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# Associated Baptist Press

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## **Murder of missionary, sons decried as religious bigotry**

WASHINGTON (ABP) - The leader of a worldwide Baptist organization blamed religious bigotry for the murders of an Australian Baptist missionary and his two young sons in the eastern state of Orissa, India.

Missionary Graham Staines, 58, and his sons, Philip, 10, and Timothy, 8, were burned to death Jan. 23 when right-wing Hindu extremists set fire to a Jeep in which they slept.

The murders were the most vicious attacks to come in a recent wave of violence directed against Christians in India.

Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, condemned "religious bigotry" behind the attacks.

"We must say no to bigotry and yes to the forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ," Lotz said. The McLean, Va., -based BWA recently sponsored an international conference at which delegates pledged to take the lead in fighting racism and ethnic conflict and proposed that 2000-2010 be declared "A Decade of Baptists Against Racism."

According to news reports, Staines, a 30-year missionary veteran, was in the village of Manoharpur, about 600 miles southeast of New Delhi, for an annual five-day Bible camp. A mob of nearly 100 activists of the Hindu extremist group Bajrang Dal reportedly doused the vehicle with gasoline and set it ablaze. According to some reports, the victims tried to escape but were prevented by members of the mob, who carried torches and chanted during the attack.

Dozens of attackers were arrested and a reward was offered for information on the whereabouts of Darah Singh, the leader of the group charged with the attack.

An estimated 10,000 people attended a Jan. 25 funeral service, at which Staines' widow, Gladys, said: "I am terribly upset but not angry. My husband loved Jesus Christ, who has taught us to love and forgive our enemies." She then led the crowd in singing the gospel song, "Because He Lives, I Can Face Tomorrow." She and the couple's 13-year-old daughter were not present during the attack.

In a Jan. 26 statement, Lotz praised Gladys Staines' example. "It is in loving that people will see Christ, and it is in forgiving that hearts will be changed," he said.

Lotz and other Christian leaders, however, continued to condemn the attacks, reportedly motivated by charges that missionaries in eastern India are converting Hindus by force. Missionaries deny the charge and say they are only ministering to the poor.

Christian leaders have also accused government leaders of doing too little to stem the violence.

In a surprise joint press conference Jan. 28, an Indian official assured American evangelist Sammy Tippit and other religious leaders that violence against Christians will not be tolerated.

Lal Jan Pasha, secretary general of the ruling party of the state of Andhra Pradesh, told Tippit and pastors attending a conference on revival and evangelism that the government deplores violence against minorities and would swiftly prosecute any attacks on Christians.

Meanwhile, tensions continued to mount, as members of Bajrang Dal said they would not allow continued conversions among Hindus and tribal people. Three evangelists were reportedly beaten Jan. 24 in the southern state of Kerala while reports continued of churches being burned.

In Africa, meanwhile, Baptists in Sierra Leone reported both their convention offices and a historic church were burned by rebels of the Revolutionary United Front.

Fire destroyed both national Baptist offices in Freetown and the Regent Road Baptist Church, the first Baptist church in Africa, which was founded in 1794, Moses Khanu, general secretary of the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone, said in a report to the Baptist World Alliance.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Baptist group responds to Colombian earthquake**

McLEAN, Va. (ABP) -- Baptist World Aid, the relief agency of the Baptist World Alliance, has made available \$5,000 for earthquake relief in Colombia.

With official tolls still rising, some reports indicated more than 1,000 people died and more than 2,000 were injured in a Jan. 25 earthquake.

Two large Baptist churches in the Colombian town of Armenia were reported destroyed, along with their pastors' homes, and a small church in Tebaidda was damaged. A house being used for a Baptist church in the town of Calarca was also destroyed.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Republican lawmakers introduce new school-prayer amendment**

By Ashlee Ross

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Congressional Republicans have introduced a constitutional amendment to allow voluntary school prayer in the opening days of the 106th Congress.

Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., and Rep. Jo Ann Emerson, R-Mo., proposed the amendment in both houses of Congress. It states nothing in the Constitution should prohibit "prayer in public schools or other public institutions."

The proposed amendment, which is routinely introduced in Congress, also states "no person shall be required ... to participate in prayer," and government cannot decide the content or words of the prayer.

In presenting the amendment to the House, Emerson said, "a student should not be prohibited from praying, just because he/she is attending a public school."

