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Bay area Baptists seek  
to shore up foundations

By Jim Newton

OAKLAND, Calif. (BP)--Southern Baptists shaken by shock waves of the Oct. 17 "world series" earthquake are seeking to shore up unstable spiritual foundations in northern California.

"Baptists are praying that the earthquake will wake Californians up to their need for God," said Larry Fisher, director of missions for East Bay Baptist Association in Oakland.

During the association's annual meeting just three days after the earthquake, Fisher said he hoped the earthquake also would awaken Southern Baptists in California to the challenge of ministering to people in need on a consistent, year-around basis.

Don Dent, a retired electrician who directs the emergency food distribution ministry of Calvary Baptist Church in Hayward, Calif., commented that thousands of hungry people in the bay area face a disaster every day of the year, but Baptists don't realize it or do much about it.

Dan Cookson, church and community ministries director for East Bay Association, challenged church members in the association to respond to the opportunities for ministry that the earthquake had provided.

Fisher said Baptists immediately set up seven collection points for food, blankets, tents and generators, and shipped a truckload to assist people less fortunate in the Santa Cruz and Watsonville areas south of Oakland.

Cookson pointed out the needs are not only physical, but spiritual and mental.

To help people handle the psychological stress of dealing with the trauma of the earthquake Cookson arranged for Baptists to provide counseling services at White Oak Grove Baptist Church in Oakland. Cookson said the church and association will provide counseling not only for residents of the area but for rescue workers, police and volunteers.

The church is located just four blocks from the mile-long Cyprus section of Interstate 880 that collapsed in Oakland, killing at least 38 people. Oakland officials, who first feared more than 250 people had been killed in the tragedy, lowered the estimated number of deaths to 85.

The sister of a member of Palma Ceia Baptist Church was one of the known 38 fatalities in the freeway collapse. Dolores Stewart, 48, an administrative records assistant at the University of California in San Francisco, was one of five commuters killed when their van plunged from the top deck of the 880 freeway. Her sister, Ceola Bernard, is a member of the largest Southern Baptist church in Oakland.

Two elderly Baptist laymen died of heart attacks brought on by stress and fear related to the earthquake. John Joel, pianist for Immanuel Baptist Church in south San Francisco, and Harry Stutte of Clinton Avenue Baptist Church in Fairfield suffered fatal heart attacks during the tremors. (See Baptist Press story, 10/20/89.)

Greg Summi, director of the missions ministries department for the California Southern Baptist Convention in Fresno, said the disaster has opened doors for Baptists to be involved in helping non-Christians in California grapple with spiritual questions friends and coworkers face

The earthquake shook people spiritually, psychologically and physically, Summi said. It has prompted them to think about the deeper questions of life. Baptists can provide comfort and counsel in times like these to help people cope with the problems of life, he said.

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Baptist relief efforts are being coordinated by Summi and by Edd Brown, director of men's ministries for the California Southern Baptist Convention. Brown is coordinating on-site relief efforts from a command post at Park Victoria Baptist Church in Milpitas, just north of San Jose.

Baptist churches in the area miraculously escaped major damage, Brown said. The needs appear to be greatest not in the big cities of Oakland and San Francisco, but in the smaller towns of Los Gatos, Santa Cruz, Hollister and Watsonville to the south.

In Watsonville, Arthur Road Baptist Church offered its facilities as a housing shelter for families whose homes were destroyed in the area.

Only one Southern Baptist church in the region was declared structurally unsafe and closed by building inspectors -- First Baptist Church of Freedom, a small town just north of Watsonville about 40 miles south of San Jose.

Bob Rooks, director of missions for Central Coast Baptist Association, said the 30-member Freedom church cancelled worship services on the Sunday after the earthquake.

First Spanish Baptist Church in San Jose suffered some roof damage and decided not to meet in its building until it had been repaired. Park Victoria Baptist Church offered its building for the Spanish congregation's worship services until repairs could be completed.

Other minor damage was sustained at First Baptist Church, Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church and First Slavic Baptist Church in San Francisco, and at Cornerstone Baptist Church, Good Shepherd Baptist Church and Berkland Baptist Church in Oakland.

