

Associated Baptist Press

July 14, 1994

In this issue:

- Baptists, others, cope and respond to floods spawned by tropical storm (revised)
- Virginia conservative group elects interim director
- Breyer endorses church-state separation, principle in RFRA
- 1992 survey overestimated doubt about Holocaust, new study says

 EDITOR'S NOTE: Please substitute this story for the one which ran under the same headline July 12. New, updated or corrected material is in paragraphs 1, 2,3,17,20,21,22,23,25 and 26.

**Baptists, others, cope and respond
 to floods spawned by tropical storm (revised)**

By Bob Allen

AMERICUS, Ga. (ABP) -- Residents of Koinonia Partners, an experimental Christian community founded in 1969 by Southern Baptist ethicist Clarence Jordan, mourned the loss of a long-time resident drowned July 5 in a flash flood spawned by remnants of Tropical Storm Alberto.

Jophie Anderson, 70, was one of at least 30 people killed in southwest Georgia by flooding caused by four days of unrelenting rains starting July 5. In Americus, located in Sumter County, among the hardest-hit of the 48 counties in the state to have been declared either a disaster area or in a state of emergency, 21 inches of rain fell in one 24-hour period.

At least one-quarter of Georgia's 7 million residents reportedly have been affected by the flood, which displaced 175,000 people and covered about 300,000 acres of crops. Agricultural losses are expected to reach \$100 million.

Anderson, like many of the flood fatalities, died while trying to drive through floodwaters in low-lying areas. She drowned when waters swept her car off Georgia Highway 49 into a rain-swollen ditch about three miles south of Americus. She was returning home after taking her foster child to Florida.

At a memorial service July 11, the Koinonia Partners community eulogized Anderson, a past activities coordinator, as "a demonstration of walking theology," said the organization's executive director, Fer-Rell Malone. "She was a doer and affected the lives of many people in the community by her sharing and her love," he said. "She will be greatly missed."

More than 50 Koinonia homes in various locations in Sumter County received flood damage, Malone said. Koinonia also suffered damage to crops, which underwrite the living expenses and ministry programs for the ecumenical Christian communal farm, and to the organization's irrigation system, he added.

"We expect some very serious financial problems," Malone said. He said Koinonia supporters will be asked to contribute to the organization's Fund for Humanity to repair and replace flood damage. Contributions may be sent

to Koinonia Partners, 1324 Georgia Highway South, Americus, Ga., 31709, he said.

Another ecumenical Christian organization based in Americus, Habitat for Humanity, International, escaped damage but turned to responding to needs of others less fortunate.

None of the 140 Habitat homes located in Sumter County was thought to be damaged, said Jim Perks, a staff member for the non-profit organization which provides affordable housing and low-interest loans to qualifying needy people by utilizing volunteer labor, donated materials and "sweat equity" by homeowners. Many Baptists, including former President Jimmy Carter, support and work with Habitat.

Habitat's staff left normal tasks to focus on community relief, Perks said, including manning a switchboard and delivering drinking water to several neighborhoods. One church group that arrived expecting to work on home construction instead wound up carrying water to flush toilets at a hospital with no running water.

Water service was restored by July 12, said Comer Williamson, director of missions for Friendship Baptist Association in Americus. He said he and pastors in the association were participating in a relief effort coordinated by the American Red Cross, mainly assessing damage so as work crews arrive they can be dispatched most efficiently.

Floodwaters have receded within the boundaries of Americus, a city of 21,000 located 70 miles southwest of Macon, Williamson said. "Everything in Americus could be cleaned up right now," he said.

Assessing damage in outlying areas is not as far along, however. Friendship Association includes 43 churches spread across seven counties and reports of damage have been sketchy, he said.

While Americus is accessible to the outside, detours around closed roads make travel time-consuming, Williamson said. He related talking to one person who said he drove 90 miles to complete a journey that is normally seven miles.

One church, Whitewater Baptist Church near Oglethorpe, reportedly had eight-to-10 feet of water in its sanctuary from flooded Whitewater Creek. Damage is expected to exceed \$100,000-plus for the sanctuary and an adjoining parsonage may be a total loss, he said. The church is fairly large for the association, averaging about 120 in Sunday school, Williamson said.

Farther south, residents of Georgia and the Florida Panhandle braced for the worst.

The 1200 residents of Bainbridge received good news when forecasters said the anticipated crest of the Flint River on Thursday, July 14, would reach 13 feet above flood stage rather than the 20 feet above flood stage predicted earlier.

