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Photo by Robin Cooper

'AS LONG AS I'M GOVERNOR, WE'LL ENFORCE THE LAW' — Governor Bob Riley (at podium) yells over a crowd of protesters and garners cheers and applause from anti-gambling leaders at a Feb. 23 rally.

'Standing against evil'

Alabama Baptists gather for rally; vocal opponents show up

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Anti-gambling leaders had their work cut out for them trying to speak over an unruly crowd at a rally held Feb. 23 at 12:30 p.m. on the steps of the Statehouse.

Hundreds of Alabama Baptists and others against illegal gambling in the state gathered to show support for Gov. Bob Riley and other leaders, but they were met with large numbers of the opposition who also had turned out en masse.

Though the opposition had planned its own rally at the same venue at 2 p.m., picketers with signs arrived early to shout loudly over the anti-gambling rally's speakers. Country music stars also meandered around, and four greyhounds were trotted through the crowd.

Chanting "let the people vote," opponents refused to be quieted for Riley, Alabama Citizens Action Program Executive Director Joe Godfrey, several pastors and others to address the crowd.

"This right here illustrates our point," Godfrey told the crowd. "People say they want to vote, but they have no interest in hearing others' opinion. They want to intimidate others to silence."

Governor addresses crowd

An event meant to rally those in favor of upholding laws against slot machines quickly turned into an event addressing the vocal opponents present.

When the crowd was finally calm enough for Riley to speak, he told the opposition, "You have a right to vote, but you do not have a right to stop a democratic process or violate the law. As long as I'm governor, we'll enforce the law."

It is illegal to have slot machines in Alabama, he said. "If you want to change that, change it in here," he added, pointing to the Statehouse and challenging them to make themselves heard through the House and Senate.

Members of the opposition waved

signs and yelled comments about how the closing of bingo parlors is taking away jobs in Alabama.

These kind of accusations "regurgitate the same old doctrine about jobs being lost," Riley said, but it's the gaming industry that destroys jobs, he explained.

Illuminating 'corruption'

First lady Patsy Riley challenged the crowd to stop wasting time on things that have been voted on already.

"If you want jobs, let them have time to work to bring in industry into Alabama," she said.

Ed Litton, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland, noted that everyone, regardless of viewpoint, could at least agree that the sun was shining at the rally.

"The sun is shining because God is shining light on this corruption," he said. "Pastors are here because our people are suffering. We're standing firm against evil."

Bob Riley affirmed that stand.

"Those of us who believe gambling is destructive for our state are going to do everything we can to keep it out," he said.

GCR Task Force calls for changes for states, NAMB

By Bob Terry
The Alabama Baptist

Major changes for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and state conventions were among the recommendations outlined in a progress report by the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), presented Feb. 22 in Nashville.

Speaking before a packed gallery of state and national denominational leaders attending the SBC Executive Committee meeting, task force chairman Ronnie Floyd presented a 90-minute report calling for a new vision for Southern Baptists to reach the world for Christ as well as a new way of reporting financial support of Baptist missions work.

Floyd, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., said the task force's final report will be released May 3. It may be revised based on feedback to the progress report, he said.

In delivering his report, Floyd outlined declines in Southern Baptists' effectiveness in reaching America and the world for Christ. In sermonical fashion, he bemoaned the SBC's decline in baptisms, the number of declining and plateaued churches and "our economic selfishness."

Floyd said for Southern Baptists to be a part of the revival God desires, they must "rally towards a clear and compelling missional vision and begin to conduct [themselves] with core values that will create a new and healthy culture" within the convention.

"Presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations" is the vision the task force will ask Southern Baptists to "accept, endorse and champion."

The report outlines six components proposed. Recommended changes impact NAMB, the International Mission Board, the Executive Committee, state conventions and cooperating churches.

On page 12 is an outline of Floyd's presentation as well as a summary of the components recommended. A complete text of the report is available at www.thealabamabaptist.org.



FLOYD

COMMENT

Gamblers, Have You No Shame?

What was supposed to be an anti-gambling rally on the steps of the Statehouse turned into a confrontation when busloads of gambling supporters invaded the space reserved weeks in advance for concerned citizens to register their opposition to gambling in Alabama. The result was a shoving and shouting match that had to be brought to a semblance of order by the Alabama state police.

Still gambling protesters shouted so loud and so long that it was practically impossible for Gov. Bob Riley to be heard when he addressed the hundreds of people who journeyed to Montgomery to speak out against legalizing slot machine-type gambling in the state.

The invasion was a deliberate act; the rudeness purposeful. Now that the state Supreme Court has ruled against them, the gamblers seem willing to resort to intimidation to silence their critics. Evidently the gambling crowd will stop at nothing to force its destruction down the throats of Alabama citizens.

One can only ask, "Gamblers, have you no shame? Have you no sense of decency?"

Unfortunately the way the gamblers conducted themselves Feb. 23 is in keeping with their campaign of distortion and untruth as they attempt to expand their hold on the state. In an ad published in *The Birmingham News*, gamblers compared the Alabama state police to the jackbooted storm troopers of the Nazi regime.

Alabamians should be furious to have these patriotic men and women compared to such an evil.

Again one must ask, "Gamblers, have you no shame, no sense of decency?"

Spreading untruths

The newspaper ad, like TV ads flooding the state, pulled out all the stops. It sought to paint Riley with the brush of McCarthyism, reckless persecution of those he opposes, and with the violence of Bull Connor, Birmingham's infamous commissioner of public safety who unleashed fire hoses and dogs on civil rights marchers.

But who is it that is spreading untruths? The gambling ads seek to gain sympathy by talking about legal businesses. The Alabama Supreme Court said otherwise. Ads call threatened raids on the state's major gambling establishments illegal. Yet the state Supreme Court refused to stop the raids by the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling.

And which group tried to prevent opponents from gathering, from speaking? The gamblers.

Once again, one must ask, "Gamblers, have you no shame, no sense of decency?"

The gambling crowd says the issue of legalized gambling in Alabama can be solved by letting the people vote. It knows better. In April 2009, the citizens of Argo rejected electronic bingo gambling in their city in a nonbinding referendum. Less than



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

two months later, the mayor and town council adopted an ordinance to bring gambling to the town.

Votes by the people settle very little. Residents of California voted against gay "marriage" being legal in that state. The nation watched the battle over Proposition 8. But before the vote could be officially recorded, motions were under way to throw out the results. Now California awaits the results of a recent trial to see if the courts will overturn what the people said.

One Baptist pastor has pointed out that Americans voted for a president in 2008 but that election has done little to silence the critics of the man who won.

If votes by the people settled issues, then Alabama would not be caught up in this fight over gambling today. More than 10 years ago, Alabama had a statewide vote on a legalized lottery and the lottery lost. By definition, bingo gambling is a lottery and not legal in the state.

The goal of the gambling crowd is not "let the people vote." It is to get another chance to expand gambling in the state. That is a truth the gamblers will not tell you. Once again we ask, "Gamblers, have you no shame, no sense of decency?"

Look at the patently unfair proposal under consideration by the state Legislature. It does not provide an up or down vote on gambling in Alabama. No bill under active consideration seeks to eliminate gambling. The bills all begin with the premise of protecting what exists and expanding slot machine gambling if possible.

If slot machine gambling is legalized, bill sponsors are seeking to make it nearly impossible to reverse.

Gamblers, have you no shame, no sense of decency?

Gamblers even try to hide behind the issue of jobs. Gamblers are always looking for some noble cause with which to deflect attention away from their selfish, immoral activity. Evidently they have no qualms about using vulnerable, hurting people.

And who cannot be concerned about jobs? Economically this is a difficult time for everyone. Concern about jobs is appropriate.

But the fact remains that slot machine-type gambling is illegal in Alabama. That means jobs related to an illegal activity are also illegal. You

don't keep the moonshiner in business because he provides jobs. You do not keep the house of ill repute going so the service providers will not be out of work.

Two hundred years ago, William Wilberforce indicted the government of England because it protected the evil of human slavery in order to provide jobs and profits for the nation. Slavery and gambling cannot be compared, but one must be careful lest the stench of promoting immoral activities in exchange for a few coins to clink together rises once more from the pages of history.

Gamblers, have you no shame, no sense of decency?

Not letting the people decide

Let no state senator or representative tell you he or she is "just going to let the people decide." The system does not work that way. The recent vote on calling a convention to rewrite the state constitution proves it. Members of the House of Representatives thought the idea ill advised for Alabama and defeated the proposal handily. They were not going to "let the people decide."

