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Abortion-doctor murderer executed in Florida

By Robert Marus

STARKE, Florida (ABP) -- Saying he's unrepentant for murdering an abortion provider and his bodyguard nine years ago, former Presbyterian minister Paul Hill was executed Sept. 3 in Florida.

"I expect a great reward in heaven," he told journalists the day before his execution at the Florida State Prison in Starke. Hill was convicted of shooting 69-year-old Florida obstetrician John Britton and his 74-year-old security escort, James Barrett, in 1994. Both men died of their wounds.

Under Florida law, Hill's crime made him eligible for the death penalty. He was the first person executed in the United States for anti-abortion violence.

"I feel very honored that they are going to kill me for what I did," Hill told reporters Sept. 2, one day before his execution by lethal injection. He spoke confidently about this crime and his fate, tearing up only briefly when he talked about the family he leaves behind.

Although a handful of radical anti-abortion groups voiced their support for Hill, virtually all major anti-abortion groups denounced his actions.

Even Flip Benham, head of the controversial anti-abortion group Operation Rescue, condemned Hill. "Christ did not come to save us with a Molotov cocktail in one hand and a dagger between his teeth; he came to lay his life down so that others might live," he said, according to the Washington Post. "What Paul Hill did was directly the opposite."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, agreed Hill got his argument exactly wrong. "It's a pretty hard case to make that you want to be pro-life by killing people," the denomination's news service, Baptist Press, quoted Land as saying. "If you're pro-life, you believe in the

sacredness of all human life -- including abortion doctors and people who work in abortion clinics."

Land compared Hill's supporters' contention that he was simply acting out of a deeply held religious conviction to the arguments of "radical Islamic jihadists."

But some officials and abortion-rights supporters fear that Hill's execution and the May sentencing of another murderer of an abortion provider may produce more anti-abortion violence. Hill himself called for "more people to do" what he did in the Sept. 2 interview. Florida officials -- including Gov. Jeb Bush -- have reportedly received threatening letters with rifle bullets enclosed.

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Federal court throws out scores of death sentences

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A federal appeals court has overturned more than 100 death-penalty sentences, which likely will force the U.S. Supreme Court to clarify itself further on the issue.

The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Sept. 2 threw out more than 100 death-penalty sentences from Arizona, Idaho and Montana. In those states, single judges can impose the death penalty in capital trials, whereas in many other states only juries can impose execution on a convict.

In one of a number of rulings that surprised observers of the conservative justices, the Supreme Court ruled last year that judges-only death sentences are unconstitutional. However, the high court left open the question of whether their ruling applied retroactively or only to new convictions.

While other federal appeals courts have ruled the decision does not apply to existing convictions, the 9th Circuit's contrary ruling means the Supreme Court is more likely to step in. When two of the nation's federal circuits disagree on an important issue of federal law, the high court often will take a case on the issue in order to resolve the differences.

If so, it could mean one more limit on the death penalty. Among other recent rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court decided last year that applying the death penalty to mentally retarded convicts is unconstitutionally "cruel." Last week, the Missouri Supreme Court used the same reasoning to outlaw execution of convicted murderers who were under 18 at the time of their crimes.

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NAMB cuts \$11 million from budget for 2004, eliminating 31 positions

By ABP Staff

ALPHARETTA, GA (ABP) -- The North American Mission Board plans to cut \$11 million from its budget

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next year, which will eliminate 31 full- and part-time positions -- some of which are vacant -- and leave seven current employees without jobs.

The proposed \$118 million budget -- 6 percent less than this year -- awaits approval by trustees of the Southern Baptist Convention agency during their meeting Oct. 8.

The 2004 budget cuts \$3 million from travel expenses, \$1.6 million in communication projects, over \$4 million from support of various programs and \$1.7 million from personnel expenses.

