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WASHINGTON -- Brief asks court to accept case on fetal personhood.
ILLINOIS -- To help battle the flood he called out the WMU; photo.
TEXAS -- Texan's solo journey aids relief efforts in St. Louis.
WASHINGTON -- Critical issues to confront Congress when it returns.
TENNESSEE -- 4,000-plus Baptist youth involved in World Changers; photo.
MISSISSIPPI -- Fire guts Jackson home of Frank, Jane Pollard.
NEW ORLEANS -- Era of unschooled preachers is past, Leavell maintains.

Brief asks court to accept
case on fetal personhood

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
8/25/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has joined a brief asking the Supreme Court to accept a case to determine whether an unborn child is a legally protected person from the time of conception.

The brief, written by the University Faculty for Life, contends each human being from fertilization is a person with a constitutional right to life. There is no valid scientific or philosophical distinction between a human being or person, the brief says, and there should be no legal difference either.

Arguments for personhood later in a fetus' development are based on inaccurate science and historically inaccurate or questionable philosophy, the brief says.

There is "no scientific or philosophical distinction between a human being and a human person," the brief says. "A human being who is simultaneously a human person is present at fertilization, and acting humanly. Since every human being is constitutionally due his or her rights and protections, and since the life of every human being begins at fertilization, then every human being is due those rights and protections from fertilization on. ..."

In the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion, the majority opinion said the Supreme Court did not need to determine when life begins and the "unborn have never been recognized in the law as persons in the whole sense."

"The 14th Amendment prohibits the states from denying a 'person' of life, liberty or property without due process of law," said Michael Whitehead, the CLC's general counsel. "The court, since Roe, has artfully dodged the medical-legal issue of whether an unborn child is a 'person' within the meaning of the 14th Amendment and hence entitled to constitutional protection.

"This case invites the court to confront the issue directly and resolve it in light of modern medical evidence. Many justices would rather visit a dentist for a root canal than to revisit this issue, but we will continue to invite them until they accept a case," Whitehead said.

The case, J.M. v. V.C., involves the attempt of a father, J.M., to assert constitutional rights on behalf of his unborn child and to prevent the mother, V.C., from having an abortion. The abortion took place when the New Jersey Supreme Court lifted an injunction.

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Also signing onto the brief are the Holston Baptist Association in Tennessee, American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Libertarians for Life, National Federation of Catholic Physicians Guilds and 17 medical school, law school and college professors.

The Supreme Court will begin its 1993-94 term in October. An announcement on whether the court has accepted the case is expected to be made shortly thereafter.

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To help battle the flood
he called out the WMU

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
8/25/93

OLIVE BRANCH, Ill. (BP)--When the Miller City levee on the Illinois side of the Mississippi broke July 15, nearby Olive Branch became "like a war zone," said Verlee Eaker, director of missions for the Clear Creek Baptist Association.

Olive Branch was inundated with Red Cross and Army Corps of Engineers officials; National Guardsmen, inmates and volunteers from as far away as Texas sandbagging at two endangered levees nearby; and farmers moving their equipment to higher ground.

Eaker, however, felt one more organization needed to be called out: Woman's Missionary Union.

Yes, WMU.

To explain, Eaker and nine other Baptist men passed through Olive Branch the day after the levee broke to help a local pastor, Gene Hart, sandbag around his house for a possible onslaught of flooding.

Eaker noticed the scarcity of food for everyone who had come to the southern Illinois community to battle the Mississippi, as well as a number of flood "survivors," as they prefer to be called. In Eaker's words, "I noticed they simply didn't have the resources (to provide meals)."

So, he called Georgia Mowery, a retiree who is the association's WMU director, certain that "she's the kind of person if you give her a job she'll do it."

"We just got on the telephone," Mowery said, her "we" referring to herself and Dimple Honey, the association's assistant WMU director, both members of Ullin Baptist Church.

Starting around 9:30 in the morning they split the phone list of Clear Creek association's 43 churches to ask for help with food.

By 11:30 that morning food from church members was arriving at Olive Branch's small community center.

Into late August -- for more than six weeks -- the association's 26 churches with WMUs and the others lacking WMUs were the primary source of some 225 hot evening meals each evening and many of the sandwiches, soft drinks and snacks available at lunchtime.

"We didn't have anybody who refused us," Mowery said.

