

# Associated Baptist Press

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## **Senate refuses compromise late-term abortion ban**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate rejected a proposal May 15 that would have banned all late-term abortions except when the woman's life or health is endangered. The vote sets up a showdown with the White House over a proposed ban of so-called "partial-birth" abortions.

Senators voted 64-36 against a bill proposed by Sen. Tom Daschle, D-S.D., an alternative to a Republican bill scheduled for vote May 20 that would ban use of the "intact dilation and extraction" medical procedure, which opponents call "partial-birth" abortion.

The ban, proposed by Sen. Rick Santorum, R.-Pa., would allow the procedure, which involves partially delivering a fetus through the birth canal before ending its life, only when it is necessary to save the life of the mother. Doctors performing the procedure could be jailed, fined and liable for civil damages. Women receiving the abortion could not be charged.

President Clinton vetoed an identical bill last year because it did not include an exemption for "serious adverse health consequences" to the mother.

Abortion opponents argue a "health" exemption is a loophole that would make the ban meaningless. Opponents of the ban say the controversial procedure in some cases is the safest way to terminate a pregnancy.

Daschle's proposal shifted focus away from the "partial-birth" procedure by seeking to outlaw all abortions when the fetus is "viable," roughly after 23 weeks of gestation. It would have allowed late-term abortions only when a woman is facing death or "grievous injury" to her physical health.

Opponents to the Daschle bill said the health exceptions would allow abortions for almost any reason.

Earlier, the Senate rejected by a 72-28 vote another bill sponsored by three Democratic senators -- California's Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and Illinois' Carol Moseley-Braun -- that would allow greater exceptions to a ban than Daschle's, including the threat of "serious adverse health consequences."

The House approved a partial-birth abortion ban March 20 by a margin large enough to override a presidential veto. While the Senate measure is expected to pass, observers say proponents are still a few votes short of a veto-proof majority.

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## **IBTS-Prague dedicated; Hoppers honored**

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (ABP) -- Hundreds of supporters of the International Baptist Theological Seminary came together April 18-20 to dedicate the school's new Prague campus and honor retiring president John David Hopper.

Located within 1,000 kilometers of most Baptists in Europe, the new campus is poised to bridge east, west, north and south, said Karl Heinz Waller, European Baptist Federation general secretary, in a dedicatory sermon.

The dedication service was held in a chapel built as a replica of the 14th-century pulpit of free-church reformer Jan Hus, who died for his stand that the Bible and preaching should be in common vernacular of the people.

Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants, IBTS professor and director of the Institute for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, said it was significant for the occasion to be held in such a place. "We need to know the whole history of the whole church," she said. "IBTS is a place where the whole history of the whole Christian church is understood and integrated into our lives."

Among those attending the dedication were some of the 1,300 volunteers from Europe and America who donated thousands of hours of work to help the seminary get established in Prague.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary Tom Pinner, who coordinated volunteer work, quoted one Scottish volunteer who said, "It seems strange to pay your own way to a place where you work without pay." They came for one reason, Pinner said. "They found a dream they could put their lives into -- IBTS."

The evening before the dedication, faculty, students and Baptist leaders of unions around Europe gathered in Vinohrady Baptist Church in Prague to honor John David and JoAnn Hopper as they officially retired from service to the school.

Theo Angelov, president of the European Baptist Federation and of the Bulgarian Baptist Union, lauded the Hoppers for "their long and fruitful ministry to the continent," their knowledge of languages and of Eastern Europe, their efforts at relocating the seminary from Switzerland to the Czech Republic and their dedication to theological education in Europe.

Knud Wumpelmann, past president and general secretary of EBF, said Hopper "spoke the language of hope and love."

Speaking for the faculty, Kent Blevins said the seminary "rests on a solid foundation with a bright future." He praised the Hoppers as bridge builders, for keen sensitivity to the great diversity of Baptists in Europe and for standing for academic freedom over financial security.

In his response, John David Hopper stressed the importance of Baptists in all of Europe coming together. "If we can't [come together,] we cannot be what God wants us to be," he said. "What a richness, what a diversity, what an amazing family we have as Baptists."

The Hoppers are now living in San Antonio, Texas.

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-- European Baptist Press Service

EDITOR'S NOTE: Color slides or prints of the IBTS dedication and Hopper retirement event are available from European Baptist Press Service, 103112.716@compuserve.com

## **Missionary, volunteers injured in automobile accident in Romania**

GIURGIU, Romania (ABP) -- Two Arkansas Baptist missions volunteers and a missionary to Romania were injured May 15 in an automobile accident in Giurgiu, Romania. The three were taken to Emergency Hospital in the capital city of Bucharest.

The volunteers are part of a 22-member Arkansas Baptist missions team scheduled to serve in Giurgiu and surrounding villages as part of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's missions partnership with the European Baptist Convention. The two-week project is being coordinated by Church Starts International, an independent church-starting organization that works in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Jim Hornsby, a resident missionary with CSI, had met team members Steve Glidewell and Samantha Neal at the Bucharest airport and was driving them to Giurgiu when the accident occurred. No details of the accident are available.

Hornsby suffered two broken legs, a crushed foot and abdominal bleeding. He underwent nine hours of surgery following the accident. Glidewell also suffered two broken legs, with possible surgery scheduled. Neal received a broken arm and a gash on her head.

Glidewell and Neal, members of East Side Baptist Church in Paragould, Ark., were the first two volunteers to arrive in Romania. The other team members, including two physicians, were scheduled to follow May 16. The volunteer group includes a medical team, evangelism team and construction team.

All three accident victims were expected to return to the U.S. for further treatment as soon as their medical conditions permit.

