

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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Year in Review:

Philosophical debates capture national, state, Baptist headlines in 2009

By Jennifer D. Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Politics, policy changes and philosophical differences — much of life in Alabama and the nation revolved around these three areas in 2009.

And Southern Baptists were not exempt. In fact, they spent lots of energy in 2009 trying to understand Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Johnny Hunt's challenge for a Great Commission Resurgence (GCR). GCR resulted in an official task force and rumors of a new direction for the convention and a potential new SBC funding structure. The official proposal from the GCR Task Force is scheduled to be released in February.

Intertwined among GCR headlines were background stories of seminary presidents' roles in this decade's "resurgence" and news that three of the SBC's top groups — the North American Mission Board (NAMB), International Mission Board (IMB) and Executive Committee (EC) — are now looking for new leaders.

Geoff Hammond resigned as president of NAMB amid controversy with the NAMB board of trustees in August. IMB President Jerry Rankin and EC President Morris Chapman announced their 2010 retirements in September.

Alongside the drama unraveling among Southern Baptists were government representatives at all levels debating health-care reform, increased gay rights and U.S.-Muslim relations.

It was rare that a day went by in 2009 when health-care reform wasn't



HAMMOND



CHAPMAN



SBC President Johnny Hunt

GCR Task Force Chairman Ronnie Floyd



RANKIN

BP/TAB photos

and senators spent hundreds of hours sifting through and negotiating about legislation that eventually found its way close to passage. But the only way the legislation moved as far as it did was because several legislators conceded on a few issues, one of which was to tone down abortion coverage.

The U.S. Senate passed one form of health-care reform and the House of Representatives another, but both report the main goal of the legislation is to find a way to give all Americans health insurance. They will work to merge the two bills in January.

Pushing gay rights

President Obama has deemed health-care reform the most important social legislation since the Social Security Act in the 1930s.

mentioned by the national media, and congressmen

But gay rights debates also impacted the federal government, several state legislatures and a handful of faith groups.

At the federal level, President Obama signed into law a measure passed by Congress that extended hate crimes protections to homosexuals and transgender people. The president's signature on the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act put into effect not only an annual bill for military spending but also enshrined into federal law the most significant legislative advance to date for homosexual activists. The Human Rights Campaign, America's largest homosexual organization, called the measure the country's "first major piece of civil rights legislation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people."

President Obama also vowed to end the ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military, and his goal garnered discussions during the year, but no changes have yet been made

to the 1993 "don't ask, don't tell" law. The Supreme Court declined to hear a constitutional challenge to the policy in June.

As far as states were concerned, several dealt with attempts to legalize same-sex "marriage."

Iowa, Vermont and New Hampshire, along with the District of Columbia, approved gay "marriage" in 2009, but New York, Maine and Hawaii rejected it. The New Jersey Senate delayed its vote on the topic in December, and it is not clear if the bill can pass before Gov. Jon Corzine leaves office Jan. 19. Corzine supports the bill but the incoming

governor, Chris Christie, opposes it.

And in California, the state Supreme Court upheld a citizen-enacted ban on gay "marriage," capping one of the most significant victories in the history of the social conservative movement. Proposition 8, as it is known, passed by a margin of 52-48 in November 2008, reversing a May 2008 ruling by the high court that had legalized same-sex "marriage."

Upholding marriage

After Proposition 8 passed, opponents quickly filed suit, arguing that the amendment amounted to a "revision" of the constitution and should first have been approved by the Legislature, which it was not.

But in May 2009, the court disagreed and by a 6-1 margin, said the citizens had the right to pass the amendment, which states that "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

(See 'Year in Review,' page 4)



Are you making plans to take care of what's most important?

A practical guide to

ESTATE PLANNING

from a Christian perspective

January 14 issue

COMMENT

Suggestions from Readers About GCR

During the past several months, readers of *The Alabama Baptist* have offered several suggestions about ways to help Southern Baptists work together more efficiently in fulfilling the Great Commission. Most of these reactions have come in response to comments and ideas related to the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force.

The following is a summary of some of the suggestions offered.

1. Revisit a decision made at the 2007 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting that could result in more money for the International Mission Board (IMB).

That year, GuideStone Financial Resources announced that it did not need its annual Cooperative Program (CP) allocation to carry out its ministry to financially needy annuitants. The 0.76 percent of the SBC budget was given back to the Executive Committee to redistribute. While the percentage is small, it amounted to more than \$1.5 million in the 2007–08 budget.

Messengers voted to give the lion's share to the six SBC-related seminaries. Three seminaries — Southeastern, Midwestern and Golden Gate — got one-time gifts of \$347,710 and then 0.51 percent of the total budget was added to the annual allocation designated for all six seminaries.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission received an extra \$320,962 that year and an extra 0.16 percent each year thereafter. The SBC Executive Committee kept \$160,480, or 0.08 percent, of the budget earmarked for stewardship education.

Why not allocate those funds to the IMB instead, a reader asked. The primary reason is the history of the IMB getting 50 percent of the SBC's portion of CP dollars. Some would add that the needs of other entities is a reason. But the reader asked if international missions is to be the top priority, then why the IMB cannot receive more than 50 percent of the budget. Revisiting the 2007 decision would be a first step.

Refocusing missions money

2. Along that same line is the suggestion that money formerly designated to the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) be channeled to the IMB.

When Southern Baptists withdrew from the BWA in 2004, the \$425,000 previously used for that organization was given to the Executive Committee for Kingdom Relationships. That is an effort to build relationships with other Baptist bodies around the world. Now the annual budget incorporates that assignment under SBC operating costs, which totals 3.4 percent — \$6,949,110 — of the current budget.

A reader asked why these funds should not be given to the IMB because it is the arm of Southern Baptists that relates to Baptist bodies around the world through the international missions programs. Changes in those two decisions would add about \$2 million to the IMB annually.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

3. Another reader recommended adopting a rule established by retired pastor Bobby Welch for SBC service as a requirement for all elected or appointed to responsibility in the SBC.

During his years as president of the SBC, Welch instructed his Committee on Nominations not to approve anyone who came from a church giving less than 3 percent of its undesignated income to missions causes through the CP.

The result was rhubarb in the Committee on Nominations. Several prominent personalities were being turned down, and it took Welch personally telling protesters that the committee was following his instructions before the situation calmed.

The reader pointed out that the primary financial problem Southern Baptists face is the declining percentage churches give through the CP. Establishing a minimum amount in order to be eligible for service would be an encouragement for all who are concerned about the SBC and its ministries at home and around the world.

4. A reader who pays close attention to the inner workings of the SBC suggested revisiting the formula used to fund seminary education.

This reader called attention to a 2008 report coming from the SBC Executive Committee questioning the direction of the convention's six seminaries. The report, printed on pages 144–152 of the 2008 SBC annual, questions the role of the seminaries in providing college-level education.

Most Baptists believe their CP dollars help provide college education in a Christian environment on the state level and ministerial education through Baptist seminaries on the SBC level. That longstanding distinction was abandoned some time ago.

But not by Alabama Baptists. Even though Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham was the first of its kind on a Baptist college campus, hours earned at Beeson have never been included in the CP formula designed for CP support. Samford gets no CP dollars for the credit hours taught at Beeson.

On the SBC side, each of the seminaries now provides college-level education. In fact, the report cited above says, "Of the total credit hours funded by the (SBC) formula for the last five years, 25 per-

cent ... of those hours were undergraduate hours (college level or below)." The report goes on to say these hours "may or may not have formed a platform for ministerial graduate degrees."

The report further declares, "The significance of this fact is that the convention is funding the equivalent of a seventh seminary exclusively for prebaccalaureate and baccalaureate programs."

When every seminary is reporting problems created by lack of funds, why shouldn't the funds that most people believe are going for ministerial education be used for the basic purpose of the seminaries? That is training ministers in the master level programs. The reader said he did not believe Alabama Baptists wanted the SBC to use CP funds to directly compete with the state convention's three historic institutions — Judson College in Marion, the University of Mobile and Samford.

5. Some suggestions have been more radical. One reader suggested eliminating all CP support for SBC seminaries. He pointed out that Alabama has a first class seminary in Beeson. Alabama Baptists do not need the seminaries, he wrote.

Thoughts on the future

6. Another suggested doing away with the SBC Executive Committee. The reader observed that state conventions could appropriate to SBC causes and such appropriations would reflect the desire of the messengers from that state.

He compared the present system to a government program in which all the taxes are collected but only a portion is returned for service. The rest is kept to run the bureaucracy.

There were other suggestions but these few give a flavor of the feedback Baptists are offering about ways to effectively work together. Some of the recommendations have merit, at least in the judgment of this writer. Some do not.

But they do illustrate the kind of ideas that begin to surface when people think about ways to reorganize. One never knows where the process will end up or what will be its final outcome.

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

"If ye continue in my word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31–32).

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Someone You Should Know

By Krista L. Kinsland, Correspondent, TAB

Margaret Bailey

Marble City Baptist, Sylacauga
Coosa River Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE:

1 Corinthians 15:10

FAVORITE HYMN: "Without Him"

HOBBIES: Spending time with grandchildren

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 34 years of marriage to Leonard, two children and four grandchildren



BAILEY

Margaret Bailey is a group leader for the ladies benevolence committee at Marble City Baptist Church, Sylacauga. The committee serves food to church or community members who have

experienced a death in their family or some other form of grief. Bailey is also a member of the ladies prayer group and card committee. She taught Sunday School for 15 years and is described by fellow church members as an encourager and a great prayer warrior. "When I pray, I get down to business," she said.

