

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

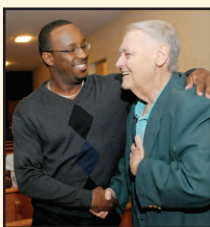


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Photo courtesy of North Carolina Baptist Men

HUGE NEED — Laszlo Pavelcze (red shirt), one of two Hungarians working with five North Carolina Baptist Men on a Rescue24 team in Haiti, assists a patient at an overcrowded hospital just days after the quake.

First ones in Baptist rescue team sees initial response as vital ministry

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

It's hard to believe there is an American who wasn't inundated with TV images of devastated Haiti in the days right after the Jan. 12 earthquake.

But Jack Frazier is that guy.

Oh, he saw the first few images of horror and heartbreak on his TV in North Carolina, but that was all it took for him to want to quit watching.

So that's just what he did.

And within hours, Frazier — along with four other North Carolina Baptist Men and two Baptists from Hungary — boarded a plane headed south.

Before the week was out, he was standing in an overcrowded hospital in Port-au-Prince, the nation's hard-hit

capital, being careful about where he walked to keep from stepping on the multitude of injured people lying on the ground.

"They were lying just about anywhere you could put them. We wanted to treat them with dignity, but you were

doing good to find a piece of cardboard to lay them on," Frazier said. "It was very chaotic."

For days, he and the other members of the Baptist World Aid (BWAid) Rescue24 International Team split up to

(See 'Team,' page 8)

First 2 Alabama teams called up, at work in Haiti

The first two Alabama Baptist teams are on the ground in Haiti as part of the joint Southern Baptist disaster relief effort there. A two-person water purification team and a seven-person medical team, including a chaplain, left Feb. 6 and 9, respectively, after being called up just days before.

"We are thankful to begin the process and do what we've been wanting to do for several weeks and that's get in there and make a difference," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Both teams are relieving teams from other state conventions sent down just before, Johnson said.

Laying the groundwork

While in Haiti, the water purification team members, who are cross-trained in emergency feeding and water purification, are "looking for ways to expand that ministry into well-drilling and other opportunities for future trips." These teams kick off what Johnson anticipates to be a steady flow of "a good exchange of personnel" from Alabama lasting for 12-24 months.

For any individuals or church groups interested in going to Haiti, training sessions are happening around the state this month. For more information, visit www.alsbom.org/haiti.

Thanks to Alabamians' donations, the SBOM sent a \$100,000 check for Haiti relief Feb. 5, totaling more than \$210,000 sent. And state Baptists are meeting needs in Haiti by packing Buckets of Hope. For more information, see graphic below. (TAB)

WANT TO HELP HAITI? Give a Bucket of Hope

What:

Alabama Baptists are currently collecting buckets with specific provisions to help meet immediate needs in Haiti. For instructions on what provisions to purchase and how to pack the bucket, visit www.alsbom.org/haiti. Then drop it off on the appointed days at the drop-off points noted below.

When:

March 4-5 (8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.)

Where:

Florence — Highland Baptist Church
Huntsville — University Baptist Church
Gadsden — Etowah Baptist Association office
Birmingham — Birmingham Baptist Association office
Montgomery — Vaughn Forest Baptist Church
Ozark — Southside Baptist Church
Frisco City — Bethlehem Baptist Association Learning Center
Demopolis — Fairhaven Baptist Church
Daphne — Eastern Shore Baptist Church

www.alsbom.org/haiti

COMMENT

Supporting the Rule of Law

It is time for (the slot machines being labeled) electronic bingo gambling to be closed down across Alabama. The Alabama Supreme Court has established the criteria for bingo, and it is time for the law of the land to be applied by the district attorneys. The Supreme Court decision dealing with White Hall (Entertainment Center in Lowndes County) applies to VictoryLand in Macon County, Country Crossing in Houston County, the gambling parlors in Bessemer and every other place electronic bingo gambling can be found."

Those were the words written in the Dec. 10 editorial of this publication. Thankfully, Gov. Bob Riley is trying to enforce the law of the land. In 62 of the state's 67 counties, electronic bingo gambling does not exist. If it did at one time, it has now been closed down. In Alabama, it is a crime to possess a slot machine, and the ruling by the state Supreme Court clearly defined that the game of bingo is not what these electronic gambling machines play. They are slot machines pure and simple.

Supreme Court Justice Glenn Murdock said as much when he wrote in November, "the machines operate almost exactly like slot machines."

In five counties, the law is not being enforced by local authorities, so Gov. Riley is trying to bring the rule of law to these places through the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling. His efforts have been met with howls of protest by those who want to continue defying state law. If local officials enforced the Supreme Court's decision, then there would be no need for the task force.

But politics and money explain why in counties like Jefferson, Birmingham was closed to electronic gambling while the Bessemer area continued to protect, even promote, the illegal activity until DA Arthur Green ordered all gambling operations padlocked by 6 p.m. Feb. 5. Green made the announcement despite protests from leaders of several city councils. Why else do these council members and legislators from places like Greene, Macon and Houston counties protest applying state law to the casinolike gambling sites in their areas?

Gov. Riley has the gambling bosses on the run, and they are fighting back like a wounded animal backed into a corner. Recently state police investigators reported being followed as they did their work. Security for the governor and other officials has been beefed up because of reported threats. If the gambling bosses were serious about being good citizens, offering legal and wholesome entertainment, then they would welcome investigators and Alabama would not be in this period of rising tension.

Instead shadows of Phenix City are cast across the state. Anyone familiar with our history knows



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

the hold gambling and crime had on that city. They know about the 1954 murder of Albert Patterson, the Democratic candidate for attorney general, and how it took a declaration of limited martial law by Gov. Gordon Persons, who sent in the National Guard, to break the stranglehold gambling bosses had there. Is that where Alabama is headed again?

A study titled "Casinos, Crime and Community Costs" studied all 3,165 counties in the United States over a 20-year period. Its conclusion: five years after a casino opened, robbery in the community went up 136 percent, aggravated assaults went up 91 percent, auto theft 78 percent, burglary 50 percent, larceny 38 percent, rape 21 percent and murder 12 percent compared to neighboring communities.

Big business

Electronic gambling in Alabama is big business. No one knows how big, but one district attorney recently said in a public address he had heard estimates exceeding \$1 million a day. No one knows how many gambling machines are in Alabama, but one report says this state has more than Las Vegas.

Is it any wonder the gambling bosses are howling? Leading the gambling bosses is Alabama's gambling magnate Milton McGregor. McGregor is used to being protected by the state Legislature, where his largesse over the years has won him enormous power. His influence won him the least restricted electronic bingo regulations in Alabama for at least one of his two gambling sites — VictoryLand. He also owns the Birmingham Race Course, which had electronic gambling machines until they were ruled illegal in 2006. When his and the other two horse and dog racing tracks in the state (Mobile County and Greene County) failed, legislators tried to save those businesses by allowing electronic gambling only at some or all of those sites.

Interestingly those legislators did not rush to save grocery stores and furniture stores and other legitimate businesses in Alabama when those kinds of businesses experienced financial difficulty. Obviously money talks. Looking back on Phenix City, Patterson's son, former Gov. John Patterson, said, "The (gambling interests) had control of the city, the county and even the ballot box. They could put anyone in office they wanted." One wonders about the role of gambling in today's Legislature.

Now even McGregor is worried. For the first time, the Supreme Court has put him on the defensive. For the first time, an Alabama governor has taken him on. For McGregor, the stakes are enormous.

True charity bingo is a tax-free endeavor in Alabama. As long as McGregor and others could claim they conducted bingo, they did not have to pay taxes. But when the courts find their machines are not playing bingo but are games of amusement, then all the earnings become subject to the state's amusement tax. Imagine a tax collector serving McGregor with a claim in the hundreds of millions of dollars based on the enormous amounts of money he has gained over the years. His downfall could be more dramatic than that of former HealthSouth CEO Richard Scrushy. No wonder McGregor is fighting so hard. He could be left with only what he gets from his involvement in Russia's gambling industry.

In truth, Russia and Alabama both should learn what economists already know and has been reported for years — gambling is a losing bet. A report published by the Institute of Government & Public Affairs at the University of Illinois examined the economic benefit of a casino (low wage jobs, taxes, convenience, etc.) and compared it to the cost of a casino in a community. The value was determined to be "no larger than \$40 per adult annually." The social costs (crime, lost work, family issues) were set at \$135 per adult annually.

The author concluded, "Thus casino gambling fails a cost-benefit test by a substantial margin." The author added, "If casino gambling cannot be offered in ways that cause it to pass a cost-benefit test, then banning it is preferable on economic terms."

The multimillion-dollar gambling facilities popping up in Alabama are nothing more than casinos. They take millions of dollars from Alabama's economy every week. They are bad for the economy and society, and they violate the laws of our state.

Gov. Riley deserves the support of Alabama Baptists as he leads the effort to enforce the laws of our state and throw off the chokehold gambling bosses have had on this state for much too long.

Letters to the Editor

See page 10

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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IMB-NAMB merger not in GCR plan, Floyd says

The much-discussed merger of Southern Baptists' two mission boards will not be among the recommendations presented to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at its June meeting in Orlando, Fla., the chairman of the SBC's Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force said Feb. 1 in Jacksonville, Fla.

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., made the comment in an afternoon panel discussion about the task force's work during the annual Pastors' Conference at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

Dismantling the myth

Shortly after the GCR Task Force was formed, speculation at one point ran so high that the group might recommend to dismantle the North American Mission Board (NAMB) or to merge it with the International Mission Board (IMB) that task force member Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., addressed it on the *betweenthetimes.com* blog site as one of eight "myths" spreading among Southern Baptists.

