

# Associated Baptist Press

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## Opal leaves path of destruction along Florida's Emerald Coast

By Barbara Denman

PENSACOLA BEACH, Fla. (ABP) -- Florida's Panhandle barrier islands, famous for their emerald waters and sugar-white sand beaches, took a direct hit from Hurricane Opal Oct. 4, leaving homes, businesses and high-rise condominiums resembling sand castles torn apart by crashing waves.

The damage from the category-three hurricane stretched more than 120 miles from Mexico Beach -- just east of Panama City -- to Pensacola Beach. Government officials, concerned over the safety of persons among the crumpled infrastructures, closed off access to several island communities, leaving residents who had responded to the mandatory evacuation stranded on the mainland.

The storm was the second hurricane in as many months to plow through the Panhandle area, coming on the heels of Hurricane Erin which struck in August. The route of the two storms intersected at Pensacola Beach, where residents had only just completed repairs caused by Erin.

Hurricane Opal is believed to be the second costliest in Florida history, behind 1992's Hurricane Andrew. In addition to Pensacola Beach, the hardest hits areas included:

- Navarre Beach, where the eye of the storm crossed and destroyed nearly 75 percent of the homes;
- Destin, where the high-rise condominiums on Holiday Isle were buffeted and stripped by 15-to-20-foot waves;
- Okaloosa Island, which received winds of 140 mph for hours; and
- Panama City Beach, where beachfront homes received extensive damage.

According to early reports, at least nine Florida Baptist churches -- perhaps as many as 11 -- sustained minor to moderate damage.

As of Oct. 9, the death toll in Florida stood at two. But at least 17 people died as the storm quickly moved north through Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee.

For nearly four days after the storm, residents of Florida's panhandle coped with no electricity, broken trees, smashed windows, backed up sewage and contaminated water. Clean up began almost immediately.

Perhaps the most photographed sight was the dozen 30- and 40-foot yachts perched on Highway 98 in Fort Walton Beach, pushed and then abandoned there by the storm's wind and water surge.

The state used 4,500 troops from the National Guard to seal off island communities and enforce curfews in three Panhandle counties.

Many residents of Pensacola and Navarre beaches, returning to their homes for the first time Saturday, found instead near-vacant lots emptied of houses and belongings. Only about one of every five seaside residences remained intact.

The storm's high winds and water surge covered the island with sand. Pieces of houses, furniture, toys and personal belongings were strewn across the island.

"We were luckier than most people here," said Pat Ford, a member of First Baptist Church of Pensacola, whose primary residence is on Pensacola Beach. Although the family lost most of their home's contents, she noted, "We still have a home." They will live with friends until they are permitted to return permanently to the island.

Next-door neighbors T.A. and Eloise Shell, also members of First Church, found their vacation home and their daughter's primary residence twisted apart.

As she gazed upon the rubble, Eloise Shell began crying. "I thought I had come to grips with this," she said. "But we have had 30 years here and lots of memories."

Pensacola Beach resident Sara Williamson was not as lucky. The uninsured renter lost everything. "I didn't really care about the furniture. I got my pictures, that's what's most important to me. I would just would like to have a place to come back to and redo."

As part of the Florida Baptist Convention's disaster-relief team, staff members Brenda Forlines, Barbara Curnutt and Sharon Thompson, were permitted on the Pensacola Beach island with residents during the weekend. As they went door to door surveying needs, they provided grief counseling, offered financial assistance, moved furniture, swept out mud and tore out soaked carpet.

"We were there at the point of real need when people were encountering their loss for the first time," said Curnutt.

Tears streamed down Sara Williamson's face as Curnutt and Forlines prayed with her and gave some financial assistance.

Another woman who lost all her home's contents promised, "When I get back on my feet again, I will find a Baptist church and put this money in the offering plate."

The teams discovered several young families in despair, including one with a 12-year-old son, another expecting a child in three months and a single mother.

The single mother was standing in her home holding a Christmas ornament and crying, Thompson said. "That was all she had left of her home." The couple and their son were worried about what the youngster would wear to school the next day. "This is the worse loss I encountered on the island," Curnutt noted. "We feel impressed to do something extra."

The volunteers purchased clothes for the boy to wear to school and connected the family with members of First Church of Pensacola who would help them find a new home.

Church members also promised to help another couple in need who only two months ago had lost their first home in Erin.

"The people are so responsive, so grateful and so open," Curnutt said. "The most heartbreaking thing of all is that so many are leaving the island with all of their belongings in the back of a pickup truck."

