



BAPTIST PRESS

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88-141

Honduras church feeds
landslide victims

N-FMB

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (BP)--A tropical depression that caused heavy rainfall and widespread flooding throughout Central America has been blamed for more than 40 deaths and has left hundreds of people homeless.

In Comayaguela, Honduras, just outside the capital of Tegucigalpa, Central Baptist Church began housing and feeding 170 refugees Aug. 19. The refugees lost their homes in massive landslides in the hilly area.

Southern Baptist missionary Joyce Harms, reached by phone Aug. 23, said rain had continued through the night and church members were expecting more homeless people to arrive at the church that day, reported Stanley Stamps, Southern Baptist missionary press representative in Honduras. Harms' husband, David, who is pastor of Central Church, is working with the national relief organization to help meet the needs of the flood and landslide victims.

When the church opened its doors to the homeless families, the Baptist mission in Honduras and the Honduras Baptist Convention each released \$1,000 to help pay for food. Mrs. Harms said the feeding program was costing between \$850 and \$900 a day.

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Baptists feeding 10,000
Burundian refugees in Rwanda

By Craig Bird

N-FMB

Baptist Press
8/31/88

BUTARE, Rwanda (BP)--About one-fifth of the estimated 50,000 Burundian refugees who have crossed the swampy border into Rwanda near Butare are being fed with \$60,000 of Southern Baptist hunger funds.

The refugees are fleeing north to escape tribal massacres in Burundi that erupted Aug. 14, pitting the majority Hutus, who comprise 85 percent of the population of the landlocked east African country, against the ruling Tutsi people, who dominate the government and the army.

An estimated 3,000 Hutu refugees, primarily women and children, are streaming daily into Rwanda, where the government is controlled by Hutus.

In 1972, ethnic strife resulted in death for an estimated 100,000 Hutus, including almost all of the educated elite.

Butare is the focal point of the exodus, although some refugees are crossing into Tanzania, Burundi's eastern neighbor.

The Rwandan government has issued urgent pleas to the international community to provide assistance for the refugees and a solution to the problems in Burundi. It asked the Baptist Union of Rwanda to assume responsibility for the "commune" of Muyaga, one of three locations where the refugees are being housed.

"This was a good choice because we already have a church in the commune and several preaching points," said Vernon Sivage, chairman of the Baptist Mission of Rwanda. Sivage is from Midland, Texas. David Hooten, a first-term missionary from Tifton, Ga., is coordinating the feeding stations at three camps.

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Ron Murff from Mobile, Ala., another first-term missionary working in the program, has estimated each refugee needs 100 grams of beans, 100 grams of rice and 200 grams of sorghum per day. For 10,000 people, the approximate cost is \$1,350 daily.

The Rwandan government considers the situation temporary and wants the refugees to return to Burundi as soon as possible, Sivage said. Refugees are being kept at camps near the border and housed in school buildings that are available only until Sept. 5, when school resumes.

Members of the Hutu tribe blame the violence on the Tutsis, but the government claims Tutsis are the target of Hutu-instigated atrocities.

The Burundian government estimates 5,000 deaths have occurred in the northern part of the country and says that a 1,500-man military force is operating in the area solely to restore order and get several hundred "insurgents" to surrender.

Refugees and Rwandan military sources, however, speculate tens of thousands of deaths have occurred and the Rwandan government has said that "to protect the environment" it is clearing the Nyabarongo River of hundreds of bodies that have floated down the swampy river, which marks the Rwanda-Burundi border.

The U.S. State Department has said the Burundi government is taking a responsible attitude toward the tribal violence.

State Department spokesman Phyllis Oakley was quoted Aug. 19 in *The Nation*, an English-language paper in Nairobi, Kenya, as saying that while the army was to blame for some of the killing, "the incidents described by President Pierre Buyoya (of Burundi) were isolated and sporadic and not part of a systematic campaign of the government against the Hutu population."

"We regret all this, but we think the government is taking a responsible attitude ... and is obviously taking steps to see that it doesn't continue," she said.

