vero Beach, Fla., appealed to the 11th U.S. Court of Appeals.

The three-judge panel in Atlanta ruled unanimously in favor of the SBC Sept. 28. "We hold that the First Amendment bars civil court resolution of this controversy," Judge Phyllis Kravitch wrote on behalf of all three judges.

The appeals court's decision received praise from Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

"I am absolutely delighted the 11th Court of Appeals upheld the district court's decision," Bennett said. "I hope this will settle the issue and certainly hope there will not be a request for the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case."

Both lower federal courts declined to discuss the internal merits of the case, deferring instead to principles of church-state separation found in the First Amendment.

"We conclude that the district court correctly found that civil court resolution of this controversy would violate the First Amendment," the appeals court's decision says. "Other interests implicated by the controversy strongly favor deferring to the decisions of messengers at the 1985 convention and the 1985 SBC Executive Committee:

-- "First, the SBC provides its own rules for determining how the membership of the Committee on Boards is to be selected. ... A majority of messengers at the 1985 convention voted in favor of the nominees for the Committee on Boards."

The decision further notes the plaintiffs appealed to the Executive Committee in September 1985 to contest the parliamentary ruling and vote made at the SBC annual meeting. "The Executive Committee rejected the arguments of appellants' counsel and affirmed the election of the 1985 Committee on Boards," the decision states. "The First Amendment strongly favors deference to such a decision by the highest church judiciary concerning a matter of church governance.

-- "Second, the controversy bears only a tangential relationship to property rights" which normally are considered in such a civil suit.

-- "Finally, appellants' interest in obtaining a civil court forum is insubstantial," the decision says. It points out the plaintiffs "received a hearing and decision on their claims" before the Executive Committee, which the court terms "the highest SBC tribunal."

"Moreover, appellants have made no allegation of fraud or collusion," the statement adds.

--more--

James P. Guenther, a Nashville attorney who worked with the Atlanta lawfirm of King and Spalding to represent the SBC's case, affirmed the court's decision.

"This litigation grows out of the controversies which have racked the Southern Baptist Convention in recent years," Guenther said. "The federal judiciary has recognized that it would be constitutionally unthinkable for the courts to enter the fray. I believe few Southern Baptists would have welcomed that intervention."

Guenther specifically noted the court correctly interpreted the action of the Executive Committee when it considered the Crowder-Cooper-McCartney protest in September 1985: "Acting for the SBC, the Executive Committee responded to the Crowders' complaints in the beginning in a very careful and judicious way. The court has deferred to the Executive Committee's deliberate hearing of the Crowders and the Executive Committee's findings."

Bennett also affirmed that position, calling the Executive Committee's action "highly significant," particularly because the court understood the hearing was part of the SBC's internal judicial system.

Guenther added the SBC case had been defended "on the basis of principle," noting, "We refused to address the correctness of the chair's parliamentary rulings in the 1985 convention and insisted that the First Amendment prevented a courtroom from being an appropriate forum for that debate."

Bennett reported the suit already has cost the convention at least \$185,000. He reiterated his desire for the issue to be resolved with the appeals court's decision. Guenther concurred: "This case has been long and drawn-out, expensive and devisive. ... Once again, we are at the point of hoping the latest decision will end the matter."

The plaintiffs have 20 days from the time the appeals court delivered its decision to apply for a rehearing of the case before that court. The next step up the judicial ladder is the U.S. Supreme Court.

Crowder told Baptist Press he has not yet decided if he will press the case further: "I am disappointed. I am studying what the options are. Until I have had time to do that, it would be premature to say what we'll do."

Both Cooper and McCartney could not be reached for comment. Jane F. Vehko, the plaintiffs' lead attorney for the Atlanta lawfirm of Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore, did not return calls from Baptist Press.

In addition to Kravitch, the other appeals court justices who ruled on the case were Elbert P. Tuttle and Larry Edmondson.

The Executive Committee has authorized Bennett to carry the case to the Supreme Court if necessary.

