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'Desperate situation'

Alabama Baptists feel personal ties to Haiti quake victims in need

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Katie Snider's day already looked a little like a scene from a movie.

The Samford University senior was sitting next to a well Jan. 12 at a children's home in Haiti — a country and people she had "fallen in love" with back last summer and couldn't wait to return to this January. She and Samford junior Megan Scott were washing, scrubbing, wringing out clothes and chatting while they worked.

And then it happened.

The trembling started, the water in the well started rising and sloshing and in a heartbeat it all crescendoed into a 7.0 magnitude earthquake the whole world heard.

All Snider and Scott could hear was children.

"We were both surprised and didn't know what to do. We heard the kids running out of the cafeteria screaming," said Snider, who attends Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, in Birmingham Baptist Association.

The children were safe — all 70 of them at Canaan Orphanage. But 40 miles down the road at Port-au-Prince, life had turned bleak in a way that was unfathomable just seconds earlier.

The capital city was in ruins. Countless buildings crumbled, schools collapsed on children and the death toll soared in the tens of thousands. Bodies lined the streets, and survivors — many injured — walked around aimless, in shock.

The world looked on in horror.

And in the moments and days since, thousands have spent frantic hours trying to contact family members unaccounted for in Haiti — even Alabama Baptists.

"My niece Becca Rose is on a missions trip in Port-au-Prince and we cannot contact her. She is 15. Her parents are freaked out," Lisa Chilson Rose, director of church and community ministries for Montgomery Baptist Association, wrote on Facebook just after the quake.



defense.gov

BRINGING HELP — U.S. airmen offload cargo at the Port-au-Prince airport in Haiti to support relief efforts after the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake. Military were the first responders after the disaster in order to make the area safe for civilian relief efforts such as those planned by Baptists.

Becca was found safe.

But for many other loved ones, that hasn't yet been the case.

At press time, the Florida Baptist Convention had yet to make contact with 18 of the 21 employees the convention has living in Haiti as part of a partnership with the nation.

"They are like our family," said

Craig Culbreth, director of Florida's Partnership Mission Department who has traveled to Haiti for the past 11 years. Florida Baptists have a 15-year partnership with Baptists in Haiti and have helped plant 890 churches during that time.

"They are mothers, fathers, sons and daughters and they are hurting

right now," Culbreth said. "Many of them have small children. Some of their homes may be damaged and they are sleeping in the streets. It is a desperate situation there."

At press time, Culbreth planned to lead an assessment team of Florida Baptist Convention staff members
(See 'Alabama,' page 3)

Legislature reconvenes — will character prevail?

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The 2010 Alabama legislative session is underway, and many fear this could be the make-it-or-break-it year when it comes to the moral fiber of the state. All because of an obsession by a few gambling moguls to legalize slot machines.

"We take for granted the quality of life we have in this state," Riley told those attending the 2010 Legislative Prayer Luncheon in Montgomery Jan. 13. "It is something that I absolutely believe we need to protect."

At times, legislators supporting gambling have said you can't legislate morality, but Riley believes the deci-

sions made by lawmakers are usually based on their moral compass.

"If we ever forget that, we forget the basic tenants of what this country was founded on," he said. "This country has not become the greatest country in the world by accident. It became the greatest country in the world because of the moral foundation this country was built on, and God has blessed it because of it."

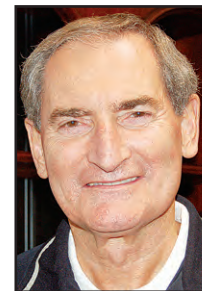
Alabama Baptist State Convention President Jimmy Jackson, also speaking during the luncheon, challenged those in atten-

dance to make a difference and positively influence those coming behind them.

"Who you are and what you do will live on long after you are gone," said Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

"There's one thing we have going for us. It is not our power, personality, education or money, but the impact of our example and our influence," he said. "Our example and influence speaks for our character."

(See 'Faith,' page 4)



JACKSON

COMMENT

What Would God Say Today?

Most of the letters contain a verbal spanking.” That is how one Baptist pastor described the letters to the seven churches recorded in Revelation 2:1–3:22.

The church at Ephesus was chided for abandoning its first love. Pergamum was scolded for tolerating false teaching. Thyatira’s problem was allowing false leadership to wreak havoc in the fellowship.

Sardis had been lulled into apathy by its abundance of material possessions. Laodicea was complacent, arrogant and blind to its situation.

Only Smyrna and Philadelphia escaped condemnation. That is two of seven.

But the letters were more than the writer giving vent to his disappointment, even anger, over the conditions of these churches. The letters offered direction from God about what people in the various churches should do to correct their shortcomings. In each case, the goals of the actions called for were for Christians to love God and one another and hold steadfast to their faith.

God wanted Christians to be zealous for Him. He called for a commitment that not even persecution could shake. God challenged believers in the seven churches to let their faith in Him and relationships with one another be more important than material possessions or social positions.

Now jump forward 19 centuries since the writing of Revelation. What if God were writing letters to the Christian churches in the United States? What would He see and what might He write to today’s churches?

First God would see a nation where it is popular to be identified as a Christian. About 80 percent of all U.S. citizens self-identify as Christians, according to pollster George Barna. About 11 percent call themselves skeptics. The other 9 percent is divided among Jews, Mormons, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and others.

Of the Christians, almost 90 percent confess to a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Nearly as many affirm that Jesus is alive today and the ultimate purpose of life is to love God with heart, soul, strength and mind as Jesus taught in Luke 10:27–28.

Purpose at the core of life

God would see some Christians reflecting the faith of those who once worshiped in Smyrna and Philadelphia. These are people whose lives have been changed significantly by their faith in God, through “a personal, hope-restoring relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

For these, faith is not a once-a-week experience. Nor is it primarily designed as a feel-good experience.

For these, faith is the heart of their existence. Pleasing God is their daily purpose.

Unfortunately the numbers for this group are not large — about one in five of those who



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

call themselves Christians, according to Barna.

The other 80 percent reflects a far different approach to Christianity. In fact, a lack of intimacy with God is one of the defining characteristics of this largest group of so-called Christians. Less than one in five attends church, reads the Bible and prays in the same week.

About one in 20 tithes his or her income through the church. God’s desire for these people’s lives is that they be happy, not holy, most of them believe. When they do read the Bible, it is for comfort, not instruction.

‘Indistinguishable’ from culture

Of this group called “casual Christians,” Barna said, “They are comfortable with themselves, open to a wide array of moral perspectives and lifestyles, prefer to stay connected with people rather than hold to moral truth, value loyalty more than being right.”

Casual Christians do not get excited about their faith. They have no passion for vocally representing God and His ways in the world. Few respond to life situations according to what the Bible teaches. They are more interested in happiness and fulfillment than faith-based truth and righteousness.

Casual Christians do not set cultural norms. They reflect them. Barna wrote, “Even their participation in activities like smoking, getting drunk, committing adultery, viewing pornography, buying lottery tickets, visiting psychics and gossiping is indistinguishable from the nationwide averages.”

Evidently God would see that in the United States, the word “Christian” is used to describe a lot of different understandings and practices.

It is hard to miss the similarities between the seven churches of Revelation and the Christian churches of the United States. Immorality and idolatry are symptoms of both. Spiritual arrogance and complacency can be found in both groups. False teachings and teachers are tolerated and inflict wounds on the churches.

More importantly, a zealous love of God and the fellowship is hard to find. Prayer and Bible study have declined in proportion to the loss of love for God and His Word.

Like the Laodiceans, some so-called Christians go on today oblivious that they are “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.”

To the churches at Ephesus, Pergamum, Sardis and Laodicea, God said repent. To the church at Thyatira, God said enough time had already been given to repent; now it was time for Him to act.

To the churches of the United States, would God say repent?

To the faithful churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia, God said hold fast and do not be afraid. Would God have a similar message for some churches today?

Popular psychology defines insanity as doing the same thing but expecting a different result. It would be insane to conclude that Christians of today can continue the same patterns and behaviors of the seven churches of Revelation without God acting.

Galatians 6:7–8 makes it clear. God is not mocked. To think otherwise only deceives. The things God demanded of the seven churches of Revelation are the same things He wants for churches of today: to be zealous for Him, have a faith that can stand against trials and persecution and have a relationship with Him and one another that is more important than material possessions or social positions.

It would be good to remember that God promised the seven churches that He would act in forgiveness if they repented but would act in judgment if they did not.

The same message is undoubtedly true for churches today.

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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State 2009 CP giving misses mark

While Alabama Baptists topped Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program (CP) giving nationwide for the 2008-09 fiscal year, they couldn't quite keep the momentum for the 2009 state budget year. State CP receipts came in 5.4 percent, or \$2,359,421, under the \$46 million budget and 2.55 percent, or \$1,141,740, less than 2008.

"The economic downturn definitely affected Cooperative Program giving in 2009," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). And the current pace of giving "complicates the process for planning the 2011 budget," he noted.

Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director, said the budget advisory/audit subcommittee was scheduled to meet Jan. 21 to begin discussions on 2010 and 2011 projections.

"We normally would present our projected budget receipts and a recommended budget amount for the following year in our January subcommittee and executive committee meetings," he said. "That recommendation will be delayed this year until later due to uncertainties that impact our budgeting process."

Because early projections indicate giving will not meet the 2010 budget of \$46 million, the SBOM offices are limiting spending to 85 percent of the budget, DuBois noted.

Cutting back

As far as the 2009 giving, "the shortfall was evenly spread among the entities of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and Southern Baptist Convention," he said. "Each entity gets its percentage distribution whether we are below or above the approved budget. We received 95.6 percent of our 2009 budget goal, and each entity received 95.6 percent of its 2009 CP budget amount."

DuBois noted that SBOM offices worked on 90 percent of budgeted expenses in 2009. "Because of that, we have not eliminated ministries at this point," he said.

Lance added, "We are hopeful that the economy in Alabama and the U.S. will be better in 2010."

"Alabama Baptists are a dedicated and resilient people. We have weathered many storms in the past, and we are confident that Alabama Baptists will stand in the gap in this time of need." (TAB)

Alabama Baptists respond to Haiti's vast needs, encouraged to participate more

(continued from page 1)

to Port-au-Prince the weekend of Jan. 16 to learn the condition of the convention-owned guest house and employees.

And still more Baptists are facing questions and heartache.

Biene Lamerquea, a prominent Baptist pastor in Port-au-Prince, died in the earthquake, and still others are unaccounted for, according to Gedeon Eugene, a vice president of the Baptist Convention of Haiti.

Many other pastors and church members are homeless and in dire need of provisions.

"They are starving," Eugene said. "You can imagine their urgent need. They cannot cook, they are thirsty, they are injured. The children and old persons are more fragile."

Different Baptist groups are already stepping up to the plate to help meet those immediate needs. The International Mission Board is collecting money for relief efforts through its Web site, and Baptist World Alliance has already made an initial \$20,000 pledge to help Baptists in the affected area.

And Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), is encouraging Alabama Baptists who want to help to give enough for a bag of rice.

"We are being flooded with phone calls," Johnson said. "Our churches have a heart. They see what's taking place on the news — staggering death toll, unimaginable suffering — and they want to help."

The best way for them to do that, he said, is to donate to disaster relief work through the special Web site set up for Alabama Baptists: www.alsbom.org/haiti.

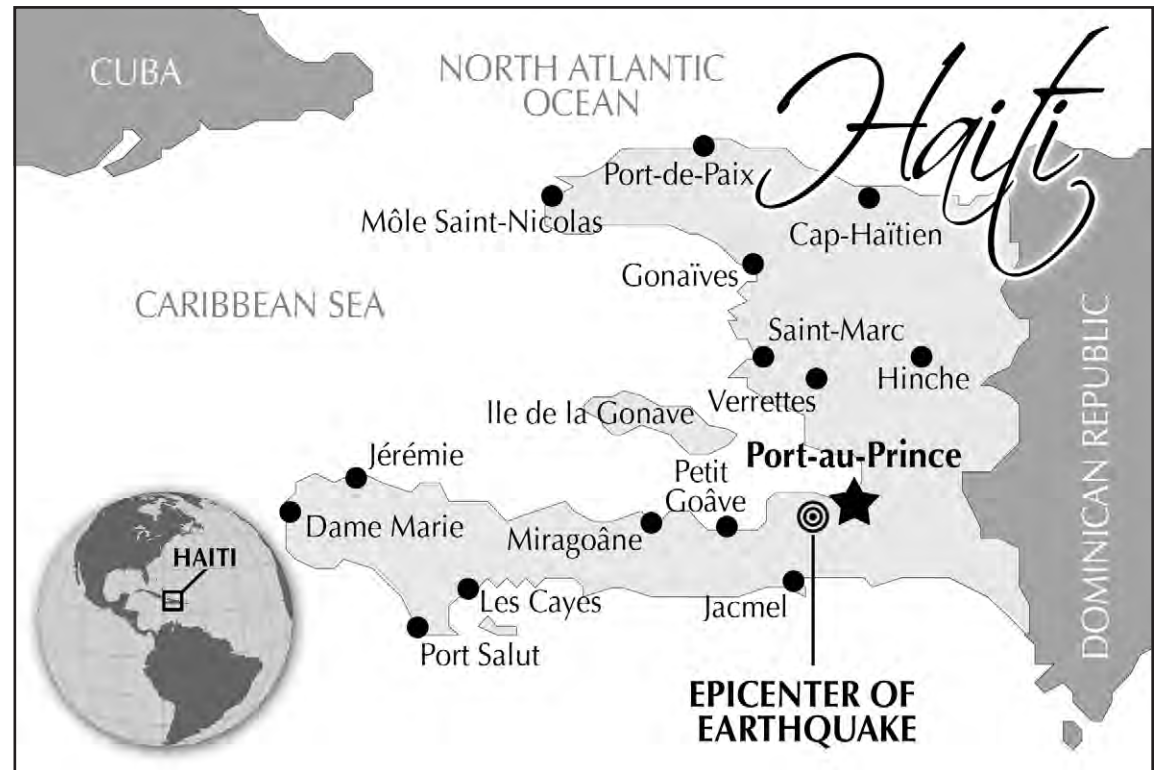
"There will be regular updates on the Web site on the work going on in Haiti, and it is also very easy for them to give through the Web site," he said. "We need to address immediate needs, and \$20 will buy a 100-pound bag of rice. The funds will be 100 percent destined for the greatest need."

