

Buchanan charged that if Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold "had walked into school with Bibles headed for a class, they would have been called to the principal's office."

"But you come in talking about Adolph Hitler, and they're having his birthday ... and that's acceptable," he said.

But Marilyn Saltzman, a spokeswoman for Jefferson County Public Schools in Colorado, said in a telephone interview that students at Columbine would not be sent to the principal for having a Bible.

"We honor the separation of church and state," Saltzman said, "but we do not believe that any mention of religion is prohibited."

"Students are certainly allowed to read the Bible and have a Bible in (their) possession," she said. While school officials do not promote prayer, students are well within their rights to pray before a test, write an essay about God or join a Bible-study club that meets when other clubs meet at school, she added.

"Basically we don't teach religion, we teach about religion," she said. "We take the First Amendment seriously."

Saltzman also took issue with Quayle's assessment that schools no longer teach values. "We teach values in our schools," she said. "We do teach values like honesty and respect."

David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, called it "utter nonsense" to blame the shootings on a lack of organized prayer in schools. The comments by conservative leaders are "flagrant efforts to fan the flames of divisiveness in America," he added.

Saperstein said that guidelines sent out by the Clinton administration in 1995 and 1998 make it "absolutely clear that kids can do whatever they want religiously as long as it doesn't interfere with the rights of others."

Noting that schools are not "religion-free zones," the guidelines for school administrators state that students may pray or discuss religious views in informal settings such as cafeterias and hallways, "subject to the same rules of order as apply to other student activities and speech."

The guidelines say students may attempt to persuade their peers about religious topics but draw a line at "student speech that constitutes harassment aimed at a student or a group of students."

Carole Shields, president of the liberal group People for the American Way, accused Quayle in a press release of "doing a disservice to the people of Littleton by exploiting this terrible tragedy and by creating the false impression that voluntary prayer is not allowed in the schools."

"Religious leaders and constitutional experts recognize that students are free to pray and express their faith on a truly voluntary basis throughout the school day," Shields said. "But having a school official prescribe a single prayer to represent the faith of everyone in Littleton is a disservice to every grieving student and family in that community."

House Constitution panel OKs religious liberty bill

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A bill aimed at increasing religious freedom passed the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on the Constitution on a voice vote May 26.

The Religious Liberty Protection Act would use Congress' spending and commerce powers to restore a high level of religious-liberty protection. It includes a separate provision to protect churches and other religious organizations from restrictive local zoning laws.

RLPA would seek to restore protections that were provided in a 1993 law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, but later struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. The new law would prohibit state and local governments from placing a substantial burden on religious practices unless they use the least restrictive means of furthering a compelling interest such as health or safety.

The measure was introduced following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1997 ruling that Congress lacked authority to impose RFRA on the states. Other courts have ruled that RFRA still applies to federal law.

Subcommittee Chairman Charles Canady, R-Fla., introduced a technical amendment that was approved during the panel's markup session May 26.

Two Democratic amendments failed. One amendment offered by Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., sought to strike a compromise between RLPA supporters and critics, who allege that the bill would threaten civil-rights laws, including the rights of gays and lesbians.

Rep. Melvin Watt, D-N.C., offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute to RLPA, which also failed. RLPA now heads to the full House Judiciary Committee for consideration.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, announced May 25 that he will conduct June hearings on the need for federal legislation to protect religious liberty.

"America has from its beginnings been the great protectorate to those of all faiths seeking to worship without state interference," Hatch said. "Sadly, we now live in a time where this very freedom is being threatened by government action -- through the steady encroachment of hosts of bureaucratic regulations, such as oppressive land use and zoning laws that limit the building of churches, synagogues and other places of worship."

A former reluctant witness, Bill Glass has zeal for prisons

By David Winfrey

LA GRANGE, Ky. (ABP) -- Given Bill Glass' current zeal for prison ministries, it's hard to imagine his initial reluctance toward what he now calls America's greatest mission field.

"We don't know of anywhere in the country where there's a greater home mission field than in the prisons," said Glass, a former Pro Bowl defensive lineman for the Cleveland Browns NFL football team.

In 27 years of prison work, Bill Glass' Weekend of Champions ministry has been in more than 2,000 prisons and trained 17,000 counselors. Last year the ministry recorded more than 40,000 spiritual decisions by inmates, "and this year it looks like it'll be over 50,000 decisions for Christ in the prisons," he says.