Q: When did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was 13 years old. When I went to the altar, I remember feeling my aunt place her hand on my shoulder and I heard her praying for me, and that had a great impact on my life.

Q: What led you to be so involved in church?

A: The love of the Lord. I've always wanted to be able to encourage others, especially those people who are dealing with some of the same experiences that I have been through.

Q: How have family or church members supported you?

A: They have prayed for me. And they were here for me when my husband died.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in church in the future?

A: I'll keep praying for as long as I have breath. And I want to know God more and more, so I continue to study the Word. I want to continue as long as I can see and hear.

Q: How do you plan to continue ministering in the future?

A: I'll just continue to encourage people and look for ways to help people.

'Intentional' evangelism

Child baptisms rise significantly via missions education

Southern Baptist churches that have Royal Ambassadors (RAs) and Girls in Action (GAs) have a significantly higher child baptism rate than churches that do not, according to an analysis by the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

The annual baptism rate for children ages 6-11 for churches with RA ministries was 26 percent higher than churches without RAs.

That works out to 10.2 baptisms per 100 children in that age group in churches with RAs compared to 8.1 baptisms per 100 children in non-RA churches. NAMB sponsors RAs.

Churches with GAs, a missions education ministry of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), had a similar 25 percent increase in baptisms for the same age group compared to churches without GAs.

The analysis was drawn from Southern Baptists' Annual Church Profile, a survey of churches each fall that entails a broad array of measurements — including participation in various ministries.

Mitzi Eaker, children's ministry consultant for WMU, said the correlation is not surprising since girls in GAs learn the plan of salvation as a part of their regular study.

"In addition to memorizing and learning Scripture passages, the girls also learn that God loves all the people of the world and He wants them to tell others of His love," Eaker said.

"It is not surprising that girls would make a profession of faith and begin sharing that faith with others just as they learn about the missionaries who do the same."

Jim Burton, mission education team leader for NAMB, said the analysis "reminds us that ministries like Royal Ambassadors are tied to the core objectives of the denomination."

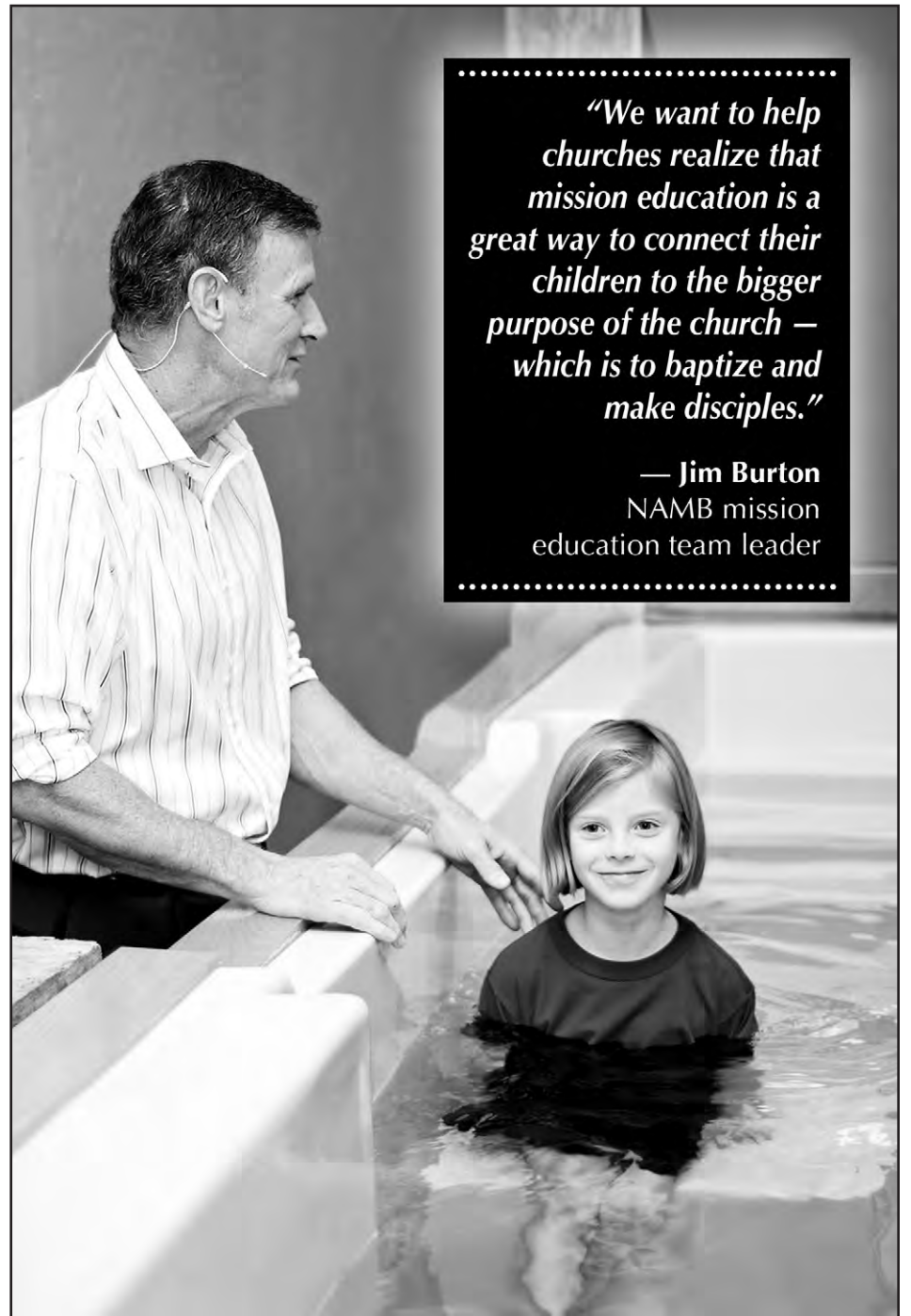
"So it's rather natural for them to feed into key measurements like baptisms. We have tried to be intentional to raise the evangelism awareness within Royal Ambassadors, realizing that the ministry creates a key mentoring relationship in which counselors can share Christ with the boys," he said.

Burton noted that out of 10,180 boys attending RA summer camps last year, 1,080 made professions of faith in Christ.

"State Baptist conventions do an outstanding job of nurturing the boys toward making a profession of faith during their RA camps," Burton said.

"Likewise many boys begin to understand God's missional call in their life and register that decision at RA camp.

"We want to help churches realize that



"We want to help churches realize that mission education is a great way to connect their children to the bigger purpose of the church — which is to baptize and make disciples."

— Jim Burton
NAMB mission education team leader

istockphoto.com

mission education is a great way to connect their children to the bigger purpose of the church — which is to baptize and make disciples," Burton said.

Richie Stanley, team leader of NAMB's Center for Missional Research, said the most significant impact of RAs and GAs on the

higher baptism rate was in churches with less than 100 members.

"Just by knowing that most younger churches are also small, you could make a case that small churches, young churches, might impact their children's evangelism if they added RAs and GAs," he said. (BP)

Two-thirds of Protestant pastors consider Islam 'dangerous'

Two out of three Protestant pastors believe Islam is a "dangerous" religion, according to a new survey from a Southern Baptist-affiliated research group.

The survey of more than 1,000 Protestant clergy by LifeWay Research, released Dec. 14, found that 45 percent strongly agrees with the statement "I believe Islam is a dangerous religion" and another 21 percent agrees somewhat with it.

Evangelical pastors were more likely to agree with the statement than mainline Protestant pastors — 77 percent to 47 percent.

Likewise pastors with a bachelor's degree or less education were more likely to strong-

ly agree than those with a master's degree — 64 percent to 37 percent.

"It's important to note our survey asked whether pastors viewed Islam as 'dangerous,' but that does not necessarily mean 'violent,'" said LifeWay Research President Ed Stetzer in a statement about the survey results.

"'Dangerous' can be defined in a variety of ways, including from the perspective of spiritual influence. Regardless of the definition, the numbers tell us that Protestant pastors are concerned."

The results of the telephone survey were based on a random sample of 1,002 senior

pastors taken in October 2008 and had an overall margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

On Dec. 10, Evangelist Franklin Graham told CNN that while he loves the Muslim people in countries he's visited with his Samaritan's Purse ministry, "I don't agree with the teachings of Islam, and I find it to be a very violent religion."

Graham's comments prompted the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) to request setting up a meeting with the evangelist.

As of Dec. 18, he had not responded, said CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper. (RNS)



(continued from page 1)

Faith groups had their own gay rights debate throughout the year.

One of the major headlines came from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It voted to ordain gay and lesbian clergy who are in a monogamous committed relationship, prompting some conservative churches to take steps toward forming a new denomination.

In the Episcopal Church, the group's governing body that meets every three years voted to end a

moratorium on installing gay bishops, disregarding a request from the archbishop of Canterbury, who is the leader of the Church of England and the symbolic head of the worldwide Anglican Communion of which the Episcopal Church is a part.

Muslim relations

Muslim-relation issues showed up numerous times in 2009, but President Obama's attempt to reach out to Muslims garnered the most attention. The June speech in

Cairo, Egypt, in which the president quoted from the Quran and said America will "never" be at war with Islam, was ranked as the No. 1 religion story by members of the Religion Newswriters Association (RNA).

RNA also named Southern Baptist pastor and well-known author Rick Warren as the 2009 Religion Newsmaker of the Year.

As abortion coverage in the health-care reform bill and gay rights issues continually found their way to the negotiation tables in U.S. political venues in 2009, one group of diverse Christian leaders said enough is enough.

The group vowed unspecified civil disobedience against abortion, same-sex "marriage" and limits on religious liberty.