Emerson said "liberal courts and high-minded bureaucrats" have "eroded the right to voluntary school prayer" making a constitutional amendment necessary.

The bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel Brent Walker said in its best light, the proposed amendment "restates what is already in the Constitution." However, the bill doesn't rule out the participation of the teacher going "way beyond what should be permitted," Walker said.

In another approach, Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., introduced the "Voluntary School Prayer Protection Act," which would bar federal funds from going to "any state or local educational agency that denies or prevents participation in constitutional prayer in schools."

The need for school-prayer legislation has divided religious groups. Some conservative groups backed an unsuccessful attempt to add a "religious liberty" amendment to the Constitution last year.

Other religious groups say the Constitution already protects voluntary school prayer and an amendment is unnecessary.

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## **Senate lawmakers vote to continue impeachment trial, hear witnesses**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate voted Jan. 27 against a motion to dismiss the articles of impeachment against President Bill Clinton and then agreed to allow House managers' request to depose three witnesses.

Two articles of impeachment by the House charge that Clinton obstructed justice and lied to a federal grand jury about his relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

With only one Democratic senator breaking party ranks, the Senate voted 56-44 on dismissal and witnesses Jan. 27. The votes came after two closed-door debates.

Democrats said their 44 votes to dismiss signaled that there is no chance Clinton will be removed, which would take 67 votes.

Sen. Robert Torricelli, D-N.J., said, "This is no longer about whether the president will be removed from office, this is about politics."

Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., however, said "it is premature to dismiss this case at the present time."

Under the motion to depose witnesses, subpoenas will be delivered to Monica Lewinsky, Clinton confidant Vernon Jordan and White House aide Sidney Blumenthal. The three are expected to give deposition in the next few days.

Democrats argue that witnesses will not change the outcome of the trial, but GOP lawmakers say some senators want further information before casting the final vote.

Sen. Robert Bennett, R-Utah, said, "We have to be fair to the House. We have to be fair to the president. We have to be fair to the Senate." He said the Senate would place appropriate time constraints on the remaining portions of the trial. "We don't want this to be the O.J. trial," he said.

But Democrats questioned the motives behind calling witnesses.

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said the goal of the House managers is to get Lewinsky into the well of the Senate. "How much more must this poor woman go through?" he asked.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, said: "The circus ought to end now. Enough is enough."

Shelby, however, said that the defense and prosecution "should have the opportunity to correct or clarify any discrepancies in previous testimony" and that the House request to depose three witnesses "is reasonable and should not delay the impeachment proceedings."

The House managers and the White House each had one hour to make their case on the motion to dismiss.

Rep. Charles Canady, R-Fla., asked senators "to consider what William Jefferson Clinton has done to the integrity of the great office he holds as a trust. I ask you to consider the harm he has caused, the indignity he has brought to the institution of the presidency."

Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., said the motion "elevates convenience over constitutional process and by implication ratifies an unusual extension of sovereign immunity."

"What kind of message does it send to America to dismiss the articles of impeachment? Charges of perjury, obstruction of justice are summarily dismissed -- disregarded, ignored, brushed off," said Hyde, who leads the House managers.

Representing the White House, Nicole Seligman told lawmakers that "the moment has arrived where the best interests of the nation, the wise prescription of the framers and the failure of the managers' proof all points to dismissal. You have listened. You have heard. The case cannot be made. It is time to end it."

She said the White House argument "is a simple one: Ordinary civil and criminal wrongs may be addressed through ordinary civil and criminal processes, and ordinary political wrongs may be addressed at the ballot box or by public opinion. Only the most serious public misconduct, aggravated abuse of executive power, is meant to be addressed through exercise of the presidential impeachment power."

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## **Campbellsville names dean for Carver School of Social Work**

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. (ABP) - Campbellsville University recently named Jerry Wilson of Niles, Mich., as dean of the newly established Carver School of Social Work, the university's president, Kenneth Winters, announced recently.

The Kentucky Baptist liberal arts university acquired the Carver School from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary last year. Trustees of the Louisville seminary voted in 1995 to close the school, established in 1983, following a dispute between the seminary's president and the social-work dean. Classes at the Carver School in Louisville ceased in 1997.

Wilson previously was executive director of the Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare Network of Cassapolis, Mich., a public agency offering services to the mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, developmentally disabled and substance abusers.