--30--

Cooperative Program
Tops \$130 Million

N-CO

Baptist Press
10/2/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists contributed a record \$130,345,184 to their Cooperative Program budget during the 1986-87 fiscal year, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the convention's Executive Committee.

The Cooperative Program is the Southern Baptist Convention budget that finances evangelistic, educational and ministry efforts around the globe. Books closed on the 1986-87 Cooperative Program Sept. 30. The overall Cooperative Program goal was \$136 million.

The new Cooperative Program total surpassed the previous year's receipts by almost \$5.9 million, Bennett said. That represents a gain of 4.92 percent, compared to the current U.S. inflation rate of 4.3 percent.

--more--

Bennett praised Southern Baptists for making the Cooperative Program record possible: "Individual Southern Baptists have given generously, even in regions where economic conditions are hard, to further the cause of Christ through the Cooperative Program. Furthermore, state Baptist conventions have been unselfish, passing on significant portions of their receipts for SBC-wide ministries."

The 1986-87 Cooperative Program received the entire \$126.63 million needed to finance the first phase of its basic operating budget, which helps fund 19 SBC agencies, said Tim A. Hedquist, vice president for business and finance of the Executive Committee.

It also paid \$99,617 to fund expenses for the SBC Peace Committee, which has worked to settle the theological/political struggles within the 14.6-million-member denomination. And the budget also provided \$3,615,567 for capital needs, Hedquist said.

Unfunded was \$716,801 held over from the 1985-86 capital needs budget; \$5,874,000 in the 1986-87 capital needs budget; and \$3,496,000 in the second phase of the basic operating budget, which would have been distributed to the 19 participating agencies in the same proportion as they received the first phase.

"I'm very glad the SBC operating budget was met in early September, and that we had more than \$3.6 million to apply to capital needs items," Bennett said.

He predicted Southern Baptists will do well in pursuit of their \$140 million goal for the 1987-88 Cooperative Program. "I am very optimistic about 1987-88," he said. "I feel like the Cooperative Program funds are going to continue to increase, and we are going to meet more convention needs."

Just a week prior to the close of the fiscal year, the Executive Committee voted to "express gratitude for the tremendous growth in the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, the Cooperative Program and encourage continued strong support of these programs for missions and evangelism."

--30--

Missionaries To Help
Bangladesh Flood Victims

By Erich Bridges

N-FMB
Baptist Press
10/2/87

DHAKA, Bangladesh (BP)--The worst flooding in 40 years has submerged much of Bangladesh, and Southern Baptist missionaries want to build or repair as many as 1,500 houses for victims left homeless by the disaster.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board released nearly \$381,000 in hunger and general relief funds for the project Oct. 2. Another \$250,000 likely will be sent in upcoming months.

Most of the money will pay for construction and repair materials for the houses and a food-for-work arrangement that will feed hungry and homeless flood victims while they build homes for their families. The Bangladesh missionaries estimate 500 houses can be built at about \$500 each and another 500 repaired with the funds already released.

The relief also will provide for food, seed, livestock vaccines, fertilizer, school and road repairs, and 30 tube wells in areas where flooding has destroyed clean water sources.

The missionaries will work primarily in the flooded western districts of Gopalganj and Madaripur and in the Comilla district, which is southeast of the capital city of Dhaka.

"The government approached the (Southern Baptist) mission about rendering some kind of help," reported missionary R T Buckley of Picayune, Miss. "Our missionaries will work with local government officials in determining the recipients of those houses and other programs we might be involved in."

Buckley said 51 of more than 60 districts in the nation had been declared disaster areas. Hundreds of thousands of people are living in the open on roadsides and high ground in badly flooded areas.

--more--

Record rainfall and heavy runoff from melting snow in the Himalayas touched off the floods beginning in late July. Since then, the government estimates more than 1,200 people have died from drowning or disease. Opposition leaders claim thousands more have died from hunger.

Government officials told the Associated Press more than 27 million people have been affected by the floods. They estimate more than 1 million homes have been destroyed or washed away and another 1.3 million damaged. Damage to crops, homes, livestock and roads is estimated at \$1.3 billion.

