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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE:

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75
Nashville, Tennessee 3720
(615) 244-235:
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-891
CompuServe ID# 70420.1

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

August 31, 1992

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Baptists feeding 50,000 daily,
calling for 1,000 Labor Day vols By Barbara Denman

Baptist Press
8/31/92

MIAMI (BP)--While the federal government begins feeding thousands of victims of Hurricane Andrew, Southern Baptists marked their seventh day of relief efforts Aug. 30, feeding more than 50,000 people and airlifting food to many in critical need.

Since Aug. 24 when Hurricane Andrew struck, Southern Baptists have been feeding displaced persons in evacuation shelters and distributing food and financial assistance in remote areas in south Dade County.

Ten Southern Baptist feeding stations, representing Florida and eight other state Baptist conventions, remain on site in south Florida serving some 5,000-6,000 meals a day.

Florida Baptist Brotherhood director Cecil Seagle has issued a call for 1,000 volunteers to work in clean-up and construction in south Florida over the upcoming Labor Day weekend.

The volunteers should bring chain saws and/or basic construction tools, nails and, if possible, plywood and shingles -- as well as their own water, bedding and food, Seagle said. Efforts are being made to house the volunteers in church gyms and tents.

Volunteers should make initial contact with their state Baptist Brotherhood offices. Wilcox Travel, at 1-800-438-5828, reports that USAir and Delta are offering 50 percent discounts to volunteers certified through the Red Cross or Salvation Army.

According to Harold Crane, Florida Baptist Convention church extension worker, no food is currently needed in south Florida and that community groups should get clearance from Florida before conducting additional food drives.

The feeding effort could easily last a month, said officials with the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission which is coordinating the national effort from its Memphis offices in cooperation with the Florida Baptist Convention and the Red Cross.

Helicopter airlifts of food supplies, begun Aug. 28, are delivering food and supplies into Florida City and other communities which have been stranded without relief for days.

The first recipient of the relief effort was a 90-year-old woman. A ham radio operator in Louisiana heard of her plight and called the Florida Baptist Convention in Jacksonville.

Within hours Southern Baptist volunteers had delivered foodstuffs and essential supplies to the woman and several dozen others.

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With the additional help of the Florida Army Air National Guard, Chinook helicopters were pressed into service Aug. 29 to ferry larger quantities of Baptist-assembled foodstuffs to a staging area in the North Perry Airport to disaster sites in Florida City.

The effort is being directed from Miramar where Baptists have set up a coordination command post. The Pembroke Road Baptist Church in Miramar (305-987-7050) has been designated as a receiving point for foodstuffs, medical supplies, water and other essential materials.

A large volume of relief supplies has been transported across the Southeast to the church from Southern Baptist churches which have been conducting food collections.

As part of the relief effort, Southern Baptist had mobilized more than 500 volunteers to begin relief efforts before state and federal officials had arrived on the scene.

Southern Baptist officials recognized early in the disaster the difficulty of transporting essential supplies across closed roadways. Initially they pressed into service privately-owned helicopters before getting assistance from the Florida Air National Guard.

Using the North Perry Airport, a large warehouse was converted into a staging area for sorting foodstuffs and packaging them for air delivery in south Dade Count.

In addition to the food distribution, Florida Baptist officials are disbursing cash assistance to both Baptists and non-Baptists with monetary need while waiting for insurance settlements. Baptist ministers from across the state are assigned at each feeding site to distribute funds and provide grief counseling.

Florida Baptist women are providing child care at the Cutler Ridge Baptist Church, distributing hundreds of diapers, juice, formula and providing temporary first-aid services. Baptists who speak Spanish and French have been assigned to each feeding site to assist in crowd control and counseling.

Florida Baptist relief operations are being directed from the convention's offices in Jacksonville, where organizing and assigning of thousands of volunteers has begun. While some volunteers were pressed into service immediately, others are expected over the next weeks and months to assist in clean-up and rebuilding.

In an effort to help Dade County residents through this emergency, the Florida Baptist Convention is receiving contributions earmarked for the disaster relief victims. More than \$60,000 has already been received, most of which has been donated by concerned Southern Baptists. Persons may make a contribution to the Florida Baptist Convention, 1230 Hendricks Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32207. Attn: Miami disaster relief.

