

Couple show grace in tragedy



NORTHWEST —

PIEDMONT, Ala. (AP) — Carrying a promise of federal help to the tornado-swept Southeast, Vice President Al Gore stood in the ruins of a country church Wednesday and called the preacher couple whose daughter died in the rubble "a lesson in grace."

The series of tornadoes Sunday that killed at least 43 people in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina left the darkest mark here at the Goshen United Methodist Church, headed by the Rev. Kelly Clem. Twenty worshipers, including Clem's four-year-old daughter, died when the church roof collapsed during Palm Sunday services.

President Clinton, vacationing in Southern California, declared Alabama a major disaster area Wednesday, making federal financing available to affected individuals and local governments.

"I'm in awe of the strength and grace you've shown through this," Gore said, grasping Kelly Clem's hand during a quiet moment on the grounds of the ruined church. "It's uplifting."

Her husband, the Rev. Dale Clem, said he recalled how Gore rearranged his life around his family after his son nearly died in a car wreck.

"That has been an inspiration to me," Clem told Gore, explaining how he's coping with the death of his daughter, Hannah. Clem heads a youth ministry at Jacksonville State University.

Visibly moved, Gore paused and said, "That really changes your perspective."

The couple took Gore on a brief tour, stepping over a large sheet of foam rubber, twigs, balls of paper and bits and pieces of the church. Mrs. Clem's eyes were badly swollen and her forehead was bruised from injuries sustained in the tornado.

"There was no warning," she told Gore softly, pointing to her church's roof, now spread flat on the ground.

At one point, Gore stepped inside the police rope and roamed a few feet into the rubble, getting a closer look at the debris that caved in on the congregation. Mrs. Clem, shaking, cautiously ventured in with him.

She cried softly later, as Gore commended the couple in brief remarks to reporters. "On behalf of the country, I want to thank you for this lesson in grace," he said.

'One of the lessons our nation must learn from this tragedy is we must do a better job of providing severe weather warnings to communities.'

— Vice President Al Gore

The couple has conducted dozens of interviews, becoming the most visible image of the tragedy while grieving and helping the congregation cope.

Gore told reporters he would announce Thursday a proposal to improve severe weather forecasting in rural areas. Without elaborating, Gore said, "One of the lessons our nation must learn from this tragedy is we must do a better job of providing severe weather warnings to communities."

A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the proposal would use satellite technology and cheap transistor radios to notify rural residents of weather problems.

The National Weather Service currently operates a series of low-power radio stations across the country broadcasting weather forecasts continually. These radio stations send out a tone when a warning is issued, and radio sets are available that turn on automatically when this tone is sent.

The Weather Service and Federal Emergency Management Agency have been discussing a plan to build a national warning program on this radio network.

Gore, who toured the site with FEMA director James Lee Witt and Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, said the government did not know yet how much money would flow to the tornado-damaged area.

Criss-crossing the Mississippi, the vice president flew to Memphis, Tenn., where he spoke at a funeral for the mother of Rep. Harold Ford, D-Tenn. Leaving the funeral early, Gore headed to Greenville, Miss., where he visited a local clinic and hosted a town hall to promote the administration's two-year \$100 billion program to foster economic development in troubled rural and urban communities.

He was then heading back to Memphis for an evening speech to the local chapter of the NAACP.

Law signed to pare federal work force

CORONADO, Calif. (AP) — President Clinton signed legislation Wednesday allowing the government to offer its workers buyouts of up to \$25,000 if they resign or retire.

The new law is part of an effort to pare the federal work force by nearly 12 percent over five years.

"After all the rhetoric about cutting the size and cost of government, our administration has done the hard work and made the tough choices," Clinton said in a statement.

The law should reduce federal employment by 272,900 by the end of fiscal 1999, dropping the size of the federal bureaucracy below 2 million for the first time since 1966 and to its lowest level since 1950.

Clinton signed the legislation while vacationing in Southern California.

"Agencies need the cost-effective incentives provided in this bill in order to avoid excessive reductions in force that are costly, disruptive and disproportionately strike younger workers, many of whom are recently hired women and minorities," Clinton said. "With the 'buyout' authority granted by this legislation, agencies can target employees in unnecessary high-level jobs and maximize savings."

Budget Director Leon Panetta, in a statement released in California, said the law means the government is "going to be more lean and it is going to be more responsive." It also will allow the government to minimize the use of layoffs that primarily hit "the most recent, youngest, lowest-paid employees, including a high proportion of women and minorities," he said.

Under the bill, a federal worker who has completed 12 months of continuous service could take severance pay or a lump sum of \$25,000 — whichever is less — upon leaving the government.

The employee-buyout plan gained wide bipartisan support after it became evident that the reduction goals would not be reached through other means such as attrition or involuntary dismissals. Congressional investigators concluded that involuntary dismissals would disproportionately affect minorities and women.

Clinton said the legislation would help the government achieve goals laid out in the National Performance Review released by Vice President Al Gore last year, which promised to make government work better and cost less.

Also Wednesday, Panetta announced that the Clinton administration had eliminated 284 federal advisory committees, exceeding its goal of a one-third cut in advisory committees not required by law.

Examples of those eliminated as part of a campaign to cut excessive bureaucracy include the Advisory Committee on Publications Subvention and the Advisory Panel on Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

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+Softball	M-W-C*	10	**Instant Scheduling	April 8	\$35
+Tennis	M-W-C	1-2	April 7	April 11	\$5/person
+Soccer	M-W-C	9	***Instant Scheduling	April 16	\$40
Ultimate Frisbee	M-W-C	7	April 21	April 25	\$30
Grass Volleyball	C	6	April 22	April 26	\$30

** Softball Instant Scheduling - April 5, 3:30 p.m., RIM Office
*** Soccer Instant Scheduling - April 13, 3:30 p.m., RIM Office

ONE-DAY EVENTS

Soccer Scramble	M-W	9	April 5	April 6	NC
Track Meet	M-W	4	April 27	April 29	\$15/team
Golf Tournament	M-W-C	2	May 9	May 15	!

TWO/THREE DAY EVENTS

Spring Term Classic	M-W-C	1-2	April 19	April 22	!
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* M=Men, W=Women, C=Coed
! Cost for Activity - check RIM office for exact amount

MANDATORY PRE-SEASON MEETINGS:

TEAM CAPTAIN/MANAGER OR TEAM REPRESENTATIVE MUST ATTEND MEETING OR TEAM WILL NOT BE SCHEDULED!

Meetings are as follows:

Sport	Day	Date	Time	Location
Softball	Monday	April 4	4:00pm	302 Gerlinger
Tennis	Thursday	April 7	4:00pm	306 Gerlinger
Soccer	Tuesday	April 12	4:00pm	107 Esslinger
Ultimate Frisbee	Thursday	April 21	4:00pm	246 Gerlinger
Grass Volleyball	Thursday	April 21	4:30pm	246 Gerlinger



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