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**Religious leaders debate merits  
of tax-funded religious ministries**

By Kenny Byrd

LOS ANGELES (ABP) -- Leaders of both major political parties are touting government partnerships with faith-based organizations to solve the nation's social ills.

Republican leaders made it a centerpiece of their annual convention July 31-Aug. 3, profiling religious leaders who are ready to bring a religious-based approach to problems like drug abuse, juvenile crime and others.

Both Vice President Al Gore and GOP presidential nominee George W. Bush have voiced support for "charitable choice" initiatives, which would open a new funding door to thoroughly religious organizations to provide social services without altering the religious character of the programs or changing their hiring policies.

But civil liberties groups and religious leaders across the political spectrum remain split on the merits of the idea and its impact on houses of worship.

Thoroughly religious institutions, such as churches, have long been able to set up separate nonprofit organizations that may receive tax dollars to provide social services as long as they do not engage in religious propagation. Churches themselves, however, have not been eligible to receive taxpayer monies directly because of the separation of church and state.

As a result, houses of worship have remained free of government regulations that typically accompany tax dollars.

At both the Republican and Democratic conventions, religious leaders addressed the divisive issue at events separate from official convention activities.

In Los Angeles, Washington Post columnist E. J. Dionne led a panel discussion on religion and politics in the election, and "charitable choice" was a hot topic.

Dionne took a question from the audience about whether it would allow the funding of extreme groups, such as David Koresh's Branch Davidians, and called it "the heart of the problem" with charitable choice. He said supporters of the charitable choice are "going to end up facing situations where they either violate their principle of fairness in distribution, or they have to give money to certain places that they're not going to like entirely."

Melissa Rogers, general counsel of the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee, instead urged churches to set up separate nonprofit organizations that can live by federal rules when taking tax money.

"Charitable choice creates more opportunities to use religion as a political tool," she told the forum gathered just blocks away from the Democratic National Convention.

"Precisely why religion is so strong here is because it is self-supporting," Rogers said.

She said a church may be interested in a program that provides a secular service and any religious activity is clearly separate from the secular activity. "If they can imagine doing that and are willing to live by the government rules, then I would say in that case they can apply for the tax funds but should be a separate [organization] from the mother church body."

Rogers said if the church does not want to establish a separate group, or if their program is "holistic in nature" and integrates religion throughout, "I don't think those are good candidates for tax money."

Jim Wallis, convener of Call to Renewal, supports the charitable-choice proposal but says it is not enough on its own to overcome poverty. Wallis said the country may be "moving from a high wall of separation to a kind of fair pluralism or neutrality."

He said charitable choice "can be done in a way that satisfies legitimate concerns that critics raise."

While he supports charitable choice, Wallis said he remains concerned about the "prophetic integrity question." The Bible suggests that it is inevitable that kings and government leaders do bad things, Wallis said. "That's why the prophets are needed. Well, if you're in too close a relationship with political power -- whether you're being funded or not -- can that prophetic vocation remain strong?"

In addition to serving the poor, Wallis said, churches should also work to change social and political structures that contribute to poverty.

At a meeting of disenfranchised voters held concurrently with the Republican National Convention, Wallis said the government's role in overcoming poverty cannot be ignored.

"We can't keep pulling people out of the river and not send somebody upstream to see what or who is throwing them in," he said.

Baptist evangelist Tony Campolo is part of Wallis' Call to Renewal movement but is reluctant to send tax dollars to religious organizations.

Campolo is critical of vouchers that would fund religious schools. But on the issue of merging government and religion to address social services, he said, "We've got to find a way, without violating church and state, where government funds and religious volunteers can come together to get the job done."

Campolo told Associated Baptist Press that Christians need to "send up a word of rejoicing for such groups as the American Civil Liberties Union, strange as that may sound." He continued, "If there are not watchdogs that will scream and yell and go to court when lines have been blurred and crossed, I think we're in deep trouble."

Just weeks ago, the American Jewish Congress filed the first known constitutional challenge to a charitable-choice contract. The suit seeks to invalidate a contract between the Texas Department of Human Services and the Jobs Partnership of Washington County.