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Jim Burton contributed to this story.

Michigan man dies helping
Hurricane Andrew victims

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
8/31/92

KALAMAZOO, Mich. (BP)--Although not a victim of Hurricane Andrew, a Michigan man probably gave his life helping in the disaster relief effort.

"I just had the ministry experience of my life," Roger Pawling, 48, told his wife following a strenuous effort Aug. 28 helping a Kalamazoo area Baptist pastor collect, box and load supplies headed for the devastated south Florida area.

Pawling's wife, Diane, told Baptist Press he suffered from severe heart problems the past two years and the day's work may have prompted the heart attack that claimed his life Aug 29. But, she said, that was the way he would have chosen to die: helping others in the name of Jesus Christ.

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Pawling responded to news on a Kalamazoo country music station which indicated Baptist pastor Richard Fenner was collecting supplies for the hurricane victims. Fenner, bivocational pastor of Glendale (Mich.) Baptist Church the past three years, had established 30 pickup points in the Kalamazoo area.

Pawling heard the broadcast, went to the bank to withdraw \$100 to purchase food and then decided to stay at the radio station to help collect, box and load the supplies on a semi-truck. A Christian but not Southern Baptist, Pawling was impressed with relief efforts for the hurricane victims.

"He really liked pastor Fenner he told me when he came home that night about 10:30," Mrs. Pawling told Baptist Press. "That was the last person he talked to ... he died early Saturday morning." The Pawlings had been attending Lake Center Bible Church in the Kalamazoo area. Survivors, in addition to his wife, include daughters Carrie, 24, and Jennifer, 14.

Pastor Fenner, a contractor by trade, has one semi-truck already loaded and half of another.

"I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the people in south Michigan," Fenner said. "I had no idea God was going to do such a tremendous work here."

Fenner and a contingent from the south Michigan area will begin the trek to Florida the evening of Sept. 1, stopping to pick up another contingent of Michigan Baptists in the Troy area. He is also taking a tent and a worship/counseling team to make sure that, in addition to feeding needy people, the victims of the hurricane also hear and have a chance to respond to the gospel.

Coordinated by Wayne Vann, a Mission Service Corps volunteer, the Michigan Baptist Convention Brotherhood Department is working with the Ohio Baptist Convention's disaster relief unit. Twelve Michigan Baptists will leave Sept. 2 for south Florida to relieve Ohio Baptist volunteers at a feeding station.

According to James Jones, Michigan Brotherhood department director, five truckloads will be traveling to Florida by the night of Sept. 2. Donated supplies include 10,000 diapers, baby food and \$5,000 in cash.

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Baptist volunteers in Louisiana
offer food, diapers, HAM help

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
8/31/92

NEW IBERIA, La. (BP)--Texas volunteers served about 16,500 meals during the first two full days of disaster relief operations in southern Louisiana, including a community that had been without assistance since Hurricane Andrew's onslaught.

Volunteers discovered on Aug. 28 that Olivier, a predominantly black community of about 500, had received no assistance and residents were unable to travel to the closest town, Jeanerette. The Texas Baptist Command Post -- an RV equipped with communications and computer equipment -- and the regional disaster relief unit from Tyler, Texas, were moved to Olivier and 400 meals were served immediately.

Three disaster relief units from Texas as well as units from Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Alabama Baptist conventions are providing meals to Hurricane Andrew victims in several hard-hit sites in Louisiana. Also on site is a child-care unit from Tennessee.

In other assistance, two pilots with the Texas Baptist Men Aviation Fellowship -- Jerry Henson of Calvary Baptist Church and Mike Lane of Southpark Baptist Church, both of Beaumont -- flew baby formula, diapers and other infant supplies in for the Texas Child Care Unit at New Iberia Aug. 29.

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The Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Mobile Unit, an 18-wheel tractor-trailer rig equipped with field kitchen, is set up there across the street from the Iberia Parish Courthouse.

