

Disaster relief volunteers prepare for the worst, hope for the best

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TBM volunteer ' blue tarp' roofing team prepares a makeshift roof after a 2006 tornado ripped off a building's roof.

Disaster relief volunteers prepare

for the worst, hope for the best

By Barbara Bedrick

Texas Baptist Communications

ALLAS—Gary Smith missed Hurricane Andrew. He was returning by plane from a mission trip to Kosovo when it hit. But he hasn't missed many severe storms in the past 15 years.

Smith has responded to hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and tsunamis since he began as a volunteer for Texas Baptist Men 15 years ago. In 2004, he became director of TBM Disaster Relief ministries.



Gary
Smith

DOWN HOME: Remember Margie with love & laughter

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DOWN HOME:

Remember Margie with love & laughter

Thank the Lord, Elijah Peter and Fluretta Ledora Berry decided 14 children were not enough. Who knows how an Oklahoma dryland farm family evaluated the pros and cons of delivering another child into the world—one more mouth to feed/one more hand to harvest crops? Whatever their calculations, on April 3, 1924, the 15th of 16 Berry babies sprang into this world.

I like to imagine little Margie's first cry sounded like laughter—laughter that echoed from her lungs and through the ears of family and friends for more than eight decades.

If you view the old Berry Clan portrait, you'll see a hard-working farm family. Look closely at the adults' faces, and you'll recognize long hours in the sun, droughts and prairie fires, blizzards and hailstorms, the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. But study the face of the mop-headed girl tucked underneath her daddy's left arm, and you'll see a sparkle in little Margie's eye.

That sparkle gleams in postwar pictures of a young woman in downtown Fort Worth, as well as a newlywed snuggled close to her skinny husband, a mother laughing with her daughters, a grandmother playing with her grandkids, and even later, an elderly woman snuggled next to her husband of many decades.

EDITORIAL: Let's do something about immigration

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EDITORIAL: Let's do something about immigration

Immigration ranks near the top of the list of great moral issues. If it were easy, somebody would have “fixed” it by now. But no matter how you look at it—either concern for the status quo or care for humanity—you see a challenge that needs to be resolved.

An editorial can't do justice to the complexity of immigration. So, consider this a discussion-starter to accompany the [package of articles on immigration](#) in this paper. Let's structure our thinking in three categories.



Problems

Immigration problems and the passion they stir swirl around three items:

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Court dismisses suit against Boy Scouts. A federal appeals court has dismissed a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union that challenged the U.S. Department of Defense's [support of the Boy Scouts of America](#) and their national Jamboree. In 1999, the ACLU filed suit claiming the "Boy Scouts' policy requiring religious oaths" violated the separation of church and state. The ACLU objected to the the Boy Scouts holding their national Jamboree at Fort A.P. Hill in Virginia every four years because the Scout Oath begins: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country." A lower court had ruled a 1972 law that allowed the Defense Department to support the Scouts was unconstitutional because it advanced religion on government property, but the Chicago-based 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected that ruling.

Only one Brit in 10 attends church. A survey by a British charity indicates more than half of Britain's adults claim to be Christian, but only one in 10 regularly attends weekly church services. [Tearfund](#), a Christian relief and development charity, said its poll of 7,000 men and women over age 16 suggests Christianity remains the dominant faith in Britain, with 53 percent—26.2 million—of the adult population adhering to its beliefs. But those figures from 2006 also represent a sharp decline from the last British census, in 2001, when nearly three-quarters of adults identified themselves as Christian. The poll indicates only 7.6 million adults in a nation of more than 60 million people go to church each month, and only one in 10 attends

each week. Two-thirds of the people polled said the only times they had gone to church were for weddings, baptisms and funerals.

Evangelical leader named to religious freedom panel. Former [National Association of Evangelicals](#) President Don Argue has been appointed to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Argue is expected to start the position May 15, replacing Roman Catholic Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, N.M. Argue is president of Northwest University in Kirkland, Wash., a school affiliated with the Assemblies of God. In 1996, he was appointed to serve on President Clinton's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom, which led to establishment of the commission. In 1998, Clinton chose Argue to be part of an official delegation of U.S. religious leaders to China. Argue was president of the National Association of Evangelicals from 1995 to 1998, when he resigned to take the university position.

