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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Three more state units  
join earthquake relief effort

Baptist Press  
1/21/94

By Steve Barber & Jim Burton

LOS ANGELES (BP)--As Southern Baptists prepared to celebrate Baptist Men's Day and the contribution of men to the mission of local churches Jan. 23, volunteers stepped up their involvement in Southern California's earthquake recovery.

Joining two disaster relief units from the California Southern Baptist Convention in the wake of the Jan. 17 trembler were those from Texas, Oklahoma and Missouri.

Texas Baptist Men arrived before sunrise Jan. 20 and set up in Santa Clarita. On-site coordinator John LaNoue of the Texas convention reported serving an average of 1,400 people each mealtime.

"Roads are impassable and the traffic is horrible," LaNoue said, adding most homes in the area "look all right" from the outside but "the inside looks like somebody took an eggbeater to them."

Oklahoma Baptist Men's nine-man crew and equipment left Oklahoma City about 4 p.m. Jan. 20. Their destination is the Van Nuys airport.

The Missouri mass feeding unit was activated at 9 p.m. Jan. 20. Jim Albers, Missouri Baptist Men's director, said the unit left Slater, Mo., at 9:30 a.m. Jan. 21 with two drivers. Their exact destination had not been assigned. The remaining crew of nine from Jefferson City and St. Louis were to fly from St. Louis to Los Angeles Jan. 22.

Arkansas Baptist Men were placed on standby Jan. 20 while Louisiana Baptist Men remained on alert.

The American Red Cross was set to move its mass care headquarters today (Jan. 21) from central Los Angeles to Van Nuys in the San Fernando Valley. Cal Jones of Louisiana, SBC Brotherhood Commission national on-site coordinator, will move with them and continue to represent Southern Baptists.

The first California unit worked with a Seventh Day Adventist feeding unit at the Valley Red Cross Center in Van Nuys. Together, they served 33,000 meals Jan. 20. California Baptists' other unit remained at Shepherd of the Hills (Southern Baptist) church in Porter Ranch.

Logistics continued to be a problem. Officials were reporting that a four-mile trip could take as long as an hour, and the traffic congestion hampered delivery of supplies to the feeding units.

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Local building officials were beginning to condemn homes and commercial buildings, putting more people on the streets. With rain and colder weather expected over the weekend, an increase in shelter populations and a greater need for mass feeding was anticipated.

The disaster response was still not ready for out-of-state volunteers other than those trained to work on feeding units. Prospective volunteers should contact their state convention Brotherhood offices.

Anyone wishing to make a donation in support of the disaster relief effort may send contributions to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104. The contribution should be designated for disaster relief.

The Brotherhood Commission has also made available a 24-hour disaster relief information line at 1-901-278-7839.

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Texas Baptists serve meals  
to California quake victims

By Ken Camp

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DALLAS (BP)--Nine Texas Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers made a 36-hour, 1,500-mile trek to provide hot meals in Jesus's name to residents of earthquake-rocked Southern California.

The Texans are part of a multi-state disaster response that also involves Southern Baptists from California, Oklahoma and Missouri.

The Jan. 17 quake, measuring 6.6 on the Richter Scale, caused more than 50 deaths, at least 4,500 injuries and up to \$30 billion in property damage, and it left tens of thousands of people in need of food and shelter.

Texas Baptists set up emergency food services Jan. 20 on a Kmart parking lot in Santa Clarita, about three miles north of a collapsed section of Interstate 5.

The team prepared 4,200 meals during their first 24 hours of operations, but the numbers were expected to escalate rapidly. The Texans were cooking food distributed to needy people by volunteers in five Red Cross emergency response vehicles.

"Initially, we thought we would be feeding directly off the unit, but the damage is just so widespread," said John LaNoue, on-site coordinator for the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief team.

Hundreds of Santa Clarita residents whose homes sustained significant damage were living in tents at New Hall Park, a little more than two miles from the Texas Baptist command post. But they represented just a fraction of the people in the community needing help, LaNoue said.

