



# Associated Baptist Press

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## UNC students study Koran as conservatives lose legal fight

By Robert Marus

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (ABP) -- Incoming freshmen and transfer students at the University of North Carolina spent the afternoon of Aug. 19 studying parts of the Koran after a federal court refused to bar the school-sponsored practice.

The university's flagship campus in Chapel Hill generated both headlines and legal action this summer after administrators said they would require new students to read and discuss a partial translation of the Islamic holy book as part of the orientation process.

Like many prestigious colleges, UNC regularly assigns summer reading to incoming students, who then discuss the books during fall-semester orientation. Past summer-reading selections have included books on the culture of Civil War nostalgia and the experience of growing up in a Chicago housing project.

This year the university assigned "Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations," by Michael Sells, and asked students to participate in the discussion groups as well as complete written assignments about the book.

Three anonymous UNC freshmen and two taxpayers enlisted by conservative groups sued to challenge the legality of the assignment. Lawyers for the American Family Association said it violated the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion by requiring students at a state-run university to study Islam.

Critics also accused the university of indoctrinating students into Islam by using a book that omits passages used by Islamic militants to defend religious violence.

"By forcing students to read a single text about Islam that leaves out any mention of other passages of the Koran in which Muslim terrorists find justification for killing non-Muslims, the university establishes a particular mind-set for its students about the nature of Islam," Joe Glover, president of the Family Policy Network, said in a USA Today editorial. "This constitutes religious indoctrination forbidden by the Supreme Court."

Glover's Virginia-based group joined the AFA in challenging the reading program.

The plaintiffs first asked a federal court to bar the university from holding the discussion sessions. After losing that bid Aug. 15, they appealed to the Virginia-based 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. A three-

judge panel of that court unanimously denied their request the morning of Aug. 19, just three hours before the discussion groups were set to begin.

The lower court noted that students who objected to the material could opt out of the assignment by writing an essay explaining why they objected to reading the book. Also, students who failed to respond to the assignment at all would suffer no penalties. Therefore, the court determined, the program does not violate the Constitution.

But critics say that information wasn't made clear to freshmen and transfer students still under the impression that the reading-and-reflection exercise was a requirement.

Despite a few protesters and a small free-speech rally on campus, the Aug. 19 discussions took place with little fanfare. The vast majority of students had read the book and participated in the discussion groups, according to news reports.

Some evangelical students voiced support for the reading program.

"I don't believe that intolerance of other religions is the guide that Christ set before us to follow," said Maggy Lampley, an upperclassman affiliated with the Campus Crusade for Christ quoted by the New York Times. "He wanted us to show that he was the way and the truth, but not through ignorance and intolerance. I think reading books like this is a good way to make people more open-minded."

The court ruling may not end the controversy. North Carolina's legislature is considering a funding provision that would require any course on religion at a state university to cover all religions at the same time.

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## **Christian-based job corps opens doors for women**

By Ken Camp

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Teretha Pass serves breakfast and burgers at a Fort Worth, Texas, cafe. Each month, a stack of bills arrives in the mailbox at her modest apartment. And she gives thanks for every one of them.

"The bills let me know I can get what I want," she explained. Bills mean she is back in the mainstream of society, with a permanent address and a job.

Not long ago, she was living in homeless shelters -- struggling with alcoholism and a history of abuse. June 7 marked her first year sobriety anniversary.

She thanks God each day for her job, but she doesn't intend to wait tables for the rest of her life.

"I'm trying to get my GED, and then I want to get into a sign-language interpretation program," she said. "I want to teach sign interpretation and work with kids with special needs."

About three months ago, she enrolled in the Christian Women's Job Corps program at Fort Worth's Cornerstone Assistance Network.

In classroom-style instruction, participants in Christian Women's Job Corps programs study the Bible along with learning about personal money management, computer skills, parenting, communication, health and nutrition.

Each participant is paired with a mentor -- a mature Christian woman who agrees to keep in close contact with her for at least one year.

