

# Associated Baptist Press

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## **Kentucky flood leaves residents, ministers feeling 'helpless'**

By Mark Wingfield

FALMOUTH, Ky. (ABP) -- "You just feel so helpless," Pastor Norman Workman said March 5 as he drove along a watery highway from an emergency shelter where he had been comforting people evicted from their homes by one of Kentucky's worst-ever floods.

Workman, pastor of Turner Ridge Baptist Church in Falmouth, Ky., talked with a reporter via cellular phone. All other phone service into the Falmouth area had been cut off since flood waters swamped the community of 2,400 people Saturday night, March 1. Outside access to the Northern Kentucky community had been impossible because of flooded roads.

"This is the first time I've been in anything like this," Workman said. "I've felt awfully helpless. ... The people are so helpless right now. There's not much you can do but be there with them."

Workman and other Falmouth-area pastors had been doing just that for several days -- making regular rounds at three emergency shelters run by local churches and the Red Cross. Workman worked extensively at a shelter set up at Southside Christian Church.

"Physically, they are all right," Workman said of the flood victims. "Emotionally, they're just drained. No one really knows what to do."

As Workman talked, authorities were getting their first chance to begin searching the flooded town for bodies. One death already had been confirmed, and four others were to be reported later that day.

At the shelters, a list of missing people contained about 60 names, Workman said, but most of those people were believed to be alive and merely separated from family members. For the first three days after the flood, there had been no way for those stranded at various shelters to find out if their missing family members were at the other shelters.

Falmouth, situated at the juncture of two rivers, was one of the state's hardest-hit areas by the flood. Water surged above the highest point on the town's flood markers, which stop at 52 feet.

The facilities of two Baptist churches in the community, Falmouth Baptist and Trinity Baptist, were severely damaged by the flood.

Although Workman's church and own home were not damaged, many of his church members lost nearly everything they owned. Some lost their businesses as well.

Workman said the most traumatic thing he had encountered so far was hearing the story of a church member who stayed in his higher-ground house as the flood waters rose March 1.

"He said on Saturday night during the night you could hear people screaming. He said he had never heard anything like it. People were hollering, 'Help! Help!' as the water trapped them in their houses."

Like other pastors in flooded areas, Workman worked as long as possible Saturday night helping residents evacuate and gather as many belongings as possible. But by 11 p.m., he drove through several feet of water to get to safety himself.

"The one thing I've been trying to share with people is right now it doesn't seem like there's any hope, but we know there is hope," Workman said. "God will take care of us."

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## **Disaster-relief workers a godsend to Kentucky flood victims**

By David Winfrey

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Linda Scholl stood in the middle of a damp concrete basement in south Louisville helping clear debris from the home of someone she just met.

"This is what they call mud-out, huh?" asked Scholl, a disaster-relief volunteer and member of Latonia Baptist Church in Covington, Ky.

"Yeah," replied co-volunteer Betty Tudor, of Richmond. "Next time you do this, they'll call you a mole."

Grateful homeowners were calling Southern Baptist volunteers a godsend the first week of March as relief workers met the needs of others after the worst flooding in 30 years.

Volunteers will be needed through the end of the month, predicted Bob Simpkins, Kentucky Brotherhood director.

As of March 6, disaster-relief workers from Kentucky were stationed in southern Louisville, Maysville and Vanceburg.

In addition to Kentucky workers, a Missouri Baptist feeding unit was stationed in Falmouth, and a Tennessee feeding unit worked in Madisonville, Simpkins said.

"Between Arkansas (where tornadoes hit) and us, it's been a major call up," he said, noting units from South Carolina and Oklahoma have been on standby.

Kentucky volunteers have been involved in disasters at many other states and now are benefiting from other volunteers coming to help, Simpkins said. "It's kind of neat to have that kind of brotherhood across the country."

Volunteers are feeding families displaced by the flood and helping clean residents' homes and basements -- the process Scholl called "mud out."

It is as nasty as it sounds.

Workers first use generators to pump hundreds of gallons of water from basements. They must be careful not to work too quickly, said volunteer George Shanks.

"The outside ground is so saturated that if you pump out too fast the outside pressure can collapse the walls," he said.

