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### **Bush heeds conservatives' call for 'Marriage Protection Week'**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- In a sign that he may support an effort to amend the Constitution to ban gay marriages, President Bush heeded the call of a coalition of Religious Right groups and proclaimed Oct. 12-18 "Marriage Protection Week."

Ironically, the week begins one day after "National Coming Out Day," when gay-rights organizations encourage gays, lesbians and transgendered people to "come out of the closet" and reveal their sexual orientation to family, friends and colleagues.

Bush's Oct. 3 proclamation came one day after the leaders of a group calling itself the Coalition to Protect Marriage announced in a Washington press conference that they were dedicating the week to defining marriage as a heterosexual-only institution.

Spearheaded by the conservative Family Research Council, the coalition's membership list reads like a "Who's Who" of influential Religious Right groups: The Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Focus on the Family, the Christian Coalition, and World magazine.

The week's intent is to build support for the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment in Congress. Sponsored by Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R-Colo.), the amendment not only would alter the Constitution to define marriage in exclusively heterosexual terms, but also would override state and local laws conferring many of the benefits of marriage on same-sex couples.

The White House has not yet announced whether it would support the amendment. While most religious

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conservatives do, some -- such as former Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.) -- have said they oppose the bill on grounds that it would intrude on the states' traditional prerogative to define marriage.

But the leaders who organized the news conference feel the measure is necessary. "We are calling on churches across the nation to act before the definition of marriage becomes deconstructed, redefined and irrelevant in our society," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, in the organization's Oct. 7 e-mail newsletter.

The topic of gay marriage has come up repeatedly since the Supreme Court's Lawrence and Garner vs. Texas decision, which on privacy grounds struck down all state laws that ban gay sex.

Many experts believe the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is poised to use that ruling to legalize same-sex marriage in that state any day now. That move would almost certainly lead to gay couples legally married in Massachusetts filing lawsuits in other states to get their marriages recognized.

Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, called on Southern Baptist pastors to inaugurate the week by preaching on the sanctity of marriage Oct. 12.

Land said America was at "an absolutely critical moment and juncture" because of the gay-marriage issue. He said gay marriage "is the poster child issue ... for the titanic struggle that is going on in our society between those who believe in a Judeo-Christian basis for our culture and those who believe in a neo-pagan, relativist base for our culture," according to Baptist Press, the SBC's news service.

But the spokesperson for a Christian gay-rights group said Bush's proclamation and the conservative leaders' statement were both "anti-family" and "anti-American."

"Bush's proclamation and the Marriage Protection Week are based on misguided religious teachings which cross the boundaries of church-state separation and the principles of religious liberty," continued Laura Montgomery Rutt of Soulforce, based in Lynchburg, Va.

On Oct. 11, Soulforce is sponsoring its first annual Marriage Equality Forum to be held at Lynchburg's First Christian Church. According to the press release, speakers at the conference will encourage religious people to separate their views of marriage as a civil institution from their views of marriage as a religious institution.

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### **Organ lovers pull out all the stops to combat player shortage**

By Hannah Lodwick

(ABP) -- Suncoast Baptist Church, a congregation of about 70 people in rural Homosassa, Fla., has been looking for an organist for almost two years. "I always ask first-time visitors if they can play," says Pastor John Fizer. "There is just no one who knows how."

The job description calls for playing hymns on the congregation's electronic organ for two services on Sundays and one on Wednesdays. Accompanying the choir on anthems would be an added blessing, the

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pastor says, but that may be asking too much.

"We have a real small church and we can't afford to pay a lot," Fizer concedes. "We're strapped. I've told the church they can take it out of my salary, but we just can't find anyone."

Suncoast is typical of thousands of congregations that have an organ but no organist. And the odds are against them finding one. There is a nationwide shortage of organists, especially in smaller churches - which is most of them.

"There are plenty of fine players, but they usually compete for the larger, downtown, society churches that have big music programs," said Howard Maple, executive secretary for the American Institute of Organ Builders. "They'll always be able to attract players. It's the small, country churches ... that are the ones that suffer."