Ollie Anderson, president of women's ministries at Meadowbrook First Baptist Church in Fort Worth, recently became Pass' mentor. She wants to see Pass grow not only in social and vocational skills, but also in her relationship with God.

"I want to be an extension of God's love and goodness to her," she said. "I'll just move slowly and wait upon the Lord, as he presents the opportunities."

Mentors provide moral support and spiritual encouragement to those with whom they work, said Margaret Young, site coordinator for the Cornerstone Christian Women's Job Corps. The goal is to help women learn to make responsible decisions for themselves, not to continue to be dependent upon others.

"A mentor is not a martyr -- not a doormat with a smiley face on it saying, 'Step on me,'" Young tells the mentors when they are trained.

Christian Women's Job Corps is designed to help low-income women "become initiators" and learn to be self-motivated, said Young, a member of North Richland Hills Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

"Many of these women have never learned that they can initiate things in their lives. The more they learn to do for themselves, the more they grow in their ability to make right choices," she said.

"We want to create an environment where these women motivate themselves to make right choices and emerge as the best they can be."

Christian Women's Job Corps has been creating that kind of environment for five years. The national ministry of Woman's Missionary Union developed from a pilot program introduced in San Antonio. Currently, there are about 150 sites nationwide.

Each woman represents a changed life and potentially a changed family, said Denise Kopriva, site coordinator for the University Baptist Mission site in Lubbock, Texas. In 1999, the office of communications for the Texas Department of Human Services named the Lubbock Christian Women's Job Corps one of the four most successful faith-based welfare-to-work programs in the state.

"They are capable of being productive citizens. They are worthy of good jobs and of a nice place to live. They don't have to sleep on the floor. They don't have to worry about how they're going to pay their bills," said Kopriva, a member of Monterrey Baptist Church in Lubbock.

"I want them to have a career, not a job -- where they have benefits and retirement and their children are taken care of. They can move out of the slums, so their children can get away from the drugs and the guns and running in the streets.

"I want them to come out with self-esteem and self-worth -- to realize that the Lord put them on this earth for a purpose."

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## **Perfect-attendance streak: 43 years and counting**

By Darla Brantley

SULLIGENT, Ala. (ABP) -- Perfect attendance in Sunday school for any length of time is unusual these days, but for Irene Box Anderson of Sulligent, Ala., it is quite normal.

Anderson has taught the first- and second-grade department at First Baptist Church for more than 43 years without missing a Sunday, and she shows no sign of slowing down.

She recently celebrated her 73rd birthday, and her commitment to children remains as strong as ever. She refers to her students as her "adopted children." After so many years of teaching, she has become a mother figure to many church members. Her affection for the children is so strong that she gets sad when they promote to the third grade.

Working in Sunday school is "just such a blessing to me," Anderson said. "It seems like I miss a meal if I don't attend. I just have to get to church on time."

Her dedication hasn't wavered despite the loss of loved ones, sickness or even surgery. In February 1977, Anderson convinced her doctors to reschedule an operation and recovery so she could make it to church to teach.

"I don't do it to show off, and it's not a duty," Anderson said. "I just love the Lord, and I do it with the love of my heart."

Former student Natalie Carruth remembers Anderson's teaching and faithfulness. "She would end each lesson with the chorus, 'Into My Heart,' and she would give her students a silver dollar each Christmas." These traditions continued with two of Carruth's children.

Anderson's commitment has continued to inspire Carruth as an adult. "She sets a very steadfast example of what a Sunday school teacher and church member should be," Carruth said. "She is a special lady to many people."

Jeff Chaffin, minister of music and youth, said other church members feel the same way. "People see she is committed to be here," he said. "She doesn't just show up -- she teaches. She proves that the small things that get in our way, don't have to."

Anderson extends her affection beyond her students to include the whole church. "I appreciate my church family. They have been by me through thick and thin," she said. "I've never had a church family like them. They are my family."