Jim Brown, on-site coordinator of the Florida Baptist disaster-relief response, said that during the next week volunteers will be stationed on other islands as the blockades are removed to comb the devastated areas to determine what needs can be met by convention resources.

"I think we will have unique needs and opportunities for ministry once these beaches are opened," Brown said.

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## **In wake of Opal, Baptists mount disaster-relief strategy**

By Barbara Denman

PENSACOLA BEACH, Fla. (ABP) -- Even before Hurricane Opal struck Florida's Panhandle, teams of Florida Baptist volunteers were racing to the path that the storm was stalking.

On the night Opal struck, the volunteers waited at Blue Springs Baptist Assembly in Marianna. At daybreak, three teams traveled to Fort Walton Beach, Panama City and Pensacola to assess damage and determine where convention resources could best be used.

By nightfall, 24 hours after the storm struck, three feeding units were dispatched to assigned areas and prepared to feed the storm's victims.

The three locations designated as feeding sites were First Baptist Church of Panama City, First Baptist Church of Destin and First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach. The feeding units were staffed with volunteers from Orlando, Palm Coast and the Panhandle.

On the second day, a Texas Baptist feeding unit was dispatched to First Church of Niceville.

According to convention officials, nearly 3,000 meals were being served each day immediately after the storm, with the peak expected to reach 10,000 a day during the following week.

Meanwhile, in Georgia, where Opal also wreaked havoc, two Georgia Baptist feeding units went to work at Central Baptist Church in Douglasville and First Baptist of Pine Mountain. Another 50 volunteers helped residents with clean-up.

In Alabama, area Baptists set up emergency food service at First Baptist Church, Enterprise, Ala., the day after the storm. Other Baptist relief teams from Louisiana and Mississippi were placed on alert in anticipation of further needs.

Many residents of Florida's Panhandle ate their first hot meals after the storm at the Baptist feeding sites.

Resident Chris Richards called the Baptist help "wonderful." The day before, Richards and his son Jason had eaten a box of crackers after a falling tree had knocked over their refrigerator.

His parents, Howard and Delores Richards, had been forced to evacuate their Okaloosa Island home just before the hurricane struck. Because the damage to the island was so severe, authorities had restricted any access to the island.

"We haven't been back since the storm," Delores Richards said, "We don't know anything about the place and we have nowhere else to go."

Eating at the convention's disaster-relief van was the first hot meal for Rachel Goodwin, whose house was without power and water. "I was really hungry," said Goodwin, a member of the Florida Baptist State Board of Missions. "I knew you'd be here," she told the volunteers. "I kept listening to the radio to hear where you were. But I told my son, Florida Baptists will be here with food."

Although Destin is an affluent community, Bob Boone, pastor of First Baptist Church there, said the church has responded in the past to many benevolent needs in the area. The disaster response allowed them to continue that ministry.

"We want to help minister to people any way we can," he said. "We want to help the church and Destin get back step by step."

Boone reported that many church members were concerned about their homes, especially on the affluent Holiday Isle. He spent his days after the storm trying to help members assess the damage to their homes. Many could only be reached by boat because of washed out roads.

As persons in the Fort Walton Beach community enjoyed their hot meals, Florida Baptist Convention staff tried to assess individual needs around the feeding site.

As hurricane experiences were shared, the conversation often led to "the neatest witnessing opportunities," said Barbara Curnutt, director of Florida Baptists' Woman's Missionary Union Department. "The Lord just put them here."

Roy Liburd, consultant in the convention's African-American division, said the time also led to several witnessing opportunities.

From the command post at the Fort Walton Beach church, teams from the convention staff fanned out across the communities assessing needs. A second volunteer reception center was established at First Church of Panama City to better disburse incoming volunteer groups.

According to Jim Brown, coordinator of Florida Baptist's disaster response team, the staff was looking for opportunities to minister, such as to the elderly, single mothers and poor who are without resources and abilities to help themselves.

During the first weekend after the storm, nearly 300 volunteers filled requests, which included cutting and removing fallen trees, cleaning up, moving furniture and helping tenants move after their homes were condemned.

Damage assessment and response was also given to areas north of Interstate 10, where the storm spawned tornadoes and massive power outages. Flooding remained a threat along rivers gorged by Opal's heavy rainfall.

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-- Ken Camp contributed to this story.