"Many of these Red Cross volunteers are local people whose homes were heavily damaged, but they're pushing that aside to help people who are worse off," he said.

One of those volunteers, Bill Synder, said he was a lifelong resident of the area, but he had never experienced an earthquake of such intensity.

"He told me his house was trashed. The foundation wasn't cracked, but the ceiling was down, everything was off the walls, and furniture was moved clear across the room. He said it felt like a personal attack of evil, jerking the house this way and that way," LaNoue said.

The California Southern Baptist Convention's Disaster Relief Mobile Unit is stationed at the San Fernando Valley Red Cross Center in Van Nuys, and a regional Baptist Disaster Relief unit based in Orange County is located at Shepherd of the Hills Church in Porter Ranch.

On Jan. 19, the two units prepared 12,000 meals total, and the number of meals was projected to increase to 17,000, according to Terry Barone of the California Southern Baptist Convention.

Southern Baptist volunteer teams from Oklahoma and Missouri were on their way to California on Jan. 21, and disaster relief volunteers from Louisiana and Arkansas were on alert.

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Texas Baptist volunteers left Dallas at 8:30 a.m. Jan. 18 in a three-vehicle caravan -- an RV that serves as on-site command post, a four-wheel-drive Bronco and the new Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Mobile Unit, an 18-wheeler equipped with a generator, solar-powered water purifier and a field kitchen capable of serving more than 35,000 meals a day.

The new mobile unit, with upgraded equipment that more than doubled the field kitchen's previous serving capabilities, was provided by gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

In addition to LaNoue, Texas director of Baptist Young Men, Dallas, crew members were: Larry Peltz, Plano; Mel Goodwin, Kilgore; George Crews, Colleyville; Harry Campbell, Killeen; Larry Blanchard, Lindale; Milton Schmidt, Dallas; John Lilly, Reklaw; and Les Brown, Dallas.

After a two-hour delay at the California border early Wednesday afternoon, the Texas team's progress was slowed further by bumper-to-bumper traffic in a circuitous, six-hour, 110-mile detour around damaged portions of the Los Angeles freeway system.

But by mid-morning Jan. 20, the mobile unit's field kitchen was set up in Santa Clarita, and volunteers served their first 1,400 meals at noon.

LaNoue said he slept two hours their first night in Santa Clarita and three hours the next night. Their first night on the disaster scene, the crew was divided with some sleeping on the command post and others inside the Kmart.

On the second night, several crew members visited a local motel hoping for a hot shower, but they were forced to bring their own water from the Disaster Relief unit.

The next day, members of Grace Baptist Church in Santa Clarita, who had utilities restored opened their homes to crew members needing showers.

Texas Baptists are prepared to continue serving meals as long as the need exists, LaNoue said, and travel arrangements for a second volunteer crew were being finalized on Jan. 21.

Bob Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men, said he already had been called by directors of missions in two Los Angeles-area associations who asked if Spiritual Renewal teams could lead "Experiencing God" weekends in their churches after the disaster relief operations end.

"The earthquake was a wake-up call for some of these people here," LaNoue said. "Some are open for the first time to hearing God."

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**Speakers urge Texas Baptists  
to keep revival fires burning**

**Baptist Press  
1/21/94**

**By Orville Scott & Thomas J. Brannon**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The fires of revival and evangelism must be rekindled in order for Texas Baptists to reach their state for Christ, speakers told 12,000 people at the annual statewide Evangelism Conference in Fort Worth, Jan. 10-12.

From the opening message by Southern Baptist Convention President Ed Young through the closing session focusing on senior adults, speaker after speaker echoed the urgency of the conference theme, "Like a Burning Fire," to be lived out in witnessing for Jesus.

Bailey Stone, director of the Texas Baptist evangelism division, said, "I believe the fires of evangelism lighted in the hearts of conference participants will be spread across the state to prepare our churches and church members for a tremendous revival through the 'Here's Hope -- Share Jesus Now' simultaneous revivals in 1995."

Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, said America in its crisis of crime, drugs, immorality and AIDS is paying the price for the prevalent attitude that there is no law above man's law.

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"Just to hav faith is not enough," he added. "There must be faith in Christ that l ads to godly living, or it's not Christianity.

"God has not abdicated th moral attributes of his holy word, the Bible."

Refuting the claim revival will come through prayer, Young said, "Revival comes through desperation, when we are desperate enough to go and worship and pray."

Christians must worship God in spirit and truth, and true worship begins with biblical worship, Young said.

"The fires of revival will burn in our hearts and churches when we worship in wonder and in spirit and truth."

Young urged listeners to pray for United States leaders, noting the church wher he is pastor distributed 10,000 prayer packets secured from the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission to help Christians pray particularly for President Clinton and Vice President Gore.

At the same time, Young blasted the Clinton administration's advertising campaign urges condom use to prevent AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

Studies indicate condom use does not result in truly "safe sex," said Young. Abstinence is the only answer.

He also criticized Clinton's lifestyle, contending the president, who is a Southern Baptist, separates his religious faith from the rest of his life.

Young said Clinton, on the day of his presidential inauguration, went to a gospel meeting where tears ran down his face during the singing.

"But by the end of the day he had taken his daughter, Chelsea, and dropped her off at a hard-rock concert. And he and his wife had gone to a gay and lesbian ball and finished the evening with a cocktail."

Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Harrington, Ill., which has grown to a membership of 16,000 since starting in a rented theater in 1975, urged conference participants to become a friend of sinners like Jesus did.

The Willow Creek Church on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings uses drama, multi-media, contemporary music and practical messages to present scriptural truths to unchurched people. On Wednesday and Thursday evenings, 5,000 to 6,000 believers gather for worship, communion and Bible teaching.

Hybels said he strives to "set people with the gift of evangelism on fire" but doesn't put "all on the same playing field."

Part of the secret behind the fruitfulness at Willow Creek, he said, is team evangelism in which people are encouraged to use their gifts, building relationships and leading clean lives.

"I celebrate churches which carry out traditional ministries, he said, but by the same token some people are meant to come to Jesus by seekers going door-to-door."

Dan Vestal, pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston, said when a church exists for any reason other than the kingdom of God it is courting disaster.

"The kingdom of God begins in the hearts of individuals as they are changed," said Vestal.

"The kingdom advances through millions of silent deeds of love. When the kingdom of God captures your heart, you will surrender everything you have, and whatever sacrifices you may be called on to make will be insignificant."

Vestal challenged listeners to allow nothing to substitute for the kingdom of God as their ultimate hope.

Frederick Sampson, pastor of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit, said America has ended up with a crossless Christianity and a crisis church in a chaotic culture.

"God is still standing, waiting for those who've been redeemed to say a word," Sampson said.

Noting most of Jesus' great thoughts and messages took place outside church walls, Sampson asked, "How comfortable are you among folks who don't look lik you? Evangelism is to meet people where they are, on their level.

"We're going to move from the pulpit to the pavement ... from the pews to meaningful participation."

Evangelist Sammy Tippit of San Antonio said America has been bypassed by the unprecedented revival taking place in Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe.

He said when he was arrested for preaching the gospel in Communist Romania and the Soviet Union, he never dreamed of returning to a football stadium overflowing with people eager to hear the gospel.

He discovered some of the students helping lead the revivals were grandchildren of people imprisoned for expressing their faith.

Underscoring the desperate moral situation in America, Tippit said, "We talk about catering to baby boomers. We don't need to be catered to. What we need is to be crucified. What we need is a fresh touch from God."

Deploring the impurity among some American Christians, Tippit said, "Don't you think our enemies around the world aren't using it. We have lost our platform of credibility."

Another key speaker, Gary Hearon, director of missions for Dallas Baptist Association, asked, "Are those who've heard the message of salvation but never shared it saved?"

Recalling how Jesus wept as he looked out over Jerusalem, Hearon asked, "How long has it been since you wept over the sins of your city?"

