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# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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## NewsMakers

◆ **Steve Magee**, pastor of Exeter Presbyterian Church in Exeter, N.H., said that it was possible "God is calling us back to worship" through the terrorist strikes in New York and Washington, D.C. "I'm not talking about prayer in schools. I'm talking about the church remembering our only hope is faith in Christ who died on the cross," he told his congregation.

◆ **Rep. Walter Jones**, R-N.C., spoke at a recent news conference to rally support for his legislation that would permit churches to engage in political speech without the risk losing their tax-exempt status with the IRS. He said that the United States should celebrate its diversity in culture and faith. "To rob even one citizen of the right to free speech is wrong," Jones said. "To do it in the name of the tax code is even worse."

◆ **Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza**, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote a letter to President George W. Bush expressing support for efforts "to seek out and hold accountable" those responsible for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon. However, he said, "any military response must be in accord with sound moral principles, notably the norms of the just war tradition such as the probability of success, civilian immunity, and proportionality." Δ

## Coalition warns against hasty response to terrorist attacks

A broad coalition of groups from across political, religious, ethnic and racial spectrums have expressed concern that a hasty response by the U.S. government to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks could infringe on religious and civil liberties guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

The joint statement, titled "In Defense of Freedom at a Time of Crisis," insists that those who committed the terrorist acts be held accountable, but cautioned that the tragedy requires all Americans to examine carefully the steps our country may now take to reduce the risk of future terrorist attacks.

Among the 128 agencies endorsing the

statement, were the Baptist Joint Committee, American Civil Liberties Union, the American Muslim Council, Rutherford Institute, the Ethics and the Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Council of Churches of Christ and the Eagle Forum.

"In a remarkable show of unity, groups from the farthest reaches of the religious and political spectrums have come together to uphold freedom and counsel caution," said Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

A list of signers is available on the Internet ([www.indefenseoffreedom.org](http://www.indefenseoffreedom.org)). Δ

### In Defense of Freedom at a Time of Crisis

1. September 11, 2001, thousands of people lost their lives in a brutal assault on the American people and the American form of government. We mourn the loss of these innocent lives and insist that those who perpetrated these acts be held accountable.
2. This tragedy requires all Americans to examine carefully the steps our country may now take to reduce the risk of future terrorist attacks.
3. We need to consider proposals calmly and deliberately with a determination not to erode the liberties and freedoms that are at the core of the American way of life.
4. We need to ensure that actions by our government uphold the principles of a democratic society, accountable government and international law, and that all decisions are taken in a manner consistent with the Constitution.
5. We can, as we have in the past, in times of war and of peace, reconcile the requirements of security with the demands of liberty.
6. We should resist the temptation to enact proposals in the mistaken belief that anything that may be called anti-terrorist will necessarily provide greater security.
7. We should resist efforts to target people because of their race, religion, ethnic background or appearance, including immigrants in general, Arab Americans and Muslims.
8. We affirm the right of peaceful dissent, protected by the First Amendment, now, when it is most at risk.
9. We should applaud our political leaders in the days ahead who have the courage to say that our freedoms should not be limited.
10. We must have faith in our democratic system and our Constitution, and in our ability to protect at the same time both the freedom and the security of all Americans.

## Bush appoints SBC's Land to freedom panel

President Bush announced Sept. 17 that he plans to appoint Southern Baptist leader Richard Land to a two-year term on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Land has been president and treasurer of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission since 1988.

He serves as host of the commission's "For Faith and Family" talk-radio program that is broadcast at stations across the country and over the Internet. He was an architect of the SBC's boycott of Disney and served on committees that drafted both a family article for the "Baptist Faith and Message" in 1998 calling on wives to "submit graciously" to their husbands and a complete rewrite of the confessional statement two years later.

The religious freedom panel monitors governments around the world and recommends action against those that deny religious freedom.

Also named by Bush were William Francis Murphy, bishop of the Archdiocese of Rockville Centre in New York, and Shirin Raziuddin Tahir-Kheli, director of the South Asia Program at Johns Hopkins University. Δ

## Chief justice rejects bid to halt minute of silence

U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist has rejected a request by the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia to temporarily suspend a Virginia law requiring a minute of silence in the state's public schools.

In a four-page opinion released Sept. 12, Rehnquist said a temporary injunction was not appropriate because it is not "indisputably clear" that the rights of students are being violated, *The Washington Post* reported.

The chief justice did not address the ACLU's general challenge to the law, which was passed last year and was upheld by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals this summer. The ACLU argues that the law is an unconstitutional promotion of religion because it requires schools to set aside one minute a day for prayer, meditation or some other activity.