In a 4,700-word statement named the "Manhattan Declaration," about 150 evangelical, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox signers said they are coming together to "embrace our obligation" to speak and act in support of the dignity of all human beings, marriage as the union of a man and a woman, and the freedom

to express religious convictions.

"[W]e will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act," the statement says, "nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family. We will fully and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But under no circumstances will we render to Caesar what is God's."

'Important for Christians'

The drafters and other signers of the "Manhattan Declaration" unveiled the statement at a Washington news conference Nov. 20. The document gets its name from the location of the first drafting committee meeting. One of the document's three drafters is Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.

"Our hope would be that we would have up to a million signatories who will want to stand with us," George said. "This is an important time for all Christians to come together, stand together and make clear what our convictions are."

At press time, the declaration had garnered more than 300,000 signatures.

The timing of the document's release — 10 months into the Obama administration — was affected by the policy proposals of the new president and a Democrat-controlled Congress,

but the principles in the statement are timeless, the drafters said.

No matter where people fell on the issues making headlines throughout the year, none could escape the continued hit left by the depressed economy. The financial market had moments of rebound and relief, but October still saw the highest unemployment numbers since 1983.

Economic woes

Individuals suffered; businesses suffered; churches and ministries suffered.

Cutbacks were inevitable at houses of worship, colleges and seminaries, relief agencies and publishing houses, and several state Baptist conventions dealt with serious financial and/or staff cuts.

The Alabama Baptist State Convention managed to maintain a flat budget going into 2010 from 2009 and did not have to trim staff. While the state convention and all related entities tightened up their purse strings and trimmed all non-vital expenses, none experienced devastating effects. Alabama Baptists also came out on top in Co-operative Program (CP) giving for the entire SBC for the last fiscal year.

CP receipts for the SBC fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2008–Sept. 30, 2009) declined 2.23 percent, and combined CP and designated giving for the year declined 3.65 percent. The first two months of the Oct. 1, 2009–Sept. 30, 2010, fiscal year reflected CP giving down about 2.5 percent.

The 2008 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) also came in at \$28.7 million under budget and caused the IMB to freeze missionary appointments for a time. But the IMB was able to open up some positions once new monies came in from special out-of-season LMCO offerings taken up by churches, associations, state conventions, seminaries and others.

In Alabama, CP giving was un-



BP photo

WATER DAMAGE — Baptists responded to numerous needs in Asia in 2009 following tsunamis, typhoons, tropical storms, earthquakes and flooding. **Above,** Tropical Storm Ketsana became the 'worst flood in 40 years' in the Philippines. Alabama Baptists focused on flooding that shut down parts of Atlanta in September.



Reuters photo

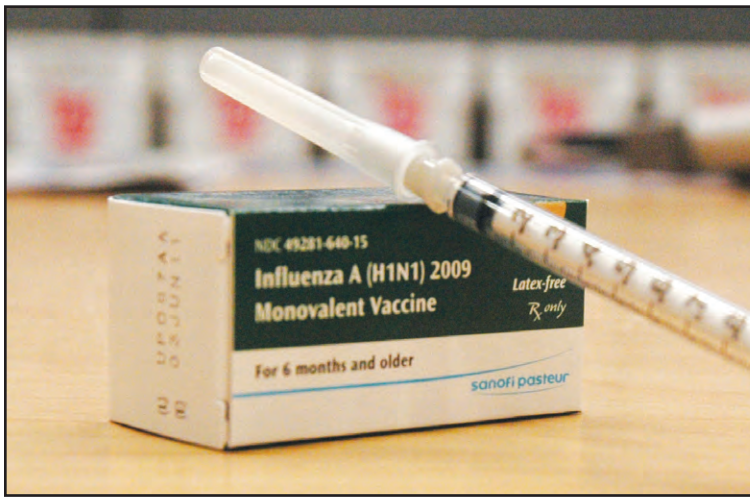


Photo by Lauren A. Chow

der the 2009 base budget goal of \$46 million by \$6,449,700 at the end of November (latest numbers available at press time).

Electronic 'bingo'

One industry that attempted to capitalize on Alabama's economic woes was the gambling industry. Using a veiled form of slot machine gambling as the answer to the state's problems, Alabamians spent the entire year debating the definition of bingo and whether slot machine gambling could be passed off as electronic bingo gambling.

Despite a major "Sweet Home Alabama" legislative push with prominent country music stars during the regular session of the state Legislature and scores of city council attempts at legalizing the slot machines, Alabamians managed to hold off the industry in 2009. Several circuit court judges also ruled against the machines in various cases late in the year.

In other news in 2009:

▶ A new form of the flu — H1N1, or swine flu — became a common concern around the world. More than 11,000 deaths were reported worldwide at press

time from this new flu pandemic that made its way to the United States early in the year and Alabama in April. The swine flu shut down a few schools and other highly populated areas for days at a time throughout the year. Alabama churches followed the same state Department of Public Health recommendations as other public gathering spots.

While H1N1 vaccinations were not available until late in the year when the worst seemed to be over, many people developed a new level of caution as a preventative measure. And anti-bacterial hand sanitizer became a staple in homes, offices, churches, businesses and coat pockets and purses.

▶ Richard Land of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission weighed in on the debate over whether "waterboarding" is torture. It is and there's no room for torture as part of the U.S. intelligence gathering process, he said. His position put him among a minority of Americans, according to a Pew Research Center poll that found that only 25 percent of those surveyed said torture "can never be justified" against suspected terrorists.



Photo courtesy of The Dothan Eagle

'CASINOS' CONTINUE TO OPEN IN STATE — Houston County's Country Crossing is the latest 'casino' to open in Alabama with more than 1,700 slot-type machines labeled electronic bingo. The legality of this type of gambling continues to be debated in the state and consistently captured the attention of lawmakers at all levels statewide in 2009.

In worldwide Baptist news:

▶ Baptists worldwide celebrated their 400th anniversary.

▶ A new baptism center opened along the Jordan River in the region where most Christian scholars believe Jesus was baptized about 2,000 years ago.

While Christians are a minority in Jordan, the dedication of the baptism center was significant and demonstrates that "all Jordanians are equal," said His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Bin Mohammed of Jordan.

▶ Nilson do Amaral Fanini, president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1995 until 2000, died. He was 77. Fanini, of Brazil, was a 14-time president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention.

In Alabama Baptist news:

▶ First Baptist Church, Huntsville, celebrated its 200th anniversary with events all year leading up to the big Homecoming Sunday June 14. The Madison Baptist Association church (originally known as Enon Baptist Church) held its first meeting June 3, 1809, in a sparsely settled area about six miles from the current location near downtown Huntsville.

▶ Samford University launched a five-year, \$200 million fundraising effort. The largest portion — about \$65 million — will go to scholarships, with the rest being divvied out among faculty enhancements, academic programs, campus facilities and annual fund support for ongoing operational costs.

▶ Tommy Puckett retired as longtime director of the State Board of Missions' office of men's ministry and disaster relief.

▶ Alabama Baptists lost several giants of the faith during 2009, including well-known leaders Thomas E. Corts, retired president of Samford University in Birmingham; John Long, director of missions for Madison Baptist Association; and Jerome King, retired director of missions for East Liberty Baptist Association.

Alabama Baptists also lost Megan Brittain, daughter of Baptist Campus Minister Gary Brittain. Many people followed Megan's story as she battled cancer until she died at age 12.

(BP, RNS contributed)

Persecution of Christians continues around the world



Reuters photo

More than a year of an unprecedented reign of terror against Christians continued in the Indian state of Orissa in 2009. Brutal murders, arson attacks on churches and various forms of death threats loomed heavily in the Christian communities. But Orissa is not alone. Christians worldwide face persecution every day. Below are a few headlines that ran in *The Alabama Baptist* in 2009:

China sentences pastors to prison

Laotian authorities jail, threaten to kill Christians

Indian pastor lured into trap, severely beaten

Islamic extremists execute young convert in Somalia

Police starve, torture Pakistani believers after arrest

Christians arrested, one executed in North Korea

Police in Bangladesh torture pastor, two others

Indonesian Christian village burned; residents die

Across Alabama's Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► Ladies who were teenagers during the late '60s and early '70s at the former **Ruhama Church, Birmingham**, will hold a reunion Jan. 16, 9 a.m.–noon, at the church, which is currently occupied by Greater Emmanuel Temple Holiness Church. There will be Krispy Kreme donuts. Bring old photographs, scrapbooks, mementos, etc. from teenage years at Ruhama. For information call Susanne Shepherd at 205-822-4728.

ESCAMBIA

► **Sardis Church, Atmore**, will celebrate church member **Reaby Fore's** 100th birthday with a reception Jan. 23, 2–4 p.m. Earle Greene is interim pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Oneonta**, will host The Talley Trio in concert Jan. 10, 6 p.m. Larry Gipson is pastor of First, Oneonta.

GENEVA

► The women's ministry of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**,

will hold a conference Jan. 16, 9 a.m.–3 p.m., with Jo Hancock of His Vessel Ministries in the family enrichment center. Jason Gunter, the church's minister of music and children, will be the praise and worship leader. The theme will be God of Order, Order My Home. Registration will be at 8 a.m. There will be a continental breakfast from 8 to 9 a.m. A light lunch will be served. For information call 334-684-9617. Mike Shihra is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► The college ministry of **Capshaw Church** donated Christmas gifts of toys and clothing to two area children and a gift certificate to the parents. Zach Terry is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will hold a gospel concert with Gold City Quartet and Compassion Jan. 31, 5 p.m. Doors will open at 3:30 p.m. A donation is requested for those over the age of 10. For information call 256-420-

8172 or e-mail mhbc@ardmore.net. Mike Clark is pastor of Mable Hill Church.