Brown said volunteers are being recruited to help on repairs and reconstruction of church buildings, but the need was not as extensive as first feared.

Disaster relief units from state Brotherhood organizations in Alabama and Oklahoma were headed to California six days after the earthquake hit to cook and serve hot meals for earthquake victims in Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

Officials at the American Red Cross three days earlier had told the Texas Baptist Men organization its disaster relief unit was not needed, since food service did not appear to be a problem, Brown said. The Texas unit, which had reached Santa Rosa, N.M., enroute to California, returned to Texas.

Red Cross officials in the San Jose area were upset by the decision and told Brown that food might not be needed in San Francisco or Oakland, but it was needed in Santa Cruz and Watsonville.

Volunteers involved in Baptist relief efforts are being trained at Park Victoria Church by Brown and L.G. Chaddick, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board missionary from Los Angeles who has had disaster relief experience. The training, Brown said, also will help Baptists in the area be better prepared for other disasters that may hit.

When a major rainstorm hit Monday, Oct. 23, Brown and others feared it would create another major problem that may require disaster response -- mud slides from the unstable hillsides already shaken by the quake. "This thing is getting bigger and bigger," Brown said.

Meanwhile, Baptists and other residents in the area are trying to return to normal life routines.

Two Baptist associations which had scheduled their annual meetings the day after the earthquake rescheduled their meetings for Thursday, Oct. 26. Both the San Francisco Peninsula Baptist Association and the Central Coast Baptist Association originally had planned their annual meetings on Oct. 18-19, but postponed because of the earthquake.

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Hepatitis, complications claim  
missionary Barry Nottingham

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
10/23/89

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (BP)--Barry Nottingham, a first-term Southern Baptist missionary to Burkina Faso, died Oct. 23 of hepatitis and subsequent complications.

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Nottingham, 35, had contracted the disease a week earlier. His condition deteriorated rapidly Oct. 21 and he was flown from Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to a hospital in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. He died there before medical evacuation to the United States was possible.

Nottingham, of Waco, Texas, was the father of three children. He was pastor of First Baptist Church in Bynum, Texas, from 1982 until he and his wife, the former Dana Lamb of Pasadena, Texas, were appointed as Southern Baptist missionaries in 1987.

Mrs. Nottingham and the children were scheduled to fly from Abidjan to Houston Oct. 23. Nottingham's body also will be flown to the United States after arrangements are completed.

"We have suffered a great loss," said Bob Cartwright, business manager for the 30 Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Burkina Faso, a country of nearly 9 million people in West Africa. "We're going through the shock of it, asking why. Even though we know the Lord is in control, it is difficult to understand right now."

"They were the cream of the crop," said Cartwright's wife, Kay. "They were missionaries in every way. They were what you would expect of dedicated missionaries."

The Nottinghams studied French for a year in Tours, France, before arriving in Burkina Faso in October 1988 to begin work as Southern Baptists' first missionaries among the Bissa people. The Bissa people number some 750,000 and are considered by missiologists to have only minimal exposure to the Christian gospel.

The couple had been studying the Bissa language for a year in Tenkodogo, a city of 40,000 people on the eastern side of the Bissa area. They were planning to move into the heart of the Bissa region after their first furlough.

"They loved the country here," Cartwright said. "They loved the people here. They loved their work here. In everything they did, they showed their love for their Lord."

Their transition to life in Africa came easy, he said, adding that Nottingham was "the most easygoing person I ever met."

After her husband's death, Mrs. Nottingham reportedly told a fellow missionary that she has had a call to missions since childhood and hopes someday to return to the mission field.

Nottingham first resisted a call to the ministry while earning a mechanical engineering degree from Texas A & M University, he wrote before his missionary appointment. He made a profession of faith in Christ and was baptized at the age of 9 and experienced a deepened Christian commitment during his high school years. He was active in his church and in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

His commitment to missions grew through involvement in the Baptist Student Union at Texas A & M and during his courtship. During a week-long BSU mission trip to the Rio Grande Valley, he said he "enjoyed a tremendous time of work and love for the people down there."

