



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #7E
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2331
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Mary 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. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 2, 1988

88-142

U- FMB

Missionaries encounter
burglary, armed robbers

By Eric Miller

COTONOU, Benin (BP)--"Jesus held us up through it all," Southern Baptist missionary Richard Bartels said after three armed men shot at him and his wife, Carmela, during an attempted robbery Aug. 31 in Cotonou, Benin. They were not hurt.

"We're doing fine," Bartels said Sept. 2. "The police are investigating and doing everything they can to help."

Mrs. Bartels said the attempted armed robbery at her house was the first in Benin against Southern Baptist missionaries, who have been there since 1972. The Bartels arrived in Benin in 1981.

In an unrelated case, six or eight burglars broke into the home of Southern Baptist missionaries Asa and Lydia Greear of Ashland, Ky., also serving in Cotonou, Aug. 25. The Greears, first-term missionaries, had arrived in Benin a few days earlier after a year of language school in France.

After the burglary, Mrs. Greear said: "We are here to stay in Benin. Even if they keep robbing us, we are going to stay in Benin, because the Lord has called us to Benin."

The break-in occurred about 2 a.m. while the Greears were at another home. When their night watchman awakened and realized what was happening, he blew a whistle and the burglars fled. They stole all of Greear's clothes; all shoes belonging to the Greears' daughter, Jessica; and school backpacks and school books belonging to Jessica and their sons, Thaddeus and Jeremiah. The items were insured.

Mrs. Bartels said God was watching over them as the gunmen fired at them during the robbery attempt. After her husband refused to open the front door, one gunman rammed a pistol through a window screen and fired, narrowly missing Bartels, who had backed up against a wall to hide.

Mrs. Bartels hid their only child, Chandra, 7, in a bathroom, while Bartels moved trunks and heavy furniture against doors. At one point, Mrs. Bartels flipped on a light, and as her husband ran to shut it off, one of the gunmen fired and hit the closet where he had been standing.

While Bartels continued barricading doors, the gunmen tried to force open another door. Two women walking down the street heard Bartels yelling and summoned the police at a nearby house. The men left in a car when they heard police sirens.

When Mrs. Bartels explained to their daughter that the gunmen wanted money, the girl said, "They ought to just count on Jesus."

--30--

Texas Baptists respond
to Delta crash at D-FW

By Ken Camp

N-TEXAS

Baptist Press
9/2/88

DALLAS (BP)--Within an hour after Delta Flight 1141 crashed on take-off from Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport Aug. 31, Texas Baptist Disaster Relief workers were at the scene, providing refreshments and comfort to rescue workers and law officers. The crash killed 13 people.

--more--

The first Texas Baptist minister known to be on the scene was David Hougham, pastor of Faith Temple Baptist Church in Irving. He was joined quickly by about a dozen trained disaster relief volunteers from Meadowbrook Baptist Church in Irving and by Rodney Baden of Fielder Road Baptist Church in Arlington and Milfred Minatrea, weekday ministries director for Dallas Baptist Association and regional coordinator for Texas Baptist Disaster Relief.

Operating from Meadowbrook's disaster relief unit, the Baptist volunteers offered soft drinks, refreshments and Christian compassion to emergency personnel at the crash site.

"There was just a steady stream of people coming for refreshments," said Pam Minatrea of First Baptist Church of Irving. Some of our folks also took drinks out to people in the field who couldn't come to the unit."

While one group of volunteers was at the disaster site, others manned a radio base station at Meadowbrook Baptist Church, monitoring broadcasts and helping to coordinate operations.

Minatrea praised Meadowbrook's capacity for immediate response in time of disaster: "There are hurting people around all the time. When a church is involved in meeting needs on an ongoing basis the way that Meadowbrook is, it is natural for them to be able to respond quickly in disasters such as this."

The Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Mobile Unit, an 18-wheel tractor-trailer rig with field kitchen, was placed on stand-by status immediately following the crash and was summoned to the disaster site at about 2 p.m.

About 500 barbeque beef plates furnished by Mt. Lebanon Baptist Encampment were served to emergency workers from the field kitchen that night. An additional 75 people were served breakfast the following day, and about 200 gathered for the noon meal.

Volunteers from Texas Baptist churches in the Dallas-Fort Worth area were assigned to four-hour around-the-clock shifts at the disaster site command post and the mobile unit, Minatrea said. They were expected to continue operations for about 48 hours.

Denny Burris, chaplain with the Dallas Fire Department and member of First Baptist Church of Lancaster, and Danny Souder, pastor of Northlake Baptist Church in Dallas and chaplain with the Dallas Police Department, also were at the disaster site to counsel with emergency personnel.