MOBILE

► **Scott A. Griffith** is the new pastor of **Cypress Shores Church, Mobile**. He comes from First Church, Wagener, S.C., where he served as pastor. He also served Mitts Chapel Church, Deatsville. Griffith holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University and a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Betina, have one child. ► **Anchor of Hope Community Church, Mobile**, moved to a new location Jan. 1 and held its first service Jan. 3. The new physical address is 2901 Schillinger Road N. Suite D, Semmes, AL 36575. Doug Shelton is pastor.

WALKER

► **Grace Church, Sumiton**, will hold a singing Jan. 16, 6 p.m., with In HIS Name. For information visit www.inhisname-ministries.com. Doug Tate is pastor. ☞

Southerners lead U.S. in religious devotion

There's a reason the South is known as the Bible Belt: A survey shows that Southerners — and Mississippians in particular — are most active in their religious practices and beliefs.

Residents of Mississippi ranked first among Americans in all four measures of a survey by The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, with 82 percent of residents saying religion is very important in their lives.

Five other states had at least seven in 10 people stating that religion holds that kind of importance for them: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee and South Carolina.

Six in 10 of Mississippi residents said they attend religious services at least once a week, followed by several states that had at least 50 percent with that commitment: Utah, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

While 77 percent of Mississippians said they pray at least once

a day, they're followed closely behind by residents of other Southern states with more than 70 percent claiming to be as prayerful: Louisiana, Alabama, South Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee.

More than nine in 10 Mississippians say they believe in God with "absolute certainty" (91 percent), but several Southern states have more than 80 percent who hold a similar belief: South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, Georgia and North Carolina.

The findings, published online by the Pew Forum on Dec. 21 and drawn from data from its 2007 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, mirror results released by the Gallup Poll in January 2009, which also found Mississippi to be the most religious state.

Like Gallup, Pew Forum researchers found New Hampshire and Vermont to be the states where the lowest percentage of respondents viewed religion as a very important component of their lives. (RNS)

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Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.

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Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Puppets energize ministry at Northridge Church

At Northridge Baptist Church, Northport, puppets have caused quite a stir. Church member Rick Sevenish began the ministry about two years ago, and it's grown to be a staple of the children's program at the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association church. One Sunday a month, all the children's groups are combined for a puppet service. Sevenish creates the skits and a team of about 10 volunteers puts on the show. Interaction between the children and puppets is encouraged.

"We didn't expect it to grow like it did but through the Lord, it's really grown," said Tina Candee, children's director at Northridge Baptist, noting that the ministry involves more than double the original amount of volunteers. "This is an absolute blessing from the Lord."

The church, which averages 150 to 175 on a typical Sunday, got a new pastor in August — Brad Smith — and Candee said that is just adding to the already present energy.

"I think our church as a whole has had some revival, some new excitement," she said. "We're busy and we're growing."

FBC Jasper RAs, GAs gather Coffee for Christ

After hearing about the coffee needs and wants of many U.S. soldiers stationed overseas, the Royal Ambassadors (RAs) and Girls in Action of First Baptist Church, Jasper, decided to help.

And the Coffee for Christ drive was birthed as an opportunity to supply coffee to a military chaplain in Afghanistan.

"Men come to his chapel to get fresh coffee every time they come off duty, and it gives him an opportunity to witness to them," said Tim Ferguson, RA director at First, Jasper.

With the children collecting nearly 75 bags of fresh ground beans to ship out, Ferguson said it was a great opportunity for them to be a part of outreach. "They understand this is helping soldiers, giving them something they like and need." ☞

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Senior Living Resource Guide

an advertising supplement • January 7, 2010

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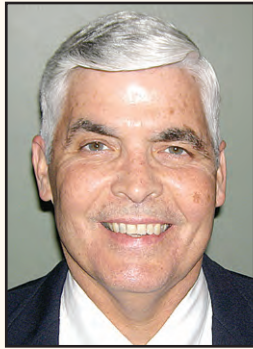
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— Jimmy Dixon —

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The staff at Amedisys Hospice of Birmingham would be happy to answer questions that you may have about hospice. If you are interested in learning more about hospice, or becoming a hospice volunteer, please call 205-868-9221.



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HEART OF MISSIONS ...

Led by Director of Missions Ken Mostella, a team representing **Sulphur Springs Baptist Association** went on a scouting missions trip to Brazil Oct. 7–15.

Working with Richie Allen, founder of LINC-UP (Linking International Needs with the Church's Untapped Power) Missions, which mobilizes American churches to develop partnerships with church plants in Brazil, the four team members — Mostella; Chris Wilson, pastor of New Temple Baptist Church, Dora; Chad Montoya, pastor of Mount High Baptist Church, Warrior; and Andy Frazier, a church planter — visited church plants across the state of Maranhao to find a church with which the association could partner.

At the end of the trip, Sulphur Springs Association committed to a three- to five-year partnership with one of the church plants, which will involve the association making two to three trips a year to visit the church.

Wilson said the goal of this partnership is training church leaders in discipleship.

"Our goal is to have Brazilians reach Brazilians," he said. "Our eyes were opened to the real need for us in the (United) States to help churches to finish the Great Commission. They can do the work of evangelism; what they need is to be equipped."

Jim and Carol Browder, members of **Mount Hebron Baptist Church, Elmore**, in Elmore Baptist Association, traveled to Guatemala Oct. 21–28 on a missions trip.

Working with Southern Baptist representatives Jim and Carol McGriff, the Browsers prayer walked about 15 K'ekchi' communities.

The majority of these communities have never heard the gospel,

while a few have a small number of believers.

"We have done this multiple times but each trip is different. This was our first visit to the Petén region," Carol Browder said. "[The K'ekchi'] are very gracious people."

Richie Farrow, pastor of **High Pine Baptist Church, Roanoke**, and two others from the Randolph Baptist Association church joined a team of 32 people in a missions trip to Uganda Nov. 19–28 through Four Corners Ministries based in Wadley.

The team provided medical, optometry and veterinary services as well as worked with five churches, leading a men's and women's ministry, Vacation Bible School and a food ministry.

Some members of the team, including Farrow, served on an evangelism team doing door-to-door witnessing. They gave out approximately 250 Bibles, 200 of which were provided by High Pine Baptist.

Thirty people made salvation decisions during the trip, but one particular conversion stood out to Farrow.

"One of our bus drivers — a Muslim — got saved the second or third day we were there," he said. "That was the highlight of the trip for me."

First Baptist Church, Ashville, and **First Baptist Church, Moody**, both in St. Clair Baptist Association, and **Thomasville Baptist Church** in Clarke Baptist Association partnered together to send a missions team to Guatemala Oct. 10–16 to work in the village of Conevisa and the nearby town of Zacapa.

Led by Thomasville Baptist member Allen Stoudenmire and his wife, Laurelle, who served in Zacapa as Southern Baptist repre-

sentatives from 2006 to 2008, the team of 25 held Vacation Bible School at the village school for children and a Bible study for adults in the mornings.

Also during the mornings, the pastors of the three Alabama churches conducted a leadership conference at Shalom Baptist Mission in Zacapa.

In the afternoons, the team did door-to-door evangelism in Conevisa. In the evenings, it held a worship service at the school.

Forty people made salvation decisions during the week as a result of these efforts.

"It's been just a tremendous opportunity there to share the gospel and, we think, an opportunity for groundwork for a church (in Conevisa)," Allen Stoudenmire said. "We're really excited about what God is doing there."

Led by Education and Missions Minister Doris Elliott, a team of 12 from **First Baptist Church, Fort Payne**, recently traveled to Guatemala.

The team from the DeKalb Baptist Association church worked inside Casa Para Niños Aleluya, a Christian orphanage 30 miles from Guatemala City, doing Vacation Bible School, painting and sewing.

The group also hosted a block party one afternoon and an ice cream social one evening for the almost 400 orphans.

The team also delivered donated items and money to the orphanage.

"It was an awesome experience," Elliott said. "We could see God's hand on everything."

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Christians in Pakistan freed after 14 months in jail

FAISALABAD, Pakistan — A Christian in Faisalabad district and his 20-year-old daughter were released Dec. 14 after 14 grueling months in jail on false charges of blaspheming the Quran.

Khalil Tahir, attorney for Gulsher Masih and his daughter Ashyana Gulsher, said the case was typical of the way Pakistan's blasphemy laws can be used to harass innocent Christians. "Christians are the soft targets, and most of the people implicated in these inhumane laws are Christians," he said. "We Christians are fighting for the same noble goal — to provide justice to the victims of blasphemy laws."

Masih said inmates beat him at least five times since he was arrested Oct. 23, 2008. His daughter was arrested two weeks earlier, on Oct. 10.

"These long 14 months seemed like ages," Masih said. "There was one inmate, Ghulam Fareed, a rich man, who always harassed me, trying to coerce me to convert to Islam by saying he would make me rich and would send me abroad."

Fareed, who also promised high-quality education for Masih's children, joined with Islamic extremists jailed for terrorist acts to beat him in an effort to force him to "come into the fold of Islam," Masih said. While in jail, he said his wife told him that their daughter had been beaten several times by the superintendent of police.

"During cross examination, I proved that the whole case was concocted, frivolous and fake and that charges against the accused Christian brother were unfounded," Tahir said.

Human rights court rules in Turkish church's favor

STRASBOURG, France — In a decision many hope will lead to greater religious freedom in Turkey, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) found that a Turkish court ruling barring a church from starting a foundation violated the congregation's right to freedom of association.