He cited statistics Harris County (Houston area) has 1.8 million unchurched people, Dallas County 1 million, Tarrant County (Fort Worth) 500,000, and Bexar County (San Antonio) 415,000.

"We must put feet to our prayers and words to our compassion," Hearon said.

"Our cities are on fire with greed, lust, murder, violence and corruption. Sin will not go unpunished. Men and women will repent or burn in hell for their sin."

Claude Thomas, pastor of First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas, said one reason Southern Baptists baptized 5,000 fewer people last year than during the previous year is because only five percent of church members are sharing their faith on any kind of active basis.

"We are in a crisis of belief, for the gospel has been equated with materialism, prosperity and universalism. It has been reduced to easy believism or impossible behaviorism.

"Do you love lost people?" asked Thomas who is pastor of a church which ministers in 17 multihousing complexes.

"Oh, God, break our hearts for people who need Jesus."

Other reasons for a decline in baptisms were listed by Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

"There is no place for self-sufficient pride because men unanimously disobey God in their hearts.

"There is no place for contentious factionalism. The gospel ought to draw us to koinonia, brotherly love. If we focus on him, there is no room for petty factionalism.

"There is no place for uncaring silence. The Bible says gospel preaching is the way."

Dilday warned missions support could be weakened by the re-emergence of inclusivism, the belief that people who've never heard the gospel will be included in God's salvation.

To deal with this issue, said Dilday, look to the scripture for clear and unchanging truth that salvation comes by grace through faith.

Conference participants were cautioned by church growth leader Ken Hemphill of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board obsession with strategies could cause a church to ignore the mandate to missions.

"The first priority is not to alter the Sunday School or change the worship style but to live in dynamic relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ," said Hemphill.

Characteristics of highly effective churches, he said include supernatural empowerment, powerful praise, prayer and fasting, visionary leadership, healthy kingdom relationships, a God-sized vision, commitment to discipleship, and a passion for souls.

Ralph West, pastor of Brookhollow Baptist Church in Houston, cited the truism "As the church preaches, so the church believes" and warned "Today we have tried to preach something other than Christ.

"Shame on the church that lost its passion for Christ. Shame on us when we can gather and not feel His fires burn within us.

"Preach a Jesus who can pick up the pieces of a broken heart and put it back together again. Once your heart has been mended, preach Jesus."

Evangelist Richard Jackson, retired pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, called for "a new commitment to the old gospel."

Jackson said Southern Baptists are not winning souls to Jesus as they should because "You don't have confidence and pride in the gospel.

"You've lost confidence in the gospel and started looking at self," said Jackson.

"You gotta find some way to dress it up. If you try anything else but this gospel, you're going to strike out."

Jackson said Rome in the Apostle Paul's day was a lot like the U.S. with "power for everything but couldn't change the corrupt hearts of the people.

"The gospel will make us pray for others, will make us love one another, will bring us together."

Evangelist Junior Hill of Hartselle, Ala., recalled Paul admonishing Timothy to endure as a good soldier of God.

"As soldiers of God, we can anticipate unexpected struggles, unrecognized successes and unintended substitutes," said Hill.

"There are no easy jobs in the ministry of God. There are struggles in the ministry of God, but nobody is a failure who does what God says.

"All God wants us to do is fire the gospel gun faithfully and not worry about responses. God has a heart ready to receive.

"I'm disturbed that in churches today I see hunger for numerical success. If people don't hear, that's not my responsibility. My job is to present the Word of God."

Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. of Nashville, reminded Christians their hope is not centered in this world.

"Hope gives resilience to life," said Draper, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Euless. "When hope is gone, life ends."

He said hope is a unique characteristic of salvation and the Christian faith.

"Our hope, based on Jesus Christ, looks to the future, not the past. Hope accounts for our distinctive lifestyle.

"Hope brings ultimate security. Hope gives incomprehensible joy. Hope provides us protection for the journey.

