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'Showing them love'

Mobile churches come together to provide hope, help to needy

By Lindsay Mott
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Meals. Shoes. Football. Haircuts. Prayer. These were just a few things lavished on needy residents of Mobile during the Festival of Hope on Jan. 24.

More than 10,000 came through the gates of Ladd-Peebles Stadium to receive some much-needed basic life necessities and some spiritual help as well. About 50 local churches, including some of the largest and smallest Baptist churches in the Mobile area, came together with 30 community organizations to provide things from groceries to portraits to health screenings.

Opportunity to share

Tracey Fincher of First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland spent the day washing the feet of the needy and said she was greatly impacted by the experience.

"It gives you an opportunity to do something personally for them," she said, noting that as she washed people's feet, she



Photo by Lindsay Mott

'FOLLOWING JESUS' EXAMPLE' — Tracey Fincher of FBC North Mobile in Saraland washes the feet of a Festival of Hope attendee.

was able to share Jesus with them. "We're following Jesus' example by washing their feet and showing them love. It's a wonderful, humbling experience, and it's as much

a blessing for us as it is for them."

Samaritan's Feet provided 1,000 pairs of shoes. The shoes, along with the 720 haircuts given; 1,500 health screenings done; and 10,000 meals

eaten, met the practical needs of the needy attendees. But the prayer tent helped meet their most important needs — the spiritual ones.

"They need prayer and they are thankful for it just as much as the free stuff," said R.D. McGahagin of College Park Baptist Church, Mobile, who spent the day in the prayer tent. He said the people had various needs to be prayed for and one guy he met came specifically for salvation.

"After they get here, they see there actually is some love here that they have never experienced before," McGahagin said.

The man he led to the Lord represents just one of the 250 decisions made for Christ during the festival and one of the 9,148 people who received prayer.

The festival was a partnership effort of Convoy of Hope and Joe Savage Ministries. Convoy of Hope worked out the logistics, and Joe Savage, an Alabamian and longtime minister to the NFL, used his sports connections to provide a family-fun environment.

(See 'Mobile's,' page 3)

Alabama Baptists serving in Haiti; others to follow

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When the earthquake devastated Haiti on Jan. 12, David Gunter was sitting on go — even more so than most people glued to their TVs.

He had a plane ticket in his hand — he'd had it since October.

"I was headed down Jan. 18 to stay for a week and put in windows and doors for a school being built for orphans," said Gunter, a member of Mountain View Church, Anniston. "My flight got put on hold after the quake though."

His plans did, too. He went Feb. 1 instead, but not to put in windows — to run a Southern Baptist feeding center and make sure those orphans got fed.

"They are out of food and water," he

said before he left. "People in the community around them are dying."

And the kids were sleeping outside on the ground under the mango trees until Gunter arrived with blankets and tarps to keep them dry.

"Things changed in my plans after all this happened," he said. "I'm planning now to stay for five weeks, then come back four more times this year."

And his brother John Gunter, who serves in Hispanic ministry in south

Alabama after a decade in the Dominican Republic, changed his plans, too.

A team of Alabamians he was taking to the Dominican Republic this week doubled in size, and many decided to

(See 'Volunteers,' page 8)

Slot machines ruled illegal in St. Clair County

The Alabama Supreme Court may not have moved quickly when the head of the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling came knocking on its door Jan. 29 (see story, page 9), but it did take a punch at gambling that day. The high court justices overturned a March 2009 ruling by St. Clair County Circuit Judge Charles E. Robinson that legalized slot machines in Ashville. It also refused to reconsider its ruling in the White Hall case.

Slot machines became an issue in Ashville in late 2008 when the American Legion Post 170 partnered with Shooting Star Entertainment Group LLC. The American Legion got as far as bringing in about 200 machines (See 'Latest,' page 9)

Don't Gamble with Alabama's Future

Regional anti-gambling rallies featuring The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's Richard Land

◆ Feb. 15, 10 a.m.

Alabama Music Hall of Fame, Tusculumbia

◆ Feb. 15, 2 p.m.

Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville

◆ Feb. 16, 10 a.m.

Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham

◆ Feb. 16, 2 p.m.

State Capitol Auditorium, Montgomery

◆ Feb. 17, 10:30 a.m.

Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan

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COMMENT

Have You Ever Misheard a Scripture Passage?

Have you ever misheard a Scripture passage? I have. The one that sticks out most plainly relates to the popular Psalm 23. In fact, my mishearing related to the key verse of the Psalm, verse 4. There the writer said, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

Most of my life, I heard that verse saying, "I will not fear," but that is not what it says. In fact, Psalm 56:3 declares, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee," referring to the Lord.

Some form of fear is a natural reaction to many life situations. Jacob was afraid of his reunion with Esau (Gen. 32:11). Daniel was afraid of his vision of man in the latter days (Dan. 10:12). The apostle Paul was afraid the Corinthians would not be what they needed to be (2 Cor. 12:20). The apostle John was afraid at the beginning of the Revelation (Rev. 1:17).

Fear is a strong word. To some, it implies being petrified, terrified or hysterical. But other words also relate to fear like "fright," "tension" or "anxiety." Some even label shyness a form of fear — the fear of not fitting in.

Many life situations produce a natural form of fear. Death brings a fear of separation for the surviving spouse. It is a fear related to identity. God made two to become one but death divides. The survivor is left to wonder who he or she is without a spouse.

Divorce brings the fear of never being loved again. Losing a job brings fear of insufficient resources to provide for one's family or care for one's self. A medical diagnosis brings fear of not being able to handle the new circumstances and demands. Even coming of age can raise fears, fears of loneliness, of fitting in, of finding one's place.

Fear of failure, insult to injury

Sometimes fellow believers heap on guilt just at the moment it is least needed. Amid the times of natural fear reactions, some Christians tell us not to fear. While their words are meant to comfort, they oftentimes make us feel like failures in our faith. If the Bible teaches not to fear and one is afraid, then one fears being a failure as a Christian on top of everything else.

Perhaps a better approach than urging a hurting soul not to be afraid is to remember the small child spending the night in a new room. The strange surroundings can be frightening, and the darkness magnifies the emotions. With tension in the voice, the child calls for his or her parents.

How soothing the answer when out of the dark-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ness comes the response from a familiar voice, "It's all right. I'm right here." That is the response of Psalm 56:3. That also is the message of Psalm 23:4. Whenever one is afraid, assurance can be found in the presence of the Lord.

Presence is important. As a parent's presence comforts a frightened child, so God's presence comforts His hurting child. Presence is more than the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the presence of God's people. Presence is God speaking through His children that the hurting soul is not alone. No matter the cause of the pain, God's child is not abandoned, not forsaken. Presence says, "I care. I am with you."

Never forsaken

From my own walk through the "valley of the shadow of death," I can testify to the value of presence. Sometimes pain makes it hard to sense God's Spirit in the midst of crisis, but there is no mistaking the presence of God's people.

Psalm 23:4 does not say, "I will not fear." It says, "I will fear no evil." Evil is real. Like a roaring lion, it goes about seeking those whom it can devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Evil is enemy. Its attacks are awesome. Its results are chaotic. Evil separates us from God.

But evil is not feared by the believer because "thou art with me."

On this side of the cross, we know that God has overcome evil, even the Evil One as the apostle Peter labeled Satan. First John 4:9 says, "By this the love of God was manifested, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." Because of God's love, Jesus paid the sin debt of all who believe on His name. God's mercy forgives the believer's sin. God's grace makes one His child forever. The believer is never forsaken, never abandoned, never alone. "Thou art with me."

Psalm 23:4 is about the end of life. The writer confidently declared that because "thou art with me," he had nothing to fear, even as he walked into death itself. That is the same message written centuries later by the apostle John: "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us ... that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment" (1 John 4:16-17). In judgment as in death, "thou art with me." We are never alone. God is there.

And as God is with us in the end, He is with us in the present. Evil may do its worst in life's circumstances but "thou art with me."

As Psalm 56 teaches, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee." Just like a child trusting his or her parents to drive away the fears of night, the believer trusts in God. And like a loving parent, God comforts. God strengthens. God encourages. God guides.

In the midst of whatever chaos evil brings, God works to make all things good (Rom. 8:28). His promise to the believer is that chaos loses. God wins. For everyone, there will be times in life when he or she is afraid — the heart will race, blood pressure will climb, breaths will come fast and shallow, adrenaline will flood the body. That is OK. It is a normal reaction. Just remember the direction of the Psalm, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee."

And there will be times when you feel under attack by the Evil One in the worst form possible. When that happens, remember that as a believer in Jesus Christ, you don't have to fear evil because "thou art with me."

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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DR. BOBBY S. TERRY, EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash, Managing Editor

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Letters to the Editor

MUCH-NEEDED TOPIC

Your series of articles in the Jan. 14 issue by Barry Bledsoe about estate planning are so needed. They are so easy to understand, and they answer

the questions most people need to ask but don't.

I am currently helping a family organize their efforts to handle an estate that had no will and is a mess. A lot

of unnecessary effort and expense will be spent.

I am helping another person organize their paperwork and to get all the (See 'Letters,' page 13)

Scruggs installed as National Baptist president

Alabamian Julius R. Scruggs was formally inaugurated as president of the National Baptist Convention USA (NBC) during a four-hour service Jan. 19 at the Baptist World Center in Nashville.

Scruggs, 67, pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church in Huntsville, for 32 years, will lead the 7.5 million-member denomination for a five-year term. He has been a vice president for 10 years, serving alongside retiring William Shaw.

Some 400 members of Scruggs' congregation drove to Nashville for the event, including more than 100 members of the choir who overflowed the choir loft, said Earla Lockhart, the congregation's minister for congregational care.

"It was a signal event, a once-in-a-lifetime kind of thing," Lockhart said, explaining why she made time to attend on a weekday night.

"Of course, at First Baptist, we know what kind of man Dr. Scruggs is, what kind of integrity he brings to his ministry."

Future plans

Scruggs won election to the office last September by a vote of 4,108 to 924 over the denomination's former president, Henry Lyons, who had served prison time for embezzling from the NBC.

Scruggs, who helped Alabama's NBC-related convention return to solvency, has said he plans to build on Shaw's efforts to stabilize the denomination, which is one of the country's largest black churches; to increase denominational support for NBC's American Baptist College in Nashville; and to form a public policy commission in the NBC to coordinate socio-economic issues. (RNS)

'Do a good turn daily'

Boy Scouts of America reflect on heritage, national impact in honor of 100th year

By Brittany N. Howerton
The Alabama Baptist

It's a commonality that bridges generations, teaches physical endurance and moral fortitude and offers churches an extra opportunity to reach out to families in their communities. It's Boy Scouts of America (BSA), and it's been around for 100 years.

"Scouting has learned a lot in 100 years," said Jeff Brasher, program and marketing director for BSA's Greater Alabama Council, which encompasses 22 counties. "If you look in a Scout Handbook from 90 or 100 years ago, it teaches things like how to stop a runaway horse or a rabid dog."

It also taught how to cook outdoors, tie knots and build campfires. "While we still cook, tie knots and build fires, youth today face different challenges with peer pressure, the Internet and other 21st-century societal changes," Brasher noted. "The lessons we teach may change, but the underlying message is still the same."

The message of doing a "good turn daily" began with a young English boy who refused payment from Chicago publisher William D. Boyce for his good deed. BSA history reports show the boy said, "No thank you, sir. I am a scout. I won't take anything for helping."

That one "good turn" was all it took for Boyce to know there was something about this "scouting" concept that just might be essential for America. After meeting with Robert Baden-Powell, who founded the scouting movement in England, he brought the idea back to the United States and founded BSA on Feb. 8, 1910.

"America has always wanted Scouting, but in difficult or trying times, people seek us out because they know we hold fast to values that last a lifetime," Brasher said.

Over the years, BSA has helped with relief efforts, encouraged voting campaigns and conducted tree-planting projects, among other things.

were handed bags of groceries.

"It's just giving them that last attention before they go," said Judd Williams, a retired missionary and member of Luke 4:18 Fellowship, Mobile. He said most people seemed to be thankful for the day. He received a number of hugs from attendees.

"I have a heart for them," Williams said. "This is just a part of it. They need help and this is what we do."

Celebrate Scout Sunday Feb. 7



100 YEARS OF SCOUTING
Celebrating the Adventure ★ Continuing the Journey

Photos courtesy of Greater Alabama Council/Graphic by Lauren A. Chow

During the World Wars, it stepped up to aid in food and fuel conservation projects; distribute government literature; sell liberty loan bonds; collect aluminum, wastepaper and rubber; assist emergency medical units; and serve as firewatchers, messengers and dispatch bearers.

And through it all, it has held true to its oath: "On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight."

More than 100 million boys — and counting — have repeated and lived those words.

"I think we will take our history and continue to affect the lives of youth because they want to have fun and experience the outdoors and parents want them to be a part of an organization that will hold true," Brasher said.

For A.J. Smith, a parent of a Boy Scout at Concord Baptist Church, Calera, and executive vice president of the Association of Baptists for Scouting, it's about his son learning a good work ethic, making moral choices and building character.

"In the Scoutmaster's Handbook, it says, 'It is easier to build a boy than to repair a man.' Scouting is about instilling character into boys so that as men, they will make ethi-

cal and moral choices over a lifetime," Smith said. "The founder of scouting, Lord Baden-Powell, believed — and BSA still adheres to the principle — that it is impossible to instill moral virtue in someone apart from duty to God, and so belief in God continues to be a central feature of the Scout Oath and Law."

Brasher said marking 100 years of BSA "means that we have stood true to our core values and beliefs without swaying. ... By being steadfast, people know that we will [neither] change what we believe nor are our values for sale."

For more information, visit www.scouting.org.

GCR Task Force to issue 'progress report'

Great Commission Resurgence Task Force members have wrapped up three days of deliberations in advance of making a preliminary report on their findings in February.

At the meeting's adjournment on Jan. 28, task force chairman Ronnie Floyd said the 23-member group will make a "progress report" to the SBC Executive Committee when it meets in Nashville Feb. 22-23, with the entire document to be released May 3.

Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church in Springdale, Ark., said the task force "still has a lot of work to do between now and June but we want to take this op-

portunity to bring Southern Baptists along in our work."

Floyd said the update will contain "several items, such as where we are at this point, how we see the final document shaping up, how our vision is coming together." He declined to be more specific.

Finalizing proposal

There will be another meeting or two of the work group as it coalesces around a definitive statement on the spiritual condition of Southern Baptists and suggestions for how the convention can be more effective, Floyd said.

The San Antonio meeting occurred three days before Southern

Baptists were to set aside Jan. 31 as a day of prayer for the future of the convention and its missions outreach. Floyd did not specify how many other times the group may meet, but did say an unofficial timetable is to have the final document released by May 3 on its pray4gcr.com Web site.