Securing future plans

As far as sending volunteers is concerned, Alabama Baptists are "waiting in the wings" for now, Johnson said.

The Florida Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist disaster relief leaders are "flying the flag, and we are coming along and getting behind them," he explained.

At press time, a Southern Baptist assessment team was set to visit



Graphic by Lauren A. Chow

Haiti the week of Jan. 18, in addition to the Florida team planning to head in just before. Teams will communicate back to state and national disaster relief representatives and work to get logistics in place for long-term, collective efforts.

"As it stands now, short of assessment teams we (Southern Baptists) have no one going in until secure lines of transportation are firmly established," Johnson said. "It has to be done very methodically and intentionally for us to help in the best way we can help."

One issue facing volunteer teams is that serious security concerns could emerge as people become more desperate for food and water in areas where

police and military control has not been established, said Jim Brown, U.S. director for Baptist Global Response. The capital's main prison also collapsed in the earthquake, raising the prospect of criminals escaping into the city.

At press time, military personnel and search and rescue organizations were on the ground working in the area. Until logistics are nailed down and arrangements secured, a number of trained Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers — including the state's airlift kitchen team — are waiting on alert, Johnson said.

For now, he is urging Alabamians to consider donating to Baptist relief work rather than thinking of going or donating items.

"The lines of shipping are sparse at best, so shipping goods to the people of Haiti is not a good option right now, though it may be a possibility later down the road," Johnson said.

Until then, Baptists can give monetarily, as well as pray and prepare.

"Our greatest opportunity will come over the long haul," he said. "We will have the opportunity to ease suffering as well as have a wonderful, wonderful gospel witness there."

The SBOM has already sent an initial check for Haiti relief, according to Rick Lance, SBOM executive director.

"On behalf of Alabama Baptists, your State Board of Missions has already sent an initial check of \$50,000 to the Florida Baptist Convention," Lance wrote on his blog, www.ricklance.com. "More, much more, is needed and Alabama Baptists will respond to this devastating situation as we have during the aftermath of the storms and other tragedies of the past."

And state Baptists will continue to respond, he noted.

"The long-term strategy is much

more involved. When the green light is given to us, Alabama Baptists will respond with trained disaster relief personnel to be sent to Haiti. Long after the news spotlight has shifted elsewhere and many relief agencies have departed, the yellow shirts of Alabama Baptists and other Southern Baptists will be on the ground working in recovery, restoration and rebuilding," Lance wrote.

The long haul

More than four years after Hurricane Katrina, state Baptists are still investing in relief and rebuilding work in Mississippi and New Orleans, he added. "The same will most likely be true in Haiti. Some of the hardest work comes after the days, weeks and months following such a traumatic disaster."

To give to Baptist disaster relief work in Haiti, visit www.alsbom.org/haiti and click on "donate" to donate by credit card, or send a check to State Board of Missions, Attn: Accounting Services, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870. Mark the check "For Disaster Relief."

(BP, BWA contributed)

Want to help?

visit www.alsbom.org/haiti



Mobile-area Baptist churches help put on Festival of Hope for needy

Baptist churches in Mobile are teaming up with other churches and organizations to put on the Mobile Festival of Hope to help needy people in the area Jan. 24.

The event at the city's Ladd-Peebles Stadium will involve more than 1,200 volunteers and is expected to draw 8,000 people looking to take advantage of the free items, services and entertainment.

Seventy thousand pounds of

groceries will be distributed. Samaritan's Feet will give out 1,000 pairs of shoes, and Victory Health Partners will provide free health screenings.

There will be a sports component with local college athletes, Senior Bowl participants and some NFL personnel to draw people to the family-friendly environment.

For more information, visit mobilefestivalofhope.com. (TAB)

Faith community can impact gambling debate, Riley says

(continued from page 1)

Hebrews 13:7 “speaks of our leadership and our followership,” Jackson said.

“The people we influence ... are being impacted on a regular basis not only by what we do but who we really are,” he noted. “Ask yourself, ‘If someone is imitating my faith and the product of my faithfulness, what kind of person is [he or she] going to be?’”

Pointing out that “we are only one bad choice away from stupid,” Jackson said, “[I]t is those accumulative choices we make deep down in the recesses of our soul that determine if we are honorable or dishonorable, humble or proud, if we make a difference positively or negatively.

“Character is the most powerful asset we have,” he said. And “what we watch, what we read, how we think is going to make all the difference (in the leaders of tomorrow).”

But is it too late for Alabama? Have the gambling giants dug their roots in deep enough to fight any attempt at pushing them back?

Riley doesn't think so. He believes the faith community can make a difference, and he challenged Alabama Baptists to personally engage in the gambling debate.

At press time, four pro-gambling bills had been filed in the state Legislature, all in the House of Representatives.

Four bills so far

► **House Bill (HB) 154**, sponsored by Rep. Marcel Black, D-Tusculum, seeks to allow Indian tribes to conduct bingo games on any machines allowed by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). It also attempts to redefine Alabama Constitution's definition of “bingo” to match IGRA's rules and allow any “non-Indian” businesses operating “Indian equivalent bingo” to operate slot machines being labeled electronic bingo gambling without risk of criminal prosecution or seizure by law enforcement.

Although many gambling supporters have said they want to “regulate and tax bingo,” this bill would make it illegal to apply “state and local sales or privilege taxes” to the “gross receipts or revenues of qualified persons derived

from Indian equivalent bingo.”

But Todd Stacy, Riley's press secretary, said the bill appears to be unconstitutional.

“Gambling is strictly prohibited by the Alabama Constitution,” he said. “You can't pass a bill to supersede the constitution.”

Sen. Hank Erwin, R-Montevallo, agreed and said lawmakers are supposed to lead by example in obeying the laws of the state.

“I think they (supporters of this bill) are totally irresponsible,” he said. “Alabama law takes precedence for Alabama. Whatever we do in Alabama affects what the Indians can do on their reservations.

If our laws say slot machines are illegal then Washington must cooperate and shut down the Indians as well. The Indians can only do what we allow.

“The courts are speaking right now and we don't need to muddy the waters,” Erwin said. “What the courts say is what we need to do. ... We need to just enforce the law. The question is not voting, the question is obeying the law.”

Erwin expects a “slug fest in the Legislature as this progresses.”

► **HB 233**, sponsored by Rep. John Rogers, D-Birmingham, would repeal Section 65 of the Constitution, which “prohibits the Legislature from enacting any legislation authorizing lotteries or gift enterprises.”

► **HB 234**, sponsored by Rogers, seeks to establish a commission to regulate gambling.

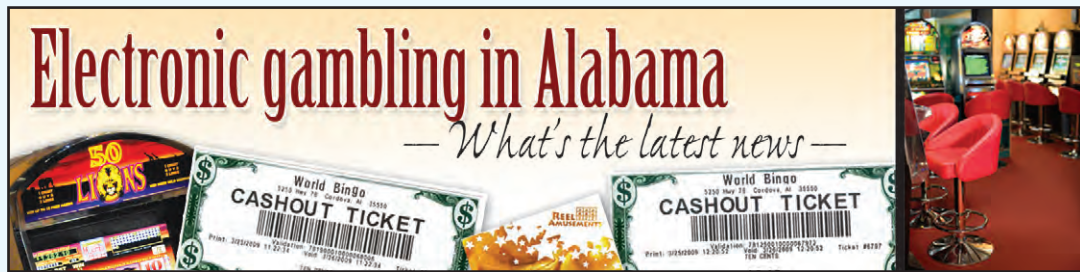
► **HB235**, also sponsored by Rogers, seeks to authorize “casino gaming in cities with a population of more than 100,000.”

Last year, similar bills sponsored by Rogers never made it to the full House for a vote.

Anticipated gambling bills include one on a similar scale as last year's Sweet Home Alabama emphasis with the “points of destination” such as Houston County's Country Crossing and Macon County's VictoryLand.

Also anticipated is legislation against gambling, particularly one that will call for a statewide vote to officially make gambling illegal in the state.

Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, plans to file his bill soon. (Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)



Chickasaw: Undeterred by warnings from Mobile County District Attorney John Tyson and Gov. Bob Riley, Chickasaw city officials continue their effort to bring slot machines to their city.

Though an ordinance allowing for slot machines (being labeled electronic bingo gambling) in Chickasaw passed 4-1 in July 2009, council members have yet to approve any contracts. But according to a December *Mobile Press-Register* article, Mayor Byron Pittman said one slot machine operator wants at least 200 machines in his facility. This operator is currently in negotiations with the city to open a facility.

In mid-January, city councilman Adam Bourne told the Mobile TV station WALA, “I've determined that as long as [electronic bingo] follows a specific pattern, ... a six-prong test the Supreme Court came up with, (then) it's perfectly legal.”

Bourne was referring to a formula the Alabama Supreme Court used in November 2009 to determine the legality of what has been labeled electronic bingo gambling.

But Tyson said he has yet to see machines that pass the Supreme Court's test.

“Electronic bingo, as I understand it, is illegal under Alabama law. In my view, (it) is nothing other than slot machines with the decal changed on it,” he told *The Alabama Baptist*.

“There was never a question about what was and wasn't gambling until Troy King became attorney general,” Tyson added.

Henry Phillips, a member of First Baptist Church, Chickasaw, is one of two council members opposed to slot machines coming to the city.

“I'm against everything they're doing with bingo in Chickasaw,” he said. “I've been on the council for 16 years, and I've never seen it disrupted like it is now.”

Councilman Mickey Day, also a member of First, Chickasaw, said he opposes slot machines because he does not want to see the city's character changed.

“Many people and many pastors say that you cannot legislate morality, and that is about the dumbest thing I've ever heard because every law on the books is legislating morality,” he said. “If we allow [slot machines], are we not legislating immorality?”

Bessemer: A court date to determine the legality of slot machines (being labeled electronic

bingo) and gambling operations in Bessemer Cut-off had not been set by press time. Although Circuit Court Judge Eugene Verin said in November 2009 he would hold a hearing in the case in January, some believe it may be as late as April before the judge brings the issue back to his court.

The delay has prolonged a heated disagreement between Bessemer Mayor Edward E. May who believes the machines are illegal and four city council members who insist on establishing an entertainment district in the city.

In a previous city council meeting, Council Members Louise Alexander, Dorothy Davidson, President Pro-Tem Jesse Matthews and President Earl Cochran passed a resolution amending the city's paper bingo ordinance virtually changing it to an “electronic bingo” gambling ordinance.

At press time, May planned to veto the resolution at the next council meeting.

Floral: Last year, Covington County District Attorney Gregory Gambril announced throughout his jurisdiction that anyone bringing “illegal slot machines disguised as bingo machines” into the county would be prosecuted.

This was enough to stop county commissioners from developing “electronic bingo” rules last year, but it did not stop Floral's City Council from recently passing an ordinance allowing the games.

According to *Andalusia Star-News*, city leaders planned to receive nearly \$700,000 per year in “bingo taxes,” permit fees and “police taxes” the first two years and more after that. Similar to Houston County's Country Crossing entertainment complex less than 70 miles away, any organization operating “bingo games” would be required to include at least one restaurant and deli and “be a part of a development that includes a hotel with at least 40 rooms.”

Although Attorney General Troy King asked district attorneys in Alabama counties allowing charity bingo to determine how to enforce the Alabama Supreme Court's recent ruling on traditional bingo, King wrote a personal letter to Floral's city attorney after the city council passed their ordinance. King said the county's bingo amendment allows only paper games.