The suit charges that "Protestant evangelical Christianity permeates" the Partnership's job-training and placement program, "all at the expense of the taxpayers" and in violation of the federal and state constitutional bans on state support for religious enterprises.

Supporters of charitable choice, however, also include conservative Christian advocates, who want to see faith-based groups, which have a proven record of success in dealing with issues like substance abuse, compete for tax funds without changing their religious character.

But even some religious leaders in this camp support safeguards.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, told ABP in a phone interview that "we certainly ought to be more open to faith-based options than we have been in the past."

However, Land said there has to "be a great deal of care and scrutiny exercised to avoid unconstitutional entanglement. ... I like tax credits a lot better than direct aid."

Land said that given society's "complex and vexing social ills" it is "unwise and unrealistic" not to use Christian and religious resources.

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## **Congressman urges churches to work harder against poverty**

By Kenny Byrd

LOS ANGELES (ABP) -- A Georgia congressman and prominent civil-rights activist says the religious community is not doing all it could to address poverty.

In an Aug. 15 interview on the floor of the Democratic National Convention, Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., told Associated Baptist Press, "There should be a moral crusade by the religious groups to end poverty, to end hunger, to provide health care."

Lewis was a major figure in the 1960s struggle for civil rights in the South. He marched, led sit-ins, was beaten and jailed for his bold actions. In later years, he has become a leading member of the Democratic Party in the House of Representatives.

In the ABP interview, he said: "In spite of all of the progress that we've seen, there are still too many people that are hurting in the American society. And the religious community, more than any other group, should speak out. They should really encourage those of us in elected positions to do more."

"I see my involvement in politics as an extension of my faith," said Lewis, who grew up a Baptist in rural Alabama. He said there are times in his public-policy role that he asks himself: "What should I do as a person of faith? What would the great teacher do?"

On another issue, he discussed the Southern Baptist Convention's increased conservative voice in the South, which he said is "a problem."

However, he lauded new moderate initiatives that have emerged in response to the SBC's power struggle.

"There are new voices emerging," he said. "Fresh faces are emerging and that will change," he said, pointing to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship that is based in Lewis' state of Georgia.

He said it was a good and healthy thing "that people are trying to move in a different and new direction." He added that it was a positive sign "that some people are becoming maladjusted to the old order and want to create something different, something new, something better."

Lewis criticized both his party's presidential nominee, Vice President Al Gore, and Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush for supporting the death penalty. Specifically, he said more than 130 people have been put to death in Texas under Bush's term as governor there.

"I don't know how any religious leaders or any person of faith can be supportive of the death penalty. It is not in keeping with the faith of most religious groups," Lewis said.

"Only the Almighty has the power to take the life of another person," he said. "We don't give it and no state, no government should be in the position of taking life."

Lewis said he would urge Gore to consider a moratorium on the use of the death penalty at the federal level.

"Churches, synagogues, and mosques should organize to end" the death penalty, Lewis said. "It is a moral blot upon our nation."

Lewis also cautioned that as both candidates tout government funding for faith-based ministries, they should consider church-state problems. "I think we have to keep the wall of separation between church and state."

He said there are appropriate ways to include faith-based groups in solving social problems, but "these groups cannot and must not try to indoctrinate. ... There cannot be any symbol or federal dollars or government supporting or encouraging a particular religion."

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## **Catholic prayer at DNC convention calls for protecting life of unborn**

By Kenny Byrd

LOS ANGELES (ABP) -- The opening prayer at the Democratic National Convention turned anything but ceremonial as Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony used it to speak out against abortion.

In the Aug. 14 invocation, Mahony asked God to "keep us ever committed to protect the life and wellbeing of all people, but especially unborn children, the sick and the elderly, those on skid row and those on death row."

Before delivering the prayer, Mahony said: "Prayer must be about moral values, not partisan politics. It should express faith, not ideology." He added, "I come as a pastor, not a politician; an advocate of values, not candidates."