Foreign governments and relief agencies have responded with aid, but hunger looms.

"Standing rice crops that could have been harvested within three or four weeks were washed away, completely destroyed. Some new rice had been planted, and that too was washed away," Buckley explained. "But the food shortage that is expected will not become a reality until the end of this year or the first of next year."

Buckley, a veteran of two decades in poverty-stricken Bangladesh, said the disaster has produced "a lot of frustration" for missionaries.

"It's hard to live in a country like this and be constantly confronted with the physical needs of the people without being affected," he admitted. "It's tough, brother."

But the government knows Southern Baptists will respond in a crisis, he added, recalling missionary relief efforts following the tidal wave that killed some 300,000 people in 1970 and the civil war of 1971.

"Because of the record we have in caring for people, I think they have felt free to call us," he said.

Buckley said many Baptist churches and families have been hurt by the flooding. The Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship immediately began providing relief to victims after the floods began.

--30--

Note to Editors: "R T" is Buckley's name, not initials. He uses no periods.

Baptists Help
Slide Victims

By Charlie Warren

AF-10
(TENN.)

Baptist Press
10/2/87

MARACAY, Venezuela (BP)--Each day as she headed out to the site of the Sept. 6 mudslide in Maracay, Venezuela, missionary Freida Adams asked God to help her keep from crying.

"If the tears once start, where will they end?" she asked.

Her husband, Ron, is the disaster relief coordinator for the Baptist Mission of Venezuela.

Until September, that has been a minor part of his responsibility as a Southern Baptist missionary. His primary assignment is to direct the Baptist Bible Institute in Valencia, about 30 miles from Maracay. Mrs. Adams, a registered nurse, assists with church and home responsibilities and works with a clinic of First Baptist Church of Valencia.

But on Sept. 6, when the side of one of the mountains that hovers over Maracay came crashing down with the force of a dozen tornados, the disaster relief assignment became a sobering reality.

Statistics fail to tell the story because nobody can agree on the numbers. Estimates of the dead range from about 100 to more than 10,000. Statistics on the homeless are anywhere from 300 homes destroyed to 50,000 people homeless.

"There is no way to estimate the death count or the count on the homeless," said Adams. But those who work in the area -- military, civil defense officials, Venezuela's Red Cross organization and church workers -- all agree the lower estimates are far from accurate.

--more--

The disaster occurred during Sunday afternoon "siesta" time when most children and many adults were napping.

Reports indicate it rained more in a 24-hour period than it usually rains in a month. As tons of mud fell from the mountainside, it collected in the already rain-swollen streams and rushed toward the valley below, carrying trees, boulders, houses and cars along with it.

People said the slide was like an avalanche. They heard a rumble, and those who could see the mountainside watched the soil and greenery simply slide off, leaving solid rock exposed. Some thought it was an earthquake.

One eyewitness helplessly watched 60 cars drive into a spot where the road had been washed away and then plunge over the side of the mountain. It was raining so hard, the drivers could not see the road was out. Reports indicate 700 cars had to be towed out of the area.

Places where homes once stood now are empty lots, with a few telltale signs that a house once occupied the spot. Further downstream, where the force of the slide had subsided, roofs of houses can be seen sticking up out of the mud. Others are buried completely.

When Adams learned of the disaster, he immediately went to work investigating. The next day, he was on the disaster site, along with Jacobo Garcia, executive director of the Venezuela Baptist Convention; Ben Kirby, chairman of the Baptist mission; Stan Parris, mission vice chairman; and Arnolde Arey, pastor of Iglesia Bautista El Amor de Dios -- The Love of God Baptist Church -- in Maracay. Adams was commissioned as a permanent civil defense chaplain.

By Sept. 9, all evangelical churches in the area had organized a committee to work together in a united relief effort. They established three disaster relief centers. Evan Cordoza, pastor of Central Baptist Mission, headed one of the centers, assisted by his fellow Baptist pastor, Arey.