Volunteers then remove everything damaged by the flood. Buckling book shelves, disintegrating cardboard boxes and brown, muddy carpet all are extracted and placed by the street to be hauled off.

"It's just a lot of hard, back-breaking work. You can get a lot of water in a mattress," Said Jerry Butcher, a veteran volunteer from Calvary Baptist Church in Franklin, Ky.

Homeowners often must be convinced not to risk trying to salvage such items as couches, Butcher added. "The mold will get airborne, and it can get in your lungs and it can be fatal."

High-pressure water hoses clear mud from the walls and floor, while shovels and brooms are used to remove the last of the mud.

A water-weakened bleach solution is sprayed to disinfect walls and floors. Finally, fans help rooms dry faster.

Before workers leave a home, they ask the resident if they may pray with them. They'll also offer a New Testament and a pamphlet explaining Christianity to the often-grateful homeowner.

"If you give a little hope, people are very willing to listen," said Shanks, who lives in Campbell County, Ky.

"We feel like it's one of the easiest missions we've got," he added. "God has sent us to help our neighbor and spread the gospel. It's two missions in one, really."

Brian Malcolm, pastor of Kirksville Baptist Church, said disaster-relief ministry gives members of that church a proper perspective.

"It keeps our focus on missions and lets us know that our main work is outside the church walls," said Malcolm, who drove the church van with six other volunteers to Louisville.

"These are just hurting people that have a need, and we just want to be available," he said.

Volunteers' offers to help quickly were accepted.

Joe Gonterman Sr. said Tuesday he originally expected it would take the rest of the week to clean his basement.

"These folks have really been great. I don't know what I would have done without them," he said. "I was going to allow at least two or three days of work, and I believe that they'll be done before the day's over now."

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## **Former Pennsylvania governor appeals to Declaration to combat abortion**

By David Winfrey

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Americans who oppose abortion must help the country return to the founding principle that life comes from the Creator, former Pennsylvania Gov. Bob Casey told the annual Christian Life Commission seminar March 4.

"In America, every child deserves a chance to be born," said Casey, a Democrat who has denounced his party's support for abortion rights.

"Abortion has destroyed the heart and soul of the Democratic party," Casey said. "Democrats say, 'We protect the powerless.' It's not true anymore."

Quoting the Declaration of Independence, Casey said abortion opponents must remind America that life is an inalienable right, endowed by the Creator, which no one should be able to take away.

"Since when does America abandon in despair an entire class, the most defenseless, vulnerable?" he asked. "We've got to talk about the child every day, all day, over and over again."

Casey added that the value of life should influence international relations as well as domestic policies. He said China should not receive "most favored nation" trade status as long as it violates religious freedoms and makes laws regarding family size that encourage abortion.

Noting that trade is important, Casey countered, "Our value system, and life, and what we stand for as Americans, and what we hope for our future are more important."

Casey outlined five actions abortion opponents can take:

-- Communicate. Casey advocated using television to help spread facts about specific abortion issues.

-- Work for passage of the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act. This issue can be a major educational tool, he said. "Most people don't understand that Roe vs. Wade provides for abortion on demand for the whole nine months of the pregnancy."

-- Recognize the limitations of a "partial-birth" abortion ban. Casey said lawmakers cannot think that a ban on "partial-birth" abortions is the end of the abortion issue. "If you let them stop there, you let them off the hook."

-- Work for change in the laws to protect the unborn. Casey suggested public hearings by Congress to define when life begins. "Roe vs. Wade is not only morally wrong, it's scientifically obsolete," he said.

-- Help those in crisis pregnancies. "Society's failed them. We've got to extend the hand of compassion," he said, advocating better federal policies to encourage adoption.

Quoting from a letter sent to him from an adopted child, Casey told the audience to be diligent in the protection of life.

"We must continue together to fight for unborn children even when it is a hard thing to do," he said.

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## **Worldwide persecution of Christians serious, but often overlooked, author says**

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- The discrimination many Christians feel they face in America today "pales in comparison" to the persecution Christians face around the world, a human-rights authority told Southern Baptists March 3.

Nina Shea, director of the Puebla Program of Freedom House, addressed the 50th anniversary seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. Freedom House is a foundation dedicated to documenting human-rights violations around the world.