Stuart Newberger, the ACLU attorney, remained hopeful about the eventual outcome of the case.

"This is a small step in the Supreme Court process, and we are optimistic that the full court will take our case and reverse the decision," he said.

Virginia Attorney General Randolph A. Beales had a different view. He called the ruling "a victory for common sense and Virginia's schoolchildren." Δ

## African-American leaders react to terrorist violence

Leaders of four of the nation's predominantly African-American Baptist bodies issued a joint statement offering advice to persons of faith reeling from the terrorist attacks on the country.

"The traumatic events of Sept. 11, 2001, have dramatically made real the fact that no nation, as no man, is an island unto itself," they wrote. "Our lives are so intertwined that the love and hatred of persons in distant places of the globe can cause shock waves in this great land of ours."

The statement was signed by the Rev. William J. Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, USA; the Rev. E. Edward Jones, president of the National Baptist Convention of America; the Rev. C. Mackey Daniels, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention; and the Rev. W.T. Snead, president of the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America.

The denominational leaders asked "all persons of faith" to pray for the victims

and their families, help those offering aid to them, help young people dealing with the trauma and participate in worship services. They also urged prayer for calm, "a just peace" and "that our shock and anger do not turn to hatred or fear." Δ

## Russian judge shuts down Moscow Salvation Army

Deciding that an evangelical organization best known for its humanitarian activities did not adhere to official rules governing religious activities, a judge in Moscow has ordered the Salvation Army to close its operations in the city.

Judge Svetlana Grigoryeva rejected the Army's request for a delay until after other Russian courts and the European Court of Human Rights responded to appeals, according to a statement from the group's headquarters for Eastern Europe, *The Associated Press* reported.

The Moscow government had accused the Salvation Army of failing to register quickly enough to avoid violating a 1997 law that required religious organizations that were not registered with the government to register and apply for re-registration each year.

The Army also did not regularly keep government officials aware of its activities, prosecutors claimed.

The Salvation Army said it plans to appeal Grigoryeva's decision. Δ

## Teachers don't need clergy note for religious holidays

A New York school official rejected a requirement that teachers in Brooklyn get a note from clergy if they want time off for a religious holiday.

The principal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School, Adele A. Vocel, told her staff on Sept. 4 that requests for religious holidays must be received a week in advance and "accompanied by a personalized letter from the applicant's clergyman/clergywoman which states that the applicant, named in the letter, is required by the tenets of his/her faith, not to work on the specified day," according to *The New York Times*.

The superintendent of Brooklyn schools, Charles Majors, overruled that order, saying, "it was a mistake and it has been corrected."

An unnamed school official said the confusion began last year when a teacher asked for time off for Orthodox Easter, which falls on a different date than Easter celebrated by Western churches. Δ

# National tragedy a test for America's faith groups



J. Brent Walker  
Executive Director

**O**ur lives have been changed forever. Americans have suffered the most hellish act of aggression against civilians on our native soil — at least since the British burned the Capitol and White House on an August day in 1814. No longer will the perennial

question be the one my parents asked, "Where were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed?" Or, "What were you doing when President Kennedy was assassinated?" as my generation has queried. For this generation of Americans it will always be, "Where were you when the hijacked commercial airliners crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and thousands died?"

As I was watching the ghastly events in Manhattan on my office television, I gazed out the window past the Capitol dome and saw the smoke billow from the Pentagon several miles to the west! As the Baptist Joint Committee staff prepared to leave the building, we paused to pray for the unfolding situation that turned out to be even worse than we then knew.

It is still hard fully to fathom the enormity of that day. In a sense, I wonder what more can be said given the media saturation of news reports, opinion pieces and talking heads reflecting on what happened that awful day. But, in another sense, I wonder if we are not still too close to the tragedy to fully appreciate its implications. I simply cannot get my mind around it.

We certainly need to continue to pray for those who have lost family members and loved ones, for the heroic rescue workers and other support personnel, and for President Bush, members of Congress and other policymakers.

As we respond to this horrific tragedy, personally and nationally, we have important choices to make. We can put our arms around each other, commiserate in the loss of innocence and, as Franklin Roosevelt said, bask in the "warm courage of our national unity." And as we do, we should support efforts to seek justice, punish the wrongdoers and prevent this kind of thing

from ever happening again.

But we also need to be careful not to compound the tragedy by sowing seeds of hate, casting blame where it does not belong, seeking vengeance, rather than justice and adding names to the list of innocent victims.