## **ABP honors Dallas newspaper, hears of progress in classrooms**

By Bob Allen and Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Associated Baptist Press honored a Dallas newspaper Oct. 6 for its efforts to enhance reporting of religion.

At its annual Religious Freedom Award banquet, held Oct. 6 in Dallas, ABP honored The Dallas Morning News for its new weekly religion section and its commitment to expanded religion coverage throughout the newspaper.

Meanwhile, Oliver Thomas, the banquet's keynote speaker, said progress is being made in the age-old dispute about religion in public schools, and he praised President Clinton as a defender of religious freedom.

Bob Mong, managing editor of The Dallas Morning News, accepted the award on behalf of the newspaper. Mong, expressing the newspaper's gratitude, said he does not believe the paper has achieved "the pinnacle" in covering religion and is only taking "the first steps" toward its ultimate goals.

Sharon Grigsby, editor of the religion section, said while the one-year-old, six-page Saturday section has received a lot of publicity, it is "only a small part" of the paper's new policy about religion coverage. The Morning News is beginning to see the religion staff on par with business, metro, sports and other sections in providing front-page stories, she said.

The ABP Religious Freedom Award was established in 1993 to recognize outstanding contributions to religious liberty and journalistic freedom. Last year's award went to Jack Brymer, who resigned as editor of the

Florida Baptist Witness in a dispute with his board of directors over editorial freedom.

In a keynote speech, Thomas, a constitutional lawyer, sought to "explode a myth" that the Clinton administration is "hostile to religion."

"The Clinton administration has done more to advance the cause of religious liberty than any administration in this century," Thomas said.

Thomas, of Maryville, Tenn., is former general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. He now works part-time for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Thomas, who chaired the commission which drafted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, noted "we would not have an RFRA today if it were not for Bill Clinton." Those who benefit most from the 1993 law protecting religious expression, Thomas said, are "evangelical Christians" who most often criticize Clinton's policies.

Thomas said he did not intend his remarks to be partisan but, "They (the administration) have done something right here and that message has not really gotten out," Thomas said.

Thomas also lauded Clinton for the recent presidential directive clarifying what types of religious expression are permissible in public schools and his endorsement of ideas in "Finding Common Ground," a project spearheaded by the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center in Nashville, Tenn.

The United States is facing a rising tide of "tribalism" as groups advance their own narrow visions for shaping society, Thomas said.

"The tribalization of America is severe," Thomas said. "If we didn't know it before, we certainly knew it after the O.J. Simpson verdict."

The "culture wars are most acute in the public schools," he said.

By clarifying how values and religious history can be taught in public schools, the Common Ground project does more to protect religious liberty in a pluralistic society than the proposed Religious Equality Amendment being debated in Congress, he said.

The "common ground" approach represents a third major shift in thinking about religion in public schools, Thomas said.

Early on, the trend was to "use public schools to make Protestant Christians out of everybody," which contributed to the rise of parochial schools, he said. After 1962 and 1963 Supreme Court rulings banning organized Bible reading and prayer, schools became "religion-free zones," where administrators overreacted to fear of violating the separation of church and state.

"We sort of went from one extreme to the other in public schools," Thomas said. "Finally, after three decades of fighting over this issue, we're trying a new way."

Thomas said he has watched fundamentalists and secular humanists come together around common-ground principles.

Thomas called the proposed religious liberty amendment "a ruse" that is being promoted "by some people that want the government to promote their particular brand of religion and it ought to be opposed by all lovers of religious liberty."

Thomas said he believes the First Amendment to the Constitution already provides adequate freedom of religion. The solution to students being denied rights already protected by law is better enforcement, not more laws, he said.

Thomas said he believes the amendment is more political than substantive and he now doubts it will pass.

"The Religious Equality Amendment was not the idea of the conservative Christian community," Thomas said. "The first public statement I heard about it was from Speaker [Newt] Gingrich."

"I don't think the amendment is going to go. I think they've lost a lot of steam. I just don't think there's the kind of support for the amendment there was even a year ago," Thomas said.

## **ABP board of directors revises '95 budget, approves '96 budget**

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Financial matters dominated the Oct. 7 meeting of the Associated Baptist Press directors in Dallas. The board revised its operating budget for 1995 to pay a \$13,000 fee to the Internal Revenue Service, approved a \$347,000 total budget for 1996 and created a development design team to ensure the news service's long-term security.

Acting on a recommendation from its finance committee, the ABP board approved a revised \$275,000 operating budget for 1995, requiring an \$8,300 transfer from reserve funds, which total about \$60,000. Projected revenue for the year is \$235,850 from contributors, \$28,350 from service fees and \$2,500 in interest income.