"Southern Baptists will be able to go online and see for themselves what we believe" the future holds for the convention, Floyd said. "We will spend the month of May tweaking the document, if any tweaking is needed, before it is formally presented to messengers to the annual meeting in Orlando on June 15-16." (BP)

Mobile's needy thankful for help

(continued from page 1)

At the festival, there were more than 75 athletes and coaches from the University of South Alabama in Mobile and the NFL to provide a children's sports camp and NFL football experience. "We took my sports component with their compassion project to put together something pretty special for the impoverished of Mobile," Savage said.

On their way out, attendees received one final blessing as they

SPANNING THE GLOBE

'Family has become the model of culture' 'Serene, beautiful' American Samoa now marked by devastation

By Brittany N. Howerton
The Alabama Baptist

Slightly larger than Washington, American Samoa is a group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean characterized by tropical rainforests, glistening beaches and rugged cliffs.

But in September 2009, a cloud of destruction rained upon the land of about 65,000 people when an 8.1-magnitude earthquake that triggered a devastating tsunami about 15 minutes later claimed nearly three dozen American Samoan lives and plowed down hundreds of structures (see story, page 5).

"There's still shock that something as catastrophic as a tsunami has wiped out what they've known," said James Katina, a member of the contemporary Christian group The Katinas who spent part of his childhood in American Samoa. "The coastal villages once were serene and beautiful and now it's total destruction. All you see is flat land."

Katina was born in Southern California to American Samoan parents. When he was 6 years old, his parents felt called to return to their native land to "reach out to family members." Although his mother's cancer diagnosis took the family back to the states just nine years later, his rich American Samoan heritage had already taken root.

According to the CIA World Factbook, it is thought that the cluster of islands constituting Samoa was settled as early as 1000 B.C., but European explorers did not stumble upon the land until the 18th century. Although early history links Samoa with French settlement, an 1899

treaty between the United States and Germany divided the Samoan archipelago into its modern-day portions



of the Independent State of Samoa (formerly called Western Samoa) and American Samoa.

The following year, the United States formally occupied its portion, which includes five volcanic islands and two coral islands — Rose Island and Swains Island.

American Samoans are American nationals, allowing them unrestricted entry into the United States, but they are not U.S. citizens. While not allowed to vote in U.S. presidential elections, American Samoans have one non-voting delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives and can vote in Democratic and Republican presidential primary elections.

Source: CIA World Factbook

But amid the complex history, it's "easy living," said Si'ave Teofilo, a resident of Pell City who grew up attending a Baptist church in American Samoa.

"People are easy to get along with, and respect is one of the biggest things they teach," he said.

"If you come in and respect the people that are taking you in, they'll give you whatever you need."

That's because it's all about family, Katina added.

"In our family, The Katinas are five brothers but we're only five of 12 kids. ... Villages are broken up into big family groups, and your last name is synonymous with whatever village you come from," he said. "So you can imagine if our one family has 12 kids and you have hundreds of families who have 12, 10 and eight children, then that's really where this concept of family has become sort of the model of the culture."

Each village has a high chief of the family who serves as the patriarch, as well as a "talking chief" who serves as the spokesperson of the village, he added.

From large families and tuna canneries to pastors preaching in "lava lavas" (a rectangular cloth worn as a skirt) and the ever-popular

American Samoans submit to the executive power of the elected governor. Like the U.S. government, their government has a legislative branch that operates in two legislative chambers — Senate and House of Representatives — with an independent judiciary.

Source: CIA World Factbook

"church-going" (see story, page 5), tradition and custom characterize the American Samoan lifestyle.

So the recent tsunami was more than just geographic destruction, it was personal, Katina said.

"I hope from a spiritual standpoint this will cause an awakening that literally shakes the island and people of the South Pacific to come to the sense that there is more to life than what we've known, and if we can come to have an experience with Jesus Christ, it would be the best thing to ever happen."

Alabama Baptist recalls years in American Samoa

When disaster struck American Samoa in September, no one was more concerned than Vera Vaughn, a member of Shades Crest Baptist Church, Bluff Park, in Birmingham Baptist Association. While some Americans may have never heard of this U.S. territory, Vaughn spent five years living there, learning about the culture and helping to improve the education system.

In 1989, Vaughn, a recently retired elementary school principal, received a phone call from a volunteer with the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board, NAMB) asking her to consider moving 5,000 miles away to become principal of Samoa Baptist Academy, located in the village of Tafuna.

She remembers having to ask where American Samoa was. The man she was talking to told her, "Go to Hawaii and turn left."

After much prayer and consideration, Vaughn visited the group of islands and realized it was a place she needed to be.

During her time at the academy (1990–1995), Vaughn established a summer school program through which students could study things like drama and public speaking.

"I was so proud to be able to build a library, set up a computer lab with 20 computers and get a testing program going so we could see their strengths and weaknesses," she said.

Vaughn left behind quite a legacy at Samoa Baptist Academy and in American Samoa. "When we mention Vera's name, a lot of people still remember her," said Sarah White of NAMB's national response team. "She's still very well known." Vaughn has fond memories of them, too.

'They need help'

"They honor people so greatly," she said, remembering when she was made an honorary high chief. It's a revered title usually reserved for men. That's when she knew she had truly been accepted as part of the American Samoan community. Though Vaughn is unable to travel to American Samoa these days, her thoughts and prayers are with her friends as they recover from last fall's earthquake and tsunami.

"I would go there today if I could," she said. "They do need people to help rebuild." (TAB)

Southern Baptist work proves difficult in 'Christian' saturated American Samoa

By Brittany N. Howerton
The Alabama Baptist

While one might want to rejoice that Christianity is the predominant religion in American Samoa, standing head and shoulders among the rest, that fact doesn't necessarily evoke cheers from evangelical missionaries there.

"In American Samoa, everyone is religious," said Lucy Tafao, principal of Samoa Baptist Academy in Tafuna and wife of Elise Tafao, pastor of Happy Valley Baptist Church, Tafuna, and director of missions for South Pacific Baptist Association. "It's a small island and ... everyone somehow belongs to a church, but spiritually coming to receive the Lord is a different story."

After attending Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and partnering with Baptist work in Hawaii, the Tafaos returned to their homeland of American Samoa in 1993 to further the work started by Southern Baptist missionaries Ray and Lena Viliamu.

The Viliamus' work began in 1976 when they were sent to American Samoa as joint missionaries of the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board, NAMB) and the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention.

Beginning Baptist work

"My parents were not attending church anywhere in (American) Samoa, so we started a church in their home with their relatives and some of their friends," said Ray Viliamu, a native of American Samoa.

"There was about 19 of us on the first Sunday," he said of the Happy Valley Baptist Church plant. "That was the beginning of Baptist work from the Southern Baptist Convention in American Samoa."

The Viliamus sought to share with American Samoans the difference between "being religious" and "being Christian," he said.

"We were able to see my parents accept the Lord, and I baptized them and some sisters. And people that were in the neighborhood started coming to church."

In the seven years they were stationed in American Samoa, the Viliamus established churches, a prison ministry, the academy and a "ministry."

Today there are seven Southern Baptist churches (including Samoan, English, Korean and Chinese) in American Samoa, mostly con-

centrated in the Pago Pago region, and two in the Independent State of Samoa, according to Elise Tafao.

"To look back and realize the Lord has used my wife and me, it brings great satisfaction — to realize God has a plan for your life and for every life," Ray Viliamu said. "I'm glad we were a part of what God is going to continue to do both in (American) Samoa and wherever (American) Samoans are today."

And continue is just what the ministry is doing.

"We've been able to start a church a year for the past three years. ... We try to get villages to respond to us, and we do a Bible study and out of that comes a church," said Brian Smart, of Hendersonville, Tenn., who has served as pastor of the English-speaking Tafuna Baptist Church for almost four years.

The churches are also doing outreach in the forms of football camps; Bible training conferences; classes about other religions from a biblical perspective; small group meetings for men, women and children; after-school programs for children and their parents; and missions trips to neighboring islands.

Smart noted that because the majority of American Samoans' faith is based on tradition, the ministry church members are now tackling focuses on "re-educating people about the foundations of what Christianity truly believes. ... We have to re-educate before we can present the correct gospel."

"The island no doubt is very religious," said James Katina, a member of the contemporary Christian group The Katinas who grew up in American Samoa. "On Sunday morning, you can get in your car

and go down the main road in the middle of the island and all you'll see is people dressed in white, walking to church. But all that says is that it is an island that is content with just being religious."

"Every family goes to church. Everyone claims to be a Christian, but as we've grown deeper in our faith, we've realized it's not about religion. It's about a relationship with God."

Over the years, the most predominant faith groups have been the Congregational Christian Church and Mormons, said Terry Henderson, disaster relief operations consultant for NAMB working in American Samoa. But the consistent Baptist relief work that has been taking place since the September 2009 earthquake and tsunami (see story, this page) has brought Baptist life to the forefront.

"We didn't come in to make any recognition for ourselves," Henderson said. "We're there to do what God has led us to do and to assist on the island. They

see we don't have an agenda, and hopefully they don't think we are there to make everybody a Baptist. We're there to share the gospel, and we're there to help anybody and everybody."

Lucy Tafao said even though the fruits of her and her fellow Baptists' labor in American Samoa may not be immediately visible, she knows God is at work in their midst.

"When we want something, we want to see results right way, but we have learned to accept the fact that it will take time," she said. "Little by little, we're planting that seed and we may not be here long enough to see a bunch of people (come to Christ), but we do see God working."

Although statistics show nearly 100 percent of islanders adhering to "Christianity," the CIA World Factbook and U.S. Library of Congress reveal the following breakdown of religious groups:

Congregational Christian: 50 percent

Mormon: 22 percent

Catholic: 20 percent

Christian groups include, but are not limited to, Baptists, Methodists, Assemblies of God, Nazarenes and Anglicans.



NAMB photo

HELP, LOVE — Wearing their trademark yellow caps, Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers Patrick Underwood (left) and David Whitehead show islanders how to purify water following the September 2009 tsunami.

American Samoa begins long rebuilding process

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

While most Americans' attention was focused on the massive flooding in Georgia's Atlanta area last fall, an equally destructive event was taking place 5,000 miles away in American Samoa, a U.S. territory south of Hawaii. The group of islands experienced both an earthquake and a tsunami, the first such disaster it has seen in 50 years. Trained relief workers quickly came to the aid of the 65,000 residents following the disaster, but several months later, its effects can still be felt daily.

For instance, about 1,700 families remain displaced, said Terry Henderson, disaster relief operations consultant for the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

"We Baptists and the Mennonites are the largest groups, and there are probably only 20 volunteers [here] for this repair," said Henderson, who is currently in American Samoa to help coordinate Southern Baptists' rebuilding efforts. "[The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has] asked us to train and apprentice people who can learn to rebuild." By teaching the American Samoans FEMA-approved construction methods, the agency can ultimately save money by sending fewer volunteers.

Encouraging residents to take part in the rebuilding process will be simple, said Leon and Sarah White of NAMB's national response team.

The Whites, members of First Baptist Church, Alabaster, who travel all

over the United States helping people after various disasters, went to American Samoa shortly after the earthquake and tsunami to serve as chaplains as well as organize and plan for reconstruction.

They were impressed by the people's optimism and self-motivation.

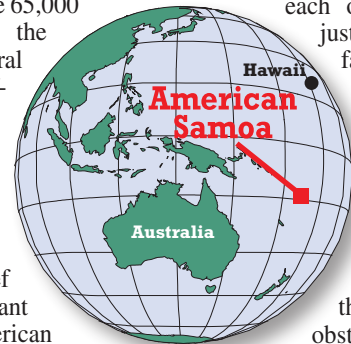
"They never lost the smiles on their faces even though they'd lost everything they owned," Leon White said, adding they all chipped in to help each other. "The homeless just moved in with other family members. They weren't sitting around waiting for someone to do it for them," he said.

According to Henderson, many people have started making repairs on their own, but there are obstacles for them to overcome. FEMA remains hesitant

to approve the start of construction on a building unless all the materials are already on-site. It is hoped this measure will prevent the possibility of unfinished projects. Getting sufficient funding for supplies is the main problem at this point, so monetary donations are the best way to help with relief efforts, Henderson said.

As reconstruction begins, he is optimistic — but also realistic — about the process. "It could be a year or two," Henderson said.

To donate to the relief efforts in American Samoa, send checks marked for "Samoa Tsunami Relief" to the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.



Across Alabama's Associations

BALDWIN

► Jay Jerrell is the new worship pastor for Faith Family Fellowship, Spanish Fort, effective Feb. 8. He is a graduate of the University of Mobile and Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Jerrell and his wife, Jill, have two children. Joel Faircloth is pastor.



JERRELL

BARBOUR

► Belcher Bethel Church, Baker Hill, will hold revival Feb. 7-10, nightly at 7. Guest speakers include Randall Johnson, Norman Simmons, Tom Chestnut and Danny Bynum. There will be special music each night. For information call 334-585-6529. Joe Vickers is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► Birmingham Association will hold senior adult fun day Feb. 11, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., at Shades Mountain Church, Vestavia Hills. Former University of Alabama and NFL football player Jeremiah Castille will speak, and Steve Dunn, associate music minister for Shades Mountain, will provide special music. To register call 205-599-3245 or e-mail register@bbaonline.org by Feb. 8. Danny Wood is pastor of Shades Mountain. Mike McLemore is executive director for Birmingham Association. ► The senior adult ministry of Liberty Park Church, Vestavia Hills, will hold a Young at Heart Valentine's Day luncheon Feb. 14 following the 11 a.m. service. There will be a musical program. For reservations call 205-969-1236 by Feb. 10. Scott Guffin

is pastor. ► Shades Crest Church, Bluff Park, will host the Concordia Choir of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m. For tickets call 205-822-1360 or visit www.shadescrest.org. A portion of the proceeds will go to Shades Crest School of the Arts. Dennis W. Foust is pastor. ► Westwood Ballet of Westwood Church, Forestdale, will host A Celebration of Love tea party for young ladies and ladies young at heart Feb. 14, 2 p.m., in the fellowship hall. There will be a light lunch. For tickets call 205-798-0900 by Feb. 10. Steven Potts is pastor.

ELMORE

► Shoal Creek Church, Deatsville, will hold a wild game supper Feb. 27, 3-8 p.m., with Randy Howell. Holy Destiny will provide special music. There will be food, fellowship and door prizes. For information contact Student Minister Ashley Miller at 334-569-2482 or ashley.miller@shoalcreekchurch.org. Shane Russell is pastor.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of Maple Avenue Church, Geneva, will hold a luncheon meeting Feb. 9, 11 a.m., with guest speaker Red Coleman, pastor of Fellowship Church, Hartford. Jason Gunter, the church's minister of music and children, will provide special music. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by Feb. 4. The church will hold a Valentine's banquet Feb. 12, 6:30 p.m., in the family enrichment center. A ribeye steak will be served. Humorist Philip "Fuel Man" Dodson with his Homespun Humor and Tall Tales from Hilson Bay will provide entertainment. Tickets are limited. Call 334-684-9617. Mike Shirah is pastor.