Food also came in from several local churches; the Red Cross-Southern Baptist Brotherhood mass effort based in Cape Girardeau, Mo.; and from purchases made via a flood relief fund established by Clear Creek association that has received more than \$5,000.

One Methodist minister, Mowery recounted, had called his regional bishop to ask how to help and was told: "Get ahold of those Baptist women."

The women also smile when Honey tells about picking up 52 cakes and pies baked by members of Maple Grove Baptist Church for the Olive Grove, loading her car to the brim, and of members of Jonesboro Baptist Church providing an evening meal -- and asking to serve it, not just drop it off.

"People have seen what WMU can do if we really work together," Mowery said of the effort. "It has drawn our WMUs closer together with one another."

"And it makes you realize what a mission it is, serving people who are in need and hurting," Honey said.

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"That's what WMU is all about," Mowery added. "After the Lord, WMU is first in our lives."

Mowery and Honey noted their WMU vigor was fueled by a MasterLife course they and Mowery's husband, Bruce, took under Eaker three years ago.

The program, widely used in Southern Baptist churches, "changes your prayer life," Mowery said. "It changes how you look at people" who, previously, she might never have spoken to or noticed. "It changes your attitude. It changes the way you live."

Honey, a recent widow at the time, took the course to find new direction for her life. "From that (course), it's been deeper and deeper all the time," she said. "I just said if the Lord can use me, I'll do whatever."

Beyond the WMU food operation, the association has received loads of cleaning supplies, clothes and canned goods arriving by vans and pickup trucks -- "the help has just come from all over," Eaker said.

"Many are experiencing the promised blessing, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,'" he noted.

Of the association's 43 churches, only Lake Milligan Baptist Church in Miller City near the levee break has taken floodwater, more than four feet in its basement.

About 10 church families have been flooded or, typical of those who have lived along the Mississippi all their lives, are waiting out floodwater surrounding their farmhouses, without electricity or telephone, with only a boat as a way of escape. Among them: the church's longtime music director, Jimmy Ice, who is in his 80s, his wife, their son and his wife.

Lake Milligan church, founded in 1844, has 90 members.

Five other churches moved fixtures from their buildings in case floodwater headed their way. Fortunately for those congregations and dozens of their members, two key levees have withstood the rush of the Mississippi southward.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the (BP) central office in Nashville.

**Texan's solo journey aids
relief efforts in St. Louis**

By Shawn Switzer

**Baptist Press
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When Larry Johnson, executive vice president of Broadcast Satellite International in Plano, Texas, donated use of a 20-foot broadcast uplink truck to aid flood relief efforts in the Midwest, he intended to drive the truck to St. Louis himself.

But his mother died and he was unable to make the trip. He would have asked one of his employees to drive the truck but they were on assignment in Denver televising Pope John Paul II's visit.

The truck was filled with thousands of cleaning supplies, including mops, brooms, buckets and various disinfectants collected by an Arlington, Texas, radio station to aid those ravaged by floodwater in St. Louis.

Johnson phoned friend Andy Howington, chief engineer at the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, and asked for help in finding a volunteer.

"The call was totally unexpected, but I was willing to call around to find a driver," Howington said.

After several unsuccessful calls to friends, Howington decided to undertake the "mission trip."

Less than 24 hours later, Howington boarded the truck stuffed with supplies and set out alone on a trek through three states bound for a vacant K-Mart store in northern St. Louis being used by Missouri Baptists as a warehouse and distribution center for donated supplies.

People in Texas also had written notes of encouragement and promises of prayer and attached them to the cleaning supplies.

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Howington recalled one note in particular: "A fellow wrote, 'I will be praying for you. Sincerely, Chris. P.S. I am 9, almost 10 years old.'"

On Aug. 20, Howington drove for 15 and a half hours, only stopping for food and fuel. After sleeping a few hours, he awoke early the next morning and pressed on, traveling two more hours through the Ozark foothills before reaching his destination around 9 a.m.

Although he had heard about the havoc the floodwater had brought, Howington couldn't believe what he saw when he approached the vacant K-Mart drop-off site.

"At least 70 volunteers greeted me and anxiously unloaded everything on the truck in approximately two hours," Howington said. "As people unloaded our donated supplies they immediately divided them into boxes and organized them to be distributed quickly to those in need."

Howington said people of all ages gave of their time. Among the volunteers was a retired woman who said she had a lot of free time and nothing made her happier than helping her neighbors in need. Her feeling was one shared by all volunteers involved in distributing food, clothing, bedding, school and medical supplies to the flood "survivors."

