



# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen  
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626  
Fax: 904.262.7745  
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

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### Robertson steps down from Christian Coalition

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson resigned Dec. 5 as the group's president, saying he desires to spend more time in ministry and less in political action.

The coalition's board of directors immediately named Roberta Combs, the organization's executive vice president since 1999, as his successor. The board accepted Robertson's resignation and named him president emeritus.

Christian Coalition officials said the group plans to continue and Combs would concentrate on developing a new generation of leaders for the grassroots organization.

Critics of the coalition, which is struggling financially and has lost membership in recent years, said Robertson's resignation might signal the organization's end.

"Pat's resignation very well could be the death knell for the Christian Coalition," Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, was quoted as saying by the New York Times.

"Pat was the only real reason the group existed, and it can't exist without him," said Lynn, a frequent critic of the coalition.

Robertson founded the Christian Coalition in 1989 after his failed run for president. The group is credited with helping to elect the first Republican Congress in decades in 1994 and with mobilizing grassroots volunteers across the nation into local political action such as running for school boards.

Observers say the coalition's membership has dwindled to about half from its heyday and is broke financially.

Robertson, 71, said he wants to devote his remaining years to religious broadcasting and promoting the Christian Broadcasting Network, which he started years ago. Today it is seen in over 90 countries and claims an audience of more than 1 million Americans a day.

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-- By ABP staff

## **CBF contributes funds to Afghanistan relief**

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has committed \$100,000 for emergency relief in Afghanistan, implementing a new partnership with the Christian relief agency World Vision.

The Atlanta-based Fellowship's global-missions arm made its first installment of \$30,000 to World Vision Nov. 28. Additional monies are scheduled to follow in December and January.

CBF officials said the \$100,000 gift would help deliver food supplies in areas hit hard by conflict and drought.

"We believe that many of the 1,800 churches in our Fellowship will begin to catch the vision to undergird our mutual commitment to the staggering needs, not only in the Afghanistan region, but around the world," said CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal.

A World Vision relief worker who recently returned from Afghanistan reported severe food shortages.

The United Nations says up to 100,000 Afghan children could die during Afghanistan's approaching winter unless essential relief supplies are made available in the next few weeks.

In partnership with other aid organizations, World Vision plans to deliver food rations to acutely malnourished children and pregnant or nursing women in western Afghanistan. In addition, World Vision is providing blankets, water containers, plastic sheeting, boots, hygiene kits, tents and emergency food rations.

"The immediate priority is obviously to deliver food and save lives, but we also want to develop quality in-depth programs that will put the Afghan population on a path to full recovery," said Robyn Kennedy, Pakistan program manager for World Vision. "I think that will be our larger challenge over the long run -- the effort to restore people's health and well-being after they have had to endure so much suffering and loss."

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-- EDITOR'S NOTE: Contributions to Afghan refugee relief can be mailed to CBF at P.O. Box 101699, Atlanta, GA 30392, or donated online at [www.cbfafghanrelief.net](http://www.cbfafghanrelief.net).

-- By ABP staff

## **SBC leaders join call for prayer for Muslims**

By Bob Allen

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Six Southern Baptist Convention agency heads have joined the denomination's president in calling for a day of prayer for Muslims Dec. 16.

Top executives of the SBC Executive Committee, International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, LifeWay Christian Resources, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and Woman's Missionary Union joined president James Merritt in a Nov. 30 letter asking Christians to pray that God would "reveal himself" to Muslims at the end of Ramadan, Islam's holy month.

"Right now, Muslims are observing their holy month of Ramadan, and many Christians have been praying that God would speak to Muslims about his love for them and their need for his forgiveness," the letter says.

The letter urges Baptists to pray that devout Muslims will "come to Christ" as they spend an entire night in prayer asking God to speak to them.

In the past, Southern Baptists have been criticized for coordinating similar evangelistic prayers with Jewish and Hindu holy days.

A spokesman for the National Conference for Community and Justice (formerly National Conference of Christians and Jews) told Associated Baptist Press it is insensitive to evangelize among other faiths during their high holidays.

"Clearly, the SBC has every right to its beliefs, and the NCCJ does not disparage the faith beliefs of others unless they become highly divisive or disrespectful of others," said Brian Ross, NCCJ executive vice president.