Shifting musical trends and a lack of money and time are most often blamed for the shortage. With the growth of contemporary and "blended" worship styles, fewer young people grow up hearing the organ played in their churches. Praise choruses and soccer practice have replaced hymns and music lessons, some say.

Perhaps because of the shift in worship styles, fewer of the musically inclined are learning to play organ -- which is no easy task anyway. The number of organ majors in universities and conservatories has dropped almost 28 percent since 1985, according to the National Association of Schools of Music.

The number of churches using mostly traditional worship declined from 49 percent of American congregations in 1993 to 38 percent in 1999. Traditional churches still outnumber contemporary churches, which accounted for 22 percent of congregations in 1999. But contemporary congregations are larger on average.

According to a Your Church study, the average Sunday morning attendance in contemporary churches is more than double that of congregations using traditional music (223 to 105).

Most organist jobs are part time, but the demographics of the modern job market have dried up the once vast pool of players able or willing to work part time.

First United Methodist Church in Duncan, Okla., looked for a part-time organist for three months, finally convincing a local college teacher to moonlight. "We drew in candidates from [all over] Oklahoma," church administrator Phil Greenwald said. "But at 10 hours a week, we weren't looking for someone to move here." Tony Thurman of the American Guild of Organists in New York says the shortage is largely due to job demand and salaries. "Most churches don't always support the musician as a full-time employee," he said. "With a husband and wife working full-time jobs, there is less of a chance a person will take a part-time job that pays \$10,000.

Some organists say it can be a thankless job - with long or unpredictable hours and little recognition or pay - which discourages potential players from joining their dwindling ranks.

An official position statement of the American Guild of Organists says, while religious institutions that offer "professional salaries for professional service rendered" have not suffered from the shortage, "institutions that are unable or unwilling to offer attractive salary packages have most often experienced difficulty."

The difficulty of learning to play the organ contributes to the shortage of players too.

The instrument itself, which emerged at least by the third century, is a machine of sorts. It has pipes to produce sound, a chamber to store "wind," pressure produced by mechanics and a keyboard to control the pipes.

An organ with a modest 36 stops -- knobs used to turn sound on or off -- can produce more than 68 billion different sound combinations. Along with the stops, most organs have at least three keyboards and some have as many as seven. Add more than 20 foot pedals and this "king of instruments" gets complicated.

Now some organ teachers are hoping that by starting with simple methods at a young age, they can develop a new generation of organ players to fill the void.

Joyce Jones, Baylor University's organist-in-residence, has written a method book for piano players who want to learn to play as quickly as possible. She taught the method in two summer music camps this year -- one for adults and one for youth age 11 to 18.

"I tried to do a streamlined organ method," Jones said. "So many of the organ methods are formidable-looking. It's so overwhelming to see 200 pages [in a music book]. People say, 'I don't have time to do this.'"

Jones said the standard method for learning the organ involves working on hand and foot exercises for several weeks at a time. Her book, "King of Instruments," teaches the same techniques but gives fewer exercises.

"This is not a scholarly method to be used in a college," she said. "It is for the pianist who needs to learn to play immediately."

Jones' camps, which have run for more than 10 years, draw people from all over the nation, as well as Canada, Colombia and Japan. With the help of some of her assistants, Jones lectures to half of the class while the other half practices with organs and headphones. Then the two sections switch.

"We have an ideal situation at Baylor," Jones said. "People [at the American Guild of Organists] in New York really appreciate the way we do it. We have a wonderful program with concerts every night and a hymn festival."

The American Guild of Organists puts on its own children's institutes throughout the country. "In 1988 we started a program called Pipe Organ Encounters," said the AGO's Thurman. "It's a four-to-five-day summer institute for youngsters to learn how to play. We had seven [camps] this summer, all over the country."

Encouraging young players is one way to address the shortage, Thurman said. While a part-time salary is often not enough to lure adults, younger players might find the pay desirable.

Some organ enthusiasts predict a revival of interest in churches.

"There are a number of churches who didn't use their organs who have started to use them again," said Lester McCullough, minister of music at Lakeside Baptist Church in Lakeland, Fla. Some churches that shifted to contemporary or blended worship have started singing hymns again, he said.