Within two hours, Howington said he witnessed the unloading of two large trucks filled with more flood relief. One truck carried donations from a Smithville, Tenn., church of 72 members, while the other was stocked by a group of 40 Vietnamese who said they wanted to help to pay back the people of the St. Louis area for their kindness.

Howington traveled approximately 1,480 miles and returned to Fort Worth less than 35 hours later.

"Although the request came unexpectedly and in spite of the long hours," Howington said with a smile, "I would do the same thing again in a heartbeat."

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Critical issues to confront
Congress when it returns

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
8/25/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--While other issues may receive more attention, a number of critical social and religious liberty issues confront Congress when it reconvenes Labor Day week after a month-long recess.

The divisive issues of abortion and its funding, the most significant religious freedom legislation in decades and the resolution of the debate over homosexuals in the military await the Senate and House of Representatives. The Senate reconvenes Sept. 7, while the House returns to business the next day.

"There is room for optimism on a number of fronts for Southern Baptists and other evangelicals who are concerned about abortion policy and other matters," said James A. Smith of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"For example, we are winning right now on the Freedom of Choice Act. We won in the House on the Hyde Amendment. We have won a huge victory on homosexuals in the military. We soon expect the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to be law," said Smith, who is the CLC's director of government relations in Washington.

"Having said all that, clearly the Clinton administration has done significant damage on abortion policy and especially with certain high-level government appointments."

One of those appointees is scheduled to be the subject of debate and a vote on the Senate's first day back. Joycelyn Elders, President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general, is expected to be confirmed despite outspoken opposition from conservative senators.

The opposition has been based on Elders' positions, such as her support of abortion rights and condom distribution in public schools; her rhetoric, which opponents have described as divisive; and some of her actions as director of the Arkansas Department of Health from 1987 until this summer.

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The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee approved Elders 13-4 one week before the recess.

Here are some of the issues and pieces of legislation before Congress this fall:

-- Abortion: While President Clinton reversed, in effect, five pro-life policies by executive order two days after his inauguration, pro-choice advocates have not been as successful in Congress.

The Freedom of Choice Act, S. 25 and H.R. 25, has passed committees in both houses but has not been brought to the floor, largely because of division within the pro-choice ranks.

Speaker of the House Tom Foley, D.-Wash., has indicated he will not bring it to the floor without a majority of representatives agreeing to a closed rule, which would prevent all or nearly all amendments. He does not have a majority, however. Many pro-choicers in Congress agree with allowing states to pass some restrictions, such as waiting periods and prohibition of late-term abortions.

Unless a dramatic change occurs, it appears FOCA may not be voted on by either chamber this year.

The Senate still has to deal with the Hyde Amendment, which has prohibited Medicaid from paying for most abortions since 1976. House pro-lifers dealt a stunning blow to abortion advocates in June when they succeeded in placing the amendment, with exceptions for life of the mother, rape and incest, in the bill after it was left out by the president.

"The Senate will be a much more difficult body in which to win on Hyde than the House was," Smith said. "In light of this, it is critical that Southern Baptists contact their senators and urge them to oppose federal funding of abortion on demand."

Indications are President Clinton's health care reform plan, which has yet to be unveiled fully, will include abortion coverage.

The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, S. 636 and H.R. 796, has been OK'd by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee but has yet to be voted on by the House Judiciary Committee.

FACE would make it a federal offense to blockade an abortion clinic. Many pro-lifers describe it as a violation of the First Amendment rights of pro-life protesters.

-- Religious liberty: It appears likely the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, S. 578, will finally reach the floor of the Senate in September. The House passed its version, H.R. 1308, by a voice vote in May.

RFRA again would require government to demonstrate a compelling interest before restricting a person's free exercise of religion. The Supreme Court eliminated the compelling state interest test in its 1990 Employment Division v. Smith decision. RFRA originally was introduced the same year.

The final hurdle apparently will be an amendment expected on the Senate floor which would exempt prisons from RFRA. Such an amendment is opposed by the broad-based RFRA coalition, which includes the Baptist Joint Committee and CLC.

He is "guardedly optimistic" about defeat of the amendment, said Forrest Montgomery, general counsel of the National Association of Evangelicals. While only eight senators are sponsoring the amendment, it is uncertain what all the others will do, Montgomery said Aug. 25.