Senators and representatives must believe the idea good for the state before they pass it on for a vote of the people. A statewide vote ratifies what the Legislature has already approved. It is a two-step process. Any state senator or representative who supports the idea of a statewide vote on slot machine-type gambling in Alabama supports gambling. That is the bottom line. To anyone who says differently we ask, "Have you no shame, no sense of decency?"

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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DR. BOBBY S. TERRY, EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash, Managing Editor

Grace Thornton, Assistant Editor.....Brittany Howerton, Assistant Editor
Kathleen Penton, Copy Editor.....Wanda Bergeron, Local Editions
Sue Ann Raybon, Dir. of Advertising.....Maxine Cordle, Financial Admin.
Debbie Campbell, Director of Circulation and Public Relations

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40,000 Haitians profess faith in Christ

A reported 40,127 Haitians have made professions of faith in Jesus Christ since a major earthquake hit the impoverished nation in January, according to pastors and directors of missions within the Confraternite Missionaire Baptiste d'Haiti (CMBH).

"Haiti is ripe for a spiritual movement from God," said Craig Culbreth, director of the Florida Baptist Convention's partnership missions department, which coordinates the work of the CMBH.

During a Feb. 16-17 citywide holiday observance in Cap Haitien, Haiti's second largest city, Culbreth saw "thousands upon thousands filling the streets where people are seeking God and asking Him to spare them from what happened in Port-au-Prince. For me, it was a New Testament expression of what it looks like when the Spirit of God shows up. I have never seen anything like it."

Window of opportunity

The CMBH is the Florida Baptist Convention-funded partnership of nearly 900 Haitian Baptist churches throughout Haiti. Through the partnership the Florida convention employs seven indigenous missionaries in six regions. Since the earthquake, the CMBH pastors have distributed 51 tons of rice, which provided 437,750 servings to Haitians in Port-au-Prince and outlying areas where refugees have fled. Additional feedings are expected.

Culbreth compared the window of opportunity where the people are hungry for the gospel to the United States after 9/11 when hundreds flocked to churches. He cited recent events in many of the 110 churches in the Port-au-Prince area where throngs of people have been seeking spiritual guidance in church meetings, which have been held outdoors because Haitians feared to enter buildings. Church leaders have reported 28,000 salvations in the Ouest (Port-au-Prince) association. (BP)

'Gambling away state's future?' – Florida columnist questions wisdom of Legislature

By Mike Thomas
Columnist, Orlando Sentinel

The newest plan to save Florida involves turning it into Nevada.

Roll those big, fuzzy dice.

Line the state with casinos, rake in the billions and live tax-free ever after. It's enough to make the conservatives in Tallahassee swallow their principles and sit down to deal.

It spares them from making responsible choices about taxes and budgets.

It would double down on everything that is wrong with Florida.

Let's see how the Nevada/Las Vegas gig is working out these days.

Here is an Associated Press story from [Feb. 7]:

"Nevada's budget is so far out of balance that by one account the state could lay off every worker paid from the general fund and still be \$300 million in the red. The economic downturn has hit so hard that prisons may be closed, entire colleges shuttered and thousands left without jobs."

Nevada relies on Vegas growth, Vegas tourism and Vegas sales taxes to pay the bills.

Now, just like here, people are bailing out, and Nevada is losing population. Foreclosures are so rampant that an economist predicted it will take 20 years for the real-estate market to recover.

Nevada has a 13 percent unemployment rate, the second-highest in the nation behind Michigan.

The Las Vegas school district is looking at firing 2,000 teachers.

Residents in Vegas are 50 percent more likely to commit suicide than people in the rest of the country. That risk goes down when they leave the city. Go figure.

Vegas is a mess. It's going to be an even bigger mess over time as gambling proliferates across the country, sucking away all but the high rollers from the Vegas strip.

And now a growing number of Florida legislators want to emulate the Vegas model.

Analyst Nate Silver called it the 'race to the bottom' ... States are rushing to put up casinos to keep up with neighboring states. And they are beginning to cannibalize each other. There is, after all, a limited number of saps in this world. ... A report by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis says Mississippi is exporting bankruptcy. The dumb hayseeds in surrounding states are coming in, losing their money and then bringing their broke selves back home. Yeah, boy. We need in on this action."

— Orlando Sentinel columnist Mike Thomas on the possibility of gambling expanding into Florida



TAB graphic

Rep. Alan Hays even wants socialized gambling, with the state owning the casinos. If Charlie Crist loses his U.S. Senate race, I can't think of a better door-greeter.

Hays says we could fund schools — just as we did with the lottery money.

And then in the next recession, we could legalize medical marijuana and Rep. Hays could set up pot clinics next to the casinos. Or do what a leading Nevada lawmaker proposed: slap a \$5 tax on all acts of prostitution.

Developing a third-class culture

With gambling, Hays says, we could cut taxes. Shrink the tax base even more. Make us even more dependent on tourism. Keep those low-paying jobs flowing in. Make the next budget crisis even worse than this one.

These people are dangerous. There is no light at the end of their tunnel vision.

The politicians in Nevada actually convinced themselves that Vegas was immune to recessions. Now they know better. Last year,

the casino owners blocked an attempt to raise taxes on them. So the state raised the hotel tax instead. It is a small drop in a big bucket.

The state never invested in its universities during the boom times, setting them up for a huge fall now.

"We have had a first-class economy and a third-class culture, and eventually a third-class culture will bring down a first-class economy," said James Rogers, the former chancellor of the state's university system.

Does all this sound painfully familiar?

Do you know what would happen if casinos were legalized in South Florida?

The tourism industry on Florida's west coast would scream about losing market share to Miami. So it would get casinos.

That dynamic would spread to the Panhandle. And then it would infect the rotting tourism corridors of U.S. Highway 192 in Osceola and northern International Drive in

Orange.

In looking at this phenomenon from a national perspective, analyst Nate Silver called it the "race to the bottom" in an *Esquire* magazine article. States are rushing to put up casinos to keep up with neighboring states. And they are beginning to cannibalize each other.

There is, after all, a limited number of saps in this world.

Silver reports that in Atlantic City, revenues were no higher in 2008 than they were 1986. In Mississippi, revenues peaked in 2000.

Isn't it amazing how much gambling has turned around Mississippi? And the benefits have spread to its neighbors.

A report by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis says Mississippi is exporting bankruptcy. The dumb hayseeds in surrounding states are coming in, losing their money and then bringing their broke selves back home.

Yeah, boy. We need in on this action.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Used with permission of the Orlando Sentinel, copyright 2010.

Two Baptist volunteers jailed in Haiti, not freed as judge said

The Haiti judge overseeing the case of two jailed Baptist volunteers said Feb. 25 the women won't be released this week and that he wants to obtain more testimony from others.

The news comes two days after the judge told Reuters the women — Laura Silsby and Charisa Coulter — could be freed this week and that he had not found any wrongdoing. That still may happen, but apparently not this week.

On Feb. 25, the Associated Press (AP) quoted Judge Bernard Saint-Vil as saying he wants to, in the words of AP, ask "two real estate agents and a pastor from the Dominican Republic to testify in Port-au-Prince about property" the women "rented to set up an orphanage." He also wants to ask questions of a pastor "and another man" from a border town, AP reported. Saint-Vil said he expects

to rule on the case the week of March 1.

He told Reuters on Feb. 23, "We haven't found anything that could suggest wrongdoing on the part of the Americans" and that "they could be released this week."

Silsby and Coulter are members of Central Valley Baptist Church, Meridian, Idaho. They and eight other Baptist volunteers were arrested Jan. 29 on charges of child kidnapping and criminal association when they tried to take 33 children out of the earthquake-ravaged country and to a makeshift orphanage in the Dominican Republic. They allegedly did not have the proper paperwork.

The other eight team members were released from jail Feb. 18 and are back in the United States. Saint-Vil kept Silsby and Coulter in jail because he had further questions for them. (BP)

LAST CALL for Buckets 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 here.

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



2010 STATE Evangelism Conference

February 22–23

Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery

- ▶ A dozen sermon personalities
- ▶ 15 Great Commission Ministries breakout sessions
- ▶ More of the program geared toward younger pastors than ever before (see story, this page)
- ▶ Sessions on building an evangelistic church led by Ed Young Sr., senior pastor of Second Baptist Church, Houston, and seven other members of the staff
- ▶ Conference attendance of more than 800
- ▶ Record breakout attendance

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash, graphic by Lauren A. Chow

No longer a preach Evangelism conference takes new approach;

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

It's time for Alabama Baptists to get serious, Sammy Gilbreath said. And if that means the State Evangelism Conference no longer looks like a preach-off, then so be it.

"Some people may not like that," said Gilbreath, director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "But if we are going to win Alabama for Christ, then we are going to have to be serious about it."