Mahony had earlier been criticized by abortion opponents who said it would be hypocritical for him to pray at the convention, because the Democratic platform supports abortion rights. "If the Catholic church believes abortion is the murder of children, then how can Cardinal Mahony as a representative of the Catholic church give the Democratic Party his blessing?" asked Jeff White, a spokesman for Operation Rescue, according to The Washington Times.

After the prayer, it was pro-choice delegates who complained that Mahony should have kept his views on abortion to himself.

Also in the prayer, Mahony asked God to "strengthen our will to build a nation that measures progress by how the weak and vulnerable are faring."

He mentioned the plight of the poor, the homeless, those without healthcare and quality education, persecuted minorities around the world and AIDS victims. He prayed for "a new kind of politics, focused more on moral principles than on the latest polls, more on the needs of the poor and vulnerable than the contributions of the rich and powerful, more on the pursuit of the common good than the demands of special interests."

At both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, members of a wide variety of faiths led invocations and benedictions each night.

Concluding the Democratic convention was Billy Kyles, pastor of Monumental Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.

During his benediction after Vice President Al Gore's acceptance speech, Kyles reflected on the country's "fore-parents," who also prayed through the years of slavery, apartheid, civil war and the Holocaust, "so that we tell it to generations following that the God who brought us through is our God. And he will be our guide always even unto death."

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## **GOP image obscures policies, Democratic strategist warns**

By Kenny Byrd

LOS ANGELES (ABP) -- Democratic strategist James Carville said Republicans are using images to convince America "that they are nice people," while making people forget about their stands on health care, abortion and nominations to the Supreme Court.

"You now what? I am scared that it might work," Carville told an audience brought together by People For the American Way, a civil-liberties group based in Washington. "Underneath all the smiles, all the commercials," he added, "you know what's there."

Carville said if George W. Bush is elected, Democrats could lose everything they have worked for in the last eight years. Most importantly, he said, they would lose the chance to replace several retiring Supreme Court justices. Bush "is going to appoint people like [Antonin] Scalia and [Clarence] Thomas," he said.

"And they'll bring him out. It'll be a nice-looking thing," Carville predicted. "There will be some guy, and he will have a family and a dog and a couple of kids. ... And bingo, Roe vs. Wade is gone. Bingo, civil rights laws are gone. Bingo, workers' rights are gone. Just like that. And you won't know what hit you."

Carville also touched on a church-state issue, criticizing the push in some places to teach creationism in public schools.

"Oh by the way," he said. "Do you want them to take your tax money to teach some kid that the earth is only 5,000 years old?" The crowd laughed.

He took the issue of morality, which Republicans have worked to co-opt, head-on.

"You want to talk about the act of a moral nation? That's reducing the elderly poverty rate from 30 percent to 9 percent," he said, pointing to the success of Democratic programs like Social Security and Medicare in recent decades.

Carville said there are other moral issues besides the scandal that sparked the impeachment battle between President Bill Clinton and Congress. "God in heaven cares a lot more about how many old people go to bed sick and hungry," he said.

Carville criticized the presidential bid of consumer-advocate Ralph Nader, saying it may take votes away from Vice President Al Gore. "Anybody that votes for Ralph Nader is voting for Scalia and Thomas," he said.

Carville said there are "major differences" between the Democratic and Republican parties.

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## **Cal Thomas says media biased covering candidates' religion**

By Kenny Byrd

LOS ANGELES (ABP) -- Amid growing discussion of the role of faith in presidential politics, conservative radio figure Cal Thomas charged that the media is biased toward religious talk coming from the left.

Both major presidential candidates proclaim to be born-again Christians. But interest in the topic skyrocketed with Vice President Al Gore's selection of Joseph Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, as his running mate.

Thomas, a syndicated columnist and former staffer for Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, said the media is more accepting of religious talk coming from Democrats than from Republicans.

Thomas said the media "approve" of the policies of Gore and Lieberman. "And for all they care the two can worship trees," Thomas said.

"If it takes a favorable mention of God to advance the Democratic agenda, that's fine with them. But when a Republican speaks well of the King who said his kingdom is not of this world, that's another story, because liberal Democrats oppose most of the Republican agenda."