Already, about 5,000 people have been evacuated from Bainbridge, said Charles Holland, director of missions for Bowen Baptist Association, as waters poured into low-lying sections. "We have many families that are totally wiped out," Holland said. "They won't even have a home to go back to once this is over."

The association's Brotherhood has set up distribution centers for food, medicine, diapers, baby food and formula and drinking water. "Water is a big commodity," Holland said. A tractor-trailer load of food and supplies was reported July 12 to be en route to Bainbridge from the Georgia Baptist Convention's state Brotherhood, he said.

President Clinton traveled to flood-stricken areas July 13, delivering more than \$60 million in flood relief aid to be shared by Georgia, Alabama and Florida. It is expected to take six months for some areas to recover from flood damage.

The Georgia Brotherhood office is asking churches in the state for prayer, volunteers, pressure washers, pumps, disinfectant, brooms, mops, rubber gloves, shovels and buckets. Local associations will set up pickup points for donated materials. Volunteers may call Ray Newman, director of the office, at (404) 936-5256.

Seven Baptist state convention-owned disaster relief units -- from Georgia, South Carolina, Florida and Alabama -- are serving meals to flood victims and relief workers, according to Mickey Caison, national disaster relief coordinator for the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Commission. The units has served nearly 48,000 meals through July 12, he said.

Farther north in Georgia, flooding knocked out a city water plant serving 150,000 residents in Macon, closing numerous businesses. Mercer University, a Baptist school, closed its Macon campus three days, July 6-8. The school re-opened July 11, said spokesman Larry Brumley, without running water. Portable toilets were moved in and some campus buildings that are water cooled were without air conditioning, he said.

Water service in Macon was expected to be restored July 15, but will be unsafe to drink for at least two weeks.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has allocated \$25,000 for flood relief to be coordinated by the Georgia state Fellowship, according to David Wilkinson, communications coordinator for the Atlanta-based organization.

David Hinson, moderator-elect for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia, said the state organization is setting up contact points in Macon, Albany, Cordele, Americus, Montezuma and Bainbridge, as well as others outside affected areas, for coordination of relief efforts.

Hinson said the Fellowship's efforts are not intended to compete with those of the state convention and SBC. "I think it's not that we're not working with the Brotherhood," he said. "We're going to work with both state convention agencies and individuals so we can provide help. People don't really care where the help comes from. They just want help. That's where we're coming from. We're doing this in the name of Christ."

-30-

Virginia conservative group elects interim director

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Evangelist Howard Baldwin of Richmond, Va., has been named interim executive director of a conservative Baptist fellowship in Virginia.

Baldwin, 59, was elected June 30 by the executive committee of Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, an organization formed in 1993 to counter what its founders charged was a weakening of ties between the Southern Baptist Convention and the more moderate Baptist General Association of Virginia.

A native Virginian, Baldwin is president of Multi-Media Ministries, an evangelistic association. In his new position, he will coordinate activities of the group, which has undertaken some mission projects, said Tommy Taylor, SBCV president.

"We felt Howard could help us with communication and education," said Taylor, pastor of London Bridge Baptist Church in Virginia Beach. "We will be trying to mobilize support and gain strength."

The organization expects to employ a full-time director, but no time limit has been placed on Baldwin's interim, Taylor said.

Baldwin is a former pastor of Ragland Memorial Baptist Church in Goochland, Va., as well as churches in Illinois, Indiana and England. He also is a former trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

In 1991 he was the conservative candidate for BGAV president, garnering about 34 percent of the vote.

A member of Bethany Baptist Church in Richmond, he is a graduate of the University of Richmond and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Baldwin was leading evangelistic services in the Baltic republic of Estonia and was unavailable for comment.

Taylor said SBCV's "main role is to maintain strong loyalty to the Southern Baptist Convention."

"Our position is that we pretty much are the Southern Baptists in Virginia," said Taylor, adding some supporters want to remove the word "conservative" from the group's title to more clearly express that viewpoint.

As conservatives have consolidated their control of the SBC since 1979, Virginia Baptists -- widely viewed as theological moderates -- have created a variety of "giving tracks" in their state convention budget to permit Virginia churches to bypass some or all SBC ministries.

One track channels funds to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a national organization dissatisfied with the SBC's conservative direction. Some observers believe the Fellowship has the makings of a separate denomination, although CBF leaders consistently deny a new religious body is inevitable.

Virginia's tie with the CBF has drawn the ire of SBCV, whose executive committee recently asked the Virginia Baptist General Board to recommend eliminating the Fellowship giving option, warning that failing to comply will increase polarization between conservatives and moderates in the state.

That request followed action of the SBC in June instructing its agencies and institutions to no longer accept funds from the CBF.

