

Survivors of Southern storms thankful to see Christmas

By **BILL BARROW**
Associated Press

Dozens of people lost their homes, yet they say they are thankful to see another Christmas.

Tony Goodwin ducked into a storm shelter with seven others as a storm pounded Tennessee and other states in the southeastern U.S. He emerged to find his house in Linden had been knocked off its foundation and hurled down a hill by high winds.

Goodwin's neighbors weren't so fortunate. Two people in one home were killed.

"It makes you thankful to be alive with your family," he said.

Unseasonably warm weather on Wednesday helped spawn torrential rain and deadly tornadoes that left at least 14 people and left dozens of families homeless by Christmas Eve.

Parts of Mississippi remained under a flood warning Friday. Weather forecasters from the National Weather Service warned that a strong storm crossing the central part of the state could produce hail and winds of more than 40 mph. The storm was bringing with it the risk of falling trees, downed power lines and flash flooding, officials said.

But that didn't stop some from spending their Christmas giving rather than receiving.

Nicholas Garbacz, disaster program manager for the American Red Cross of North Mississippi, said members of the Marine Corps brought donated toys to a center in Holly Springs for children whose families



Gregory Shuford, left, and Terease Shuford keep an eye on flooding in west Montgomery, Ala., on Christmas morning Friday, Dec. 25, 2015. The line of springlike storms continued marching east Thursday, dumping torrential rain that flooded roads in Alabama and caused a mudslide in the mountains of Georgia.

were hit hard by the storms. Two of the seven people killed in Mississippi were from the Holly Springs area.

Dozens of children and their families showed up Friday morning to pick up a toy or other items they might need to recover from the storm, Garbacz said.

More severe weather was also in store for parts of Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee that were again being pounded with rain. Residents were warned to brace for flash flooding and possible tornadoes.

Among the dead were seven people from Mississippi, including a 7-year-old boy who perished while riding in a car that was swept up and tossed by storm

winds.

Six people were killed in Tennessee, including three who were found in a car submerged in a creek, according to the Columbia Police Department. The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency said the victims were a 19-year-old female and two 22-year-old males.

One person died in Arkansas, and dozens of homes were damaged or destroyed.

As the rain continued to fall, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley on Friday issued an emergency declaration that covers any part of the state experiencing flash flooding. Officials in southeast Alabama are particularly

concerned, as Pea River is approaching record-levels near the town of Elba, which has a history of severe flooding.

Dozens of people were injured in earlier storms, some seriously, said Greg Flynn, spokesman for the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency.

Search teams combed damaged homes and businesses for people still missing, a hunt made complicated because so many had left for the holidays.

"Until they know for sure where those folks are, they're going to keep looking, because we've had in some cases houses leveled, and they're just not there anymore," Flynn said.

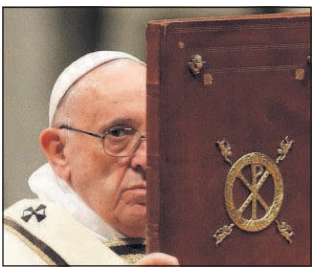
Pope urges prayers for Syria, Libya peace

By **NICOLE WINFIELD**
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis issued a Christmas Day prayer that recent U.N.-backed peace processes for Syria and Libya will quickly end the suffering of their people. He denounced the "monstrous evil" and atrocities they have endured and praised the countries that have taken in their refugees.

Speaking from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, Francis issued a plenary indulgence for Catholics in hopes of spreading the church's message of mercy in a world torn by war, poverty and extremist attacks. The sun-soaked St. Peter's Square was under heavy security, as it has been since the Nov. 13 Paris attacks by Islamic extremists that left 130 dead.

An indulgence is an ancient church tradition related to the forgiveness of sins. Francis announced it after delivering his annual "Urbi et Orbi" (To the city and the world) speech listing global hotspots and his prayers for an end to human suffering.



Pope Francis holds the book of the Gospel as he celebrates the Christmas Eve Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Thursday.

Francis referred to the "brutal acts of terrorism" that struck the French capital this year as well as attacks in Egypt's airspace and in Beirut, Mali and Tunisia. He denounced the ongoing conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Ukraine and issued words of consolation to Christians being persecuted for their faith in many parts of the world.

"They are our martyrs of today," he said.

