



# Associated Baptist Press

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## Presidential panel gives mixed message on therapeutic cloning

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A presidential panel on bioethics has called for a four-year moratorium on human cloning, including for medical research.

A divided President's Council on Bioethics, however, declined to call for an outright ban on cloning, saying instead that "prudent and sensible" regulation is the best way to advance research while guarding against abuse.

Ten of 18 council members supported the moratorium. One member abstained from voting.

The long-awaited report is unlikely to affect a Senate stalemate over the issue, however.

The House of Representatives has passed a bill banning cloning of human embryos for any purpose, but two competing bills have been mired in the Senate for months.

One bill, sponsored by Sens. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) and Mary Landrieu (D-La.), would ban cloning outright. Another, sponsored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), would ban cloning for reproductive purposes but not for research.

Each version has the backing of about 40 senators. Anti-abortion groups prefer the Brownback-Landrieu measure. They contend that life begins at conception. Since research requires that embryos be destroyed, they oppose all research involving fertilized human eggs.

Adding to the conflict is the unlikely co-sponsorship of the other bill by Feinstein, a pro-choice Democrat, and Hatch, who is pro-life. Hatch has said he believes, too, that life starts at conception, but that cloned embryos aren't technically "conceived," through the uniting of an egg and sperm.

Embryos are valued in research for their ability to produce stem cells, which can be harvested to grow a variety of tissues for use in transplantation to treat serious illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

Other research, however, points to similar promise using stem cells harvested from adults, meaning no embryos are destroyed. That led pro-life leaders to hope the president's council might call for an outright ban on cloning.

"The report is not what those of us who want a total ban on cloning would have hoped for, but it's the best we could expect given the composition of the council," said Richard Land, head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Aside from the pro-life lobby, some ethicists fear that loopholes in the Feinstein law could ultimately lead to the use of human embryos for reproduction. All voting council members said they opposed cloning for reproductive purposes.

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## **ATS gives Leland Center associate-member status**

By Robert Dilday

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (ABP) -- The John Leland Center for Theological Studies has been admitted as an associate member by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

ATS, the primary accrediting agency for seminaries in North America, admitted the Leland Center at its biennial meeting, June 22-24.

Associate membership is a significant step in a school's quest for full accreditation.

The Virginia Baptist-affiliated Leland Center was founded in 1998 in Falls Church in response to requests to provide post-baccalaureate, professional theological education with a distinctively Baptist orientation in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

The Leland Center offers two degrees: the master of divinity and master of theological studies. It also offers diploma and certificate programs as well as courses in Fredericksburg and Hampton Roads.

The center reflects the diversity of its metropolitan area. Although small, the full-time faculty includes an Estonian and an Argentinian national and the associate faculty includes a Ghanaian national. Diploma classes are taught in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

"Associate membership in ATS communicates the quality of our program and allows us to learn from the seminary experiences of the other member schools," said Randel Everett, Leland's president. "We hope Leland will bring a perspective to ATS from our ethnic diversity, our Baptist heritage, our D.C. location and our commitment to training leaders for the emerging church."

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## **Passport celebrates 10-year anniversary**

By Lacy Elwood

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Many teens are content to spend their summer vacations in front of the TV, but for their peers attending camp at Passport, summertime means getting off the couch and into the community.

It has been 10 years since Passport, Inc., first invited students from grades 7 to 12 to take part in a weeklong mix of summer camp and mission trip. In that decade, Passport has outgrown the dream created by its founders, Colleen and David Burroughs.

When the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida's Pat and Carolyn Anderson wanted a new youth camp in Florida for moderate Baptists, they approached the Burroughs -- who were then Southern Seminary students -- and several of their friends to help develop Passport, Inc.

Wanting to build off their childhood experiences, Colleen, who grew up as a missionary kid, and David, who attended and worked at youth camps, asked if they could do something different with the CBF camp.

"At the time, the concept of combining youth camping and a mission trip was new, and we were excited about it," Colleen said. "We wanted to give teens the opportunity to make a difference."

In September of 1992, plans were underway for the first camp in Bradenton, Fla. They created a five-year business plan, organized their ideas into a non-profit organization and began garnering support from their CBF peers. When Passport first began, Colleen said, they "didn't know what would happen."

"Somebody invited us to try something new and gave us free reign to create it and then backed us, and we just kept walking faithfully," Colleen said. "We were in seminary and we didn't have anything to lose. We outgrew our five-year plan in two years."

What started as a "mom and pop" organization has outgrown all expectations. They began with 155 campers, but this summer Passport will host more than 6,000 youth at university campuses in Daytona Beach, Fla.; Wingate, N.C.; Louisville, Ky.; and Tulsa, Okla.