Officials blamed the cuts on sluggish contributions and the economic downturn. The agency joins other SBC entities and Christian ministries that have reduced staff and services recently. In June the SBC International Mission Board eliminated 61 positions affecting 37 employees. A recent survey of eight large state Baptist conventions showed all eight are receiving less money from churches than last year.

Twelve of the 31 NAMB positions are vacant and won't be filled. Three employees whose positions were eliminated will retire. Nine others are transferring to other jobs at NAMB. The remaining seven will lose their jobs. The agency employs approximately 460 people.

Martin King, NAMB spokesman, said the agency would not identify the employees affected. He said positions were eliminated based on need. "This is not a reflection of performance," he told Associated Baptist Press, and he added, "This number was a lot bigger two weeks ago."

King said 11 eliminated positions are for support workers, 14 are professional positions that are not supervisory, and six are management positions with supervisory responsibilities.

NAMB officials project the agency's income next year will be \$7.2 million less than the 2003 budget -- nearly a 6% decrease. But some of that money will have to be directed to fixed-cost increases, they said.

"The bottom line is we anticipate having \$3.4 million more in expenses we cannot control, but \$7.2 million less income," said NAMB president Bob Reccord. "That means we must come up with nearly \$11 million in spending cuts in 2004."

Reccord expressed appreciation to Southern Baptists for supporting NAMB financially, which he said "allowed us to endure our country's economic downturn better than so many other ministries, non-profits and even for-profit organizations."

"But we must face the fact that mission giving is not keeping pace with growing increases in expenses like health insurance, utilities, and capital and fixed expenses which will increase almost \$3.4 million next year," he said in a statement.

Randy Singer, NAMB executive vice president, said that although income from the SBC Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering - which together comprise more than 75 percent of NAMB's income -- have increased incrementally over the past several years, those increases have barely kept pace with inflation. "... When adjusted for inflation both have been virtually flat several years, which means the purchasing power has remained the same during that time," Singer said in a statement.

"Due primarily to the impact of the sluggish economy on our investment income, NAMB has not reached income projections four of the last five years," Singer said. "We must submit a 2004 budget which takes that into account."

The proposed 2004 budget freezes salaries for NAMB missionaries and staff, the second year in a row staff have not received pay raises. NAMB funding of state Baptist conventions is not being reduced but neither are they receiving their usual increases. The proposed staff reductions do not reduce support for NAMB missionaries who are jointly supported with state Baptist conventions, Singer said.

"Of course, the personnel reductions are the most difficult, and we've worked very, very hard to minimize them as much as possible," Reccord said. "Many of the positions we're eliminating are vacant, but other cuts will mean valued friends, colleagues and brothers and sisters in Christ will lose their jobs. However, under our present economic situation, there's simply no way to avoid it, and no painless way to do it."

The seven employees who will lose their jobs will receive a severance package and help in finding new positions. "These are wonderfully gifted, God-called people, and we're committed to doing everything we can to help them find God's will for their work life," Reccord said.

The agency's 460 full-time equivalent positions include national missionaries, staff based in Alpharetta and staff at the agency's broadcast studios in Ft. Worth, Texas. Reductions in Ft. Worth staffing were made last year.

- Contributing to this report was Martin King of NAMB.

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'Passion' movement ignites a generation of worshipers

By Leann Callaway

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Unknown to most Christians over the age of 30, the "Passion" worship movement is sweeping college campuses -- the magnificent obsession of youth evangelist Louie Giglio and a cadre of songwriters and worship leaders.

"People call it a movement," explained Chris Tomlin, a regular worship leader at Passion events, "but it's really just an idea of how we should live our lives as Christians."

Louie Giglio began Passion Conferences in 1995 with a passion to evangelize the 80 percent of America's 16 million college students with no personal relationship with Christ and to deepen the discipleship of Christian students.

Giglio's roots in college ministry date back to 1985, when he established Choice Bible study at Baylor University. After graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Giglio returned to Baylor for further graduate studies.