"My responsibility was to provide initial debriefing for paramedics, fire fighters and other emergency personnel," Burris said. "When bodies were taken out, we took the emergency workers aside and kept an eye on them so that if they exhibited any psychological problems we could counsel with them.

"The idea was to allow them to vent their feelings and not keep things pent up inside. Our research shows that initial debriefing decreases the need for counseling later."

Texas Baptist ministers from the Dallas, Fort Worth and Denton areas also counseled with family members and survivors at the Delta terminal and at a hospitality room at the D-FW Hilton.

Dixon Ayers of Orchard Hills Baptist Church in Garland, son of evangelist Walter Ayers, provided a large revival tent that was set up by the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief team. The tent provided shade for emergency workers and media personnel from throughout the Southwest who were at the disaster site.

Baylor Hospital's Grapevine facility received six crash victims. The central Baylor Health Care System facility was one of several locations in the area that was set up for blood donations.

Pastor receives baptism of fire
in disaster relief at crash site

By Ken Camp

F - Tex 05

DALLAS (BP)--When David Hougham arrived at Faith Temple Baptist Church in Irving for his first full-time pastorate after seminary, he never suspected that in less than a week he'd be gaining his first disaster relief experience -- as the first Southern Baptist minister known to be on the scene of the Delta Flight 1141 crash at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

Hougham was at an apartment complex near the airport a little after 9 a.m. Aug. 31 when he saw a dark cloud of smoke billowing from a field close to Highway 183. As he drove toward the fire, he heard a radio news report that a Delta Boeing 727 had crashed.

"I tried to get as close as I could," said Hougham. "I told the police officer at the entrance I was a minister, and he told me to come on in."

As the 35-year-old May graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary neared the crash site, he saw the distant wreckage of the passenger plane still engulfed in flames and numerous injured survivors in need of comfort.

"Some were hurt really bad, some didn't seem to be hurt at all, and some who were still walking around were in shock and didn't realize they were hurt," he said.

"The first person I saw was a lady who was worried about her baby. She was hurt, and she didn't want her 18-month-old baby to see her like that. I checked on her baby for her. The guy who had been holding the baby was still on the plane, but she was all right. She was probably in shock, but otherwise she looked OK."

In those first crucial minutes as crash victims were being loaded on ambulances and helicopters bound for local hospitals, Hougham had the opportunity to speak to about a dozen survivors.

"They just wanted to know someone was there who cared about them," he said. "In a crisis situation like that, I think your presence is more important to them than anything you might say or any prayer you might pray -- harsh as that may sound coming from a minister."

Although he had never received formal disaster relief training, Hougham said experience working as an orderly in the emergency room at Irving Community Hospital 13 years ago and one semester of chaplaincy internship at Harris Hospital in Fort Worth during seminary proved helpful.

"I had seen things kind of like this before, but not to this extent," he said. As soon as veteran disaster relief workers Rodney Baden of Fielder Road Baptist Church in nearby Arlington and Milfred Minatrea of Dallas Baptist Association arrived, Hougham followed their instructions.

"I followed Rodney around like a little puppy," he said. At Minatrea's request, Hougham also performed a ministry few Baptist preachers are asked to do -- praying over the dead.

Minatrea explained that after the crash of Delta 191 at D-FW three years ago, many grieving family members were distraught to think that while Catholic priests were present to administer last rites, no Protestant ministers attended to their dying loved ones.

"One man said, 'I just want to know my son was treated with dignity.' It meant a lot to be able to say, 'Sir, your son was handled with dignity, and a minister was there praying for his family,'" Minatrea said.

"I prayed over each of the bodies for the families involved," Hougham said. "I knew they'd be going through difficult times in the days and hours ahead."

Although Hougham was moved by the suffering he witnessed, he said the only time he had difficulty coping was when the body of an infant was taken from the wreckage.

"When they took the baby out of the plane, that got to me," he said. "It would be hard for anyone to see something like that and for it not to affect them."

--more--

Hougham left the disaster site about six hours after the plane crash to prepare for his first Wednesday evening prayer meeting at Faith Temple.

"I don't know what I'll preach on," he said. "I'll have to share with them some of what happened, but a lot of it they couldn't understand unless they were here. To spell it out in detail would be cruel."

The one thing he'd likely share would be the importance of a Christian presence to suffering people in times of crisis.

"I really felt like I was doing some good when one man whom I had been talking to was being taken away. He turned to me, gave me his name and said, 'Don't forget me.' That was important - just knowing there was someone there who cared and who wouldn't forget."

--30--

Stanley opposes civil disobedience
in Atlanta abortion protests

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
9/2/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Charles Stanley, pastor of Atlanta's First Baptist Church, has opposed the Operation Rescue abortion protests in Atlanta as unbiblical, but he maintains he still views abortion as murder.