What that meant at this year's conference, held Feb. 22–23 at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, was intensive, specific training on how to grow an evangelistic church. The lion's share of the teaching was done by Ed Young Sr., senior pastor of Second Baptist Church, Houston, and seven more members of his church staff.

The staff taught all the breakout sessions Tuesday, hitting on topics ranging from evangelism in small groups to restructuring a church. Conference attendees had the option of attending breakout sessions or the main evangelism conference preaching session in the worship center.

"The response has been overwhelmingly positive," Gilbreath said, noting that the breakout sessions were well-attended. "It's been exciting to talk with people and get e-mails from folks saying, 'For the first time in my life, I got specific help for specific needs in my church.'"

The topics also drew in a "younger crowd than ever before," he said. "We made a deliberate effort to have something on the program to draw younger pastors, and many young pastors came specifically for these breakout sessions."

Another change was that the Tuesday night rally veered from the normal challenge for personal evangelism as Young closed out the conference with a practical message about building a more evangelistic church.

He said he and his staff came to "try to share with Alabama Baptists how to build a church for those who are not there yet. That is the genius of

evangelism and one of the most difficult things to do. Most churches are structured in such a way that I don't believe a church would radically grow in reaching the lost for Jesus Christ."

Alabama Baptists shouldn't forget that they are in a battle but apparently they have, Young said, noting that though the state continues to grow, churches continue to decline.

In his message, Young gave 10 factors that hinder church growth:

▶ A poor location

"Sometimes you can help that, sometimes you can't. But if your church is hard to get to or parking is difficult, that's a problem," he said.

▶ A committee-led church

Young told the 800 or so present that committees bog down church growth and challenged them to "sit down with the legitimizers of the church and convince them" to go a different route with leadership.

▶ Already the "right" size

No vision for growth stunts outreach, Young said.

▶ Negative preaching

"If you continually preach negative messages, you will build a church of the maddest, meanest people you've ever seen," he said.

▶ A fear of debt

The Bible doesn't say a church shouldn't go in debt; it says make sure you don't have too much saddle for the horse, Young said.

▶ A staff that does not function

"Get somebody far better than average (in a staff position), or you're better off without them," he explained. "God has given to every body of believers the gifts that are needed to do what you need."

▶ A team without a leader

"Don't pass the buck," Young said, challenging pastors to take responsibility for what happens in their church. "If something didn't happen, it didn't happen because I didn't lead properly."

▶ A threatening atmosphere to non-Christians



ED YOUNG SR.



Photo by Doug Rogers

ALABAMA EVANGELISTS ELECT NEW OFFICERS

The Alabama Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists announced its election of new officers during the 2010 State Evangelism Conference. Officers are John Bush (center), of Montgomery, president; Bob Smith (left), of Huntsville, secretary/treasurer; and Dean Forrest, of Pike Road, music director.

-off

Ed Young Sr.'s church does intensive training



Photo by Doug Rogers

PRACTICAL TOOLS — Lisa Milne was one of eight staff members of Second Baptist, Houston, who came to lead breakout sessions on building an evangelistic church.

When “everybody calls everybody brother and sister, you have turned off hardcore lost people already,” he said. “We’ve got a religious lingo that people who come in from the outside, they don’t get it. We’ve got to communicate with a person who doesn’t know Genesis from the maps.”

► Evangelistic counting

Don’t inflate numbers, he said. “You’re fooling yourself; you’ve got to know a true picture of where you are.”

► Shabby buildings

“There is no reason we can’t paint, we can’t keep things clean,” he said. “We can show pride in our churches.”

There are also 10 things churches can have to promote church growth, Young said:

1. Leadership
2. Surplus parking
3. Visibility
4. Prioritized ministry

“You have to decide what the most important

thing is. For instance, what is the No. 1 hurting element in Alabama? Single parents,” Young said.

5. Prayer
6. Shared vision
7. Quality

“Don’t do anything if you don’t do it with quality,” Young said, noting that for instance, churches should put effort into planning their worship services. “People will come where there’s a reality of the almighty God.”

8. Constant change

“If you don’t like something at my church, don’t worry — we’ll be doing something new next week,” he joked.

9. Teach and preach the Bible
10. Discernment

“You can preach heaven down, know Bible from stem to stern, but if you don’t have discernment, you’re going to get killed sooner or later,” he said.

(Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)

Ed Young Jr. lists eight ‘brutaful’ concepts for church leaders

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Church work is “brutaful” — beautiful and brutal at the same time, Ed Young Jr. said.

“Church work is the highest calling but it is hard work ... and there’s a brutal side,” Young told those attending the Monday night dinner focused on the structure and process of his Fellowship Church, Grapevine, Texas, where he serves as senior pastor.

He planted the church 20 years ago “in a room about this size,” he said, looking around the banquet room at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery. What started with 30 families has now grown to more than 20,000 members. The church also has four satellite campuses (three in the Dallas area and one in Miami).

Using Nehemiah’s experience in Nehemiah 1–6 in which he struggled to build the wall of Jerusalem, Young said there are eight “brutaful” concepts that are vital for leaders as they direct church work.

First is the law of investigation. Nehemiah, the “ask master,” modeled this concept, Young said. “We should ask the right people the right questions to get the right answers. ... Obviously we should ask God first.”

Second is the law of preparation.

“Nehemiah prayed and prayed,” Young noted. “Leaders don’t do anything until they pray. Then they step out and do something, and they pray along the way.”

Young also explained that once Nehemiah began building the wall, the intensity of the opposition — “the enemy” — increased.

“God gives us ‘the’ target but once we go after the target, we become ‘a’ target,” Young said, noting the spiritual warfare that comes along with a believer’s attempt to “ramp up” his or her spiritual disciplines.

Third is the law of multiplication.

Delegation is key but it is vital that the person be “investigated” first, Young said. Each person receiving delegated duties must be coached and equipped, he said. “Delegation without investigation is an abomination. It is merely relegation.”

Fourth is the law of ovation.

Nehemiah was always encouraging people, Young explained, noting a leader’s energy should be spent cheering on those who believe in the vision, not trying to push those who are not on board. “You want to work

with the workers ... swim with the swimmers. Stay away from the bottom feeders.”

Fifth is the law of “hateration.”

“Whenever you begin to build the wall, you will have people who slurp that haterade (a combination of hate and Gatorade),” Young said. “You will face an opposition. But the brilliance of Nehemiah is that he did not stop what he was doing.”

Noting it is unproductive to try to change the opposition’s mind, Young said, “Quit wasting your time. ... You aren’t going to change people’s mind. If [Nehemiah] had stopped and chased down the haters, he would have shrunk his vision, his message, his opportunity.”

Sixth is the law of determination.

“Build the wall ... stay above the fray,” he said, pointing to Nehemiah’s example of being determined. “Stay there and do what God has called [you] to do.”

Seventh is the law of simplicity.

“We get things too complex,” Young said. “I would challenge you as church leaders to keep your structure simple.”

Eighth is the law of elevation.

“Nehemiah stayed on the wall,” Young noted. “He did not trade insult for insult. Just take the high road. ... There’s no opportunity without opposition.”

“Church work is the highest calling but it is hard work ... and there’s a brutal side.”

Senior Pastor Ed Young Jr.
Fellowship Church

Ed Young Jr. calls on believers to ‘pull’ people into church

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Ed Young Jr. is all about rhymes. And Alabama Baptists attending the 2010 State Evangelism Conference felt his hip-hop style up close and personal as he paced up and down the aisles driving his message home. Headlining the Monday night session of the conference, held at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, Young had the congregation chanting: “The ring is the thing,” “hope is the rope” and “pull so the house will be full.”

‘A rescue society’

It’s simple, it rhymes and people remember it, he said, showcasing a bright orange life preserver. “The thing” represents Jesus attached to the rope of hope, which is tethered to the Church, explained Young, senior pastor of the more than 20,000-member Fellowship Church, Grapevine, Texas. “The Church is a rescue society, and God has placed you and me strategically around people who are drowning ... and they need to be rescued.

“Using poor flotation devices — possessions — doesn’t work,” he said. “They must let go of those poor flotation devices, confess their sin and grasp their life ring. Jesus came from the top to the bottom to bring us from the bottom to the top.”

Quoting Matthew 28:19, Luke 19:10 and 2 Timothy 4:5, Young challenged Alabama Baptists to focus on evangelism.

“It is much easier to have the deeper-life church or the navel-gazing church or the inward church,” he said. “The work of the evangelist is hard work. ... Discipleship is easier than evangelism. Missions is easier than evangelism. Children’s ministry is easier than evangelism.

“Those other things are great, but it is not the thing,” Young said. “Every single person who is part of your church and mine should be a part of the pull (evangelizing, baptizing and bringing people into the church). ... If they are not, then they are missing out on why they are here.