MOBILE

► Terry Ellis resigned as pastor of Spring Hill Church, Mobile. ► Clint Pressley resigned as pastor of Dauphin Way Church, Mobile, to be co-senior pastor of Hickory Grove Church, Charlotte, N.C., effective Feb. 21. ► Dauphin Island Church will celebrate its 50th anniversary Feb. 28, 10:30 a.m. There will be a musical celebration and review of the church's history. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. Lunch will follow the service at noon. Chris Schansberg is pastor.

SAND MOUNTAIN

► New Home Church, Pisgah, will dedicate a home that was built by church members on donated land for one of its fellow members Feb. 7, 4 p.m. David Smith is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► Mike Dowling is the new pastor of Cook Springs Church. He comes from Highland View Church, Trussville, where he served as pastor. He has also served several other churches in the Jefferson County area. Dowling is a graduate of Samford University. He and his wife, Sandra, have seven children and four grandchildren. ► Matthew Dowling is the new minister of youth and children for Cook Springs Church. He is a graduate of Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham. He is married to Angel Duran. Mike Dowling is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► The women's ministry of Calvary Church, Tuscaloosa, will hold a conference called Beauty Marked Feb. 5-6 with Angela Thomas. Registration will begin Friday at 5:30 p.m. The conference will be 7-9 p.m. on Friday and 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday. Tim Lovett is pastor.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Calif. director emeritus Bill Hogue dies at 82

BROWNWOOD, Texas — C.B. "Bill" Hogue, executive director emeritus of the California Southern Baptist Convention (CSBC), died Jan. 26. He was 82 and was undergoing treatment for cancer at the time of his death.

Before leading California Southern Baptists, Hogue served as vice president for evangelism of the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board, NAMB) 1973-1982 and director of evangelism for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma 1971-1973.

During his tenure in California, from January 1985 to February 1995, Hogue restructured an executive board staff to emphasize evangelism, missions and church growth.

When he retired, the number of CSBC churches totaled 1,648, an increase of some 40 percent.

It was during Hogue's 10-year term the convention's name was changed from The Southern Baptist General Convention of California to the name still in use — California Southern Baptist Convention.

It was Hogue's motion at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in 1993 in Houston that led to the restructuring of the SBC set forth in the 1995 document, "Covenant for a New Century," approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta.

Hogue subsequently served on the SBC Implementation Task Force and chaired the incorporators of NAMB that recommended its first president.

Hogue also served as a Baptist World Alliance vice president and chairman of the North American Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism.

Iraqi Baptist church damaged by explosion

BAGHDAD — First Baptist Church of Baghdad, Iraq, was damaged by an explosion a third of a mile from the church building.

The incident occurred on the morning of Jan. 26 after a suicide bomber drove an 18-wheeler with explosives into a crowded intersection, killing several bystanders.

The pastor, workers and children at a kindergarten school at the church were not physically harmed, but the Baptist church building suffered serious damage.

First Baptist Church of Baghdad is a congregation belonging to a small group, the Baptist Church of Baghdad, which is affiliated with the European Baptist Federation (EBF). The EBF is one of six regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Tony Peck, BWA regional secretary for Europe and general secretary of the EBF, stated that two members of the Iraqi congregation attended an EBF Youth Conference held in Elstal, Germany, less than two weeks earlier, Jan. 15-17. The EBF includes churches in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

"This is the reality of what they, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the whole Iraqi people, face daily," Peck said. "We are praying for peace and the ending of the violence in Iraq, but also for the clear and courageous witness of Christian believers in these troubled times."

Iraqi insurgents linked with al-Qaeda claimed responsibility Jan. 27 for bombings that took place that week at three Baghdad hotels that killed at least 36 people.

Annie Armstrong misses goal, still a 'blessing'

TALLADEGA, Ala. — Southern Baptists gave \$56.5 million in 2009 to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. The amount was 2.7 percent (or \$1.5 million) off the previous year's giving mark and \$8.5 million below the stated goal of \$65 million.

Richard Harris, interim president of the North American Mission Board, shared the total in an address to the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) board of trustees at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

The \$56.5 million received in 2009 is the fourth-largest total in the offering's history.

In a year filled with 10 percent unemployment, a bleak housing market and other distressing economic news, Harris said the amount given to "Annie" was a blessing.

"Only God could do that," Harris told the WMU leaders Jan. 10, "and only through the faithfulness of people like WMU ladies out there lifting up the opportunities and needs."

Harris expressed his appreciation for WMU's year-round efforts to promote missions and missions giving.



Photo courtesy of Carlos Lemus

ALABAMA HISPANIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP CELEBRATES SIXTH ANNIVERSARY

The Alabama Hispanic Baptist Fellowship celebrated its sixth anniversary Jan. 23 at First Hispanic Baptist Church, Fort Payne. Approximately 60 people were present for the celebration, including a number of Hispanic Baptist pastors from around the state (pictured here).

'Christian gentleman'

Samford names FBC Montgomery's Melvin Cooper as layperson of year

By Brittany N. Howerton
The Alabama Baptist

If you're going to be a believer, serve your church — serve anywhere [you] can bring people to Christ. I just thought that was what we're supposed to do."

This is the philosophy of 82-year-old Melvin G. Cooper, a member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association. And that philosophy gave Samford University a reason to name him its 2009 Alabama Baptist Layperson of the Year.

After accepting Christ at age 11, Cooper said he never wondered whether Christian service was an option.

'Unusual effectiveness'

And serve he has — as a long-time member and chairman of the Alabama Baptist Christian Life and Public Affairs Commission, moderator of Autauga Baptist Association and deacon and chairman of deacons at First Baptist Church, Prattville; East Memorial Baptist Church, Prattville; and First, Montgomery.

In addition to his 26-year military career and 20 years of service

as the first executive director of the Alabama Ethics Commission, Cooper taught Sunday School and Bible study classes for 63 years in churches in four states, Washington and the Philippines, where he was stationed at Clark Air Base.

He explained one of his most memorable experiences came while in West Virginia, where he and his wife, Dolores, started a Sunday School class with two other people, and just four years later, it had an attendance of 200.

"You serve where you're needed," said Cooper, who received his award at a Jan. 24 service at his church.

Sometimes that means trying new things like teaching English as a Second Language or citizenship classes.

"Mel is a Christian gentleman who serves the Lord with unusual effectiveness and enthusiasm," said Jay Wolf, pastor of First, Montgomery. "He is an uncommonly wise and winsome person who encourages everyone who crosses his path."

A graduate of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, George Washington University in Washington and West Virginia University in Morgantown, Cooper taught

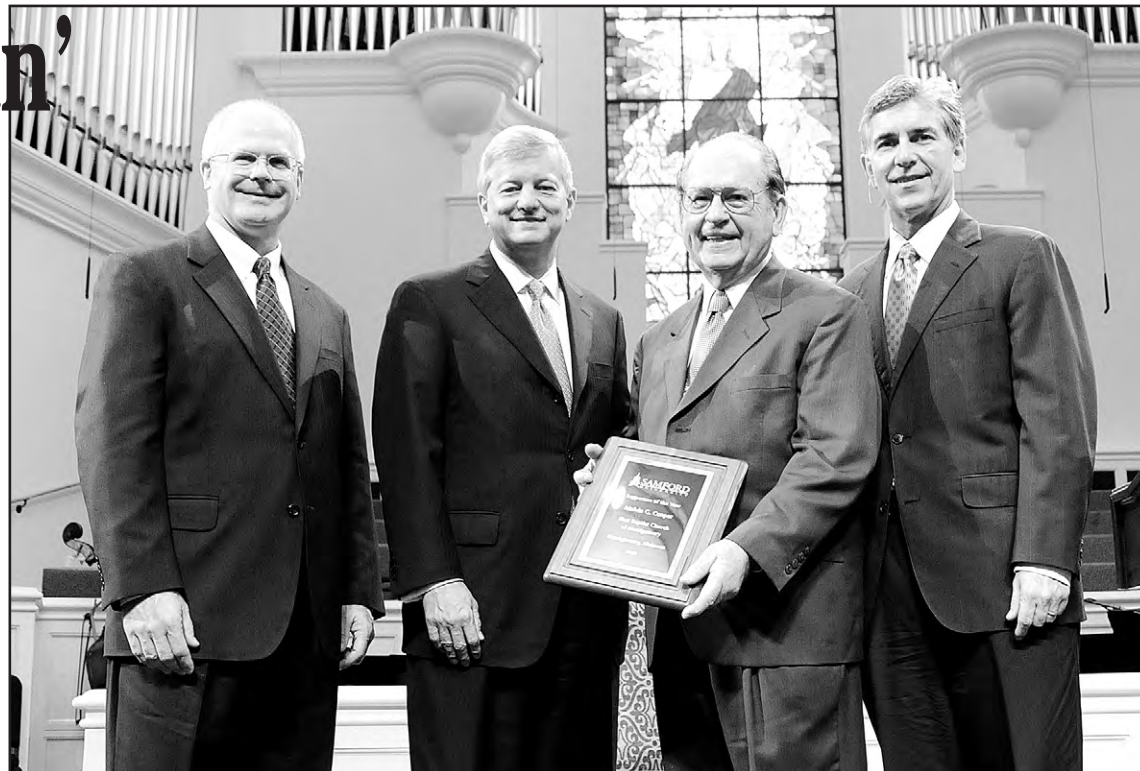


Photo by Chris Mills

HONORED — (L to r) Michael Wilson and Randall Pittman of Samford present Melvin G. Cooper with the 2009 Alabama Baptist Layperson of the Year award. Jay Wolf (right) is pastor of FBC Montgomery.

governmental ethics and American government at Auburn University at Montgomery and ethics at Troy University's Montgomery campus.

"I have been fortunate to receive military awards during my Air Force career, various awards as executive director of the Alabama Ethics Commission and as outstanding adjunct professor from Troy University in 2008," he said. "However, to

be told I had been selected to receive Samford University's outstanding layman of the year was completely and totally overwhelming."

Cooper said when Kenny Hoomes, associate pastor of First, Montgomery, informed him of his selec-

tion, he became quite emotional. "By the time I told my lovely wife, Dolores, tears were evident," Cooper said. "I am humbled and grateful for this honor. It is the only award that one day, I can lay at the feet of my Savior."

What law says about public religious expression 'clarified'

Legal experts from the left and right say they hope a new statement of shared principles on religious expression in public life will lead to fewer church-state lawsuits.

"There's tremendous confusion about this area of the law," said Melissa Rogers, whose Center for Religion and Public Affairs at Wake Forest University School of Divinity published the document after five years of work.

Rogers is a member of President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

"We hear broad inaccurate statements all the time: on the one hand ... that somehow religion has been kicked out of the public square; on the other hand ... that there are no limits when government deals with religion."

The 32-page document, which was unveiled Jan. 12 at the Brookings Institution, is an effort to "try to blow away those mischaracterizations," said Rogers, who is finalizing recommendations for reform of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

The document covers such thorny legal matters as governmental displays and monuments that contain religious elements; public school lessons about religion; and religious symbols in retailers' holiday ads. While its drafters disagree on what some laws should say, the

document summarizes current law as it is.

It answers such questions as:

► May a city require individuals to obtain a permit prior to engaging in door-to-door advocacy on religious issues? (No)

► May elected officials reference religious ideas and discuss their personal religious beliefs while in their official capacities? (Sometimes)

► May gravestones at government-run cemeteries display religious symbols chosen by the families of the deceased? (Yes)

Decreased lawsuits?

Some questions were more difficult than others for the 28 legal experts — who represented groups ranging from the Anti-Defamation League to the Southern Baptist Convention. Several experts cited particular kinds of lawsuits they hope will decrease if the document succeeds in bringing greater legal clarity.

Rogers said the document will be distributed to government officials and will be available through her center's Web site, www.divinity.wfu.edu/rpa.

The document follows publications produced over the last two decades in which legal experts with differing stances have found agreement on issues such as religion and the public schools, including a 1995 statement that was distributed by the Clinton administration. (RNS)



Someone You Should Know

By Kristen Lindsey
The Alabama Baptist

GEORGE YEAGER

Philadelphia Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills
Birmingham Baptist Association



YEAGER

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES:
1 Timothy 6:17-18

FAVORITE HYMN:
"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

HOBBIES: Golf and fishing
FAMILY STATUS: Married to Cathy for 29 years; four children, Grey, Ryan, Dana and Holly; and four grandchildren

You need to understand God's vision for your life in order for you to be happy," said George Yeager. He believes God's vision for him was to co-found and serve as president of Rejoice and Hope Ministries International, a non-profit Christian organization serving people of Tanzania. He is also a senior financial adviser for Ronald Blue & Co. in Birmingham.

Q: What led you to create Rejoice and Hope Ministries International?

A: I was part of Promise Keepers and went to a Promise Keepers conference in 1996. The name of the conference that year was Breaking Down the Walls, which was about breaking down racial barriers. I was convicted that I had a barrier that I needed to break down. So I made a private promise to God that if He would put a colored man in

my life, I would endeavor to make him my friend. Several years later, God did just that and I remembered my promise. The man God put in my life is named Rejoice Ndalima from Tanzania. Rejoice wanted our church to do ministry to Tanzania, and so a group went to Tanzania in 2000. I was so taken by their first trip to Tanzania that I wanted to go the next year. When I got to Tanzania in 2001, I was taken aback by what we saw. The opportunity was so great and so large that it just felt like we needed to get other people involved.

Q: What is the purpose and function of this ministry?

A: Our primary purpose is to evangelize. We do this in several ways. First, we have or support a crusade, which is still a very popular method of evangelism in Africa. Secondly, we have a pastor's

conference each year. Most pastors don't have a theological education; they have a sincere calling but no training. Thirdly, we have children's programs and programs for young women and girls. Fourthly, we have a health initiative. Lastly, we have a micro-finance program.

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

A: We are working to make the ministry sustainable. I have an interest in training people to return to their countries and making a difference. I think I'll continue to work with micro-finance ministries even here. I'm not done yet.

Q: What impact has this ministry made on your life?

A: This ministry has matured me. I've learned something new about myself every year. I have learned to let God be in control.

Haiti needs you

Will you send a 'Bucket of Hope'?

Over the next several weeks, Alabama Baptists have the opportunity to pack "Buckets of Hope" with specific necessities for Haitians who desperately need provisions.

"These are food-supplement kits that will be assembled and sent to Haiti with very specific items in them packed in a very specific way," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

For about \$30, an individual or church can buy a plastic five-gallon bucket and pack it with specific provisions like rice, cooking oil and flour (see full list to the right).

Buckets will be collected at drop-off points around the state (more information coming soon) in mid-March and taken from those points to Montgomery, where they will be packed and shipped to Miami.

From Miami, buckets gathered from different states will be taken to Haiti.

"These will help target absolute needs on the ground there," Johnson said.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Purchase a plain five-gallon white plastic bucket with a handle — new and unused — from your local discount or hardware store. Be sure the bucket has a tight-fitting lid. The bucket should have no logo or commercial imprint.

Purchase these commercially pre-packaged food items (may be generic or store brand items). Please do not substitute any item listed and do not add anything additional inside the bucket.