Texas volunteers skilled in HAM radio communications are staffing the Emergency Operating Center in the Iberia Parish Courthouse. The large HAM radio equipment aboard the Texas Baptist Command Post was better suited to the multi-site operation than the equipment in the parish's Emergency Management Office, so the radio unit was moved into the courthouse.

Craig Romero, president of Iberia Parish (roughly equivalent to a chief county commissioner), said the arrival of Baptist volunteers was "a godsend in the real sense of the word. The first people on the scene to help us after the hurricane were the Baptists. I'm still trying to figure how they knew just what we would need. It's truly amazing."

When interviewed by a reporter from the CBS News program, "48 Hours," Romero said, "I'm Catholic but before these guys pull out, I'm liable to change my religion."

Applications for emergency food stamps are being processed at the Iberia Parish Courthouse Annex, across the street from the courthouse. On Aug. 29, the lines began forming at 4 a.m., but the office did not open until nearly 9 a.m. By noon, people began to be overcome by heat exhaustion. The line -- with people standing three and four abreast at most points -- reached completely around a large city block. National Guard, policemen and sheriff's deputies were keeping order but the people in line were growing impatient and restless.

Finally, after 1 p.m., volunteers at the Texas mobile unit were granted permission and a police escort to take water, Gatorade and Kool-Aid to the people. The volunteers were greeted with cheers when they carried large coolers across the street to the people in line and began distributing styrofoam cups to the food stamp applicants.

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HMB's Lewis asked to remove
director of Freemasonry study

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
8/31/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Southern Baptist Home Mission Board study of Freemasonry is headed in a "compromising" direction and could become "watered-down, potentially destructive" unless corrective action is taken, a Texas physician has written to the board's president, Larry Lewis.

Larry Holly, a Beaumont, Texas, physician who brought the issue of Freemasonry to the Southern Baptist Convention last June, has written to Lewis asking him to replace the person assigned to head the study, Gary Leazer, director of the board's interfaith witness department.

Or, Holly suggested, Lewis should establish "an official Home Mission Board liaison committee to review and critique the study" or ask the SBC Executive Committee to prepare a report "to balance" the HMB interfaith witness department's study.

Saying "Dr. Leazer's prejudice is overwhelming," Holly took issue with a number of sentences in a letter he obtained written by Leazer to an unnamed non-Southern Baptist.

With Leazer directing the study, there is "an approaching compromise of the integrity of the Southern Baptist Convention by one of its agencies," Holly told Lewis.

Lewis was traveling Aug. 31 and could not be reached for comment.

Leazer told Baptist Press concerning Holly's request, "That's his privilege. I'm just doing what I've been told to do. (Deciding the matter is) up to Lewis, and whatever he decides is fine with me."

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Before sending his letter, Holly had been scheduled to meet with the interfaith witness department Sept. 17 to discuss his concerns about the Freemasonry study.

The study follows a vote by SBC messengers last June to instruct the HMB to address the issue. Holly had made a motion for a special ad hoc committee to study the Masonic lodge's compatibility with Christianity but messengers instead opted for a study by the HMB.

After that vote, Lewis told Baptist Press the study inevitably would hurt the cause of home missions. "Any position we take -- either pro Masons or against Masons or neutral -- will generate a certain amount of ire and wrath and thus hurt missions."

Holly sent copies of his Aug. 26 letter to Lewis to Baptist Press and to a Nashville daily newspaper and a state Baptist paper; to current SBC President Ed Young; President-Treasurer-elect Morris Chapman of the Executive Committee; Leazer; and 10 others.

Leazer, in the letter obtained by Holly, wrote, "I am receiving volumes of letters, books, and tapes about Freemasonry. This subject is bigger than the abortion issue. By far, most of the pressure on me is coming from anti-Masons. I get the distinct feeling they don't want a scholarly study. Surely you agree that organizations can change. Look at the apparent theological changes in the Worldwide Church of God. No scholar worth his salt would write a report on the Worldwide Church of God and ignore the changes of the past couple of years. I merely intend to be objective enough to examine recent Masonic writers.