“Regardless of whether or not the County Commission has chosen to regulate bingo, there is no

authority in Amendment 565 that empowers a city or municipality in Covington County to pass rules and regulations allowing for electronic bingo,” King wrote.

King also responded to Gadsden in this same manner when city officials planned to bring “bingo machines” into Etowah County. Gadsden is less than 60 miles from the Birmingham Race Course, whose owner Milton McGregor continues to seek ways to bring slot machines into his facility.

Although Gambril says the law is clear, he still expects some business or organization to attempt to bring the slot machines into Covington County.

“I think the money figures being thrown around are going to be too much of a temptation to most folks,” he said.

Legislature: When it comes to whether to legalize or ban slot machines in Alabama, lawmakers seem to be torn.

According to a recent survey conducted by The Associated Press, less than half of Alabama legislators would support a constitutional amendment to legalize slot machines (being labeled electronic bingo). Less than half also indicated they would be willing to ban it.

Two questions were sent to Alabama legislators.

1. A constitutional amendment has been proposed that would make sure electronic bingo is legal and levy taxes on it. What is your view of the legislation?

HOUSE
Support — 41 percent
Oppose — 35 percent
Undecided — 24 percent

SENATE
Support — 41 percent
Oppose — 45 percent
Undecided — 14 percent

2. A constitutional amendment has been proposed that would ban electronic bingo in Alabama. What is your view of the legislation?

HOUSE
Support — 37 percent
Oppose — 31 percent
Undecided — 32 percent

SENATE
Support — 45 percent
Oppose — 28 percent
Undecided — 28 percent

The survey was mailed to all 104 House members and 35 senators in December. Responding were 71 percent of House members and 83 percent of senators. ■

State of the State

'Men, women of principle must act now' in state's gambling battle, Riley challenges legislators

EDITOR'S NOTE — This is an excerpt from Gov. Bob Riley's State of the State address delivered Jan. 12 in Montgomery. To view the video clip, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org and go to the video section.

We're doing a lot as a state to help struggling families during this recession and to help our economy. But we also must protect our economy by standing strong against threats to it ... (and) ... there is one threat to our economy that members of this Legislature can control, and that's whether to legalize slot machines in Alabama. I can't imagine anyone who thinks the best way to help our economy is to have Alabamians lose billions of dollars gambling! But that's precisely what the gambling interests want you to believe. In one Alabama county where these illegal casinos operated, court testimony revealed that people were losing \$2 billion every year — \$2 billion from one single county. This is not money spent in the community at local businesses, where it would sustain jobs and help the local economy. No, this money is taken out of that county and sent to out-of-state slot machine makers and gambling bosses. Just imagine how many billions more will be taken out of the pockets of Alabamians if you vote to make it legal. Talk about a rip-off!

So let's understand that any scheme that will legalize slot machines under the pretext of generating new revenue is the biggest hustle in Alabama's history.

Yet here we go again. Another legislative session is starting, and you know what that means. Millions of dollars are going to be spent trying to pressure you into making slot machines legal for the first time in the history of our state.

Of course, they don't call it that. They call it bingo. But you weren't born yesterday and neither was I. This is nothing like bingo. These are slot machines pure and simple,

"They call it bingo. But you weren't born yesterday and neither was I. This is nothing like bingo."

Bob Riley
Governor of Alabama

and they are illegal for a reason. They are illegal because they're bad for our families, they're bad for taxpayers and they're bad for Alabama.

The devastating social costs of gambling — increased crime, addictions, domestic violence, bankruptcies, suicides, family

breakdown and much more — are undeniable and well documented by the National Gambling Impact Commission. Now I ask you: who ultimately pays for all these problems? The casino operators? Not a chance. They're making money hand over fist off this misery. It's the taxpayers who are the ultimate losers. In states with casinos, for every \$1 casinos contribute in taxes, they cost taxpayers at least

\$3 in additional government services to deal with the devastation the casinos leave behind.

They say those who don't remember history are doomed to repeat it. Alabama has seen this before. How can we so soon forget the lessons that Phenix City taught us? Someone who has not forgotten — and will never forget — is Gov. John Patterson. If there is one person who knows the lawlessness and corruption that gambling brings, it is him. Listen to his warning, which was in the newspaper last week.

He said, "Gambling brings the bad people to town and brings out the bad in good people. There's nothing about it that's good."

Ladies and gentlemen, heed his warning. If you vote to let this happen, you'll be swimming in a pool that has more sharks than all the oceans of the world.

Every one of us in this room knows that slot machines are illegal under Alabama law, no matter whether you call it electronic bingo or anything else. Yet despite the clarity of that law and the clarity of the court decisions, we have to-

day slot machine casinos being operated in some areas of this state, abetted by officials who are willing to ignore the law.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we are to fulfill our oaths to ensure that the laws are followed, how can we permit this flagrant and rampant violation of the law to go on?

Men and women of principle must act now — and act decisively — to ensure that the rule of law is not some hollow standard that is cast aside whenever people with enough money and enough influence decide that

PRAYER LUNCHEON



URGENT MESSAGE — Gov. Bob Riley urges the nearly 500 people at the Jan. 13 Legislative Prayer Luncheon in Montgomery to oppose current efforts to legalize gambling in the state. The event, sponsored by Alabama Baptists, also featured Alabama Baptist State Convention President Jimmy Jackson (see p.1).

Photo by Doug Rogers

the law does not apply to them. I took an oath to uphold the laws of Alabama. And as long as I am governor, I will never go back on that oath. All of you (legislators) took that oath, too. [A]ll of us must reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law.

Look beyond empty promises, see gambling for what it is, concerned citizens contend



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Members of Citizens for a Better Alabama and Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) challenged the state's residents to look beyond empty promises made by casino operators wanting to "get into [their] pocketbooks" during a Jan. 13 news conference in Montgomery.

"Gambling is predatory in nature," said Joe Godfrey, executive director of ALCAP. "It's bad for Alabama ... and it's only going to get worse if we allow [it] to continue."

Tom Anderson, president of Concerned Wiregrass Citizens, which is fighting to rid Houston County of illegal slot machines, urged citizens to reject gambling pushers "trying to buy your mind" by pledging money to improve the economy. "There are some people baiting the field ... [and] throwing money around. If gambling is an industry, it

only produces broken lives. ... It leaves behind a wake that is hurtful and painful."

Several speakers, including Sens. Hank Erwin, R-Montevallo, and Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, called upon church members to take a stand as a community of faith and ask their legislators to do the same.

"The battle for Alabama is about to begin," Erwin said. "What is going to transpire here is a showdown of the magnitude of Phenix City."

'Think rationally'

Beason compared promises made by gambling proponents in other states to the ones made in Alabama. "It (gambling) does not do what it promises," he said.

"As long as we can keep this based on rational thought ... I believe the people of Alabama will make the right choice. I just hope the Legislature will." (TAB)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will hold a marriage retreat Feb. 6, 5-9 p.m., with Michael Mason, pastor of Trinity Church, and his wife, Crystal. There will be special music. Dinner will be at 5 p.m. Child care will be available at 4:45 p.m. Pre-registration is available. For information call 205-425-4381 or visit www.canaanbaptist.net. Morgan Bailey is pastor. ► **North Highlands Church, Hueytown**, will host the Hueytown Revival Feb. 14-18, 6:30 nightly. Phil Waldrep will speak Sunday, Charles Carter Monday, David Nasser Tuesday, Calvin Kelly Wednesday and Kevin Hamm Thursday. Paul Armstrong will lead the music and direct the community choir. Youth night will be Tuesday featuring a youth drama celebration. Child care will be available by reservation for infants through age four by calling 205-491-7921. Doug O'Brien is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Kerry Sparks** resigned as praise minister/pianist for **East Gardendale Church** to begin a ministry called Sunday Supply. He is available to supply as worship leader or musician or to share mini concerts. Sparks can be reached at 205-647-5434 or www.kerrysparks-music.com. Allen Davis is pastor.

CAREY

► **Jerry K. Colquett** celebrated his 25th anniversary as pastor of **Lineville Church** Nov. 1. He and his wife, Carolyn, were given a plaque, a love offering and other

momentos as a video was shared. A letter from the State Board of Missions was read and a framed certificate from Carey Association was presented.

COFFEE

► **Ino Church, Kinston**, will hold its 9th annual wild game banquet Feb. 5, 6 p.m., with Troy Ruiz as guest speaker. Doors will open at 5 p.m. There will be wild game, exhibits and door prizes. For information call 334-565-3970 or visit www.inobaptist.com. Garry Winstead is pastor.

MADISON

► **John "Bobby" R. Burt**, pastor of **University Church, Huntsville**, graduated from New Orleans Seminary with a doctor of philosophy in Christian education.

MOBILE

► **Rickey Edward Camp**, pastor of **Sonrise Church, Mobile**, graduated from New Orleans Seminary with a doctor of ministry in education.

MONTGOMERY

► **Thomas E. Hicks**, pastor of discipleship for **Morningview Church, Montgomery**, graduated from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., with a doctor of philosophy. Shawn Merithew is pastor. ► **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will host Harlan Burton in concert Jan. 31, 5:30 p.m. For information call 334-265-2881. Mike Stephens is pastor. ► **Hunter Station Church, Montgomery**, will hold a gospel singing Feb. 6,

6 p.m., with The Larch Family, of Wetumpka, The Morris Family, of Eufaula, and The Parrish Family, of Bainbridge, Ga. For information call Charlie Costner at 334-467-0614. Donald W. Goble is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Thomas Perkins**, pastor of **Glenn's Chapel Church, Gardendale**, will celebrate 59 years in the gospel ministry Jan. 31, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. Southern gospel recording artist Richard Robertson, who was formerly a guitarist for the Gaither Homecoming concerts and toured with Ivan Parker, will be in concert from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Perkins has served as pastor in churches across Alabama and serves as chairman of evangelism for North Jefferson Association. For information call 205-631-7555.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Montevallo**, will hold winter Bible study Jan. 24-27, 6:30 nightly, with Jerry Batson. Terry Sutton is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Calvary Heights Church, Alexander City**, will have special music with Seretha Sprayberry and guitarist Pete Hosey Jan. 31, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. Jeff Freeman is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Corinth Church, Elrod**, will hold its monthly singing Jan. 24, 5 p.m., with Joe Brown and his group. Shawn Odell is pastor.

Seminaries confer degrees on Alabamians

A number of Alabama Baptists graduated from Southern Baptist seminaries with degrees at the master's level or above during the fall 2009 semester.

Their names, hometowns and degrees were provided by their schools.

► Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of Arts in Educational Leadership — Kellie Barry, Madison

► New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry in Education — Rickey Edward Camp, Mobile

Doctor of Philosophy — Byron Matthew Brown, Eva, and John R. Burt, Huntsville

Master of Arts in Christian Education — Jessica Elizabeth Pike, Roanoke, and Lauren Ashley Price, Anniston

Master of Arts in Theology — Adam F. Beach, Moulton

Master of Divinity — Darryl Malcolm Jolley, Corner, and Thomas Christopher Kynard, Grove Hill

► Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Doctor of Philosophy — Thomas E. Hicks Jr., Montgomery

Master of Arts in Missiology — Brian P. Robinson, Auburn

Master of Divinity — Justin D. Compton, Moulton, and Nathan Moore, Jemison

Master of Divinity in Christian Education — Vince M. Scarborough, Verbena

► Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of Divinity with Christian Ministry — Stephen Ford Murphy, Birmingham

► Southwestern Baptist

Theological Seminary

Master of Arts in Christian Education — Jonathan Grant Freeman, Trussville

Master of Arts in Church Music — Jay Michael Jerrell, Birmingham

Master of Arts in Missiology — David C. Chen, Decatur

Advanced Master of Divinity — David Russell Bryan, Headland

► Beeson Divinity School

Master of Divinity — Philip R. Coffman, Wilsonville; Jonathan B. Gilliland, Attalla; and Chase R. Kuhn, Homewood (TAB)

SBC president Hunt calls for Day of Prayer

Saying that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has "forgotten our first love" and is in need of revival, SBC President Johnny Hunt is calling the convention to a day of prayer, fasting and repentance Jan. 31.

"There are many decisions being made, including the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force, GPS: God's Plan for Sharing, Across North America, search committees for three SBC entities, etc. We need God's direction," said Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga.

The goal for the day of prayer is "for all of us to 'Be still and know that God is God' as a sign of our humility and desire to wholeheartedly return to Him," Hunt said. "By our being still before Him, we exalt our God and position ourselves to obey the Great Commission our Lord commanded in Matthew 28:18-20."

In a Dec. 9 Baptist Press column calling for the day of prayer, Hunt listed five specific concerns churches and individuals could focus on for the Day of Prayer:

► A spirit of repentance to fall on churches corporately and individuals personally and for genuine revival of first love for Jesus. (See Matthew 4:17; Revelation 2:4.)

Pray for awakening

► A great spiritual awakening across our land so that the lost will be drawn to a personal relationship with Jesus. (See John 6:44; Romans 1:19; 2 Corinthians 2:14.)