"I never dreamed of college ministry," he said. "It wasn't one of the options I'd been looking at for my life. But when it happened, it was just perfect and felt so right. All of a sudden, it dawned on me ... there was an opportunity for us to start a ministry there. It was just one of the most amazing moments where God was working."

The Baylor Bible study set the stage for other large-scale campus Bible studies in Texas. Today 4,000 students attend Breakaway Ministries at Texas A&M University, the largest campus Bible study in the state. Similar

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events include Grace Bible study at Hardin-Simmons University and Paradigm Ministry at Texas Tech University.

After leading Choice Bible study for 10 years, Giglio and his wife, Shelley, believed God was calling them to Atlanta to care for his father, who was near death. "My mom was taking care of him, and she was really about to go under," he said. "Shelley and I felt the peace of God to leave Baylor and help my mom. We transferred the leadership of our ministry [to colleagues] and we weren't thinking about anything except taking care of my dad."

When students returned from spring break in 1995, Giglio announced he planned to leave at the end of the semester. But when Giglio's father died before they moved, the Giglios faced an unexpected crossroads.

"We had already told everybody we were leaving, and we had already told our staff they were taking over," Giglio said. "It's kind of hard to come back at that point, and say: 'Well, guess what, we're not leaving after all. We're back!' So, we felt like we needed to keep going to Atlanta."

"In the midst of that summer, a picture flashed in my head while on a plane one day, traveling from Dallas to Atlanta," he explained. "It was a picture of not just one campus, but the campuses of the nation. All of a sudden, God was saying: 'Now, it's time to lift your eyes up from a single campus, Baylor, where you've spent 10 years of life, and think about the 16 million college students in America. I'm going to do something new called "Passion," and I need somebody who will help steer the ship for a while, and you're available.'

"I was like: 'That's true. I am available. I have no job. I have no ministry. Shelley and I are completely available.' We took the first step, and the rest is history."

Armed with a vision, Giglio searched for a starting place. Eventually, he sought the help of 25 like-minded campus-ministry leaders from around the nation. "We pulled those guys together and said: 'We want to birth something new. We're going to have a four-day gathering, and it's going to be about the glory of God.'"

That event was called Passion '97. About 2,000 students attended in January 1997 in Austin.

The next year, 5,000 attended a similar event. By 1999, the Fort Worth Convention Center filled with 11,500 students from six continents for four days of worship and renewal. Speakers included Giglio, Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright, pastor and author John Piper, youth evangelists Voddie Baucham and Gregg Matte, as well as Bible teacher and author Beth Moore.

"All of a sudden, we're sitting in Fort Worth and looking at 11,500 students," Giglio said. "We're thinking: 'This is great. But if we just keep growing incrementally, it's going to take us a long time to impact 16 million students.'"

From that, leaders of Passion Conferences reshaped their vision to create OneDay. "We didn't want to call it Passion 'something' because we wanted to take our name off of it. We wanted it to be totally about the Lord," Giglio said.

In May 2000, OneDay became the largest collegiate gathering of its kind in the United States in more than 25 years. Forty thousand students from around the world met on a field in Shelby Farms, Tenn., to join in worship and prayer for spiritual awakening.

After the first OneDay, Passion embarked on a nationwide tour of 25 cities. In the spring of 2002, Passion hosted the Thirsty Conference, its first gathering specifically for campus ministers.

By 2003, Passion organizers realized there were a lot of students who weren't in college for Passion '99 or OneDay 2000. So OneDay 2003 was planned for them. Nearly 30,000 students descended on a field outside Sherman, Texas, on Memorial Day weekend, which introduced a new generation of college students to the Passion vision. "We feel like now they're going, 'Oh, I get what this is about,' and they're going to walk with us on the next leg of the journey."

The nationwide Passion Experience Tour is scheduled for this fall.

At Passion Conferences, the music combines traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs. Since creating their own recording label, Sixsteps, in partnership with Sparrow Records, Passion has sold more than 1 million records. Sixsteps is home to songwriters/worship leaders Chris Tomlin, Charlie Hall and the David Crowder Band.