“We are saved by grace and through faith ... but we are here to take as many people as possible with us, by God’s power, to heaven,” he said. But “all believers want to reach people until you start reaching people,” Young pointed out.

If Luke 19:10 says, “the Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost, why do we have our churches on birth control pills?” he asked, noting the Bridegroom (Jesus Christ) and bride (the Church) are in intimate relationship. With that should come reproduction, Young said. “When God wants to birth a bunch of babies, He looks for the best incubator He can find.”

And noting that the original language for the Great Commission command that begins in Matthew 28:19 means “as you’re going,” Young told Alabama Baptists to “get your ‘as’ in gear!”

Share the gospel “as you are playing golf, as you are antiquing ... as you go about your daily business.”



Photo by Doug Rogers

‘LIFE RING’ — Ed Young Jr. tells listeners that “the ring is the thing ... pull so the house will be full.”

Sharing 'the living hope'

Nine Alabama Baptist preachers challenge, encourage conference attendees

By Brittany N. Howerton, Jennifer Davis Rash and Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist preachers dominated the main preaching portion of the State Evangelism Conference, held Feb. 22-23 at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Monday afternoon and all day Tuesday, nine men from churches and ministries around the state brought messages of encouragement to burned-out pastors and challenges to share the gospel more passionately and frequently.

► Opening to the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, **Ed Litton, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland**, explained, "It's a three-character play. ... And you and I are in it."

Litton called the first character introduced "the far son."

"The far son wanted freedom, not just from the world he saw himself in but freedom from responsibility," he said. "He's the far son because his heart is at a distant place."

The son moved away, participated in frivolous living and found himself "in need," Scripture says. Desperate for food and help, he decided to return home and beg his father for forgiveness and to be hired as one of his servants.

But grace is something freely given by the prodigal father, the second character.

Pointing out that "prodigal" does not speak of reckless living or a sinful lifestyle but rather "freely spending resources recklessly," Litton said, "The real prodigal is the father who pours out grace — grace upon grace. ... When we have sinned and strayed from [God], He pours out His love. He beckons us to come home. He is the prodigal God."

The third character is the near son, Litton said, referring to the son who was home tending to his father's flock.

"He was in the right place — near the father — doing the right things. He was the near son, but he wasn't even close to the father's heart," he said, adding that drawing near to the Father's heart is pertinent to true revival.

But no matter whether preaching to the near son or the far son, "we preach the grace of God to both."

► It's that same grace that Christ gave to



Photo by Grace Thornton

the woman at the well in John 4, preached **Evangelist Mike Satterfield of Field of Grace Ministries in Alabaster**.

Noting the well, the woman and the water, Satterfield said Christians must come as the thirsty woman to the well for refreshment. But God wants to give the water — "the God life," Satterfield said.

"In the text, there is water that represents the purpose of His coming. He comes to bring us 'God life,'" he said. "If it's been awhile since you've experienced the doorpost shake, since you've seen God high and lifted up ... you need to cry, 'Give it to me,'" Satterfield preached, as respondents echoed his "give it to me" cry.

Satterfield said no matter what one may be going through, Christ is the one who rewards those who diligently seek His face. He offers the well and "you drink from it," he said.

► Seeking after Him diligently requires endurance, said **Jimmy Jackson, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and senior pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville**. And it requires surrounding oneself with the right kind of "helpers."

Opening to the story of the paralyzed man

in Mark 2, Jackson told listeners about the helpless man (whom he named John): those who do not know Christ, the helpers: those who carried the man to Jesus, the hinderers: those who stood in the way

of the man being carried to Jesus and the great Healer.

Jackson challenged attendees to consider whether they are helpers or hinderers when it comes to carrying others to Jesus.

"Here's the bottom line: Their job was to get John to Jesus. That's it. They had to get John to Jesus. If they don't get John to Jesus, nothing else makes any difference in John's life.

You can't disciple the dead. ... The job of the church is to constantly go back to its moorings and say our job is to find 'John' and bring him to Jesus, and 'John' is usually not in the church."

"We preach out of fear. We see culture degrading around us like a cheap suit. But it's not our job to sew it back together. Our job is to preach Jesus."

Ed Litton, FBC North Mobile, Saraland

► "Do we agonize over our friends? Do we weep over them? When we get broken before God, we will become bold before men. ... But we can't do it with burned-out pastors and worn-out staff," said **Mark McClelland, senior pastor of Willowbrook Baptist Church, Huntsville**.

McClelland turned to Numbers 11, explaining that just as Moses was in a place of discouragement with lack of encouragement from his people, pastors, too, may be prone to discouragement.

But they can avoid burnout by getting alone with God and pouring out their heart — not to mention rest, he said. "Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is rest ... because you're not superpastor. Maybe some pastors are burned out because they're worn out."

► **Doug Ripley, senior pastor of Decatur Baptist Church**, said if you love ministry because you love the people you're serving, then it's just a matter of time before that burns out.

"It's the wrong motivation," Ripley said. "I've got to do what I do (for people) because I'm in love with the One who loves them. Sometimes I have to get a renewal of my love for God. Not my love for people —

my love for God. And that's the motivation."

► That motivation should drive believers to share Christ with people who don't have hope, said **Wade Wallace, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville**.

"Do you have burnout? It's time we as preachers of the gospel of Jesus realize that they don't need to hear the newspaper; they need to hear Jesus," he said. "We must realize that there are people who don't have hope in our communities, and we must take Jesus to them."

Our state is growing faster than we're winning people to Jesus — that alone should be motivation to share, he said. "Church, tonight hope is all people need. Hope is what we have. We must go where they are."

► **Bruce Word, senior pastor of CrossPoint Community Church, Gadsden**, also called on Baptists to share and shine. "What are you going to do when you leave this Evangelism Conference, after you hear what you've heard today?" he asked. "If this doesn't change us, then we have done nothing more than taken a break from our work or church. It hasn't done anything for us or changed the world."

► **Keith Thomas, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile**, wholeheartedly believes that exalting and trusting God when things are tough is a way to proclaim His glory. He found this out firsthand when he discovered he had pancreatic cancer in 2007.

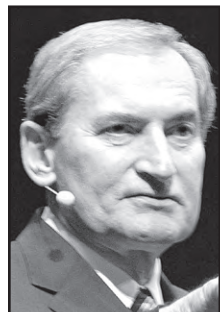
Beginning with the theme of suffering in 1 Peter, Thomas landed in 2 Peter 2:4 with "the living hope." His prayer became, "Help me suffer well for Your glory."

"We live in a world with no hope, but we have the living hope and we must declare it. We must display it," he said. "And the world around us will watch us sing and shine 'on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.'"

► **Tim Anderson, pastor of Clements Baptist Church, Athens**, focused on living by faith as he preached from Habakkuk 3.

Habakkuk didn't understand what God was doing, but he resolved that God knew more than he did. Habakkuk determined that no matter what, he would exalt God and trust Him.

"We have to choose to believe God," Anderson said. "It all comes down to the character of God and who we believe and what we believe God is. God is still sovereign, still in control. ... God's all we need."



"The job of the church is to constantly go back to its moorings and say our job is to find 'John' and bring him to Jesus."

Jimmy Jackson, Whitesburg Baptist, Huntsville



"The world around us will watch us sing and shine 'on Christ the solid rock I stand.'"

Keith Thomas, Cottage Hill Baptist, Mobile



"What do we do when God doesn't make sense? ... It all comes down to the character of God and who we believe God is."

Tim Anderson, Clements Baptist, Athens



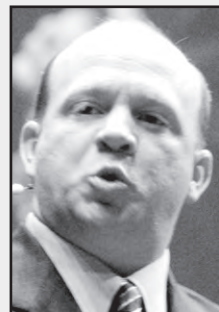
"When we get broken before God, we will become bold before men."

Mark McClelland, Willowbrook Baptist, Huntsville



"We are good at believing ... (but) we are not sharing our faith with people around this world."

Bruce Word, CrossPoint Community, Gadsden



"Church, tonight hope is all people need. Hope is what we have. We must go [to them]."

Wade Wallace, Calvary Baptist, Russellville



"If it's been awhile since you've experienced the doorpost shake ... you need to cry, 'Give it to me.'"

Mike Satterfield, Field of Grace Ministries, Alabaster



"I've got to do what I do (for people) because I'm in love with the One who loves them."

Doug Ripley, Decatur Baptist



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Variety of musicians lead worship

Under the direction of worship leader Jamie Baker of Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, several music groups graced the stage of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, during the Feb. 22–23 evangelism conference. It included performances by (top to bottom) VOICES from the University of Mobile; Kevin Derryberry, artist and worship leader at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster; The Specks, of Lebanon, Tenn.; and the choirs of East Memorial Baptist Church, Prattville, and Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery.