In an effort to ease tensions in Virginia, BGAV President Ron Crawford earlier this year appointed a "council on cooperation" of prominent moderate, conservative and unaligned pastors. The council is expected to make recommendations at the BGAV's annual meeting this fall. However, its influence may have been diminished recently when Taylor, citing personal reasons, resigned as the group's co-chair.

Crawford called Baldwin's election "disappointing."

"At a time when Virginia Baptists are working to enhance cooperation, this action diminishes cooperation," said Crawford, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Richmond.

Crawford said he sent letters last December to SBCV executive committee members asking them to delay hiring an executive director until the council on cooperation had time to complete its assignment.

"The election of an SBCV interim executive director undermines the work of the council ... ," Crawford said. "The SBCV is refusing to postpone its fundamentalist agenda in Virginia."

More disturbing, he added, is the election's impact on the work of BGAV executive director Reginald McDonough.

"Dr. McDonough has effectively ministered to all Virginia Baptists," said Crawford. "He has worked tirelessly to build bridges of trust and cooperation in the Virginia Baptist family. I call on Virginia Baptists to support and pray for Reginald McDonough. We do not need another executive director."

But Taylor said Baldwin will enhance SBCV's role as Virginia Baptists' "conscience," applying pressure to return the state association to a "more normal and acceptable" relationship with the SBC.

Some observers speculate SBCV may eventually sever ties with the BGAV -- raising questions about both organizations' future relationship with the national convention -- but Taylor said BGAV leaders could head off such a move.

Although the immediate future of SBCV appears to be one of "more growth and strength and perhaps separation, it doesn't have to be that way," Taylor said.

"Howard told me -- and I agree with him -- that if the time comes that the BGAV is ready and willing to return (to a closer relationship with the SBC) ... our organization would be ready to disband. That could happen if we (conservatives) felt we were reasonably included in state convention affairs and, even more importantly, if the BGAV were in a more reasonable partnership with the SBC."

-30-

Breyer endorses church-state separation, principle in RFRA

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The man expected to become the next Supreme Court justice endorsed a wall of separation between church and state and the principle embodied in the Religious Freedom Restoration Act during the first two days of confirmation hearings July 12-13.

Appearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Judge Stephen Breyer answered questions focusing on First Amendment issues, the death penalty and abortion. President Clinton nominated Breyer, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, to replace retired Justice Harry A. Blackmun.

Embracing Thomas Jefferson's wall metaphor, Breyer said the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment "has tremendous foresight."

"And the reason that there was that wall ... is that we are a country of so many different people, of so many different religions, and it's so terribly important to members of each religion to be able to practice that religion freely, to be able to pass that religion on to their children," Breyer said. "And each religion in a country of many, many different religions would not want the state to side with some other religion, so each must be concerned that the state remain neutral."

Breyer said he embraces the principle of neutrality in the Lemon test but that no test is absolute or complete in helping the high court determine Establishment Clause cases. The Lemon test requires governmental actions to have a secular purpose, neither advance nor inhibit religion and avoid excessive entanglement between church and state.

The court faces two problems with Establishment Clause cases, he said. First, the court must decide where to draw the line separating church and state. Second, the court has to communicate the result in a manner that is understandable.

The Supreme Court has been clear, he said, that government must not favor one religion over another or religion over irreligion.

Addressing the Free Exercise Clause, Breyer said the principle embodied in RFRA "is absolutely right." RFRA restored a high level of protection for religious practice that the high court virtually abandoned in its 1990 Smith decision. RFRA, signed into law in November, requires government to have a compelling interest before it can restrict a citizen's religious practice.

Breyer said that the death penalty and the right to privacy in abortion decisions are settled law. He underscored that both issues already have been resolved by the court and are the law of the land.

Appointed to the federal bench by President Carter in 1980, he expressed a keen desire to make the "law work for people."

In an opening statement, Breyer said, "The vast array of Constitution, statutes, rules, regulations, practices and procedures has a single basic purpose. It is to help the many different individuals who make up America -- from so many different backgrounds and circumstances, with so many different needs and hopes -- live together productively, harmoniously and in freedom.

"Keeping that ultimate purpose in mind helps guide a judge through the labyrinth of rules and regulations that the law too often becomes, to reach the very human goals that underlie the Constitution and the statutes that Congress writes."

Breyer's years of public service cover all three branches of government. Prior to his judicial appointment, Breyer was chief counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee, pioneering landmark airline deregulation legislation. He also was a law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg, a top aid in the Justice Department's anti-trust division, an assistant special prosecutor in the Watergate investigation and a law professor.