He initially intended to enter missions as a mechanical engineer. "But God had other plans," he wrote. "He continued to tug at my heart about pastoring." Nottingham soon made a commitment to the ministry and entered Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, where he received a master of divinity degree in 1986.

Survivors include his wife and three children, Jeremy, 10, Kaci, 7, and Zachary, 1. Other survivors include his parents, John and Bobbie Nottingham of Waco, a brother and sister.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Seelig retiring from  
Southwestern Seminary

Baptist Press  
10/23/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--John Seelig, vice president for public affairs at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will retire Jan. 31, 1990, after 30 years of service.

During his tenure at Southwestern, Seelig, who turns 65 in December, has helped raise more than \$65 million for the school while directing the seminary's public relations/development program.

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In June, he was honored by Southwestern's alumni association with the Distinguished Alumni Award. Seelig has been active in several public relations groups, including serving as president of the Baptist Public Relations Association and the Texas Baptist Public Relations Association. He is accredited by the Public Relations Society of America and certified by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives.

Seelig is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas.

Before joining the staff at Southwestern, Seelig was minister of education at Evans Avenue Baptist Church, Birchman Baptist Church and Travis Avenue Baptist Church all in Fort Worth, and Highland Baptist Church in Dallas. He also worked for the Dallas Baptist Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Seminary President Russell Dilday praised Seelig's contributions to the seminary and called him a "valued member" of the school's administrative staff.

Robert Naylor, president emeritus of Southwestern, brought Seelig to Southwestern in 1960 as director of public relations. Seelig later became assistant to the president.

Seelig and wife, Virginia, former professor of voice at Southwestern, have two sons, Stephen and Timothy, and four grandchildren.

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Bruce Metzger delivers  
Drumwright Lectures

Baptist Press  
10/23/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Jesus Christ has given Christians a model prayer that helps communicate effectively with the eternal God of spirit, light and love, said the guest speaker at the 1989 Huber L. Drumwright Lectures in New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"The Lord's Prayer is a remarkable teaching vehicle" and should be used as a model for all prayers, said Bruce Metzger, one of the world's best-known scholars on the text of the New Testament and professor emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary. Metzger gave three lectures at the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary Oct. 19-20 as part of the annual Southwestern Pastors' Conference.

The Drumwright Lectures were endowed by the family of the late Huber L. Drumwright, former dean of Southwestern's School of Theology.

In his final lecture, "The Prayer Jesus Taught His Disciples," Metzger said the Lord's Prayer, as recorded in Matthew 6:9-13, can be divided into two sections -- petitions for God's glory and petitions for human needs.

While God wants to have a close relationship with his children, Metzger said, Christians need to keep their communication with him in perspective.

"We need to come into the presence of God aware of who he is -- aware of the reverence that is demanded of those that come into the presence of the Lord of hosts," he said.

And while Jesus told his disciples to pray for the coming of God's kingdom and the accomplishment of his will, neither is dependent on man's prayerful initiative, Metzger said. "God's kingdom will come whether we pray for it or not," he said, adding this portion of the Lord's prayer is designed to allow people to ask "to fit into his will."

Discussing the second half of the prayer, which is devoted to human needs, Metzger said Christians must remember Jesus' model prayer is a daily command. "We are expected to use the Lord's prayer every day of our lives," he said.

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Latin American Baptists  
set region-wide goals

By Art Toalston

SANTIAGO, Chile (BP)--Plans to expand Baptist work in Latin America, including the naming of 100 foreign missionaries, have been adopted by representatives of Baptist bodies from 15 countries.

Eight thrusts, to be set in motion by 1992, were adopted by 176 Baptist leaders attending the Baptist Union of Latin America's October meeting in Santiago, Chile.

"This was by far the most outstanding meeting the Baptist Union has ever had in the number of participants, their vision, plans for the future and fellowship," said Bryan Brasington, who represented the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board during the sessions. Brasington directs work in Spanish-speaking South America.

"What we are seeing is the development of mature Latin American leadership and the development also of their vision for reaching other countries for Christ," Brasington said. Baptist work in Latin America "has moved from missionary leadership to national leadership, and that's the way it should be."

"In every one of the countries, we are seeing a new intensity in sending out home missionaries and studying the possibility of sending out foreign missionaries."