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Texas Baptists hear testimonies  
of passion to share the gospel

By Orville Scott, Thomas J. Brannon & Ken Camp

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--"Like A Burning Fire," a consuming passion to share the Good News of Jesus links the lives of those who shared their testimonies at the 1994 Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference, Jan. 10-12 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Growing up isolated from God in a non-Christian family, Greg Fauls concluded at age eight there was no God.

At a YMCA camp, he and others decided to ransack a hotel room. He threw a Gideon Bible across the room, but something moved him to take it with him, and he began reading it.

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On the morning he told a friend he was going to church with him, Faulls' father announced he and Faulls' mother were divorcing.

"This, among other things, made me ready to hear the Father's message," said Faulls, who is now pastor of Valley View Baptist Church in Nocona, Texas.

"My emptiness became fullness. I soon knew God was calling me to lead others into his presence. He not only saved me by his burning message, but has given me a burning vision. I pray almost daily to reach 1 million people -- directly or indirectly -- for Jesus Christ.

"I urge each of you to share with people such as I who are unexposed to and isolated from the news of Jesus Christ."

Stephanie King Peters' career as a journalist was on the rise when at age 19 she became news anchor on a New Orleans television station.

"You might say I had it all," she said, "but there was a void in my life. I could flash a winning smile on television and go home and be tear-filled."

Desperate for love and protection, she joined a New Age cult which enslaved its members and required them to sell jewelry, books and incense on the streets.

She broke her TV contract and left her family and friends. But as she "jumped through the hoop" for the cult leader, she realized there was no love and no ministries to others.

She returned to her mother's home and read the Bible through tear-filled nights. She read in the scripture "All have sinned" and she accepted Jesus's salvation.

"Don't buy into reincarnation and the New Age," said Peters. "Ask, 'Where is the blood?' If they can't tell you about blood redemption, don't buy into it."

At age 63, Billye King was part of the first group at Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas, to receive Continuous Witness Training eleven years ago.

"My heart's desire was to win just one more person to Jesus," she said. "It does not matter how old we are, we still can witness and pray. If we can't go or can't witness personally, we can stay on our knees for those who can."

Describing her burden for lost souls, she said, "Every tear I shed washes my eyes so that I may see my Lord more clearly."

A few hours after Bruce Baker, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Baytown, Texas, asked God to forgive him for his self-sufficiency, his house burned and he became totally dependent upon God. Fortunately, he and his family escaped the fire uninjured.

In his sermon the following Sunday, he said, "God is sufficient for my every need, my family is my most valuable asset, and life is brief and in a moment it can be gone."

God's revelation to him was to do the basic things to follow Christ's example in seeking and saving the lost.

"God has given me the mission to be a fisher of men and to make my people fishers of men," he said, explaining he felt led by God to distribute 5,000 tracts.

"Go back to your church and do the basics. Be fishers of men, lovers of the lost."

Paul Pinyan, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Glen Rose, Texas, said at one time he thought God worked only in big churches.

"You started in small ones and worked hard, and God would bless you in a bigger church," he said.

"God was patient with me. He allowed me to have confidence that it was not up to me but up to God. I must prepare for God to do something. I could present people with the opportunity to confront Jesus and do something with their lives."

God gave him a new boldness as he challenged members of a church that was ready to close its doors and turn the building into a hay barn. As members responded to his challenge and began bringing visitors, the church baptized 39 members the first year and 49 the next.

Then God called him to a church with 52 members. Members there responded also, and the church baptized 14 members during his first two months and baptized 44 during the full year. The next year, there were 50 baptisms. The second Sunday in January, there were 150 in Sunday School, and members made 146 contacts.

"Prepare for God to do something," Pinyan urged evangelism conference participants. "Whether you have 75 or 5,000, God wants to work in your church."

When Dennis Moody was called in 1988 as pastor of First Baptist Church in Lyford, he found 20 adults and five children remaining in a congregation which "had suffered hardship" and almost closed its doors. When members asked what his vision for the church was, he said, "Growth and a vital outreach to children and teenagers."