"Christians today are the most persecuted religious group in the world," Shea reported. "More Christians have died this century simply for being Christians than in the first 19 centuries after the birth of Christ."

The data behind these statements are documented in a new book written by Shea and recently published by Broadman & Holman.

In that book, called "In the Lion's Den," Shea highlights specific cases of Christian persecution and martyrdom in Sudan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba and Laos.

She drew a sharp distinction between the persecution she has documented and the lesser offenses of discrimination and bigotry. Persecution, she said, is much more serious and includes torture, rape, kidnapping, slavery and murder.

Shea said Christians are persecuted most under communism and militant Islam.

While many Americans think of communism as a thing of the past because of Russia's transformation, it is not, she explained. One-fifth of the world's population still lives under communist rule, primarily in China, she said.

The death of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping will not make life better for Christians, Shea predicted. "It's going to get worse. ... China sees Christianity as the biggest threat to communist government."

In her speech, Shea highlighted some of the cases of persecution documented in her book.

For example, she told of 1.5 million people, mainly Christians, who have been murdered in Sudan as the result of an Islamic holy war. She told of children of Christians who have been stolen and forced into slavery.

In Saudi Arabia, she said, an Islamic-controlled government has placed severe restrictions on religious practices of the American troops who saved Saudi Arabia from invasion by Iraq's Saddam Hussein. In addition, "hundreds of Christians" have been imprisoned there simply because they are Christians, she said.

"It's shocking that so few Americans know about this worldwide persecution of Christians," Shea declared.

Americans knew more about persecution of Christians during the Cold War years but since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe have "turned inward" and ignored the rest of the world, she said.

Additionally, "our government has not made this an issue," Shea said.

Although she has been appointed to a special presidential commission on religious persecution, Shea said it will take major change for the United States government to even understand the scope of religious persecution, much less attempt to do something about it.

For example, she told about meeting with U.S. Ambassador Jim Sasser before he left for his post in China. He had been briefed by the State Department about human-rights abuses against Tibetan Buddhists, student-democracy activists and other groups, but no one had told him about the millions of Christians who worship in illegal house churches in China.

"I can assure you Ambassador Sasser now knows about the house-church movement in China," Shea said.

American Christians must demand that their government do more to address the worldwide persecution of Christians, and they must get involved personally in speaking out against persecution, Shea said. Her book contains numerous suggestions of ways to get involved.

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## **Baptists Today associate resigns in dispute with editor**

By Bob Allen

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The associate editor of the moderate newspaper Baptists Today has resigned abruptly after questioning spending habits of editor Jack Harwell.

It marks the second personnel shakeup at Baptists Today in three years over conflict between editor and staff.

The Feb. 20 issue of the paper reported that Associate Editor Steve Wright resigned suddenly to "pursue other professional interests." It also announced that Jeff Hatcher, a computer specialist from Georgia, was elected to replace Wright, a Baptists Today employee for three years.

Before resigning, Associated Baptist Press has learned, Wright approached Baptists Today's personnel committee with documents questioning some of Harwell's business practices.

Sources say Wright's charges do not involve anything illegal or immoral but question mostly decisions about spending, such as high travel expenses.

The paper has few policies governing such decisions, so the concerns deal with issues of judgment and not policy violations, sources say.

Harwell said March 6 that an independent auditor had reviewed Wright's charges and found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Layne Smith, chairman of the paper's board of directors, declined to answer questions about what he termed a "personnel matter."

"The personnel committee is responsible for addressing anything that would ever occur like that," said Smith, pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Ark. "If there have been accusations made, they are being dealt with in a responsible manner and in the best interest of the readers, the subscribers."

"We want the people to know that we're trying to be honest and fair and take care of any concerns that have been or will be raised," Smith said.

The next scheduled meeting of Baptists Today's board of directors is April 28-29, Smith said.

Wright came to Baptists Today in 1994, after three part-time staff members resigned, citing philosophical differences with Harwell, editor since 1988.

At the time, the paper's directors asked Harwell to undergo counseling because of personal problems -- including a divorce, remarriage and deaths in his family -- and came one vote short of forcing him to take a leave of absence to deal with stress resulting from four years of turmoil.