Orhan Kemal Cengiz, a Turkish attorney and legal adviser for the litigants, said the decision earlier this year was the first time the ECHR has held that religious organizations have a right to exist in Turkey.

Cengiz added that this case is just the first of many needed to correct conflicts within the Turkish legal system in regard to freedom of association, known in Turkey as the concept of "legal personality."

"This case is a significant victory, but it is the first case in a long line of cases to come," Cengiz said.

In its decision, the court unanimously found that the Turkish courts' "refusal to register the foundation, although permitted under Turkish law, had not been necessary in a democratic society and that there had been a violation of Article 11."

Saturday, February 27, 2010

Concordia Choir

in Concert at Shades Crest Baptist Church

The world-renowned Concordia Choir, under the direction of Dr. René Clausen, will be in concert on Saturday, February 27, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. The concert is proudly sponsored by Shades Crest Baptist Church, located in the Bluff Park area of Hoover.


TICKETS GO ON SALE JANUARY 3, 2010
Tickets: \$15 Per Person or \$10 for Students/Groups

Visit www.shadescrest.org for directions

Shades Crest Baptist Church, 452 Park Avenue, Hoover, Alabama 35226
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Want to know God?

By Pastor Scott Stokes
First Baptist Church, Guin

Each new year begins with many resolutions or at least confessions of the areas of our lives that need attention.

We view this time as a new start and always with good intentions of making life better. Our hope is that in the new year, we will be able to get our lives organized and on track.

Yet we seem to find that after a few weeks or months, we have fallen very short of our intentions.

Then we begin looking for answers and turn to all kinds of solutions, but they still come up empty, and we become very discouraged, as the meaning of life just seems to elude us.

Then comes the question "Is there anything that will make me happy or enable me to make life better?"

The answer seems to be that we can't do it on our own, so we need someone to help us.

May I offer the solution that will help you to get on track and stay there? You must look to God's Word, for there you will find the answer to life and the directions to lead you to what you are looking for.

In the gospel, we find the love, grace and salvation of God given to us as the alternative that we can trust. When we see ourselves and the greatness of life, we begin to see that God has provided us with all we need for a new beginning, hope and meaning, all by His unmerited favor.

Titus 2:11-14 tells us, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good."

Let the new year bring about a new start, all by faith in the Holy Word of God that gives us the prescription for life through His Son, Jesus.

He gave Him to us so we may live fresh and new in this life and in the glorious kingdom of God.

'Opportune time'

LifeWay leaders introduce Transformational Church initiative

During the 2009 Southern Baptist Convention State Conventions' Summit, held Dec. 8-11 in Nashville, LifeWay Christian Resources outlined its Transformational Church (TC) initiative, a multiyear project set to launch in mid-2010 with the release of "Transformational Church," a B&H Publishing Group book co-written by Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, and Thom Rainer, LifeWay's president and CEO.

Citing a season of "evangelical malaise" — when people are asking, "What do we need to think about differently?" — now is an "opportune time" to talk about church transformation, Stetzer told the participants.

"Transformational churches make disciples whose lives are being transformed by the gospel so that the culture around them is ultimately transformed," Stetzer explained. "Transformational churches are deeply committed to the essential foundations of discipleship: worship, community and mission. They practice and make disciples through vibrant leadership, prayerful dependence and relational intentionality,

and they do so in their context with a missionary mind-set."

Spiritual transformation is the work of God in salvation, drawing unbelievers to Himself, regenerating them, indwelling them and conforming them to the likeness of Christ, Stetzer said. Spiritual transformation is experienced in the lives of God's people and His church. They impact their communities and the world as living testimonies of the transforming power of Christ.

The initiative is designed around research, which will be revealed in Stetzer and Rainer's book, and will guide LifeWay as it produces resources to help churches spread the gospel and promote spiritual growth, Stetzer said.

Making an impact

"The goal is not to give a church a book, tool or research that will help them make the headlines," Stetzer stressed. "Our goal is to help churches — any size, any location — make a biblical impact."

For months, LifeWay Research has been surveying thousands of churches from multiple denomina-

tions that are leading examples of spiritual transformation, Stetzer said. Those interviews are providing a framework for the resources LifeWay is developing to guide local churches through the TC process.

"We're asking people who are doing what we want to do, how they do it," Stetzer said.

Consultant training for TC will begin in fall 2010, with other events and resources to follow, including pastor/staff retreats and TC training conferences, Stetzer explained.

Ultimately church leaders will be invited to involve their congregations in the TC initiative by completing an internal survey and tailoring TC resources to their people, churches and communities.

During a later session of the summit, Rainer told attendees there are two motivating forces behind the TC initiative.

First "we want to know reality. Facts are our friends and they help us understand the current situation of the church in real terms — good, bad and ugly," Rainer said. Second "we see hope and possibilities in what God is doing in local churches.

This is what our research has shown us, and we want to share this encouraging data with churches at all levels of effectiveness."

Drawing from the Book of Zechariah and the seemingly hopeless situation facing the Jews after their return from exile in Babylon, Rainer said there are three reasons the American church has, in many respects, lost hope: lack of focus, opposition from without and dissension from within.

'Missed opportunity'

The new data from LifeWay Research, however, reveals many churches are passionate about the gospel and, as a result, are thriving, Rainer said. "The most important message is that churches are being transformed, and they are actively engaged in the transformation of people and communities. Too often, we've highlighted the negative realities of the declining American church, but we've missed the opportunity to magnify the God of hope and transformation."

For more information, visit TransformationalChurch.com. (BP)



VictoryLand: Milton McGregor opened a new 300-room luxury hotel at his VictoryLand complex in Shorter on Dec. 9, according to The Associated Press (AP). McGregor plans to open a 1,500-seat entertainment center and convention complex in 2010. The two-part update to the dog track is valued at \$100 million, according to AP.

VictoryLand's electronic bingo gambling "casino" has more than 6,000 slot-type machines and is the largest of its kind in the state. Casino City's North American Gaming Almanac claims VictoryLand has more slot-type machines than casinos in Nevada, New Jersey and Mississippi, according to AP.

Decatur: In case there is any confusion over the type of bingo welcome in Decatur, City Council members unanimously passed a resolution Dec. 21 to prohibit electronic bingo gambling.

Although Councilman Roger Anders said the city's original bingo ordinance, passed in 1996, allows "card" bingo games only,

the five-member council is asking the Morgan County legislative delegation to pass a bill defining bingo as traditional paper games to eliminate any potential misunderstanding over the matter.

"The issue is that in places with similar ordinances that were not specific [on what bingo is], some (companies) have gone to court, saying some of the machines have cards in them," said Anders, the resolution's sponsor.

"We didn't want to get into a court battle over what we thought it (bingo) is versus what someone else assumed bingo was. ... The bingo ... we have in Decatur is what we want."

Midfield: The Midfield City Council voted 5-0 Dec. 28 to allow electronic bingo gambling in the city, according to *The Birmingham News*. The new ordinance calls for a minimum of 500 machines in an establishment.

Electronic bingo gambling operators will pay \$100 per month per machine the first year, then \$200 per month per machine the second year, according to *The News*. Also licenses for bingo operators will

cost up to \$15,000 a year, and machine manufacturers will pay \$500 per machine per month and \$25,000 each year for a license.

It is unclear how the City Council's decision will play out in light of a pending circuit court ruling about the legality of electronic bingo gambling in the Bessemer Cut-off, a separate political subdivision of Jefferson County. Midfield is part of the Bessemer Cut-off.

The ruling by Jefferson County Circuit Judge Eugene Verin is expected in January.

Legislature: The Alabama Legislature opens Jan. 12 and electronic bingo gambling bills are expected to be among the main pieces of legislation claiming legislators' attention.

To stay informed about what is happening in the state Legislature, read *The Alabama Baptist* each week and visit www.thealabamabaptist.org and www.alcap.com often. To contact your senator, call 334-242-7800. To contact your representative, call 334-242-7600.

Mount Pleasant's Pastor John Powers dies unexpectedly

John C. Powers, pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Pell City, in St. Clair Baptist Association, died Dec 29. He was 62.

Prior to assuming the pastoral role at Mount Pleasant Baptist in December, Powers served as pastor of Cook Springs Baptist Church and Happy Home Baptist Church, Leeds, both in St. Clair Association.

"John was a pastor full of life and he enjoyed preaching and enjoyed Bible study and helping people understand what the Bible has to say," said Ben Chandler, director of missions for St. Clair Association. "He was very active in the association. We are going to miss him greatly."

A native of Sterrett, Powers served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. In associational life, Powers served as part of St. Clair Association's bivocational PEN group (Pastoral Encouragement Network).

"The main thing that struck me about Brother John was that he was really interested in visitations and especially sick people," said Larry Burnham, chairman of deacons at Mount Pleasant Baptist. "And he was more about getting people in church than anything else. ... He was so Bible-oriented and really got into the Scripture."

Powers is survived by his wife, Deloras; two sons; and four grandchildren. (TAB)

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

Paul David Freed's



MIGHTY MEN OF GOD CONFERENCES

Tuscaloosa area/January 15-16: Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, Gordo; Valor & Courage Regional Conference – *No pre-registration available*

Birmingham area/January 22-23: First Baptist Church, Trussville; Mighty Men of God Regional Conference – *Pre-registration deadline: Jan. 11*

Huntsville area/February 19-20: Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville; Mighty Men of God Regional Conference – *Pre-registration deadline: Feb. 8*

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For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Gayle Burlingame at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, gburlingame@alsbom.org.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



*...for the glory of the Lord
filled the temple*
1 Kings 8:10-11

Great Commission Prayer Conference

Friday and Saturday, March 5-6, 2010
First Baptist Church, Montgomery

SCHEDULE:

Friday: 6:30-9:15 p.m.
Saturday: 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Includes general sessions and breakout conferences

Cost: \$10 per person



For more information, please contact State Missionary Mike Jackson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 210, mjackson@alsbom.org.