- 2 – 5-pound bags of long grain enriched rice
- 1 – 48-ounce plastic bottle of cooking oil
- 2 – 2-pound bags dry black beans (can substitute with red beans)
- 1 – 5-pound bag of all-purpose flour (not self-rising)
- 1 – 20-ounce cylinder container of granulated white sugar (coffee service size)
- 2 – 1-pound boxes of spaghetti noodles
- 1 – 2-pound plastic jar of smooth peanut butter
- 1 – 2-gallon plastic Ziplock storage bag (used to wrap bottle of cooking oil)

Packing Instructions:

1. As you pack the bucket, pray for the Haitian family that will receive the food.
2. Lay the bucket on its side.
3. Place the rice packages in the bucket. Lay the bags side-by-side and flat, running in the direction of top to bottom of the bucket. Gently compress the bags (without breaking them) as flat as possible to create room for other items.
4. Place the bottle of oil inside a clean, unused 2-gallon storage bag. Compress the air out of the bag and wrap the excess portion of the bag tightly around the bottle. (This is a precaution to protect the food stuffs should there be leakage or a break in the bottle during transport.)
5. Lay the bottle of oil on top of the rice bags. Lay the wrapped oil container so that the bottom of the bottle is at the bottom of the bucket and is approximately in the center of the bucket.
6. Place the peanut butter jar on one side of the oil.
7. Place the cylinder of sugar on top of the wrapped oil bottle.
8. Place the boxes of spaghetti noodles on the other side of the oil bottle.
9. While holding the sugar and peanut butter in place, stand the bucket upright.
10. Place one bag of black beans down along the inside of the bucket next to the peanut butter.
11. Place the bag of flour on its side on top of the peanut butter, gently packing down the flour bag to clear the rim of the bucket.
12. Place the second bag of black beans next to the flour.
13. Close the lid of the bucket and make sure it is securely closed.
14. Place \$10 cash (bills only) into a business size (#10) or smaller envelope. Seal the envelope. Securely tape the envelope to the lid of the bucket.
15. Take the filled "Bucket of Hope" to your area collection center by mid-March (further information on specific due date and collection points coming soon).



Photos courtesy of BP and Florida Baptist Witness/Graphic by Lauren A. Chow

Volunteers needed for Alabama Baptist Haiti recovery teams

(continued from page 1)

go across the border to work in Haiti instead.

"They are really excited about the possibility of ministering there," John Gunter said. "When we decided to shift our focus, they were ready to go be used wherever they could."

They aren't the only ones.

"Things are starting to improve in Haiti, and we've got some teams headed out," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers will be the first Southern Baptist recovery personnel arriving in Haiti. That wave of volunteers — arriving in March — will comprise the first part of a 12–24 month long-term recovery effort Alabama Baptists are committing to.

To recruit teams and train volunteers, the SBOM is holding four disaster relief certifica-

tion sessions in different parts of the state in February (see page 12 for details).

"From that pool of data and volunteers, we will begin to put together some teams that can go," Johnson said.

At press time, four "strategically selected" medical teams were headed to Haiti to lead Southern Baptists' joint effort there.

Meanwhile Alabama Baptists are finding ways to contribute to ongoing work in Haiti:

► Individuals and churches are being encouraged to participate in a "Buckets of Hope" project to provide food provisions to Haitian people in need (see story, this page).

Churches are also encouraged to download a bulletin insert from www.alsbom.org/haiti that provides information for individuals on how to get involved in volunteer work in Haiti.

► Jim Dewey, a Navy chaplain and former Marine officer, is distributing meals and water

in Petite Gouve, about 40 miles west of Port-au-Prince, the nation's hard-hit capital.

"Things are much worse in Port-au-Prince than here," said Dewey, a graduate of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. "The hardest part is seeing the children in need. We have seen one die due to medical issues."

► Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) is working in co-operation with the Florida Baptist Children's Homes in a standby capacity to help if needed with any children who may come into their care. Paul Miller, ABCH president/CEO, said leaders are identifying ABCH employees, former employees and select volunteers who would be able to help if called upon.

► The University of Mobile (UM) is hosting a shoe and blanket drive for children in Haiti through Feb. 26. The Salvation Army will deliver the items to children in Haiti.

UM students will also work together to build a cardboard city on campus to raise awareness about homelessness in Haiti and around the world. Students are asking individuals and businesses to sponsor their overnight stay in the cardboard homes they create.

► In the wake of the Haiti crisis, Baptist churches across the state — as well as students at the state's three Baptist colleges — have responded with generous donations to the SBOM's disaster relief fund. A total of \$110,000 has been sent so far to help with Haiti relief on behalf of Alabama Baptists.

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."

Latest high court ruling clarifies illegal 'bingo'

(continued from page 1)

and operated for about two weeks before Sheriff Terry Surles shut the operation down. The machines were moved out pending action by the Supreme Court.

Gov. Bob Riley applauded the latest ruling and said it clarifies the slot machine issue statewide.

The high court's opinion "again makes clear that the so-called electronic bingo machines being used by casino bosses across the state are illegal," Riley's office said in a news release Jan. 29.

"In a follow-up to its November opinion that identified six elements that are required for legal bingo, the court today made clear that 'human interaction in playing the game' must be present for a game to qualify as bingo," the release stated. "In other words, a machine cannot play the game of bingo for a person."

In the opinion, the justices said bingo requires a player "(1) to pay attention to the numbers or designations announced, (2) to physically act to determine and then to mark whether they have a matching number or symbol, [and] (3) to recognize that they have a winning card and be the first to announce this fact."

If the game is not one where the player could lose by making mistakes in marking his card, then it is not bingo according to the court, Riley's office explained.

Although the case arose out of St. Clair County, the decision on the meaning of "bingo" applies statewide, the news release stated. Even though there are different constitutional amendments pertaining to bingo for various counties, the Supreme Court has already ruled that "bingo" means the same thing in all the amendments.

New Task Force on Illegal Gambling leader comes out punching

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

Mobile County District Attorney John Tyson wasted no time enforcing the state's gambling laws. Just four days after being appointed commander of the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling, Tyson attempted to raid Houston County's Country Crossing and Macon County's VictoryLand casinos Jan. 29.

Although the pre-dawn raids were stopped by judges' restraining orders, Tyson vows he will not give up the fight.

"The Governor's Task Force [on] Illegal Gambling is at work today defending the rule of law in the state of Alabama," Tyson said during a Jan. 29 press conference. "The message ... goes to anybody and everybody that has illegal slot machines in operation. ... Respect the law of the state of Alabama, shut those machines down and get them out of the state immediately."

'We are going forward'

At press time, Tyson was awaiting a response from the Alabama Supreme Court about his request for it to lift the VictoryLand restraining order. He said there was an estimated 8,000 slot machines inside the facility and about 10,000 more in a storage facility near the casino.

"Let me assure you as soon as the Supreme Court lifts the temporary restraining order, we are going forward at VictoryLand."

Since Country Crossing officials closed

the facility's doors before state troopers arrived, Tyson considers the operation a "complete success."

"Illegal gambling is not taking place at Country Crossing," he said. "If they open their doors again, we will send in our undercover operatives and others, and we will document that illegal gambling activities are occurring. Then we will proceed with seizures and in both instances appropriate arrests."

Questions arose since the task force did not have a search warrant for the Country Crossing raid. But Tyson said, "We don't need a search warrant when a (officer) is in the presence of illegal activity."

He issued a strong warning to the state's residents.

"Here is a word to the wise. First, electronic bingo machines are illegal. Second, obey the law. Third, shut down any machines that exist anywhere in the state of Alabama. Four, have those machines (sent) out of the state. Five, let the Department of Public Safety know."

Riley describes Tyson as a "real bulldog" with a "reputation for integrity, tenacity and courage."

"Like me, John Tyson believes that the law must be enforced — no matter how much money or political pressure is brought to bear by the casino bosses," Riley said. "John Tyson understands the stakes. He understands that gambling bosses will do and are doing anything and everything they can to prevent the enforcement of the law."



Photo by Chris Mills

TASK FORCE STALLED — John Tyson addresses the press Jan. 29 following attempted raids on VictoryLand and Country Crossing.

"Much is at stake for the people of Alabama in this fight," Tyson said when named to the position Jan. 25. "I love Alabama too much to see it repeat the history of Phenix City, and I will see to it that Alabama's laws against illegal gambling are enforced everywhere ... because no one is above the law."

"We all know [the charity bingo] provisions of the constitution do not authorize ... slot machines."

"None of the slot machines being used at casinos in Alabama comes anywhere close to meeting this definition of bingo," Riley said.

"A person could play these machines blind-folded and still win. Although the previous court decisions were crystal clear that the ma-

chines are illegal, this decision absolutely slams the door shut on any argument that these slot machines qualify as bingo.

"The court's decision is hardly a surprise. Anyone with any common sense knows that these slot machines are not bingo," Riley added.

"Law enforcement officials across the state cannot turn their heads any longer to the illegal activity that is occurring.

"The gambling bosses have run out of excuses, and these slot-machine casinos must be shut down."

In the original White Hall case,

the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling and against White Hall Entertainment Center in Lowndes County in April 2009.

The task force seized more than 100 machines and nearly \$600,000 in a March 2009 raid. (TAB)

Chickasaw trying for new type of electronic gambling

Chickasaw is attempting to become the first city in the state to open a gambling facility that will meet "legal bingo" standards outlined by the Alabama Supreme Court in November 2009.

During the Jan. 26 City Council meeting, city officials were presented with an ordinance "to amend and to restate in its entirety" the electronic bingo gambling ordinance passed in July 2009 and to promulgate the "rules and regulations for the operation of bingo games in the city of Chickasaw."

The new ordinance, which was drafted and presented by city attorney Jay Minus, will be voted at the council's next meeting Feb. 9.

Minus and Councilman Adam Bourne told *The Ala-*

bama Baptist that electronic bingo machines have already been redesigned for Chickasaw to meet the Supreme Court requirements. They described the machines as both "paper-based" and "machine-assisted."

'Bingo' button

Minus said the machine calls and covers the numbers on the card — essentially playing the bingo card. To win, the player must press a "bingo" button in an allotted amount of time. A paper card is then printed from the machine, and the player turns in the card to receive the prize money.

Reports indicate the city has a lease agreement with M.S. Land Company, Inc., to operate 500 machines. (TAB)

Bessemer 'bingo' not clear but permits OKd

The Bessemer City Council voted to accept three electronic bingo gambling permit applications Jan. 22 despite Judge Eugene Verin's order to keep the "status quo" regarding bingo operations in the Bessemer Cut-off of Jefferson County.

The council's decisions have been led by its bingo committee, which wants to legalize and expand slot machine gambling referred to as "electronic bingo" in the city.

Less than two hours prior to the special called Jan. 22 meeting, council members Louise Alexander and Dorothy Davidson, along with President Pro Tem Jesse Matthews and President Earl Cochran, decided which organizations would be approved. Then the four again outvoted councilors James Stephens and Sarah Belcher. Councilor Albert Soles, who usually votes against bingo, was absent.

To no avail, Charlie Waldrep, the city's attorney, advised the council that Bessemer does not currently have an electronic bingo ordinance

allowing the permits it approved. Referring to two ordinances previously vetoed by Mayor Edward May, Alexander said, "Actually we have two."

Set Free Community Development Corp. was approved to move its operations from Concord to Bessemer. Executive Director James Kirk, who is also a pastor, told *The Alabama Baptist* his organization was issued a permit from Concord in April 2009.

Kirk said his organization used a permit issued by Jefferson County, which expired Sept. 30, 2009.

Save the Youth was also approved for an electronic bingo permit renewal, even though this is the first bingo gambling-related permit for the group in Bessemer.

Who's legal? Who's not?

Birmingham attorney Bob Barnett, who is representing Save the Youth and the Shriners of Walker County, said both organizations filed applications with Bessemer on Nov. 4, just one day before Verin's order went into effect.

Police Chief Nathaniel Rutledge said the proper procedure for approving bingo ordinances is obtaining recommendations from building and inspections, fire department, police department, mayor's office and then the city council.

"Anything that has been approved has not come through this department," Rutledge said.

A permit for the VFW Post 1762 was also approved.

At press time, the "bingo attorneys" representing the city and organizations were waiting to see if Bessemer's city clerk would issue the approved bingo permits.

Stephens said he planned to "consult with an attorney" regarding a declaratory judgment on the matter.

"Everything [the council has] done since the mayor's veto is on the premise that Bessemer has a valid electronic bingo ordinance," he said. "I don't know where they are getting their legal advice or what type of advice they are getting. I do know that our citizens are paying for it." (TAB)

Church in China 'going in right direction'

We must have patience for the church in China," said Baptist World Alliance (BWA) President David Coffey. "It is going in the right direction."

Coffey led a BWA team to China in January as guests of the China Christian Council (CCC), an umbrella organization for all Protestant churches in China.

The BWA team was keen to determine the state and status of unregistered churches in China. The CCC reported a figure of 16 million Christians in registered churches, but the BWA delegation had reports that there were an estimated 80 million Christians in the most populous country in the world, "which would take account of the reportedly large numbers of believers in unregistered churches," Coffey said.

"We specifically asked our hosts if we could meet with unregistered church leaders in order to verify these news reports but we were asked not to do so, and since we were guests of the CCC, we honored that request," he explained.

'Not yet full liberty'

Even though "it became evident to us that there is not yet full liberty for the church, totally free of state control, there is sufficient freedom for a vibrant spirit-filled church life to exist under the existing religious law, which is evolving all the time."

As a result of the trip, which included visits to the cities of Beijing, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Shanghai, BWA leaders reaffirmed its relationship with the CCC. The relationship between the two groups began in the early 1980s.

BWA leaders have been visiting China as guests of the CCC, and CCC leaders have been attending the Baptist World Congress since then. CCC leaders are expected to be present at the 20th congress in Hawaii July 28-Aug. 1.

Gao Feng, CCC president, expressed "pleasure at the strong ties of friendship with the BWA and hoped these could be built on in the years ahead."

On this recent BWA "listen and learn" tour of China, Coffey and the BWA delegation were impressed with the level of Christian witness in China and were "able to visit churches and speak openly with church leaders."

The BWA team visited the Amity Printing Company, which celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2010 and is one of the largest publishers of the Christian Bible in the world. The printing press produces approximately 1.5 million Bibles each

month, in addition to other Christian literature and educational books for children. Amity has exported more than 20 million Bibles to more than 70 countries in 75 different languages.

Meetings were also held with the Amity Foundation, founded in 1985, and which promotes education, social services, health and rural development. The foundation has established clinics, educational training programs,

foster care projects, HIV/AIDS education programs and rehabilitation facilities, among other programs.

Meetings with others

In addition to the CCC, the Amity Printing Company and the Amity Foundation, the delegation also had meetings with the Three Self Patriotic Movement which, along with the CCC, form the only state-sanctioned or registered Protestant Church in Mainland China; leaders and students at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary; officials at China's Foreign Affairs Department; and with the director general of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. (BWA)

Church in China:

"not yet ... free of state control."

David Coffey
BWA president



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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Central Baptist Church, Bearden (www.cbcbeardean.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.cbcbeardean.org/pastorsearch.shtml.