"We continue to believe that it is disrespectful to target faith groups for conversion during their holy seasons," he said. "This is particularly of concern during this time of global instability, when many Muslims in the U.S. have been targeted with hate messages and hate crimes."

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## **News briefs from Associated Baptist Press**

### **Church leaves Missouri convention**

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Holmeswood Baptist Church in Kansas City, Mo., has cut ties with the Missouri Baptist Convention, citing disagreement with the recent ouster of a non-Southern Baptist church.

"It is Holmeswood's belief that Baptist doctrine clearly states that each individual church is free to affiliate with any Baptist or non-Baptist entity as it chooses," the resolution said. "In contrast, the MBC has publicly stated that only those churches that are affiliated with the SBC can be affiliated with the Missouri Baptist convention."

The church, which previously voted to cut SBC ties, plans to remain in its local association and reaffirmed its commitment to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. (ABP)

### **Freed relief workers' homecoming to be webcast**

WACO, Texas -- A homecoming celebration at Baylor University for graduates Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer will be webcast live on the Internet at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 8.

The service, including comments by the two freed Afghanistan relief workers, may be accessed at <http://pr.baylor.edu>, according to officials at the Baptist-affiliated university in Waco, Texas. (ABP)

### **Baptist college receives grant for ministerial study**

GEORGETOWN, Ky. -- Kentucky Baptist-affiliated Georgetown College has received \$2 million from the Lilly Foundation for a program aimed at encouraging students to enter the ministry as a profession.

"Georgetown has a rich and lengthy history of preparing students for the ministry," said college President William Crouch. "However, the need for talented young ministers is serious and it behooves Christian institutions of higher education to redouble their efforts." (ABP)

### **Waco church calls woman as pastor**

WACO, Texas -- Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, has called Dorisanne Cooper as pastor. While female pastors are a rarity in Baptist life, Waco now has two.

Calvary Baptist Church in Waco broke the gender barrier among Texas Baptist clergy when it hired Julie Pennington-Russell as pastor in 1998.

While about 1,300 Southern Baptist women are ordained, most serve in ministries other than the pastorate. They include Cooper, who for the past five years has been associate pastor at College Park Baptist Church in Greensboro, N.C.

Cooper grew up in Waco. She graduated from Baylor in 1993 and then went to Princeton Theological Seminary, where she won a prestigious preaching award before earning her master-of-divinity degree in 1996. (ABP)

### **College chaplain dies from crash injuries**

LIBERTY, Mo. -- A Baptist chaplain at William Jewell College died Nov. 21 from injuries suffered in an automobile accident in Kansas City.

Bill Davis, 52, chaplain and vice president for religious ministries at the Baptist-affiliated school in Liberty, Mo., came to William Jewell in 1999. Before that, he served nine years as a regional coordinator and campus minister for the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Davis' son, Josh, a freshman at the University of Missouri in Columbia, received minor injuries in the accident. Other survivors include Davis' widow, Jo, an elementary school teacher. (ABP)

### **CBF hires chaplaincy associate**

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has hired a new associate coordinator for endorsement of chaplains and pastoral counselors.

George Pickle of Marietta, Ga., agreed a two-year contract with the Atlanta-based CBF, according to officials. For the past nine years, Pickle has worked at the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as director of healthcare and pastoral counseling.

A graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Fuller Theological Seminary, Pickle previously worked as a campus minister, pastor and chaplain. (ABP)

### **Baptists warned against e-mail scam**

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. -- Several Baptist churches in New Mexico report being targeted in an e-mail scam posing as a bequest from Nigeria.

Several of the state's pastors said parishioners received e-mails titled "Notification of Bequest" saying they can receive \$570,000 if they fax personal information to the sender.

The e-mail, supposedly from a court official in Nigeria, tells the recipient he or she has been named beneficiary of the huge sum of money in a client's will. In order to claim the money, it continues, the recipient is "required" to fax a photo of his or her driver's license.

A representative of the U.S. Secret Service, however, said the e-mail is a hoax and warned that such information could be used to steal a person's identity. The worker said recipients should mail a copy of the e-mail to the Secret Service. (ABP)

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