The United States continues to be in close touch with the Burundi government "to urge the government to exercise restraint in its efforts to restore peace," she said.

A three-page open letter to President Buyoya that was published Aug. 28 in the Burundi capital of Bujumbura blamed the Tutsi-dominated army for the massacres. The 27 signatories were mainly intellectual members of the Hutu tribe.

The government offers no immediate response.

More than 20 Southern Baptist missionaries live in Rwanda, but none live in Burundi. All Southern Baptist missionaries and most other missionaries were evicted from Burundi in 1986 by former president Jean-Baptiste Bagaza.

But after ousting Bagaza in a bloodless coup in September 1987, Buyoya has moved to restore religious freedom. Two couples, Jeff and Mary Polglase, from Tucson, Ariz., and Dallas, and Dennis and Margaret McCall, from Vicksburg, Miss., and Louisville, Ky., are awaiting government permission to re-establish Southern Baptist mission work in Burundi.

Both Burundi and Rwanda were German colonies that were placed under Belgian administration in 1919 after World War I. Both became independent in 1962. Rwanda is considered the most densely populated country in Africa, but Burundi is only slightly less so.

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HMB makes gospels of John
available for movie witness

N - HMB

Baptist Press
8/31/88

ATLANTA (BP)--In an effort to encourage a positive witness to people who attend the controversial movie "The Last Temptation of Christ," the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board is making available free copies of the Gospel of John.

The Scripture portions will be available through the Baptist associations in the cities where the movie is being shown.

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In addition to the gospels, the Home Mission Board is making available to the associations a specially-printed cover overleaf to be attached to each Scripture portion that says: "Be Your Own Critic! You've seen the movie. Now read the Book."

Board President Larry L. Lewis said he feels Baptists ought to take advantage of the opportunity to present a positive witness to people who attend the movie who might be asking questions they have never considered before.

Although he said he has not seen the movie personally and does not plan to do so, Lewis agreed public reports indicate the movie degrades and blasphemes Jesus Christ.

"But we worship a God who has the power to take something that is bad and turn it into something good," Lewis said. "I believe God can use this movie, even though we might consider it blasphemy, to cause people to search for an understanding of who Jesus Christ is and for an understanding of the human and divine nature of the Son of God."

Christians need to be at the exits of every theater to ask people who see the movie what they thought about it and to engage them in serious conversations about the questions the movie raises, Lewis said. In seeking to answer those questions, Christians will have an opportunity for "personal soul winning," he said.

"We need to strike while the iron is hot, and while people are searching for the answer -- Jesus Christ, the Son of God," Lewis said.

The Home Mission Board is making the free Scripture portions available following a request from Larry Braidfoot of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Lewis noted.

In addition to the Gospels of John and the "Be Your Own Critic" cover, the Home Mission Board is providing to the associations a list of practical suggestions on how to distribute the gospels. The Christian Life Commission is providing the associations with a one-page list of suggestions on how to protest effectively against Universal Studios and the local theaters.

Lewis encouraged local pastors and church members interested in a positive witness to contact the director of missions in the Baptist association to place orders for the free copies of the Gospel of John and the covers. Associations and churches, but not individuals, can place orders calling the Home Mission Board's toll-free customer services number, (800) 634-2462.

The movie currently is being shown at theaters in at least 14 cities: Atlanta; Austin; Houston; Dallas; Chicago; Cleveland; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Minneapolis; New York; Philadelphia; Salt Lake City; Seattle; and Washington.

The movie will open later in other cities, and Baptists need to organize now to be ready when it does, Braidfoot said.

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Four Southern Baptist chaplains
receive major recognitions

N-HMB

Baptist Press
8/31/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Four chaplains endorsed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board have received major recognitions from their peers.

Bill Donovan, director of institutional and business-industrial chaplaincy for the HMB, was elected first vice president of the American Protestant Correctional Chaplains Association. Rebecca Lewis, chaplain at Harris County Jail in Houston, was elected second vice president.