During Sunday worship Aug. 28, Stanley read a statement concerning the protests that later was distributed to worshippers in a leaflet titled "A Biblical Perspective on Civil Disobedience." The statement is labeled as the opinion of the pastoral staff and deacons of First Baptist Church.

Other Baptists who have participated in Operation Rescue believe Stanley's statement is misguided. They fear the influence of the former president of the Southern Baptist Convention may hinder recruitment of other Baptists to support Operation Rescue in the future.

More than 700 people, including several members of Stanley's church, have been arrested for trespassing on the properties of Atlanta abortion clinics since July 19 in attempts to "rescue" babies scheduled for abortions. The people arrested and hundreds of other supporters are part of an interdenominational effort known as Operation Rescue.

Christians from across America have rallied behind Operation Rescue's non-violent protests in Atlanta, hoping to make it the first "abortion-free city in America."

Stanley noted he agrees with the Atlanta rescuers that abortion is wrong. "From our perspective, the wrongness of abortion is not up for discussion," he said. "God's word clearly teaches that life begins at conception and that abortion is murder."

Stanley advocated "all lawful means of protesting abortion," but declared that Operation Rescue's tactics do not meet the biblical test for justifiable civil disobedience.

He cited Romans 13:1-7, I Peter 2:11-17 and Titus 3:1 as biblical mandates to obey the "law of the land." However, Exodus 1:16-20, Daniel 6 and Acts 5:29 are biblical examples of obeying God's higher law, he said.

"It is right to break the law when there is a direct, specific conflict between God's law and man's law, because God's law is higher," Stanley said.

However, he added, the civil disobedience advocated by Operation Rescue does not meet the biblical requirements of civil disobedience for three reasons:

-- Trespass laws have nothing to do with abortion. Therefore those arrested are not being arrested for opposing abortion. "If certain anti-God protesters blocked the entrance to First Baptist Atlanta so we could not enter to worship, we would use the same ordinance to have them arrested," he said.

--more--

-- The Supreme Court ruling in Roe vs. Wade "neither requires abortions nor prohibits them, but makes them permissible with certain restrictions."

-- Women who have abortions are "free moral agents responsible before Almighty God for their actions."

Stanley said the proper way to change abortion laws "involves carefully working through the judicial, elective and legislative process to effect change -- especially in the composition of the U.S. Supreme Court."

However, some members of Stanley's church and at least one local Baptist pastor who have participated in Operation Rescue said Stanley's opinion is wrong.

Jim Wood, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church and a member of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, prepared a response to Stanley, which he plans to read to his congregation Sept. 4. Wood has not been arrested in a rescue, but, has been a local supporter for the effort.

Wood said Stanley presented an eloquent statement of Operation Rescue's position but came to an illogical conclusion about the biblical support for civil disobedience.

"I do not believe the heart of this dear man of God will long permit him to avoid the weight of his own statements," Wood said. "Citizens are permitted by U.S. law to violate the trespass ordinances in an effort to prevent a murder. Dr. Stanley knows this. If abortion is murder, then our responsibility is clear."

Stanley's logic could be used to justify not jaywalking to prevent a rape, Wood said: "The ordinance that prohibits jaywalking is designed to keep pedestrian and vehicular traffic moving safely, and therefore has nothing to do with rape."

"If someone were coming in the church door to shoot him, I think Dr. Stanley would want someone to stand in the way," Wood added in an interview.

Members of Stanley's church who have supported Operation Rescue also were surprised by his statement. Earlier in August, Stanley had observed a rescue with television preacher Jerry Falwell, who encouraged local pastors to get involved. At that time, Stanley refused to state his opinion on the protests.

"It just breaks my heart," said First Baptist member Becky Fern of Stanley's statement. Fern was arrested in the first rescue July 19.

"We're not telling pastors if they don't get arrested they're wrong. We want to tell people to obey God," she said. "I don't think this is a cut-and-dried issue."

At least two other Atlanta-area pastors who Falwell indicated should support the effort have said they cannot. Dwight "Ike" Reighard, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, and Nelson Price, pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, told the Atlanta Constitution that Operation Rescue has the right goal but the wrong tactics.

Meanwhile, Operation Rescue leaders have issued a short response to Stanley's statement: "We are glad Dr. Stanley agrees that abortion is murder. We wish he could also see that Operation Rescue is not about protest or civil disobedience. It is about saving the lives of babies who are scheduled to be murdered."

Wood said Stanley's statement would negatively influence only those people who don't read it carefully. "For some people, all the excuse they need is to know Dr. Stanley doesn't support it," he said. "They were hoping somebody would give them the assurance they didn't need to take Operation Rescue seriously."