The idea that the task force was planning "to abolish NAMB or dissolve it into the IMB" was a matter of "intense discussion and interest" among Southern Baptists, Akin acknowledged in that article, but "a myth as it relates to the current work of the GCR [Task Force]."

SBC President Johnny Hunt, also a task force member, addressed the subject during one of the earliest listening sessions — an Aug. 26 panel discussion at the Church at Pinnacle Hills, Rogers, Ark. Hunt said at the time it was "poor journalism" that suggested the task force would consider disassembling NAMB and added: "There is absolutely no quote whatsoever to go with that. It is ludicrous."

Weighing the options

During the Feb. 1 event in Jacksonville, however, Floyd acknowledged the task force had weighed the option of changing the SBC's two-board arrangement.

"Our sights are set on having the North American Mission Board, and our sights are set on having an International Mission Board," Floyd told the group.

"There was great, great, great discussion, study, planning and even to the point of having strategic formation of the possibility of the other. But we just really sensed in our heart that wasn't right at this time," he added in response to a question from Jeff Callaway, a church planter from Cleveland.

While the task force's full report will not be released until May 3, Floyd said his presentation at the Feb. 22-23 SBC Executive Committee meeting in Nashville would "unveil a great part" of the final document. (BP)



Photo by Jay Hare

WORKING TOGETHER — Al Williams (left), pastor of St. James Baptist Church, and Don Falgout, pastor of South Lena Baptist Church, maintain a 'good working relationship' with their two churches meeting in the South Lena facility in Dothan.

Multiplying works

Sharing space rejuvenates Dothan church, opens new door for ministry

By **Brittany N. Howerton**
The Alabama Baptist

After seeing its congregation drop to about 20, South Lena Baptist Church, Dothan, had a decision to make: close its doors or open them to a new ministry?

And the timing couldn't have been better because St. James Baptist Church, a black church plant that had been meeting in the Columbia Baptist Association office for about four years, was looking for a new meeting space.

Now, two years later, the South Lena Street facility plays host to both churches as they alternate service and Sunday School times.

"There are times that we have programs together, homecoming together and revival together," said Don Falgout, pastor of South Lena Baptist. "If there's a special program either of our churches is going to have, then we invite the other. It's a very good working relationship."

Mutual benefit

To balance out the blessing of meeting in a building rent-free, St. James Baptist takes care of paying utilities and provides some additional manpower to the mostly senior citizen group who constitute South Lena Baptist.

But for the South Lena Baptist congregation, the partnership is more than just a chance to gain a little help. It's an opportunity to make an investment.

"If you look at the life of churches, they live in a cycle and pass on," Falgout said. "We look at it as this is the way the Lord is giving us spiritual children we wouldn't be

able to have otherwise. ... It's a way we feel like we are being beneficial to the kingdom of God."

For Al Williams, pastor of St. James Baptist, the partnership is another step toward establishing his congregation's spiritual identity.

"Without a church building, it's hard to form an identity — a place we can call our home even if it's temporary," he said. "But to be there for a time period has given us an identity to embark on our relationship with God and with the community in ministry."

Williams said he hopes when his church moves out on its own, South Lena Baptist members will be able to say, "That body of Christ truly is the 'body of Christ.'"

"Our vision statement is ... to be able to touch people the way Jesus touched them, to hear people the way Jesus heard them and to love people the way Jesus loved them. And that's the ministry I hope to leave on South Lena — that they can say they were ministered to by us," Williams said.

Impacting the community

But the ministry has spread beyond the church walls.

Had it not been for the partnership, "we would have never been able to reach some

of these people (in the community)," Falgout said, noting St. James Baptist's 32 baptisms.

"We tried and we were miserably failing at it," he said.

"We went door to door, and we just were not doing well. ... I really think the fact that

Brother Al could lead some folks to the Lord has made our people feel like their lives are a little bit richer. They look at it like I do — that we have an investment in St. James. But let me tell you, St. James feels like they have an investment in us."

Jerry Grandstaff, director of missions for Columbia Association, hopes this partnership is just the beginning of what the association's churches can do.

"I think it's a large leap in the right direction because it gives that new work an existing community to reach people to spread the gospel. ... It's not that we want to have white churches and black churches, but it's about how best can we penetrate pockets of people and reach them for Christ?" he said.

"Sometimes it's best to have churches that are specifically developed to do that. I think if we can multiply what we're doing with St. James eventually in the future, then we would have multiplied works in this area," he said.





Til' death do us part: Marriage can be characteristic of Christ even without a daily fairy tale, experts say

istockphoto.com

By **Brittany N. Howerton**
The Alabama Baptist

You've heard it sung, "Love and marriage — goes together like a horse and carriage." Unfortunately sometimes your horse runs away or your carriage gets stuck in the mud, and that fairy tale feels more like a Rambo saga than Cinderella and Prince Charming.

But it's pretty safe to say Cinderella never had to balance a checkbook or pick up her prince's dirty socks. It's also a safe bet that the prince never got bored or had to listen to Cinderella complain about not having enough time in the day.

Practical approach

So how do you bring it back to reality, move beyond fairy tale expectations and maintain a healthy marriage that glorifies God and honors your spouse?

Communicate.

"Learning how to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts ef-

fectively through communication is central and vital to moving forward in a healthy Christian marriage," said Renay Carroll, a licensed professional counselor with the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries' Pathways Professional Counseling.

And create variety.

It's normal for feelings to change to some degree "when life becomes daily," said J. Thomas Bevill, professor of marriage and family counseling and Christian studies at the University of Mobile.

"Practically you can deal with that by creating variety in your life — sharing a variety of experiences together so there is some kind of newness that keeps happening," he said. "Realize it's not 'on the mountaintop' all the time. It's journeying up and down the whole way with lesser de-

grees of intensity. So if you anticipate that and create variety with trips or making new friends or sharing new experiences, then every new experience is a different way of sharing a different kind of intimacy."

And consider more than just the obvious.

Bevill said obvious characteristics of distinctly Christian marriages can include worship, prayer and Bible study time together and being involved in church but other

things like commitment to God, serving others and searching out ways to share your faith are just as vital.

But too often, Christians' marriages look the same as everyone else's, said Eileen Mitchell, an associate in the office of discipleship and family ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Resource sites:

www.MarriagePartnership.com
www.FireproofMyMarriage.com
www.MarriageCoMission.com
www.AlabamaMarriage.org
www.StainedGlassMinistry.com

Use retreats, studies to build a healthy marriage

It's nothing you can just be satisfied with," Eileen Mitchell said of marriage.

"(You must) continue to learn about your spouse and how to make that marriage strong so you can have strong families and then have strong churches," said Mitchell, an associate in the office of discipleship and family ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

That's why resources like marriage conferences, Bible studies, articles and books are important supplements to one's own hard work.

And it's the same reason Gov. Bob Riley proclaimed February as Healthy Marriage Month across the state.

"We recognize the special place of marriage in American society and in American hearts. ... We honor marriage as the extraordinary vow that ordinary people make and guide their lives by every day," Riley said in his proclamation.

Riley's proclamation the past few years has been in keeping with the goals of the Alabama Community Healthy

Marriage Initiative, a five-year initiative (2006–2011) to provide churches, families and state institutions with the resources necessary for promoting healthy marriages and homes.

Upcoming marriage conferences in Alabama include

► Let's Get Real Conference, sponsored by Stained Glass Ministries, at Community Life Church, Roanoke, Feb. 19–20 and Liberty Church, Birmingham, April 9–10;

► Focus on Marriage, sponsored by Focus on the Family, at Vaughn Park Church of Christ in Montgomery on Feb. 27;

► Marriage Celebration, sponsored by the SBOM, at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega March 12–13; and

► Fireproof My Marriage at First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland March 19–20.

For more marriage resources and events, contact Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 221, or emitchell@alsbom.org or visit www.lifeway.com/menu/?id=200740. (TAB)

For instance, the divorce rate in the Church is about the same as in the world, she noted.

"But we all know what it (marriage) should be — it should be that triangle with God at the top and both partners looking to God and asking for His will," Mitchell said. "Focusing on God and loving that person as God loves you is a whole different concept," she said. "That's why it's important for people to grow to-

gether in marriage ... because if they're not focusing on the same goal, they're growing apart."

Although all married couples face similar trials and frustrations, Christian couples have a higher source from which to draw, Bevill said. Coming from a Christian perspective creates outlets for selfless principles "because of our firsthand knowledge of what Christ has done for us," he said.

And because of the love God has shown, Carroll added.

"Christian couples have the capacity to love each other deeply and even more deeply than just through physical love or secularized love. ... The capacity to understand agape love and God's love increases the capacity to love each other," she said. "That sets Christian couples apart."

First Corinthians 13 describes love as patient, kind, gentle, humble, calm, forgiving, trusting, hopeful and persevering.

"Patience and kindness are acts

that you choose to do whether you feel like it or not," Bevill said, adding, "with patience, you listen before you defend yourself."

"And realize your partner isn't perfect," he said. "For any given thing [he or she does], stop and think 'this doesn't mean an attack on me necessarily; this can mean it's just a bad day.' That's another aspect of patience."

But sometimes the "little things"

can make all the difference like "a cup of coffee in the morning, a phone call during the day, a special moment just to stop and listen, sending her flowers or giving him a few moments when he comes home from work to unwind a little bit," Bevill said. "It's the little things we do every day that create an atmosphere of caring."