Thomas, who recently wrote a controversial book critical of the Religious Right, said that leaders in both parties have used religion for political gain.

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## **Golfers share impact of Christian faith**

By Trennis Henderson

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Why, amid all the distractions and pressures surrounding a major golf tournament, would a professional athlete take time from a demanding schedule to talk about his Christian faith?

Tom Lehman's motivation is clear. "Out of love for Jesus and appreciation for what he has done for me," explained Lehman, who joined other golfers Aug. 15 for a Christian event held in conjunction with the 2000 PGA Championship in Louisville, Ky. The "Up Close and Personal" ministry banquet featured Lehman, Steve Jones and Loren Roberts in a panel discussion moderated by CBS golf commentator Bobby Clampett.

The evangelistic event, sponsored jointly by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and other religious organizations and businesses, attracted more than 1,000 area fans. The program also featured music by Grammy Award-winning Christian artist Larnelle Harris.

Lehman, the Professional Golfers' Association's 1996 Player of the Year, told the crowd he became a Christian at age 15 through involvement in a Fellowship of Christian Athletes Bible study.

Recalling that he felt insignificant as a third-string quarterback on his high school's state championship football team, Lehman said he also "had an incredible feeling of insignificance" when he realized "I wasn't part of God's team."

"That's how I was drawn to God," Lehman said, adding that the discovery that God loved him unconditionally "gave me an incredible feeling of worth and significance."

Evaluating his golf career, Lehman said even after being the world's top-ranked player in 1996, "any competitor is really never satisfied. There's always much more out there."

Citing the overwhelming impact of Tiger Woods, golf's most dominant player, Lehman said Woods' success has pushed him to "work harder at my golf game than ever before."

Woods "definitely has raised the bar in golf," he told the crowd. "Seeing a person achieve his potential is a great encouragement."

During an interview after the event, Lehman said his primary goal in ministry is to evangelize unbelievers. Another goal is "reaching believers who have maybe backslidden and confronting them with the fact that God wants them to walk closely with him."

Lehman said being a role model both as a professional athlete and a Christian is both "a responsibility and a privilege."

He said his relationship with Christ is more important to him than golf. "Everything that happens in life is to be used by God to mold you into what he wants you to be," he said. "I see my career as one element of that."

"We're all just like everybody else," he said. "We are in the public eye and have a responsibility to make people's lives better, not worse."

Jones, winner of the 1996 U.S. Open, said his life changed dramatically after he became a Christian in 1984.

"The people who knew me before would really see a big difference in me," he said. "I was sort of a rebel when I was growing up. We used to play golf and drink."

"In '84 that all changed. A lot of my friends couldn't understand that change. For me, Jesus came inside my life and that changed my outside. God is the only one who can change you from the inside out."

Roberts, who grew up attending church, has won seven tournaments on the PGA Tour. Despite his professional success, he said: "It always seemed to me like there was something missing. I acquired the head knowledge, but I didn't have the heart knowledge."

While attending Bible studies on the PGA Tour, Roberts said he realized he needed to accept Christ. "I decided my priorities were out of whack," he said. "I needed to turn it over to the Lord."

"The claim of Christianity is it's a free gift," he emphasized. "All you have to do is accept it."

Clampett, who retired from the PGA Tour in 1995, founded the Players' Outreach Ministry in 1992 to help expand golfers' ministry opportunities. He said several Christian players involved in Bible studies decided as a group to work together to coordinate speaking engagements and other outreach efforts.

Noting that "golf has never been as visible in the public as it is today," Clampett said such players as Lehman, Jones and Roberts "are passionate about their love for God."

"They're not the kind that want to slam it down people's throats," he added, "but when the opportunity arises for them to share what God has done in their lives and be able to influence and impact other people, they're willing and able to do that."

Acknowledging that outspoken Christian players sometimes "take a lot of hits from other players and the media," Clampett said the three panelists "have stood very strong in that test. It's a battlefield out there."

After the panel discussion, Clampett invited those attending the banquet to pray to receive Christ or to renew their Christian commitment.