PASTOR: Brindlee Mountain Baptist Church of Morgan City, Ala., is currently accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Please mail resumé to: Brindlee Mountain Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 3422 Hwy 231, Lacey's Spring, AL 35754, or e-mail: bmbchurch@otelco.net.

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.

PASTOR: Rural church seeking full-time pastor. Resumés should be sent to: Larry Enfinger, P.O. Box 732, Blakely, GA 39823. Resumés will be accepted through Feb. 26.

WORSHIP PASTOR: First Baptist Church of New Smyrna Beach, Fla., is seeking a full-time worship pastor. Responsibilities include planning and conducting Sunday morning worship services, developing a vibrant music ministry with adult choir, praise team and instrumentalists and other pastoral responsibilities. Primary responsibility will be music ministry with other pastoral responsibilities being secondary and occupying a significantly smaller amount of time. All interested persons may submit a resumé with references

by e-mail to: newsmyrnaabc@gmail.com, or by mail to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 214 Sams Avenue, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168.

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.

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

TWO POSITIONS: Cottage Hill Baptist Church is seeking part-time worship leader and part-time pianist for blended worship services. With prayerful consideration, please reply with resumé: pastor@cottagehillbaptist.org or mail: Pastor, CHBC, 1120 Pleasant Grove Road, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127. Rev. Jerry Sherrell is pastor.

STUDENT PASTOR: Smokerise (SBC) is a progressive, growing church looking for a dynamic, full-time student pastor. Submit a resumé 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.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS: Calvary Baptist Church in Scottsboro, Ala., is

now searching for a full-time minister of students. Minimum requirement: currently pursuing or have completed a seminary degree and have 3-5 years of experience working with youth. Mail resumés to: Minister of Students Search Committee, Calvary Baptist Church, 305 County Park Road, Scottsboro, AL 35768, or e-mail to: pdstout@centurytel.net.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR: First Baptist Church, Leeds, Ala., is searching for a part-time children's ministry director. Please send resumés no later than Feb. 22 to: Children's Director Search Committee at FBC Leeds, 7481 Parkway Drive, Leeds, AL 35094, or e-mail to: rmckenzie@fbcleeds.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

PRESIDENT-TREASURER: The search committee of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation in Brentwood, Tenn., is soliciting resumés for the position of president-treasurer. College degree and five years experience in finance-related work required. Supervisory experience. Must be a committed Christian active in a church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Energetic, self starter a must. Interested persons contact: George Gibson, 100 Coventry Wynde, Kingsport, TN 37664, 423-288-8982 or gandsigs@charter.net.

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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Don't call it an affair — call it an abuse of power

By Diana Garland
Analysis of clergy sexual abuse

The recent murder trial of former pastor Matt Baker in Waco, Texas, was mesmerizing for many reasons. It involved sex, lies, premeditated murder, pornography and a clergy member. It should have been a work of fiction; it should never have happened in real life.

Even as we grieve for the victim's parents and her two daughters, we must not overlook that, initially, there was another victim. Long before she engaged in a sexual relationship with Matt Baker, Vanessa Bulls, in the midst of divorce, was just a young woman attending a church seeking comfort and guidance in her life. The pastor of the church she chose to visit offered to counsel her.

We cannot and should not dismiss the chain of events that followed and led, almost incomprehensibly, to the murder of a young mother whose parents and daughters now have an irreplaceable void in their lives.

But if we focus on how this extramarital relationship began, we see a textbook example of clergy sexual misconduct, a felony offense in Texas according to the state penal code (Chapter 22: Assaultive Offenses). Matt Baker's crime of sexual misconduct as a religious leader — long before he plotted to add murder — was not only immoral but criminal.

During the past four years, I have conducted research on clergy sexual misconduct in order to find approaches to prevent it. I wish that Baker's initial offense was an isolated incident.

It isn't.

Our research found that one of every 33 women in a congregation in America has experienced sexual harassment or sexual misconduct from her religious leader at some time in her adult life. The average

Former pastor sentenced for murder

Former Baptist pastor Matt Baker was sentenced Jan. 21 to 65 years in prison for murdering his wife by drugging her and smothering her with a pillow while their two daughters slept in a nearby bedroom.

A jury in Waco, Texas, found Baker, a graduate of Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary who worked as a pastor at several Baptist churches in central Texas, guilty of murder in the death of his wife, Kari, in April 2006.



BAKER

Authorities originally ruled the death a suicide by sleeping pills. But, after being convinced by Kari Baker's parents to reopen the investigation, her body was exhumed for an autopsy and authorities changed the cause of death to "undetermined."

During the trial, prosecutors

said they had evidence of at least 13 women who claimed Baker made improper sexual advances toward them between 1991 and 2006. Vanessa Bulls, who allegedly was Baker's mistress, testified against him at a grand jury in exchange for immunity. Bulls, who was going through a divorce at the time, said Baker seduced her under the guise of counseling her.

According to a March 2008 *Texas Monthly* cover story, Baker was accused of sexual misconduct several times early in his career, but supervisors believed his story that he was innocent and allowed him to move on without warning future employers about the allegations.

Lora Mueller, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service, testified during the penalty phase of the trial that Baker tried to sexually assault her while both worked as as-

sistant athletic trainers for Baylor University in 1991. Mueller said she reported the attack to Baylor officials, but nobody would believe her. After that Baker received an internship at First Baptist Church, Waco, where he was accused of grabbing a female custodian in a bathroom and telling her he wanted to have sex. Because church leaders did not have any concrete evidence, they did not fire him or report him to the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Baker was fired in January 1996 from a job at the Waco Family YMCA after allegedly groping a female counselor. That fall he was admitted to seminary, where he began the first of five pastorates that ended when Crossroads Baptist Church, Lorena, fired him after learning about his reputation in 2006.

Baker, 38, is not eligible for parole until 2042. He plans to appeal his conviction. (ABP)

even seek a sexual relationship with a religious leader. But that is not the point, no more than it would be if a client in therapy "went after" her counselor.

Especially when religious leaders are confronted with temptation or seduction, it is the responsibility of that leader to hold the line. They must model how to care for others. They should never take advantage of another's neediness or vulnerability. That's why clergy sexual misconduct is illegal in Texas, and it should be illegal everywhere. The point is that clergy sexual misconduct is a breach of the community's trust in a leader.

When a religious leader abuses the power a community gives him, it damages the whole community. It was devastating for a congregation who trusted this man to lead them and who will probably never trust another leader in quite the same way.

The larger community trusted him; when Matt Baker told the authorities that his wife committed suicide, they believed him and conducted no autopsy. Families all across our community are trying to understand how this could have happened.

As a community, we need to take seriously that we all need accountability structures and guidelines, both for ourselves and for those to whom we give power. We cannot undo what happened to Kari Baker, but we can learn from it to create guidelines and accountability structures in our congregations. As we found in the focus groups we held, it is a structure many pastors would welcome — for the safe-keeping and well-being of all involved.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Diana Garland is dean of the Baylor University School of Social Work. This article was originally published in the Waco Tribune-Herald on Jan. 24. It is used with permission. (ABP)

American attends a congregation of 400 adults, so that's an average of seven women per congregation.

Of course, it is rare that clergy sexual misconduct involves murder, although the suicide rate among victims is high. I have conducted interviews with more than 80 people from all over the country and from more than 30 religious groups. They described how they were victimized by religious leaders, blamed themselves for being vulnerable, and remained silent, trapped in their shame.

First let's name what Matt Baker did accurately; it wasn't simply an affair; it was an illegal abuse of power.

Clergy sexual misconduct with adults is a more nuanced issue than the sexual abuse of children. Sexual involvement of an adult with a child is always wrong because we know that children are not developmentally able to give consent. Because adults always have authority over children, children cannot "just say no" to adults.

When the sexual offense occurs between adults, however, we assume that if there is no physical coercion, the relationship is consensual. In fact, however, when persons in positions of power — counselors, pastors, physicians — attempt to

engage in sexual relationships with those over whom they have authority, the relationship is not consensual. The feelings or willingness of the victim are irrelevant; the act is legally defined as abuse because of the authority the professional holds.

'Wearing mask of God'

Most of the stories I heard in my interviews sound much like the story Vanessa Bulls told in court. Matt Baker offered her the professional service of counseling in order to pursue his own sexual agenda. The woman, caught off guard by her trust in a "man of God" and told that God wants her to be in this relationship, is victimized. In her testimony, Bulls said Baker was "wearing the mask of God" in or-

der to engage her in a sexual relationship.

From the victims I have interviewed, I learned that if victims do break the silence in order to report a religious leader's misconduct, they often are ostracized by the church and blamed for causing a good leader to fall. The stories of victims are hard to hear; members of the congregation do not want to believe that their beloved leader could do such a thing. When I talk about this research, I have often been asked, "But don't you think women go after pastors?"

It is a good question, and a reasonable one. Yes, surely some women may be attracted to kind, thoughtful, caring religious leaders who listen to their life struggles. Perhaps some

UM promotes Breland to vice president

The University of Mobile's (UM) Roger Breland has been named to a new role at the school — vice president for project development.

Formerly director and dean of UM's Center for Performing Arts (CPA), Breland will continue to work with the CPA as executive director, but his primary role will be in the new vice president position.

Al Miller, formerly associate dean of the CPA, has been promoted to dean. Miller has worked side by side with Breland to develop the CPA, which has more than 300 students and 24 performing ensembles.

Miller also serves as director of the A Cappella Choir and the ensemble VOICES of Mobile. He holds a bachelor of music from the



BRELAND



MILLER

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, master of music from Samford University in Birmingham and doctorate from Florida State University in Tallahassee. He has founded and directed vocal groups in churches, high schools, colleges and universities for 35 years, presenting concerts internationally and at the White House.

Breland's new role is a key leadership role, said UM President Mark Foley. He will assist Foley in developing strategies and building relationships in the school's 2020 Vision, the plan to become a nationally recognized leader in the revitalization of Christian character and faith in America.

"Throughout his career, Roger Breland has demonstrated the drive, determination and creativity to see what can be and to make it a reality," Foley said.

"As the founder and director of TRUTH, one of the first internationally successful contemporary Christian recording and performing groups, and currently [in his role at UM], Roger has a proven track record of success," he explained. (UM)

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(Neither childcare nor meals are provided as part of these events.)

PRE-REGISTRATION: Highly recommended but not required. However in the event of an overcapacity attendance, pre-registrants will be given priority. Pre-register at www.levelone.sbdr.org

ON-SITE REGISTRATION: 4:00-5:30 p.m. During this time, photos will be made of all participants. Anyone who pre-registered will receive I.D. badges the same evening. Others will receive the badges by mail. The \$45 per person registration fee is payable at the door (includes cost of training, workshop materials, criminal background check and official disaster relief badge).

COURSE CONTENT: Participants will receive instruction in disaster relief essentials. There will be training related to Haitian cross-cultural awareness and a briefing on the unprecedented scope of this disaster. Participants who want to deploy to Haiti with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) will need this vital information. Other topics will include the nature of sleeping conditions especially in Haiti and a variety of other concerns related to the ongoing aftermath of the earthquake.

PURPOSE/REQUIREMENTS: This event will provide the required certification for volunteers who want to go to Haiti or work at other U.S. sites with SBDR and is open only to members of churches affiliated with the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

OTHER INFO: For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Mondene Coker in the Office of Global Missions at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 273, mcoker@alsbom.org.

Want to know God?

By Bobby E. Hopper
Director of Missions
Bethel Baptist Association

J.M.'s eldest son asked, "Dad, why don't you give your heart and life to Christ?" J.M. answered, "Son, you don't know what all I have done."

J.M. had an intriguing past. As a 5-year-old, he, along with his eight siblings, felt the impact of the Great Depression. Six years later, he witnessed his dad's suicide. At 18, he left for World War II.

While serving in North Africa and Italy, J.M. had a machine gun and a grenade wound. He was left for dead in a foxhole, was taken prisoner, eventually escaped and was missing in action for a short time. His mom received word that he was dead — killed in action. She responded, "No, he is not because I am praying for him." Yes, J.M. had a praying mother. Her last plea before her death was that all her children be saved.

Somewhere in J.M.'s past, he learned his sins were so bad that he could not be saved. He attended church on Christmas and Easter and for funerals without any persuasion but had to be begged on other occasions. He wanted his children to be Christians, but he knew there was no hope for him. He always made sure that someone offered the blessing before a meal. He acknowledged that God was in control but could not accept the fact that God could forgive him.

J.M.'s eldest son could not bear the thought of eternal separation from his dad. He would say, "Dad, if you ask God to forgive you, Psalm 103:12 says, 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.'"

J.M. was confident that his sin was too great. He understood Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," but did not understand Ephesians 3:20, "Now unto Him (Jesus) that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." The Holy Spirit was working in J.M.

Finally he could not resist the prayers and pleas of those who loved him. At 58, J.M. asked Jesus to forgive him. Dying two years later, he had lived an abundant life as promised in John 10:10b, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

'We just like to be able to help'

Clay Association's Baptist Center helps community for 30 years

In talking with L.C. Harris, you get the distinct impression that he and the people he represents deem operations like their Baptist Center, located in downtown Lineville, as the place where the religion "God our Father accepts as pure" is truly practiced.

"When you go inside those church walls, that's worship," said Harris, moderator of Clay Baptist Association. "But you only serve God when you get outside and serve your fellow man."

The Baptist Center, a self-sustaining ministry that provides for families and individuals in need through its thrift store, food closet and other provisional ministries, has been serving Clay County for nearly 30 years.

But it's how the center has done it that brings out the pride — the good kind — in Harris' voice.

"We're a small association made up of seven churches made up of mostly senior citizens," said Harris, who estimates the combined resident membership of the association's churches to be just 291. "But [the center] is all volunteer. The only one who gets any money is our clerk and that's just for postage."

In 2009, the center took in more than 3,000 individual donations, according to Harris — "Everything from bedding, clothes, TVs, suits, appliances ... about anything you can name, we get it." Those donations helped provide food and other necessities for more than 100 families as well as school supplies to children in both Lineville and Ashland.

The center's work is overseen by an executive board comprised of the pastors of every church in the association and two volunteers.

Fred Amason, a member of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church,



Photo by Steve Gross

PREPARING FOR BROWERS — Patty Wolf (left) and Mary Moore check out donated clothes before they are put out for people to look through at the Baptist Center in Lineville.

Lineville, has been chairman of the board for 15 years.

"A small portion of our funds for our food closet comes from the (Alabama Baptist) State Board of Missions, and Gary Swafford (di-

rector of the state board's office of associational missions and church planting) has been very generous with his help with funds at the beginning of each year," Amason said. "There's just a great need in

our area with people less fortunate and that just need help on occasion, and we just like to be able to help when the request comes."

Exactly, Harris said. "That's Christianity in action." (TAB)

Letters

(continued from page 2)

legal documents needed so they will be ready when death occurs.

Thank you so much.

I have e-mailed several people and told them to get their hands on this copy, to read all the articles,

to keep them for references and to take action if they don't have what they need.

Thanks again for well written and easy to understand information.