At the end of the day, Mitchell said the most important thing for husbands

and wives to remember is Philippians 2:1–4:

"If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Resource books:

"For Men Only" and "For Women Only" by Shaunti Feldhahn

"Never Alone: Devotions for Couples" by David Ferguson and Teresa Ferguson

"The Five Languages of Apology" by Gary Chapman

"The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts" by Gary Chapman

"Magnificent Marriage: 10 Beacons Show the Way to Marriage Happiness" by Nick Stinnett, Donnie Hilliard and Nancy Stinnett

• Healthy Marriage Month •

Alabama Baptist leaders share views on marriage

By Kristen Lindsey
The Alabama Baptist

Faith. Prayer. Commitment. Forgiveness. These are just a few words four Alabama Baptists used to describe the distinctives of a good Christian marriage. Combined, these four have more than 150 years of marriage experience with their respective spouses.

Their answers reveal the longevity and strength

of their marriages are results of Christ being No. 1 in their relationships.

What would you do differently if you were given the opportunity to start your marriage over again? What advice would you give to someone about to enter into marriage?

The following individuals answer these questions and more in their interviews with *The Alabama Baptist*.

Marilyn Foley

Marilyn Foley is the wife of Mark Foley, president of the University of Mobile. The Foleys have been married for 38 years.

Q: What are characteristics of a good Christian marriage?

A: Sharing the power of prayer, belief system and faith. Honoring each other is very important. Looking for things you enjoy doing together and having fun and allowing each other to have space.

Q: How have these characteristics played out in your marriage?

A: We share prayer concerns and pray together. We have found things to enjoy together — bicycling, (watching) some TV shows, (going to the) movies, traveling. He has his own hobbies and activities that help him refresh, and he allows me time to do things I want to do without question or pressure. We use our phones a lot to offer encouragement to each other throughout the day.

Q: Would you do anything differently if you were to start your marriage over again? If so, what?

A: I would have started the honoring process sooner — honoring and appreciating and not taking the time for granted. Looking for things you can admire about your spouse and sharing those things (with him) instead of looking for the irritating things.

Q: What have you learned about being a



Photo courtesy of Marilyn Foley

good Christian wife since being married?

A: Appreciating all the things he brings to the marriage. I feel like [God] really blessed me with my husband. He's been a spiritual leader in encouraging me to pursue my own personal relationship with the Lord.

Q: What advice would you give to someone about to enter into marriage?

A: You have to take the time to know each other first. Spend time in a lot of different situations and in a lot of different places. Talk about all those things that are important to you — children, money management, each other's families, your hopes and dreams, faith.

Barry Cospers

Barry Cospers is the director of missions for Tallapoosa Baptist Association.

He has been married to Cathy for 37 years.

Q: What are characteristics of a good Christian marriage?

A: First, unconditional surrender to the lordship of Christ. No. 2, unconditional love that both spouses have for one another and for the Lord. No. 3, mutual submission. No. 4, dedication that the marriage is going to be committed to Christ and dedication to one another.

Q: How have these characteristics played out in your marriage?

A: It has provided a blessed relationship for 37 years.

Q: Would you do anything differently if you were to start your marriage over again? If so, what?

A: I'd probably marry her sooner.

Q: What have you learned about being a good Christian husband since being married?

A: To love her as Christ so loved the Church. It is a happy marriage; we enjoy being around each other and doing things together. I've been a very lucky and blessed man.



Photo courtesy of Barry Cospers

Q: What do you value most in your marriage?

A: I have appreciated her faith relationship with God, the unconditional love she has for me and her diligence in serving the Lord with her best.

Q: What advice would you give to someone about to enter into marriage?

A: Make sure Jesus is No. 1, that God has brought them together and that the husband love his wife as Christ loved the Church.

Carol Gilbreath

Carol Gilbreath is the wife of Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. The Gilbreaths have been married for 40 years.

Q: What are characteristics of a good Christian marriage?

A: Several characteristics of a good Christian marriage would include commitment to the relationship, unselfishness toward each other, appreciation, communication, spending time together, being friends, patience, forgiveness and a healthy handling of anger.

Q: How have these characteristics played out in your marriage?

A: Our commitment to our marriage became the basis for working through problems and maturing as a couple in our early years together. Without that commitment, we could have selfishly gone our separate ways. Commitment, patience and forgiveness [were] primary and remain so today. I have talked to divorced couples who have said that their marriage would have made it had they taken seriously their commitment to each other rather than allowing their own selfishness to bring an end to their marriage.

Q: Would you do anything differently if you were to start your marriage over again? If so, what?

A: I would definitely do things differently if I could start my marriage over again. I would embrace better communication from the start: discussing individual goals, dreams, desires and prob-



Photo courtesy of Carol Gilbreath

lem-solving options/solutions. Premarital counseling would be a must.

Q: What have you learned about being a good Christian wife since being married?

A: I have learned that a good Christian wife is submissive. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). And there's no other way to submit than through love. Knowing your spouse's "love language" is key. Each of us has a definite "love language," and submitting becomes easier when loving him through his "love language," not mine.

Q: What advice would you give to someone about to enter into marriage?

A: One piece of advice for couples about to enter into marriage is to get extensive premarital counseling and take a honeymoon!

Mike Shaw

Mike Shaw is pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham. He has been married to Mary for 38 years.

Q: What are characteristics of a good Christian marriage?

A: The main thing is that there be a spiritual aspect to marriage — that it is based upon a strong foundation of having a relationship with Christ and sharing the same spiritual values.

Q: How have these characteristics played out in your marriage?

A: When we married, we both agreed that divorce was not in our vocabulary. We are committed to God and to each other until we're parted by death. We made a commitment that whatever problems came, we would work through them.

Q: Would you do anything differently if you were to start your marriage over again? If so, what?

A: I wish I had known the value of communication. If I could go back and do it over again, I'd make sure I was more kind and more loving in everything I did. In the early days of our marriage, I would lose my temper; I sincerely regret that now.

Q: What have you learned about being a good Christian husband since being married?

A: I've learned that I need to share with her everything that's on my heart and mind. We've been each other's prayer partners; we've ministered to other people together.



Photo courtesy of FBC Pelham

She's just a wonderful addition to my ministry. I'd hate to think what my ministry would be without her. I've cherished every day I've had with her. We laugh a lot and we are each other's best friend.

Q: What advice would you give to someone about to enter into marriage?

A: Remember all marriages have problems; there's never been a marriage that hasn't had problems. When you enter into marriage, you enter in with an attitude that we are going to work through our problems. Many people, instead of attacking problems, attack each other. Remember that God wants you to be together as long as you live.

Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

► **Glynwood Church, Prattville**, will celebrate Baptist Men's Day Feb. 28, 10:15 a.m., with Fred Kelley, co-host of the "Phil & Fred Show" on 99.3 FM WMFC in Monroeville. Kelley's praise band will also provide special music. Bruce Hose is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Cary Baker** is the new pastor of **Grantswood Church, Irondale**. He comes from First Church, Leeds, where he served as youth minister and associate pastor. Baker and his wife, Bridget, have one child.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its third Sunday night singing Feb. 21, 6 p.m., with The Singing Ambassadors, of Fayetteville, Tenn. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CAREY

► **Carey Association** will hold a wild game supper Feb. 16, 6 p.m., at County Line Church, Daviston. Chette Williams from Auburn Uni-

versity will speak. Larry Fetner is men's ministry director, and D. Bruce Willis Jr. is director of missions for Carey Association.

CLEBURNE

► **Bill Brown** is the new pastor of **Beulah Church, Muscadine**. He comes from First Church, Buchanan, Ga., where he served as minister of music.



BROWN

He also served as pastor of Midway Chapel, Bremen, Ga. Brown is a computer technician and has developed a computerized music system to help choir members hear music and improve. He and his wife, Carol, have five adult children.

MOBILE

► **Travis Road Church, Mobile**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary Feb. 14, 10:45 a.m., with former Pastor Alben Gaston. Tony Gordy will lead the music. Meet

and greet former Sunday School teachers and members at 9:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Roy Stebbins is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **Russell Association** will hold a community choir singspiration for all ages and styles of worship March 1, 7 p.m., at Summerville Church, Phenix City. For information call Steve Pace at 334-298-4416 by Feb. 22. Wayne Burns is director of missions. ► **Bethany Church, Phenix City**, licensed **Phillip Camp** to the gospel ministry Jan. 10. Jimmie Hobbs is pastor. ► **Crawford Church, Phenix City**, will hold a missions fair Feb. 28, 6 p.m. For information call Alyssa Johnson at 334-297-5307. Steve Williamson is pastor. ► **Lakewood Church, Phenix City**, recently ordained **Chris May** into the gospel ministry. The church also will hold revival Feb. 28-March 3 with Rick Coram. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. EST and weeknights at 6:45 EST. Billy Dickerson is pastor. ☞

Retired pastor David Carpenter dies at 89

Retired Alabama pastor David T. Carpenter died Dec. 4. He was 89.

Carpenter spent 47 years in church ministry, retiring in 2008 as part-time pastor of Perdido Beach Baptist Church, Elberta.

He served as full-time pastor of Olive Branch Baptist Church, Owassa (1967-1969); Round Island Baptist Church, Athens (1969-1972); Temple Baptist Church, Adamsville (1972-1974); Concord Baptist Church, Cal-

era (1974-1980); Akron Baptist Church (1980-1981); and First Baptist Church, Orange Beach (1981-1983).

After leaving First, Orange Beach, Carpenter served as interim pastor at several Alabama churches as well as churches in Alaska and England.

He also did missions work in India.

Carpenter, an Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, left his job as an electrical engineer for

NASA to pursue a call to ministry in the early 1960s. He graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1967.

Throughout his life, he also served as a ham radio operator for disaster relief.

At the time of his death, Carpenter was a member of Maytown Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Eloise; five children; seven grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

GuideStone reports strong mutual funds

DALLAS — Eight of 11 GuideStone Select Funds in the GS4 class exceeded their respective mutual fund peer universe median as measured by Lipper over the one-year period ending Dec. 31, 2009.

