



# Associated Baptist Press

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## **Co-workers mourn, bury slain mission workers**

By Greg Warner

JIBLA, Yemen (ABP) -- Colleagues and friends of the three American hospital workers killed in a Dec. 30 terrorist attack in Yemen gathered the next morning to bury two of the victims and celebrate their lives and ministries.

The bodies of physician Martha Myers, 57, and hospital administrator William Koehn, 60, were buried, as they had requested, on the grounds of the Jibla Baptist Hospital where each worked for more than 25 years. The remains of Kathleen Gariety, 53, are being returned to the United States.

After the service, most of the 13 American mission workers and their families left for the relative safety of San'a, the Yemeni capital, for "a time of healing and grieving together," a spokeswoman said.

Six remained behind in Jibla -- including Donald Caswell, 49, who was injured by the lone gunman and required surgery, and Koehn's wife, Marty -- but they expect to join the group later. Some workers plan to return to Jibla when it's deemed safe.

Officials of the International Mission Board said its work in Yemen will go on despite the tragedy, but the hospital likely will be transferred to a Muslim charity as previously planned. "The transfer is still in process, but with three deaths, the discussions understandably have stopped," said IMB spokeswoman Anita Bowden.

Hours after the slaying, colleagues talked warmly of the slain workers, who were shot by a suspected Islamic fundamentalist.

"We've lost three of the dearest people," said Lee Hixon, assistant hospital administrator, in an interview. "Between the three of them, there are probably 60 years of service. They were here because they loved the people."

Repeatedly co-workers voiced the resolve of mission workers who risk death to minister in dangerous lands like Yemen.

"They already gave their lives -- they gave their lives when they came here," Hixon said.

Ken Clezy, an Australian surgeon who works at the hospital, remembered William Koehn as "a fine administrator, fair and well-liked by the Yemenis."

"He had a heart of gold and did a lot for orphans and prisoners, as well as the truly poor around here," Clezy said. "He had none of the foibles that one sometimes sees in long-serving missionaries. And we loved him unreservedly. He was fearless and had no thought of leaving during the civil war of 93-94 or the Gulf War."

In a statement, Koehn's stateside family said the Kansas native "died doing what he was called to do. Bill and Marty were in Yemen because of their love for the Lord. We're saddened by this news, but we understand that this does not reflect on the people of Yemen as a whole. We have found them to be gracious and kind...."

Randal Pearce of Mansfield, Texas, Koehn's son-in-law, told the Dallas Morning News: "He was not a pastor or a doctor. He was an administrator. His job was not to convert people, not telling them what to believe. He did maintenance work, administration, anything to keep the place running."

Martha Myers was an obstetrician and gynecologist from Montgomery, Ala., who worked at the Jibla hospital 25 years.

"Martha Myers was a legend, known all over Yemen," said Clezy, her surgeon colleague. "She was generous to a fault, if there is such a thing in Christian terminology. She was a radiant, relaxed Christian."

"I think she was prepared to stay there the rest of her life," added John Wikman, a former missionary who previously served at the hospital. "She could talk Arabic, and the Jibla version of it, as well as the local people."

Myers, who was single, was responsible for immunizing "hundreds of thousands" of Yemeni children, Wikman said. She was the victim of a carjacking several years ago but escaped when her otherwise reliable SUV broke down. "She was kind of scary to drive with," Wikman added.

Kathleen Gariety of Wauwatosa, Wisc., also single, managed the medical supplies for the hospital for 10 years. On her infrequent trips home to Wisconsin, she would collect donated medical supplies to fill a shipping container for the hospital. Churches in the Lakeland Baptist Association, including her home congregation of Layton Baptist Church in Milwaukee, helped with the collection.

"She was a cheerful, determined individual who was extraordinarily focused in her work," said Keith Cogburn, director of missions for the association, where Gariety was employed before becoming a missionary. "She epitomized the calling of a missionary who knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that he or she is called to a particular place. I can't think of a stronger challenge than where she was serving."

"She had such a heart for the people," said Wikman. "She really felt the hospital was serving a purpose. They lost someone who really loved them. She was very concerned about the desperate needs of the people."

Gariety was the most vocal advocate for keeping the hospital in the hands of Christians, colleagues said.

"She pleaded with people to try to save the hospital," Wikman said. "When she said the local Yemeni people wanted the hospital to stay, she knew what she was talking about because the nationals really confided in her.... She worked with a lot of the nationals in her job. She had the pulse of the folks, even more than the doctors did."

Jibla Baptist Hospital, founded by Southern Baptist mission workers 35 years ago, is the only full-service hospital in the poor, rural area around Jibla. It is staffed by 180 local workers, 13 Southern Baptist mission personnel and about 20 other international workers.