Fingerprint scanner a tool of Antichrist, school employee believes. A public school employee in St. John the Baptist Parish, La., was suspended for refusing to use a biometric time clock that scans fingerprints, claiming the process violates his religious beliefs. Joe Cook, director of the Louisiana chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, urged the school board to allow Herman Clayton, a school system electrician and Baptist minister, to continue signing in and out of work, as he did for several months before being suspended without pay in February. Clayton objected to the fingerprint scanning system based on his belief in end-times prophecy. The St. John school district implemented the \$75,000 fingerprint identification system last fall. Employees use it to clock in and out of work by placing a finger in front of a small scanner that recognizes key points on each employee's finger.

Documentary on the power of forgiveness cites Amish example

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Documentary on the power of forgiveness cites Amish example

By Mary Warner

Religion News Service

ARRISBURG, Pa. (RNS)— Filmmaker Martin Doblmeier, who set out to explore the nature of forgiveness, was almost finished when the news broke about the [Amish school shooting](#) in West Nickel Mines, Pa., last October.

He went to Lancaster County to film a segment on what happened after a gunman invaded the school and killed five girls and then himself. He found an Amish delegation that went to the gunman's widow to show support and forgiveness.

An Amish family arrives to pay respects at the White Oak farm of Chris and Rachel Miller, who lost two daughters when a gunman killed five girls at an Amish school. The Amish community also reached out in compassion to the family of the gunman. (RNS/Robert Sciarrino/*The Star-Ledger* of Newark, N.J.)

Giuliani leads among evangelicals, Clinton leads among Catholics

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Giuliani leads among evangelicals, Clinton leads among Catholics

By Philip Turner

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Presidential hopefuls Rudolph Giuliani and Sen. Hillary Clinton hold early leads among key religious voting blocs in the race to win their party nominations, a national survey revealed.

The survey by the Pew Research Center shows religious voters leaning toward more recognizable candidates in the early stages of the race, said John Green, a senior fellow at the [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](#).

Anti-immigrant rhetoric nothing new, historians say

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Anti-immigrant rhetoric nothing new, historians say

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

If American Protestants today have trouble knowing how to accept and assimilate a new wave of immigrants, they at least can take comfort in knowing their forebears wrestled with similar issues.

“Americans have always struggled with immigrants. Non-conformist immigrants like Quakers and Baptists were exiled and sent back to England or the Caribbean by the colonial religious establishment,” [church historian Bill Leonard](#) noted. “Roger Williams (who founded the first Baptist church in the colonies) was an unacceptable immigrant.”

With the Statue of Liberty as his backdrop, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act on Oct. 3, 1965. The law, which ended restrictive national origin quotas, ushered in an era of mass immigration of unprecedented diversity.

How can churches legally minister to illegal immigrants?

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Elvira Arellano
(center) prays
with other
illegal
immigrants in
the kitchen of
her apartment
in the
Adalberto
United
Methodist
Church in
Chicago, April
15 marked the
8th month that
Mexican-born
Arellano, 32,
has been
fighting a
deportation
order from
inside the
Chicago
church where
she has
imprisoned
herself,
invoking the
ancient
medieval
protection of
sanctuary.
(REUTERS
Photo/John
Gress)

How can churches legally minister to illegal immigrants?

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

When the doorbell rings at many churches, a person in need may be standing in the doorway seeking some food, clothes, counseling or encouragement.

If that individual is an undocumented immigrant, his presence presents legal and ethical issues many congregations do not know how to address, said Krista Gregory, consultant with the [Baptist Immigration Services Network](#), started by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Relationships key to helping immigrants, Baptist workers say

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Relationships key to helping immigrants, Baptist workers say

FREDERICKSBURG, Va. (ABP)—Every afternoon, Felicitas does something she thought might never happen. She meets the school bus near her

Virginia apartment complex to pick up her son, Carlos, as he returns from another day of elementary school.