The budget shortfall was due in part to minor anticipated overages in insurance, telephone and fax costs, on-line services, travel, office supplies and auditing and accounting fees. A more significant cost was an IRS penalty for failure to file required reporting forms during ABP's first three years.

ABP board chairman Jeff Mobley, an attorney in Nashville, Tenn., reported that the directors would continue to seek a waiver of penalties from the IRS district office citing "reasonable cause" for the oversight. However, he recommended the board pay the penalties while continuing its appeal in order "stop the meter running on interest" assessed by the IRS. If the fees are waived, Mobley said, the IRS will refund the money with interest.

Even though the non-profit organization owed no taxes, Mobley noted, the IRS penalized ABP for failing to file required annual reporting forms in 1991, 1992 and 1993. The penalties amounted to more than \$5,100 in 1991 and again in 1992 and about \$3,000 for 1993.

The 1996 budget includes a \$294,000 basic requirement and \$53,000 for expanding the news service's outreach through an internship, electronic news delivery, marketing and development.

Next year's budget calls for \$265,400 revenue from contributors, including \$150,000 from organizations -- primarily the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization dissatisfied with Southern Baptist Convention leadership in recent years -- and \$73,000 from Baptist state conventions in Texas, North Carolina and Virginia.

In his report to the board, executive editor Greg Warner pointed out that the proposed budget was \$47,000 above anything in the news service's five-year history.

"It's OK to adopt a budget beyond your experience so long as it's not beyond your commitment, and ours will be tested," he said. "There is no evidence that business as usual will make that budget reality. I don't know that we have exhausted our traditional sources of revenue, but I know a status quo effort on our part next year will leave us well short of our goal."

To put together a fund-raising plan for ABP's long-term financial growth and security, the board approved creation of a five- to seven-member development design team. The team's development plan proposal would include enhancing awareness of the news service, identifying and cultivating donors, securing financial resources and developing an endowment.

Members of the team approved by the board are: Bob Feather, assistant to the chancellor at Baylor University; Lloyd Elder, retired president of the Baptist Sunday School Board; Philip Poole, assistant to the president at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo.; and Jimmy Nickell of Overland Park, Kan., chairman of the board's development committee.

The board authorized Nickell to fill the other posts on the development design team with people possessing expertise in development, marketing and organizational Baptist life. Members are expected to serve 12-to-18 months on a volunteer basis.

Directors also:

-- Approved a strategy committee recommendation that ABP pursue a pilot project to expand its outreach through electronic publishing to attract a mass market audience.

-- Re-elected as officers: chairman, Jeff Mobley of Nashville, Tenn.; vice chairman, Ardelle Clemons of Greenville, S.C.; and treasurer, Don McGregor of Dallas. Don Sharp of Chicago was elected to a first term as secretary.

-- Elected John Roberts, editor of the Baptist Courier in South Carolina, to the board of directors for a term ending in October 1998.

The next ABP board meeting will be March 29-30, 1996, in Greenville, S.C.

At its annual Religious Freedom Award banquet, held the evening prior to the board meeting, ABP honored the Dallas Morning News for its new weekly religion section and commitment to expanded religion coverage throughout the newspaper.

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## **Texas association ousts church for ordaining gay man a deacon**

By Bob Allen

AUSTIN, Texas (ABP) -- University Baptist Church of Austin, Texas, has been expelled from Austin Baptist Association for ordaining a gay man as a deacon last year.

At its annual meeting Oct. 9, the association voted 108-55 to disfellowship the church, which was thrown out of the association once before for opening its doors to black members in the 1950s.

The church could face further sanctions from the Southern Baptist Convention, which in 1992 amended its constitution to exclude from membership churches that approve of homosexuality.

Larry Bethune, pastor of the church, declined to name the deacon, citing his privacy. Bethune said the man is "in a long-term continuing relationship with another male," according to the Austin American-Statesman. The man, one of six deacons elected in September 1994, "is one of the best deacons I have ever seen and one of the finest people I have ever known," Bethune said.

In an Oct. 9 letter to the Association, which was approved by the church in a business meeting, Bethune said the church has "no policy or agenda regarding sexual orientation and ordination" and "would not participate in an invasion of privacy of any of our members, let alone one of our deacons."