Although the hospital is popular among most local residents, some extremists see it as a Western intrusion and an affront to Islam. The gunman, who confessed and surrendered to Yemeni officials, said he shot the American workers "to cleanse his religion and get closer to Allah."

Lee Hixon, the assistant administrator, declined to speculate on the shooter's motive. "We're here to help poor people, that's our gift from God," Hixon said.

Even before the attack, as the IMB moved to close or transfer the hospital, some of the mission workers had made plans to leave Yemen or transfer to other jobs in the country. But others say they plan to return to Jibla.

"I do," said Hixon, who has lived in Jibla with his wife and two teenage children for more than two years. "God puts a great love for a people in your heart, and we love the Yemeni people."

He said he is confident his children are up to the challenge. "They are strong in their faith. They know how to go to the Rock. They're good kids."

At 6:30 a.m. on the morning of the shooting, the hospital mission workers gathered for their regular morning chapel service. Ken Clezy, the Australian surgeon, read Hebrews 11:4, which talks about the faith of Abel, Adam's son. "By faith, he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead." (NIV)

"About an hour later, our friends were dead," Clezy recalled. "We pray that, like Abel, they will still speak."

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## **Baptist ethicists denounce cloning**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Prominent Baptist ethicists have joined a chorus of religious leaders in soundly denouncing a cult-like group's recent assertion that they have produced the first cloned human infant.

Clonaid, a cloning firm associated with a religious group that believes space aliens created human life, announced Dec. 27 that a child named "Eve" was born the previous day. The location of the child's birth and the mother's name were not released. Clonaid claims Eve is an exact genetic replica of her mother -- making her a clone. Clonaid is affiliated with the Raelians, a fringe religious group.

Scientists and ethicists cautioned that the announcement may be a hoax; similar announcements of cloned humans in the past have been proven false. However, the information will not be scientifically verifiable until at least Jan. 4, according to Clonaid scientific director and Raelian spokesperson Brigitte Boisselier.

Baptist ethicists of conservative, moderate and middle-of-the-road varieties all condemned the announcement. "When unprincipled science meets crazy religion, the results may be horrific, like cloning a human being," said Robert Parham, director of the Nashville-based Baptist Center for Ethics.

Likewise, the Southern Baptist Convention's head ethicist, Richard Land, said he believes the advent of human cloning, if it is true, "will lead to Frankenstein fiction becoming Frankenstein fact. Sooner rather than later we are going to be presented with horrific human tragedies coming out of these laboratories."

And ethicist David Gushee of Baptist-related Union University in Jackson, Tenn., said the news means delays over illegalizing human cloning in the world's legislatures may have had disastrous consequences.

"From a Christian perspective, the Clonaid announcement is disastrous news," Gushee said in an e-mail interview with Associated Baptist Press. "Some of us have been warning that the world community needed to move quickly to stop human cloning... If it turns out that the activities of this frightening group have actually yielded a cloned human being, it will be all too clear that we have not moved quickly enough."

The vast majority of religious groups worldwide publicly oppose human cloning for reproductive purposes. However, recent legislative and religious debates have ensued about outlawing all forms of cloning, including what scientists call "therapeutic cloning" or "somatic cell transplantation."

In that process, a cell that could grow into a human infant is cloned from a donor's non-reproductive cells and stimulated in a laboratory to produce fetal stem cells. Human fetal stem cells have proven valuable in treating and even curing many diseases, including some forms of cancer. But the process of harvesting those cells kills the fetus from which they are harvested. While many anti-abortion activists have opposed stem-cell research on these grounds, other religious ethicists have opposed cloning for stem-cell research on the grounds that it would be difficult to outlaw reproductive cloning without also outlawing all other forms of cloning.

A debate over this issue stalled the passage of a human-cloning ban in the U.S. Senate in 2002 -- leaving the U.S. without laws addressing human cloning. If Clonaid's announcement turns out to be true, the federal government would have little recourse for prosecuting the doctors and mother involved.

However, scientists who support research cloning contend that outlawing that form of cloning would not make it any less likely that groups such as the Raelians would attempt reproductive cloning.

Parham warned that Clonaid's announcement shouldn't rush consideration about cloning bans. "We must not let crazy scientists and biotechnology phobes determine the future of good scientific research," Parham said. "Rather than overreacting, we need careful discernment within the Christian community about the proper relationship between science and religion."

Not all Christian ethicists agree that reproductive cloning should be banned. Lutheran ethicist Ted Peters of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif., said the Bible contains no direct ban on cloning, but that cloning for reproductive purposes is a trivial scientific pursuit at the present time. "The best use of genetic science right now would be to help rid the human race of diseases," Peters, affiliated with the seminary's Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, told Religion News Service.

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