Kathy and Larry Bates, youth leaders in the church, called his attention to mail pieces on the Texas Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference, and he agreed the church's young people should attend. Seven young people attended in 1989. More attended in successive years.

After the 1991 Youth Evangelism Conference, three young people started a Bible club, CFYS (Christian Fellowship for Youth in School), and attendance has grown to 35 at Lyford High School.

In 1993, First, Lyford, was able to secure one of the Youth-Led Revival teams commissioned by the Texas Baptist evangelism division. During the revival 42 young people accepted Christ as Savior.

Moody urged churches to support youth ministries including Youth-Led Revivals, saying, "Youth can't 'just say no' to such temptations as drugs and sex until they have first said 'Yes' to Jesus."

Iris Blue knew all about the temptations of sex and drugs, having yielded to them early in her life as a teen-age runaway. Stealing to support her heroin habit, she was sentenced to eight years in prison for armed robbery.

After her release, she frequented bars until one night when a young man told her how Jesus could change her life. Bowing to pray under a streetlamp outside a nightclub, she asked Jesus into her heart.

"The greatest thrill of my life is knowing I'm forgiven," said Blue, who is now a Mission Service Corps volunteer in Seagoville, Texas. "All my dreams now are wrapped up in Jesus.

"Everything changed that night when I knelt down a tramp and stood up a lady."

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Montgomery bus boycott  
offered hope for future

By Linda Lawson

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NASHVILLE (BP)--When David Tolbert got off the train in Montgomery, Ala., in 1956 to start his freshman year in college, he did not know the following months would give him an education about life that would bring hope, fear and a commitment to making a difference.

A year earlier in Montgomery, Rosa Parks, tired from a long day's work, had dared to sit in a bus seat reserved for whites because the seats in the back of the bus designated for blacks were taken. Her action touched off the Montgomery bus boycott and the beginning of the civil rights movement in the South.

"Arriving in Montgomery, I realized the boycott was not just news. It was real," Tolbert, now a church consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's church growth group, recalled. He was interviewed for a Race Relations Sunday videotape produced by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and talked later with Baptist Press. Southern Baptists will observe Race Relations Sunday on Feb. 13.

The leader of the Montgomery bus boycott was Martin Luther King Jr., then pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church where Tolbert attended. Later, when King's home was bombed, leaving the front of the house open and exposed, Tolbert and other fraternity members from Alabama State University took turns guarding the home at night.

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Under the leadership of King and other ministers, the boycott continued with regular mass meetings and a focus on nonviolent protest. Students, including Tolbert, found themselves on the front line.

"We had the most to gain and the least to lose," he said. We were not employed. We were enrolled in a black university and did not face expulsion, so we became very involved in the boycott itself."

Tolbert had not been involved in campaigning for equal rights for blacks while growing up in Alabama. No such movement existed.

"We had in my community a strong school, a good church, so we never accepted the inferiority that went along with segregation. We were forced to accept a way of life, separation of the races. We saw no prospect for living out our lives just being free, being American," Tolbert said.

"Montgomery offered that hope.

"It became almost an obsession that if there was to be change, this was our hope," he said. "We committed ourselves to doing what was necessary in a nonviolent way to bring about this change. There was tremendous hope and commitment to pay the cost, no matter what it was, to bring about change for ourselves and generations to come."

Images from those days in Montgomery remain etched in Tolbert's memory -- mass meetings, Sunday worship services when King preached about hope and nonviolence, college students walking in groups for comfort and safety, the face of a black man electrocuted for allegedly raping a white woman.

Looking back, Tolbert points with satisfaction to changes that have taken place in the aftermath of the Montgomery bus boycott.

- Segregation has been outlawed.
- Public accommodations and the educational system have been integrated.
- Progress has been made toward acceptance of equal rights for all people.
- Improvements continue in equal treatment of blacks in the economic and political systems.

"These positive changes have benefitted not only blacks but the South and America as a whole," Tolbert said.