► A sweet spirit of reconciliation among any Southern Baptists who are at odds with each other or other works of God. Love for one another in the body of Christ to grow and blossom. (See Proverbs 28:13; 1 Corinthians 13:25-27; John 13:34-35.)

► Wisdom for the members of the GCR Task Force as they

prepare their report in February. (See Jeremiah 33:3; James 1:5.)

► Guidance for the search committees for presidents of the Executive Committee, the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board. (See Proverbs 3:5-6, 13, 15:22, 27:17; Acts 1:21-26.)

Prepare, participate

Hunt suggested eight ways congregations can prepare for and participate in the emphasis:

► Distribute personal preparation guides for cleansing and restoration and instruct every church member on how to use it through the day.

► Plan a solemn assembly or a concert of prayer for the whole congregation or the entire association.

► Hold prayer gatherings by Sunday School classes or Bible study groups.

► Encourage families to have a focused prayer time acknowledging God alone is God. For example, a family may hold an extended prayer before the evening meal or a prayer walk through the home, asking for cleansing and God's presence.

► Challenge every Sunday School class or Bible study group in the church to tithe its time in contrite prayer for spiritual awakening.

► Extend the pastoral prayer and invite several to read scriptural prayers and admonitions.

► Preach a sermon on prayer, stopping at each point to lead the congregation in application praying.

► On Sunday, Jan. 24, ask members to pray daily for tens of thousands of SBC congregations to participate in the Jan. 31 urgent call to prayer for the SBC.

Information to support the above ideas and more are being added daily to the GPS Web site, www.GPS2020.net, Hunt said. (BP)


"There are many decisions being made, including the GCR Task Force, GPS ... search committees ... We need God's direction."

Johnny Hunt
SBC president

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Death penalty on decline in U.S., report says

Fewer death sentences were imposed in 2009 than in any year since the Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976, according to year-end statistics compiled by the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC).

It marked the seventh consecutive annual decline — with the rationale for juries, judges and prosecutors increasingly shifting away from the morality of the death penalty toward whether the higher cost of executing criminals is worth the benefit it brings to society.

The American Law Institute — the organization that laid the legal groundwork for the death penalty in the early 1960s — voted in October to abandon support for it. The institute — which represents about 4,000 judges, lawyers and law professors — overwhelmingly adopted a resolution stating that America's half-century experiment with the death penalty has failed to develop even "a minimally adequate system for administering capital punishment."

Eleven states considered repealing the death penalty in 2009, with high costs and lack of measurable benefit during severe budget crises

In 2009, Texas led all states with **24 EXECUTIONS** — **four times** the number executed in No. 2 Alabama, which had **SIX EXECUTIONS**.

At **200**, Alabama has the second largest number of death row inmates. California has the largest number of inmates on death row — **690**.

tal punishment, said those costs multiply because of how the system really works. A single death-penalty trial might cost a state \$1 million more than a nondeath-penalty trial, he said, but only one in three capital trials may result in an actual death sentence. That makes the true cost of a death-penalty conviction more like \$3 million. In some states, like Maryland, only one in 10 death sentences ever results in an execution. That would mean the real cost to put a single inmate to death there is \$30 million.

In a nationwide poll of 500 police chiefs by DPIC, officers ranked the death penalty the least-efficient use of taxpayer money to reduce violent crime.

Another factor shaking public support for the death penalty is development of DNA evidence, which has resulted in overturning about 250 wrongful convictions since 1989, including 17 involving inmates on death row.

In March, New Mexico became the 15th state to abolish the death penalty. Gov. Bill Richardson (D), a life-long supporter of capital punishment, signed the bill. He said new DNA evidence exonerating individuals on death row

caused him to reconsider his earlier views.

"Faced with the reality that our system for imposing the death penalty can never be perfect, my conscience compels me to replace the death penalty with a solution that keeps society safe," Richardson said in a statement. "In a society which values individual life and liberty above all else, where justice and not vengeance is the singular guiding principle of our system of criminal law, the potential for wrongful conviction and, God forbid, execution of an innocent person stands as anathema to our very sensibilities as human beings."

Baptist arguments

Other arguments against the death penalty claim it is imposed unfairly. Deacons at First Baptist Church in Columbia, Mo., joined more than 300 other faith groups, businesses and organizations calling for a moratorium on executions while the state's death penalty is studied.

"The death penalty as now administered appears to be exercised often in unfair ways, with the burden of death falling on African Americans disproportionately, with crimes against males punished by death more than crimes against females and the rich executed far less [often] than the poor," John Baker, pastor of First, Columbia, Mo., said at a news conference held at the church Jan. 6.

In August, the federal Supreme Court ordered a hearing to receive testimony about whether new evidence establishes the innocence of Troy Davis, a black man on death row for the 1991 murder of a white police officer in Savannah, Ga.

Seven of nine witnesses who testified they saw Davis shoot and kill Officer Mark McPhail later recanted, saying police pressured them into falsely fingering Davis. One of two witnesses who did not recant allegedly told family and friends that he is the actual murderer.

Supporters of the fallen officer say Davis was convicted on physical

evidence and should be executed in the name of justice. But Alan Bean, an ordained American Baptist minister who runs a criminal-justice-reform organization called Friends of Justice, said manipulation of eyewitness testimony is a problem in the court system nationwide.

"Not only do police officers and investigators coerce 'eyewitnesses' into cooperating with the government's theory of the case, there is growing evidence that even sincere and well-intentioned eyewitness testimony is far less reliable than is generally believed," said Bean, a white man who helped bring national attention to a noose-hanging incident that revealed racial tensions in Jena, La.

Bean started Friends of Justice in response to an infamous drug sting in Tulia, Texas, in 1999, in which more than half of the town's black male residents were arrested and convicted on the questionable testimony of a single undercover officer. Bean said he is monitoring the Davis case because of its similarity to one involving Curtis Flowers, a black man behind bars for the 1996 execution-style slaying of four people in Winona, Miss. Flowers has been tried five times without a final conviction by the state.

Alabama ranks second

More executions were carried out in 2009 than in 2008 — 52 compared to 37 — but DPIC said that was partly because of backlog from a de facto moratorium on executions for four months of 2008 as the Supreme Court addressed controversy over the use of lethal injection. Texas led all states with 24 executions — four times the number executed in No. 2 Alabama, which had six executions last year. California has the largest number of inmates on death row — 690 — in part because executions are on hold because of challenges to the three-drug protocol used in the state's capital-punishment method. At 200, Alabama has the second largest number of death row inmates. (ABP)

Someone You Should Know



By Kristen Lindsey
The Alabama Baptist

HOWARD B. FOSHEE

First Baptist Church, Fairhope
Baldwin Baptist Association



FOSHEE

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Psalm 19:14
FAVORITE HYMN: "Eternal Father, Strong to Save"
HOBBIES: Reading and traveling

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 56 years of marriage to Zola; three daughters, Zola, Becky and Elizabeth; eight grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren

Howard B. Foshee served from 1956 to 1989 as director of several departments of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), including church administration, Christian development and corporate planning. Foshee also wrote three books during that time: "The Ministry of the Deacon," "Now That You're a Deacon" and "Broadman Church Manual."

Q: How did you become a Christian?

A: I was blessed by growing up in a Christian family, and I was converted at age 11 while a member of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Birmingham (now located in Hoover). Following Vacation Bible School, I was deeply impressed that God was speaking to me and that I needed to respond to His gift of grace. My faith in Him

led to a deep, spiritual experience and a lifelong following of Christ.

Q: In what ways have you been involved in church ministry?

A: Over the years, I have sought to serve in leadership positions in all of the churches to which I have belonged. I have served as an active deacon and a Sunday School teacher. I now am fortunate to be a Bible teacher of a senior adults Sunday School class at First Baptist, Fairhope. I also serve as co-facilitator of a weekly grief support group in the retirement community where I live in Spanish Fort.

Q: When and how were you led into the ministry?

A: My decision to enter a church-related vocation was made while an active member of Cloverdale Baptist Church, Montgomery. I went to Howard College (now

Samford University) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. At Samford, I had a growing feeling that I wanted to be involved in the field of religious publishing. After graduating from the seminary, I went to the University of Alabama and pursued graduation work in editorial and publishing concerns, never dreaming that I would have an opportunity to spend my vocational life with LifeWay. God works in remarkable ways in the lives of His people.

Q: What role has missions played in your life?

A: A major interest of mine has been in the field of foreign missions. Over the years, Zola and I made more than 50 trips overseas. I'll always be grateful to the International Mission Board for the opportunity of serving through them as a volunteer.

Samford named one of 50 'Best Values' by Princeton Review

Samford University in Birmingham has been selected as one of the 50 "Best Value" four-year private universities in the nation in the annual *USA Today* and The Princeton Review listing. The listing highlights 50 private and 50 public schools that provide high quality academics at a reasonable price.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said, "To be part of this latest ranking affirms the efforts of our students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni and friends who work every day to make Samford the top university that it is. The Princeton Review has acknowledged the things that we see as the ultimate Samford

experience — accessible faculty, rigorous academics, academic and research options and living and learning experiences beyond the classroom."

Samford works hard to keep its tuition low, and its costs are about 25 percent less than other private schools of its caliber, said the listing. One way it does this is by offering need-based and merit-based scholarships. Samford tuition, room and board is about \$27,000 per year, but a variety of financial aid opportunities and Birmingham's comparatively low cost of living balance this out, said *USA Today* and The Princeton Review. (SU)



BGR photo

ASSISTANCE — Victims of a quake in a mountainous region of Tajikistan wait for humanitarian aid.

‘Great opportunity’ Baptists help quake victims in remote area

Winter’s bitter cold will be eased for hundreds of earthquake victims in Central Asia as 20 tons of coal, purchased with Southern Baptist disaster relief funds, makes its way into a mountainous region of Tajikistan struck by an earthquake Jan. 2.

The 5.3-magnitude quake hit Gorno-Badakhshansky, where Southern Baptist relief work was still ongoing from a March 2009 tremor, said Glen Hofecker, who is directing the relief response on behalf of Global Partners, a humanitarian organization cooperating with Southern Baptists in the effort. Emergency relief officials in the government report 100 houses destroyed and another 900 partially damaged.

The coal deliveries will provide an opportunity to help people in and around Gishkhun village who are

frightened about the prospect of more violent seismic activity, Hofecker said after visiting the area.

“Aftershocks were frequent and some quite noticeable. I am a little jumpy myself after part of a house came down just beside me during one,” Hofecker said. “Local people are frightened from years of seismic activity that some have attributed to pending volcanic eruption. The quake of Jan. 2 and aftershocks have been preceded by loud booming from underground.”

The area is prone to earthquakes, Hofecker noted. According to the government’s emergency management office, more than 170 significant tremors were reported in the area between September 2007 and March 2009.

Several relief organizations are providing emergency supplies, including tents, tarps, food and clothing, Hofecker added. Water in the area is safe to drink. The coal deliveries, which will begin this week, will provide heat for displaced families forced to live in tents during the weeks of bitter winter weather ahead. The \$7,000 cost of the project breaks down to just \$11.70 per person.

More than 600 people have been left without shelter, so a long-term need in the area will be constructing new housing, said Francis Horton, who with his wife, Angie, directs work in Central and South Asia for Baptist Global Response.

“Global Partners been asked to build houses. This is the principal humanitarian need and Global Partners could serve as the primary implementer of the project,” he said.

“Funding will come from several sources, including general relief funds provided by Southern Baptists. Volunteers may be needed in this relief effort, once building can start in the spring.”

Meanwhile people who care can begin helping immediately by praying for the affected families and those who are organizing the relief effort, Horton said.

“This is a great opportunity for people who care to help people in need in a very remote area of the world,” he said. “One of the Christians in the area has asked us to pray that those in leadership and ministry would have wisdom and discernment, and for the Father to bless and guide them. Please pray that God’s peace would reign in this very remote, isolated part of the world.” (BGR)



BGR photo

World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Muslim mob in Pakistan beats Christian family

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Infuriated by an alleged anti-Islamic comment by a mentally ill man, more than a dozen Muslims attacked his Christian family in Islamabad, beating his 20-year-old sister unconscious and breaking her leg.

The woman’s father, Aleem Mansoor, said his daughter Elishba Aleem was unconscious after being struck in the head with an iron rod in the Dec. 28 attack.

Mansoor said Muslims beat him, his daughter and other family members with rods and cricket bats on the street in front of their apartment home after falsely accusing his 32-year-old son, Shumail Aleem, of blasphemy.

Aleem, who suffers from schizophrenia, had remarked to a Christian that a shopkeeper was right as a Muslim not to show movies in his general store during a Muslim holy day — to which shopkeeper Muhammad Naveed responded by beating Aleem for profaning Hussein ibn Ali, grandson of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad.

Mansoor’s daughter received treatment at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS) and eventually regained consciousness, though she remains in intense pain.

When Mansoor told Naveed and others that he would take them to court over the attack, his Muslim adversaries said he would fail because they had paid IMS officials \$600 to withhold the medical report on his daughter’s injuries.

