



Associated Baptist Press

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Baptists in New York overwhelmed by tragedy

By Bob Allen

NEW YORK (ABP) -- David and Ana D'Amico, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionaries to New York's diplomatic community, live eight blocks from the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan.

Walking toward loud explosions caused when two hijacked commercial jets crashed into the familiar twin-towers landmark Sept. 11, they met people running in every direction and streets clogged by rescue vehicles.

Pat Anderson, coordinator of the CBF state chapter in Florida, said he spoke early Sept. 12 to Ana D'Amico, who described the situation there as "overwhelming."

The couple made their way to the New York University Hospital, Anderson related in an e-mail account of the conversation, where they helped medical personnel by washing soot and ashes from the "walking wounded" seeking help. They distributed clean clothes for victims to change into after treatment throughout the day and into the night.

Her experience as a hospital administrator helped, she said, as did the fact they speak more than one language. Under stress, victims who had learned English as a second language had trouble remembering words. The D'Amicos translated for many people, helping them reunite with families.

They met one young man who asked, "Where is God at a time like this?"

They also ministered to several members of an atheist group who had just returned from a meeting in California. One asked, "You are religious people, aren't you?"

Ana replied, "Well, I do not know if we are religious or not, but we believe in God and believe he is here right now."

"Then please pray for us," the man said.

"Ana said she and David feel overwhelmed," Anderson said. "They are grateful for my call and all of our prayers and offers of help."

David Waugh, pastor of Metro Baptist Church in midtown Manhattan, said he believes all members of the church family are safe. He said the church is open for prayer, food and shelter. At least 26 people who couldn't get home slept Tuesday night on the church floor, he said.

"We are a bit numb," Waugh said, describing the challenge of ministering amid such widespread grief. "How do you counsel? What do you say? How can one help? There is nothing to do but offer the ministry of presence and pray that God is in that presence."

Lisa Chilson, volunteer coordinator for Metro New York Baptist Association, said she watched events unfold on television at the association's offices in midtown Manhattan.

"It was just a shock," she said. "We've spent the morning praying."

People working near the World Trade Center had to walk home when subway service was canceled. Chilson said people were still walking past the association's office, about four miles away, six hours after the attack.

Chilson said Baptist workers in the association, which covers about 100 square miles, had been praying for some time about how to minister to people in the area. "This is the perfect opportunity to put into practice what we've been praying about for the last few months," she said.

Pat Pattillo, a longtime denominational worker for Southern Baptists who recently became associate general secretary for communications at the National Council of Churches, said the high towers of lower Manhattan are visible from upper floors of his office building some 100 blocks north on the upper west side.

"It was eerie to look out the window and watch the mile-long plumes of soot and smoke rise from the twin towers, looking like factory smokestacks," Pattillo said. "And suddenly they were gone. Only the smoke and dust remained, billowing eastward toward the Brooklyn Bridge."

Ironically, Pattillo said, he had visited the observation deck at the south tower of the World Trade Center last Saturday for the first time since 1978.

"I have very clear pictures in my mind of the cheerful, vital, young employees -- elevator operators, ticket takers, waiters, and salespeople hawking the T-shirts and souvenirs -- up there on the 107th floor, and wonder what happened to them on Tuesday morning," he said. "It's a reminder of how delicate the balance of life really is, of how close we all come to being in the wrong place at the wrong time."

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-- Staff of the Biblical Recorder contributed to this report.

Baptists mobilize for disaster relief

By Bob Allen

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Baptists nationwide mobilized quickly to provide relief to thousands of victims of terrorist attacks in New York and Washington Sept. 11 with donations, volunteers and prayer.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship immediately allocated \$15,000 for emergency relief and established a fund to channel contributions from individuals and churches.

"Our hearts turn to God for mercy and grace, especially for the victims of these acts of violence and their families," said Daniel Vestal, coordinator of the Atlanta-based CBF. "We grieve over the tragic loss of human life and the suffering that has taken place in our country."

CBF personnel in New York and Washington are accounted for and safe, according to a statement.

The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention also set up an NY-DC Emergency Fund, inviting contributions either by mail or on-line at the NAMB Web site, www.namb.net

NAMB staffer Mickey Caison and an advance team arrived in New Jersey Sept. 12 to set up a staging area for disaster-relief teams from Baptist state conventions.

Southern Baptist disaster-relief ministries, coordinated among state Baptist Men organizations, typically respond to natural disasters such as tornadoes and floods.

A disaster-relief unit from North Carolina was activated and headed for the Pentagon. Richard Brunson, director of North Carolina Baptist Men, said a group of about 30 men left for Washington around midnight Sept. 12. Two other large shower units from North Carolina prepared to travel to New York.