In his letter, Bethune and deacon chair David Gavenda blamed a year-long dispute with the association on "a deliberate campaign of rumor, gossip and slander regarding the question of the sexual orientation of one of our deacons."

The letter said the church considered the ouster "an interference in the autonomy of our congregation."

"We do not believe the association has the right to dictate whom our church may or may not ordain nor to tell us how we must interpret scripture on any issue," the letter said.

Dale Gore, executive director of Austin Baptist Association, blamed the break in fellowship on "the fact that the church had ordained as a spiritual leader a member of the church that was disobedient to the scriptures."

"It has been acknowledged this person lived in a relationship with another male," Gore said in an interview. "The feeling of the majority of our association's messengers at this meeting was this is not in keeping with God's law."

Bethune said Oct. 10 he felt sadness over the association's action: "Sadness that once again the message that goes out to a wide portion of our population that has been marginalized is God's judgment and judgment of anyone that has mercy toward them."

"Sadness that the autonomy of the local church and the fellowship that is based on the unity of the gospel and the grace of God and a common mission has been replaced with a test of fellowship and a particular biblical interpretation."

Gore denied that autonomy or ministry to homosexuals is the issue. "We have always acknowledged the autonomy of the local church," he said.

"We are not saying, 'You cannot do this.' We have not said to them, 'You have to stop.' We are saying the association is also autonomous and can choose its constituency as the local church chooses its constituency," he said.

And while many churches in the association offer ministries to the gay and lesbian community, it is a different matter to ordain a practicing homosexual as a church leader, Gore said.

"We do not believe for the most part that this lifestyle can be condoned or accepted by the Lord or his people," Gore said.

Bethune acknowledged that even members of his church differ in their opinions about homosexuality and whether different expressions of homosexual behavior are acceptable, but that "moral perfection" is not the standard by which deacons are chosen.

"Most of the attention has come from those who believe they need to review the holiness of our board of deacons to see if it suits their biblical interpretation. That's why we feel like it's an invasion of privacy and an invasion of the autonomy of the local church," Bethune said.

"If we begin to make sins, however defined, the test of fellowship for churches, what church will stand? And why is this sin more significant than embezzlement or child abuse? There are other things: one church would consider a previously married person to be sinful and unable to serve as a deacon and another would not. It's up to the individual church."

Bethune said the closeness of the vote was "both surprising and pleasing to me."

"The debate was respectful on what was a very emotional issue in our time. I certainly respect the right of conscience of all Baptists on this issue and wish they respected ours," he said.

Gore, however, said the large vote against the ouster probably resulted from University Baptist and two other sympathetic churches "probably for the first time" exercising their right to bring 20 messengers to the annual meeting.

The issue of sanctioning the church "has not been really that divisive," Gore said. He said most of the association's 112 churches probably would agree with the action.

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## **Theologian urges seminarians to 'redeem' Bible from patriarchy**

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (ABP) -- A feminist theologian urged seminarians in Kansas City, Kan., to "redeem" the Bible through reinterpretation of sacred texts traditionally read as anti-women.

The Bible was "born and bred in a land of patriarchy," leading many feminists to despair or dismiss its authority, theologian Phyllis Trible said in a recent lecture at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Kan.

"To know that one is a feminist and to know that one loves the Bible is in the thinking of many an oxymoron," said Trible, a professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

But some scholars are unwilling to let the Bible's subordination of women be the final word, Trible said. They are applying new interpretations to the Bible "to redeem it from the confines of patriarchy," she added.

Reinterpretation of scripture "does not mean making the Bible say what I want it to say," Tribble said, but she noted that "any text is open to multiple interpretations." Some legitimate meanings "exert themselves forcefully" while others "have to be teased out," she said.

Tribble cited the second and third chapters of the book of Genesis as an example. Interpreters traditionally have pointed out that woman was second in creation, and thereby subordinate to the male. Traditional readings also view woman as the man's "helper," and not his equal, and blame her for their common disobedience.

Tribble argued, however, that the first reference to "man" in most versions of Genesis 2:7 is better translated "the human." The first human is not identified by gender until the end of the second chapter, when God puts the one creature to sleep and from the one creature makes two.

"At that point only in the story does sexuality emerge. Not until then do you get the Hebrew words for male and female," she said.

Also, the Hebrew word describing the woman as man's "helper" is used in later scripture passages to describe God's relationship to Israel. "If we say that God is the helper of Israel, do we assume that God is subordinate to Israel?" Tribble asked rhetorically. Correctly interpreted, the word connotes superiority, not inferiority, she said.