"Youngsters tend to want to come back to the traditional flavor," said McCullough, former assistant music director for the Florida Baptist Convention. They want something deeper -- more depth and theology in the songs -- so hymns are coming back." While organs can't handle the syncopated beats of praise songs, he said, restructured hymns work well with the organ.

With prices ranging from \$80,000 to more than \$1 million, some smaller churches simply aren't able to afford a pipe organ. Like Suncoast Baptist in Homosassa, many turn to less expensive electronic organs. Smaller both in sound and size, they don't use pipes at all but produce sound by amplifiers and speakers. While pipe-organ makers design unique instruments for individual churches, most electronic organs can fit in any area. Organ purists make a disdainful distinction between electronic and pipe organs, but for many congregations they are a financial necessity.

Spanish missionaries brought the first pipe organs to the United States in the 1700s. And organ enthusiasts insist it is not going to disappear anytime soon.

"I get so discouraged when you have so-called 'church planting experts' come in and say, 'If you want to have a growing congregation, the first thing to do is get rid of the organ,'" said Joyce Jones, the Baylor teacher. "In the future I think people will continue to realize that the organ is not a dead instrument."

Indeed, there are as many organs in use now as in 1993. Howard Maple of the American Institute of Organ Builders said organ sales have been stable in recent years -- about 100 organs and 100 "rebuilt" annually -- and some manufacturers have backlogs of more than six years.

Enthusiasts like the AGO's Thurman are optimistic about the organ's future. "I see organ playing as always very strong," Thurman said. "There are enough positions in mainline churches. And there's no shortage of instruments."

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- Photos available at [www.organresearch.net/photo.html](http://www.organresearch.net/photo.html)

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### **David Crowder Band stays rooted in home church as its music spreads**

By Leann Callaway

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- The son of an insurance broker, David Crowder planned to run the family business after graduation from Baylor University. Instead, he has become one of the most sought-after worship leaders in the nation and a popular recording artist.

The David Crowder Band's new release, "Illuminate," currently ranks No. 1 on the SoundScan Christian retail chart, selling 13,935 units in its first week. This release more than doubled a record-breaking debut of the band's first album, "Can You Hear Us?"

Even in the unique world of Christian music, it's safe to say there's no one quite like Crowder, who lives in Waco with his wife, Toni. In fact, he's been called "the Pied Piper of Christian music."

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The Texarkana, Texas, native says his desire to connect people to God and his passion for college ministry began while attending Baylor as a music major. However, becoming a worship leader and recording artist came as a surprise even to him.

While at Baylor, he was troubled by a campus survey that showed 8,000 of Baylor's 14,000 students said they never attended a church service while in college. He discussed ways to reach those students with his friend Chris Seay.

"We just started talking about our peers and how there was a lack of student involvement in churches. Being in Waco, there's not a lack of churches, so that wasn't the problem. And it wasn't like, 'Oh, here's a great idea -- let's start another church.'

"But we knew those people [at Baylor] because they were our friends, and we thought we could provide an environment they would feel comfortable in and wouldn't feel threatened by," he explained.

Armed with a vision and a desire to impact their campus, Crowder and Seay founded University Baptist Church in 1996. It is an innovative congregation with a contemporary worship style designed for students to safely explore their questions about faith. Today the church regularly draws 1,000 students, and Seay has moved on to establish another innovative congregation, Ecclesia Church in Houston.

But Crowder remains at University Baptist as worship leader.

"We've seen a great response since the beginning," Crowder noted. "But there's still a lot of work to be done -- 1,000 students is still a long way from 8,000."

When Crowder became the church's music and arts pastor, he started writing praise songs he thought students could relate to. At the time, he didn't realize his songs, such as "You Alone" and "Our Love is Loud," eventually would be sung in churches across the nation.

"For me, songwriting happens when I'm not trying to write a song," he explained. "I spend a lot of time reading and listening to music. If you pay attention to those small moments in life that maybe others aren't noticing, then you have a place to write from whenever the inspirational moment hits you."