He said they also told him that they had paid off officers at the Shehzad Town Police Station to pressure the family to drop the case with an out-of-court settlement.

“The assistant subinspector, Ghulam Gilani, of Shehzad Town Police Station, called my wife and told her that if the family pursued the case of assault on us, then we would be implicated in the blasphemy case, which would have serious consequences for us,” Mansoor said.

Witness to Christian murders being coerced

GOJRA, Pakistan — A Pakistani Christian accused of killing a Muslim during the Aug. 1 Islamist attack on Christians in Gojra said he was arrested and tortured only because he was a key witness of the mob assault that left at least seven Christians burned to death.

Naveed Masih, released on bail Dec. 23, said several Muslims have offered him large amounts of money to alter his testimony regarding the assault in Gojra, 31 miles from Faisalabad in Punjab province.

The mob attack, prompted by calls from Muslim clerics spreading a false rumor of “blasphemy” of the Quran, included banned Islamic terrorist groups and resulted in the looting of more than 100 houses and the burning of 50 of them; at least 19 people were injured.

Masih said one of the Muslims accused in the attack, Qadir Awan, approached him at an early court hearing and invited him to come to his house to strike a cash-for-testimony deal.

“He said that I could make lots of money because I was the witness of the ransacking, but I feared God,” the 32-year-old Masih said. “Because I was not prepared to take money, he had me implicated in the counter-charges.”

Coptic Christians gunned down after church service

NAG HAMMADI, Egypt — In spite of threats of violence from Muslims in an area of Egypt wracked by sectarian violence, police declined to increase security for a Coptic Christmas Eve service Jan. 6, and six Christians were shot to death after leaving the church.

Three men suspected to be Muslims, including one with a criminal record and sought by police, were in a moving car from which automatic gunfire hit Coptic Christians who had attended services at St. John’s Church in Nag Hammadi, 282 miles south of Cairo.

A Muslim security guard was also killed, and nine other Coptic Christians were wounded, with three of them in critical condition, according to news reports.

Copts, along with many Orthodox communities, celebrate Christmas on Jan. 7.

The primary Muslim suspected of firing the automatic rifle at the Copts, witnesses reportedly told police, is local resident Mohammed Ahmed Hussein.

Local clergy said Hussein had not been arrested for previous crimes because he receives protection from officials in the ruling National Democratic Party.

Fox News analyst says anti-Christian bias fueled Tiger Woods backlash

Fox News analyst Brit Hume, who was both widely praised and criticized for suggesting that golfer Tiger Woods should embrace Christianity to find true “redemption,” said he fell victim to widespread media bias against Christianity.

“Instead of urging that Tiger Woods turn to Christianity, if I had said what he needed to do was to strengthen his Buddhist commitment or turn to Hinduism, I don’t think anybody would have said a word,” Hume told *Christianity Today*’s Sarah Pulliam Bailey.

“It’s Christ and Christianity that get people stirred up.”

Hume also suggested that other public figures — including Re-

publican politicians and evangelical leaders — who have strayed from their marital vows, should follow the same advice he gave to Woods.

“Christianity is a religion for sinners,” Hume said. “Christianity is not about the salvation of perfect people. Christianity is a way for people who are not perfect to be saved. What (South Carolina Gov.) Mark Sanford needs is not less Christianity. He needs more of it.”

‘Politically incorrect’

Hume was slammed in the blogosphere and by media outlets for suggesting that Woods leave his reported Buddhist faith and “turn to

the Christian faith” because Buddhism does not offer the same kind of “forgiveness and redemption” for his alleged philandering.

Others, however, have defended Hume, including Frank Page, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, who agreed with Hume’s “politically incorrect” remarks. “In Christ, Tiger Woods can find true redemption, forgiveness and restoration,” Page said.

Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, also defended Hume, writing that “(f)ree, autonomous individuals not only have the right to hold whatever beliefs they wish, they also have the right to change those beliefs and to persuade others to change as well.”

Hume, in the *Christianity Today* interview, said he would continue to use his Fox News perch to spread the gospel as he deemed “appropriate.”

“I don’t want to practice a faith that I’m afraid to proclaim. I don’t want to be a closet Christian,” he said. “I’m not going to stand on the street with a megaphone. My principal responsibility at Fox News isn’t to proselytize. But occasionally a mention of faith seems to me to be appropriate. When those occasions come, I’ll do it.” (RNS)

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'Sheds light' on His life

Archaeologists find house in Nazareth that dates back to Jesus' time

Archaeologists have discovered the remains of a dwelling in Nazareth that can be dated back to the time Jesus lived in the area, making it the only known structure to portray what His home may have looked like.

Yardena Alexandre, excavations director at the Israel Antiquities Authority, unveiled the finding to reporters Dec. 21.

He revealed that workers had uncovered the first signs of the dwelling during the summer as they were digging up the courtyard of a former convent, according to The Associated Press (AP).

Typical dwelling

The workers were making room for the construction of the International Center of Mary of Nazareth on the site, which is just yards away from the Church of the Annuncia-

tion — the location where Mary is believed to have received word of Jesus' impending birth.

"The discovery is of the utmost importance since it reveals for the very first time a house from the Jewish village of Nazareth and thereby sheds light on the way of life at the time of Jesus," Alexandre said. "The building that we found is small and modest and it is most likely typical of the dwellings in Nazareth in that period."

Archaeologists believe Nazareth was an out-of-the-way hamlet of around 50 houses on a patch of about four acres, AP said, and it was populated by Jews of modest means whose dwellings included camouflaged grottos to hide from Roman invaders.

Alexandre said the stone house, which consists of at least four rooms, a courtyard, a water cistern

and a small grotto, could have possibly been a place where Jesus and His cousins and friends played as children.

"It's a logical suggestion," she said.

'Simple Jewish family'

The excavation team has chipped away at mud to uncover about 900 square feet of the dwelling, so authorities aren't yet sure how large it was at the time, when it could have been used as a home for an extended family.

Archaeologists believe the home was occupied by a Jewish family because of the discovery of clay and chalk vessels inside.

Galilean Jews of the time used chalk to ensure the purity of the food and water kept inside the vessels, AP reported.

The absence of remains of glass

vessels or imported products suggests it was a "simple Jewish family," Alexandre said.

Today Nazareth is the largest Arab city in Israel with about 65,000 people, mostly Palestinians. It's located about 16 miles from the Sea of Galilee in the northern region of Israel. (BP)

Number of foreign adoptions hits 13-year low

The number of foreign children adopted by Americans has plunged to the lowest level since 1996, in large measure because Guatemala's government shut down that country's thriving but corrupt international adoption industry.

Adoptions from abroad dropped 27 percent in 2009 to 12,753, the U.S. State Department reported

Dec. 17, according to The Associated Press (AP). That number was almost 45 percent off the all-time high — 22,884 — registered in 2004. It was the lowest figure since 1996.

Guatemala's 4,123 adoptions to Americans in 2008 sank to 756 for 2009, before authorities shut down the industry indefinitely while re-

forms are formulated. International adoptions from China, the leading source in 2009, also dropped substantially as China cuts back on the number of healthy orphans made available for adoptions, the AP reported.

Adoptions from Vietnam — where corruption also has been a problem — dropped as well. (BP)

Want to know God?


By Pastor Thomas Graves
New Georgia Baptist, Birmingham

On a Thursday night in March 1965, I attended revival services at my local church. Having already been introduced to the good news of Jesus and feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I came forward during the time of invitation and publicly confessed Jesus as my Savior.

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At that young age, I did not understand the truth of the cross as I do now but I did believe it, and that is what God requires — belief and trust.

Since I know Jesus as my personal Savior, my desire is that you know Him as your Savior. If you will admit that you are a sinner, believe in your heart that Jesus died on the cross for you and confess with your mouth that He has been raised from the dead, then you will be saved. Then you will know peace with God, and the fear of death and hell will be gone forever. May you trust Jesus today. ✠



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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Central Baptist Church, Bearden (www.cbcbearden.org), a large suburban Knoxville, Tenn., church with ties to both the SBC and the CBF, is seeking a senior pastor. Selection will be led by the Holy Spirit; however, professional degrees, maturity and experience in related positions will be expected of any candidate. For more information about this position, to apply or to recommend a candidate, please see the church Web site at www.cbcbearden.org/pastorsearch.shtml.

PASTOR: Corinth Heights Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Mail to: CHBC, Pastor Search Committee, 4070 Dime Road, Haleyville, AL 35556.

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 resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, 101 Pisgah Road, Easley, SC 29642, or e-mail: mtpisgaheasley@yahoo.com.

SENIOR PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Florence, Ala., is seeking a senior pastor. Master's level seminary (SBC) degree or above and five years experience as a pastor preferred. Send resumés to: fbfc-pastorsearch@gmail.com or mail to: 209 N. Walnut Street, Florence, AL 35630.

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

blarrycobb@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL INTERIM PASTOR: Rivendell Baptist Church, Gadsden, is seeking a bivocational interim pastor. Send resumés to: ryanmcglaughn@comcast.net or 474 Lakewood Drive, Gadsden, AL 35901. 256-442-2580.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Seeking full-time minister of music. Seminary degree and prior experience required. Red House Baptist Church, Richmond, Ky. E-mail Alex Poulter at wapbear@insightbb.com. Web site: www.redhousebaptistchurch.org.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: The Pintala Baptist Church is engaged in a search process for a minister of music. Interested persons should contact Gary Burton, garyburton1@charter.net. Resumés may also be sent to him. Pintala Baptist Church, 73 Federal Road, Hope Hull, AL 36043. www.pintalabaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Bethel Baptist has a staff opening for minister of music to lead blended style worship. Send resumés to: Bethel Baptist, P.O. Box 527, Snead, AL 35952, or e-mail: bethel_bethel@hotmail.com.

PART-TIME/BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Please send resumés to: New Hope Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, 13110 Mooresville Road, Athens, AL 35613.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS & RECREATIONS: McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of students and recreation. Responsibilities include preparing and implementing ministry to middle school

through college students and supervision of recreation ministry, staff and facility. Resumé and salary requirements may be e-mailed to: jobyt@mcelwain.org, or mailed to: McElwain Baptist Church, ATTN: Dr. Tricquet, 4445 Montevallo Road, Birmingham, AL 35213.

STUDENT PASTOR: Smokerise (SBC) is a progressive, growing church looking for a dynamic, full-time student pastor. Submit a resumés and DVD including a testimony/introduction and a sermon/lesson. E-mail resumés to: dallen@smokerisechurch.org. Send DVDs to: 1550 Scenic Trail, Warrior, AL 35180. Due Feb. 17.

FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Meadowbrook Baptist Church in Oxford, Ala. Send resumés to: 1125 Meadowbrook Court Oxford, AL 36203 or e-mail to: mbcap@bellsouth.net.

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 resumés postmarked no later than Jan. 30 to: Mount Zion Baptist Church located at 228 Mt. Zion Road, c/o Dean Polk, Huntsville, AL 35806.

OTHER POSITIONS

PIANIST: East Gardendale Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pianist for Sunday morning and Wednesday night services (with choir practice following service). Applicants should be able to play traditional and praise and worship music. Resumés may be mailed to: East Gardendale Baptist Church, Music Director, 360 Tarrant Road, Gardendale, AL 35071, or e-mail: pj3toogo@aol.com.

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E-zekiel Web Training Workshop

Thursday, April 22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd.,
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Dacia Gullledge, director of customer services with Axletree Media (the parent company of E-zekiel.com), will lead an E-zekiel Web Training Workshop for those interested in learning more about this web ministry tool. The workshop is designed for those that currently use E-zekiel or LifeWayLink, but anyone interested in learning more about web ministry is encouraged to attend. Dacia will give overviews of E-zekiel's most popular web development tools in a six-hour workshop.

Early registration discount deadline is April 12. (Cost includes lunch.)

For more information, contact State Missionary Chris Mills, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 310, cmills@alsbom.org.

Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program

BY BRYAN BLASS

Pastor, First Baptist Church, Gadsden

As a member of Alabama Baptist churches since age 8 when I professed Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, I can say that I believe in the Cooperative Program. Because Alabama Baptists joyfully give through the Cooperative Program, many Great Commission Ministries are made available.

My own spiritual walk has been blessed by many of these ministries. I am thankful for Sunday School teachers and Vacation Bible School leaders who had the opportunity to receive enhanced training at the associational and state levels because you gave.

I am thankful that missions was not simply discussed but missions was demonstrated to me through praying, giving and going.

Giving to missions through the Cooperative Program took on an even more personal nature when my sister and her husband answered God's call to serve Him as missionaries in Kobe, Japan. Their needs were met and time on the field was maximized because so many of you also believe in the Cooperative Program. Raising money was not their priority; rather revealing Jesus Christ to lost men and women was their privilege.

My grandmother was a leader in the church ministry we know as Woman's Missionary Union. I am thankful for ladies who have continued to stay true to the Gospel that commands us in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) to go, make disciples, baptize and teach all people.