Each center has distributed food, medicine, clothing and fresh water. Of the 30 evangelical pastors involved, 10 are Venezuelan Baptist pastors.

The Venezuela Baptist Convention provided mattresses for families that had lost everything. Churches all over Venezuela sent food, clothing and other supplies to help the mudslide victims. Churches also have contributed about \$2,000 to support the relief efforts.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board disaster relief funds were earmarked for Maracay relief efforts. Future possibilities include using FMB funds and volunteer labor to rebuild a school that was destroyed. Tennessee Baptist construction teams might be used to rebuild homes. Adams and other missionaries note they will need to work through all the proper channels to make the necessary arrangements.

"Baptists are doing everything the government will allow us to do," explained Mrs. Adams.

Edgar Herrera, chosen by the evangelical pastors to coordinate the disaster efforts in the El Limon community where much of the damage was done, explained the group's approach.

"The first objective is to work with our brothers in Christ who have been affected by the mudslide," he said. Teams went door to door trying to locate Christians who were left homeless and who needed help.

"The second objective is to help anyone who suffered damage," he noted. "As a result of the word being spoken on the streets while searching for Christian brothers and sisters, many unbelievers have come here. They've received food, water, clothes and medicine."

The center where Herrera works, located at a free church seminary in El Limon, had distributed more than 10,000 meals during the three weeks following the mudslide. More than 100 volunteers -- students and faculty at the seminary and evangelical church members -- have worked in teams to help victims.

--more--

Herrera is director of field education and director of public relations for the seminary. He also is pastor of Manada Pezuena Baptist Church in Caracas, an independent Baptist church not related to the Venezuela Baptist Convention.

He said the emphasis is now shifting from emergency relief work to crisis counseling: "Not only is there a need for food, clothing, housing and other material things, but we have sensed there are greater needs -- emotional needs, spiritual needs. The shock of this has affected many different people in many different ways. Some have lost brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters.

"Everyday they are thinking about how this happened. They saw the mud come and sweep people away. They remember this, day after day, so they are walking around in a state of shock. One lady is lying on her bed in a state of shock. She can't do anything. Another woman has a rash that's broken out all over her body that is all from nerves. Children have lost their emotions. They don't laugh. They don't cry. They don't speak. They just walk around like zombies.

"There have been a lot of suicide attempts. Our big need is to prepare people who can help people like these."

A Christian psychologist, Mark Maldonado, has been enlisted to train the pastors to do crisis counseling, using some of the materials that were used in similar disasters in Armero, Colombia, and Quito, Ecuador.

The theme for the evangelical pastors' group is "In everything, may Jesus be glorified."

"Even in the midst of this disaster, they (the pastors) realize that God is still in control," Herrera said. "He has a purpose for all of this, and we must find out what God wants to do and do it.

"This involves the total Christian community, the people of God, to assemble themselves together and work together for this main purpose as brothers and sisters united in this effort," he explained.

"This is a way of learning how to work together for the benefit of the gospel in this country."

--30--

(BP) photos available upon request from the Baptist and Reflector

BWA Women's Department
Names Executive Director

N- (O)
(BWA)

Baptist Press
10/2/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--Elizabeth (Beth) Hayworth-MacClaren of McLean, Va., has been named executive director of the Baptist World Alliance women's department.

MacClaren, 63, has been minister of outreach and adult education at McLean Baptist Church since 1979. She will assume her new post Nov. 2, the date for this year's observance of Baptist Women's Day of Prayer.

Her selection was announced by BWA women's department President Edna Lee de Gutierrez at the eighth assembly of the North American Baptist Women's Union in Niagara Falls, N.Y., Oct. 1-2.

MacClaren worked in student ministries in Kentucky and Louisiana where she was associate director for the Baptist student departments in both states.

From 1965 to 1973, she was assistant to the director of information services with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington. She also has worked as a congressional legislative assistant and as a local church director of Christian education in Washington.

MacClaren is widowed. She was educated at Bryce Commercial College and Mars Hill College, both in North Carolina, and is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and took additional studies at Louisiana State University and George Washington University.

--30--