Betty H. Fields
Northport, Ala.

EDITOR'S NOTE — The estate planning articles have now been published in booklet form. Visit the shopping cart section of www.thealabamabaptist.org to order a booklet.

FREEDOM FOR ALL

Excellent editorial — "A Blow for Religious Liberty" — in the Jan. 14 issue. How right you are. Yes, several years ago some of the leading ministers and religious leaders were very subtly, and some very openly, trying to knock down our long heralded freedom belief of separation of church and state. At that time, it interfered with their special interest agendas.

We all need to understand that religious freedom is for everyone and not just when it meets our current need or project. Religious freedom is for all times and for all. It does bother us sometimes, but speed limits on the high-

ways bother me sometimes, too.
Bev Williams
Pintlala, Ala.

'JAM-PACKED' PAPER

Our congratulations and thanks for the outstanding edition of *The Alabama Baptist* dated Jan. 14. It was "jam-packed" with interesting and valuable information. The eye-catching story about the snow by the First Baptist Church, Opelika, youth pastor and the heart-warming story about the former abortion clinic director grabbed our attention and we just couldn't put the newspaper down. Your editorial on religious liberty hit at the heart of our current frustration and disappointments in our governmental decisions. You may have planned it, but the information throughout the paper assisted in our Bible study of *Wrestling With Injustices* found in *Ecclesiastes* chapters 3-9. I did encourage our Count for Christ Bible study class members to take the time to read the newspaper mentioned. The information about wills, etc., was of interest to them also.

I am pleased to pass this compliment on to you and your staff and look forward to future editions.

Howard Lucas
Birmingham, Ala.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 7

Explore the Bible

By Cecil Taylor

Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

WHEN YOUR PRIORITIES
ARE CHALLENGED
Mark 12:13-17, 28-34

Question About Taxes (13-17)

The Sanhedrin, the supreme court for Israel, launched a clever attack on Jesus. It sent “some of the Pharisees and Herodians” to ask Him a question. Just like today, politics made “strange bedfellows.” Pharisees disliked Roman rule; Herodians supported the Herods as rulers and thus supported the Romans who kept the Herod family in power. These two groups despised each other but hated Jesus more. Bitter enemies, they joined hands to destroy Jesus. They came with a question intended to “trap” Jesus. The word was used of a hunter stalking prey.

The tax in question was an annual poll tax levied on every person in Samaria, Judea and Idumea since A.D. 6 just for the privilege of living in the Roman Empire. It was a “head tax.” Facetiously speaking, if a person paid it, then he got to keep his head. This tax was immensely unpopular for several reasons. First it was a constant reminder that the Romans ruled the land. Second the Romans demanded that the tax be paid with silver coins stamped with the emperor’s image. The Jews thought human images idolatrous (Ex. 20:4-6). Common Jewish currency bore inoffensive symbols such as an olive branch or palms. Third the coins also bore an inscription, “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus.” To call Augustus divine (after his death, the Senate voted to elevate the former emperor to godhood) was extremely repulsive to Jews.

The question was hypocritical because the sole purpose of the group who raised it was to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the Jewish people or, better, to secure His arrest by Roman authorities. If He said, “Pay the tax,” then the intensely nationalistic Pharisees would accuse Him of disloyalty to Israel. Paying taxes to Rome was considered treason by some. It would cost Him popularity. On the other hand, if He said, “Do not pay the tax,” then the Rome-loving Herodians would report Him to the government as a dangerous revolutionary.

It would cost Him His life. Calling for a denarius, the coin required to pay this tax, Jesus asked, “Whose image is this and whose title?” There was only one answer: “Caesar’s.”

The ancient idea was that all a king’s coins actually belonged to the king. “Render” has the sense of giving back to someone what belongs to him. If the Pharisees and Herodians used Caesar’s coins, then they could hardly object to giving some of them back to him in the form of taxes.

Jesus avoided the trap, saying, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s!” Both God and government have rights. Loyalty to God is not necessarily incompatible with obedience to the state. Followers of Christ must give each its due. Should those claims clash, God’s claim comes first. “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Question About the Great
Commandment (28-34)

Next came a scribe to test Jesus’ skill in dealing with the Law. Copying the Scriptures gave scribes such great expertise in the Law that people called them “lawyers.” “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” he asked.

The first and greatest commandment Jesus drew from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. That text stressed the unity of God and insisted that a man worship the one true God with everything within him. Repeating “all” four times stressed that the whole personality must be involved in the worship. The second commandment Jesus drew from Leviticus 19:18, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The questioner commended Jesus for His answer, noting that love for God and neighbor was more important than sacrifices. In turn, Jesus offered a commendation of His own: This scribe answered wisely and was “not far from the kingdom of God.” Near it ... but not yet in it. To enter that Kingdom, the scribe would have to confess he had not loved God and his neighbor as he should and then throw himself on God’s loving grace for forgiveness. After this episode, no one dared ask Jesus any more questions. He was too sharp for them.

Bible Studies for Life

By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

ARE YOU IN THE RIGHT MIND?
Romans 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16; 2 Corinthians 4:2-4

In his classic little book “Your Mind Matters,” John Stott, one of the great leaders of evangelical Anglicanism, made the comment that “knowledge is indispensable to Christian life and service.” He also challenged his readers to realize that “if we do not use the mind which God has given us, we condemn ourselves to spiritual superficiality.” On several occasions, Paul focused on the importance of the mind for Christian living and obedience, encouraging the church in Philippi to “let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus” and calling the church in Romans to be “transformed by the renewing” of their minds.

Flesh vs. Spirit (Rom. 8:5-8)

In this passage, Paul drew a sharp contrast between believers who are “in Christ Jesus” and those who have never responded to the message of God’s saving grace. He spoke of those who live according to the flesh as those who “set their minds on the things of the flesh” whereas Christians are those who “set their minds on the things of the Spirit.” The latter brings believers into a relationship with God characterized by “life and peace” rather than “death.” For Paul, although sinful actions demonstrate a person’s spirituality, he also stressed the thought processes that create attitudes that lead to particular patterns of behavior.

For Paul, it is the Christian mind that must be the initial and transformative center of renewal. This not only includes our thought processes but also the things that we concentrate upon, mull over, focus upon in our daily lives. Paul encouraged those who have experienced the saving power of Christ to abandon thinking about the things of the flesh and concentrate on the things of the Spirit.

Blindness vs. Sight (2 Cor. 4:2-4)

In this passage, Paul appeared to equate the term “conscience” with “mind” and argued that unbelievers are spiritually blinded by the “god of this age.” Conscience and mind are human faculties that enable human beings

to make moral decisions with regard to life-style. For Paul, minds and consciences can be controlled by the “god of this age” or Jesus Christ, the Lord of those who follow Him as disciples. Paul had already told the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 8:5) that there are “many gods and many lords” in the world. Whatever or whoever takes priority in our lives, controlling our decisions, is our “god.” Living in a world filled with actual idols that people worshiped, Paul’s words bring a particular challenge to our lives, asking us if Christ is the determining center of our lives.

Craig Gay describes contemporary Christians as “going about their daily business in this world without giving God much thought.” George Barna recently suggested that the best term to describe many Christians today would be “casual,” those who do not get excited about their faith. In such a situation, the minds and consciences of believers have become dulled at best and blinded at worst.

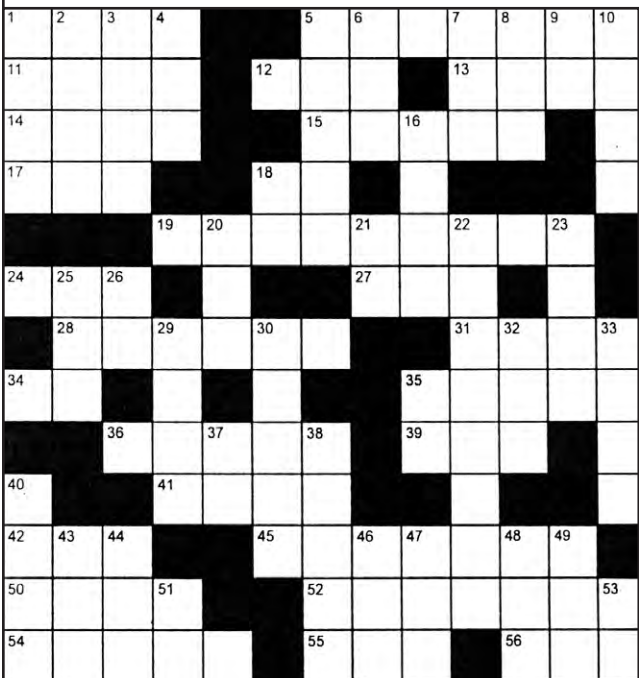
Human Wisdom vs. the Mind
of Christ (1 Cor. 2:12-16)

In our final section on this topic, Paul focused on the role of the Holy Spirit, who enables the child of God to be truly spiritual in his or her thinking, in all his or her attitudes and actions. It is only a person who has received the gift of the Spirit — and for Paul, this means all Christians — who can begin to know the “mind of Christ” and be empowered to live differently.

Alastair McGrath, the English evangelical, calls the Holy Spirit the “Cinderella of the Holy Trinity” whose person and work we minimize perhaps because of some of the excesses of modern-day Pentecostalism. Yet we ought to question why we make so little of the Holy Spirit and His workings in our lives as individuals and churches, if the mark of spirituality is a vibrant experience of His ministry in our lives. Paul believed the church should be Spirit-rich, filled with the Spirit of love and life, of holiness and service, and he encouraged us to cultivate the Spirit’s working so that the fruit of the Spirit might be manifested in our lives.

Christian Crossword

By Amy Rognlie Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**
1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, _____.
5. Yet will I leave a _____. (Ezek. 6:8)
11. Jesus cried “...”, _____. Elloi, lama sabachthani? (Mark 15:34)
12. Sun. (Spanish)
13. Ancient South American Indians.
14. Jesus ... touched him, saying, I _____. (Matt. 8:3)
15. ____ yourselves unto God. (Rom. 6:13)
17. Jacob ____ pottage. (Gen. 25:29)
18. Mom.
19. Ye say that I cast out devils through _____. (Luke 11:18)
24. Under oaks and poplars and _____. (Hosea 4:13)
27. North northeast. (abbr.)
28. Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but _____. (Gen. 32:28)
31. But ____ found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Gen. 6:8)
34. Maine. (abbr.)
35. Sharpen every man his _____. (1 Sam. 13:20)
36. ____ thy wife shall bear thee

- a son. (Gen. 17:19)
39. Give ____ to my words, O Lord. (Ps. 5:1)
41. Texas city: El _____.
42. Choose.
45. Joseph took them both, _____. and Manasseh. (Gen. 48:13)
50. Butter substitute.
52. I beseech _____. (Phil. 4:2)
54. No scrip, no bread, no _____. (Mark 6:8)
55. A time to rend, and a time to _____. (Ec. 3:7)
56. Cow noise.
- Down**
1. Where is He that is born King of the ____? (Matt. 2:2)
2. A dish of many ingredients.
3. God will ____ thy right hand. (Isa. 41:13)
4. Nothing.
5. Ye are a chosen generation, a ____ priesthood. (1 Pet. 2:9)
6. The child did minister unto the Lord before _____. (1 Sam. 2:11)
7. Same as 4 down.
8. With; as well as.
9. North Carolina. (abbr.)
10. Weed.
16. Thou hast been in ____ the garden of God. (Ezek. 28:13)
18. Myself.
20. Period of time.
21. Zinc. (abbr.)
22. ____ the king of Syria was sick. (2 Kings 8:7)
23. The ____ out of the wood doth waste it. (Ps. 80:13)
25. A faithful witness will not _____. (Prov. 14:5)
26. Master of Science. (abbr.)
29. They that sow in tears shall ____ in joy. (Ps. 126:5)
30. To obliterate.
32. All that handle the _____. (Ezek. 27:29)
33. ____ me, O Lord. (Jer. 17:14)
35. Southeast. (abbr.)
37. Egyptian sun god.
38. [Love] always protects, always trusts, always _____. (1 Cor. 13:7 NIV)
40. Space.
43. Palestine Liberation Organization. (abbr.)
44. There met Him ____ men

- that were lepers. (Luke 17:12)
46. Color.
47. The second ____ shall be an emerald. (Ex. 28:18)
48. They departed from _____. (Num. 33:45)
49. Deceased Chinese leader, ____ Tse-tung.
51. Old English. (abbr.)
53. He had sent messengers to ____ king of Egypt. (2 Kings 17:4)



World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Pakistani Christian sentenced to life for 'blasphemy'

FAISALABAD, Pakistan — A Christian shopkeeper was sentenced to a life term in prison and fined more than \$1,000 in January following a dubious conviction of desecrating the Quran, according to Pakistan's National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP).

Peter Jacob, executive secretary of the NCJP, said 22-year-old Imran Masih of the Faisalabad suburb of Hajivairy was convicted Jan. 11 of desecrating the Quran (Section 295-B of Pakistan's legal code) and thereby outraging religious feelings (Section 295-A) by Additional District and Sessions Judge Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan.

The conviction was based on the accusation of a rival shopkeeper who, as part of an Islamic extremist proselytizing group, allegedly used a mosque loudspeaker system to incite a mob that beat Masih and ransacked his shop.

Neighboring shopkeeper Hajji Liaquat Abdul Ghafoor accused Masih of burning part of the Quran on July 1, 2009.

Denying that he burned any pages of the Quran, Masih told investigators that the papers he burned were a heap of old merchandise records he had gathered while cleaning his store. Nearby shopkeepers said they had seen the two men arguing over business a few days before the incident.

They said when Masih burned the papers, Ghafoor started shouting that he had desecrated the Quran and blasphemed Islam and its prophet, Muhammad.

"Ghafoor spread misconceptions about Imran Masih," said one of the shopkeepers, "and a mob of angry Muslim men unaware of the facts attacked Masih and viciously beat him, looted his shop and later handed him over to police." Sources said Masih plans to appeal to a higher court.

Islamic militants in Somalia kill Christian leader

NAIROBI, Kenya — Islamic extremists shot the leader of an underground church to death outside the capital city of Somalia and have threatened to kill his wife, his widow said.

Having learned that he had left Islam to become a Christian, Somali militants from the Islamic extremist al-Shabaab murdered 41-year-old Mohammed Ahmed Ali at about noon Jan. 1, Amina Ibrahim Hassan said.

He was killed after leaving his home in Hodan, on the outskirts of Mogadishu, she said.

Ali had led an underground church. Christian sources said members of al-Shabaab, said to have links with al-Qaida terrorists, had been monitoring Ali and his wife because of indications that they had left Islam.

Ali had organized New Year's Day festivities for Christians to take place outside of Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab extremists killed him after word of the planned party leaked to them, said Hassan, who has since fled to Nairobi with their 2-year-old son.

Hassan said she received threatening calls from members of al-Shabaab on Jan. 3.

"We know who you are working for," Hassan said one extremist told her. "We also know your home and that you are a follower of the Christians, and we are going to kill you the way we killed your husband."