Among those inspired by Crowder's lyrics was Louie Giglio, who founded Passion Conferences in 1995 and Sixsteps Records in 2000.

"I met Louie through writing some songs," Crowder said. "I had written some songs for our church, and they had gotten outside our church and were being sung by other churches. Somehow, Louie got ahold of those songs, and they were put on a couple of the Passion CDs."

This led to the David Crowder Band being signed to the Sixsteps label -- which partners with Sparrow Records for distribution and marketing -- and they began performing at Passion Conferences and worship gatherings across the country.

The David Crowder Band is committed to sharing the message of Christ through music. They also have remained dedicated to leading worship at their home church.

"All the guys got connected to UBC at some point while they were going to Baylor," Crowder said of the band members. "They just started helping lead worship on Sunday mornings. These guys that I'm with seem to connect to something that needed to go beyond our church."

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With Crowder on lead vocals and acoustic guitar, the band consists of electric guitarists Jason Solley and Jack Parker, as well as drummer Jeremy Bush, bass player Mike Dodson, and Mike Hogan on electric violin.

Despite touring across the country and performing 251 concerts in 2002, they only missed 11 Sundays at University Baptist Church.

"It's amazing to me how God has used these songs and to find that they are taking root other places. To be really far from home and hear people singing the words to these songs that are so personal and meaningful to a small group of folks in Waco is just incredible."

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### **Carnies find caring 'family' when fair comes to Asheville**

By Norman Jameson

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (ABP) -- Patrick lives with high blood pressure. He is like thousands of "carnies" - or carnival workers - who struggle to eat and sleep in mobile bunkhouses, vans, tents and the back seats of rickety cars. They work 14 hours a day for a minimum wage that barely gets them to the next town. They pay full price for a constant diet of corn dogs, Coke and funnel cakes from vendors on the midway.

But when the next town is Asheville, the carnies all smile.

Since 1990, when the Mountain State Fair returned to Asheville after a 32-year hiatus, area Baptists have been ministering to this almost forgotten group that many treat as second-class citizens.

About 1,000 volunteers from eight Baptist associations minister during the two weeks of the fair, reaching carnies and fair-goers alike. In the months preceding the fair, dozens of others make bracelets and teddy bears and Christian symbol giveaways to seed the gospel message in the sometimes fertile ground where the fair meets despair.

"Our bottom line mission is to share the love of Jesus Christ with those working and attending the fair," said Wayne Higgins, a local banker whose Baptist Men's group came up with the idea of ministering at the fair in 1990.

Higgins and Norma Melton, Buncombe Baptist Association's community ministries director, coordinate the effort.

"These workers are forgotten people, desperate for fellowship and friends," Melton said. "They've developed into our close friends. Some are like family."

In a special break tent, area Baptists provide a full meal on setup day, before the food vendors arrive. Once the fair begins, about 150 homemade sandwiches are provided during each of three shifts every day. A clothes closet provides clothing for workers and their children. After hours, workers can get a haircut or find a caring person with whom to talk.

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On Sunday, following a full breakfast in the break tent, a service is held for carnies, probably the only church many of the workers know. They grow close to the leaders and have called from the road to ask prayer for special requests.

One carny couple brought their seven-day-old baby to Asheville. It had been born during the previous week's fair in Hickory, N.C. The family had nothing. The Mountain State Fair ministry team rallied to provide all the newborn essentials.

In 2001, a local minister performed a wedding for two carnies in the break tent. Another couple decided they wanted to leave the carnival in Asheville. They were connected locally to people who helped find them work and a place to live.

Doctors and dentists operate in shifts in the Baptist Men's medical/dental bus to give care to carnival workers. Without insurance, money or transportation, carnies can nurse aches and injuries for months.

In addition to the direct ministries to 150-200 carnival workers, Baptists in western North Carolina operate four other sites to educate and minister to the 180,000 fair-goers. The Mountain State Fair is the largest fair in North Carolina except for the state fair in Raleigh. It includes a mission booth, a witness tent, medical/dental bus and disaster-relief vehicles. As the milling throng passes each site, cold water is offered free to everyone.