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.



Children's Missions Explosion

Theme: "A Holy Expedition: To Damascus and Beyond"

Choose from two dates/six locations:

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 - Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery
- February 20, 2010
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For more information, please contact Cynthia White at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 338, cwhite@alsbom.org, or visit www.alabamawmu.org.



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SBC Representatives Around the World

Jess recently concluded a trip to an Asian country that is very closed to the gospel. The goal of the trip was to connect with partners who would be willing to use students and Nehemiah Teams (students involved in short-term summer missions projects among unreached and hard-to-reach people groups around the world).

Because this country is closed to traditional missions work, they have a variety of programs they are involved in through which they are able to meet physical needs while sharing the good news.

It's been awesome to see how God's Kingdom is growing while the enemy tries to stifle it.

Pray for partners to see how students can be used in helping them accomplish their strategies. Pray for

students to respond to these requests and give their summer to help reach these unreached peoples.

Thank you so much for your prayers and your partnership with us.

Jess, Wendy, David, Krysten and Betsy Jennings
Philippines

Many times, when Jim preaches, he starts with, "I have good news and bad news." Here's our good news and our bad news.

The bad news is that in December, our good Mozambican friend Dinis da Cruz went to be with the Lord.

We had the privilege to be with him and his wife when he died. He was a deacon and treasurer.

He and his wife have been mentors to many young people and young families who have been a part of Primeira Igreja Baptista Portuguesa during the 21 years that they were here in Johannesburg for Dinis' dialysis treatments. They were called "vovo," or grandpa and grandma, by everyone.

We and the church will miss him greatly.

The good news is that we have been able to witness through our English classes and give New Testaments to several Chinese young people who are called "the lost generation" in China because they grew up under communism and have no faith at all.

Other good news is that recently five Mozambicans and Angolans

were baptized at Primeira Igreja Baptista Portuguesa of Johannesburg.

More good news is that we will be home for a stateside assignment from April through July of 2010. We are really looking forward to time with family and friends.

The best news is that God loves us and sent His Son to die so that we might live.

We are very grateful for your gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering that make it possible for us to be here to share the good news.

We are very thankful for your partnership with us through the 26 years that we have been here in Southern Africa.

Please pray for:

- ▶ Safety for Jim and Brenda
- ▶ God's guidance in prioritizing work
- ▶ God's blessing on work with Portuguese-speaking people
- ▶ God's guidance in work with Chinese people

▶ Recovery for Jim's hand and Brenda's eye after surgeries on both

Jim and Brenda Brock
Southern Africa

We are all doing well, continuing to study Portuguese and participating in mostly Chichewa-language ministry while waiting for housing in a very remote part of Lomweland (an area with no development and no gospel presence that we can detect).

God has now provided a master Portuguese teacher in the city only an hour from our house. Mrs. Sha is a Mozambican who fled during the war years and actually taught at the high school level in Portugal for many years before returning to Africa. We hope to begin an advanced grammar course with her in January.

Pam and Bob Brownfield
Thyolo, Malawi



O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with Him is plentiful redemption.

Psalm 130:7

CORRECTION

The photo that accompanied the article "Love for Brother Jim": Cherry Hill Church pastor Johnson named Samford's minister of year" on page 3 of the Dec. 24 issue was taken by Beth Pounders.

MARKET PLACE

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CHURCH POSITIONS

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, Easley, S.C., a traditional Southern Baptist church, seeking a pastor with a seminary degree, 10+ years experience, evangelistic and a heart for people. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 101 Pisgah Road, Easley, SC 29642, or e-mail: mtpisgaheasley@yahoo.com.

PASTOR: Perdido Baptist Church is searching for pastor. Please send resumé to: Perdido Baptist Church, c/o Calvin Jarman, P.O. Box 254, Perdido, AL 36562.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Center Hill Baptist Church in Jemison, Ala., is accepting resúmes for pastor. At this time we are looking at a bivocational position. Please send your resúmes or if you have any questions to: Larry Cobb, 2240 Co. Rd. 25, Jemison AL 35085, or e-mail to: blarrycobb@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Trinity Baptist Church, Roanoke, Ala., is now accepting resúmes. Send to: P.O. Box 705, Roanoke, AL 36274, e-mail to: Pastor@TBCRoanoke.org or drop by the church office: 3501 Hwy.

431, Roanoke, AL. 334-863-8129.

BIVOCATIONAL STUDENT MINISTER: Oak Grove Baptist Church is searching for bivocational student minister to help build a program. Send resúmes to: ATTN: Pastor, 2800 Reads Mill Road, Glencoe, AL 35905.

ASSOCIATE STUDENT MINISTER: Mount Zion Baptist Church (www.mzbc.net), located in Huntsville, Ala., is seeking a full-time associate student minister to work with the existing student minister. Please send resúmes postmarked no later than Jan. 30 to: Mount Zion Baptist Church located at 228 Mt. Zion Road, c/o Dean Polk, Huntsville, AL 35806.

FULL-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Some college education preferred. Experience in children's ministry preferred. Ministry to over 150 children. E-mail resumé to: gjordan@crosspointefamily.org or mail resúmes to: Children Ministry Position, 719 Hughes Road, Madison, AL 35758.

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PIANIST: McElwain Baptist Church, Bir-

mingham, is accepting resúmes for a pianist to play for Sunday and Wednesday worship services in addition to adult choir rehearsal. The applicant should be able to play traditional and contemporary music. Mail resúmes to: Music Director, McElwain Baptist Church, 4445 Montevallo Road, Birmingham, AL 35213, or e-mail: hgoff@mcclwain.org.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 10

Explore the Bible By Cecil Taylor Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR FAITH Mark 8:11-21, 27-33

Pharisees Seek a Sign (11-13)

Pharisees were one of the most important religious/political parties of Judaism in Jesus' day. Josephus, a Jewish historian of the period, said there were more than 6,000 Pharisees at this time compared to about 1,500 Sadducees. In a show of official hostility, representatives of the Pharisees demanded that Jesus give them a sign (Greek "semeion") from heaven that He was the Messiah and had divine authority. They wanted something that would convince them that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. The word for "tempting, testing" has the sinister meaning of putting to the test to prove that something is not what it appears to be. Jesus' opponents were sure He could not produce such a sign. Given the things Jesus was already doing, it is not clear what kind of sign would have convinced them. The time they chose to ask for such a sign was the very moment He had just supplied "bread in the wilderness," a clear indication of both divine and messianic authority.

A sign of the kind they demanded Jesus resolutely refused to give. To grant it would neuter personal choice and make faith impossible. He left the Pharisees and sailed with His disciples to the other side of the Galilee.

Blindness of the Disciples (14-21)

On the way, the disciples found they had not brought food. In the boat was only one loaf (silver-dollar size). The Lord took that occasion to warn them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. Probably "Herod" included the whole religious aristocracy of the ruler (Herod), his supporters (the Herodians) and the ruling party (the Sadducees). Usually leaven, or yeast, stands for an evil influence. Perhaps He had in mind a bad influence more general, i.e., rejection of God's will for people to accept Jesus as the King-Messiah. Or maybe He meant something more specific, i.e., the leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy (see Luke 12:1) while the leaven of Herod consisted of materialism and anti-supernaturalism.

The disciples missed the point because

they thought He was referring to their failure to bring along food. But He questioned them about the feeding of the 5,000 — and the later feeding of the 4,000 — evidently to show them He could not be talking about a shortage of bread. After all, He had fed the mobs and the disciples with food to spare, and He could do so again. With Jesus aboard, all their needs and more were guaranteed. But the disciples still did not understand.

Peter's Confession and the First Passion Prediction (27-33)

Jesus and His disciples went north to "the villages of Caesarea Philippi," ancient Dan and modern Banias. Herod Philip, son of Herod the Great, built this city and named it for his benefactor, Tiberius Caesar. To distinguish it from Caesarea on the seacoast, he put his own name on it. On the way to that area, Jesus asked His disciples what people were saying about Him. They reported that popular opinion held Jesus to be somebody great and unusual. Then Jesus put the question to the Twelve. Peter answered, "You are the Christ." It is not clear what he meant by "Christ," but the disciples probably expected Jesus to set up a political/military kingdom and crush Gentile powers. Jesus' strict orders to keep silent about His identity as Messiah imply first that He accepted Peter's confession as true but second that He wanted no talk of His messiahship. They were crystal clear on what kind of messiah He was, i.e., the Suffering Servant who gives His life to redeem His people.

Jesus began to teach the Twelve a new fact about His role. Jewish authorities would reject and kill Him (like the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 50:4-6; 52:13-53:12) but He would rise again. This was the first prediction of His Passion, i.e., His death. While He spoke openly of His resurrection "after three days," the disciples missed this point. "Three days" meant "a brief period of time" (as John 2:13-22; cf. Josh. 1:11; Hos. 6:2). Peter opposed talk of Jesus' death but Jesus rebuked him. In rejecting Jesus' role as Suffering Servant, the apostle had taken the side of "Satan," i.e., the "adversary" of God.

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

WRESTLING WITH TIME Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

It seems that no matter how many times saving inventions we purchase, we never seem to have enough time. Time is a precious commodity. When we come to the end of another day, week, month or year, we will never have that time to live over again.