But Glass, who will visit 350 prisons around the world this year, says none of it might have happened had he not been shamed into taking his Christian witness into an Ohio prison nearly three decades ago.

Glass says he wanted to be a minister since his days at Baylor University, where his fame as a college football player often got him invited to share his testimony in Texas churches. "My testimonies got so long that pastors kept saying, 'Well, you might as well take the whole sermon.'"

After college he attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

in Fort Worth, Texas, enrolling for spring semesters during the off season while playing professional football during the fall. "I'm the only guy that ever crammed three years into six," he quips.

During his NFL career, he began to do citywide crusades, modeled after Billy Graham's preaching events, except in smaller cities, mostly in Ohio. It was a member of his crusade board of directors who challenged him to take his message to a much-neglected part of the population.

Gordon Heffen, then president of Goodyear Bank in Akron, Ohio, had been a counselor at Glass' citywide crusades. He and other members of his church also were involved in helping ex-cons to find work. They placed more than 5,000 former prisoners in jobs on the outside, mostly in the tire business.

"And they took a survey among those inmates they got jobs for and they found virtually no success cases," Glass says. "They decided that inmates needed a moral and spiritual fiber if they were going to stay out of prison."

Heffen encouraged Glass to take his crusades into the prisons, but Glass was uninterested. Glass had been inside a prison only once -- for a Fellowship of Christian Athletes program -- "and it was a really bad experience."

But Heffen insisted. "He was saying things like, 'If you really believe what you say you believe, then you'd try it where it's really tough. The truth is that you're really gutless because you don't really have the courage to do that,'" Glass recalls. "I finally came to feel because of his bantering and pushing that if I didn't try it at least once I was really gutless."

Still nervous about preaching to criminals, Glass said he assembled "the meanest, toughest group" of speakers he could find to join him on the platform. Among them were Paul Anderson, who at that time known as "the world's strongest man," and Jim Houston, a teammate from the Browns. "I got judo and karate experts and all kinds of big tough athletes to go with us with the idea that if we got in trouble and had to we could fight our way out."

The program for that first event is still the basic outline for his Weekend of Champions.

First, organizers avoid the prison chapel and take their message directly into the recreational yard. "I knew that very few inmates go to chapel, like 5 percent," Glass says. "But when we went outside on the prison yard we found we had more like 95 percent attendance."

Second, speakers avoid church talk. Promotional materials omit words like "crusade," and instead highlight world-class athletes as speakers and clinics for football or weightlifting.

Third, the events bring in trained lay counselors who are prepared to talk about their faith. For three days, the counselors are free to go anywhere in the facilities to meet with prisoners.

Glass admits he was frightened when he entered that first prison in Marion, Ohio, 27 years ago. "Not frightened that I would get hurt; frightened that I would be ineffective and it would be a fiasco."

Instead of failing, the group witnessed hundreds of spiritual decisions. Counselors were excited about the results, but Glass was just glad it was over. "I thought, 'Well, I've done it. I've met the challenge, but I'm not going to do it anymore.'"

What he didn't know was that the grapevine among prisons was in full swing and word of his success was spreading across the country. "We had a hundred invitations within a month to do prisons," he says. "We had governors of states call us and say, 'Do every prison in the state.'"

Glass says he finally began to realize that prison ministry was a way for him to meet his two top evangelistic goals. "I wanted to preach to a lot of lost people," he says. "You have a lot of lost people in prison, believe it or not. And secondly I wanted to see Christians learn to share their faith. And even though I really didn't want to go into the prisons, I came to realize slowly -- you know, I'm a lineman, I'm a little slow -- I began to realize that this was right in the center of both of my passions."

Some of the best-known names in sports are among his guest speakers: former Dallas Cowboy quarterback Roger Staubach, former Green Bay Packer defensive lineman Reggie White, former Chicago Bear linebacker Mike Singletary. Even NBA superstar Michael Jordan participated during his college career, Glass said. "I'm hoping, now that he's retired, he'll start coming with us."

Glass says his ministry not only makes a difference in the lives of inmates and counselors but is also the most effective way to stem crime in the United States.

"Eighty percent of all crime is committed by ex-cons, so if you're going to impact the crime problem in this country, the way to do it is in the prisons," he says. "And the only way to have a real, genuine change of heart is through Jesus Christ."

If an inmate makes a commitment to Christ and receives proper

follow up, Glass says, "all the statistics that I can read say that recidivism drops from 80 percent to 10 percent."