He is a graduate of Olivet Nazarene College in Kankakee, Ill., with a master's from the University of Michigan and a doctorate from Michigan State University.

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-- By ABP staff

## **First American Baptist joins Baptist Center for Ethics board**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The Baptist Center for Ethics, an independent organization started by moderate Southern Baptists in 1991, has named its first American Baptist board member.

Dwight Stinnett is executive minister for the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region, an affiliate of the 1.5 million-member American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

Robert Parham, executive director of the Nashville, Tenn., -based ethics agency, said Stinnett's appointment to the board of directors "moves BCE another step closer to its founding vision of providing ethics resource and services to Baptists across North America,"

Stinnett, a former pastor who has led the Springfield, Ill., -based Great Rivers Region since 1997, said he is "honored" to be the first American Baptist BCE board member.

"Today Christians are creating new networks to resource and encourage one another across historic denominational and political boundaries," Stinnett said.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Keeping the Lord's Day is group's single aim**

By John Pierce

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States has wide support but a single mission. Founded as the American Sabbath Union in 1888, the organization's sole purpose is to maintain and cultivate Sunday as a day of rest, worship, Christian education and spiritual renewal.

Churches across the nation are asked by the group to make Feb. 7 a special day for emphasizing the importance of Sunday observance.

Founded by representatives of six denominations and with current board members from several more Christian bodies, the alliance has deep Baptist involvement.

Jack Lowndes, executive director, is a former Baptist pastor and long-time denominational leader who once led the Baptist Convention of New York. The organization's offices are housed in facilities of the Georgia Baptist Convention in northeast Atlanta.

"We're the only national organization whose sole purpose is to emphasize the keeping of Sunday as the Lord's day," said Lowndes, who also edits the group's Sunday magazine.

The Lord's Day Alliance, according to Lowndes, has recently been involved with helping individuals who are forced to work Sundays against their religious convictions and supporting Campbell University regarding the recent NCAA ruling that accommodates sports teams that will not compete on Sundays.

The group regularly honors businesses that close their doors on Sunday such as Truett Cathy's successful Chick-Fil-A restaurants. Cathy, a layman from Jonesboro, Ga., is one of several Baptists currently serving on the LDA board of managers.

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EDITOR'S NOTE -- Information and resources for promoting adherence to the Fourth Commandment are available from the Lord's Day Alliance, 2930 Flowers Road South, Atlanta, Ga., 30341 or (770) 936-5376. Photo and logo are available electronically from [jwestbury@christianindex.org](mailto:jwestbury@christianindex.org)

### **Ministry to storm victims highlighted at MLK Day event**

By Michael Duduit

JACKSON, Tenn. (ABP) -- Addressing a Martin Luther King Day worship event at Union University, U.S. Senator Bill Frist urged listeners to "live up to the promise of freedom" that King represented.

The event on the campus in Jackson, Tenn., took place just 24 hours after a series of tornadoes shook West Tennessee, on what Frist termed "a difficult day for many Tennesseans." As a result, the Monday evening program became not only a celebration of King but also a community prayer service for the storm-torn city.

In his comments, Frist described his day of activities surveying area damage with Gov. Don Sundquist and other officials. He thanked hundreds of volunteers for helping local families, stressing that such aid was in the best spirit of Dr. King's legacy of service.

"We face devastation," the senator said, "but out of that devastation can come hope and great purpose for tomorrow."

University President David Dockery told several hundred attendees that "reconciliation is the theme of the vision of Martin Luther King, Jr." Stressing the need for Christians to reach across racial barriers, Dockery said, "Three decades after King's death, we treasure his legacy and take up his challenge to seek the reconciliation of God's people."

The Union-sponsored program, entitled "Reconciled Together," grew out of Dockery's participation last year in a gathering at the Carter Center in Atlanta. At the invitation of former President Jimmy Carter, six white presidents of Christian colleges met with six presidents of historically black colleges to discuss ways higher education might aid in the task of racial reconciliation. One idea was for white Christians to take seriously the significance of the King holiday for the African-American community.

"The black college presidents stressed to us that we should celebrate King's memory not by taking the day off but through some type of community service or worship event," Dockery said. "This community worship service was a culmination of that concern, and will be accompanied by the efforts of many Union faculty, staff and students who are serving as disaster volunteers or who are contributing much-needed supplies for the relief effort."

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