Living in Time (1-8)

Time, like many other features of life that the preacher has discussed in this book, often brings us a sense of frustration at what we have failed to accomplish in the time we have already lived. During times of difficulty, we tend to feel that life is passing us by and we will never be able to enjoy it again. We need to view time in the light of eternity and of His control of all our times and to discern His providence in every moment. This does not lead us to a sense of fatalism or extreme determinism but confident trust in the security of God's control of every aspect of our lives.

The way these verses contain a variety of different pairs is a common idiom in Hebrew Scripture. Humanity is described as "man and woman" (Ex. 36:6) or the "great and small" (Jer. 6:13). Each pair in verses 2-7 describes a different aspect of human life, to describe the variety of experiences we pass through in time. Thus we are "born" and "die," "weep" and "laugh," "keep" and "throw away" and are "silent" and "speak." The phrases not only remind us of different activities we engage in but also encompass all the pursuits, emotions, dreams and aspirations of human beings, both creative and destructive, the things we do in private as well as in public. If we live our lives "under the sun" without any other perspective than what we have achieved by ourselves, then we are doomed to be depressed and despair. Life becomes empty and futile.

Longing for the Eternal (9-11)

The antidote to such a pessimistic view of time is to see God's overall control of time and the way in which He works through the events of our lives, initiating the events of each day, giving meaning and purpose to all our activities. It is this theme that lies at the

foundation of these verses and brings hope to our hearts.

Verse 10 reminds us that every moment we have is a gift of God to be used and be busy with. We are stewards of time. It should not be wasted or frittered away. Every moment is precious, to be appreciated and lived for God's honor. Life does not need to be purposeless but can be filled with a sense of His presence every moment of the day.

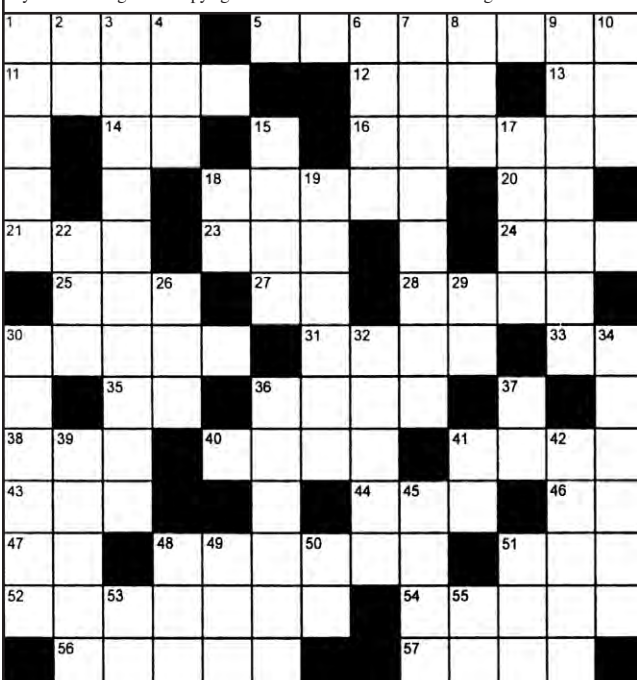
Verse 11 takes this thought even further when it indicates that a sense of eternity and God has been placed into our hearts. It reminds us that as people who have been created in the image of God, we have a sense of a deeper plan and purpose for our lives. We are living not just for 70 or 80 years of life in this world but for the eternal kingdom of God — we are people of hope, of expectation, who are convinced that the seeds we sow in this life will reap eternal benefits. We set our minds not on things below but on things that are above — where Christ is.

Standing in Awe of God (12-14)

Paradoxically, in verses 13-14, this eternal perspective will enable us to enjoy life here and now. Paul reminded Timothy that God has given us "all things richly to enjoy," and here the preacher said virtually the same thing: "We should eat and drink and take pleasure in our toil" because we are seeking to use our time well. Our sense of meaning and security, here and now, as well as in the future, is based not upon our human efforts to improve ourselves but in recognizing that God is reliable, that His purposes from eternity will be accomplished and that a sense of security is to be found in trusting in Him. This, once again, leads to fear, not a craven terror but a reverent trust, an affectionate devotion and a giving of ourselves to God. Perhaps this is why, at the beginning of each week, we spend time not on our work or our own projects but in God's house, reflecting on Scripture, standing in God's presence, offering Him worship and praise and listening for His voice. In such a context, our faith is renewed, our lives are set on the pathway of pilgrimage and confidence can develop within our hearts.

Christian Crossword

By Pat Horning Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- We ought to ___ God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)
- Son of Rachel. (Gen. 35:24)
- Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great ___. (Luke 4:38)
- Edible cereal grass.
- Fa, so, ___.
- Suffix indicating plural.
- Odorous.
- One of the 12 spies. (Num. 13:6)
- And hath raised up ___ horn of salvation. (Luke 1:69)
- Narrow beam of light.
- Rod for billiards.
- A time to rend, and a time to ___. (Eccles. 3:7)
- Pig pen.
- Los Angeles. (abbr.)
- Large rodents.
- Son of Jacob. (Gen. 30:13)
- Change direction.
- South Dakota. (abbr.)

- Give, and ___ shall be given unto you. (Luke 6:38)
- Simple.
- Light brown.
- ___ unthankful lepers healed. (Luke 17:17)
- Then shall the lame man ___. (Isa. 35:6)
- Or if he shall ask an ___, will he offer him a scorpion? (Luke 11:12)
- Cardiac Care Unit. (abbr.)
- Louisiana. (abbr.)
- North America. (abbr.)
- Put up thy sword into the ___. (John 18:11)
- Average amount.
- Reject.
- Come ye yourselves ___ into a desert place. (Mark 6:31)
- Loud.
- Inner surface of the hand.

Down

- Let us ___ the sacrifice of praise. (Heb. 13:15)

- ___ ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Pet. 1:16)
- In ___ give thanks. (1 Thess. 5:18)
- Expression of affirmation.
- I put my hook in thy ___. (Isa. 37:29)
- Merry gathering.
- Already eaten.
- Period of bad health.
- Negative vote.
- Pull.
- But many that are first shall be ___. (Mark 10:31)
- Cubic centimeter.
- Purge out therefore the old ___. (1 Cor. 5:7)
- And the Lord opened the mouth of the ___. (Num. 22:28)
- Nevertheless.
- Arkansas. (abbr.)
- ___ to the voice of my supplications. (Ps. 86:6)
- Build.
- To ___ from evil is understanding. (Job 28:28)
- Remember his ___ no

- more. (Prov. 31:7)
- Blessed is ___ that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matt. 21:9)
- Once more.
- Halle ___jah.
- Sound an ___ in my holy mountain. (Joel 2:1)
- Roughen and redden.
- Science. (abbr.)
- Owens.
- Newspaper ___.
- Comrade.
- Do-re-mi-fa-___-la-ti-do.
- Ma and ___.



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Training, renewal 'important' for ministers

ATLANTA — A recent poll showing public confidence in clergy at a three-decade low should be a wakeup call for the importance of maintaining excellence in ministry.

"In a culture that qualifies success as bigger being better, it is easy to lose sight of the claim upon our lives that calls for fidelity to the excellence of God's justice and mercy, grace and healing," said Steve Graham, director of ministerial excellence for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

A recent Gallup Poll found just 50 percent of Americans rate the ethics and honesty of clergy as "high" or "very high." While still relatively robust when compared to other professions, trust in clergy declined by 6 percent in the last year and 17 percent since 1985.

The Atlanta-based CBF recently published a resource to help encourage healthy attitudes toward ministry and life-work balance by educating both the congregation and the minister.

"Well-Being and Excellence in Ministry: A Practical Guide for Ministers and Caring Congregations" equips ministers and congregations to work together to enhance their church's quality of ministries.

Responding several years ago to address the need for ministers to find renewal and enrichment, the CBF launched the Initiative for Ministerial Excellence with funding from the Lilly Endowment.

The program includes peer-learning groups that meet monthly to build collegial relationships. A ministerial residency program allows graduating seminarians to work with teaching congregations to hone their ministry skills. The initiative also includes sabbatical resources to help veteran church leaders disconnect and recharge their passion for ministry.

NAMB's TV/radio network FamilyNet sold again

DALLAS — FamilyNet, a television and radio network formerly owned by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB), has been sold once again.

Charles Stanley's In Touch Ministries, which purchased FamilyNet from NAMB in October 2007, has sold the network to a private firm affiliated with Robert A. Schuller, son of TV preacher Robert Schuller.

The Schullers, who were jointly leading the "Hour of Power" telecast from California's Crystal Cathedral, parted ways in a much-publicized father-son dispute in November 2008.

No purchase price for FamilyNet was disclosed by either In Touch Ministries, which issued a news release about the sale Dec. 10, or the private firm, named ComStar Media Fund, L.P., according to the TradingMarkets.com business Web site.

Neither NAMB nor In Touch Ministries disclosed a purchase price for FamilyNet's sale in 2007. The then-Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (now NAMB), in 1991, purchased FamilyNet from the ministry of TV preacher Jerry Falwell, who died in 2007.

NAMB received a half-hour of TV and radio programming each week under the sale of FamilyNet to In Touch Ministries. NAMB, though, will lose that airtime under the new sale.

Bell choir cancels when mall says no religious songs

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Sometimes, Pastor Phil Cockrell says, people just need to use common sense. Cockrell, minister of music and arts at Country and Town Baptist Church in suburban Mechanicsburg, said that would have brought harmony to the flap over what music his hand-bell choir could play at the Capital City Mall. Mall management Dec. 11 told the church that only secular music would be allowed — which caused the church to cancel its performance.