William Andrews, coordinator of chaplains for the Maryland State Police, has been named Career Chaplain of the Year by the International Conference of Police Chaplains. Andrews has been a Southern Baptist pastor in Maryland since 1959, serving most recently at Hazelwood Baptist Church in Baltimore.

Eugene Elmore, Civil Air Patrol chaplain in Maiden, N.C., has been named Civil Air Patrol Chaplain of the Year by a national gathering of his counterparts. Elmore is pastor of Oak Hill Memorial Baptist Church in Thomasville, N.C.

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Marjorie Bailey, 1st woman
ordained in Virginia, dies

N- HMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Marjorie Bailey, the first woman ordained by a Virginia Southern Baptist church, died Aug. 4 from cancer. She was 65.

Bailey, who was endorsed as a chaplain by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, also was the first woman chaplain to serve in a Virginia institution.

Until her retirement last year, Bailey worked with Chaplain Services of the Churches of Virginia, which supplies chaplains to state institutions. The organization is funded by several denominations in the state, including the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Bailey most recently had been a chaplain at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women in Goochland County. She also was interim senior chaplain at the all-male State Penitentiary in Richmond for eight years.

The National Child Labor Committee gave Bailey the Lewis Hine Award in 1987 in recognition of her ministry. Because she was too weak to travel to New York to receive the award, committee officials traveled to Richmond when she was honored by Gov. Gerald L. Baliles.

She had no close relatives.

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MasterLife helps inmates
face problems in prison

By Terry Barone

F- Texas

Baptist Press
8/31/88

DALLAS (BP)--Eathcliff Bollers doesn't face more problems in prison than he did on the outside, but he admits, "Here you have to face them because you can't run away."

Bollers and three other Texas Department of Corrections inmates are learning to face their problems through the Southern Baptist MasterLife discipleship program in the Beto 2 prison in east Texas.

But with the help of Mike Fleming, a Southern Baptist chaplain at the prison near Palestine, the tough problems are becoming easier.

"Every day there is a different trial around here," Bollers notes.

One of the biggest obstacles Bollers and the others in the group have had to overcome is learning to love one's self.

"Through MasterLife, I've learned how little I loved myself and the Lord. I thought I really loved the Lord, but I was wrong," Bollers says. "I never stopped to look at myself or where I was going. MasterLife has given me the spiritual life to help me look where to go. It has shown me that I need to forgive myself and have faith."

But faith is what Fleming needed to get the MasterLife group off the ground. A couple of years ago, he became convinced that if he could get inmates involved in the program, it would augment their rehabilitation program.

MasterLife is an in-depth discipleship process for equipping groups with the spiritual tools to help carry out Christ's vision to make disciples of all people.

"Because the turnover population is so rapid in the Texas prison system," Fleming says he had a difficult time getting a group together to commit six months -- the amount of time it takes to complete the course which meets weekly for two hours.

"I was discouraged at first," says Fleming who has been a Texas Department of Corrections chaplain for six years. "I couldn't hold on to them long enough, but we're hanging in there now."

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After taking the course and being certified to teach the group, Fleming realized how valuable the program could be for the inmates. "Because it truly made Jesus Christ the Lord of my life and worked in helping me with a daily devotion time, prayer and memorization, I knew it could help the inmates make the Lord the master of all parts of their lives," he explains.

"These guys are undisciplined, and it helps them structure all parts of their lives because it deals with all parts of one's life -- emotions, intellect and relationships. Face it, none of these people are here (in prison) because they know how to get along with people."

Bollers and another inmate in the class -- Johnny Lenford -- agree that structure and discipline have been invaluable to them and their time in MasterLife.

"It is great for a guy like me," says Bollers, "because it gives me discipline. I've always done things my way and never pushed the Lord. In my eyes, I could not see that I was doing things wrong."

The two inmates agree MasterLife is enlightening. Lenford says: "I've grown a lot since I started the class. I thought I knew a lot, but the course shows you just how much you really know."