She also taught me a little about crocheting. As a young boy, I was fascinated to watch her take all those individual strands of yarn and then carefully and methodically weave them over and under other strands. The result was a multi-colored, warm afghan. The spools containing yarn of all colors were beautiful by themselves, but they became even more beautiful and much more functional with a greater purpose when they were meshed together.

I see the Cooperative Program like this as it allows many individual churches to work together to accomplish much more than any one church could do alone.

I am thankful that when I answered God's call to serve Him in full-time Christian service, your giving provided a seminary that I could afford and where I was further trained.

As a pastor on the field, I am thankful that you give because our Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions serves as an excellent resource for virtually any question I have. It is encouraging to know that there are men and women who partner with our churches in an effort to expand and grow the Kingdom.

I am thankful that your faithful giving through the Cooperative Program allowed me to be trained as a Disaster Relief Volunteer. I have seen hurting people helped, hungry people fed and lost people saved.

I pray that we will never abandon the gift of the Cooperative Program. In December, we focused on the celebration of the greatest gift ever given, and His name is Jesus Christ.

I am not equating the Cooperative Program with Jesus. I am saying I am thankful that it is the most effective and efficient way I have seen in my 46 years of life to convey and carry the gift of Jesus Christ to the millions who have not yet received Him.

I am reminded of the story in Mark 2 where four men carried their paralytic friend, eventually lowering him down to Jesus. That paralytic man knew it was Jesus who healed him, but I believe he had high regard for the friends who brought him to Jesus.

I too have high regard for the vehicle known as the Cooperative Program, which God has blessed since 1925. Your giving through the Cooperative Program has allowed many people to be carried to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

My parents always taught me to say "thank you" whenever someone did something special for me. While I have not met all Alabama Baptists who give through the Cooperative Program, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you because you have done something very special for me. I have tried to share some of those blessings with you and I know there are millions more people who join me in saying, "Thank You!"

Why do I believe in the Cooperative Program? I believe because I have seen lives changed. I believe because people like you have demonstrated through the years and continue to prove to this day that it is the most effective way for all Southern Baptists to actively support and be involved in a multitude of Great Commission Ministries.



Uzbeki Baptist leaders' 'criminal' charges upheld

A court in Uzbekistan has overturned massive fines levied against three Baptist Union leaders in late October but upheld their criminal convictions, which Uzbek Baptists claim were based on fabricated evidence. An order barring the three from holding responsible positions in the Baptist Union for three years also remains in place.

Baptist Union President Pavel Peichev, union accountant Yelena Kurbatova and Baptist layman Dmitri Pitirimov were relieved of the fines — which equaled 260 times the monthly minimum wage — were overturned but said they planned to appeal the Dec. 4 ruling in Tashkent criminal court.

"We will probably lodge a further appeal to the Supreme Court," Peichev said. "The conviction was unjust and we want it overturned."

The charges of evading taxes and involving children in religious activity without their or their parents' consent were based on assemblies held at the union's Joy Baptist Children's Camp, which was directed by Pitirimov.

The three were convicted even though some of the parents involved denied their children were forced to listen to religious teaching. Parents testified they had filed no complaints about the camp and that no one harmed their children materially, physically or morally.

They also told the court that no religious rituals were performed with their children during the camp, no Baptist had suggested their children change religion while at the camp and no one had

suggested children attend Baptist churches after the camp. One parent said she had written her statement as it was dictated to her by officials from the prosecutor's office and that she had signed the record of her interrogation even though it was written in Russian, which she does not speak.

The removal from their positions and the fact the criminal charges were upheld will seriously harm Baptist work in Uzbekistan, the three said.

Harm to Baptist work

"Although we won't now have to pay the massive fines, we still have a criminal record," Pitirimov said. "Pavel can't be leader of the Baptist Union anymore — that's clear. Court executors will enforce this. Yelena won't be able to have anything to do with finances, but accounting is her only profession. This is serious for the Baptist Union and serious for them."

Uzbekistan law now calls for police to ensure the Baptist Union removes Peichev and Kurbatova from office. The three also will be required to give police the names and addresses of their relatives and promise not to leave the city without prior police permission. They will be subject to periodic "check-ups" by local police as well.

The verdict illustrates a broad climate of government persecution against religious freedom in Uzbekistan that affects not only evangelical Christians but also Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is and even Muslims. (F18)

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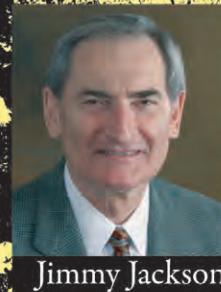
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For more information, please contact Stephanie McClelland at smcclelland@alsbom.org or 1.800.264.1225, ext. 245.



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When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?

Psalm 8:3-4

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Gallion Church digs deep, gives \$10,000 to Moundville's Pleasant Hill Church

After seeing Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Moundville, a fellow Hale Baptist Association congregation, attempt to rebuild its facilities and ministries after an arson attack last year, Gallion Baptist Church decided it wanted to help.

Although insurance and volunteer labor were providing funding for the structural rebuild, Gallion Baptist members knew additional costs could arise.

So the church of about 100 dug deep into its pockets to produce a \$10,000 gift.

"I felt like with so much going on about the Great Commission resurgence that people need to understand that the Great Commission begins in the local church, and we want to be the local church helping each other," said Gallion Baptist's Pastor Timothy Davis. "Our church has been blessed financially by a local church member in the past, and we want to pass that blessing on to others."

Pleasant Hill Baptist's ground breaking is set for March, with completion anticipated for late fall. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Bill Wallace

A HAND UP — Timothy Davis (right) and Bill Baker (left), pastor and minister of music, respectively, at Gallion Baptist, present a \$10,000 check to Chuck Weaver, pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist, to help with the church's rebuild.

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IN THEATERS FRIDAY, JANUARY 22ND

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 24

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

HOW TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS Mark 9:33-50

Controversy Over Greatness (33-37)

When He and His band arrived at “the house” (perhaps Peter’s) in Capernaum, Jesus asked the Twelve what they had argued about on the way. They never gave a direct answer because they had debated about which of them was the greatest. Of course, He already knew that. So Jesus called them together for a heart-to-heart talk. He began with a principle: “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” To illustrate the principle, Jesus stood a child in the middle of the group and added, “Whoever receives one of these little children in my name receives me ... and the One who sent me.” In the ancient world, children, like women, did not count.

True greatness is based not on status but on service to people who “do not count.” To serve such a person is to serve Christ and the Father who sent Him.

Strange Exorcist (38-41)

John broke in with a question, prompted by Jesus’ teaching that whoever does good deeds in His name pleases both the Father and the Son. The Twelve had seen a man casting out demons in Jesus’ name and tried to stop him “because he was not following us.” Rather than not being a disciple of Jesus at all, the man seems not to have been one of the Twelve Jesus sent to do this kind of work.

Jesus called for tolerance toward all who minister in His name. “Stop hindering him.” Jesus said it is impossible for anyone actually doing supernatural deeds in the name of, i.e., on the authority of, Jesus to be opposed to Him. Indeed Jesus promised reward for all who cared for His disciples by casting in their lot with them. Receiving Jesus’ disciples entailed receiving their message about Christ and thus meant receiving Christ Himself. Jesus’ rebuke of narrowness applies today when partisanship often overtops loyalty to Christ.

Collection of Sayings (42-50)

Because these sayings cover such a variety of topics, it is likely Jesus spoke them on sev-

eral occasions and Mark strung them together by linking key words in them. The common idea of “causes to sin” connects verses 42-43, 45 and 47. “Hell” in verse 47 suggests “fire” in verse 48. “Fire” ties 9:48 to 9:49. And “salt” brings together the three separate sayings in 9:49-50. Such verbal links seem curiously artificial to modern readers, but this practice was not uncommon in the first century (cf James 1), and it surely made it much easier to learn large blocks of material by heart.

Jesus called for drastic action to avoid causing a “little one,” i.e., another disciple, to sin. A millstone was not the stone used in a hand mill (Matt. 24:41) but the huge grinding stone turned by a donkey. To be thrown into the sea with such a weight inevitably led to death.

A man’s own hand, foot or eye could lead him to sin. The hand stands for things one does, the foot for places one goes and the eye for things one sees. Each can bring the whole man down to perdition. “Cut it off ... cut it off ... pluck it out” surely is figurative. Jesus called for drastic action but short of self-mutilation. No one rids himself or herself of sin by cutting off body parts. “Hell” here is Gehenna, originally the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem that served as the trash dump for the city. Fires burned trash constantly and maggots worked the garbage. For the Jews, including Jesus, Gehenna was the technical term for the hell of fire, eternal punishment. It is striking that the strongest teaching on eternal punishment in the whole New Testament appeared in the so-called “simple teaching” of the gentle Galilean. Jesus said more about hell than any other person in the New Testament. One cannot repudiate hell without altogether repudiating Jesus Christ.

“Fire” connects verse 49 to the previous verse. Perhaps “everyone will be salted with fire” means suffering tribulation purifies the disciples. “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again” links to salt in the previous verse. It probably means a disciple who becomes corrupt and loses his or her sharpness becomes useless. The salt of the gospel makes for peace by purifying bickering disciples (50b).

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

WRESTLING WITH STUFF Ecclesiastes 2:4-8; 5:10-16

The movie hit of 2008 for many people was “Mamma Mia!,” with its haunting song “Money, Money, Money.” The temptation to make the accumulation of possessions the most important aspect of one’s life is a theme that the Bible warns against over and over again. Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and wealth” (Luke 16:13), and Paul warned that “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:16). It’s easy to try to water down these passages of Scripture and rationalize our consumerist mentality, arguing that money in and of itself is not evil. The temptation to covet what others have and make the accumulation of things the be all and end all of life is too strong to ignore.

Focus on Stuff (2:4-8)

Solomon had the reputation of being one of the wisest, as well as one of the wealthiest, individuals of his time. These verses indicate the extent of what he had achieved through his life — houses, vineyards, gardens, parks, silver and gold and many concubines. It seems that there were moments, perhaps many of them, when he hoped that “things” would bring a sense of meaning and happiness in life. Yet he would discover that property, produce, wealth and sex do not bring ultimate fulfillment.

The key to the problem with these verses is the number of times that the personal pronouns “I” and “my” are used. Solomon focused upon his own achievements and accumulated wealth, with no reference to God or the way He had provided for him. As Paul reminds us, “God has given us all things richly to enjoy,” but human possessions and pleasure must be put in their proper context. In verse 5, Solomon talked of his “gardens” and the word used in its Greek form is “paradeisos,” the same word used in the New Testament where Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” Where do we place our ultimate hope — in the pleasure and possessions of this life or in the eternal hope of heaven?

Desire for More Stuff (5:10-14)

The irony of possessions is that if you do not

have them, then you are tempted to be jealous of those who do and when you have achieved a certain amount of prosperity, which should make you feel secure, you never feel that you have enough. These are exactly the issues that are dealt with in these verses. In verse 10, we are reminded that wealth never satisfies, and in verses 11 and 12, we discover that our possessions never bring security and peace of mind. We are anxious that we will lose them, either through taxation, theft, variations in financial markets or the ultimate threat of death. In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote, “In this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” The wisdom of Job is more appropriate here: “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away — blessed be the name of the Lord.”

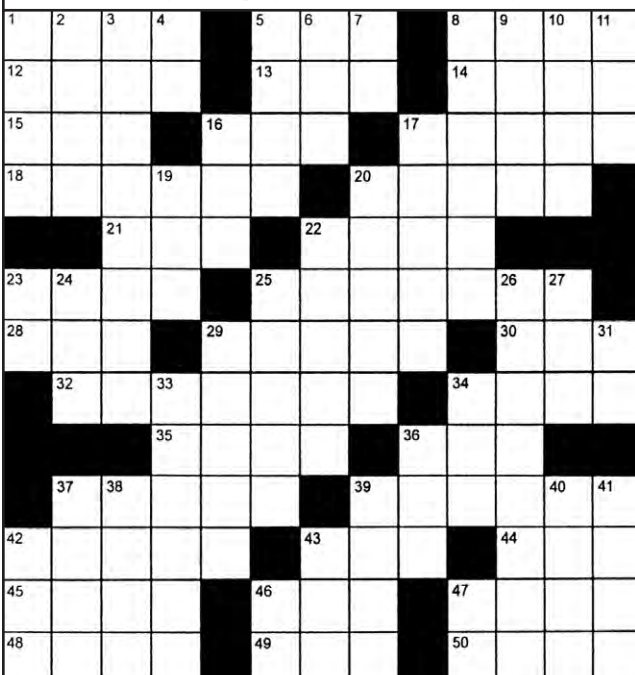
Perspective on Stuff (5:15-16)

With many of the frustrations the preacher deals with in this book, a proper perspective on possessions can only be discerned when we stop living as if this world were all there is to our lives. John Wesley, in his sermon “The Use of Money,” made the comment “Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” He continued by urging his hearers to remember that “[wealth] is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of His children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked,” a means to the end of serving God and ministering to the needs of others.