Teams from Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina were activated Sept. 12 and assigned to Edison, N.J. A unit owned by the Baptist Convention of New York was activated in White Plains, N.Y. Other disaster-relief units remained on standby. Disaster-relief units from Virginia and Kentucky were reportedly headed for Manhattan to feed rescue workers Sept. 12.

NAMB also sent a point person to coordinate chaplains to minister to victims and rescue workers.

American Baptist Men, a division of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., stood ready after consulting with officials of the American Red Cross and FEMA.

Leaders also encouraged Baptists to donate blood.

Meanwhile, Baptists across the nation gathered in groups large and small for prayer.

Staff at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina prayed together in the chapel of the convention's offices in Cary, N.C., said spokesman Bill Boatwright. "The staff was encouraged to express their feelings in the meeting or, if they preferred, cluster into smaller groups or return to their office areas for a time of reflection and discussion," Boatwright said. "Staff members who felt the need to go home and be with family members were encouraged to do so."

Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, Calif., convened a countywide, interdenominational prayer service at 7 p.m. on the day of the attacks.

Pastor Rick Warren said the purpose of the meeting was threefold: to pray for the families of victims, wisdom for the nation's leaders and for everyone anxious and concerned about the day's events.

"This is the Pearl Harbor of this generation, and if ever there was a time to call our country and county together and pray, it's now," Warren said.

In Albuquerque, N.M., the interim pastor of Del Norte Baptist Church e-mailed members to announce a called prayer meeting. "As pastor, I realize that each day calls for prayer in our own lives, the life of our church and the safety of our great nation," said Don Murray, announcing a special church meeting to "pray for our nation and the events of the day."

About 100 high school students in Crestwood, Ky., started Wednesday, Sept. 12 gathered around the school's flagpole for prayer. Sophomore Jeff Viniard, a member of Crestwood Baptist Church, helped organize the gathering, modeled after "See You at the Pole" student-prayer rallies scheduled around the country Sept. 19.

"Since we can't go there physically and help out, this is something we can do," Viniard said. "Prayer is a very strong tool. This is what we could do, and I think this is what God wanted us to do."

Many churches in Texas held prayer services at noon or Tuesday evening. Baptist pastors also were guests on large-market radio shows to discuss the tragedies.

John Loudat, editor of the Baptist New Mexican newspaper in Albuquerque, N.M., said a pastor from Canada told him that Baptists there were praying as well.

Charles Quail, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dunnville, Ontario, said churches across Canada, like his, were holding special meetings to pray for their neighbors to the south, Loudat reported.

At Baylor University in Waco, Texas, students began praying as soon as they heard the first news reports, according to students on campus at the time. When the scheduled chapel speaker for the day could not get to Waco due to flight cancellations, the chapel hour was turned over to a period of corporate prayer.

Students also held a candlelight prayer vigil at the university's Floyd Casey Stadium Sept. 12.

Meanwhile, the minds of many in the Baylor community were focused anew on the plight of two Baylor graduates who are imprisoned and on trial in Afghanistan because of their Christian faith. Due to the suspected connections between the bombings in the U.S. and terrorist groups in Afghanistan, the plight of the imprisoned Americans was considered to be even more dire than before.

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-- Staff from the Biblical Recorder, Western Recorder, Baptist New Mexican and Baptist Standard contributed to this report.

Don't scapegoat Muslims, Baptist leaders caution

By Bob Allen

NEW YORK (ABP) -- As evidence in terrorist bombings in New York and Washington pointed to radical Islamic groups, Baptist leaders warned against turning anger against American Muslims and other immigrants from the Middle East.

Media reports identified Islamic fundamentalist Osama bin Laden as a suspect in attacks Sept. 11 on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and criticized Afghanistan's Taliban government for harboring the suspected terrorist.

That prompted concerns that angry Americans may wrongly view Muslims in this country as scapegoats. Mosques and Muslim-owned businesses around the United States have reported threats since the attacks. But experts say even if religious fanatics are to blame, they don't represent the vast majority of the world's Muslims, who don't advocate violence.

Pat Pattillo of the National Council of Churches in New York said a major concern "is the safety of the citizens of this country who are law-abiding, God-fearing Muslims who might become the targets of hate attacks and violence in a misguided retaliation -- adding still more innocent victims to the list of those harmed by this senseless act of terrorism."

David and Ana D'Amico, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionaries to New York's diplomatic community, said they have heard from many Muslims who fear they will be targeted for revenge. "They have friends among diplomats from unfriendly countries," said Florida CBF coordinator Pat Anderson, who spoke to Ana D'Amico by phone.

"[Ana] and David pray that Americans will not become blindly vengeful," Anderson continued, "that we will remember that God loves everyone, even our enemies. She asked me to encourage all of us to hold up God's love for all people, including our enemies, and pray that America does not act precipitously and maybe commit horrible mistakes."

