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July 12, 1993

93-111

MISSOURI -- Missouri Baptists at work in Mississippi flood relief.  
IOWA -- Iowa Baptists waiting for flood to recede.  
NORTH CAROLINA -- HMB presents 5 awards during missions week.  
NASHVILLE -- Correction.

Missouri Baptists at work  
in Mississippi flood relief By Laurie A. Lattimore

Baptist Press  
7/11/93

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Flooding along the Mississippi River has Baptist disaster relief units and Red Cross teams wet and worn out -- yet still willing to work -- as nature continues to wreak havoc across the state and Midwest region. Sweeping floods from Missouri's northwest to the northeast corner and south to the bootheel have destroyed homes, businesses and land.

Jim Albers, Missouri Baptist Convention state disaster relief coordinator, said the waterlogging from heavy thunderstorms and daily rainfall compounded the damage from flooding along the Mississippi in April.

"The April floods were a Sunday stroll compared to this now," said Albers upon returning from a Red Cross shelter in Winfield, between Hannibal and St. Louis. The National Weather Service in St. Louis reported a water level in Winfield at 36.6 feet July 12, which is expected to crest at 38.5 feet July 16. "Houses are underwater, businesses are underwater, crops are lost ... it's a mess."

Al Sorrell, Baptist volunteer at the Red Cross feeding kitchen at Winfield Elementary School, said they have been serving more than 500 meals a day. Sorrell, a member of Pisgah Baptist Church in Excelsior Springs, said five Baptists work at the kitchen at any one time, usually rotating on a weekly basis. Other area churches have assisted in the effort, including First Baptist churches in Winfield and Troy; the Lutheran church in Troy; and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in St. Peters. Sorrell said the Freemasons donated \$2,000 worth of food for the kitchen over the weekend.

"It is bad ... and it's only going to get worse, not better," Sorrell said, estimating he will be working on and off at the site until September or October. "Places that were not underwater when we got here last Saturday now have water up to the second floor. People are just hoping the flood doesn't take their whole house."

Dale Mehan from Pisgah Baptist said the city of Winfield has been switched to the county water supply because officials feared contaminated water after a levee broke late Friday night, July 9. Mehan said the kitchen at the church has been cooking with bottled water since July 10.

Leila Mason, a Red Cross volunteer from Delaware and also a Southern Baptist, said about 31 people have stayed at the shelter set up at the high school. She said many people are staying in their flooded homes to protect them from looting, which has been a big problem.

"It is really dangerous because there are a lot of snakes and some leeches up to 12 inches long. The sanitary conditions are terrible," she said. "But we can't make them stay here; we can only ask."

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Mason said some are still futilely putting up sandbags against the rising water.

"It doesn't do any good, but I think they just need something to have hope," she said.

Albers, who is helping the Red Cross coordinate food and shelter out of Edmunson Road Baptist Church in St. Louis, said Missouri Baptist volunteers currently are helping Red Cross units in three flooded areas along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers -- Winfield Elementary and High School; Edmunson Road Baptist; and First Baptist Church, Weston, in the Kansas City area.

Other Baptist churches working with the Red Cross include Orchard Farms Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, Jefferson City; and New Jamestown Road Baptist Church, St. Louis County. Hannibal-LaGrange College in Hannibal also is involved in helping area flood victims.

The Red Cross had established 18 shelters statewide and involved more than 300 volunteers by July 9, but spokesman Andrew Rose said the number keeps increasing.

"Our operation is very static right now and the numbers change daily," he said.

The Army Corps of Engineers reported July 12 nearly 7,000 people in St. Louis County were evacuated from their homes.

The MBC disaster relief feeding unit was called out to Edmunson Road July 8 to assist in the feeding of flood victims. Albers reported from the site that 4,000 meals a day were being served at the church and carried out in Red Cross emergency relief vehicles (ERVs). More than 100 volunteers work at the site each day, including about 20 Baptists. Albers said the 4,000 meals represents about half of all relief meals being served in Missouri.

"To give you an idea, in April it took three weeks before the meal count was 1,300 per day," Albers said. "We were sending out 2,000 meals a day here by the third day (Monday, July 5)."

Federal Emergency Managing Operations (FEMO) moved into the St. Louis area July 6 to head the relief operation with the Red Cross. Albers said Baptist volunteers still are needed for food preparation and for cleanup in a few weeks. He said local officials are predicting the water will not recede until August.

In St. Louis, water levels reached 43.1 feet July 12 and are predicted to crest at 45 feet by Sunday, July 18, which would break the record level of 43.23 feet during the 1973 floods.