Church targets 'seekers' on Virginia's coast

By Robert O'Brien

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (ABP) -- Word is spreading about the CrossWind Community Church's contemporary-style service in the Hampton Roads area on Virginia's coast.

Eighty-nine-year-old Lois White is seeing to that.

Recently, White's physical therapist came into her nursing-home room as she and her pastor, Ed Sunday-Winters, were beginning to pray. They invited the young man to participate, and White prayed for him.

The next day the therapist told her that no one had ever prayed for him like that, and he appreciated it.

As they talked about his spiritual life, White recommended CrossWind, a new congregation started by her church and 15 others in the area.

"Can you imagine a woman this age in a nursing home telling a younger person about a contemporary church that targets Baby Boomers?" marveled Sunday-Winters, pastor of Holland Baptist Church in the area.

But CrossWind -- named for the cross of Jesus Christ and the wind of the Holy Spirit -- appears to be catching on with a growing number of residents since its launch at Cinemark Movies 10 theater in Chesapeake (Va.) Square Mall.

Eighty-five people gathered at the temporary location recently to worship and observe the "grand opening" of the church, which is affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

CrossWind grew out of a dream starting with Pastor Fred Lane and his wife, Liz, both volunteer church planters with the Atlanta-based Fellowship's global-missions ministry group. He also consults with a New Church Starts task force recently named by CBF.

The Lanes and a core congregation of 10 adults and nine youth and children are dedicated to reaching out to the unchurched community

with "contemporary, seeker-sensitive" worship in one of Virginia's fastest-growing areas.

CrossWind began in September 1998 with Bible studies in members' homes. The church, based on the Willow Creek model, is designed to guide seekers "to live for Jesus Christ."

Willow Creek Community Church began in South Barrington, Ill., in 1975. It later formed the Willow Creek Association, an international network of outreach-oriented churches of various denominations. The association provides resources and ideas to help Christians develop their gifts and minister to "seekers" -- persons who don't know the basics of Christianity but are looking for truth.

On a series of Sundays leading up to the launch, CrossWind core members attended contemporary worship services at other churches. They then scheduled a series of "preview" Sunday services of their own to refine the worship style in time for their grand opening.

The worship service features contemporary music, video, drama and the use of other arts. Dress is casual. A 20-minute sermon is designed for easy understanding and practical application.

CrossWind targets middle-class families of Baby Boomers, ages 35 to 53, but Lane believes the worship style will have "a wider appeal than just a narrow demographic group."

He projects the church will start another worship service in 2000 for Generation X (college age to 35); start a building and church-starts fund by mid 1999; and begin to start new churches by 2002.

Instead of electing deacons, the church recruits lay persons to serve as associate pastors to provide care for groups of members and fulfill ministry needs in the community.

The Lanes were commissioned earlier this year at a gathering in Hampton Roads attended by 100 people from churches that helped start CrossWind. Mark Olson, then moderator of the CBF of Virginia chapter, challenged the people to follow CrossWind's lead and look for places that need a new church.

"I appeal to you to look with a new set of eyes around the state and find those places," said Olson, pastor of Thalia Lynn Baptist Church in Virginia Beach. "We'll have to do it slowly. We're not going to start 30 new churches in the next two years."

"But if we begin to look around -- even in places that seem to be saturated with churches -- we'll find niches with special needs," Olson said. "I believe we'll find places where God wants a church. Then it's

up to us to do something about it.

Daniel Vestal, CBF national coordinator, described the Lanes' commissioning as "a renewal and recommitment of us all."

"We're responding to God's spirit, calling all of us not only to support the beginning of a new church but also to renewal in the work of the Kingdom," Vestal said.

CrossWind's task won't be easy, because it's expensive to start a church -- especially a contemporary one, said Lane, whose wife operates a commercial-art business out of their home to make ends meet.

Lane has projected a church budget of \$96,900 for 1999 and has been seeking various Baptist grants and supplements to help get underway.

"It would be a great tragedy if this new church start failed because of a lack of resources," Vestal said. "The resources are here. The problem is not money. The problem would be not having a conviction to participate beyond our own churches."

Lane's goal is for the church to be self-supporting in one year. "That's ambitious but possible, he said. "These kind of churches usually grow quickly. But God has to bless us for that to happen, and I truly believe he will."

Back To Top

[The Front Page](#) | [What's ABP?](#) | [Top of the News](#) | [Links](#) | [Town Hall](#)
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