"The great danger of (the amendment) is that it denies religious freedom to a class of Americans that most needs it above all others," he said. "We understand the concerns of law-enforcement authorities (about prisoners' frivolous claims), ... but the courts have proven they are capable of handling those frivolous claims."

-- Homosexuals in the military: The Senate and House will vote on legislation already approved by both chambers' Armed Services committees on homosexuals in the military.

Although the committees' hearings and votes followed the July announcement of President Clinton's long-promised new policy, some congressional conservatives are describing the legislative version as stricter and an improvement over the president's proposal. It appears the committee version will pass both houses.

"The House and Senate Armed Services committees took a bad and contradictory policy concocted by the president and restored sanity to the question of homosexuals in the military," Smith said. "As a matter of fact, some military experts suggest that the policy adopted by the House and Senate committees may actually be better than the one Clinton sought to change.

"On virtually every issue of significance, those who oppose homosexuals in the military won," Smith said.

"The homosexual lobby lost big-time. They overreached when they made this policy change their No. 1 priority in the 103rd Congress. I believe that this failure has further set back any chance they had on a federal civil rights bill for homosexuals."

Two such homosexual rights bills, H.R. 423 and H.R. 431, have been introduced this year but appear to have virtually no chance of passage.

-- Alcohol advertising warnings: The Sensible Advertising and Family Education Act, which would require health and safety warnings in all broadcast and print alcohol advertisements, faces an uphill battle.

The SAFE Act, S. 674 and H.R. 1823, is expected to be voted on by the Senate Commerce Committee in September. When the committee considers it, the bill may be different than now written.

"We have always recognized that the broadcast and alcohol industries have powerful lobbies in Washington which would make passage of the SAFE Act difficult," said Smith, who is a member of the steering committee of the coalition supporting the bill. "However, we are optimistic that some legislation which will begin to take some of the glamour out of alcohol advertising is achievable."

Southern Baptists may contact their senators and representatives in Washington by calling (202) 224-3121 and asking for their offices. They may write their senators at U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510. They may write their representatives at U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

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4,000-plus Baptist youth
involved in World Changers

By Susan Watt

Baptist Press
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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--More than 4,000 youth and leaders participated in World Changers work projects across the United States and in Puerto Rico this summer.

Youth representing 206 churches from 23 states painted, roofed and repaired nearly 400 homes of low-income or elderly residents in Millington, Briceville and Campbell County, Tenn.; Houston; Kansas City, Mo.; Savannah, Ga.; Brockton, Mont.; Canton, N.C.; Tuscaloosa, Ala.; Eastern Shore, Va.; Clarksdale, Miss.; Shreveport, La.; and Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico.

Sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, World Changers involves youth in "hands-on" missions work through home construction and renovation.

Participants arrive for their eight-day project on Saturday and are divided into work crews of 12 to 15 members. Each crew is led by an individual with construction experience. Evenings are devoted to crew meetings and worship.

On Monday, the work begins. Residents are excited to watch the day-to-day progress of the crews and even more excited to see the finished work on Friday.

"I won't have to put pots and pans down anymore," said Millington resident Georgia Stapleton about her once-leaking roof. "It's a wonderful thing."

"I am thrilled to have these young people working on my house and helping me out this way," said Oliver Springs resident Lanie Phillips. A World Changers crew re-roofed Phillips' house and built an indoor bathroom.

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"I have lived in this house over 35 years and I have never had an indoor bathroom," Phillips said.

Youth benefit from the experience as much as the residents. They learn the value of working together to respond to the needs of those around them.

"I think it's really neat how people who hardly know each other can come together to minister for God," said Celia Brown, 17, of Millbrook Baptist Church in Aiken, S.C. "My work crew has become a close group as we've worked and bonded together."

"This experience has shown me how being a servant is essential to Christian spiritual growth," said Jimmy Croome, 15, of First Baptist Church, Sandersville, Ga.

As each project progressed and temperatures soared, many youth and adults felt God was challenging them both physically and spiritually.

"World Changers is faith that sweats," said Jeff Buscher, a youth leader at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Mont. "There is really nothing like it."

"I was expecting something really challenging, yet enjoyable," said Shayna Franks, 17, of Roebuck Park Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. "I got the experience of a lifetime."