"I think God gave us the gift of music because where words stir our soul on one level, music stirs our soul in a different level," Giglio noted. "If you can combine truth of expression of who God is ... with this powerful, heart-moving, soul-stirring thing called music, then you've really got something amazing. I think it allows people to be touched on multiple levels."

But staging massive worship events is not the only goal. Leaders of Passion Conferences encourage students to serve and support the local church and local Christian ministries on campuses across the nation.

Likewise, the "voices" of Passion serve in their local churches. Tomlin leads worship at Austin (Texas) Stone Community Church, which he helped start. Crowder leads worship at University Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, while Hall serves at his home church in Oklahoma. "Being involved in a church keeps us grounded," Tomlin said.

Giglio, in addition to traveling the world speaking to students, also leads a citywide Bible study in Atlanta, which has more than 3,000 young adults attending each week.

One of the key messages at Passion events focuses on worship being more than a song, but a lifestyle that glorifies God. "Worship is our response -- both personal and corporate -- to God for who he is and what he has done, expressed in and by the things we say and how we live," Giglio said.

"It says in Romans 12 to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, that is your spiritual act of worship," Tomlin noted. "Everyone was created to worship. Worship is our response to what we value in life, and God must be the center."

The main reasons students give for attending Passion Conferences are to draw closer to God and to unite with believers in prayer. At each Passion event, a significant amount of time is spent in prayer.

Many students kneel in prayer and reflection, while others are moved to tears as they cry out to God. Through personal and corporate worship, participants often petition God on behalf of their non-Christian friends and loved ones, repent and humble themselves as they dedicate their lives to God.

The most important thing Giglio wants to stress, he said, is that students' lives should center around God, not vice-versa. "Our lives exist for God. God doesn't exist for us," he said. "I think if we can really grab onto the thought that life is not about us ... it frees us to really live in the full potential of what we were created to do."

"When it's all said and done, Passion would like to see not any monument to a ministry or to our name," Giglio said, "but what we would like to leave behind in the generation is a bigger, louder anthem of the name of God."

... What the world needs from us is to know that we've found our happiness in God, that we really do take delight in him, and that he is the best thing going on in our lives."

"We want his name to be echoed in the whole world -- not just in America, not just the college campuses of America, but to the whole world."

- Photos available from Associated Baptist Press. Leann Callaway is a free-lance writer in Fort Worth, Texas.

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News Briefs from Associated Baptist Press By ABP staff

Patterson brings six staffers to Southwestern

FORT WORTH, Texas -- When Paige Patterson moved from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary this summer, he brought six staff members with him, according to seminary spokesman Greg Tomlin.

In addition to Patterson's wife, Dorothy, who was elected a full professor without pay, Patterson brought:

-- Jason Duesing, a doctor of philosophy student, as his personal aide. He assumed a position previously held by Barbara Walker, who was administrative assistant to President Ken Hemphill. Walker has moved to a role in the Leadership Development Complex.

-- Chris Thompson, also a doctor of philosophy student, is Dorothy Patterson's personal aide. He will be writing his dissertation under Paige Patterson's tutelage. Norita Drake, who was secretary to Paula Hemphill, has become secretary for Provost Craig Blaising.

-- Danny Moosbrugger has joined the institutional advancement team. Bobbi Moosbrugger, who is married to Danny, will assist Dorothy Patterson as hostess for the president's home.

-- Candi Finch and Maurice Ahern, student interns, will work on a part-time basis. Their duties were not enumerated.

Also as part of the transition, trustees have authorized an addition to the seminary president's home to accommodate Patterson's personal library. Those plans have not been finalized, however, Tomlin said. (ABP)

Southern Baptists of Texas break ground on new headquarters

DALLAS -- Five years after pulling away from the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention broke ground July 11 on a \$3 million headquarters building. The group, which has reportedly grown from 120 churches to 1,300 churches since its split with the Texas convention in 1998, hopes to move to its 30,000-square-foot headquarters in April. The convention's 25 full-time employees now occupy leased space in Las Colinas.