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Darla Brantley is a correspondent for The Alabama Baptist

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

### **CBF reports boost in designated gifts**

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship took in more than \$6 million in designated gifts last year, pushing total receipts to \$21.3 million, according to information released by the organization's Atlanta offices.

Bolstered by an anonymous \$4 million gift for global missions and \$300,000 for relief ministries following last year's terrorist attacks, designated gifts outpaced a \$1.5 million goal anticipated in the CBF's 2001-2002 budget.

Undesignated gifts totaled more than \$8.9 million during the fiscal year ending June 30. That is an increase of 2.6 percent from the previous year, but \$768,302 (8 percent) under budget.

CBF financial coordinator Jim Strawn said expenditures also came in under budget, however, making the shortfall a wash. CBF "partner" organizations, which receive a portion of their funding through CBF, were funded at 97 percent of budgeted amounts.

The CBF's global missions offering took in \$5.3 million, \$180,000 less than last year and 11 percent short of an announced goal of \$6 million.

The number of contributing churches fell by 61, from 1,776 to 1,715.

The CBF's 2002-2003 budget is \$19.3 million, 7 percent larger than last year's. The offering for global missions goal is \$6.1 million. (ABP)

## **Couple gives university \$1 million**

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. -- Kentucky Baptist-affiliated Campbellsville University has received a \$1 million capital gift -- the largest in the school's history -- toward the building of a planned \$4 million chapel and home for its school of theology. University trustee George Ransdell and his wife, Marie, made the lead gift, which will result in naming the chapel in their honor. "Words cannot express our deepest gratitude to George and Marie Ransdell for their continued faithful commitment to Campbellsville University," President Mike Carter said in announcing the gift.

Campbellsville's theology school offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. (ABP)

## **Former Howard Payne president moves to Dallas Baptist**

DALLAS -- Former Howard Payne University President Rick Gregory has rejoined Dallas Baptist University as vice president for university advancement.

Gregory, who resigned recently after five years at the helm of Howard Payne in Brownwood, Texas, earlier worked seven years at Dallas Baptist. He joined DBU in 1990 as registrar and later became vice president for executive and student affairs.

"We are thrilled about Rick's return to DBU," said President Gary Cook. "He is a wonderful servant leader, and his talents and abilities will benefit our institution ... ." (ABP)

## **International Baptist seminary helps flood victims**

Students and staff at International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague pitched in to aid victims of the Czech Republic's worst floods in a century.

Volunteers packed the seminary-owned van with clothes and other goods Aug. 13 for evacuated persons in Prague. The clothing was an immediate help to people, many of whom had nothing dry to wear. The next day, graduate students from Russia, Lebanon, Egypt and Bulgaria joined other IBTS volunteers to deliver groceries and help fill sandbags. The seminary loaned its van over the weekend to help with transport of tools and cleaning supplies.

The seminary itself escaped damage. The most severe flooding in Prague took place near the Vltava River, about three miles from the campus. The seminary did lose communications for several days, but telephone and Internet connections are now restored. (ABP)

## **Oklahoman nominated to lead Missouri Baptists**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. -- An Oklahoma Baptist leader and Missouri native is being nominated as next executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

David Clippard, 53, associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, will be presented for election by the MBC executive board. He is a native of Cape Girardeau and graduate of the University of Missouri. He entered the ministry in 1981 after working several years in real estate, graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1984.

He worked with Evangelism Explosion International in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and then served eight years at Sarasota (Fla.) Baptist Church before joining the Oklahoma convention staff in 1996.

If elected, he would succeed Jim Hill, who resigned in October, saying he could no longer work with the state convention's conservative leaders. After Hill stepped down, a separate convention organized in Missouri, with leaders saying they had grown tired of political infighting between moderates and conservatives in the Missouri convention.

The MBC executive board recently sued in an effort to regain control of five convention agencies, which over the last two years changed their charters, without MBC permission, to move to self-perpetuating boards of trustees. (ABP)

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-- By ABP staff

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