Carlos has spina bifida, which prevents him from walking. When Felicitas first came to the United States, she spoke little English and had neither a job nor transportation. Her husband had difficulty maintaining a steady job, and Child Protective Services was preparing to take Carlos away from them because of his low weight and poor health.

Then Felicitas met Greg and Sue Smith, who helped connect her with Spanish-speaking doctors and lawyers. They gave her food and encouraged her to start a business in her home. And they worked with the school system to ensure Carlos' needs were met in the classroom.

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- [Almost any immigration reform better than nothing, advocates say](#)
- [Anti-immigrant rhetoric nothing new, historians say](#)
- [How can churches legally minister to illegal immigrants?](#)
 - Relationships key to helping immigrants, Baptist workers say
- [Immigration laws have an impact on who a church can call as pastor or hire as staff](#)

The Smiths are co-founders of [LUCHA Ministries](#), an organization in Fredericksburg, Va., created to help Latinos cope with a new life in the

United States. “Lucha” means “struggle” in Spanish, but LUCHA also is an acronym for the Spanish equivalent of “Latinos United through Christ in Brotherhood and Support.”

Immigration laws have an impact on who a church can call as pastor or hire as staff

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Immigration laws have an impact on who a church can call as pastor or hire as staff

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

SAN ANTONIO—Claudia Munoz feels called to serve on church staff and is doing everything she can to prepare herself to fulfill that calling. She received a student visa and traveled from her home country of Chile to enroll at Baptist University of the Americas. She went on to graduate and

began optional career training, working as a graphic artist at the school, the same position she hopes to hold one day on a church staff in Chile.

Months before her student visa expired, she applied for a religious visa so she could work on a church staff in the United States while her husband finished his master's degree. Months after it expired, she continues waiting. Munoz remains in the country legally, but she can't legally hold a job. She and her husband, who also is on a student visa, are living off the support they receive from their parents.

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- [How can churches legally minister to illegal immigrants?](#)
- [Relationships key to helping immigrants, Baptist workers say](#)
- Immigration laws have an impact on who a church can call as pastor or hire as staff

"I'm still waiting, hoping and praying I receive it soon because I need to work," she said.

Almost any immigration reform better than nothing, advocates say

April 28, 2007

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Almost any immigration reform better than nothing, advocates say

By Robert Marus

ABP Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON (ABP)—As Congress begins to take up immigration-reform proposals, some Christian immigration activists say there is no perfect legislation in the pipeline. But time is of the essence in getting something passed, nonetheless, they insist.

A reform bill with broad bipartisan support already has been introduced in the House. The Senate is likely to begin its consideration of the issue in May.

Texas Baptist Forum

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Texas Baptist Forum

God & Allah

My wife and I served as International Mission Board missionaries in the Middle East for almost 30 years. Baptists in each country in the area [call God "Allah."](#) It is the generic Arabic name for God.

Christians and Muslims agree on some of the characteristics of God/Allah. We agree he is the one and only Supreme Being; he created all things, including human beings. He is a moral God, so those who "do good" are assured a place in heaven and those who disobey are assured of punishment in hell.

• Jump to online-only letters below
Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com ; 250 words maximum.



"If I make exceptions to following God's rule, even if it is only once, there will be more exceptions that will follow."

Elliot Huck

Fourteen-year-old who made it to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2005 and 2006, but refused to compete in the Bloomington, Ind., regional bee this year because it was scheduled on a Sunday (*World/RNS*)
"Evangelical Christians are the most incompetently portrayed group in America—in TV, in fiction, in the news. When Christians say the media gets them wrong, Christians are absolutely right."

Ira Glass

Host of Public Radio International's *This American Life* (*The Forward/RNS*)

"I'm afraid that people have gotten to the point where they are worshipping America. I want to be loyal to America as a nation, but my loyalty ultimately belongs to Jesus. I respect America and want to serve American interests, but if those interests run contrary to serving Jesus Christ, then in fact I must stand against my nation."

Tony Campolo

Evangelical author (*The Washington Times/RNS*)

After that, our view of the basic character of God/Allah varies greatly. Christians believe in one God expressed in the Holy Trinity. Muslims believe in one Allah expressed only as Supreme power and will.