Tolbert left Alabama in 1963 and lived and worked in the Midwest and Northeast for the next 26 years, serving as a bivocational Baptist pastor while working for several companies. He moved to Franklin, Tenn., in 1989 to operate a Christian book store and joined the board in 1992 where he works primarily with African American churches. He also is pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

"I feel God has put me in a strategic spot here at the Baptist Sunday School Board to serve African American churches and help them know what's available at the BSSB and how they can use resources to grow the churches which are going to change lives," Tolbert said.

He said he believes the Southern Baptist Convention has an active role to play in strengthening race relations.

"Its size and resources coupled with the fact that it is Baptist put it in a unique position," Tolbert said. "The strongest force in the African American community is the church. The Baptist denomination is the largest among African Americans. There is a Christian kinship. There is denominational and relationship kinship.

"I see a lot of emphasis on revival in the Sunday School Board. I'm convinced revival is the only real hope for our country. If there's not healing among the races, there is a paradox with the gospel," he continued.

"My hope for the future, as Martin Luther King said, is that we will really live out the equality for all people because of the good news of the gospel. It is a message of hope which also carries with it the dynamic for change. I believe the SBC is going to be an important part of what God is doing," Tolbert said.

Tolbert can be reached for consultation about BSSB resources at 1-800-458-2772, ext. 5716.

N.C. men give relief unit  
to Michigan convention

By Todd Deaton

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP)--When the next disaster occurs, Michigan Baptist volunteers will be ready to respond with hot meals and recovery teams working from their own relief unit -- furnished by North Carolina Baptists.

The 18-wheel, tractor-trailer unit was presented to representatives of the Michigan Baptist Brotherhood organization at the North Carolina Baptist Men's Convention Jan. 15 in Winston-Salem. North Carolina Baptist Men recently acquired and equipped a new unit that will provide a more versatile approach to the state convention's disaster relief feeding ministry.

"North Carolina Baptist Men learned of the need for a disaster relief unit in Michigan through Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission officials," said Richard Brunson, state Baptist Men's director. "Many Michigan Baptist men have participated in disaster relief and recovery training programs, but the state convention did not have a unit with which to respond to disasters.

"What we are doing is enabling another state convention to be able to respond to disasters and minister to people in the same manner North Carolina Baptist Men has been ministering in recent years," Brunson said.

During the December meeting of the executive committee of the Baptist State Convention's general board, North Carolina Baptist Men presented the need for a newer disaster relief unit, with the proposal that -- instead of selling the old unit -- the 60-foot tractor-trailer rig be given to Michigan Baptists so it could provide a further witness for Southern Baptists in that state. The executive committee also approved a transfer of \$25,000 from a Midwest disaster relief fund to help purchase a new disaster relief unit.

"This is a significant gift of love from North Carolina Baptists to Michigan Baptists," said Richard Capps, outgoing state volunteer coordinator for disaster relief, who presented the keys to the tractor-trailer unit to Michigan Baptist Brotherhood representatives Paul Walser, Pete Blythe and H. Oliver.

For more than 10 years, Capps said, the 18-wheel unit "gave Baptist Men of our state a tangible means of doing ministry in disaster relief."

Through the years hundreds of thousands of meals have been served and the regional teams which maintained the unit have been blessed by the many hours spent in ministry, Capps said.

"The generosity of North Carolina Baptists has advanced Michigan Baptists' disaster relief ministry 10 years," remarked Jim Jones, Brotherhood director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. "Because of the gift of North Carolina Baptists, Michigan will be ready with our own unit in months."

"Not only is this gift generous, but it is also strategic. This unit in Michigan expands Southern Baptists' capacity to respond quickly to disasters in the Midwest and Canada," added Jim Burton, interim adult division director at the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.

"The North Carolina response to the need for a disaster relief unit for Michigan demonstrates the wonderful partnership that has developed within the Brotherhood network," James D. Williams, president of the Brotherhood Commission, said.

"In our 25th year, disaster response has become a team effort," Williams noted, "and I thank God for the significant ministry which disaster relief represents for Southern Baptists. This gift enhances our response capability."

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