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-- Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

## **Baptism becomes centerpiece of Jewish-Baptist worship service**

By Marv Knox

LUBBOCK, Texas (ABP) -- When Lubbock, Texas, pastor Charles Johnson realized Laura Layne Boon's baptism coincided with Second Baptist Church's second joint worship service with the city's only Jewish synagogue, he grew nervous.

"We sweated the baptism a little bit," Johnson admitted later.

Would guests from Congregation Shaareth Israel be offended by the most Baptist of Christian rites and the bold proclamation, "Jesus is Lord?"

"No, no; that was wonderful," protested Lou Wolfson, lay leader of Shaareth Israel, which is without a rabbi. "Nobody was offended. This was a young girl entering her faith."

"What should we expect?" added Norman Shulman, another Shaareth Israel member. The Jewish visitors would have been offended if the Baptists had watered down the Christian faith to try to placate them, he suggested.

These Baptists and Jews refuse to dilute their doctrines, even while they insist shared worship enriches their faiths, members of both groups affirmed. Joint worship services particularly have been meaningful in light of recent developments among Jews and Baptists on a larger scale, they added.

Shaareth Israel and Second Baptist have worshiped together in the shadow of the "Resolution on Jewish Evangelism" adopted at last year's Southern Baptist Convention.

The resolution stressed the need for Jews to "come to their Messiah, Jesus, to be saved." It pledged that Southern Baptists would pray and work for the Christian salvation of the Jewish people.

Most observers agree the resolution accurately reflected traditional Baptist teaching that all people need Christian salvation. Yet by singling out Jews among all the world's religions, many believe the resolution set Jewish/Baptist relations back decades.

Jews said the resolution's tone reflects a rigidity they have felt before.

"There's a young man who worked for me for many years. He's almost like a son," reported Wolfson. "He's a strict Southern Baptist, and he firmly believes I'm going to hell. He cannot bring himself to accept any different doctrine."

That's a common theme encountered by Jews, particularly those who live outside the country's strong Jewish enclaves, added Anne Epstein, a member of Shaareth Israel.

"In the South, it's hard to find Jews. Everyone is Christian, or so it seems," she noted. "Prejudice against Christians doesn't come up. The question is: What are the Christians going to do about us?"

Epstein moved to Texas when she was 2 years old. She's the mother of a 10-year-old daughter who is the only Jew in her school.

"My experience with many people of the Christian faith has been fundamentalism," she said, noting she has been "accosted" by well-meaning tract-waving Christians who have tried to convince her to forsake her faith.

"When the Southern Baptist resolution came out, this played on my fears. I felt threatened and embattled," she recalled.

"Our biggest threat is the assimilation of our children," Epstein added. "They're after my daughter. Especially at Christmas time, when she must stand up and say, 'I am a Jew,' or pretend to be like everyone else."

Some fears run even deeper, stressed Johnson, the Baptist pastor. He cited 2,000 years of Jewish persecution, which reached its agonizing crescendo with the Holocaust.

"Our Jewish friends saw and heard the strains of Nazi Germany" when they learned of the SBC resolution, Johnson said. Every Jewish head in the room nodded.

He recounted how German Christian leaders denounced Judaism prior to and during the rise of the Third Reich. "The German people were told, 'Jews are not in the fold,'" and that anti-Semitic thinking expedited the Jewish tragedy, he said.

Southern Baptists have gone on record deploring the Holocaust, and SBC leaders pointedly have decried anti-Semitism. But Jews cite history, which teaches religious intolerance can lead to social injustice.

"Baptists suffer from extreme historical ignorance, which leads to theological arrogance," Johnson said. "We have said: 'We are God's chosen people, and everyone else is inferior. Jews are greatly inferior.' ... That is a sin and an embarrassment that is a direct contradiction to the teaching of Jesus Christ."

And that's why one-on-one relationships between Jewish and Christian congregations are vital, the Lubbock Jewish leaders said. They noted a long tradition in their city.

Norma Skibell fondly remembered participating in the women's auxiliary to the Lubbock Ministerial Alliance in the 1940s. However, a Protestant woman in the group pushed for rigid enforcement of the bylaws and had the Jewish and Catholic women thrown out.

Everette Abernathie, a charter member of Second Baptist, recalled taking elementary school children on tours of the local temple, helping them understand much more about the Old Testament.

A dozen years ago, Shaareth Israel worshiped at Second Baptist for several months while its new temple was under construction.

More recently, numerous members of both congregations have shared warm friendships. Shulman and Johnson have led joint seminars in the community. And Johnson enjoyed monthly lunches with the previous rabbi, spiced with "loud and long" friendly arguments over doctrine.

So, Second Baptist members were delighted but not surprised when Shaareth Israel proposed the joint worship services in the wake of the SBC resolution.

"Our Jewish friends lovingly took the initiative" to worship together, Johnson said. "They said, 'We care about this relationship enough to work on this.'"

"Judaism teaches there is more than one path to God. We're not better than others," Shulman said. "I do this because of my faith."

Second Baptist responded with joy and a sense of spiritual compulsion, Johnson said. "It's a core value of this congregation to maintain this ecumenical relationship with robust assertion. It is not only a value to maintain this relationship, but to let this light shine ... to communicate with society that we enjoy this relationship."

That feeling is reciprocated, Epstein stressed. She recalled how 150 members of Second Baptist swamped the small temple for the first joint worship service. "When we saw the response of Second Baptist, I was so genuinely touched," she said. "Their respect for us is genuine. I don't think I've ever felt such reassurance from a church."

The key is mutual respect, insisted Anita Bass, a charter member of Second Baptist.

"I don't understand how a good Christian could not have a very healthy respect for the Jewish faith," Abernathie added. "Jesus was a Jew. His teachings are built on the Old Testament."

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