The Latin American Baptists' goals call for:

- Presentation of the gospel "in a personal manner" to at least 100,000 Latin Americans.
- Starting 500 new missionary works in areas with no Baptist work.
- Sending out "at least 2,500 disciples witnessing full time for at least one month."
- Sending out "at least 1,000 missionary volunteers" to other countries during 1992.
- Training and sending out at least 100 full-time missionaries to other countries.
- Setting up campaigns in each country during 1992 to provide training in evangelism and discipleship, then launching door-to-door visitation and evangelistic services.
- Establishing prayer chains to operate "24 hours a day, 365 days during the year 1992."
- Establishing ongoing discipleship programs for new believers.

The Baptist Union of Latin America also endorsed the possibility of efforts to send missionaries to Spain in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Argentine Baptists already are planning to send a missionary couple to work alongside Spanish Baptists.

The Baptist organization endorsed a multifaceted effort to strengthen Sunday schools and programs for Christian education workers in seminaries and Bible institutes, and to highlight books and other resources that can help Baptists expand their religious education efforts.

The plans do not lessen the need for Southern Baptist missionaries in Latin America, Brasington noted. He quoted one leader who commented to him, "The greatest resource you send to aid us are the missionaries."

Southern Baptist missionaries will be working "side by side with Latin American Baptists in the development of these plans and at the cutting edge of beginning new works," Brasington said.

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Hobbs has no plans  
to stop writing

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press  
10/23/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--On the eve of his 82nd birthday, Herschel H. Hobbs, one of Southern Baptists' best known and most prolific writers, said he intends to continue writing as long as he can still push a pen.

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Hobbs, who turns 82 Oct. 24, has written "Studying Adult Life and Work Lessons," a quarterly Bible study commentary for the Life and Work adult Sunday school curriculum series, for 21 years.

He has completed manuscripts for the popular Bible study commentary for editions through December 1991. Hobbs and Southern Baptist Sunday School Board editors intend for him to continue the series as long as he is able.

"I see no reason why I can't keep on indefinitely (writing the lesson helps.) My health is good. My mind is as clear as it has ever been. As far as I'm concerned, I'm not ready to stop writing them," he said.

Hobbs said the success of the lesson commentary is in his ability to transform the Bible study to a simple language with illustrations teachers can understand.

James L. Sullivan, retired Sunday School Board president who first contracted with Hobbs to write the materials said at an Oct. 20 reception at the Sunday School Board honoring Hobbs that he is "one of the few men who has a proven mastery of both the Hebrew and Greek languages."

Hobbs explained: "It's not that I'm so smart that they can't find someone else to replace me. It's the way I provide a balance that apparently is successful."

He agreed to write the materials for the Sunday School Board after first providing similar materials for Sunday school teachers at First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, where he was pastor.

"I said I would do it (write for the board) if they would promise to let me write it the way I wanted to," he said. "About the level I write is what the teachers want -- a combination of the pastoral approach and the academic."

Hobbs said he relies on his Greek and Hebrew training, not because the teachers need to know Greek or Hebrew, but because it can be helpful to them in understanding the text.

He has spent more time writing the lesson commentaries than most books he writes, he said. He has written 127 books in addition to the lesson helps.

His books usually are written for pastors, and in those he assumes a certain level of background knowledge that can't be assumed with Sunday school teachers.

"I'm so careful to try to give a proper background to what we're studying and give what I think is a sound interpretation. If I mislead people in doctrine, with 100,000 teachers using it, I'm talking about between one and two million people that I'm affecting for good or bad depending on what I do," he said.

Hobbs maintains a discipline of writing one chapter each week to stay on schedule with the lesson commentaries in addition to his other writings and travel schedule.

"I write the lesson helps because I believe it is the most effective and beneficial thing I've ever written," he said. "I'm not reaching just pastors in the pulpit but the teachers, and through the teachers I reach far more people. This is a direct approach. I'm willing to pay the price. I enjoy doing it because of what I think I am accomplishing."

A Broadman book, "My Favorite Illustrations," will be released in April 1990, as a selection of original Hobbs anecdotes and quotations.

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