"All of us were born in sin," Clampett said. "Sin separates us from a just and holy God." He affirmed that Christ died and rose again "to bridge the gap between sinful man and a holy God."

Urging participants to "get things right between you and God," Clampett added, "This event is about encouraging you."

## **Baptist seminary in Prague stunned by armed robbery**

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (ABP) -- A daring mid-day armed robbery on Aug. 14 stunned staff and students at International Baptist Theological Seminary in the Czech Republic.

Three gunmen reportedly burst into the seminary's accounting office during the lunch hour and held a staff member at gunpoint before fleeing on foot with the U.S. equivalent of approximately \$11,700 in cash and a mobile phone, IBTS officials reported.

The thieves bound and gagged accounting assistant Tereza Kvasnickova, holding a gun to her head as they removed money from the safe. Kvasnickova, who told police the gunmen addressed her in Russian, received medical treatment for shock, but was not physically hurt.

Seminary Rector Keith Jones said the seminary community was "devastated" by the robbery, noting the campus "has not experienced this type of crime in this part of Prague."

He also praised Kvasnickova: "Tereza kept calm throughout, and we applaud her for her courage."

Seminary officials are cooperating with Prague police and are also conducting an immediate review of campus security, Jones said.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary and IBTS board member Jim Smith, a veteran of Baptist missions in Central Europe, said the money was not insured, but added, "The emotional damage is the heaviest toll for the seminary community."

Smith noted the seminary had an unusually large amount of cash on hand because it was preparing to restock items in the bookstore/gift store and make several other purchases. "It's normal in this part of the world to pay in cash for certain goods and services," he said.

The seminary is owned by the European Baptist Federation and is one of several schools that receive partial support from the Atlanta-based Fellowship. Hundreds of volunteers from CBF-related churches helped with an extensive renovation of the campus after the school moved to Prague from Ruschlikon, Switzerland, in 1995.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Alaska Baptists elect leader, debate inclusion of church**

By Tony Cartledge

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (ABP) -- Baptists in Alaska were unified in their selection of a new paid leader but divided over whether a disputed congregation qualifies for membership in the 66-church Alaska Baptist Convention.

David Baldwin won election as the next executive director of the 55-year-old affiliate of the Southern Baptist Convention during an Aug. 8-9 annual meeting in Anchorage. Baldwin, who currently is director of evangelism and church growth for Alaska Baptists, will succeed Cloyd Sullins, 66, who retires in October after five years in the job. Baldwin previously was a pastor in Fairbanks and a director of associational missions.

The meeting began on a tense note, with a motion from the floor to exclude messengers from Faith Community Church in Anchorage. Opponents claimed the church, which formed in a merger of longtime-affiliated Baptist church and a non-denominational congregation, is not Baptist.

Former members of Faith Baptist Church who left in a dispute over pastoral leadership challenged seating of the congregation's messengers. After the split, the church's membership dwindled, prompting the merger with the larger Parkside Christian Community.

The new church still uses both campuses, and the pastor of the former Faith Baptist Church, Walter Davidson, is now associate pastor of the new congregation.

Davidson said the combined fellowship held a series of informational meetings and studies of the "Baptist Faith and Message" doctrinal statement before voting by 90 percent to affiliate with both the Alaska and Southern Baptist conventions.

During debate, the church's senior pastor, Steve Holsinger, acknowledged that most members of Faith Community Church probably consider themselves to be non-denominational, but he said the church's beliefs were in line with Southern Baptists. He said affiliation would benefit the church by making it accountable to others and allowing it to support cooperative missions.

One speaker during debate asked whether messengers from Faith Community Church were elected by church members in a business meeting, the normal way Baptist churches choose representatives at convention meetings. Holsinger replied that the church's leadership team had chosen the messengers.

Affiliation is important to the church, in part, because Faith Baptist Church still has legal and financial obligations to the SBC North American Mission Board, which loaned it money for construction.

Messengers ultimately voted by secret ballot to seat messengers from Faith Community Church by a margin of 84-54.