The mission booth is mostly educational, showing the outreach of North Carolina Baptists locally and around the world. The witness tent is more overt. Those operating that tent intentionally seek opportunities to share Jesus with those who stop for water and who linger to read the evangelical messages.

"You have to know people to reach them spiritually," said Higgins. "We don't force our beliefs on anyone, but we demonstrate God's love to them."

When visitors take cold water at the disaster-relief vehicle, they learn how Baptists respond to natural disasters around the country. On Sept. 11, 2001, the disaster-relief vehicle was at the Mountain State Fair -- and on Sept. 12 meals were being served to disaster workers at the Pentagon.

Volunteers come from eight Baptist associations in North Carolina. Planning starts each January for the September fair. Although the total budget for this outreach would be close to \$50,000 if everything had to be purchased, the volunteer labor, donated food, tents, supplies, clothes and equipment enable Norma Melton to submit a budget of \$15,000 to \$17,000. Those funds come in large part from the North Carolina Missions Offering.

The workers look forward to coming to Asheville, where they know Christians care for them.

Patrick is especially glad to see the Baptist volunteers this year. He has lived with elevated blood pressure for many years. But this year, Baptist volunteers at the medical/dental bus provided him with free, life-saving assistance.

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## **Fire destroys church's building**

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## **but not its determination**

By Grace Thornton

CITRONELLE, Ala. (ABP) -- For decades 80-year-old Alma Johnson sat in her pew at First Baptist Church in Citronelle, Ala., with her open Bible illuminated by the soft-colored light trickling down from stained glass windows she helped design years ago.

So when the church burned down Sept. 24, watching those windows blow out of their bricked arches in a shower of splintered glass was "rough," Johnson said.

In 1946, Johnson's husband, C.B., worked by day and helped other men in the church construct the sanctuary by night. The Johnsons were among many who wept as they watched fire consume the beloved church they'd built with their own hands.

"Watching those windows actually melt was rough. I'm almost unable to describe the feeling," she said.

But Johnson, a member of the Citronelle church for 70 years, said she's seen the church go up, seen it go down, seen problems, seen joys -- and the church will "just pick up from here and go on."

Pastor Max Dempsey agreed, though he -- in his first pastorate -- has only been at the church 10 months.

At around 2:20 p.m., an explosion caused by a short in the attic startled day-care workers. It gave them time to get all 26 children -- napping on the first floor beneath the burning sanctuary -- to safety at a playground about 100 yard away.

By 2:40, Dempsey watched the steeple plummet through the roof of the large brick building in a ball of fire.

"God has been given so much glory through the hearts of the people here. The children are safe, and the older members who helped build it are handling it with so much grace," the pastor said.

"We didn't lose our church, we simply lost our building. Our church is stronger than it's ever been." That's not just a heroic thought in a difficult time, Dempsey said. "It's the truth. Our church is more excited, more open than ever. That excites me as a pastor."

While volunteer firefighters still worked to contain the blaze in the main building at the time the Wednesday evening service normally starts, more than 200 church and community members met in the gym across the parking lot for a worship service, Dempsey said. "The people honestly met to say God is good in all things at all times."

Former pastors and other pastors from across the state, as well as the man who led Dempsey to faith in Christ, came to encourage the church. "It was an awesome time, and the excitement in the Lord was real and honest," Dempsey said.

Ironically, though the service took place, another meeting scheduled for that night didn't -- the first meeting of the church's vision committee, a group of members who were soon to plan the church's relocation or remodeling.

"We were going to seek the Lord and explore our options," Dempsey said, noting God helped make the

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decision for them. Insurance coverage on the sanctuary will help pay for a replacement building.

The church, which averages 325 in Sunday services, could accommodate only about 225 people in the sanctuary. "We were already outgrowing our facility, and we were fighting a losing battle with the old structure of the church," Dempsey said. "We're brokenhearted, and everyone's shocked, but no one's really surprised. Sentimentally, [things] are gone, but we're grateful no one's injured."