Spike in anti-Christian violence feared in Burma

NEW DELHI — As Burma's military junta gears up this year for its first parliamentary election in two decades, observers fear attacks on the Christian minority could intensify.

Mungpi Suantak, assistant editor of a New Delhi-based news agency run by exiled Burmese journalists, the *Mizzima News*, said the Burmese junta has "one of the world's worst human rights records" and will "definitely" attack religious and ethnic minorities more forcefully in the days leading up to the election.

The military regime, officially known as the State Peace and Development Council, pledged to hold the election this year, and analysts believe polls will be held after July in the country, also known as Myanmar.

Suantak said the Buddhist nationalist junta would target Christians particularly in Karen state, which borders Thailand, and in Chin state, which borders India and Bangladesh. Given that the junta merely uses religion for political power, it doesn't target Christians alone, Suantak said.

"The junta has no respect for any religion, be it Christians or Buddhists, and anyone who opposes its rule is dealt with harshly," Suantak said.



SBC Representatives Around the World

This time last year, my teaching schedule in the universities was packed out. By the end of spring semester, my team and I were teaching 16 English classes a week.

This school year, I expected to be similarly as busy in the classrooms.

But due to a major health quarantine and the following manic schoolwork catch-up, my teaching schedule slowed down to four classes a week.

What is a Journeyman to do with all that down time?

Initially I panicked, thinking that I was going to be a waste of IMB time and funds. But then new doors began to open. I began having students contact me, asking me if we could spend time together outside

of class. Currently I'm spending my weekends with various groups of girls who want to spend time getting to know me. We talk about the influences in our lives, significant events, what motivates us.

A year ago, I began praying the Lord would open opportunities to invest intentionally in the lives of unbelieving students. This year, I'm seeing answers to that prayer!

Yesterday I got a call from a friend, telling me that there are about eight more students who want to be a part of the weekend hang-out groups. Prayerfully, more and more students will show interest and want to join.

Thank you, Swine flu, for providing free time!

Erin Brassart
Poltava, Ukraine

We continue to thank the Father for you and your partnership with us.

Your gifts to the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering are part of the physical lifeline that keeps us on the field. As an organization, there have been many cutbacks regarding budget and even the number of new personnel being assigned. Your gifts provided:

▶ all those thousands of tracts

and evangelistic videos that were distributed by Nehemiah Teams,

▶ the education budget for our girls to attend school,

▶ the field budget for the Hands On health care team to go to remote villages to share the gospel and provide needed health care,

▶ training for our national partners so they can be on mission with God and train others to do the same,

▶ materials to make water filters so villages can have clean water

▶ and so much more.

Your prayers are the spiritual lifeline. We thank you for both.

These past three years have passed quickly, and we're getting ready for our next stateside assignment (August 2010-January 2011). We look forward to getting to see many of you face to face and thanking you personally for your prayers and support over this term. We are excited to get to spend time with students and student leaders, encouraging them to be focused on reaching our world for Christ. Pray for those little things that need to be worked out — vehicle needs, schooling decisions, etc.

Jess, Wendy, David, Krysten and Betsy Jennings
Philippines

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Christians in Bhutan remain underground

In the distant and isolated nation of Bhutan in the eastern Himalayas, known as the "Land of the Thunder Dragon," almost everything looks uniformly Buddhist. There are no visible signs of Christians' tiny presence but they do exist.

Christians, whose only official identity falls in the "others" category in the census, are estimated to range in number between 3,000 and 6,000. They live out their Christian lives underground; no church buildings, Christian cemeteries or Christian bookstores are yet allowed.

An absolute monarchy for more than 100 years, Bhutan became a democratic constitutional monarchy in March 2008, as per the wish of former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Asked what would happen if authorities found out about his underground church, a pastor who requested anonymity said before 2008, church members would have been arrested because Christianity was banned.

"Even now, there will be serious repercussions," he said. "What exactly will happen, I do not know. But no Christian worker will take the risk to find it out the hard way." (CD)

Looking forward

Marty: No easy predictions for Baptists' next 400 years

Nobody can predict with certainty what the next 400 years hold for Baptists — or for any religious denomination — church historian Martin Marty told a recent gathering at Baylor University.

But Marty, professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School and longtime *Christian Century* columnist, offered general observations based on history and trends as he spoke on “The Future of a Denomination: Baptists in the Next 400 Years.” The Jan. 17–18 event was scheduled as part of the Texas Baptist university’s recognition of the 400th anniversary of the Baptist movement.

Marty characterized denominations — as distinct from a single state church — as a “four-century-old Anglo-American invention” and noted Baptists were “present at the creation.”

While some observers ask if denominations in their present form are dead or dying, Marty asserted that “structurally, functionally, something would likely fill its role.”

What’s true for denominations in general undoubtedly would prove true for the Baptist movement, he suggested, but he cautioned against making confident predictions. He cited as a guiding text a line from a speech by Abraham Lincoln: “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.”

Marty offered a series of “where-and-whither” questions followed by “what-and-how” application on a variety of subjects:

Identity

Regarding the essence of the distinctive Baptist tradition, Marty confessed, “I have not found the essence of Baptisthood.”

However, he suggested, a clue to the historically central feature of the Baptist movement lies in its name.

“Believer’s baptism by immersion was the most visible mark of being a Baptist,” he said, pointing to its “branding” nature. But the commitment to following religious convictions and living those convictions out with integrity preceded the mode and method of baptism. Separatists and others “backed into” their understanding of believer’s baptism, he asserted.

“It was so exceptional, unsettled and branding that it became central to the story and provided the name,” he said.

Marty observed less attention today is given to the meaning of believer’s baptism among Baptists — particularly as it relates to daily living and ethics — than in some places and times. He also pointed to a decline in baptisms, even in congregations where attendance has increased.



Photo courtesy of Baylor University

BAPTISTS' FUTURE — (From left) Martin Marty speaks with Baylor leaders David Garland and Barry Hankins following his lecture Jan. 17.

Community, autonomy

Baptists long ago “took the risk” in terms of emphasizing individual decision-making in matters of religion, Marty noted.

However, he added, historic Baptist convictions about soul liberty and soul competency have been balanced by “the integral tie to community in voluntary association.”

The challenge for the future lies in the “pick-and-choose” nature of individualized spirituality that does not find direction from a religious community, he asserted.

Church polity

Observers of church life recognize that regardless of a denomination’s official polity — hierarchical, episcopal, presbyterian, congregational or whatever — “the local wins out,” Marty observed, and “Baptists should be theologically most ready to profit from the trend.”

At the same time, individual Christians, churches and denominations have unprecedented capacity to be involved with other Christians globally through communication technology, he added. Through the Internet, “distance has disappeared,” he noted.

Church, state

In some circles “long-held Baptist views on separation of church and state have appeared to be compromised or obscured — or even abandoned,” Marty said.

“The moral crisis, the security crisis, the pluralism crisis — all have led some to conclude we are so far gone that even Baptists have been willing to call on the state to help us do our work,” he said.

How Baptists (as well as what Marty called “Baptist-like traditions”) respond to church-state issues in the future has fateful consequences

for their witness in society, he observed.

Peoplehood

Baptists, like other Christians, tend to congregate and allow their lives to be shaped to a large degree along lines of social class and race, Marty noted. “Some largely white Baptist groups do better than others at reaching beyond historical bounds, but all confess that they have a long way to go,” he said.

The role of women in the church — particularly in the clergy — remains a crucial issue with which Baptists likely will grapple in the future, he noted.

Witness, pluralism

Few Baptists waver in devotion to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, Marty said, but they struggle with how that faith relates to other world religions. “We can’t settle for a casual universalism that says we’re all in different boats headed toward the same shore,” he observed.

At the same time, some Baptists want to avoid holding to the kind of exclusiveness that would cause non-Christians to write them off as narrow bigots more focused on “denouncing each other than hearing each other,” he said.

Sex

Baptists’ response to issues such as abortion, contraception and homosexuality do not relate specifically to Baptist history and impulses — except the Baptist tendency to fight — Marty observed.

Conflict

“Baptists, as creative dissenters, were born in conflict and produce conflict,” he said. But Baptists also possess the capacity to provide “a rich and warm home,” he added. “And there are plenty of biblical texts to find direction for that.” (ABP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

City, church battle over historical landmarks

CLEVELAND — Rebuffing the concerns of church leaders over the fate of shuttered church buildings, Cleveland’s Landmarks Commission is recommending that six more Catholic churches be designated as historical city landmarks.

The designation, which would give the buildings some protection against demolition or structural changes, is opposed by the Diocese of Cleveland, which is in the midst of closing some 50 parishes. The City Council would need to adopt legislation to implement the commission’s recommendations, and in a letter sent to the commission and council members, the diocese called the proposals “extremely offensive.”

“We do not seek nor do we approve of landmark designation,” said the letter from John Maimone, a finance officer with the diocese.

The six proposed landmark-designated churches — four of which have been closed or ordered closed — would be added to a list of 31 Catholic churches already designated by the council as landmarks.

As landmarks, it could be difficult for the diocese to sell the empty buildings because the restrictions might narrow the number of possible buyers. A landmark structure cannot be demolished or structurally reconfigured without permission from the Landmarks Commission.

Marijuana supporters emboldened in four states

WASHINGTON — Supporters of marijuana gained traction in New Jersey, California, Washington and Nevada in recent days through legislative victories and petitions to legalize the drug.

Barrett Duke, a public policy expert with the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), warned that efforts to legalize marijuana are the next steps in the plan that began with the medical marijuana movement.

Medical marijuana is “the Trojan horse of the marijuana legalization movement,” said Duke, the ERLC’s vice president for public policy and research. “It should not come as a surprise that the three states making serious headway toward legalizing the recreational use of marijuana (California, Washington and Nevada) currently permit the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes.”

“Having weakened the resistance of the residents of these states through the acceptance of marijuana for medicinal purposes, the legalization movement is taking them to the next step in their plan,” Duke said.

In New Jersey on Jan. 18, Gov. Jon Corzine signed a bill making that state the 14th to legalize medical marijuana before turning the governor’s office over to a Republican the next day.

United States passes 50 million abortions mark

WASHINGTON — At some point during the past two years, the United States experienced its 50 millionth legal abortion, the overwhelming majority of which were conducted for reasons of convenience.

The tragic statistic — which spans the 37 years since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion nationwide in 1973 — is based on data compiled by the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute and tallied by the National Right to Life Committee. Guttmacher’s data is respected by both sides of the issue and comes directly from abortion clinics.

The mark of 50 million was passed in 2008 and likely approached or reached 52 million in 2009, although data is not yet available for that year. The 50 million figure actually is an estimate based on Guttmacher data from 2005 — the last year of data — when 1.2 million abortions were performed.

The abortion rate ranged between 1.2 and 1.3 million from 2000 to 2005. If the same number of abortions performed in 2005 were performed in each succeeding year, then the number stood at 52 million at the end of last year.

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Senior Living Resource Guide

an advertising supplement • February 4, 2010

For seniors looking for 'the best of the rest of their life,' discover Foley's LiveOak Village Assisted and Independent Living Community

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If you think retiring along Alabama's beautiful southern coast is a dream for someone else, then you haven't heard about one of the gulf coast's most charming hidden treasures — LiveOak Village Assisted and Independent Living community; a gated enclave for seniors age 55 and up.

This charming 200-acre retirement village is nestled amongst old-growth hardwoods and towering pines in the lovely community of Foley, Ala., located just a short drive from the coastal beaches of Gulf Shores and the cultural experiences of nearby Mobile. And this 14-year-old established retirement village can accommodate the full spectrum of senior housing needs and services from single dwelling homes for those ages 55+, to three different independent living options to a beautiful assisted living facility with full accommodations. So residents are not only getting state-of-the-art retirement living, but they're getting it at very affordable prices compared to those in metropolitan areas. In addition to the housing options, the LiveOak campus includes shaded walking paths, a lovely outdoor pool, two beautiful ponds and many other amenities that all complement the 56,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Assisted Living Center.

So be it children of seniors who are 55+ contemplating a retirement move to the emerald coast and don't want to leave their parents behind in an assisted living facility or recent retirees looking to downsize and retire at the coast, LiveOak Village has an option for whatever retirement needs you or your loved ones may have.

ASSISTED LIVING

LiveOak Village Assisted Living Center is uniquely designed to offer a luxurious,

professionally assisted lifestyle to those choosing to make the rest of their lives the best of their lives. The spacious suites and studios of LiveOak may be leased on a month-by-month basis without any buy-in or endowment requirement.

At LiveOak, residents' safety is top priority. A response system is located by each bed and in every bath of the charming one-room studios and two-room suites. Smoke detectors and emergency pull cords are located in each apartment. These systems are linked to the health services desk and are monitored 24 hours a day.

Designed all on one floor, LiveOak Assisted Living offers privacy and independence with 24-hour personal assistance by a trained professional staff that includes assistance with bathing, grooming, dressing, meals, medications, etc. Suites and studios are straightened daily and cleaned thoroughly every week. There's ample closet space, free cable television, phone hook-up, individual climate controls.

Residents furnish their suites or studios with their own treasured, comfortable furniture and belongings. Scheduled transportation in the specially equipped bus or automobiles is available whenever the need arises. Three delicious meals and snacks are offered by the outstanding dining staff dedicated to providing a delightful selection of good, nutritious food, and special dietary needs are gladly accommodated.

LiveOak is pet friendly, allowing residents to keep small pets if they so desire. Other amenities include a beauty/barber shop, walking trails, green area for horseshoes, croquet and putting, a pool and jacuzzi, library, barbeque grill and an activities room with it's own director who oversees daily activities. Residents are free to come and go as they please and resident parking is provided for personal cars.



INDEPENDENT LIVING

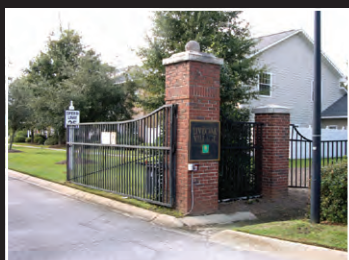
The Independent Living component of LiveOak Village offers the senior community three unique options of one and two bedroom rental garden apartments and villas: the Garden Apartments, the Villas and the Townhomes.

They come complete with all kitchen appliances, washer/dryer, spacious bathrooms and closets, as well as attractive outdoor porches or patios. Residents enjoy the Clubhouse at Village Square, which boasts an indoor heated pool, an outdoor pool and sunning area, tennis courts, weight room, men's and women's card rooms and locker/shower facilities and a meeting room for potlucks, social activities and civic events. It offers the opportunity to enjoy the companionship of peers and the fun of many activities. Residents enjoy lunches out, cooking breakfast together, shopping, cards and games, speakers, and lots of get-togethers and parties. Twenty-four-hour emer-

gency response is included, as is all maintenance, housekeeping and landscaping needs. Residents have privacy when they want it and socializing when they desire it.

And because of the in-migration to coastal Alabama of healthy and active seniors the LiveOak Village Assisted and Independent Living campus was designed to include single dwelling homes for ages 55+ in gated communities of Savannah and Charleston. Currently there are more than 100 homes within the two neighborhoods, and homeowners can take advantage of the full-service wellness center as well.