The news was even better for Select Funds in the GS2 class, which saw seven out of nine funds exceed their peer universe median over a one-year period, with six of nine beating their peer universe median over three- and five-year periods ending Dec. 31, 2009. Lipper Inc., a Reuters company, is a nationally recognized organization that compares the performance of mutual funds having similar investment objectives.

Additionally, GuideStone Fund's Extended-Duration Bond Fund was ranked No. 1 out of 134 in the GS2 class and No. 2 out of 134 in the GS4 class for the five-year period ending Dec. 31, 2009, according to Lipper. The Extended-Duration Bond Fund in the GS2 class ranked 2 of 145 in its three-year period and 15 of 154 in the one-year period. In the GS4 class, it ranked 3 of 145 over the three-year period and 16 of 154 in the one-year period.

"This is indeed good news for GuideStone Funds and its investors," said John R. Jones, chief operating officer for GuideStone Financial Resources. "To come through the volatile period we just experienced and be recognized by Lipper's rankings is quite an accomplishment. The results we're seeing reported by Lipper indicate that our consistent investment philosophy and the manager-of-managers approach can lead to industry-recognized performance."

The Lipper results come as markets rebound from a volatile time period from 2008 through early 2009.

SWBTS acquires Dead Sea Scrolls fragments

FORT WORTH, Texas — Pieces from what many scholars argue is the greatest archaeological discovery of the 20th century have found a permanent residence at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas. Southwestern trustee Gary Loveless presented President Paige Patterson with the collection during a seminary chapel service Jan. 20. Loveless, founder and chief executive officer of Square Mile Energy in Houston, provided the lead gift for the purchase of the fragments, which were acquired from a private collector in Europe. The collection makes SWBTS one of only a handful of institutions of higher education in the United States to possess pieces of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Early analysis shows the fragments owned by SWBTS include portions of Exodus 23, Leviticus 18 and Daniel 6, although the seminary will conduct further study on the pieces. A pen made from a palm tree, which was found with the Dead Sea Scrolls and presumably used by the scribes who wrote them, also was gifted to the seminary as part of the collection. It is only one of three pens known to exist from the Dead Sea Scroll discoveries. Weston Fields, executive director of the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation, an organization dedicated to the preservation and publication of the scrolls, said in a telephone interview, "Any piece of the Dead Sea Scrolls is significant because it shows us what the state of the Hebrew text of the Bible was 2,000 years ago, which gives us a way to measure whether or not they've been faithfully transmitted over the last 2,000 years."

BWA expresses solidarity with Malaysian Christians

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Neville Callam sent a letter of support to what he called the "Baptist family in Malaysia." The letter, sent Jan. 14, was in response to the torching of at least one church and attacks upon several others in the wake of a court ruling that allows Christians to use the name "Allah" for God. At least 10 church buildings, one of them Baptist, were attacked, damaged or vandalized.

"The [BWA] has learned, with sorrow, of the difficulties the churches in Malaysia are facing as a result of violent opposition to the use of the term 'Allah' for God by persons who are not Muslims," Callam wrote to John Kok, a vice president-elect of the BWA and a former president of the Malaysia Baptist Convention (MBC). "We note with concern your government's response to the present crisis, and we want you to know that we are joining you in praying for patience and wisdom in the face of the situation in which you find yourselves."

The Metro Tabernacle Church, an Assemblies of God congregation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital, was fire-bombed Jan. 8, gutting the first floor. On Jan. 10, "a plastic bag of black paint was thrown at the front wall of the Malacca Baptist Church building," said Isaac Yim, president of the MBC. Attacks on the 10 churches took place between Jan. 8 and 15. The MBC, a BWA member body, has more than 22,000 Baptist members in 163 congregations. ☞



Photo by Chris Mills

BIBLE DRILL/SPEAKER RETREAT DRAWS MORE THAN 400 PARTICIPANTS

Steve Stephens (left) of the State Board of Missions leads children in Bible Drill practice during the Alabama Bible Drill/Speaker Retreat at Shocco Springs Jan. 29-30. More than 400 children, teens and leaders spent the weekend 'Camping Out in God's Word' through activities and worship.

Baptist volunteers charged with kidnapping in Haiti

A Haitian prosecutor Feb. 4 charged 10 members of a predominantly Southern Baptist volunteer team with child kidnapping and criminal association for allegedly not following the law in attempting to transport 33 children into the Dominican Republic.

Haitian Deputy Prosecutor Jean Ferge Joseph then handed the case to an investigative judge, Reuters news service reported.

"That judge can free you, but he can also continue to hold you for further proceedings," he told the group, comprised of five men and five women who were arrested Jan. 29.

The charges carry prison terms of up to 15 years, *The New York Times* reported.

Officials decided not to pursue what could have been the most serious charge against the group — trafficking. The charges will now be considered by an investigative judge, who has up to three months to decide whether to pursue the matter further, according to the *Times*.

The case has garnered national and international attention and has adoption and Christian aid agencies concerned it could tarnish their work. The 10 volunteers maintain they are innocent. A Haitian pastor who assisted the team told The Associated Press that the volunteers had permission from parents of children in the group who were not orphans to transport them into the Dominican Republic and into an orphanage there. The pastor, Jean Sainvil, described the controversy as a misunderstanding stemming from the volunteers not having the needed paperwork for the children. Sainvil said the Baptist volunteers were acting "with a good heart."

Prior to the Feb. 4 hearing, group leader Laura Silsby told a group of reporters, "We're just trusting God for a positive outcome."

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders, including SBC President Johnny Hunt and Executive Committee President Morris H. Chapman, have urged Southern Baptists to pray for the jailed volunteers.

Gil Lain, senior pastor of Paramount Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas — where one of the volunteers, Jim Allen, is a member — said in a



RECEIVING THE CHARGES — Haitian Deputy Prosecutor Jean Ferge Joseph gives his verdict Feb. 4 to 10 Baptist volunteers accused of illegally trying to take children out of Haiti.

Reuters photo

statement Feb. 3 on the church's Web site that the volunteers' goal simply was to "take care of 'the least of these' (Matt. 25:40), just as Jesus said." He also discounted accusations that the 10 volunteers knew what they were doing was wrong.

"Here's what you may not have heard or read: They spent three days getting the proper paperwork in order," Lain said. "The problem arose when they got to the border and still lacked something due to a change in the laws."

'Big misunderstanding'

Allen's wife, Lisa, told CNN's "Larry King Live" she has not spoken with her husband since he was arrested. "I think it's a big misunderstanding that's kind of been blown out of proportion," she said. "Their intentions were to go there and help the kids that were in need."

The families of the volunteers released a brief statement Feb. 3 that read in part, "Our hearts and prayers continue to go out to our family members who are being held in Haiti. We are concerned and worried about them, but the two governments need time to work this out."

P.J. Crowley, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department, was quoted in a CNN.com report as saying American and Haitian officials are "working to try to ascertain what happened [and] the motive behind these people."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Feb. 3 that "it was unfortunate, whatever the motivation, that this group of Americans took matters into their own hands." She said her office is "engaged in discussions with the Haitian government" about their fate.

Silsby was seen in several video interviews Feb. 1 and Jan. 31, which were permitted by authorities, as stating that the group had thought their plans were in order for transporting the children into the Dominican Republic until they were stopped by Haitian guards at the border between the two countries.

Silsby, in a Feb. 1 interview with a CNN reporter, said, "We believe that we have been charged very falsely with trafficking, which of course that is the furthest possible extreme, because, I mean, our hearts here — we literally all gave up, you know, everything we had, I mean, income, used of our own funds to come here and help these children and by no means are any part of that horrendous practice."

Of the 33 children the team was seeking to aid, Silsby said, "They really didn't have any paperwork. This is, again, probably a misunderstanding on my part, but I did not really understand that that would really need to be required."

Told by the CNN reporter that at least 10 of the children had a mother or father and a telephone number, Silsby said, "I can tell you our heart and our intent was to help only those children that needed us most, that they had lost either both mother and father, or had lost one of their parents and the other parent had abandoned them."

Silsby's interest in helping Haitian children started with her father, who did missionary dental work in Haiti, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Silsby, along with her 24-year-old live-in nanny Charisa Coulter, organized a nonprofit group, New Life Children's Refuge, which they incorporated last November, and planned a companion organization in the Dominican Republic.

Silsby is a member of Central Valley Baptist Church, Meridian, Idaho, as are group members Coulter, Carla Thompson and Nicole and Corinna Lankford. Three detainees are from Eastside Baptist Church, Twin Falls, Idaho: pastor Paul Thompson, his son Silas and church member Steve McMullen. The other detainees are Allen and Drew Culbert, a firefighter who also is an assistant youth pastor at Bethel Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan. Bethel Baptist is the only church not affiliated with the SBC.

Hunt released the following statement Feb. 2: "We lift up in prayer the 10 volunteers from Baptist churches detained by the Haitian government. Our hearts go out to their families. ... While we know that the Convention cannot require any church to coordinate its local church ministries with Convention ministries, we strongly encourage all co-operating Baptist churches planning ministry trips to Haiti to contact their respective state conventions and our two mission boards, which are working together to provide ministry to this devastated region." (BP)

State's gambling battle erupts into all-out war; pressure intensifies

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama's gambling battle has erupted, forcing state and local officials to pick a side and join the fight. Even Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board employees were ordered not to patronize or release any "secret security plans" about the "illegal (gambling) machines" at Houston County's Country Crossing and Macon County's VictoryLand casinos.

Now fear of law enforcement raids and several court rulings against the slot machines being presented as electronic bingo have gambling supporters pushing harder than ever to legitimize their practices through the state's lawmakers.

Earlier in the legislative session, gambling opponents and supporters expressed concerns about House Bill (HB) 154, sponsored by Rep. Marcel Black, D-Tusculum, which seeks to legalize slot machines and protect gambling operations from taxes and threats of criminal prosecution and law enforcement raids.