A recognition that comes out in verse 18 is the key to understanding a proper attitude toward possessions. In that verse and the next, we read about “the few days of the life God gives us ... all to whom God gives wealth and possessions ... this is the gift of God.” In all that we possess, we need to be careful not to speak of what “I” have accomplished or “my” possessions but to recognize that who we are, what we are and what we have is all because of the generosity of a God who gives good gifts to His children and expects us to be wise stewards of His grace in being generous toward others. The concluding challenge of these verses is to consider how our online shopping and check stubs would indicate the priorities of our lives.

Christian Crossword

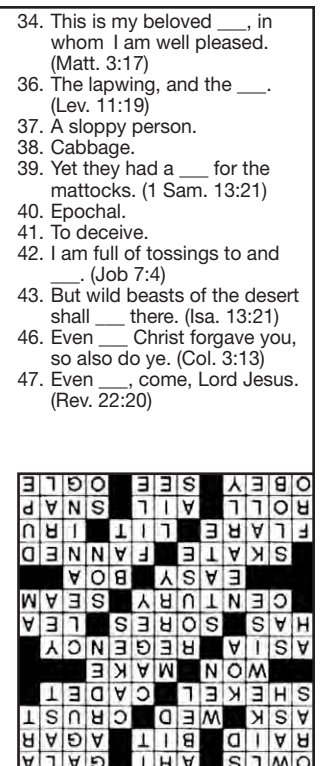
By Evelyn M. Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- I am the brother to dragons, and a companion to _____. (Job 30:29)
- _____ the son of Abdiel. (1 Chron. 5:15)
- Festive.
- An invasion.
- Leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent _____ him. (Amos 5:19)
- For this _____ is mount Sinai in Arabia. (Gal. 4:25)
- But let him _____ in faith. (James 1:6)
- To marry.
- Outer layer.
- The man took a golden earring of half a _____ weight. (Gen. 24:22)
- Trainee.
- A brother offended is harder to be _____ than a strong city. (Prov. 18:19)
- In that day when I _____ up my jewels. (Mal. 3:17)
- The churches of _____ salute you. (1 Cor. 16:19)
- Governing board.
- Possesses.
- The dogs came and licked his _____. (Luke 16:21)
- Meadow.
- Era.
- Now the coat was without

- _____. (John 19:23)
- For my yoke is _____. (Matt. 11:30)
- A scarf.
- Roller or ice.
- Cooled.
- Blaze.
- Illuminated.
- _____, Elah and Naam. (1 Chron. 4:15)
- Who shall _____ us away the stone? (Mark 16:3)
- What _____ eth thee, Hagar? (Gen. 21:17)
- To break suddenly.
- Children, _____ your parents in the Lord. (Eph. 6:1)
- Yea, thou shalt _____ thy children’s children. (Ps. 128:6)
- To leer.
- Danish money.
- _____ me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Ps. 51:7)
- Go, and do thou _____. (Luke 10:37)
- Midwest state. (abbr.)
- _____ was a keeper of sheep. (Gen. 4:2)
- In whom are _____ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col 2:3)
- _____ is finished. (John 19:30)
- God sent him forth from the _____ of Eden. (Gen. 3:23)
- Terror, consumption, and the burning _____. (Lev. 26:16)
- And it shall come to pass in the _____ days. (Isa. 2:2)
- Rabbi, thou _____ the Son of God. (John 1:49)
- Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a _____. (Lev. 22:22)
- And they baked unleavened _____ of the dough. (Ex. 12:39)
- All the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and _____. (Ezek. 23:23)
- Tricky.
- A _____ heart doeth good like a medicine. (Prov. 17:22)
- _____ sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity. (Isa. 1:4)
- A pouch.
- Who shall _____ him up. (Gen. 49:9)
- Washing.
- For all the promises of God in him are _____. (2 Cor. 1:20)
- The last _____ of that man is worse. (Matt. 12:45)
- I _____ become a fool (2 Cor. 12:11)
- Almost.



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites By Jeremy Henderson

ABANDON

Searchlights

Forefront

"Searchlights," the first full-length record from San Antonio-based Abandon, picks up almost exactly where it's self-titled, debut (digital) EP left off. Which is to say that if a deluxe edition of The Killers's seminal "Hot Fuss"



were to ever be released, "Hold On," the first song off "Searchlights"—and, truth be told, several others — could be

slipped in as a bonus track and no one would notice. That's a compliment — The Killers are a great band.

But as the album progresses, the brother-cousin quintet begins to come into its own, blending heart-felt, face-to-the-sky vocals a la young Bono with tight, urgent rock 'n' roll. And they do it well enough to stand out, if they keep it coming, for a long time.

BETHANY DILLON

Stop & Listen

Sparrow Records

Five years after her self-titled record ended 2004 as the top-selling female debut in contemporary Christian music, the attention then 16-year-old Bethany Dillon re-

ceived is (re)validated in "Stop & Listen."

Expertly produced, the album is a personal, confessional 11-song collection of catchy, soulful adult contemporary, bearing the influence of Dillon's new husband, Shane Barnard of popular acoustic praise and worship duo Shane and Shane, on an acoustic remix of the record's great lead single "Everyone to Know." Highly recommended.



JOSH WILSON

Life Is Not a Snapshot

Sparrow Records

There is a race being run in contemporary Christian music to see who can become the first, sanctified Jason Mraz. Josh Wilson is currently in the lead (with Jake Smith and Jimmy Needham nipping at his heels), though "Life Is Not a Snapshot" bears less of Mraz's stamp than 2008's breakthrough-built "Like Trying to Fit the



Ocean in a Cup."

Mraz continues to abide in Wilson's phrasing and vocal delivery but the record's instrumentation

largely lends itself to a more mainstream, contemporary sound. Gone is the experimental, electronic flashes; and the atmospheric minimalism (a la early Pedro the Lion) of his debut has been beefed up with the swells of a praise band.

But Wilson's remarkable knack for hooks and lyrics seem to be here to stay. If "Before the Morning" isn't featured in the season-finale montage of a reality television show by the end of the year, I'll be surprised.

GIFTED DA FLAMETHROWA

Street Symphony

Much Luvv Records

If the various subgenres of hip-hop have been the last to achieve full acceptance into contemporary Christian music, so, too, have its Christian practitioners struggled — more than

Christian punk rockers, even more than Christian metal bands — for secular legitimacy.

The result, thanks in large part to the laptop ease with which these once-suspect beats can be made to sound so professional, has been an almost entirely insulated Christian rap community in which genuine artists like Gifted Da Flamethrowa are making genuine art.

Gifted's 16-song "Street Sym-



phony" is competitive, innovative and indistinguishable from the best secular hip-hop/crunk can offer. Recommended.

NEWSBOYS

In the Hands of God

InPop

For years now, reviews of Newsboys records have read like Wikipedia entries, bullet-pointing the band's illustrious 25-year, 14-album career before moving onto to the musical details.

One reason is that unlike other bands, the Australian legends have maintained an uncanny consistency in sound (give it five seconds — if you know the Newsboys, you'll know it's a Newsboys song), thanks in very large part to singer



Peter Furler's distinct voice and Aussie inflections.

This record is no exception; from the energetic, disco-driving opener "The Way We Roll" (which, fittingly, recounts the band's early days) to the cover of Hillsong United's "Lead Me to the Cross," "In the Hands of God" is classic Newsboys, even down to the songwriting work of Steve Taylor, who was a driving force on 1994's "Going Public" — arguably the group's best record.

But it might be the last time that can be said as Fuller recently announced his retirement — at least from behind the microphone — and replacement by DC Talk's Michael Tait.

This is to say, if you're a Newsboys fan, you need to get this record: it's good — kind of great actually. But unless Tait can affect his accent to Australian, it might also be, effectively, their last. ❧

Book Reviews By Walter G. Nunn and Rosalie Hunt

The Alabama Bomber Boys: Unlocking Memories of Alabamians Who Bombed the Third Reich

Donald E. Wilson. Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2008. 188 pp. (Paperback).

Needless to say, American citizens are extremely grateful to U.S. soldiers who fought overseas during World War II (WWII). One of these soldiers is the author of this book.

Alabamians will especially desire to read this tome inasmuch as its author was a professor at Samford University for 25 years prior to his retirement in 2004.

Wilson bases his account on the recollections of approximately 60 former members of the Eighth Air Force as well as a number of other soldiers. This author himself was wounded while

flying a mission over Germany.

As an appropriate salute to veterans, Wilson is contributing all proceeds from the sale of this book to a program that honors WWII veterans.

This reviewer gives this book an "A-plus" grade. (Nunn)

Emily on the Golden Shore

Marie Conyers McKay. New York: Strategic Book Publishing, 2009. 144 pp. (Hardback).

Marie Conyers McKay became intrigued with Emily Chubbuck Judson upon coming across a book of poetry the young author had written over 150 years ago. McKay is a librarian who was formerly an overseas missionary, so a little-known book written by a pioneer missionary was like a magnet.

Her interest was piqued by this young woman who had been a rising star in American literary

circles, yet left all to marry a man old enough to be her father and to go with him half a world away to a totally foreign culture. McKay began researching the life of Judson and from that research wove a novel based on the events of her short but amazing life.

The Judsons impacted American missions in a way unparalleled in the history of Baptists in this country. The story of Emily and Adoniram is very much a love story, not only of their love for each other but also their love for and commitment to the people of Burma. It was actually the magic pen — the genius of Emily Judson — that preserved for history the essence of that remarkable man, America's first missionary, Adoniram Judson.

Those who love missions and like to read can find a glimpse of the heart of one of our earliest missionary wives in "Emily on the Golden Shore." (Hunt)

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Shades of Blue**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **The Shack**, William P. Young (Windblown Media)
3. **Green**, Ted Dekker (Thomas Nelson)
4. **Missing**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
5. **An Amish Christmas**, Beth Wiseman and Kathleen Fuller (Thomas Nelson)
6. **The Sound of Sleigh Bells**, Cindy Woodsmall (WaterBrook)
7. **Intervention**, Terri Blackstock (Zondervan)
8. **Take Two**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
9. **A Lineage of Grace**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
10. **The Centurion's Wife**, Davis Bunn and Janette Oke (Bethany House)

Inspirational

1. **Going Rogue**, Sarah Palin (Zondervan)
2. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. **The Love Dare (paperback)**, Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick (B&H Publishing Group)
4. **Jesus, Light of the World** (Thomas Nelson)
5. **The Love Dare (leatherback)**, Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick (B&H Publishing Group)
6. **Same Kind of Different As Me**, Ron Hall and Denver Moore (Thomas Nelson)
7. **The Purpose of Christmas**, Rick Warren (Howard)
8. **Voices of the Faithful 2**, Beth Moore and Kim Davis (Thomas Nelson)
9. **It's Your Time**, Joel Osteen (Simon & Schuster)
10. **Give This Christmas Away**, Matthew West (Tyndale)



IMB photo

STANDING WATCH — Most Lezghi of the Caucasus Mountains survive as farmers or shepherds, growing what they need to eat and selling anything left over.

Redeeming value

Vodka unlikely ally for ministry, overseas worker finds

Carl Stroller doesn't drink vodka. But his ministry might not be the same without it. Stroller and his wife, Amy, are Southern Baptist representatives. Ten years ago, they left their hometown in North Carolina to share the gospel with a Muslim people known as the Lezghi (pronounced lez-gee).

More than 600,000 Lezghi live among the snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus Mountains, located between the Black and Caspian seas. Most are poor by Western standards, surviving as farmers or shepherds. Though their culture is Islamic, the Lezghis' belief in God is deeply rooted in animism (spirit worship). Many have heard Jesus' name but know Him only as a good man who did good things.

In rocky soil like this, Stroller says sharing the truth about Christ requires patience to build relationships. When he's not involved with community development projects, — like teaching English — much of Stroller's time is spent talking about God over a bottle of vodka.

Alcohol, like animism, is tightly woven into Lezghi society. Sharing a drink with a neighbor, friend or co-worker is an everyday event — at meals, on the job, after work. Russian influence has made vodka the Lezghis' liquor of choice, not to mention the fuel that fires rampant alcoholism.

But the Lezghis' desire to drink does have a single redeeming value — it presents Stroller with the

chance to explain why he doesn't. "To decline (to) drink is always an odd response for them," Stroller says. "They can't believe that somebody wouldn't want to drink, but it often leads to an opportunity to ... share your testimony and what the Lord has done in your life."

"The funniest thing is what they consider to be alcoholic and not alcoholic. I'll decline vodka ... and they'll bring beer or wine. Then it's back to my testimony of why I don't drink. If I don't have an opportunity to share ... it's because I didn't take the opportunity."

But opportunity doesn't necessarily indicate openness to the gospel, and sharing is no guarantee of salvation.