Gerald Mann, pastor of Riverbend Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, told radio listeners not to blame American Muslims for the terrorist acts.

Mann, interviewed on the Clear Channel radio network, urged listeners not to assume that all Muslim people endorse terrorism simply because some Muslim extremists are suspected of launching the attack on the United States. The vast majority of Muslim people worldwide are peaceful and kind, he said. Like Islam, all

major world religions are plagued by fundamentalist factions, Mann said, adding that even American Christians are not immune.

Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tenn., urged Christians to temper feelings of anger and revenge with teachings of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount.

"Jesus' wisdom and witness must set our course in this very sinful world where evil multiplies evil, anger feeds anger, injustice breeds injustice, vengeance begets vengeance," Parham said.

"When some rush toward revenge, those of faith must be slow to speak about retribution," he said. "When some quickly denounce Muslims and demonize them, we must avoid the false witness that universalizes harmful attributes to those of different religions."

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-- Mark Wingfield contributed to this report.

Baptist counselors offer advice for helping kids deal with tragedy

By Ken Camp, Russ Dilday and Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- As television newscasts beamed continuous images of terrorist-inspired death and destruction into American homes, Baptist counselors advised parents to work hard at creating "normal" environments for their children.

"Don't avoid talking about what has happened, but don't draw on it either," advised Jeff Jones, director of counseling services for Buckner Children and Family Services of North Texas.

"They're going to be exposed to this through their schools or seeing it through the media. As a parent, I would be careful not to let it consume us, where it is always on the television and this is the only input they're receiving."

Children need information, but they also need context, added Helen Harris and Diana Garland of Baylor University's School of Social Work. They released a three-page document giving tips for parents on dealing with the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.

"Tell your children in age-appropriate language the simple facts," the professors advised. "Be simple and direct, explaining things at their level.

But while giving facts, make sure to provide interpretation, they added. "Children need interpretation. Don't allow children to watch these events on television or listen to them on the radio alone. Watch with them. Ask what they are thinking and feeling, and share your own thoughts and feelings with them."

Harris and Garland agreed with Jones that keeping a routine helps children feel secure.

"Children need routines and your presence," they advised. "As much as you feel drawn to the television and newspapers and discussions with other adults, remember that your children need things to be as normal as possible, and they need your presence with them. Spend time with them in homework, in play, in discussion."

Children may simply need to get out of the house and away from discussion of the trauma, Jones added. "You may need to physically take your children out of the house to a park or movie to reinforce that they are safe at home and outside the home. That's all part of normalizing family life without downplaying the situation."

Parents also should let their children see them express normal emotions over the tragic events, added Amy Branch-Lambert, a pastoral-care consultant with the Baptist General Convention of Texas Counseling and Psychological Services.

"Parents need to be honest about their own feelings," she said. "To a large degree, children will mirror what their parents are doing."

Dealing with your own emotions can provide a powerful point of explanation for children, added Harris and Garland. "If you cry, explain what is making you cry. Ask them what makes them sad or angry. It is OK for children to see your feelings; they will know even if you don't tell them."

But be careful about expressing anger, Jones warned. "As Christian adults, we will struggle with the feeling of desiring retribution. As hard as it may be, God calls us to calm and forgiveness, and we're to strive to be like him."

How children understand such events and emotions will vary depending on age. "Children under the age of 6 or 7 do not yet understand the permanence of death," Harris and Garland wrote. "They may be confused that others are so upset."

"Children older than 8 or 9 years have an awareness of the permanence of death. They frequently have questions about what happens after death. Parents should share with these children information that death means that the body doesn't work anymore. Share what you believe about life after death."

Parents also should reassure their children of their own safety as truthfully as possible, the experts agreed.

Harris and Garland advised parents to "tell your child the truth: 'This is scary because it could happen to anyone. But we believe it will not happen here. And you need to know that if it were to happen here, we would get through it together as a family. God is with people there who are hurting. And God is with us. God says we will never be alone, even in the scariest of times.'"

Parents should not neglect the emotional needs of adolescents at this time either, Harris and Garland added.

"They need information, interpretation and security, but they are ready for conversations that are more adult," the social workers explained. "They also need normalcy. They need you to watch television with them too."

Further, adolescents "need you to listen to their strong feelings, even when they are hard for you," they continued. "They easily feel out of control when a tragedy like this happens. They believe in justice, and so they may express rage and question where God is at a time like this. Their thoughts about what our nation needs to do may be quite different than yours."

With children of all ages, current events provide excellent opportunities to teach about faith, the counselors suggested.

"Use conversations between parents as occasions to discuss ways in which their faith sustains them," said Branch-Lambert. "Let them know that we depend on God for our peace when the world around us is not at peace."