In his final report as executive director, Sullins reported that the state convention currently has 66 churches, which sponsor 29 missions, 12 preaching points, and numerous Bible studies. Resident membership in 1999 totaled 10,096. The churches reported 659 baptisms and 783 other additions during the year, had more than \$9.6 million in total receipts, and gave more than \$1.3 million in Cooperative Program and various missions gifts.

Sullins said evangelism and missions are major priorities for the ABC, which has a partnership with Far East Russia.

Sullins expressed gratitude for support gained from previous partnerships with Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia Baptists. He noted that the new partnership with North Carolina Baptists has gotten off to a promising start, with up to 700 Tar Heel volunteers expected by the end of the first year.

The convention's second session included lengthy discussion on new articles of incorporation and a constitution for the ABC and its two agencies, the Alaska Baptist Foundation and Alaska Baptist Family Services. Jack Green, a layman from Grandview Baptist Church in Anchorage, presented the report. He said the need for new documents arose from a legal review of the existing documents, which are no longer compliant with Alaska law for nonprofit corporations.

The new Articles of Incorporation were approved, with minor amendments. The new constitution gained first approval, but will require a second affirmative vote at the next annual meeting.

Messengers re-elected Marvin Owen, pastor of First Baptist Church in Anchorage, as president of the ABC. Owen defeated Greg Clark, pastor of Glacier Valley Baptist Church in Juneau.

Denver Copeland, pastor of North Kenai Baptist Church, won re-election as first vice-president, handily defeating Bill Milewski, a layman from First Baptist Church in Kenai.

Leon May, pastor of Greater Friendship Baptist Church in Anchorage, was elected without opposition as second vice-president. Current second vice-president Georgie Owen was not re-nominated.

The state convention adopted a budget of \$1.78 million for 2001, anticipating income of \$581,545 to the Cooperative Program unified budget from Alaska Baptist churches and \$1.07 million in funds from the Alpharetta, Ga.,-based North American Mission Board.

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## **Scholars view 'ethnic cleansing' through the eyes of a child**

By Robert O'Brien

GOSTIVAR, Macedonia (ABP) -- The 5-year-old Albanian girl probably couldn't spell "ethnic cleansing." But her spontaneous words at an international conference on the subject may have upstaged the best work of a roomful of scholars.

"We don't want to be killed. We don't want war. All we want is to live in peace," the tiny "Besnika" told an interfaith, multinational group gathered in early August for the first public reading and signing of The Stockholm Accords on Ethnic Cleansing.

Eloquent words denouncing wholesale murder and relocation of ethnic and religious groups in the document's first four written translations -- in English, Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish -- had just moved a roomful of adults in Gostivar, Macedonia, to a spirited discussion.

Darting almost unnoticed to take her turn at a microphone, Besnika probably didn't know that "ethnic cleansing" is as old as the Crusades but as recent as atrocities in Rwanda, Burundi and an Islamic jihad declared against Christians in the Maluku Islands of Indonesia.

But she understood the pain of family members and classmates who had fled to Macedonia as refugees from the ethnic bloodbath in neighboring Kosovo.

As Besnika spoke, the Stockholm Accords -- hailed as a document to help begin an international movement to end ethnic annihilation -- took on new inspiration for the unlikely mix of Americans, Albanians and Macedonians; Muslims, Orthodox and Protestant Christians.

Mesmerized by her blonde hair and pink outfit and touched by profound words of wisdom beyond her years, grown men and women brushed away tears.

Differences and problems gave way, at least for that moment, to a common resolve to change a world in which 170 million children, women and men died in the 20th century at the hands of their own governments via genocide, ethnic cleansing, and political mass murder.

That's more than the combined casualties of all the wars in the 20th century. It made the century "the bloodiest one in human history," said Gregory Stanton, who directs the Washington, D.C.-based Campaign to End Genocide.

A sentence in the preamble of the four-page, nine section Stockholm Accords calls on "women and men of every nation" to denounce ethnic cleansing in all its forms.

Because of Besnika, Doug Tipps, president of Global Strategies International in San Marcos, Texas, who envisioned and spearheaded the movement against ethnic cleansing, said he would ask the group to add the word "children."