For a few weeks, the issue lay dormant at the Statehouse while some of the state's largest casinos fought the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling to keep their doors open and machines intact. Then during the first week of February, legislators filed a flurry of bills to legalize and expand gambling around the state.

Two companion bills — HB 507, sponsored by Black and Rep. John Knight, D-Montgomery, and Senate Bill (SB) 380, sponsored by Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville — seek to change the definition of bingo to include games played on slot machines currently being used around the state. The bills also propose a constitutional amendment allowing a point-of-destination gambling facility in each of Alabama's seven congressional districts.

At press time, a combined public hearing was scheduled for Feb. 9 at the Statehouse for the two bills, which could pass from their respective committees and be placed on the House and Senate calendars the same day.

"We have been told there is going to be an

attempt to push these (bills) through both the House and the Senate next week," said Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program. "They (legislators) are getting pressure from the gambling bosses. The courts, along with the governor's task force, are one-by-one shutting these places down. The gambling bosses are fighting with every ounce of energy they've got and with every penny they've got to keep these places open, and we have to fight to stop it."

Gambling bills given priority

Still those are only two of the newly filed pro-gambling bills facing Alabama's legislators. While Bedford originally denied involvement with any bingo legislation, he also sponsored SB 379, which seeks to legalize gambling until Alabamians can vote on the previously mentioned bills Nov. 2. This bill appears to be the Senate version of Black's HB 154.

Although these new bills were filed two days after Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale,

filed SB 333 and 334, Beason's bills did not receive the same "hurry up" attitude from legislative leaders. His bills had not been placed on the Senate's Tourism and Marketing Committee meeting calendar at press time. SB 333, which calls for a statewide vote, would specify that the Legislature "would have no power to authorize any gambling activity" and instead "shall pass laws to further prohibit such gambling activity." SB 334 would "provide a civil cause of action to recover civil monetary penalties for illegal gambling activities."

Sen. Marc Keahey, D-Grove Hill, who recently took over the late Sen. Pat Lindsey's seat, filed SB 381 calling for a vote of the people to "establish the Alabama Gaming Commission to regulate commercial bingo operations."

Godfrey encouraged Alabama Baptists to also join the fight and contact their legislators. "They (legislators) need to step up to the plate and do the right thing not for a handful of gambling bosses but do what's good for all the people of Alabama." ■

Team composed of medical, rescue experts

(continued from page 1)

work round-the-clock shifts caring for patients who had been waiting for days to have injuries treated.

"I can't even imagine how many patients we touched while we were there," Frazier said.

And the team did the work with very little equipment, scrounging around for whatever would work.

"We had a pretty significant need for supplies by the end of the week and no food or water at all," Frazier said. "We knew based on observation that we would treat a patient and then they would wait one or two days on the ground and in the meantime, had no food. These people have just been through the ringer, and we can't even put food in their bellies."

This kind of heartbreak is faced often by the team, a group of specialized Baptist volunteers based in Hungary and spread around the world from Singapore to North Carolina.

The team, made up of firefighters, doctors, paramedics, trained rescue personnel and even two rescue dogs, aims for getting into a devastated country within 24 hours of a natural disaster. Among the team members, there are even those who know alpine rescue techniques and have diving capabilities.

"We meet once a year and train together," said Gaylon Moss, volunteerism/disaster relief coordinator for North Carolina Baptist Men, noting that his organization got involved with the team after the Indonesian tsunami in December 2004.

When things happen in other parts of the world, North Carolina Baptist Men respond. And when something happens on this side of the world — like in Haiti — North Carolina takes the lead.

'Heart-shaking experience'

"When the earthquake happened, within three hours, we were on the phone with our North Carolina partners," said Bela Szilagyi, director of Hungarian Baptist Aid. "The next morning, two Hungarians were on an airplane."

Oftentimes the team's focus is search and rescue — such as in India, where it saved 13 from the ruins of an earthquake.

But in Haiti, the focus was medical instead, though Szilagyi said the team had second thoughts about that. "With all the previous experiences we've had, we thought at first it would be too late (by the time rescue workers could get into Haiti)," he said. "But now we realize it would not have been too late."

But being the first international medical team to arrive at the small hospital still brought re-

lief in a profound way. "They (hospital staff) couldn't treat them all because there were more and more coming," Szilagyi said. "And eight or nine days down the road, there were still patients coming who had not received any medical treatment before. Some had to walk several days to get there."

All in all, it was a "heart-shaking experience," he said.

Paul Montacute, director of BWAid, the relief and development arm of Baptist World Alliance (BWA), said it's a significant ministry for Baptists. Because of BWA's relationships worldwide, the team has been among the first to enter affected countries after major disasters. "It's an important initial response that we can make, to have teams with expertise in medical matters and search and rescue in place within 24 hours of an emergency in the world," Montacute said.

Szilagyi agreed. "Baptists have always been good to provide disaster relief as far as food, water, shelter and construction have been concerned. But it was a dream and a vision (of Hungarian Baptists) to provide this initial response," he said. "When you have a disaster or tsunami or flood, there are always two stabs that need to be addressed — one is saving lives and one is saving lives with medical attention."

Want to know God?

By Bruce Willis
Director of Missions
Carey Baptist Association

Do you really want to know God? If you have never had a personal experience with the cross, then you are alienated from your Creator, almighty God. You have two major problems that separate you from Him.

First, because you were "in Adam" at the time of your conception (1 Cor. 15:22a), you are without the life of God. Because you were born without the life of God, this deadness has permeated your whole being and experience.

Second, as a sinner, you have committed sins. Since you did not know that God alone could meet your needs, you began to live your life out of your deadness to God. You tried to get your needs met apart from God, which involved sinning.

Both of these problems were taken care of, in love, by God through the finished work of the cross. Your dead unrighteous identity as a sinner in Adam can be exchanged at the cross for a new identity. Your old man can be crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). Death can die at the cross.

At the same time, you can be united with Christ in His resurrection (Rom. 6:4b-5), and your new spirit will be birthed by the Holy Spirit (John 3:6). Your new spirit — the new man — will be filled with the life of Christ. So it will be said rightly that He is your life and is living His life in you (Phil. 1:21).

To know God in this real, personal way, simply admit you were born "in Adam," are dead to God, are separated from Him and do not have Him in your life. Say that to God. Acknowledge you are a sinner and have sinned against your Creator, Holy God.

Ask God to forgive you of your sins because Jesus Christ died in your place and for your sins. Ask Jesus to come into your heart to give you His eternal life. Say that to God. When you do, the Holy Spirit will unite your spirit with Christ and you will forever be in union with Jesus.

Southern Lady to hold its first Christian women's conference

If ever there was a conference happening just because the people begged for it, then this one is it.

Southern Lady Inspiration, set for April 23-25 in Atlanta, will answer a grass-roots cry for a Christian women's conference put on by *Southern Lady* magazine.

The magazine, produced by Hoffman Media LLC in Birmingham, has hosted women's conferences before in which speakers injected some of their faith but didn't focus on that aspect of their lives.

'Intimate setting'

But this conference will speak of faith through and through.

"I've had many opportunities to unapologetically give my testimony of how the Lord has blessed my life even in uncertain times," said Phyllis Hoffman DePiano, founder and chief executive officer of

Hoffman Media and a member of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. "But this (Southern Lady Inspiration) is a new adventure for us. It will take place in an intimate setting, not an arena setting, and will offer quality sessions, along with quality fellowship time."

The conference will feature speakers such as Christian novelist Francine Rivers and missionary/author Suzanne Crocker and musicians Kathy Troccoli and Sara Groves.

The speakers will bring a word of encouragement and excitement for the women who attend, DePiano explained.

"It's an opportunity for a woman to get away and have a weekend of renewal."

For more information or to register, call 1-888-411-8995 or visit southernlady.com. (TAB)

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Letters to the Editor

THANKS FOR CARDS

I want to thank all the caring people who helped with the MAC D Ministries Christmas cards for Limestone Correctional Center.

We had a lot of beautiful cards. When I marked the towns where cards were sent from, it was a scattering from all over the state.

Thank you again for your participation.

If you are blessed by the card ministry, join us as we are going to gather Easter cards for these same people.

I will need them by March 20 in order to get them to Limestone for Easter, the first Sunday in April.

Mail the cards to MAC D Ministries, c/o Scarlett Dunnam, 403 6th St. East Tuscaloosa, AL 35404.

For additional information, e-mail adunnam@bellsouth.net or call 205-553-1592.

We look forward to your Easter cards.

Scarlett Dunnam
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

LUKEWARM STANCE?

I do not understand why the various Christian denominations in Alabama have not taken a concerted effort to support our governor's stand against illegal gambling activities that exist at several locations in the state.

It appears all churches are guilty of being lukewarm on this issue.

In order to keep readers updated, *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper gives weekly accounts of on-

going electronic bingo activities throughout the state.

But I have yet to see where any serious effort has been taken by any church to support Gov. Riley's determination to do the right thing by upholding the provision of our state's constitution, which prohibits gambling anywhere in Alabama.

Jerry Fuller
Greenville, Ala.

THREAT OF GAMBLING

Christian people who stand up for all that is good and right in our state and nation are to be commended.

The gambling threat and other issues threaten to destroy our society.

The greatest challenge to our churches is in the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He commanded His people to "make disciples" and to "[teach]

them to observe all things that I have commanded."

The results will be better people. Better people — following Jesus — will not gamble, steal, kill, lie or destroy family life.

A few years ago, our United States president appointed a "drug czar" to help protect our borders from the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S.

The czar was reported to have personally criticized his Mexican counterpart for letting the flood of drugs come into the U.S.