"We're projecting that this will handle our needs for at least 10 years into the future," said Gary Ledbetter, the convention's communications director. The group began scouting for land last year, according to Ledbetter, and

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the four-acre tract, located near Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, was chosen because of its central location and close proximity to transportation. The facility also will offer conference and meeting space. (ABP)

Parkses join Hardin-Simmons student ministries

ABILENE, Texas -- Kent and Erika Parks have returned to the student ministries office at Hardin-Simmons University this fall as missions consultants. The couple served as missionaries-in-residence there four years ago.

Currently on appointment by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Kent Parks is South East Asia Regional Facilitator for Network Strategic Mission. Erika Parks focuses on equipping workers to reach the unreached in Asia.

Chris Sammons, director of student ministries at Hardin-Simmons, said the Parkses will be available for consultation and assistance to both students, faculty, staff, alumni and community residents who have an interest in missions.

A daughter, Katy, 18, will be a fourth-generation family member to attend Hardin-Simmons this fall as a freshman. Kent received a bachelor of arts degree from Hardin-Simmons in 1979. He also earned both PhD and MDiv degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Parks is a former teaching fellow at Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife were under appointment by the Southern Baptist Foreign (now International) Mission Board from 1987 to 1995 in Indonesia. They were appointed by the CBF in 1995. (ABP)

'Shout to the Lord' most popular among Baptists

PORTLAND, Ore. -- "Shout to the Lord" and "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High" are the two most popular songs sung in Baptist churches that use contemporary worship, a new survey says. According to Christian Copyright Licensing International, which licenses more than 150,000 songs for congregational use, those songs topped the list in a survey of Baptist churches with CCLI licenses. For an annual license fee, 140,000 Christian churches in North America receive permission to copy the songs for printing, displaying and projecting lyrics, among other uses. Most contemporary worship services don't use hymnals.

The Baptist churches, surveyed earlier this year, listed as their top 10 songs: 1. "Shout to the Lord," Darlene Zschech; 2. "Lord, I Lift Your Name On High," Rick Founds; 3. "Open the Eyes of My Heart," Paul Baloche; 4. "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship," Brian Doerksen; 5. "You Are My All in All," Dennis Jernigan; 6. "Breathe," Marie Barnett; 7. "He Is Exalted," Twila Paris; 8. "I Love You, Lord," Laurie Klein; 9. "Give Thanks," Henry Smith; and 10. "Awesome God," Rich Mullins.

Worship songs rise in popularity a lot quicker than they used to, said industry insider Steve Parolini, because of their availability on radio stations and in retail outlets like Wal-Mart. "Were it not for the current popularity of worship music performed by [contemporary Christian music] artists, the top 25 list would look a lot different," said Parolini, a music critic in Colorado Springs, Colo. (ABP)

Anti-conversion bill gains support in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka -- Lawmakers in Sri Lanka are expected to consider legislation to make it illegal for non-Buddhists to spread their faith, according to Christians there and an international watchdog group. In recent years, decisions by the Buddhist country's Supreme Court have undermined the freedom to promote one's religion, according to the Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. In August, the court ruled against the incorporation

of a Roman Catholic ministry, saying that while the country's constitution allows citizens to practice their religion, it does not guarantee the right to propagate religion. Similar decisions refusing incorporation were made against other ministries in Sri Lanka, an island nation southeast of India.

Sri Lanka's constitution guarantees Buddhism supremacy. The minister of Buddhism and legal reform has said he will introduce an anti-conversion bill in the country's parliament, according to Voice of the Martyrs. Christian organizations in Sri Lanka are concerned the recent court decisions will set a precedent for enforcing the proposed anti-conversion bill, the Oklahoma-based watchdog group said. (ABP)

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