Jones added: "Depending on their ability to comprehend spiritual concepts, explain to them that there are bad or evil people in the world whose actions sometimes confuse us, but that God is a God of love, not confusion and he has a plan."

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News service postpones leadership meetings

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- Associated Baptist Press postponed its fall board meeting and presentation of a major award in light of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Also scheduled Sept. 13-15 in Jacksonville, Fla., was a first-ever meeting for a new foundation established to support work of the independent, national news service.

ABP Executive Editor Greg Warner said the meetings would be rescheduled. Veteran religion writer Jim Jones of the Fort Worth, Texas, Star-Telegram, named earlier as 2001 recipient of ABP's Religious Freedom Award, will be honored at a later date, Warner said.

Rebecca Wiggs, chairwoman of ABP's board of directors, cited the news service's reporting responsibilities and travel problems in postponing the meetings.

"The work and mission of Associated Baptist Press is to serve Christ by providing credible and compelling information about matters of faith," said Wiggs, an attorney in Jackson, Miss. "I can think of no more urgent need during this time than for our staff to be disseminating words of reason, stories of courage and reminders of hope."

Warner said that in order to accommodate schedules of busy directors, ABP board meetings are planned months in advance. Still, he concurred with Wiggs' decision.

"The need to conduct business becomes insignificant when compared to what has happened this week," he said. "And, we did not want to appear callous to the national situation by having a celebration event when our focus should be on praying for the victims of this tragedy and for our nation."

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-- By ABP staff

John Upton nominated as Virginia executive

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Virginia missions leader John Upton Jr. will be nominated to become executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Ray Spence, who chairs the nine-member committee seeking to fill the position, unveiled the committee's choice at the Virginia Baptist Mission Board's executive committee meeting Sept. 11.

Upton, 48, must be elected by the full Mission Board at its Oct. 9-10 meeting in Richmond and by messengers to the annual BGAV meeting Nov. 8-9 in Woodbridge, Va. If approved by both groups he would assume his new position early next year.

Reginald McDonough, executive director of the BGAV and the VBMB since 1987, plans to retire Feb. 28.

"Missions is the foundation of our house," said Spence, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Richmond. "John Upton has an understanding of missions structure and a network for doing missions. We believe he is the right person for this time in the history of Virginia Baptists."

Upton has been group leader of the Mission Board's mission-mobilization group since 1995. In that role he has developed mission partnerships with Baptists in Virginia, the United States and around the world in cooperation with the Baptist World Alliance, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board and other ministry partners.

From 1984 to 1986 and again from 1991 to 1995, Upton was pastor of Urbanna Baptist Church in Urbanna, Va. He and his wife, Deborah, were missionaries in Taiwan from 1986-1991, serving with the SBC's International Mission Board.

He also has been pastor of Colts Neck Baptist Church in Colts Neck, N.J., and associate pastor of Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, Texas.

Upton holds a bachelor of arts degree from Averett College, a Baptist-affiliated school in Danville, Va., and a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

He also holds the honorary doctor of divinity degree from the India Baptist Theological Seminary in Kerala. He has studied at the Taipei Language Institute and Chinese Language Institute, both in Taiwan. He also has been involved in clinical pastoral education at Hazelwood Hospital and Crescent Hill Baptist Church, both in Louisville, Ky.

Upton's wife, Deborah, is associate pastor for children at First Baptist Church in Richmond, which Upton also attends. The couple has three children: Christopher, 23; Richard, 21; and Emily, 20.

Spence said the search committee interviewed several people for the state association's top leadership post -- both from Virginia and out of state -- before settling on Upton. One "serious" candidate was a woman, he said.

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Virginia Baptist treasurer dies

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Nat Kellum, treasurer and director of business management for the Virginia Baptists for 19 years, died Sept. 12 of an apparent heart attack at his home in Ashland, Va. He was 56 years old.

Kellum, widely active in Baptist church and denominational life, was an insurance executive in Roanoke, Va., for 12 years before joining the Virginia Baptist Mission Board of the Baptist General Association of Virginia in 1982.

A former two-term trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign (now International) Mission Board, 1982-91, Kellum was chairman of deacons at Cool Springs Baptist Church in Mechanicsville, Va.

Kellum, a native of Gloucester, Va., also formerly taught in the Hampton City Schools in Hampton, Va., and served as a houseparent for the Virginia Baptist Children's Home in Salem, Va.

The Hogg Funeral Home in Gloucester, Va., is handling funeral arrangements that at press time were incomplete.

Survivors include his wife, Doris Ann Daughtry Kellum of Ashland, Va.; a son, Wendell Kellum of Allentown, Pa.; a daughter, Andrea Kellum, a student at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.; and a sister, Lucille Warren of Gloucester, Va.

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-- By Robert O'Brien

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