The Mexican official is reported to have said, "If there were no market to sell the drugs, they would not be brought across the border."

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we can be a "better people." Churches, share the good news.

Ralph B. Jernigan
Jacksons' Gap, Ala.

"The gambling interests have been busing people in, and we are hearing people say, 'Where are the churches? Why aren't they speaking out?' We need to pack this place out Feb. 23 with as many people as we can to show there's a lot of concern and we're standing together against the gambling interests."

— Joe Godfrey, ALCAP executive director

Anti-gambling rally

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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.

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.

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

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: New Life Baptist Church, Brent, Ala. Blended worship service. Send resumé to: Sandy Kornegay, 438 Slick Road, Centreville, AL 35042, or e-mail: sandsterk@aol.com.

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: Crosshaven Church, Cullman, is seeking a full-time student pastor. Crosshaven, a dynamic 6-year-old church plant, has grown quickly. Resumés to: pastor@crosshavenchurch.org. Requesting a DVD of applicants to include personal testimony and delivering a message/lesson to students. Mail to: 9131 US Hwy 31 S, Hanceville, AL 35077.

CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTER: Southside Baptist Church, Decatur, Ala., seeking a full-time children and family minister. Ideal candidate will be a Chrisitan, Southern Baptist and have at least 3 years of work and/or seminary experience. Send resumés to: ben@southsidebaptist.net or SBC, 709 Ninth Street SE, Decatur, AL 35601.

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: [\[fbcleeds.org\]\(mailto:fbcleeds.org\).](mailto:rmckenzie@</p>
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OTHER POSITIONS

PIANO PLAYER: New Life Baptist Church, Brent, Ala. Blended service/praise band. Send resumé to: Sandy Kornegay, 438 Slick Road, Centreville, AL 35042, or e-mail: sandsterk@aol.com.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR: Alabama Baptist entity seeks financial administrator. Accounting degree preferred, extensive experience may be substituted. Minimum of five years experience required. Position oversees all accounting and bookkeeping functions for entity, provides human resources services and oversees property management. Send resumé to: 3310 Independence Drive, Homewood, AL 35209.

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About Alabama

Is Gambling Illegal in Alabama?

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Section 65 of the Alabama Constitution prohibits the Legislature from authorizing "lotteries or gift enterprises for any purposes" and requires laws against them.

The Legislature wrote Section 13A-12-20 of the criminal code in 1977. It defines a lottery as "unlawful gambling," in which "gambling" involves risking something of value on the outcome of a contest of chance.

Frequent exceptions

Ordinary citizens reading these general provisions of law might conclude that gambling is unlawful in our state — but it's not that simple. Alabama lawmakers have developed a way of avoiding either/or choices.

Even if the constitution states a general rule such as this, they often authorize voters to approve a local constitutional amendment that carves out an exception for a single county or community. If possible, they may pass a local act that doesn't require a vote of the people. The term "often" is an understatement here. There are hundreds of local constitutional amendments and thousands of local acts of the Legislature.

This means that the general requirements of law may apply fully, partially or not at all in a given county or community.

There's no way to know without digging through all the laws that might apply. Unfortunately only a tiny fraction of local acts are in the code, so you have to find them in a law library.

Extreme confusion

Furthermore the process of carving out local exceptions involves "legislative courtesy," whereby the Legislature defers to the wishes of lawmakers from a given county on local bills.

There may well be no consistency in the law from one county to another.

It's confusing in the extreme. Lawyers and judges may disagree over how to apply the conflicting terms of general and local laws and even constitu-

tional provisions. The current controversy over gambling illustrates this problem. While Section 65 of the constitution and the criminal code outlaw gambling, voters have approved 19 local constitutional amendments that permit varying versions of "bingo" within all or parts of 16 counties.

Only one of these amendments has a definition of "bingo;" only two mention an "electronic" or "media" version. Only nonprofit organizations can operate bingo in most of the counties, but three allow private clubs, too.

Most of the amendments disallow operating contracts with an outside organization; two specifically allow them.

Sometimes counties, municipalities or even sheriffs write the rules; in other cases, the Legislature can. No taxes on bingo are allowed in one county; other amendments are silent on this. And so on. It's no wonder that state and even federal courts are heavily involved in this controversy today.

Power question

It is an interesting question whether the Legislature had the power to authorize votes on local bingo amendments at all since Section 65 of the constitution specifically denies authority over lotteries or gift enterprises. If not, what is the status of the 19 local amendments? The root cause of this issue is a flawed way of doing the people's legislative business. Almost 40 years ago, the people of South Carolina got tired of their Legislature operating in this way and passed a constitutional amendment that stated simply: "No laws for a specific county shall be enacted."

If you would like to read and compare the provisions of the constitution and The Code of Alabama mentioned in this column, then go to <http://parca.samford.edu/bingo.html>.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.



NAMB photo

MEETING NEEDS — NAMB missionary Vivian McCaughan (center) helps Theresa and Curtis Smith stock a food pantry at the Metro North Family Ministry Center in North St. Louis County, Mo.

Transformed lives

Missionary sees fruit from multihousing effort

North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary Vivian McCaughan enters Hidden Valley Estates in Wentzville, Mo., and thanks God for the changes she sees.

She points out the new community center, the tidy landscaping and the covered pavilion built on the dusty spot where outdoor baptisms once took place in a rented cattle tank.

But mostly McCaughan thanks God for transformed lives. She remembers back almost 20 years ago when she first saw the 200-unit apartment community as a suffering mass of humanity. In those days, the complex was infested with drugs and crime.

She got behind the work begun in 1990 by Pastor Dan Hite and 45 members of Christian Family Fellowship, which began its ministry by serving a Thanksgiving meal to 230 residents. Twin Rivers Baptist Association had targeted the complex as a strategic focus area. In those early days, McCaughan taught children and women and helped to make connections with churches and resources, according to Hite. "She became our greatest cheerleader."

By the next year at Thanksgiving, the new church served 350. It also ran a weeklong Life Fair ministry, holding various life skills workshops for adults, Vacation Bible School for the children and ended the week with a Christian concert. Hite said management noticed a significant drop in the number of complaint calls to the police and the complex's office that week — down from 40 calls to just two.

The complex manager later called Hite and said, "I don't know what you did, but all I know is I want you here all the time." That week, the church saw 123 professions of faith and would later rent a cattle tank for outdoor baptisms in the middle of the community.

After meeting for those first years at a nearby dance school, the church now meets in a community center built on 11 acres bought in 1996. The center serves the community's 600 residents — consisting of a majority of single mothers and children — and offers day care for infants up to 5 year olds, an after-school reading and sports program, GED and pre-college tutoring, mentoring, cooking classes and fragile family counseling.

Serving as the Missouri Baptist Convention's missions/evangelism team leader, McCaughan also serves as NAMB's multihousing church-planting missionary to Missouri. Like most of the 5,300 NAMB missionaries in the United States, Canada and their territories, McCaughan receives a percentage of her support from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. She is among the NAMB missionaries featured as part of the annual week of prayer, March 7-14.

In Missouri, where 37 percent of

the population of 5.9 million lives in multihousing, her job is not a small one. She said every county in Missouri has some type of multihousing facility, whether an apartment or condominium complex, an inner-city housing project, a mobile home park, cluster homes, duplexes or blocks of homes that are subdivided. And 97 percent of the residents who live in multihousing are unchurched, according to a national NAMB study.

McCaughan said among these unchurched multihousing residents, studies show that generally 40 percent will go to a Bible study or worship experience on the property but that only 3 percent or 4 percent of residents will attend a church off the grounds.

After ministries are launched on the multihousing properties, she said, "The ultimate goal is to hold Bible studies and worship experiences on the property and to have a long-term presence."

"The biggest fallacy in multihousing/church planting is that people think it can happen overnight, and they are willing to jump in and go into a community for a week, two weeks, maybe even for a year," she said. "In some instances, it may take five or 10 years for a church plant to take hold so that the residents see it as their church and their mission field. It's a longtime process." (NAMB)

**Week of Prayer for
NORTH AMERICAN
MISSIONS
March 7-14, 2010**



**National goal:
\$70,000,000
Alabama goal:
\$6,000,000**

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Alabama Baptist All-State Children's Honor Choir Tour

2010 PERFORMANCES BY THE ALABAMA ALL-STATE CHILDREN'S HONOR CHOIR:

- **Saturday, March 6:** Sing the national anthem at Alabama-Auburn basketball game, which will be televised beginning at 12:30 p.m. on the SEC Network.
- **Saturday, March 6:** Full concert at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, 6 p.m.
- **Sunday, March 7:** Sing at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, worship services at 9:40 and 11 a.m.



The Alabama Baptist All-State Children's Honor Choir was formed in 2000 to offer music opportunities to fourth through sixth grade boys and girls who are involved in choirs from churches across the Alabama Baptist Convention. Each year 150-175 children are accepted through auditions to be a part of this unique group. They have sung in churches all across Alabama as well as the 2001 and 2007 Southern Baptist Church Music Conferences and the Church Music Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in North Carolina.

Updates: www.alsbom.org/chc-tour

Conductor: Jane Burdeshaw, Montgomery

Accompanist: Deb Anderson, Selma

Consultant: Ray Burdeshaw, Montgomery

For more information, please contact Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, cparrish@alsbom.org

Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program

By Tim Cox

Pastor, Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea

I believe in the Cooperative Program because it works!

Since 1925, Southern Baptists have invested in financial cooperation rather than competition for Great Commission ministries. Countless lives have been touched and millions have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ because of faithful Southern Baptists giving through their local churches through the Cooperative Program.

The past 89 years testify to the eternal impact of God's people working together with earthly treasures for His eternal work.