Faculty, staff and students at Hannibal-LaGrange College are sandbagging, putting plastic on tops of levees, helping with food preparation in Salvation Army kitchens and delivering meals to flood victims. Hannibal's water level was reported at 29.4 feet Friday and was expected to crest at 32 feet Wednesday (July 14).

The college's parking lots have become temporary campsites for people parked in campgrounds now inundated by the Mississippi River. Students affected by the flood are allowed to stay in the dormitories free, and other flood victims will be able to stay in the dorms if Red Cross facilities are filled.

The college also is serving as a shuttle point for hundreds of area workers who are being bused to work on levees. HLG has offered its kitchen space to the Red Cross if demand becomes necessary.

Albers said prevention is impossible because of the massive amount of water coming in on top of already high flood levels. He said volunteers are providing whatever food and shelter can be made available in the short term and coordinating help for long-term cleanup when the flooding subsides.

"It looks like we will be doing this the rest of the summer, which could be a concern when schools begin and the shelter sites have to move out," Albers said, adding that cleanup is at least four weeks away. "Sandbagging is a lost cause and when the water goes down there will be a need for a tremendous 'mud-out' operation.

"This is a good time for churches to begin talking, praying and organizing this kind of ministry," he said. Albers estimates volunteers will be needed for at least two more months. "We'll need construction crews, people who can push a broom, flop a mop or pick up trash."

Albers said disaster relief crews need between 20 and 25 people a day to maintain relief for the current flooding but more volunteers will be needed as water drenches more homes and businesses with the expected rainfall. He emphasized that volunteer help will be most important for cleanup.

Thousands of people have been washed out of their homes in Missouri and about 45 counties across the state have reported flood damage, state officials said. Damage to crops throughout the Midwest is estimated at \$1 billion.

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Iowa Baptists waiting  
for flood to recede

Baptist Press  
7/12/93

DES MOINES, Iowa (BP)--Baptists in Iowa are "at a standstill" while the surging Mississippi River continues its assault on the state, reported Sherri Mertens, a staff member of the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship.

"The waters are so high right now that not a whole lot of anything can be done," Mertens said July 12. The flooding also was preventing damage estimates, she said, explaining, "Everybody's just having to wait."

The Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship encompasses 82 congregations with 11,000 members. The fellowship's offices in Des Moines had not received any reports of flooded churches as of July 12, Mertens said.

Reports from Baptist leaders in Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota were not available July 12.

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HMB presents 5 awards  
during missions week

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
7/12/93

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Five awards recognizing leadership in home missions were given during Home Missions Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

Award recipients were:

-- Rutledge Memorial Baptist Church in Charleston, S.C., PACT church of the year for the eastern United States. PACT, an acronym for Project Assistance for Churches in Transition, is a process to help churches in neighborhoods with a changing ethnic or economic makeup.

Rutledge Memorial Baptist Church was established in 1892 and initially served its neighborhood, but in recent years the neighborhood's culture base shifted, said Everett Anthony, Home Mission Board director of metropolitan missions. Through the PACT process, the church decided to sell its property to an African American congregation. Rutledge Memorial relocated and both churches are growing, Anthony said.

-- Buddy McGohon, director of missions, and Bob Dempsey, associate director of missions in Montgomery Baptist Association in Montgomery, Ala., PACT consultants of the year for the eastern United States.

In five years McGohon and Dempsey have worked with 17 churches which all had declining membership and attendance, Anthony said. Now 15 of them are growing in evangelism and membership.

-- John Patterson, metropolitan associational director of missions of the year award for the eastern United States. Patterson is director of missions for Peninsula Baptist Association in Newport News, Va.

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In eight years, the former foreign missionary led the association to start 13 congregations and plan to start five more, Anthony said. Patterson also has helped five congregations that had stopped growing in membership and attendance to begin growing again and led associational churches to begin an array of outreach ministries.

-- Lawrence Clegg, town and country associational director of missions of the year award for the eastern United States. Clegg is director of missions for four associations between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

In Clegg's 13 years with the associations, the number of churches and missions and the number of Southern Baptist church members have increased by one-third, said Gary Farley, HMB director of town and country missions. The associations have 120 churches with 47,000 members, Farley said.

-- Bill Butler, Mission Service Corps volunteer and director of the Pensacola Bay (Fla.) Seminary Extension Center, extension center director of the year.

More than 200 students have enrolled in 75 courses during Butler's 10 years as director, said Doran McCarty, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention Seminary Extension program.

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EDITORS' NOTE: More information sent to state Baptist newspapers in South Carolina, Alabama, Virginia, Louisiana and Florida.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Growth helps Christians overcome spiritual inertia, author says," dated 7/9/93, please change the last sentence of the seventh paragraph to read: The book has just been released by WMU.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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