Photo by Doug Rogers



Photo by Brittany N. Howerton



Photo by Brittany N. Howerton

Desire to preach

The gospel matters most, evangelist Fish says

By Kristen Lindsey
The Alabama Baptist

Anything as great as the gospel must be shared,” Evangelist Roy Fish declared.

And that’s what he did at the 2010 State Evangelism Conference, held at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Fish, distinguished professor of evangelism emeritus at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, did not use any props or tell any funny anecdotes like Ed Young Jr., who followed him in the Monday evening session (see story, page 5).

Steadying himself with both hands holding onto the pulpit during most of his almost 45-minute sermon, Fish did not use many illustrations. He did not really need any. His sermon was evidence that the illustration that mattered most to him was the cross.

“It’s the cross that stands behind us that ought to create a burning in our hearts to tell others about Him,” Fish said.

Using Romans 1:14–15 as his text, Fish outlined five motivating factors for the apostle Paul’s burning desire to preach the gospel.

The first was his call from God.

“Your conversion experience may not have been so dramatic as the apostle. (But you, too, are a person under orders,” Fish said. “Friends, I’m talking about a divine mandate — holy orders, if you please.”

Using the example of a soldier, Fish said it would be better to be a soldier who disobeys his commander than to be a follower of Jesus Christ “who disobeys that call ... to bear this exciting news about Him.”

Paul also had a burning desire to spread the gospel because of the crowd around him.

Fish asked what Paul owed all the people listed in Romans 1:14.

“His answer is this: I owe it to them to give to them that which they desperately need,” Fish said. “You cannot have the gospel without being in debt to others to share it.”

He also preached because of the crown that awaited him.

This crown is the people you won to the Lord, Fish said. Working from 1 Thessalonians 2:19, he said, “When Jesus comes again, he’s going to bring a crown to me and you are my crown.

Eternity in mind

“I want to ask you — are you going to have a crown of rejoicing? Are there folks on the other side who will welcome you and say, ‘I’m so glad you’re here?’” Fish asked.

Paul lived with eternity in mind, in particular the terror that awaits those who do not know Him, Fish said. Hell is the “catastrophe that exists below us,” he said.

“Knowing the terror ... I persuade men. Realizing that there are going to be people in that hellfire ... we persuade men. Has



Photo by Doug Rogers

LOVE — Roy Fish told Feb. 22 evangelism conference attendees that the crown should motivate them to take the cross to the crowd.

anyone here grasped the awesome fact of that view of eternity?” Fish challenged the audience.

“Could there be anything more catastrophic than someone being in hell forever or for someone to die without Jesus Christ?” he asked. “Are you attempting to persuade anybody in view of the fact they are an eternity-bound soul?”

“It’s the catastrophe that exists below me that causes this burning in my heart,” Fish said.

But if the calling, crowd, crown or judgment does not ignite a burning within your heart to take the gospel to others, then the cross — the fifth of Paul’s motivating factors — should, Fish said.

Fish reminded Alabama Baptists that the hands that once spread out over vast nothingness and created universes and the feet that walked across golden

streets in heaven were pierced, the brow that was once adorned with a crown of glory wore a crown of thorns and the One who was once adored by angels was jeered by a crowd.

“Why Lord Jesus that cross?” he asked before revealing the answer: “It’s because I love them and I want them for myself. I die for them out of my own compassion and love.”

Love is like that, Fish said.

“Love wants to make itself known. It wants to communicate itself,” he said. “Lord Jesus, you loved so much.”

Fish posed a question based on the conference’s theme, “Across Alabama. Imagine What If ...”

“What if you could honestly say as you leave this conference that ‘I have a burning in my heart to tell others about Jesus?’”

“It’s the cross that stands behind us that ought to create a burning in our hearts.”

Roy Fish
Evangelist

Taking it Across Alabama

Churches get help with statewide evangelism initiative during conference breakouts

By Kristen Lindsey
The Alabama Baptist

Across Alabama: Imagine What If ... was the theme of the 2010 State Evangelism Conference, held at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, Feb. 22-23.

But it was more than a theme — it was a big underscore to the Across Alabama initiative kicking off March 20.

And it was featured during the Great Commission Ministries track the first day of the conference. The breakout sessions focusing on Across Alabama offered help for those participating in the six-week initiative that challenges churches to take the gospel to everyone in Alabama by Easter.

Across Alabama is part of the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) God's Plan for Sharing (GPS), with the goal of "Every believer sharing, every person hearing by 2020."

Mike McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association, led an Across Alabama session describing how the initiative will work and how it fits into the overall mission of GPS.

"Dr. Rick Lance (executive director of the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, SBOM) has called it a decade to make a difference," he said, noting that 73 of the state's 75 associations have signed up to take part in the initiative.

"We've got to get our people back to doing some very basic things ... what the Lord has called us to do ... making disciples," McLemore said. "That's what this 10-year emphasis is about ... turning that trend around ... but we're not talking about numbers but about lives."

Beginning with four biblical markers, McLemore went through the four GPS stages Alabama Baptists will use during the initiative.

► Praying. Getting every church mobilized to pray for the lost.

► Engaging. Getting every believer equipped to share the gospel and engaged in his or her community.

► Sowing. Making sure every lost person in North America receives a full gospel witness.

► Harvesting. Getting every church harvesting and celebrating every salvation result.

These four stages will take place on these specific dates:

► March 20: Prayer walk every street and

every home within a three to five mile radius of the church.

► March 27: Leave gospel materials — the SBOM recommends using Find It Here, a NAMB resource — on the door handle of every home. These should be left at the homes that were prayed for the week before.

► April 4: Hold Easter Sunday harvest and invite those in the community, especially those in the three to five mile radius, to attend.

"You want to have a dynamic worship service planned," McLemore said. "Make sure you have greeters at the doors, and have some people out in the parking lot to greet and point them to the door."

"Do your very best; have your very best face on," he added.

► April 5-May 2: Follow up with those who visited on Easter.

Sonya Tucker, an associate in the SBOM office of discipleship and family ministries, was leading a session called Across Alabama: After the Harvest, Now What?

Tucker focused on how to do follow-up so that first-time visitors will become members.

"I love event evangelism," she said. "But

I believe the event is not over until we do the follow-up."

At the Easter service, Tucker suggests asking visitors to fill out a card and take it to a guest table where they can receive a free gift, such as a New Testament, magazine or book. Then use the information on the card to contact the visitor and thank them for coming.

Tucker suggested contact be made in the first 36 hours, 96 hours, two weeks, one month and three months.

Suggestions for follow-up during these times include e-mail, phone call, hand-written letter, visit and invitation to another church event.

"Research says that if you don't reach a first-time visitor within six weeks, then you've

lost them," Tucker said.

The reason that Across Alabama is so important is because "people are looking for a message of hope and what a [good] time to deliver the message of hope," McLemore said.

For more information on Across Alabama and GPS or to order the "Find It Here" gospel materials, visit www.alsbom.org or call the SBOM office of evangelism at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 320.



Photo by Doug Rogers

BASICS — Birmingham Association's Mike McLemore teaches session attendees about the mission of Across Alabama.

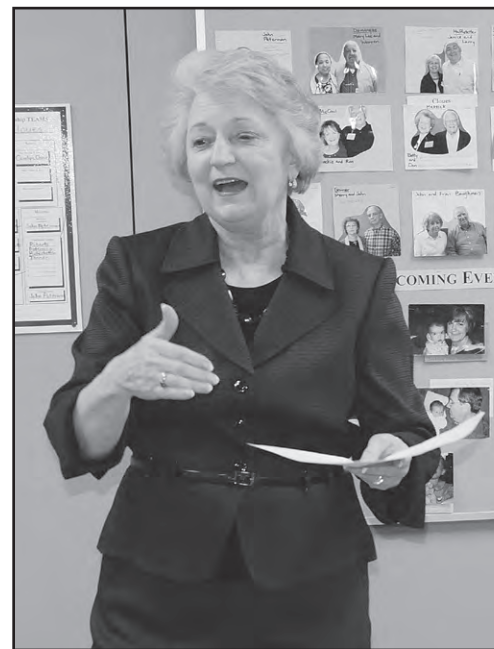


Photo by Doug Rogers

FOLLOW-UP — Sonya Tucker of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions leads a session on discipleship.

WMU luncheon offers encouragement to ministers' wives

By Brittany N. Howerton
The Alabama Baptist

There was lots of laughter at the Alabama Woman's Missionary Union-sponsored (WMU) Ministers' Wives Luncheon, held Feb. 23 during the Evangelism Conference at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery.