Several senators from both parties have voiced their support for Breyer, who is expected to sail through the nomination process.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and ranking minority member of the Judiciary Committee, said, "I believe he will be confirmed." Hatch said Breyer is known for his "careful, scholarly opinions" and that President Clinton has made "an excellent choice."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., worked with Breyer in the 1970s when he was counsel to the committee and expressed unqualified support for his nomination.

"Judge Stephen Breyer is superbly qualified to serve on our highest court," Kennedy said. "Throughout his long and brilliant career, Judge Breyer has committed himself to public service, to excellence in the law and to the pursuit of justice for all Americans."

The Judiciary Committee is expected to hear witnesses speaking for and against the nomination before voting on its recommendation to the full Senate. If confirmed, Breyer would become the 108th justice on the high court.

-30-

--By Pam Parry

1992 survey overestimated doubt about Holocaust, new study says

NEW YORK (ABP) – A widely publicized 1992 study reporting that one in three Americans either doubted or were unsure if the Holocaust actually occurred was flawed because of poor wording of a survey question, a new study commissioned by the American Jewish Committee concludes.

The study, performed by Tom Smith of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, found Americans' knowledge about the Holocaust to be "shallow, incomplete and imperfect," but not particularly worse than their knowledge about other historical events.

He attributed doubt and uncertainty about the Holocaust to ignorance rather than any influence of neo-Nazi

revisionism.

Smith analyzed all available research data relating to denial of the Holocaust, including two studies conducted for the American Jewish Committee by the Roper Organization in 1992 and 1994.

A question in the 1992 Roper survey asked, "Does it seem possible or does it seem impossible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened?" -- to which 22 percent responded "possible," 65 percent "impossible" and 12 percent "don't know."

The question's double-negative phrasing skewed that response, Smith said. A revised version of the question in the 1994 survey -- "Does it seem possible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened, or do you feel certain it happened" -- yielded dramatically different results. Only 1 percent of respondents in the 1994 poll thought it "possible" the Holocaust never happened, 91 percent felt "certain" and 8 percent said they did not know.

Based on combined data, Smith said the group of hard-core Holocaust deniers in the U.S. is less than 2 percent of the population. Another 10 percent express some doubt or uncertainty about the Holocaust. Included in that category are those who say it is possible or probable the Holocaust did not occur, those who accept that it happened but believe its dimensions may have been exaggerated and those who are simply unsure due to wholesale ignorance of the event.

Knowledge about the Holocaust grew modestly between the 1992 and 1994 Roper surveys, Smith said, probably due to increased media coverage of the Holocaust and related developments such as the opening of various Holocaust museums and memorials.

Newspaper coverage of the Holocaust expanded by 89 percent between 1992 and 1994, largely because of attention to Steven Spielberg's 1993 film "Schindler's List." A total of 9 percent of adults said they had seen the film and 58 percent of those who have seen a movie in the last 12 months but haven't seen "Schindler's List" say they want to see the film.

Awareness of neo-Nazi claims that the Holocaust never happened grew from 38 percent in 1992 to 49 percent in 1994. Most of that information came from television, Smith said. Television news programs such as Sixty Minutes have carried Holocaust denial stories particularly focusing on a controversy about the placement of ads in college newspapers by a neo-Nazi group while tabloid TV and talk shows have featured neo-Nazis among their "kooks-du-jour," he said.

Still, most doubt and uncertainty stems from lack of knowledge rather than neo-Nazi claims, the report says. Two 1994 Gallup surveys found that among those who knew what the Holocaust was, 89-90 percent were sure it happened and only one-half percent were either unsure or doubters. Of those unfamiliar with the Holocaust, 34-37 percent thought it definitely happened and 21-23 percent were uncertain or doubtful.

"Ignorance and denial both decline with education and exposure to more information," Smith said.

Most Americans believe it is important that the facts and the lessons of the Holocaust be widely taught. "The Holocaust has proven such a powerful and horrific warning of the consequences of bigotry and authoritarianism that neo-Nazis and anti-Semites have tried to deny its truth," Smith said. "Their goal is assisted by the historical ignorance of Americans, but few have swallowed the deniers' claims. While uncertain of the details, most Americans see the Holocaust as an enduring warning from the past, whose lessons should be taught and remembered."

David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, said his organization, through Smith's study, "is pleased to set the record straight with regard to the actual number of Americans open to hard-core Holocaust denial."

"We are relieved to learn that this percentage is far smaller than originally assumed," Harris said. "At the same time, even the smallest levels of Holocaust denial or doubt are of concern to us, and, as the survey data reveals, there is still much that needs to be done in the area of Holocaust education."

-30-

END