Another conference leader said many people call it "naive to think we can initiate a worldwide movement to end ethnic cleansing in the 21st century."

"People said the same thing about efforts to end slavery," said Derek Davis, director of Baylor University's J. M. Dawson Institute for Church-State Studies.

Davis edited the first and succeeding drafts of the accords, based on input from around the world to encompass thinking from both East and West. He coordinated a committee named last January at a meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, to compose the accords. Washington State Supreme Court Justice Charles Smith, the grandson of slaves, wrote the first draft.

Forty-three women and men -- now called "The Stockholm 43" -- came to Sweden from 15 countries and all continents and represented Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, Jewish and other traditions. That included Baptists from four countries and five U.S. states.

Davis said that in 19th century America, "no one thought slavery could be ended, but it was."

"We want to do the same thing with genocide and ethnic cleansing in the 21st century," Davis said. "We want to develop a world consciousness, a grassroots movement."

Tipps said he hopes the accords "will provide compassionate leverage for us in urging world citizens and governments to help us work in specific areas of conflict to bring about ethnic reconciliation."

"We want to work with every sector -- religious, political, educational and economic -- to launch dialogue, education and direct action to delegitimize ethnic cleansing as a political tool for conflict resolution," said Tipps, who is also pastor of First Baptist Church in San Marcos.

Representatives of "The Stockholm 43" met in two Macedonian cities -- in Skopje, for final approval and private signing of the accords, and in Gostivar, for the public meeting.

Arville and Shelia Earle and Darrell and Kathy Smith, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship representatives in Macedonia, were hosts for the meetings. Arville Earle and CBF staffer Ben Bryant of Atlanta are members of the "Stockholm 43."

"Our work is a ministry of relationships," Arville Earle said. "I see this kind of meeting, replicating itself around the world and reaching from grassroots to governments, as a culmination of building relationships across all borders and boundaries."

"The 20th century began with a war (World War I) sparked in this region of the world -- the Balkans," Tipps said. "In the 21st century, the Balkans could be a birthplace for reconciliation."

Ydriz Basha, another "Stockholm 43" member, also sees it that way. Basha, Albania's ambassador to Belgium, postponed what later appeared to be successful brain surgery in order to travel to Macedonia. "Our people suffer from injustice," said Basha, a psychoanalyst and human-rights advocate turned diplomat. "I must do something so I will sleep better. I must do my duty and serve my country."

"If I die, I die -- after this (the trip to Macedonia)."

The Stockholm Accords will now become the focus of a series of international signing events and on the World Wide Web by individuals, governments and organizations. The document can be accessed at the Web site of Global Strategies International, [www.gsrf.org](http://www.gsrf.org)

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## **Group denounces 'holy war' targeting Malukus Christians**

By Robert O'Brien

SKOPJE, Macedonia (ABP) -- An international movement against ethnic cleansing has written an open letter condemning Muslims who have declared a holy war against Christians in Indonesia.

Islamic extremists have since 1999 killed thousands of Christians in the Malukus Islands of Indonesia. Thousands of others have fled as refugees. The island nation in Southeast Asia is about 80 percent Muslim.

Framers of the new Stockholm Accords on Ethnic Cleansing, a multinational, interfaith effort aimed at ending genocide in the 21st century, denounced the call to "jihad" in an August meeting in Macedonia.

The open letter calls on people inside and outside Indonesia to cease "instigating, aiding or abetting hatred, violence, genocide or ethnic cleansing." It further urges aid to displaced persons and efforts to return them safely to their homes.

It also calls for "creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, consisting of reputable and honorable Indonesians of diverse backgrounds and experiences, to reaffirm that all human life is sacred, and to provide a healing response to violence."

Inhabitants of the Maluku Islands and all Indonesians should "establish a means of seeking restoration, reconciliation and healing for all ethnic, racial and religious communities of their land," the letter says.

It further calls on "women and men of every nation of good will to join us in this resolution as an international call for the unqualified reverence for human life in the Maluku Islands of Indonesia."

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