Due to Wright's resignation and computer changes, Baptists Today missed one of two publication dates scheduled for February, according to a note in the Feb. 20 paper. Baptists Today publishes 20 issues a year. The missed issue will be made up later, probably in July, the paper said.

Harwell declined to comment about Wright's charges. "I wish the best for Steve and his family," he said March 6. "He and I have been friends for over 30 years," Harwell said, noting that he gave Wright his first job, a summer internship at the Christian Index in 1968.

Wright declined comment.

Harwell, 64, was editor of the Georgia Baptist paper 21 years before being forced to retire in 1987 over what he called censorship by conservative critics.

He became Baptist Today's second editor in 1988, succeeding Walker Knight, who founded the paper in 1983. Originally called SBC Today, the paper was the flagship publication for moderates in the Southern Baptist Convention in their unsuccessful fight to prevent a conservative SBC takeover in the 1980s.

In 1991, directors voted to change the paper's name to Baptists Today to reflect a broader focus and closer ties to the newly formed Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

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## **Lawmakers take sides in Alabama Ten Commandment controversy**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. House of Representatives threw its weight behind a controversial bid by an Alabama judge to keep a display of the Ten Commandments on a courtroom wall.

The House voted 295-125 on March 5 to approve a resolution supporting Etowah County Judge Roy Moore's display of the Ten Commandments.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit two years ago to stop the Gadsden, Ala., judge from opening court sessions with a prayer by a local Christian minister and from displaying the commandments.

Montgomery County Judge Charles Price first ordered Moore to cease the prayers in the court but allowed the Ten Commandment replica. After viewing the replica, however, Price said it was an attempt to promote religion and ordered Moore to remove or modify the display.

The Alabama Supreme Court then halted enforcement of the rulings until it reviews the case.

Adding to the controversy, Alabama Gov. Fob James said he will call in state troops and the National Guard to prevent the removal of both the prayers and the commandments display. A spokesman for James explained the

governor would not actually use force but said President Clinton would be forced to "nationalize the Guard and bring in the U.S. Army" to remove the replica or cease the prayers.

The nonbinding resolution expresses the "sense" of the House that the Ten Commandments are a declaration of fundamental principles that are the cornerstones of society and "the public display, including the display in government offices and courthouses, of the Ten Commandments should be permitted."

Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala., primary sponsor of the resolution, said he supports James' threat to use troops.

Aderholt, whose district includes Gadsden, said the "nation was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, which are embodied in the Ten Commandments."

Supporters of the resolution said there is no difference in Moore's display of the Ten Commandments and a display of the same commandments in the U.S. Supreme Court. They also said opponents of Moore's actions would also have to oppose the inscribed words, "In God we trust" over the speaker's chair in the House and prayers that take place before the opening of the House.

Opponents argued that the Supreme Court display only represents the commandments with Roman numerals without written text. They also said it is part of a larger display that includes other historical documents and symbols.

Some opponents argued that Congress does not normally act on a pending case and that a courtroom should be neutral ground for all parties.

Rep. Robert Scott, D-Va., said: "Anyone thinking that a vote for this resolution represents a show of their own support for the virtues of the Ten Commandments should take pause. This actually demeans Christianity rather than upholds it."

"Christians do not need the courts to endorse or legitimize our religion, and asking for support from a court for endorsement is self-defeating," he added.

Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., said the resolution was an "effort to enlist religion in a political battle."

Supporters of the courtroom display called its opponents "radical" revisionists.

Rep. Bob Barr, R-Ga., said, "Judge Moore, we are glad that in God you trust, and I certainly hope that more of the defendants that appear in your courtroom also hear that message because they will leave that courtroom better citizens than when they came in."

Rep. Joe Scarborough, R-Fla., said it was "humorous watching people doing historical cartwheels, trying to rewrite history as radical revisionists have been doing for the past 30 years, trying to tell us that the Ten Commandments is some political gimmick."

Rep. Steve Horn, R-Calif, however, said the resolution treads on judicial ground and that a Judeo-Christian symbol leaves out a lot of religions.

"We are intervening in a state-court case which has not even reached the federal courts," Horn said. "There are many great religions in this world: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Judaism and Islam. We have all studied them, many of us in this chamber, and it is wrong to single out two religions and carve what they believe on the walls," he added.