He added that the community has been "absolutely precious." Many businesses and municipalities opened their doors to take in the congregation. Temporarily, Sunday services are meeting in the Citronelle High School gym, and the day care may continue operation in a nearby elementary school.

Church member Christine Purvis said the close-knit community and all the denominations that pitched in to help were a blessing -- "strictly a God thing."

"The flames were unbelievably heart-wrenching, but it was just a building, and we got all the children out. It holds a lot of memories, but we still have our memories," Purvis said. "It's not quite what we wanted, but God's not surprised -- he's in control. It's tragic, but we're going to go on."

Nothing changes, Johnson said. Just as her husband was "right there pushing the wheelbarrow" 60 years ago, he's still there encouraging the church forward at 83. And the same community is still helping build them up.

"We made it then, we'll make it now. And God will lead us in the right way," Johnson said.

- Photo available from the Alabama Baptist.

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### **Religious Right groups rally as court begins new session**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- As about 200 protestors rallied outside the Supreme Court demanding government support for religious displays, inside the justices began their annual term with at least one major church-state case on the docket.

The protestors displayed a replica of the Ten Commandments monument recently removed from the Alabama judicial building in Montgomery. Meanwhile, the high court opened its 2003-2004 session Oct. 6 by sidestepping one church-state case and remaining silent on another. Only one church-state case so far -- involving government funding of a religious college - is scheduled to get the court's attention this year.

The justices declined to review a ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that allowed a Bible club in Washington state to meet in a high school during school hours. A lower court had ruled against Tausha Prince, who as a sophomore at Spanaway Lake High School sued for the right to form the World Changers club.

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The school allows students time during the school day to do homework, be tutored or take part in school-approved clubs. The clubs can make announcements over the school's public-address system and apply for use of a pool of funds shared by the clubs.

At the time, there were no religious clubs. Prince applied to start the club and was rejected by the school because of the group's religious nature. She then filed a lawsuit, saying the school was violating her First Amendment right to free expression of religion.

The 9th Circuit ultimately agreed. The Supreme Court, in declining to review that decision, has again avoided speaking on the issue of whether such clubs can operate during school hours. The case is *Jacoby vs. Prince*.

The court also did not reveal whether it would hear arguments in another controversial case from the 9th Circuit. That court caused great controversy last year when it declared the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in a California public school unconstitutional because the oath contains the words "under God." In that case, *United States vs. Newdow*, atheist father Michael Newdow sued his daughter's Sacramento-area school district to end their practice of teacher-led recitation of the pledge.

The court has already agreed to hear another Washington state case involving religion and schools. In December, justices will hear oral arguments in *Locke vs. Davey* -- also a case from the 9th Circuit. The question before the court is whether states are required to fund religious programs -- in this case a Bible college -- on an equal basis with secular programs even if the state constitution contains an explicit bar on indirect government funding of religion.

The protesters who provided the backdrop for the Supreme Court's opening session were attending the culminating event of the "Save the Commandments Caravan," calling attention to the Ten Commandments monument erected by Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore but removed by court order. Supporters say they will appeal the federal court ruling that banned the monument. But it is not known if the case will make it to the U.S. Supreme Court this year.

The caravan, organized by the groups Faith in Action and Grassfire.net, left Montgomery, Ala., Sept. 28 and stopped in Atlanta; Columbia, S.C.; Raleigh, N.C.; Lynchburg, Va.; and Fredericksburg, Va., before concluding their rally in Washington.

Organizers and participants touted a grab-bag of Religious Right causes -- including denunciations of abortion, homosexuality and the separation of church and state -- and assailed Supreme Court decisions the activists believe support each.

Protestors directed their harshest criticism at two targets -- the six Supreme Court justices who in June issued the landmark decision legalizing gay sex in all 50 states and the federal district judge who ruled the Ten Commandments display in Alabama unconstitutional.

"Impeach the Sodomy Six and Myron Thompson" read the protesters' signs.