In 1994, World Changers will expand to 25 projects. Dates and locations for senior high projects are Houston; Birmingham, Ala.; Shelby County, Tenn.; and Orlando, Fla., June 11-18; Poplar, Mont.; Tuscaloosa, Ala.; and Danville, Va., June 25-July 2; Poplar, Mont.; and Quitman County, Miss., July 2-9; Anderson County, Tenn.; and Savannah, Ga., July 9-16; Kansas City, Mo.; Anderson County, Tenn.; Vicksburg, Miss.; and Savannah, Ga., July 16-23; and Murphy, N.C.; Shreveport, La.; and Lee County, S.C., July 30-Aug. 6.

Two World Changers junior high projects are scheduled for Memphis, Tenn., June 20-25, and Dallas, Aug. 1-6. Senior Adult World Changers will be piloted Oct. 24-30, 1993, in Lake Village, Ark. A second senior adult World Changers project will be announced at a later date.

A Caribbean World Changers work project in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, scheduled July 23-30 of next year is open to anyone who has completed the ninth grade.

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Watt is assistant editor of coed youth materials at the Brotherhood Commission. World Changers summer staff members Carol Spurlin, Brian Hawkins and Melissa Myers, contributed to this story. (BP) photo available upon request from the Brotherhood Commission.

Fire guts Jackson home
of Frank, Jane Pollard

Baptist Press
8/25/93

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--An Aug. 24 fire destroyed the home of Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss.

Neither Pollard nor his wife, Jane, were at home when a neighbor saw smoke rolling from the Pollards' house and reported it to the fire department shortly after noon.

Most of the roof and inside of the house caved in, but the frame was left standing after the fire, which apparently broke out on the second floor.

Neighbors on both sides of the Pollards' wooded lot in northeast Jackson said the fire department's quick response on a day with a heat index of 99 (measuring heat and humidity) may have kept the fire from spreading to other homes.

The cause of the fire was not immediately determined. The Pollards were not allowed inside the house until a review by arson investigators was completed.

"It's just stuff. We can replace it," Pollard told the local newspaper. "As long as nobody was involved, it's not a tragedy.

"The great thing about going to heaven," he added, "is you don't have to take it with you."

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Pollard was told of the fire shortly before conducting a weekly Bible study for 400-plus men at the Jackson church, located across from the state capitol. He finished his message and immediately left for the scene. Zach Hederman, one of the men in attendance, said, "We were told Dr. Pollard's home was on fire and he was on his way there. We bowed our heads and had a special prayer for him right then."

Pollard and his wife temporarily will reside with their son, Brent, who has a home in Jackson.

Pollard said he purchased the house for \$175,000 seven years ago and didn't know the value of the contents, which were insured. Most of his library was at the church.

Fire Capt. James McDonald said the fire "was tough. It was hot, and the heat had a chance to build up before we got the call."

Pollard is a former president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.; a popular speaker throughout the Southern Baptist Convention; and co-chairman of the Reaching America Study Group under the SBC-wide study initiated by SBC President H. Edwin Young.

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Information from The Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, Miss., was used in this report.

Era of unschooled preachers
is past, Leavell maintains

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
8/25/93

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Why are you here?" asked Landrum P. Leavell II, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, during the first chapel address of the new school year.

"You can point me to great preachers of the past who had no formal education," Leavell said to the audience of both new and returning students who filled the entire floor level of the seminary's chapel.

However, "Not only are they in the past, but that era is in the past.

"You're here to sharpen and to refine what God has given you," he said.

"You're not going to make it without education. Believe me, any church you might serve, anywhere in this land, is going to have someone in there who is well-educated and who will know it if you are not.

"You can't get up and preach off the top of your head or lead from a hit-or-miss sort of method. ... You need training, you need honing of your skills, if you're going to serve God to the maximum. ...

"You may say, 'Well, look at the 12 apostles. They were ignorant and unlearned.' That's right," Leavell said. "But when God wanted his gospel proclaimed throughout the world, he took a trained mind, the mind of the Apostle Paul, who had the equivalent to a Ph.D. degree in his day, having sat at the feet of Gamaliel. ...

"Why are you training?" Leavell asked. "So that you can train others and get them involved in ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, that is, teaching the truths of the gospel that you have received from the Lord and that you have been helped in understanding through those who have taught you."

Final registration totals are not yet available, but all indications show New Orleans Seminary is beginning its 76th year with its largest-ever fall enrollment.

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