She also argued the relationship described in the Garden of Eden is not patriarchal. The woman in Genesis 2-3 is "depicted as alert, intelligent and sensitive." The man, in contrast, "comes off as passive, bland and belly-oriented."

The woman "contemplates" the tree in the story and makes her own decision without consulting her husband. The serpent approaches the woman, not the man, as the spokesperson for the couple. Both details are contrary to a patriarchal pattern, Tribble said.

God's statement to the woman, "Your husband rules over you," is not a curse, as some argue, but "a descriptive statement" describing the consequences of disobedience, Tribble said. The Genesis story contains several other consequences: the soil does not bring forth its fruit, humans live in fear of the serpent and pain in childbirth is increased.

"So patriarchy comes under judgment, not under creation," Tribble said.

"What do we do, as the worshipping community, when we hear this awful, tragic story? If we are in tune with the biblical perspective, we hear it as a call to repentance, to return to our full creaturehood under God," she said.

Some feminists denounce the Bible as a "woman-hating document" because it acknowledges the subordination, inferiority and abuse of women in the society of ancient Israel, Tribble said.

"You can see how a feminist reading of this story enables one to reclaim it over against centuries of patriarchy and to make it work for good, not for ill; for blessing, not for curse," she told the seminarians.

Central Seminary is affiliated with the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. and, more recently, with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptists. In recent months Central has recruited a number of faculty members from nearby Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., a Southern Baptist Convention school that recently elected a conservative president.

## **South Carolina editor sets retirement date**

GREENVILLE, S.C. (ABP) -- South Carolina editor John Roberts has announced he will retire next Feb. 29 after completing 30 years as editor of the Baptist Courier.

Roberts, 69, has the longest tenure among active Baptist state paper editors and has been at the Courier longer than any of the eight previous editors in the paper's 126-year history.

Under Roberts' leadership, the Courier's assets have grown from a negative cash-flow to \$4 million, including a \$2 million endowment. Circulation doubled and the paper built new offices in two phases in 1968 and 1979.

In his Sept. 21 editorial, Roberts said he has "no pet agenda to push and no grudges to settle," but he promised to "express some pointed opinion to South Carolina Baptists" during his final 22 weekly issues.

Earlier in his 42-year career in Baptist communications, Roberts was editor of Charity and Children, a newspaper published by the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, and public relations officer for Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, N.C.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Child care greater burden for poor families, study says**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Poor families who pay for child care bear an economic burden two-and-a-half times greater than non-poor families, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report.

According to the study released Oct. 6, fewer poor families paid for child care for preschool-age children in 1993 -- 37 percent compared to 58 percent of non-poor families. Poor families also paid about \$25 less than other families -- an average of \$50 versus \$76.

As a percentage of income, however, the cost to poor parents is considerably greater, the study said.

"Even though poor families pay less for child care, they feel the biggest pinch in their budget because they spend a larger portion of their income on child care than non-poor families," said Lynne Casper, author of the report, "What Does it Cost to Mind Our Preschoolers?"

Poor families with working mothers of preschool-age children paid about 18 percent of their monthly income for child care, compared to 7 percent for families with incomes above the poverty line, the study noted.

Overall, weekly child-care costs increased an average \$15 between 1986 and 1993, or 23 percent. Parents using in-home sitters and organized child-care facilities paid the most for child care, about \$65 per week, followed by parents using family day care (\$52) and relatives (\$42) to care for their preschoolers. Only one in six arrangements using relatives required cash payments.

Child care is more expensive in the Northeast and in metropolitan areas, the study reported.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Mickey Mouse could become world's news, clergyman warns**

METEPEC, Mexico (ABP) -- With global communication systems in the hands of huge conglomerates, truth-telling could take a back-seat to entertainment and profit, an Argentinean clergyman warns.

International conglomerates, like those of Rupert Murdoch and Disney, are "maintained by entertainment and profit," said Carlos Valle, general secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication. There is a danger that "Mickey Mouse will become the news of the world," Valle said in an Oct. 7 press conference at the opening of the communicators' second international congress in Metepec, Mexico.

Valle claimed huge conglomerates have created a circle which links all parts of the worldwide network of communications.

"Giant companies publish a book, then the movie of the book, then CDs and tapes of the music from the movie and finally the video of the movie," he said. He added it is difficult to see how Christian communicators could break into that circle "which is maintained by entertainment and profit," according to a report by Ecumenical News International.

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-- By ABP staff

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