Rally organizer Rob Schenck said the group would "hold the Supreme Court in contempt of the court of Almighty God" for the rulings. Referring specifically to the sodomy decision and five others on church-state issues or abortion, Schenck told rally participants, "We no longer hold these decisions relevant or binding on us, on our children or on our nation."

One man at the rally said he was there to "rebuke" the Supreme Court for past decisions and to support

government display of the Ten Commandments and other religious monuments. "It's always been a part of the landscape -- the forefathers acknowledged God, right?" said Gregory Pembo, pastor of Vieux Carre Assembly Church in New Orleans. "Why all of the sudden, after 300 years, we are saying, 'Wait a minute, this is wrong?'"

But a lone counter-protestor said she was there to provide a silent witness for the rights of religious minorities. "When you put one particular religion's monument inside of a government building, it gives the appearance that the government is promoting that particular religion -- which, of course, is unconstitutional," said Sandra Van Maren, Illinois state director of American Atheists.

"As soon as you start moving religion into the government, you end up with, at the extreme, the Taliban, the Iranian government, all the governments we say we despise," she continued. Van Maren held up a sign that said, "Thou shalt not turn a republic into a theocracy."

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### **BJC directors adopt smaller budget, hear about upcoming court case**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Directors of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs adopted a smaller budget and heard a report on the organization's work -- including its involvement with an important upcoming Supreme Court case -- during the group's annual meeting Sept. 29-30.

Convening at Washington's First Baptist Church, the directors of the religious-liberty watchdog organization adopted a 2004 budget of \$1,063,100 -- slightly less than the 2003 budget of \$1,068,000.

Executive Director Brent Walker noted the BJC finished 2002 with a sudden upswing in contributions and significant growth in its number of individual donors. However, he said, "The bad news is that the first eight months of this year have been terrible -- like [the difference between] night and day."

Walker noted that an anemic stock market made the situation worse for income from the organization's endowment funds.

General Counsel Holly Hollman noted several legislative and legal areas in which the group was working to promote the separation of church and state. She also announced the BJC has weighed in on a case the Supreme Court agreed to hear that deals with the use of government funds for religious instruction.

The high court agreed in May to hear arguments in *Locke vs. Davey*. Joshua Davey applied under a program in Washington state that provides scholarships to disadvantaged students who want to attend in-state colleges. The scholarships may be spent at any accredited school, including religious ones.

Davey, who qualified under the program's rules, elected to spend his scholarship at Northwest College, a Seattle-area Bible school affiliated with the Assemblies of God. However, the state revoked the scholarship when officials found out Davey planned to major in theology and business management.

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State officials cited a provision in Washington's constitution that prohibits the state from spending any money on religious instruction. Davey sued the state with the help of the American Center for Law and Justice, a legal-advocacy group founded by Religious Right leader Pat Robertson that often opposes a strict interpretation of church-state separation.

Davey won in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, generally considered one of the nation's most liberal federal appeals courts. A three-judge panel of that court ruled 2-1 that the Washington constitutional provision, as well as a similar state statute, violated Davey's freedom of religious expression under the U.S. Constitution. Washington Gov. Gary Locke (D) appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court.

Hollman said the BJC had joined the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the American Federation of Teachers on a friend-of-the-court brief in the case, asking the justices to overturn the 9th Circuit's ruling.

Hollman said the ruling, if upheld, could set a dangerous and wide-ranging precedent for government funding of religious groups. While the Supreme Court has previously ruled that it is permissible for government organizations to provide vouchers or scholarships that can flow indirectly to religious groups, the Locke case has the potential to extend that into a finding that states are required to include religious groups in such programs if they already include secular groups.

Referring to the specific ban on state support for religious schools in Washington's constitution and similar provisions in other state constitutions, Hollman said, "The Locke vs. Davey case is really a frontal assault on these state constitutional provisions."

In other action, directors elected new BJC officers for 2003-2004.

The new board chairman is Jeffrey Haggray, a representative from the Progressive National Baptist Convention and executive director of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention. He is a member of Washington's Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church. Haggray replaces Reginald McDonough of Virginia.

BJC's new vice chairman is Ray Swatkowski, a representative from the Baptist General Conference and the conference's executive vice president. He lives in Zion, Ill. Swatkowski replaces Ed Massey of Kentucky.