"Our hand-bell choir has played traditional Christmas carols like 'Silent Night' and 'Joy to the World' at the mall for years," Cockrell said. "This year, we were asked to sign an addendum to the contract that we would only perform secular music. We said we couldn't abide by that."

Jillian Fikkert, mall spokeswoman, said the mall staff made "a simple error" in interpreting the mall performance policy.

"It has always been our policy and remains our policy to allow community organizations to perform the music of their choice in our center," she said. "We apologize for the confusion this has caused."

She and Cockrell are working at rescheduling the choir's performance.

Campus News



Samford University

► **Samford Board Establishes New Fund:** Samford University's board of trustees

established a new endowment fund at its regular winter meeting Dec. 1 in Birmingham.

The new William Self Propst Fund was established using gifts from a Samford alumnus and Huntsville pharmaceuticals executive. Earnings from the fund will be used for maintenance and improvements for William Self Propst Hall, the university's primary academic building for sciences, and for academic and program support for the McWhorter School of Pharmacy and natural sciences in the Howard College of Arts and Sciences. A report showed that Samford's endowment is valued at about \$221 million, up about 5 percent for the current fiscal year. As a result, net assets are up \$11.6 million over the previous year. Trustees also heard that while giving has been impacted by the global economic situation, year-to-date giving from alumni and parents is well ahead of previous years.

Also during the meeting, Birmingham attorney W. Clark Watson was re-elected board chairman.

Other officers are former Alabama Gov. Albert P. Brewer, of Birmingham, vice chairman and executive committee chairman; Birmingham businessman John E. Bell Jr., secretary; and retired businesswoman Wynema J. Lowry, of Cullman, assistant secretary.

► **Randy Gachet's Sculpture to be Displayed:** Samford University's Visiting Visual Artist Series will present the sculpture of Randy Gachet at Samford Art Gallery Jan. 25–Feb. 26 from 9 a.m.–4 p.m. weekdays. Gachet will give a lecture Feb. 23 at 4:30 p.m. A reception will follow. Gachet's work involves reclamation and transformation of remnants and organic material found on urban and suburban highways. His sculptures suggest the returning of industrial materials to nature.

For more information, call 205-726-2840.

► **M. Daniel Carroll Rodas to Deliver Biblical Studies Lectures:** Samford University's Beeson Divinity School will present the Biblical Studies Lectures, featuring M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, distinguished professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, at Hodges Chapel Feb. 2–4 at 11 a.m., with an additional 1 p.m. lecture Feb. 3.

A luncheon by reservation will follow the 11 a.m. lecture Feb. 3.

For more information, call 205-726-2731 or 1-800-888-8266 or visit www.beesondivinity.com.

► **Pianist Roberto Plano to Present Concert:** Samford University's school of the arts' Davis Architects Guest Artist Series will present pianist Roberto Plano on Feb. 12 at 7:30 p.m. at Brock Recital Hall. Plano was the winner of the 2001 Cleveland International Piano Competition and a finalist in the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

The concert is the concluding event in Samford's Morris Piano Competition.

For more information about tickets, visit www.samford.edu/arts/tickets or call 205-726-2853.

► **Samford Students to Present Step Sing:** Samford University students will present Step Sing Feb. 18–20 at 7 p.m. at Wright Center Concert Hall.

For more information about tickets, visit www.ticketreturn.com or call 205-726-2345.



Judson College

► **Burmese Student Honored at Judson:** Judson College senior Ja Rawng Lasi was

honored in chapel Dec. 1 as a December graduate and a member of the chapel committee. She is the second Burmese student in Judson history and traces her spiritual ancestry to the work of Adoniram and Ann Judson, Baptist missionaries to Burma (now Myanmar) in the 19th century. Lasi has enjoyed speaking in many local churches about Baptist work in her native land. A psychology major, Lasi hopes to visit Burma this spring and then apply for an internship in public administration before enrolling in graduate school.



LASI

► **Judson Student Helps Film Documentary:** Judson College senior Chelsea Barton recently worked with University of California, Berkeley, graduate students as a documentary assistant while they were in Perry County. The documentary is about coal ash from a coal ash spill in Kingston, Tenn., being moved to Perry County. The local community is against the coal ash being dumped at the Uniontown landfill. The documentary crew worked on the project in October and November in Perry County. The final project is due May 4. The crew plans to return to Perry County sometime in early summer to screen the film for the local community.

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In living color

Massive murals depicting Bible stories engage children at Trinity Church in Texas

On a hot south Texas summer morning, parents and children stream into the Children's Center at San Antonio's Trinity Baptist Church for Sunday School. Visitors are greeted warmly, and children are directed to their classrooms: downstairs for the youngest, upstairs for older children. Today's lesson is from Exodus.

"This morning you're going to learn how the Israelites were freed to find their own path," says one greeter, pressing a toy maze into a child's hand.

It's a typical Sunday-morning routine at churches around the country. What makes this scene unique is the Children's Center itself: More than just a building, the center has become what Senior Pastor Les Hollon calls "a canvas to tell the stories of Scripture and hope."

Throughout the center, bright murals — some three stories high — tell the traditional stories in an innovative way. Paintings on every wall have turned this sizable education building into a life-sized biblical storybook. On the first floor 250 pairs of animals — including Longhorn cattle and paintings modeled after church members' pets — prepare to board Noah's Ark. A light-filled three-story rotunda is an artistic aviary where species of birds both exotic and familiar perch.

In one stairwell, a group of men walk up a hill, gazing at the stars. At the top of the stairs is a nativity scene, more crowded with children and animals than in any biblical account of Christ's birth. The second-floor walls display illustrations from 20 Bible stories. One hallway is for the Old Testament, and another is for the New Testament.

This remarkable project was created over the course of a year by painter and Trinity member Shawn Bridges under the direction of Trinity Children's and Women's Pastor Debbie Potter. It's a reflection of Potter's belief that children would respond to the stories of the Bible as deeply and enthusiastically as they embrace pop entertainment.

The story of how Bridges came to paint the massive set of murals is as multi-layered as the paintings themselves and shows what can happen when leaders harness imagination in the service of faith.

In 2002, Trinity hired Potter, a former schoolteacher, to be its new pastor for children



Photo courtesy of Trinity Baptist Church

VIVID PICTURES — Giant murals depicting Noah's Ark, the good Samaritan and other Bible stories fill the Children's Center at San Antonio's Trinity Baptist Church. The paintings are aimed at engaging children in Scripture.

and women. When Potter arrived, the Children's Center's spacious interior was in need of updating. The two-story, 28,000-square-foot center contains nurseries, classrooms and worship spaces for infants through sixth graders.

"The walls were painted bright green and bright orange," Potter said.

Money for remodeling wasn't a problem because a family had left a bequest specifically for the building.

But as the church proceeded with changes such as knocking out walls to create larger rooms, adding a stage for performances and

plays and purchasing kid-friendly furniture, Potter contemplated what more could be done. The goal was not just to create a kid-friendly space, but to engage children in learning the Bible.

She researched what other congregations were doing, touring Baptist churches in Houston, Dallas and Chicago looking for ideas. On her travels, Potter encountered elaborately decorated spaces, rich in secular imagery and undeniably fun. These were wonderful, but she knew she hadn't found her model.

"I wanted children to know they were in a church," Potter said, in contrast to simply an elaborately decorated, child-friendly environment. And she wanted this sacred space to be interactive. "But I didn't really have a clear picture of how to make that happen," Potter said. She also was mindful of stewarding the donated funds wisely.

So Potter looked within the church for a solution and ended up meeting with Bridges, a painter and longtime member.

On May 4, 2005, Bridges donned her paint-stained overalls, pulled back her hair and went to work. She quickly sketched a gigantic Asian elephant in the three-story rotunda. Slowly the first floor's blank walls transformed into a menagerie of animals, ranging from the very large (elephants, camels, gorillas, lions, zebras and tigers) to the very small (birds, fish and small mammals, as well as rodents and insects). Bridges also painted tool sheds and supply rooms, and a smiling image of Noah modeled after the church's then-pastor graces an entryway.

"The children could not wait to get here every week to see what was new on the walls," Potter said.

Every day for almost a year, Bridges showed

up to paint. And every day she began her work by laying her hands on the walls, thanking God for her talent and praying for the day's work ahead. She also made a point of including the children in the painting process, giving them small containers of paint and directing them to fill in her sketches.

"We let them pick the colors of Naomi and Ruth's outfits, and talked about the stories they were painting." The first time she let the kids help, she gave out large brushes and buckets of paint. "It was disaster," Bridges said with a laugh. After that, "we learned to give small brushes and baby food jars," she said.

Response from children

On the second floor, the Genesis creation story begins with a darkly painted wall before lightening to depict a Garden of Eden. The stories of Moses, Ruth, Hannah, David and Goliath, Daniel, Esther and others fill one long hallway. On the other hallway, there are stories from Jesus' life, death and resurrection, keeping in mind the primary audience is children. "She tried to keep everything developmentally appropriate," Potter said.

The children have responded; they often walk up and stroke the animals. Sometimes a child will become deeply interested in one particular part of the mural, returning again and again to gaze at an intriguing scene. Bridges also added an element of hide-and-seek to the paintings by tucking 80 Bible verses, in tiny handwriting, throughout the paintings.

As children's pastor, Potter often has fielded inquiries from other churches about creating murals similar to Trinity's.

"What I encourage people to do is go and look in your own congregation and find the gifts that are there," Potter said. (ABP)



Photo courtesy of Trinity Baptist Church