"I assure you I did not ask for this impossible assignment," Leazer continued, "but my staff and I will give it our best effort and let the messengers fight it out on the floor of the Convention next June. I feel like a sacrificial lamb.

"The report of my three-month study leave is greatly exaggerated. I have not been relieved of any of my regular work such as routine staff meetings. Neither have I been given any additional budget for the study," Leazer concluded.

Holly voiced concern over Leazer's emphasis on recent Masonic writers, noting that even a current, widely used Masonic altar Bible retains the occultic essence of Freemasonry as depicted by such Masonic notables as Albert Pike.

"Dr. Lewis, please ask your staff to spare me the condescension that I 'do not want a scholarly study!'" Holly wrote. "I want an honest study. Scholarship, properly exercised, will condemn the Masonic Lodge.

"Dr. Lewis, you have a stated concern for the possibility of this study affecting the purpose and the financial support of the Home Mission Board and the Southern Baptist Convention. The best way to make sure that does not happen is to do an excellent study," Holly wrote.

Targeting Leazer's fight-it-out-at-the-SBC comment, Holly wrote, "What a tragedy that a denominational employee would want to allow 'the messengers (to) fight it out on the floor of the Convention next June.' The very purpose of this study was to avoid such a divisive conflict!"

Holly disputed Leazer's use of the term "anti-Mason." Holly wrote that he believes he is a friend of Masons. "They are going to face a holy God, and they are going to do it with the blood of the occultic upon their hands. If we say nothing, and if we do nothing, we will be judged by God for our silence." Rather than being "anti-Mason," Holly wrote he is "pro-Truth."

Samford Moscow study center
to open in summer of 1993

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Samford University officials say the Baptist-related institution is moving in on Moscow.

As part of its growing international program, Samford has acquired its own building in central Moscow for use as a center similar to its highly successful London Study Centre.

The two-story building, built about 1900, is situated within three miles of Red Square and the Kremlin, the heart of the capital of the former U.S.S.R., now the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is 300 yards from two prominent metro stations for access to mass transit throughout the city.

Samford President Thomas E. Corts, board of trustees Chairman A. Gerow Hodges and Global Center director William R. O'Brien visited Moscow in early August to sign an agreement to develop the center.

They were aided by leaders of the Evangelical Union of Christians-Baptists of the CIS and said they received "eager endorsement" from the Office of the Mayor of Moscow, the national Committee on Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture.

"Moscow is a whirlwind of entrepreneurial activity just now," Corts said. "The country is so advanced in many areas but is just now awakening to the free-market system and it is eager to catch up with the way the rest of the world does business."

Birmingham architect Ed Bailey, who has designed several Samford buildings, is in Moscow reviewing and revising plans already drawn by a Russian architect for a total interior renovation of the center.

The Moscow Study Centre will have classrooms, computer lab, a small library, residential space for 15 students and an apartment for a Russian/English-speaking caretaker-facilitator. Samford faculty members will alternate serving as professors-in-residence. Plans call for the center to be in use by the summer of 1993.

Students may elect to spend fall or spring semesters in Moscow or London or shorter terms in January. Summer will permit short-term, continuing education use by professionals related to the schools of law, pharmacy, divinity, education and nursing and general use.

"Moscow is one of the great cities of the world," Corts said. "It is opening to America and the West as never before and certainly in a way we could never have imagined. We are eager for our students to learn from the experiences of the Russian people and to share with them a vision of the future."

Samford began its international study center program in 1984 with the purchase of a building in London. Since then, hundreds of Samford students, faculty and alumni have studied in London and traveled in Europe during their stays.

CLARIFICATION: (BP) photo of the South Dade Baptist Church gym, badly damaged by Hurricane Andrew, has been sent to state Baptist newspapers. While the information attached to the photo is correct, it should be noted that church is not Southern Baptist. More photos of Miami will be available Tuesday to state papers. If next-day shipment is needed, please call the Atlanta Bureau of Baptist Press at (404) 898-7518.

CORRECTION: In an Aug. 28 (BP) story "Hurricane Andrew 'answers' Baptists prayers," the correct spelling of the name of the Miami Baptist Association volunteer is Tony Ponceti.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