In an indirect reference to the Islamic State group, he urged the international community to direct its attention to Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and sub-Saharan Africa, where atrocities

"even now reap numerous victims, cause immense suffering and do not even spare the historical and cultural patrimony of entire peoples."

Francis said he hoped the plenary indulgence he issued for this, his Holy Year of Mercy, would encourage the faithful "to welcome God's mercy in our lives, and be merciful with our brothers to make peace grow."

"Only God's mercy can free humanity from the many forms of evil, at times monstrous evil, which selfishness spawns in our midst," he said.

Libya has been in a state of lawlessness since dictator Moammar Gadhafi was overthrown in 2011. Syria has seen a five-year war that has killed over 250,000 people and forced millions to flee the country. The surge of refugees flowing out of Syria to Europe has created a migration crisis for the entire continent.

The U.N. Security Council last week threw its support behind a peace process for Syria including a cease-fire and talks between the Damascus government and

the opposition. The council has also recently endorsed the U.N.-brokered deal to form a unity government that Libya's rival factions have signed.

"We pray to the Lord that the agreement reached in the United Nations may succeed in halting as quickly as possible the clash of arms in Syria and in remedying the extremely grave humanitarian situation of its suffering people," Francis said. "It is likewise urgent that the agreement on Libya be supported by all, so as to overcome the grave divisions and violence afflicting the country."

Francis praised both individuals and countries that have taken in refugees fleeing "inhuman conditions," saying their generosity had helped the newcomers "build a dignified future for themselves and for their dear ones, and to be integrated in the societies which receive them."



This site on Ridgeway Avenue behind the Hermiston Public Library is the city's new plan for a site for the Harkenrider Center.

COUNCIL: Will vote on update to financial policies

Continued from 1A

The Harkenrider Center would be used exclusively as a senior center for the first five years, as required by the conditions of the grant, but after that the city plans to use the center in the evenings for classes and other events.

In other business during its last meeting of the year, the city council will consider final adoption of an ordinance that would change the definition of a "multi-family dwelling" from a building containing

three or more dwelling units to include multiple single or double-unit buildings grouped together on a single lot.

The council will also review and vote on adoption of its yearly update to its financial policies.

The Hermiston City Council meetings are held on the second and fourth Monday of every month at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 180 N.E. Second St.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

BRIEFLY

Earthquake rattles Pakistani capital, Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A strong earthquake shook parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan early Saturday, rattling buildings and forcing sleeping residents out of their homes.

More than 30 people were injured as houses or walls collapsed in the northwestern Pakistan city of Peshawar, said emergency rescue service spokesman Bilal Ahmed Faizi. A total of 41 people were taken to hospitals in the city, according to doctors and rescue officials.

Pakistani official Ghulam Rasool told The Associated Press that the magnitude-6.9 quake was centered in Tajikistan near the Afghan border, beginning after midnight and lasting for 59 seconds.

However, the U.S. Geological Survey reported that the quake measured at magnitude 6.2 and was centered in the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan. Twitter users in the Afghan

capital, Kabul, reported feeling the tremors.

2 dead, 12 injured as migrants try to enter Spain by sea

MADRID (AP) — Two people drowned and at least 12 others were injured when they tried to get to a small patch of Spanish territory in North Africa by swimming from Morocco and scaling a barbed-wire fence that juts into the sea, Spanish and Moroccan news agencies reported Friday.

The dead and hurt were among more than 200 people trying to reach the enclave of Ceuta, which borders Morocco and is across the Strait of Gibraltar from mainland Spain.

More than a million people hoping to escape war and poverty have made their way into Europe this year, according to migration monitors, but attention has been focused on two more common routes — across the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece or across the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy.

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Girls JV Ione vs. Enterprise JV 11:00 am

Boys JV Ione vs. Enterprise JV 12:30 pm

Girls Var. Heppner vs. Hermiston JV 2:00 pm

Boys Var. Heppner vs. Pendleton JV 3:30 pm

Girls Var. Ione vs. Enterprise Var. 5:00 pm

Boys Var. Ione vs. Enterprise Var. 6:30 pm

TUESDAY

Girls JV Consolation 8:00 am

Boys JV Consolation 9:30 am

Girls JV Championship 11:00 am

Boys JV Championship 12:30 pm

Girls Consolation 2:00 pm

Boys Consolation 3:30 pm

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