The women laughed when Jennifer Landrith talked about being compared to previous ministers' wives, told stories of receiving "unique advice" and recounted crazy church happenings like someone trying to check a Chihuahua into the nursery for a Sunday morning service.

'Hurting group'

But only gasps filled the air when Landrith, co-author of "In Our Shoes: Real Life Issues for Ministers' Wives by Ministers' Wives," explained that 50 percent of pastors' marriages end in divorce, 85 percent of pastors' wives feel discouraged in their roles and more than 50 percent of pastors' wives feel their husband entering into ministry was the most destructive thing to ever happen to their families.

"We're a hurting group of women and we need one another," said Landrith, wife of David Landrith, senior pastor of

Long Hollow Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tenn.

Depending on what is happening in her life, each woman entered the room wearing a different kind of shoe, she said.

Whether it was a house shoe, running shoe, high heel, combat boot or broken shoe, "sometimes it helps to know you're not alone," she said, giving the women four things to keep in mind:

1. Calling — "The most miserable ministers' wives I've ever met are women who are not called to the ministry. ... I would urge you if you're in that group, God is not the author of confusion. Pray for Him to give you clear direction, but remember that just because you're called to a place, it doesn't mean you'll always be happy or it'll always be easy."

2. Comparison — "As women and ministers' wives, we're challenged to be a part of a comparison game. We want to compare clothes, jewelry, houses, kids, husbands — it's time for us to put that junk up and share with one another and love one another."

3. Crazy stuff — "There is some crazy stuff that goes on in ministry. ... You'll encounter things that don't make sense, but sometimes you have to look at those situations and be discerning about it."

4. Compassion gauge — "Just like your gas gauge when it's getting low, when everybody in the church is getting on your nerves or if you hear something and you have no feeling for what they're going through, then maybe you need to step back and replenish yourself so you don't get cynical or calloused. God loves people and we're in the people business."

Things in common

Tena Jones, wife of Mike Jones, pastor of Old Providence Baptist Church, Goodwater, said it was comforting to come together with other women and see "there are others going through the same things."

"In my situation, I'm the only minister's wife in my church because Mike is the only full-time staff member, so I feel like I'm in my own little desert sometimes. So ... it helps to see you're not alone and you're not the only one going through it."

Becky Luther, president of Alabama WMU, added, "We all get discouraged and need to know we aren't alone."

Luther said she hopes women take away "that it's like a sisterhood and there are people there to support them and hold them up every day."



Photo by Brittany N. Howerton

WHAT SHOE ARE YOU? — Author and minister's wife Jennifer Landrith tells women no matter what shoe life demands you to wear, 'you're not alone.'

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By Jimmy Dixon, McGowin
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For any other questions you have or for a free brochure, please call Jimmy Dixon at 205-567-4800 or toll-free at 1-866-879-7775. Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director for Valley Creek Baptist, Hueytown, as well as an Upward basketball coach, deacon and FAITH team leader.



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(These leaders are all on staff at First Baptist Church, Russellville)

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For more information contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at emitchell@alsbom.org or 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 221. For reservations contact Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105.

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BP photo

GETTING THE FACTS — Task force members (from left) Johnny Hunt (president of the Southern Baptist Convention), Ronnie Floyd (senior pastor of FBC Springdale, Ark.) and R. Albert Mohler Jr. (president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) take questions.

GCR Task Force recommends changes to 'business as usual'

Southern Baptists must be gripped anew by the lostness of the world, repent of their self-centeredness and focus their local churches on taking the gospel to those who have yet to hear, the chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Great Commission Resurgence Task Force said Feb. 22.

Toward that end, Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., presented a "progress report" to the SBC's Executive Committee on the task force's work that included six "components" (see story, this page) of a vision they believe Southern Baptists will rally around and experience renewed passion for the Great Commission — making disciples of all the world's people groups.

To open his 90-minute presentation, Floyd drew on Joel 2:12-17 to deliver a challenge about the need for wholehearted repentance if Southern Baptists are to participate in the evangelistic harvest that will accompany the outpouring of God's Spirit in the last days and can be seen already beginning in some parts of the world.

'We need to repent'

"I believe with all my heart that God is calling us to return to Him now in deep repentance of our sin, in brokenness over our sin, denying our pride and selfishness and returning to God with complete humility," Floyd said. "The boasting, ego and pride that goes on in our lives, our churches and our denomination is unacceptable to God. The disunity in our churches and in our denomination is so wrong and sinful. We need to repent and return to God."

"With rhetoric we bemoan our dismal baptism numbers, our declining and plateaued churches, and our economic selfishness. The casting of criticism has resulted in a caustic cynicism that just adds to our rhetoric and writings," Floyd said. "We attempt to treat symptoms rather than the root issues of sin and carnality. The rhetoric needs to cease and the repentance personally and corporately must begin. We need to repent of our sins and return to God."

"[W]e realize our No. 1 need is to return

to God in deep repentance and experience a fresh wave of His Spirit upon our lives, ministries and work of our denomination," Floyd said. "We need a fresh and compelling vision that will only come when we are right with Him."

Southern Baptists need to understand the "staggering" lostness of North America — where 258 million of 340 million residents are estimated to be lost — and the entire world — where 4 billion of 6.8 billion people have little to no access to the gospel, Floyd said. Penetrating such lostness requires each of the 50,000-plus Southern Baptist churches to become its own "missional strategy center," Floyd added. "If we do not begin to understand the complexity of lostness in our own backyard and strategize to reach them, the lostness will never be penetrated with the gospel."

"Business as usual and what we are doing as a whole is not working. It is said, 'Facts are our friends.' This is true, as long as we pay attention to the facts and do not act as though they are nonexistent. If we deny the present reality of where we really are, we are jeopardizing our future and the generations who will follow us. We need to return to God and recommit ourselves to advancing the gospel to all generations."

"We believe this vision we are unfolding to you tonight provides major momentum for the continuation of this Great Commission Resurgence movement and vision. However, a real, long-lasting Great Commission Resurgence must happen personally, as well as in our churches, and in all of our Southern Baptist local associations, state conventions and national entities."

The Orlando meeting "can become a watershed moment for the reaching of the nations," Floyd concluded. "May June 15-16, 2010, be the moment that will define the future for generations to come and show that Southern Baptists are a unified people, Bible-based, gospel-centered and set on fire by the Holy Spirit, believing we must join together like never before in presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations." (BP)

Six components of report would reallocate work, funds

The six components of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force's vision presented by Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., involve:

'Rally toward missional vision'

► Calling Southern Baptists "to rally towards a clear and compelling missional vision and begin to conduct ourselves with core values that will create a new and healthy culture within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)."

The "missional vision" is "as a convention of churches, ... to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations. Our culture represents 1 Corinthians 3 much more than 1 Corinthians 13."

"Envy, strife and division need to become unacceptable. Instead, let this world know us by the depths of our love for Jesus, the gospel and one another."

The eight core values are Christ-likeness, Truth, Unity, Relationships, Trust, Future, Local Church and Kingdom.

NAMB 'reinvented, released'

► Recommending the North American Mission Board (NAMB) prioritize efforts to plant churches in North America to reach the nation's cities and underserved people groups.

NAMB needs to be "reinvented and released by implementing a direct strategy for planting churches that reflects the entities role to lead a national strategy to reach North America with the gospel."

The plan calls for Cooperative Agreements between NAMB and Baptist state conventions to be phased out over a four year period with funds redirected toward church planting.

Nurturing state conventions in new work areas would become the responsibility of mature state conventions.

NAMB would do direct appointment of missionaries rather than work in cooperation with other Baptists in order to have supervision of its missionaries and to ensure that funds are spent according to its national strategy.

NAMB would decentralize its employees to serve in seven regional centers across North America.

Remove IMB's geographic limits

► Requesting Southern Baptists "entrust to the International Mission Board (IMB) the ministry to reach the unreached and under-served people groups without regard to any geographic limitations."

"Globalization has flattened the world," Floyd said. "While years ago a people group was located within a specific geographical location, this is no longer reality. Reality today is that these people groups are located all over the world, including the United States."

"Most of the 586 people groups that do not speak English in the United States have [IMB] strategy coordinators working overseas with the same groups," he said. "With geographical limitations removed, a new synergy can be created in international missions."

Floyd added: "We believe that with this bold and needed change, we are position-

ing our convention of churches for a major evangelistic harvest, a discipleship revolution and an unprecedented, exponential explosion in church planting."

CP promotion passed to states

► Moving the primary responsibility for Cooperative Program (CP) promotion and stewardship education ministry assignments from the Executive Committee to the state conventions.

Historically promotion of the CP was seen as the responsibility of the state conventions, Floyd said.