Despite a decade of work among the Lezghi, the Strollers can't confidently say they've led a single person to saving faith in Christ. It's been a difficult journey, filled with bitter disappointment — even betrayal.

"Initially we thought that these people only needed to hear the gospel and then they would start coming to faith. We never anticipated them being so obstinate to the Good News," Stroller says. "Though spiritually minded, they don't ... express much interest in the gospel. Their eyes have truly been blinded."

Stroller remembers sharing the gospel with a young Lezghi man who appeared to accept Christ but later began asking about the "benefits" of being saved. He eventually discovered that the young man's conversion was motivated by a TV

news story about churches that were allegedly bribing people to become Christians. Once the man realized his profession of faith wasn't going to pay, he renounced Jesus and ended his contact with Stroller.

Amy tells of a similar experience. Several years ago she shared Christ with a Lezghi woman who was married to an abusive, alcoholic husband. Amy, along with several local believers, tried to help the woman. She claimed to accept Christ and even went so far as to be baptized. But Amy soon realized the woman was using them — lying to the church and borrowing money she had no intention of repaying.

"All the other neighbors that I had evangelized in the past had heard that this woman had become a Christian," Amy says. "They thought she was an accurate model of a believer, and they wanted nothing to do with Jesus."

But situations like these don't tell the whole story. God has blessed the Strollers with some successes among the Lezghi, including starting a small house church that's grown from a group of five to 15 people. Persecution has since forced the church to split in half to attract less attention, but it continues to grow in spite of the Lezghis' coldness to the gospel.

"How do we overcome [hardship]? By remaining faithful to the task," Stroller says. "We remain obedient to the command of our Lord to make disciples of all nations. We believe He meant the Lezghi people when He gave that command — that's why we are here."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (IMB)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

YMCA attempts to accentuate 'C' in its name

CHICAGO — Many YMCAs across the nation are reminding people who think of it as a good place to work out or find dependable child care that the "C" in Young Men's Christian Association still means broad Christian values inspired by Jesus' life.

There are 2,686 YMCAs in the United States. They operate autonomously, interpreting their common charter according to the needs of their communities, said Mamie Moore, a spokeswoman for the YMCA's national office in Chicago. No one keeps track of how many YMCAs are reclaiming their Christian heritage, she said. But an October conference in Colorado for YMCA chaplains drew about 90 people from 40 Ys. "There are a lot of hurting people in the world," said Bob Hall, president and chief executive officer of the regional YMCA, which offers programs in five counties surrounding Portland, Ore. Economic troubles, personal trials and a longing for community and spirituality — if not religion — have convinced him that the YMCA has a significant spiritual role to play in the region.

"We're not in the business to replace churches, but many people who step inside a YMCA may never set foot in a church," he said. "Our mission, our purpose, our reason why is to teach, train, equip and see people taking responsibility for their own physical, mental and spiritual well-being. We believe in the whole person."

Hall likes to say he's trying to "illuminate the C" in the Young Men's Christian Association. He has reactivated the chaplaincy — there hadn't been one for decades — hiring Pastor Bob Reichen as vice president for mission advancement. Reichen ministers to staff, volunteers and members across a five-county region. "We were founded on Christian ideals," Hall said: love, respect, honesty, responsibility and service. Stated so simply, they describe any moral person, but he insists that they are inspired by the life of Jesus and foundational for the YMCA. "They're in our DNA," he said.

The YMCA was founded in Britain in 1844, at a time when the Industrial Revolution drew young men to London for work. George Williams and a group of businessmen wanted to offer a Christian alternative to the sordid street life. The first YMCA offered beds, Bible studies and wholesome activities. By 1854, there were 397 YMCAs across seven countries, claiming 30,369 members.

Bush's faith-based push increased churches' interest

DURHAM, N.C. — Churches' activity in social welfare was "business as usual" during the eight years of President George W. Bush's faith-based agenda, but congregational interest in the initiative definitely went up, according to a scholar at Duke Divinity School.

The agenda, aimed at increasing religion's role in providing social services, had little impact on day-to-day ministries of local congregations, according to Mark Chaves, a professor of sociology and religion who directs the National Congregations Study.

Chaves said the proportions of congregations that provide social services (82 percent of all houses of worship), that have a staff member who devotes at least a quarter of their time to providing social services (11 percent) and that receive government funding for such services (4 percent) did not change between data collected in 1998 and in 2006–2007. Easier availability of government funding for faith-based groups, introduced as part of welfare reform during the Clinton administration but elevated to a centerpiece of Bush's domestic agenda, did increase congregational interest in social services, however. Nearly half (47 percent) of surveyed congregations said in 2006 they would like to apply for government funding, compared to 39 percent who said so in 1998.

New Jersey Senate defeats gay 'marriage' bill

TRENTON, N.J. — Homosexual groups suffered their third straight major setback in the Northeast on Jan. 7 when the New Jersey Senate easily defeated a bill that would have legalized gay "marriage," 20–14. The loss was expected but nevertheless is significant because it comes in a region of the country known for its social liberalism and in an area that gay "marriage" activists view as their stronghold. Of the five states that have redefined marriage, four are in the Northeast.

Just two-and-a-half months ago the bill seemed as if it might be headed for passage but homosexual groups suffered a string of losses on Election Day, the most significant one for the bill being the defeat of Democratic Gov. Jon Corzine, a gay "marriage" supporter. Republican Gov.-elect Chris Christie, who takes office Jan. 19, had pledged to veto it. The loss means the issue likely is dead in New Jersey for at least four years, or until another governor who supports gay "marriage" wins.

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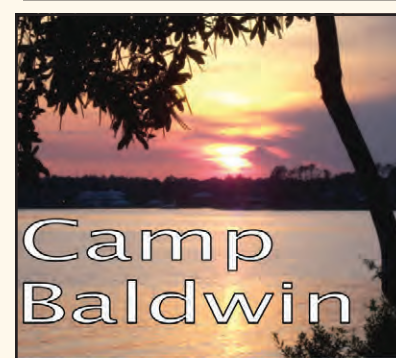
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A brand new facility where you can customize your itinerary as easily as 1-2-3. We can accommodate up to 300 guests in the summer, 200 in the winter and offer dormitory, lodge and platform tent accommodation types.

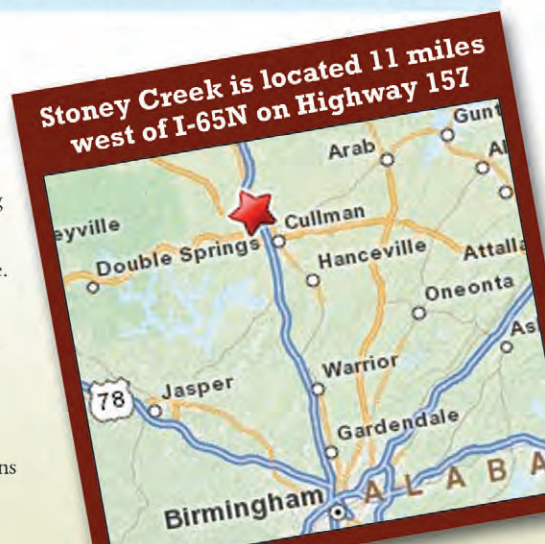
STONEY CREEK OUTREACH, INC. is a non-profit Christian church camp affiliated with the West Cullman Baptist Association that includes:

- **52 ACRES** of picturesque views of wooded surroundings including two creeks and a fishing pond.
- **AMENITIES GALORE** including a water facility for ministry uses with slides and pools!
- **PREMIUM LODGING** for comfort and security.
- **FAMILY PICNIC AREAS** with charcoal grills, tables, and lots of room to play.

- **TRAILS, TRAILS, TRAILS** for running, biking and hiking.
- **STONEY CREEK OUTREACH CHURCH** (local Southern Baptist church) provides a place of worship and a venue for weddings and receptions.
- **THE STONEY CREEK WATER FACILITY** adjoins the Stoney Creek Church Camp and will provide unlimited fun!
- **AND SEVERAL OTHER AMENITIES INCLUDING:**
 - Soccer & softball fields
 - Archery range
 - Rifle range

- Basketball & volleyball courts
- Ropes & challenge courses
- Each lodge features its own kitchen & bath facilities.
- Central heat & air in all lodges.
- Each lodge will feature sleeping and meeting accommodations for 36-72 people.
- No extra fee for bringing your own food service into your lodge. Catering is available.

- STONEY CREEK OUTREACH CHURCH & CAMP** is the perfect setting for:
- Youth Groups and Other Church Groups
 - Community
 - Leadership training groups, etc.
 - Senior Adults
 - Family, Class Reunions, Weddings, Receptions
 - Couples/Men's/Women's Retreats



THE VINEYARD CHRISTIAN RETREAT CENTER

A GREAT PLACE TO GROW IN THE LORD ... JOHN 15:5

The Vineyard, a year-round Christian camp/retreat/conference center owned and operated by the Coffee Baptist Association, is located between Troy and Dothan. Every year thousands of people attend camps or conferences at this facility. Small and large groups find it ideal for fellowship and spiritual renewal.

**COZY CABIN AVAILABLE
FREE to ministers and their families**

- Camps, retreats
- Conferences
- Mission opportunities
- Day-use facilities
- Family reunions
- Secluded setting
- 90 acres, 3 lakes
- Sleeping capacity of 210
- Paddleboats, canoes, kayaks
- Pool
- Gym
- Inflatables
- New cozy cabin for family getaways
- Wi-Fi
- RV hookups
- Walking trails
- Ball field
- Confidence/team course
- Open year-round for all ages



245 County Road 131 • Ariton, AL 36311 • 334.762.2256 • info@vineyardretreat.org • www.vineyardretreat.org

BASIC TRAINING: Teen Resident Camp

your program, our place, great price

To book your camp week or for more information, call Brock at 866-350-7000.

This summer, camps at Smoky Mountain Christian Village are about Basic Training! We are going back to the basics of our faith learning how to use the Spiritual Armor and Weapons that God has issued to every believer, focusing on the Armor of God and learning what it is and Basic Training on how to use it!

Camps at the Village begin at registration on Sunday afternoon, 3–5 p.m. and ends Friday morning at 10 a.m.

What we provide for Teen Resident Camp:

- Over 20 unique activity opportunities (rafting, paintball, tubing, caving, go-carts, etc.)
- Godly speakers specially chosen for their abilities to communicate to youth
- Decentralized approach to camp where you are in charge of the schedule
- A free camp T-shirt for those who register before April 1

What you'll need to bring for Teen Resident Camp:

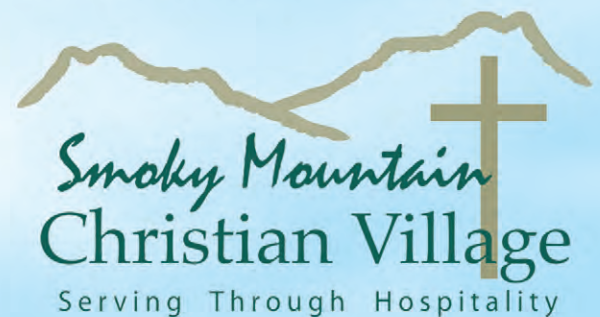
- Church sponsors: we recommend 1 sponsor per 7 campers
- Meals: each group will have at least two fully-equipped kitchens to use for meals
- Sleeping bag/pillow/towels/toiletries

All this for only \$150 per camper for 6 days and 5 nights. Ask about special discounts for sponsors.



SUMMER SCHEDULE:

- Week 1 Resident Camp: 6/6/2010–6/11/2010
- Week 2 Resident Camp: 6/13/2010–6/18/2010
- Week 3 Resident Camp: 6/20/2010–6/24/2010 (4 nights 5 days only, \$120 per camper)
- Week 4 Resident Camp: 6/27/2010–7/2/2010
- Week 5 Resident Camp: 7/4/2010–7/9/2010
- Week 6 Resident Camp: 7/11/2010–7/16/2010
- Week 7 Resident Camp: 7/18/2010–7/23/2010 (Full Week no vacancy for resident camp)
- Week 8 Resident Camp: 7/25/2010–7/30/2010
- Week 9 Resident Camp: 8/1/2010–8/6/2010



BASIC TRAINING: Wilderness Camp for Boys

The Creator, His creation and your kids. If you enjoy being outdoors, if you want to learn how to survive in the wild and if you think sleeping in a tent is a vacation then you will love **Wilderness Camps** at the Village. Those with a heart for adventure are guided through experiences that will include wilderness skills development, leadership opportunities, scripture studies and problem solving situations. This experience will foster an increased discipline of life and character, bringing a greater understanding of who they are and an up-close look at the wonders and stewardship of God's creation.

- Challenging, Biblically-based curriculum focusing on creation stewardship
- Graded outdoor education curriculum
- Special emphasis placed on survival, problem-solving and leadership skills
- Low camper-to-counselor ratios
- Platform tents for lodging
- Minimum Impact Philosophy To Camping

Activities include:

- Orienteering
- Pool
- Challenge course
- Survival skills
- Paintball
- Night hikes