LiveOak Village Assisted and Independent Living truly does offer retirement living at its best! Call LiveOak Marketing today for more information and to schedule a tour of the campus. LiveOak can be reached at 1-800-871-7066, 251-943-6733 or visit www.LiveOakAl.com.



1 - 800 - 871 - 7066 / 251 - 943 - 6733 / www.LiveOakAl.com

Reverse Mortgage Benefits

By Jimmy Dixon, McGowin & King Mortgage, LLC
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President Ronald Reagan and I have a few things in common. To name just two: Both of us were born on February 6th and we both came to appreciate the benefits of a reverse mortgage. President Reagan signed the bill into law in 1989 making FHA Reverse Mortgages possible for homeowners who were at least 62 years old with a good bit of equity in their home.

What are the benefits? Well, (see, we even talk a lot alike) space is limited but here are some:

They can provide a guaranteed, tax-free, steady monthly income to those who need it. I've heard first-hand of seniors who are trying to decide between medicine or meat because they can't afford both.

Others are getting the reverse so they won't have to make any more monthly mortgage payments. By the way, you still have to pay for homeowners insurance and, if you're not exempt from property tax you're responsible for that also.

Some have benefited by paying off all their outstanding debts such as credit cards and autos.

Some of my customers have been in serious financial situations with threats of foreclosure and bankruptcy. I'm glad to report many have been greatly relieved when the reverse paid off their mortgage company allowing them to stay in their home the rest of their lives.

If you or someone you know could possibly benefit from a reverse mortgage, please call me. Information is always free, and remember we are a mortgage broker company. We are not tied to just one lender and

not all lenders give the same amount to the senior adult. It's always better to shop and we'll do your shopping for you while we diligently look for the best product to meet your needs.

For a free brochure or more information please call Jimmy Dixon direct at 205-567-4800, or toll-free at 1-866-879-7775. Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible Study Director, a FAITH team leader, deacon and Upwards basketball coach at Valley Creek Baptist Church in Hueytown.



Jimmy Dixon

There's never been a more important
TIME TO BRING THE FAMILY TOGETHER.

End of life care

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Alzheimer's
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Our family of caregivers is ready to work together with yours. Take the time now.

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LifeStic offers peace of mind for adult children of seniors

Total Identification Systems, Inc.
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It's a scenario that we all hope will never happen. Your parent encounters a medical emergency that renders them unconscious or unable to communicate. Emergency personnel arrive and because your parent is disoriented the EMTs are helpless to know what type of medications they are taking or if there is a serious medical condition they should be aware of as they try to administer care. Hospital personnel contact you to obtain vital information, which is critical for treatment, and in your panicked state of mind you can't remember all of his or her medications or dosage. Many times even minutes are critical in an emergency and having vital medical information such as blood type, medications, allergies and medical history readily available can mean the difference between life and death.

And that's where LifeStic comes into play. LifeStic is the perfect solution for adult children of aging parents who worry about such a horrible scenario occurring, even for themselves.

Eric and Melanie Kercher of Fairhope, Ala., have patented a device that can literally be a life saver in a medical emergency. LifeStic is a portable, custom, two-inch USB flash drive (Microsoft compatible) that has a simple-to-use program on it designed specifically for critical medical information to be readily available at a moment's notice.

Portable design

The LifeStic was designed to be attached to a key ring or worn around the neck on a red lanyard or even carried in a purse or pocket. Each LifeStic comes with a bright red key tag, with the acronym I.C.E. (in case of emergency) boldly printed on it. "Attention EMT" stickers are provided with each purchase for the purpose of putting them in car and house windows with "Medical Device" boldly displayed.

Many senior adults are not familiar with computer technology so there is no need for them to be concerned about inputting information on this device. It can easily be inputted by a family member or friend and once it is loaded with their medical information they will have a feeling of security knowing this information will always be immediately on hand. For information call 251-990-3500.

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When Seconds Count...



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Fairhope, Ala.



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The CovenantGroup
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Have you ever heard of or had family members fighting over an inheritance?

Do you believe parents intend for that to happen? Well around 85% of estate designs contain provisions that unintentionally cause this.

www.covenant-group.com

Typical estate documents focus on the transfer of assets and avoiding taxes. Let The Covenant Group design a Biblical plan that also focuses on building your eternity portfolio while keeping your family hugging each other after you are gone.

Call Paul Berry, CFP™ at The Covenant Group at 1-800-844-PLAN (7526) to discuss your family circumstances.

Paul Berry is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ practitioner and principal of The Covenant Group, a biblically-based financial planning firm in Birmingham. Visit us on the Web at www.covenant-group.com

Comfort Keepers®: Providing in-home, nonmedical services

Comfort Keepers
Paid Advertising

Comfort Keepers® mission is to provide in-home care to seniors and others who need help with activities of daily living, with the goal of allowing people to stay in their own homes.

Comfort Keepers® strives to provide a full range of care and services that maximiz-



es the quality of life and reduces the physical and emotional stress for clients, their family members and friends.

Whether physical or emotional support, Comfort Keepers® is there to provide quality caregiving each step of the way. At Comfort Keepers®, nothing is more important than helping people live full, independent and dignified lives within the comfort of their own homes.

The vast majority of Comfort Keepers® clients are

seniors, but services are also available to others needing assistance such as new mothers, those recovering from illness or injury or those with disabilities.

HIRING quality care givers

Visit
www.comfortkeepers.com and click on the employment tab for information or call one of our locations.

Sixty-three percent of initial calls made to Comfort Keepers® are made by family members of seniors who are in need of care and assistance.

And clients as well as family members can be assured that Comfort Keepers® caregivers undergo a thorough screening process including extensive background checks, and are insured and bonded for their client's peace of mind.

PERSONAL CARE SERVICES

- ▶ Bathing
- ▶ Mobility
- ▶ Transferring and positioning
- ▶ Incontinence care
- ▶ Toileting
- ▶ Feeding
- ▶ Oral hygiene
- ▶ Special diet and meal preparation

ERRAND SERVICES

- ▶ Grocery shopping
- ▶ Respite or relief for family
- ▶ Medication reminders
- ▶ Grooming and dressing guidance
- ▶ Incidental transportation
- ▶ Laundry and linen washing
- ▶ Recreational activities and crafts

COMPANIONSHIP SERVICES

- ▶ Companionship
- ▶ Moral & emotional support
- ▶ Incidental transportation services
- ▶ Medication reminders
- ▶ Meal preparation
- ▶ Light housekeeping
- ▶ Errand services
- ▶ Grocery shopping
- ▶ Grooming
- ▶ Live-in services (where available)
- ▶ 24-hour care
- ▶ Respite care
- ▶ Mail assistance and organization
- ▶ Periodic review and communication with family
- ▶ Daily TLC phone calls
- ▶ In-Home Safety Technology

ANNISTON: Owner: Rick Goedde, 256-237-6684, 256-237-6685. Service areas: Cleburne, Clay, Calhoun, Etowah, Talledega, and parts of St. Clair County.

BIRMINGHAM: Owner: Brent A. Watson, 205-981-1800. Service areas: Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, Chilton and Blount counties.

DAPHNE: Owner: Deborah Colebank, 251-621-5555. Service areas: Mobile and Baldwin counties.

AUBURN-OPELIKA: Owners: Chris & Brenda Jane, 334-749-8461. Service areas: Auburn-Opelika, Tuskegee, Tallahassee, Dadeville, Valley and surrounding areas.



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5 nights hotel! 9 meals!
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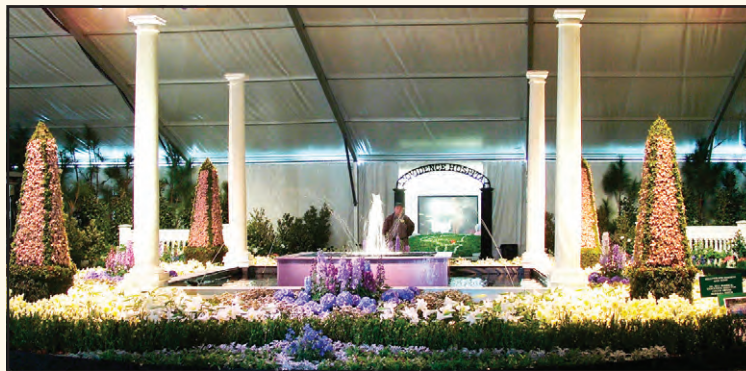
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Mobile's spectacular Festival of Flowers: A perfect spring trip destination March 25-28



Festival of Flowers
Paid Advertising

For senior adult groups looking for that one-of-a-kind spring outing ... look no further than Mobile's Festival of Flow-

ers being held March 25-28.

This garden extravaganza will take your breath away as you explore the wonderland of floral majesty created within life-size landscape gardens de-

signed by some of the South's premier landscape architects and garden designers.

The 17th annual festival will be the largest outdoor flower show in the Southeast. The Festival of Flowers is acknowledged as the premier flower and garden event of the greater Gulf Coast.

The festival takes place during what is perhaps Mobile's prettiest month, with trees leafing out all over and bloomers displaying their splendor.

It is arrayed under tent and sky with over 300,000 square feet of exhibits that will enchant, entertain and educate visitors at this feast for all the senses. "Stand by Me," is the harmonious theme guiding the spectacular displays of this year's festival. Mankind's love of music and flowers will blend to create a global tapestry of gardens.

Guests will be taken from England to Holland as well as Asia and points in between on a sensational and horticultural



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tour. Its purpose is to encourage and illustrate new methods of home gardening. Visitors may tour at their own pace. Visitors can spend the entire day enjoying the displays and the seminars and shopping.

Relax in the Garden Café. Tables and chairs are provided for the convenience of festival visitors.

As the show is outdoors, comfortable shoes are recommended.

The Festival of Flowers will enable you to "take spring home in a bag." The Garden Galleria vendors offer garden accessories, tools and plants.

For ticket information and to find out about church group discounts, call 251-639-2050, 1-877-777-0529 or visit www.festivalofflowers.com.



Holiday Retirement Communities: Four Alabama locations providing worry-free, independent living options



Holiday Retirement

Paid Advertising

For nearly 40 years, Holiday Retirement has been providing the very best options for senior living with more than 300 communities in North America — four of which are strategically located in Alabama.

All four Alabama facilities provide activities and amenities that are amazingly affordable such as: delicious and healthy chef-prepared meals served three times a day in a beautiful dining room setting; two teams of live-in managers that ensures on-site availability 24 hours a day; monthly rent that includes all utilities (except phone); an innovative travel program; climate-controlled suites; chauffeured transportation to appointments; and enrichment programs with stimulating activities.

Holiday Retirement's turn-key lifestyle solutions are all based on one affordable monthly rent. No expensive buy-in fees and no long-term leases. Our agreements are all on a month-to-month basis, so we earn the right to serve you one day at a time, month after month, year after year. So if you're looking for an affordable, independent living community within the state of Alabama Holiday Retirement has a place for you!

Our on-site resident management team is available to assist with any event or emergency 24/7, while our in-house chef prepares three excellent meals per day from scratch, all served in our beautiful dining room.

The entire staff provides fun and stimulating on-site activities, off-site excursions, transportation to your appointments and basic housekeeping and maintenance chores to free your time for better things...like relaxing and enjoying the many joys your retirement has to offer! All of the Holiday Retirement communities in Alabama feature the following amenities:

Suite & Apartment Features

- Studio apartments with kitchenette
- One-bedroom apartments with kitchenette
- Two-bedroom apartments with kitchenette

- Air conditioning
- Paid utilities & cable, except phone
- Private telephone line
- Wheelchair accessible
- Residents can personalize living space
- Pets welcome
- Smoking accommodations provided

Community Amenities

- On-site staffing
- Around the clock resident manager and co-manager teams
- Administrative/reception personnel
- Award-winning chef with cooking staff

- Servers
- Housekeepers
- In-house maintenance personnel
- Resident Enrichment Coordinator

Security

- Emergency in-room call system
- Fire sprinkler system
- Personal, locked mailbox

Dining

- Daily, chef-prepared meals provided in restaurant-style dining room, with in-room delivery available.

- Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks

Transportation & Parking

- Resident parking
- Guest parking
- Daily chauffeured shuttle bus

Housekeeping

- Weekly apartment cleaning
- Weekly linen service

On-site Services

- Resident enrichment activities
- Exercise equipment &/or fitness center
- Library
- Billiards/pool room
- TV/media room
- Guest dining
- Guest lodging
- Meeting room(s)
- Resident kitchen



Check out one of our gracious retirement living communities near you!

Eastdale Estates in Montgomery

Eastdale Estates Retirement Residence in Montgomery offers up the best in southern hospitality along with the security and amenities that make retirement living a breeze. We're just a stone's throw from the many cultural and recreational opportunities the metropolitan state capital has to offer, yet we retain our warm, homestyle charm.



the world a better place for everyone else, it's now your turn to sleep in, indulge in great food, enjoy your choice of social activities and feel at ease as part of our family. Leave the driving, cooking, dishwashing, cleaning, yard work and maintenance to us while enjoy the greatest things in life. We'll be here for you 24 hours a day, 7 days week.



Monarch Estates in Auburn

Located at the edge of the Appalachian foothills in Auburn, Monarch Estates is a wonderful place to relax and enjoy the benefits of independent retirement living.



Our prime location is next door to a Baptist church and within easy driving distance of the Colonial Mall, Indian Pines and Rolling Hills golf courses and cultural and athletic events at renowned Auburn University.

University Oaks in Mobile

So you're ready to retire, but not ready to slow down? University Oaks retirement residence in Mobile is the place for you!

The greater Mobile metropolitan area abounds with cultural events and recreational activities of every description...from ballets, symphony performances, jazz festivals, formal dances and arts and crafts exhibits to amateur and professional sports, hunting, fishing, golfing and tennis.



At University Oaks — the pace can slow down — but it

doesn't have to. Our enrichment coordinator plans a variety of in-house activities and off-site excursions every week, and there's plenty to hold your interest in our billiard room, big screen TV room, library, crafts and activity room, exercise room and fitness trail.

Rocky Ridge Retirement Residence in Birmingham

Rocky Ridge Retirement Residence in the Birmingham suburb of Hoover offers just what you deserve: a relaxed, care-free retirement surrounded by friends with activities to stimulate any interest. After all the years you've put into making

Montgomery: 334-260-8911

Auburn: 334-502-0977

Birmingham: 205-989-6500

Mobile: 251-661-7733

For more information visit www.holidaytouch.com.

You are cordially invited to a personal tour and complimentary meal at any of our gracious retirement living communities.

Recreational & Social Activities

- Holiday retirement travel program
- Civic groups welcome
- Arts & crafts
- Bingo
- Card games
- Cooking & baking
- Shopping excursions
- Holiday & birthday parties
- Special event celebrations
- Cultural events

- Guest speakers
- Computer classes
- Educational programs
- Gardening

Personal Care

If our residents need personal care assistance, they are welcome to contract with an outside agency to bring in the services they desire. Please see a Manager for details and personal care agreements.