The Burroughs' involvement in Passport has changed since they led their first camp in 1993. Taking on the administrative work of the organization, they've turned over the leadership of each camp to college and seminary students.

But the couple remains an integral part of each camp, Colleen said. They still train and keep in daily contact with the camp leaders and plan each summer's theme and activities.

Each year focuses on a different theme, which is incorporated through every activity of the camper's day, from the morning devotional and Bible study to the evening parties. This year, the Passport staff selected "Gravity" as their theme, defining it as "the force that pulls you to the center."

"Christ is the center of our gravity. He pulls us to himself," David Burroughs wrote in a letter to youth leaders and campers. "As the world spins around us, our goal this summer is to challenge campers to consider the power of being in a positive relationship with the force of Christ's pull on their lives."

A major part of the camper's day is the three hours of community service. Each camp's work depends on the location, Colleen said, with projects ranging from work with the community's disabled and children's literacy programs at local YMCAs to the inevitable physical labor from Habitat for Humanity sites and other local houses.

"There's only so many projects that lend themselves to that many kids at once," Colleen said, explaining Passport's frequent painting and scraping projects. She added that the kids often don't mind the hard work, because at most of these sites homeowners and campers have the opportunity to interact and develop friendships. "It's not just what happens on the outside of the house, but on the inside."

Marnie Fisher-Ingram, director of the Tulsa team, said the missions experience is what changes the students the most.

"I see kids come into camp scared to go to a mission site, but they leave with so much confidence, feeling they've helped someone," Fisher-Ingram said. "It's amazing to watch the transformation of these youth."

Colleen said she's seen "campers show up wide-eyed, with their knees knocking, thinking about what they got themselves into." Their perspectives quickly change, she said, noting that "by Friday, you have to help them get on the bus to go home."

Sam Hestorff, youth minister of Bayshore Baptist Church in Tampa, Fla., has been involved with Passport camps for eight years. He's found Passport's hands-on emphasis to missions to be a tangible way for students to learn the Christian ways preached at most camps.

"One thing I've learned from kids is that words are cheap. There's something about the actual experience that is life-changing for them," Hestorff said. "Passport is the camp that when they come back they start immediately thinking about next year."

Their approach to youth camp must be working, as their church return rate stands at 70 percent, Colleen said. However, the churches' students are not the only ones who want to stay with Passport.

For staffers like Fisher-Ingram, who said she's been involved with Passport for seven years, the end of camp leaves them wanting to come back, partly because "it keeps getting better and better."

And although the camp has become more diverse, moving from a camp for moderate Baptists to simply a non-denominational Christian one, the Passport crew still remains spiritually tied to the CBF.

"They're the ones who got off the bus, rolled up their sleeves and said, 'What can we do to make this work?'" Colleen said. Symbolizing that history, Passport celebrated its 10-year anniversary with a "hoedown" on June 28 at the CBF's General Assembly in Fort Worth, Texas.

The ties go beyond symbolic. Campers have given more than \$100,000 in support of CBF Global Missions over 10 years, and Passport co-sponsors several other CBF ministries.

With the help of CBF Global Missions, Passport, Inc. provides summer and semester-long mission opportunities to college students through Student.go. They also sponsor a mission exchange program, connecting groups to mission trip opportunities. Next August, Passport plans to go international, as 75 American students are going to travel to Kenya to work with CBF missionaries Sam and Melody Harrell.

The future of Passport camps seems secure, with their newest ministry, Passport Kids!, currently in development. Taking their experiences with the youth camp, Passport, Inc., has created a missions-based camp designed for children in grades 3 to 6, slated to begin in the summer of 2004. Hestorff said the camp will help children prepare for their experiences at Passport's youth camp.

The Passport staff works to keep more kids coming to camp, by ensuring the camps affordability. Passport costs \$220 per camper, with each church adding a \$45 mission project fee for every 10 campers. Passport also offers scholarships for youth that cannot afford the fee.

The price is on the low scale comparable to other Christian summer camps. An Internet search found camps ranging from as low as \$115 for one week to \$1,025 for one camp's two-week session, with most camps falling between \$400 and \$500 for one week of camping.

Their money gets the campers far more than room and board and a T-shirt. It gives the students the opportunity to learn about themselves and their communities.

"They get to choose to be whoever they want to be at camp," Colleen said, adding that the shyest kids in their youth groups may be the ones who volunteer to get on stage. "When we go out to be Christians to the world, the campers wind up getting more out of the experience than they gave."

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