Of course the Cooperative Program is more than money. Rather it represents dollars ignited by a God-size vision and passion to reach the lost for Christ. From the local church to associations, state conventions, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entities and the SBC, God's people have pooled resources to equip believers and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ both near and far. The Cooperative Program is fuel for a God-given mission.

The Cooperative Program is about a people on mission. It is a portrait of many members of one body working together to accomplish God's purpose for His church. Together we can send more missionaries, offer a Christian education to more college students, train more seminary students, plant more churches, offer relief to more people in crisis, and defend Biblical principles and values more effectively before all levels of government than any one church could do on its own. The Cooperative Program represents a passionate people on mission 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because it is a tributary for changed lives. I am one of those lives.

I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior in a Southern Baptist church. I was nurtured in my faith, I surrendered to the Gospel ministry and I was equipped in both college and seminary through institutions of higher education that received Cooperative Program dollars.

Now I am blessed to lead one of our precious Alabama Baptist churches to believe in the powerful impact of the Cooperative Program.

Why do I believe in the Cooperative Program? Because I am a life that was changed!

To those who have gone before us, thank you. To those who carry the torch for the Cooperative Program today, persevere. To those who come behind us, get on board with the most effective and efficient denominational mission program in the world.



Study: Sex in movies doesn't sell or impress

Contrary to popular belief, sex in movies doesn't sell.

That's the conclusion of a study by two researchers who examined the content of 914 movies made between 2001 and 2005 and found that films containing nudity are less likely to be successful at the box office or to win awards and praise from movie critics. The

study was published in the latest issue of the journal of *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, a publication of the American Psychological Association.

"Sex neither sells nor impresses," the authors of the study wrote. "It is manifest that anyone who argues that sex either sells or impresses must be put on notice.

At present, no filmmaker should introduce such content under the assumption that it guarantees a big box office, earns critical acclaim or wins movie awards."

The top 10 films in the study — led by "Shrek 2" and "Spiderman" — contained no nudity or significant sexuality. The authors also noted that the top 10 movies of all

time, adjusted for inflation, also contained no nudity or significant amount of sexuality, with the lone exception being "Titanic." Rated PG-13, the 1997 blockbuster "appears to be an anomaly" to the rule, the study said.

The authors, Cerridwen Anemone, of Vancouver, and Dean Keith Simonton of the University of California (Davis), examined the movies by using data compiled by ScreenIt.com, a Web site that gives detailed reports of a film's content. The study looked at a movie's critical reviews by using the Web site Metacritic.com — which averages ratings — and it examined a movie's success at the Oscars and Golden Globes.

The researchers found that movies with nudity not only did worse at the box office in the United States but also did worse worldwide.

"It cannot just be U.S. puritanical values operating if sex sells even less abroad," the study said. "In fact, no matter what the mar-

ket, sexual content appears to have much the same adverse impact as smoking, alcohol/drugs and profanity."

The study, though, did have some bad news for concerned parents: violence — although not the focus of the research — apparently leads to higher box office totals, on average.

"[T]he data presented here establish that, on the average, enhanced sexual representations in mainstream film largely fail to justify their presence, whether according to commercial or aesthetic criteria," the study said. "Even worse, whatever justification cinema sex may claim may depend on the implicit exploitation of women. ... In light of these empirical results, we are compelled to ask, 'Why is sex even there?'"

The study, titled "Sex Doesn't Sell — Nor Impress! Content, box office, critics, and awards in mainstream cinema" — was published in the November edition of the journal. (BP)

State Evangelism Conference

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Every person in Alabama was prayed for by name.

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Every church planned an evangelistic service for Easter morning, April 4, 2010.

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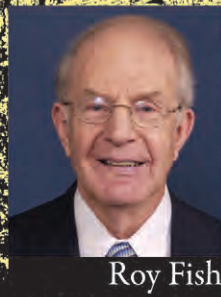
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For more information, please contact Stephanie McClelland at smcclelland@alsbom.org or 1.800.264.1225, ext. 245.



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

Bingham, pioneer in Alabama Baptist deaf ministry, dies at 93

Mary Louisa Canoles Bingham, one of the earliest contributors to deaf ministry and work in Alabama, died Dec. 28. She was 93.

Bingham was a pioneer of Baptist church ministry to the deaf in the state, according to David Richardson, a retired missionary to the deaf in Alabama.

Bingham, who was raised by deaf parents and began interpreting at the age of 3, began her first deaf ministry in the late 1940s at Glen Addie Baptist Church, Anniston.

She later interpreted for the deaf in other Alabama Baptist churches, including First Baptist Church, Birmingham, and Central Park Baptist Church, Birmingham.

In addition to church ministry,

Bingham served as a houseparent at schools for the deaf in Alabama, Florida, New Mexico and North Carolina and a teacher at E.H. Gentry Technical Facility, a part of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind in Talladega.

She was also the first interpreter in Alabama to become nationally certified in legal interpreting and one of the first to interpret in an Alabama courtroom.

She also served as president of the Alabama Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Bingham was a member of Wilkes Baptist Church, Midfield, at the time of her death.

She is survived by two daughters, six grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Church of England loses \$78 million in sour New York real estate deal

The Church of England will lose about \$78 million in a New York real estate investment gone sour, according to Episcopal News Service (ENS). The Anglican church's investment was part of a record-setting \$5.4 billion deal put together in 2006 by two New York-based firms to buy two massive apartment complexes in Manhattan.

After defaulting on loan payments, the firms will cede the downtown properties — Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village — to its lenders.

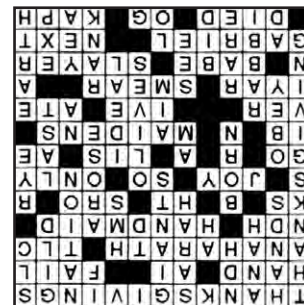
The Church of England, the mother church of the Anglican Communion, the world's third-largest Christian denomination, invested about \$78 million (40 million pounds) in 2007, before real estate values in New York and elsewhere began to plummet.

Ben Wilson, a senior media office for the Church of England told ENS that the New York investment represents less than 1 percent of the church's assets, which are valued at some \$6.4 billion, according to ENS. (RNS)

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WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED

Mark 13:5–37



World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Two church buildings burned in Indonesia

MEDAN, Indonesia — Islamic extremists are suspected to have burned two church buildings under construction in a village in North Sumatra on Jan. 22.

The attackers came from outside the area to burn the partially constructed buildings of the Batak Christian Protestant Church (BCPC) and the Pentecostal Church in Sibuhuan village, Padang Lawas Residency, during daylight hours, said Pastor S. Lubis of the BCPC church.

"Hundreds of people arrived on motorcycles and burned the empty church," he said. "After that, the mob moved 200 meters down the road and burned the empty Pentecostal church."

No people were hurt in the fires. Lubis said those who burned the church buildings were not from the area. He said that last year — after local officials had held up an application for a permit to erect a permanent building for five years — the church began construction. The Muslim leaders demanded that the church dismantle the parts that had been built, which the church began to do Jan. 13.

The 272 members of the congregation have been traumatized and many have fled, fearing for their safety, church leaders said.

Pastor Charles Hutabarat of the Pentecostal Church said his church's application for a permit has been held up for three years. "Because the local citizens had approved the presence of the church, we were surprised that our church was burned like this," Hutabarat said.

New book reveals plot to kidnap John Paul II

VATICAN CITY — The Italian left-wing terrorist group the Red Brigades plotted to kidnap Pope John Paul II, according to a new book released Jan. 26 by the Vatican-appointed advocate for John Paul's canonization.

The book, "Why He Is a Saint," also reveals that the pope personally confronted Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev about possible Kremlin involvement in the 1981 attempt on the pope's life.

The book is written by Monsignor Slawomir Oder, the postulator, or official advocate, for John Paul's sainthood, with Saverio Gaeta, the editor-in-chief of the prominent Italian Catholic magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* (Christian Family).

The book says the Italian secret services informed John Paul about the Red Brigades plot early in his papacy and that the pope "wondered about the motivations for the attack."

Years after Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca shot and nearly killed John Paul in St. Peter's Square in May 1981, Oder reported, the pope asked Gorbachev about theories that the Kremlin, acting through Bulgarian intermediaries, had been behind the assassination attempt.

Gorbachev "said that he had found nothing in the archives of the USSR to support such a hypothesis," Oder wrote.

Bishops nix move to force hiring of gays in churches

LONDON — Anglican bishops and other members of the House of Lords have nixed an attempt by the British government to force churches and other religious institutions to hire gays, lesbians and transgender people.

The upper chamber of Parliament, which includes 26 Anglican bishops as members, rejected the proposed law change Jan. 25 after church leaders argued it would violate tenets of their faith.

Under current British law, churches, mosques and other religious establishments have the right to turn down candidates for jobs as ministers, priests, school principals or youth workers if they are actively gay or have had a sex change.

The defeated legislation would have required churches and other religious groups to hire key staff even if their lifestyles conflicted with accepted religious doctrine.

The Lords' rejection, with support from the Conservative Opposition Party, was hailed by Archbishop of York John Sentamu, who holds the No. 2 spot in the Church of England hierarchy.

"If religion means anything," Sentamu said, "it must mean that those are matters for the churches and other religious organizations to determine themselves in accordance with their own convictions."

Campus News



University of Mobile

Summer Music Camp:

The University of Mobile (UM) Center for Performing Arts has opened registration for its 17th annual Summer Music Camp.

Taking place June 14–18, the camp will be held in Martin Hall on the UM campus.

Registration deadline is June 1.

The purposes of UM's Summer Music Camp are to encourage musicianship, inspire young musicians and increase technical proficiency in the musical area of the student's choice.

It is open to students rising into grades 4–12 for the 2010–11 school year.

Instruction in all instruments, including voice, is offered.