The task force's plan envisions state convention leaders creating a consortium that, in cooperation with the president and CEO of the Executive Committee, would "plan and execute an annual strategy that will promote the Cooperative Program to our churches as well as challenge our churches in biblical stewardship."

While the plan envisions state conventions reassuming the stewardship assignment, "it is the responsibility of local churches to challenge their people to walk in obedience to God by honoring Him weekly with at least the first tenth of all income as well as additional offerings to our local churches," Floyd said.

Recognize Great Commission Giving

► Reaffirming the CP "as our central means of supporting Great Commission ministries" and establishing a broader category of "Great Commission Giving" to celebrate all the financial support — CP giving and designated giving and direct support — local congregations provide to Southern Baptist missions work in associations, state conventions and the SBC.

"We are urging Southern Baptists to celebrate what all churches are doing for the Great Commission." This is not seen "as being competitive with CP ... but complementing it for the sake of the gospel."

The new designation will be added to the Annual Church Profile.

"When churches give more ... and state conventions keep less of it within their respective states, and a compelling unified gospel vision is cast for Southern Baptists, we will see giving ... increase in a major way."

Raise IMB's CP percentage

► Raising the percentage of CP received by the International Mission Board in the 2011-2012 budget year to 51 percent and funding the increase in part with monies previously allocated to the SBC Executive Committee for CP promotion and stewardship education.

The proposal would reduce the SBC Operating Budget allocation of 3.40 percent by 1 percentage point, or roughly \$2 million, and add it to the IMB's budget, currently at nearly \$320 million.

Calling the proposal "both symbolic and substantial," Floyd explained, "This means that for the first time in our history, more than one-half of all monies that come from our churches through the SBC Cooperative Program will go to the reaching of the nations."

"We believe this is a great move forward and we need to do all we can to reach the nations," he said. (BP, TAB)

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Two former Baptist youth suspected in church arsons

TYLER, Texas — Two young men suspected of setting 10 eastern Texas churches on fire were active in the youth group of a Southern Baptist congregation before drifting away from church after the mother of one of them died three years ago.

David McAllister, father of 21-year-old Daniel George McAllister, one of two men arrested Feb. 21 on an arson charge, told the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* he had struggled with keeping his son on the right track since his wife, who home-schooled the boy and kept him active in First Baptist Church, Ben Wheeler, Texas, died from a heart attack and stroke.

Carlton Young, pastor of the Baptist General Convention of Texas church for 15 years, remembered Wanda McAllister as the "spiritual anchor" of the family. "I knew her death affected him tremendously, but I hadn't seen him enough since his mother died to know how much," Young told the Tyler newspaper. "It was a really traumatic experience for their family."

Young said neither McAllister nor the other suspect, 19-year-old Jason Robert Bourque, had attended the church for a year and a half. He said their attendance fell off after McAllister's mother died and Bourque's family moved from Ben Wheeler, a town of 600 east of Dallas, to Lindale, about 20 miles away.

Police arrested Bourque in Van Zandt County and McAllister in San Antonio. Both arrests were without incident and both suspects were taken to Smith County to face charges of arson in the Feb. 8 blaze that destroyed Dover Baptist Church, Tyler.

Authorities believe the duo is responsible for 10 church fires set between Jan. 1 and Feb. 8 in four eastern Texas communities. They also are suspected in three attempted church break-ins during the rash of arsons. Additional charges are expected to be filed.

Ken Starr named Baylor University president

WACO, Texas — Ken Starr, the former independent prosecutor whose investigative work led to the impeachment of former President Bill Clinton, has been selected as president of Baylor University.

Since 2004, Starr has been the dean of Pepperdine University's law school in Malibu, Calif., where he is credited with dramatically raising the school's profile.

Starr, 63, was introduced to students during a universitywide meeting Feb. 16, and he is scheduled to assume duties as president June 1. He succeeds John Lilley, who was fired as Baylor's president in 2008 after less than three years in the position.

The university reported that Starr was the unanimous choice of both the 14-member presidential search committee and the 10-member presidential search advisory committee and was elected unanimously by the board of regents Feb. 12.

Baylor's student newspaper, *The Lariat*, reported Feb. 16 that Starr plans to join a Baptist church in Waco by June 1.

Across Alabama's Associations

BALDWIN

► **Faith Family Fellowship, Spanish Fort**, will host a Beth Moore simulcast live via satellite called *So Long, Insecurity* April 24, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Tickets can be purchased at the church office or by calling 251-626-1379 or e-mailing sally@faithfamilyonline.com by April 17. Joel Faircloth is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing March 6, 7 p.m., with The Waylighters. The kitchen will open at 6 p.m. For information call 205-425-4991. Scott Bush is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Hopewell Church, Marion**, will hold revival March 14-17, nightly at 7, with Jamey Pruett, an associate in the office of associational missions and church planting for the State Board of Missions. Larry and Jeanie White, of Vancouver, Wash., will provide special music. For information call George Washburn at 334-878-5347. Joe Bob Mizzell is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Stanley Reedy** is the new pastor of **Cedar Creek, Castleberry**. He comes from Mount Pleasant Church, Canaan, Ind. He and his wife, Linda, have two children and one grandchild.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will

hold a luncheon meeting March 9, 11 a.m., with guest speaker Gene Hauser, pastor of Trinity Church, Geneva. Jason Gunter, Maple Avenue's minister of music and children, will provide special music. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by March 4. Mike Shirah is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Bayou Sara Church, Saraland**, will host an encouragement conference for pastors March 12-13 with Argile Smith, pastor of First Church, Biloxi, Miss., and former professor and J.D. Grey Chair of Preaching at New Orleans Seminary. The topic will be biblical preaching. The conference will be Friday at 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturday at 8:30-11:30 a.m. Snacks will be provided. Pre-registration is recommended by calling 251-675-1770 or e-mailing bsbsecretary@comcast.net. The church also will hold revival March 14-17 with Smith. Evangelist Ronnie Cottingham, of Lucedale, Miss., will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 10:50 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Child care will be provided. Dennis E. Dunn is pastor.

SELMA

► **Northside Church, Selma**, will host Southern gospel music family The Hyssongs in concert March 24, 6:30 p.m. Kenny Hatcher is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Westwood Church, Alabaster**, will hold a national teleconfer-

ence called Cancer and End-of-Life Care March 24, 12:30-3:30 p.m.

The teleconference will be sponsored by Family Comfort Hospice in Alabaster and hosted by Hospice Foundation of America. It will address care options related to cancer diagnoses as well as loss and grief reactions for patients, families and professional caregivers. It also will examine psychosocial aspects of cancer, pain management and ethical issues related to the disease. A local panel of health care professionals and caregivers will be available for questions. To register call Lance Lee at 205-663-5614. Space is limited. Les Hughes is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Lance Bowman** is the new health and wellness minister for **Eden Westside Church, Pell City**. He comes from Seddon Church, Pell City, where he served as student minister. He and his wife, Amy, have three children. Jacky Connell is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Corinth Heights Church, Haleyville**, will hold a wild game feast for men and boys of all ages March 13, 6 p.m. Former University of Alabama and Dallas Cowboys football player Dennis Homan will be the guest speaker. J.J. Hadder of the Steel City Quartet will provide special music. For information call 205-486-3900 or visit www.corinthheights.com.



By Kristen Lindsey
The Alabama Baptist

Someone You Should Know

EDNA PHILLIPS

Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Kinston
Sardis Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Psalm 23:1
FAVORITE HYMN: "Amazing Grace"
HOBBIES: Sewing

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed (Carlton);
two sons, Daniel Joe and Paul
Cleveland; two grandchildren;
and two great-grandchildren



PHILLIPS

At 77, Edna Phillips remains active in her church and association. Phillips, who served as her association's treasurer until recently, has volunteered for the past 10 years as manager of the association's thrift store.

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: I lived out in the country, and I still live on the same land I grew up on. I was also raised in church.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: When I was 13 years old, we were having a revival. I went forward one night and joined (the church).

I was baptized in the creek during the revival.

Q: Does the thrift store help a lot of people?

A: Yes it does. I know some really appreciate it because they'll come back and tell us.

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

A: I hope I can continue being involved and going to it.

Q: What difference has being a Christian made in your life?

A: I wouldn't want to be any other way.

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.



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Governor's task force raids Chickasaw slot machine hall hours after opening

The Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling raided Chickasaw's new slot machine operation Feb. 25, just a few hours after it opened its doors.

The task force, led by Mobile County District Attorney John Tyson Jr., and other state authorities confiscated all 25 machines after Tyson had sent undercover agents to scope out the situation, Tyson said.

The raid came one week after Attorney General Troy King said he may decide to "superintend" over the task force, but not "yet."