The new second vice chairman is Glen Howie, who represents the North American Baptist Conference. He is an attorney and also serves as the part-time pastor of Mowata Baptist Church in Eunice, La. Howie replaces Margaret Ann Cowden of Pennsylvania.

BJC's new secretary is Sue Bennett, representing the Religious Liberty Council. Bennett is the president of Bennett Enterprise in Tulsa, Okla. She is a member of Southern Hills Baptist Church in Tulsa. Bennett replaces Richard Bloom of Illinois.

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**Threats to religious freedom  
growing in U.S., speakers say (revised)**

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By Robert Marus

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This revises and corrects a version of the same story released Oct. 2. It contains changes in the 5th-8th paragraphs.)

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Under the watchful gaze of Baptist pioneer Roger Williams, speakers at a convocation sponsored by two Baptist organizations sounded notes of serious concern over the status of religious freedom in the United States.

Several speakers noted what they consider serious threats to religious freedom during a Sept. 30-Oct. 1 meeting in Washington, called "Reclaiming an Historic Baptist Principle: Separation of Church and State."

Most of the convocation's sessions were held at the historic First Baptist Church of Washington, which contains two stained-glass windows devoted to Roger Williams. After getting kicked out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for refusing to practice Puritanism in accordance with the wishes of state leaders, Williams founded both the colony of Rhode Island and the first Baptist church in the New World.

Speaker after speaker suggested that modern American political events might make Williams wonder what happened to his vision of religious liberty for all and opposition to state enforcement of religious values.

"Events of the past three years confirm that we are in the midst of a very serious re-ordering of church-state law and policies," said Melissa Rogers, who is stepping down as the director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life to become a visiting professor at Baptist-related Wake Forest Divinity School.

Rogers referred specifically to two cases involving government aid and religious institutions: the 2002 *Zelman vs. Simmons-Harris* ruling, and 2000's *Mitchell vs. Helms*.

Regarding the *Mitchell* case, she said, "Four justices on the current Supreme Court have made it clear that they would toss out one of the fundamental propositions of church-state constitutional law -- the prohibition on the use of direct government subsidies for religious purposes."

Therefore, Rogers added, "We are only one justice away from a ruling Court majority that would uphold this radical departure from traditional constitutional interpretation."

Likewise, Detroit minister Charles Adams said the "sacred separation of church and state" is in dire need of defense.

Delivering the convocation's opening address, Adams specifically denounced President Bush's efforts to provide public money to religious institutions -- such as parochial schools and church-based drug-treatment programs -- to conduct social services. "To mingle government funds with church funds is to entangle the church with government -- and control the church by government," he said, speaking on the steps of the Jefferson Memorial.

Adams is pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, an historically African-American congregation in Detroit. Although Bush has relied heavily on inner-city churches operating social ministries to push his "faith-based initiative," Adams said those churches will regret it in the long run. For instance, he said, accepting government funds inevitably opens a private organization to a whole host of legal regulations

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and problems.

That, according to Adams, could eventually hurt the effectiveness of the very ministries that inspired the government support in the first place. "If you want to protect yourself against legal challenges, you're going to have to know more about the federal code than about the holy Bible," he said.

Adams, Rogers and other speakers also argued that Christians who support church-state separation have public-relations challenges.

Rogers said that, in a public discourse on church-state issues that often pits liberal secularists against religious conservatives, the voice of Christians who support separation for theological reasons often gets drowned out.

"We're facing a constant communications battle to adequately convey these ideas to the general public," she said. "Religious liberty is best protected when the government leaves [religion] alone.... We want this freedom because it protects and respects human dignity."

Rep. Chet Edwards (D-Texas), one of Congress' most outspoken supporters of church-state separation, said like-minded Christians need an entire network of political groups, "think tanks" and media outlets to combat the attacks from both right and left.

"I think we can win on this issue," Edwards said, "because I think we are right on this issue."

The meeting was sponsored by the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Virginia-based Center for Baptist Heritage and Studies.

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