Participating students are required to have completed a minimum of one year of disciplined study in music and submit a recommendation by their music teacher.

Both full-tuition and partial-tuition scholarships are available by audition, which must include two pieces of contrasting style, demonstration of technical ability and a short interview.

Registration deadline for scholarship auditions is May 13. Auditions will be held May 20.

For more information or to register for the camp, contact Barbara Laurendine, camp director, at 251-442-2402.



Samford University

Entrepreneurship Program Wins National Award:

Samford University's Brock School of Business entrepreneurship program was recognized with the 2010 national Emerging Entrepreneurship Program award by the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE) in January.

USASBE, the largest independent professional academic organization in the world focused on advancing entrepreneurship, created the award this year to recognize outstanding programs that have been in existence for three years or less.

Criteria for the award included a program's innovativeness, effectiveness, comprehensiveness, sustainability and transferability to other universities.



Judson College

Judson Instructors Now Certified in Equine-Assisted Mental Therapy:

Judson equine instructors Janice Williams and Jennifer Hoggle recently received Registered Level 1 Instructor certification through the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA).

Both will now be able to direct the anticipated equine-assisted mental therapy major at the college.

Judson currently offers a concentration in Equine-Facilitated Mental Health, as well as, a minor in Equine Science.

Williams, adjunct instructor, and Hoggle, equine program director and lead instructor, completed the four-day evaluation and certification process Dec. 1–4.

Hoggle also brought several of her equine students from Judson to the certification event where they participated in a special studies course.

Students called this training the "chance of a lifetime" and were grateful for such a unique learning opportunity.

Christians held in prison without legal counsel

In the past few months, at least 14 Christians have been detained in Iranian prisons for weeks without legal counsel as last year's crackdown continues, sources said.

Three Christians remained in detention at Evin Prison after authorities arrested them along with 12 others who had gathered for Christmas celebrations Dec. 24 in a home 12 miles southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran, according to a source who requested anonymity.

While the others were released Jan. 4, Maryam Jalili, Mitra Zahmati and Farzan Matin remain at the prison. Authorities have promised the release of the three Christians but have yet to let them go.

Within days after their arrest, Jalili's sister, Mobina Jalili, and another Christian were arrested in Isfahan. The source said these two have had no contact with their families. The location and conditions of their detainment are unknown.

In the southwestern city of Shiraz, seven Christians have been detained since Jan. 11, another source said, and most of them may face charges of apostasy, or leaving Islam.

Yousef Nadarkhani, who was arrested Oct. 13 last year in Rasht, remains in prison. (CD)

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Reuters photo

DEATHS — Bombings and explosions in the Nigerian city of Jos and nearby communities have raised the death toll to at least 460 after four days of clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs.

Illusion of safety

Christian-Muslim hostility raises death toll in Nigeria

Gunshots and smoke continued to alarm residents of Jos in central Nigeria on Jan. 19, with the Christian community fearing further violence from Muslim youths who Jan. 17 attacked a Catholic church and burned down several other church buildings.

A 24-hour curfew was imposed Jan. 18 in Jos and the suburb of Bukuru by the Plateau state government. Police said continuing violence was initially triggered by the unprovoked attack by Muslim youths on worshippers at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Nasarawa Gwong, in the Jos North Local Government Area.

Riots, chaos

Also burned were buildings of Christ Apostolic Church, Assemblies of God Church, three branches of the Church of Christ in Nigeria and two buildings of the Evangelical Church of West Africa, Christian leaders said.

The number of casualties continued to grow, reportedly reaching more than 100 as security forces tried to rein in rioters, with both Christian and Muslim groups still counting their losses.

Hundreds were reportedly wounded.

"We have been witnessing sporadic shootings in the last two days," said Chuwang Avou, secretary of the state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria. "We see some residents shooting sporadically into the air. We have also seen individuals with machine guns on parade in the state."

Avou said many of those who

are shooting are civilians, not policemen, and that they have been mounting road blocks and causing chaos in the area. At least 35 people have been arrested.

"What we have witnessed only goes to show that the problem in the state is far from over," he said. "Many families have been displaced. There are a number who are receiving treatment in the hospital. The dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed in the state has not solved any problem, as there is still tension in the land."

Avou said the crisis broke out when Muslim youths pursued a woman into a church during worship on Sunday, wreaking havoc on the service.

"We were told [some Muslim] youths pursued a lady to the church. Nobody knew what the lady did," he said.

"What we just discovered was that the entire atmosphere was ignited and houses were being burned."

A Muslim group in the area, however, dismissed claims that Muslim youths ignited the tensions. They accused Christian youths of stopping a Muslim from rebuilding his house.

State Commissioner of Police Greg Anyating stated that Muslim youths were to blame for setting off the violence.

Ignatius Kaigama, co-chairman of the state Inter-Religious Coun-

cil and Catholic Archbishop of Jos, condemned the recurring civil disturbances in the state and called on all to "sheath their swords and be their brothers' keepers."

The secretary of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Wale Adefarasin, said attacks on Christians are a manifestation of terrorism in the country.

"What we should realize is that the government is not helping situations," he said. "It is an illusion that Nigeria is safe."

He added that terrorism affects both Christians and Muslims negatively, and that it is the duty of elected officials to ensure that terrorists are detected early and deterred.

"The Muslim fundamentalists want to take over Jos by all means," Adefarasin said.

"They claim that Jos is a Muslim state, which is not true."

Sectarian violence in Jos, a volatile midpoint where the predominantly Muslim north meets the mainly Christian south, hit the same area Nov. 28-29, 2008, when murderous rioting sparked by Muslim attacks on Christians and their property took the lives of six pastors and at least 500 others and destroyed 40 churches.

In 2001, more than 1,000 people were left dead, and another 700 people were killed in sectarian outbreaks of violence in 2004. (CD)

"What we have witnessed only goes to show that the problem in the state is far from over."

Chuwang Avou
Christian Association of Nigeria

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Three pastors file challenge to hate crimes law

BAY CITY, Mich. — Three Michigan pastors and a conservative Christian law firm have filed a legal challenge to the federal hate crime law that was expanded last year to include sexual orientation.

The civil rights suit was filed Feb. 2 in U.S. District Court in Bay City, Mich., by the Thomas More Law Center on behalf of Gary Glenn, head of the American Family Association of Michigan, and three pastors: Rene B. Ouellette of First Baptist Church in Bridgeport Township; Jim Combs of Faith Baptist Church in Waterford Township; and Levon R. Yuille of The Bible Church in Ypsilanti.

The suit names U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. as the defendant and targets a law that makes it a federal offense to assault someone because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.

Glenn and the pastors claim the law makes it a crime for them to preach against homosexuality and therefore infringes on their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech, association and free exercise of religion. The suit also alleges the law creates an Orwellian society, setting up a special class of citizens who receive special protections. The plaintiffs list biblical prohibitions on homosexuality in their statement of facts.

"According to the Bible, homosexual acts are acts of grave depravity that are intrinsically disordered ... (and) Homosexuality is an illicit lust forbidden by God," the complaint reads.

As opponents of "homosexual activism, the homosexual lifestyle and the homosexual agenda," the ministers and their churches could be subjected to unfair and increased scrutiny and federal investigations under the new law, the men said.

Graham tops list of most influential preachers

NASHVILLE — Billy Graham was named by U.S. pastors as the country's most influential living preacher, according to a recent survey by LifeWay Research.

The study, conducted last November, interviewed more than 1,000 Protestant pastors by telephone. The participants were asked to "name the top three living Christian preachers that most influence you."

Graham was cited as most influential by 21 percent of clergy, followed by pastor and author Charles Swindoll, at 8 percent. Charles Stanley, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, and Rick Warren, senior pastor of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif., followed closely behind Swindoll with 7 percent of the vote each.

Graham, 91, has preached to more than 200 million people in 185 countries, written 27 books, advised several U.S. presidents and influenced religious and secular audiences alike.

Rounding out the top 10 were: John MacArthur, pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, Calif.; Barbara Brown Taylor, religion professor at Piedmont College in northeast Georgia; David Jeremiah, senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, San Diego County, Calif.; Max Lucado, minister of writing and preaching at the Oak Hills Church in San Antonio; John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis; and Andy Stanley, senior pastor of North Point Community Church, Buckhead Church and Browns Bridge Community Church, all in the Atlanta area.

Ore. parents guilty in son's faith-healing death

OREGON CITY, Ore. — Jurors sent a clear signal Feb. 2 that parents who rely solely on faith healing to treat their children face prison if a child dies.

Jeffrey and Marci Beagley were found guilty of criminally negligent homicide in the death of their 16-year-old son, Neil, who died in June 2008 of complications from an undiagnosed congenital urinary blockage. His parents attempted to heal him with prayer, anointing with oil and laying on of hands.

They are the first members of Oregon City's Followers of Christ church to be convicted of homicide in the congregation's long history of children dying from treatable medical conditions.

"This is a signal to the religious community that they should be on notice that their activities will be scrutinized," said Steven K. Green, director of Willamette University's Center for Religion and Democracy.

Friends and family reacted to the 10-2 verdicts with stunned silence. Marci Beagley hugged her mother in the courthouse lobby as both women wept. Other family members quietly stood by.

The Beagleys will be sentenced Feb. 18. The maximum penalty for criminally negligent homicide is 10 years, but the Beagleys likely will receive no more than 18 months in prison and could be sentenced to probation.

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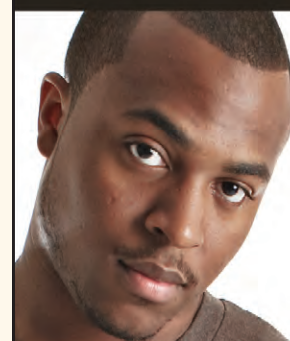
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