

Baptists mobilize after quake rocks Turkey and Syria

February 6, 2023

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was posted Monday morning, Feb. 6. By Tuesday morning, Feb. 7, the Associated Press was reporting the death toll had exceeded 5,000. By Wednesday morning, Feb. 8, the reported death toll had surpassed 11,000. By Thursday morning, Feb. 9, the number of reported fatalities topped 17,000.

A massive earthquake that claimed at least 2,700 lives in Turkey and Syria left a Baptist church in Aleppo severely damaged, the Baptist World Alliance reported.

A 7.8-magnitude earthquake—followed by aftershocks and a second quake measuring 7.5—injured more than 10,000 people across southern Turkey and north central Syria on Feb. 6.

In the immediate aftermath of the deadly earthquake, Baptists met to plan ministries in response, while Hungarian Baptist Aid mobilized a team to assist with relief efforts and BWA called on Christians globally to pray.

“Baptist church leaders in Turkey are gathering in Izmir to mobilize response efforts, and leaders in Lebanon are working with Syrian Baptists to respond to needs in the communities impacted,” [BWA reported online](#).

“The Baptist church in Aleppo has sustained significant damage, and Baptist World Aid is working in collaboration with European Baptist Federation to ascertain details regarding current needs.”

In an email, Merritt Johnston, director of communications for BWA, noted European Baptist Federation representative Helle Liht contacted Nabil

Costa, executive director of the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development, who was able to confirm the Aleppo church was “badly damaged.”

Liht also contacted Hürrem Cevik in Turkey, a BWA United Nations representative.

“She said the church in Adana, which is closest to the earthquake epicenter, was not affected by the earthquake. Pastor Şükrü is also safe but has family members in Istanbul who were impacted,” Johnston wrote.

Paul Chitwood, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s International Mission Board, noted Southern Baptists will respond to needs in the region through its [Send Relief](#) collaborative.

“Turkey’s disaster agency has appealed for help from the international community as it conducts search and rescue operations, and we thank the Lord that he is allowing Send Relief’s international relief team to respond as initial needs are assessed,” [Chitwood told Baptist Press](#).

Bryant Wright, president of Send Relief, urged prayer for those affected by the earthquake and for all who are responding to their needs.

“The devastation cannot be put into words, and we are praying for the first responders, as well as the churches and others who will be bringing relief during this tragic and difficult time,” Wright said.