"After I started the class, I got sort of bold about my witness. I gained confidence that I could witness without feeling people would reject what I am saying."

Bollers says MasterLife has taught him the true meaning of the words faith, fellowship, discipleship and love. "The class also has shown us who to depend on and how to depend" on Jesus Christ, he adds.

He still gets weak and has to reflect on the first memory verse he learned through the MasterLife course: Luke 9:23 says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Lenford reports he had a problem in memorizing Scripture, but MasterLife has helped him overcome it. He has several favorite passages, but the one to top his list is John 8:31-32, "If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine: and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Most of the inmates have "never finished anything," so MasterLife will be a real accomplishment for them, Fleming says.

"If they really begin to master life, chances are slim that they will be back in here again," he stresses. "I am seeing these four men dig in. I am sensing a hunger among the group. I feel the group is getting better each week. Even though TDC organizes most of their time, MasterLife is teaching them to organize their free time."

The group interacts well together, and members are "spontaneous and more aware of nature and the world God has made," he adds: "We all wear masks, ... but I don't sense any cover-up here in the MasterLife group. They have a real fellowship among themselves as exemplified by voicing prayer concerns for one another without prompting."

"I get 10 times more out of it than they do. It (teaching the course) makes it all worthwhile being here."

Prisoners' families find warmth,
security at Hospitality House

By Ken Camp

N- Texas

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (BP)--When her husband of two years was sent to prison 325 miles from home, a west Texas woman found herself alone and aimless, feeling as if she were "running around in a storm without an umbrella."

But then she found shelter, warmth, security and "a home away from home" at Hospitality House in Huntsville, Texas.

Sponsored by the State Missions Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Texas Baptist Men and Tryon-Evergreen Baptist Association, Hospitality House is a temporary home for the visiting families of inmates in Texas Department of Corrections facilities.

In a letter to Hospitality House directors Bob and Nelda Norris, Jackie Warmsley of Abilene, Texas, told a story common to many prisoners' families who drive hundreds of miles for weekend visits with loved ones.

"I have gotten up at 2 a.m., driven to Huntsville, visited and returned home the same day," Warmsley said. "I have stayed in motels -- alone -- half-scared and using the grocery money to pay.

"I have seen women sleeping in cars at roadside parks and along the road. I have seen little children on blankets in the grocery store parking lots, and I have felt my plight and theirs."

Although dangers are great and expense is an obstacle, visits are essential to the families, Warmsley added.

"One of the most frustrating problems is how to maintain a family relationship, to follow God's plan in being a Christian wife, to support a man who is knocked down for the near 10-count and to, somehow, just keep going.

"The visiting process is vital ... to really see and talk and cry and pray together. To sometimes get to hold and touch, but to be together for an allotted two or four hour visit -- regardless of cost, time involved, condition of tires or whatever seems to stand in the way."

For Warmsley, the anxiety associated with her twice-monthly treks to east Texas ended when she discovered Hospitality House and the "belonging feeling" she found there. She considered it, quite literally, a God-send.

"Coming home to family, the safety and security, the prayers, the sharing of faith, the breakfast rolls, popcorn and coffee smells, a place to come back to after a visit to cry before taking off again, the hugs and encouragement, but most of all the love. Oh, God is so good to share his love through such a place," she wrote.

Hospitality House is the one place many prisoners' families have been able to find acceptance, Warmsley said: "We've felt so much rejection, even from our families and churches, that you just don't know how good it feels to walk in that front door, safe and greeted with, 'Hi! We're glad to see you. We knew you were on the road, and we've been praying for you.'"

Since opening its doors in the summer of 1986, Hospitality House has provided nearly 4,700 beds and food for about 1,500 meals to the prisoners' families. The Norrises have held more than 1,000 counseling sessions and been instrumental in seeing 78 people make professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

About 60 percent of the operating budget for Hospitality House is provided by Texas Baptists through their gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for state missions. Additional funds are supplied by the gifts of individuals, churches and associations.