Aderholt told a reporter after the March 4 debate that he was "not trying to turn the United States into a theocracy."

On the House floor, Aderholt said that families in Oklahoma "would still be whole if the perpetrators of the bombing had followed the command 'thou shalt not kill.' The streets of Los Angeles would have been peaceful last Friday if two men had followed the command 'thou shalt not steal.'"

Responding to press questions, Aderholt refused to attempt to recite any more of the Ten Commandments than the two he mentioned during his statement on the House floor.

During press questions he also acknowledged that he was not aware that the Ten Commandments appeared in more than one book of the Bible.

When asked about judges who may want to display Islamic or other religious codes of law, Aderholt said it would be all right as long as they consistent with the "principles of this nation." But "if it's something that went against the grain of this nation" then it would be questionable, he added.

He said opponents of his legislation would not be voting against God, but "would be leaning toward the position that the Ten Commandments is not a cornerstone of this nation."

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## **Non-biblical' efforts hinder evangelism, Barna claims**

By Marv Knox

OXNARD, Calif. (ABP) -- Many efforts aimed at leading people to faith in Christ aren't effective because they aren't biblical, researcher George Barna reports.

Although 40 million believers a year talk about Christ with non-Christians, "few non-believers ... make a first-time commitment to Christ as their savior," Barna notes in the latest edition of his organization's newsletter, The Barna Report.

"Why aren't we seeing greater impact?" Barna asks. A leading answer is the lack of biblical evangelism, he adds.

Human beings are the weak link in the process of salvation, Barna insists.

On the divine side, "it is the Holy Spirit's job and ability to bring a seeking person to true faith in Christ," he says. Unfortunately, many witnesses lack the "evangelistic competence" to do their part, he laments.

Part of that problem is the churches' fault, Barna reports. His organization's research reveals "most Christians attend churches which do not offer any type of evangelistic training or equipping," he says. Further, few churches focus the power of prayer on evangelism, and few Christians "have many, if any, significant relationships with non-believers" out of which spiritual witnessing can grow.

"What is perhaps more disturbing ... is the worldview and theology possessed by many Christian evangelizers," he stresses. "After the affirmation of some ... basic truths of Christianity, there is a tremendous degree of confusion, misunderstanding and bad theology."

The consequences are dreadful, Barna asserts. "So much of this bad theology gets passed on to non-believers, resulting in two common outcomes -- non-believers choosing not to embrace Christ because the faith seems odd, weak or inconsistent; or people accept Christ but enter the faith with an erroneous set of theological insights, which thereby undermine their own faith development, lifestyles and outreach efforts."

Based on 1996 surveys of "evangelizers," Barna cites six serious problems:

-- Ignorance of other faiths.

"Almost four out of five Christian evangelizers do not realize Catholics and Mormons have a different understanding of salvation than Protestants possess," he says. "Six out of 10 evangelizers contend a person's faith of choice doesn't matter, since all major faith groups teach the same lessons."

Such ignorance hinders witnesses' "ability to understand and effectively communicate with non-believers," he notes.

-- Lukewarm passion for souls.

Thirty percent of those who shared their faith in the previous year "do not feel a personal responsibility to continue to do so," Barna reports.

-- Ignorance about Jesus.

Three out of 10 witnesses "refuse to rule out the probability that Jesus committed sins during his time on Earth," he says. "A similar proportion do not buy into his physical resurrection."

-- Bad salvation theology.

"Much evangelism is wishy-washy," Barna claims. "It has to be, given the bland views on grace, heaven, forgiveness and eternal life held by huge numbers of evangelizers."

For example, he reports, 40 percent of people who witnessed think "a person can earn a place in heaven by doing good deeds" and 30 percent believe "a person who has rejected Christ is not necessarily condemned to hell by that decision." One-third say "there are some sins which cannot be forgiven, even by God."

-- Misplaced trust.

"Evangelizers ... are more likely to put their trust in feelings and assumptions than in God's written message to us," Barna laments. "Without a definitive, consistent, recognized standard of truth, imagine all the beliefs that get shared under the banner of Christianity, and all the cross-free routes to salvation that can be validated."

-- Insufficient motivation.

For many Christians, witnessing is not imperative, Barna explains, since they believe "the gospel represents just one of various means to ... salvation."

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