We have already witnessed threats and acts of violence against Muslims and their houses of worship and many other Arab-Americans. This is so wrong. Those who perpetrated this evil do not speak for or act on behalf of Islam, any more than the hateful venom of the Ku Klux Klan can be attributed to all Christians. Muslims and Arab-Americans perished along with people of other nationalities and religions. They grieve along with us. America must continue to protect the religious liberty of *all* of its citizens; we must not engage in religious and ethnic stereotyping.

We see other forms of scapegoating, casting blame, not on the Muslim community, but on political and cultural adversaries. Even while the fires still clouded the Manhattan and Washington skylines, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson engaged in a hair-raising conversation on national television. They blasted the American Civil Liberties Union, People For the American Way, abortionists, feminists and gays and lesbians for the events of September 11. The implication was that God allowed this to be perpetuated to punish all Americans for the views and lifestyles of these groups and people. At best, it is preposterous to purport to know the will of God with such breathtaking certainty. At worst, it is demagogic to use a national tragedy as a tool to castigate those with whom one disagrees. In any case, it again plays directly into the hands of terrorists to foster hatred, strife and fear. Although both have issued apologies, those remarks stand as a stark reminder to measure our words carefully in a time of crisis.

In addition, it is important that we not overreact to the point of compromising our commitment to civil liberties. To fall prey to that temptation would be fundamentally alter what it means to be America. Of course, we need to protect our citizens and our national sovereignty. We

## Falwell offers apology for remarks on terrorism

The Rev. Jerry Falwell apologized for saying that liberals helped cause the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States because they had removed "God from the public square."

Falwell was roundly criticized — including a rebuke from the White House — for saying on Pat Robertson's "700 Club" program that the terrorist attacks were "probably what we deserve" because liberal groups have tried to secularize America.

Falwell singled out gays and lesbians, abortionists and liberal advocacy groups. "... All of them who have tried to secularize America — I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen.'"

In a statement issued Sept. 18, Falwell called his remarks, "insensitive, uncalled for at the time and unnecessary as part of the commentary on this destruction."

"I apologize that, during a week when everyone appropriately dropped all labels and no one was seen as liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican, religious or secular, I singled out for blame single groups of Americans," he said.

Robertson called Falwell's remarks "totally inappropriate," even though he said he concurred with Falwell's statement at the time. A Robertson spokeswoman said he was confused and "didn't really realize what" Falwell was saying.  $\Delta$

# Baptist Joint Committee

## Supporting Bodies

- ◆ Alliance of Baptists
- ◆ American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- ◆ Baptist General Association of Virginia
- ◆ Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Baptist General Convention of Texas
- ◆ Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
- ◆ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- ◆ National Baptist Convention of America
- ◆ National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.
- ◆ National Missionary Baptist Convention
- ◆ North American Baptist Conference
- ◆ Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
- ◆ Religious Liberty Council
- ◆ Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

### REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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## Terrorists, not Muslims, target of wrath, Bush says

Engaging in tough talk to prepare America for a possible prolonged war, President George W. Bush took care to identify the nation's enemy as terrorism, and not Muslims.

Speaking Sept. 20 on national television before a joint session of Congress, the president said evidence gathered so far points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al-Qaida, led by exiled Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden, as being behind the assault.

"The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics — a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam," Bush said. "The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children."

Some Islamic nations discussing cooperating with the United States in expected military strikes against bin Laden and Afghanistan's Taliban leaders for harboring the accused terrorist reportedly took pause when Bush earlier referred to his declared war on terrorism as a "crusade."

"This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while," Bush said Sept. 16 on the South Lawn of the White House.

For many, the term recalls the Crusades, a series of campaigns by Christians in the Middle Ages to rid the Holy Land of "infidels," primarily Muslims.

An aide said Sept. 18 that Bush regrets using the word "crusade," and he meant only to say his is a "broad cause" against terrorism, The Associated Press reported.

In his Sept. 20 speech, Bush spoke

directly to the world's Muslims. "We respect your faith," he said. "It is practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them."

Bush met Sept. 17 with Muslim leaders at the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. At a news conference following the meeting, Bush said: "The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace." Δ

### Reflections, Continued from Page 3

will have to tolerate the added inconvenience of increased security at airports and other public places. We may even be forced to tolerate (even applaud) marshals on passenger planes and other extraordinary law enforcement measures. But, as E.J. Dionne Jr., wrote in his syndicated column, "our nation can be both tough and democratic, ... we can guard both public safety and liberty." Both/and, not either/or.

So, as we Americans come together enjoying a welcomed sense of heightened patriotism, let's all fall to our knees in prayer to God respecting each other and appreciating our differences, take the necessary steps to punish the wrongdoers without foregoing our way of life and remember that being free is at the core of what it means to be American Baptist Christians. Δ



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