Despite warnings by Tyson and Gov. Bob Riley, the city council went forward with its "bingo" agen-

da approving an amended "bingo" ordinance and a lease with electronic gambling developer M.S. Land Inc. on Feb. 9.

Two weeks later, Gulf Shores attorney James "Pete" Bridges, owner of M.S. Land, opened his casino in the former Chickasaw municipal auditorium.

Threatening lawsuits

Tyson said his next step will be to file a forfeiture action against Bridges' operation.

But Tyson is not the only one planning to pursue legal action.

"We fully intend to file a civil action in the coming days," Bridges re-

portedly told The Associated Press.

While Bridges, some city council members, city attorney Jay Minus and Mayor Byron Pittman believe the machines comply with the Supreme Court's six-point test (released as part of a November 2009 ruling), Tyson does not.

"I have never seen an electronic machine that was really nothing other than a slot machine disguised by a decal and clever name," Tyson told *The Alabama Baptist*.

"The Supreme Court of Alabama has ruled twice in just four months that these illegal slot machines are not bingo," he said, adding that he is going to continue to enforce the law. (TAB)

Baptist denominational presidents unite to help in Haiti

Presidents of five historically black Baptist denominations announced Feb. 12 they were collaborating to respond more effectively to human need in Haiti.

Presidents of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention; National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.; National Baptist Convention of America; National

Missionary Baptist Convention of America and Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc. formed the African-American Baptist Mission Collaboration.

Representing more than 10 million Baptists in the United States, the coalition exists to link resources to create financial and technical synergies in responding through relief and recovery for Haiti, advocate for just and compassionate

government policies toward Haiti and work toward sustainable community development in the island nation devastated by the Jan. 12 earthquake.

"This collaboration is essential for the kind of response that is needed in Haiti," said Julius Scruggs, president of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc. and pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church, Huntsville. (ABP)



Photo courtesy of West Side Baptist Church

JACKSONVILLE'S WEST SIDE DEDICATES NEW ADDITION

West Side Baptist Church, Jacksonville, dedicated the new addition to its facilities Jan. 31 during its morning service. After the service, the congregation held a potluck lunch in the new fellowship hall. Bill Caudle is pastor.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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

PASTOR: Full-time pastor needed at Harmony Grove Baptist Church located in Winfield. Interested candidates may e-mail their resumé to: hgpastor2010@hotmail.com, or mail it to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 1736, Winfield, AL 35594.

ADULT EDUCATION MINISTER: Seeking full-time minister of adult education. Seminary degree and prior experience required. CrossPointe Church, Madison, Ala. E-mail Dawn Buscemi at dbuscemi@crosspointefamily.org. Web site: www.cpcfamilly.org.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP & EDUCATION: First Baptist Church of Blountville, Tenn., seeks a minister of worship and education. Blountville is the county seat of Kingsport and Bristol. First Baptist currently has both blended and contemporary services with a variety of choirs and ensembles. Education will involve working with teams to coordinate Bible study, VBS, camps and adult education opportunities. Candidate should be team player who is ready to serve as needed. Please submit resumé and any DVD or CDs to: Minister Search Team, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 587 Blountville, TN 37617 or e-mail: fbcbtn@embarqmail.com. Resumés will be received through April 15.

TWO POSITIONS: Wayside Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for both a youth/children's minister and a part-time minister of music. Please send resumé to: Wayside Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 493, Alexander City, AL 35011, or e-mail to: waysidebaptist@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR: Fairhope Avenue Baptist Church (www.fairhopeabc.com) is seeking a part-time youth director. Salary will be based on maturity, experience in related positions and/or professional degrees. With prayerful consideration please mail resumés with references to: Pastor James W. Hill, P.O. Box 1086, Fairhope, AL 36533 or fax 251-928-1328.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Please send resumés to: Spring Valley Baptist Church, P.O. Box 978, Springville, AL 35146.

OTHER POSITIONS

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR: East Hill Baptist Church, Tallahassee, Fla., seeking church administrator competent in accounting procedures, computer skills and oral and written communication. College degree and/or 3 years church administration experience required. Send cover letter, resumé, references to: East Hill Baptist Church, 912 Miccosukee Road, Tallahassee, FL 32308-5085 or dan@easthill.net.

PIANIST: East Gardendale Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pianist for

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: The Baptist State Convention of Michigan is seeking resumés for the position of executive director. The qualified applicant will be a visionary leader with administrative skills, have a minimum of a master's level degree, pastoral experience and proven SBC denominational leadership. Please send all resumés to: search@bscm.org by May 15.

PRINCIPAL: Legacy Christian Academy (a newly formed K-6 school opening in August in East Lauderdale County) is accepting resumés for a principal. All resumés should be sent to: P.O. Box 1054, Killen, AL 35645, or e-mail to: legacychristianacademy35645@gmail.com and must be received by March 15.

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Want to know God?

By Bobby E. Hopper
Director of Missions
Bethel Baptist Association

Everett did not have time for God. He spent Sundays working on his work car. The pleas of his wife and mother-in-law to attend church with them were answered with "I have to work on my car so I can make a living."

Everett was about to get a startling revelation from his mother-in-law, whom everyone called Granny. Granny was a God-fearing widow and sharecropper who raised nine children during the Great Depression. She lived by faith. Her revelation for Everett: Working on the old car was reward for not spending time with God. She was not a name-it-and-claim-it person, but through her hardships, she had learned to depend on God. Her challenge to Everett: Trust God and serve Him. Granny used Jesus' words from Matthew 6:33-34: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Frustrated with the endless task of car repair, motivated by the prayers and loving compassion of his wife and mother-in-law and drawn by the Holy Spirit, Everett decided to put his faith in the Lord. He accepted the salvation found in accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. He made a public confession of his sins and committed his life to serving Jesus.

Everett committed to reading the Bible, joining and attending the local church and tithing. Granny challenged Everett to stop spending money on the old car and give to God.

Everett never looked back. Serving the Lord for the rest of his life, he never missed an opportunity to share his testimony. He wanted people to know God and His promise to care for His children.

Everett admitted that when he spent more time with God, he spent less time working on his old car. God did not give him a new car or more money. Everett just became a better steward of what God gave him.

That is what knowing God is. It is seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness and believing He will meet your need.

A closer look

Questions raised about Attorney General Troy King's ties to gambling operations

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

Since Gov. Bob Riley formed the Task Force on Illegal Gambling without Attorney General Troy King's support, many of the state's highest officials have questioned King's ties to illegal gambling operations around the state.

It didn't help that King was rumored to have growing personal ties to VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor. Now similar connections are being made to developers of Houston County's Country Crossing and its bingo business.

At a recent press conference held in Montgomery, King strongly criticized the task force's attempted raids on VictoryLand and Country Crossing. After the owners asked King to intervene, some expected him to announce plans to take over the task force. He refused but issued a warning to the governor that he may do so in the future.

Denying the links

King denied having any links to McGregor or Country Crossing developer Ronnie Gilley beyond "know(ing) them."

The attorney general acknowledged attending an "economic development party that had nothing to do with gambling" when Country Crossing was proposed for Coffee County. Both Gilley and King are from that area.

King did attend a Jan. 24, 2008 event at Gilley's home where the invitation read "Come dressed for fun and join Attorney General Troy King for a bash you'll never forget!" The party occurred one month before Houston County commissioners changed the county's bingo rules and entered into an agreement with Gilley to move the Country Crossing venture from Enterprise to Dothan. A year later, Country Crossing officials announced their Dothan-based "entertainment resort" could not be built without a 1,700-machine "electronic bingo" facility.

In March 2009, Gilley told legislators who were considering a bill to legalize slot machines at Country Crossing and other "points of destination" across the state that he could not build the entertainment center without the machines, which he called "electronic bingo."

"It took Branson 40-50 years to build what they have," Gilley said of the Missouri tourist destination that boasts more than 50 live per-

formance theaters. "We don't want to wait that long."

He said the only reason he needed gambling legalized there was to finance the \$250 million venture.

Since Houston County's constitutional amendment only allows charity bingo games, questions remained as to how the facility's charity bingo operations could serve as the financial backbone of a 400-acre project. Gilley and Wiregrass politicians said they received approval to operate in that manner. King provided at least one of the approvals in an Attorney General's Opinion.

Two opinions from King

Months before Gilley's March 2, 2009 ground-breaking ceremony for the County development, King issued two official opinions related to Country Crossing. The first, issued April 21, 2008 to Gary Sherrer, attorney for the Houston County sheriff, said the sheriff is "required to issue" electronic bingo permits when he has "conducted an investigation and determined that an applicant has met the requirements and qualifications." Previously there was confusion over whether the sheriff had discretionary authority in issuing permits.

This opinion is widely known. But five months later, King issued another opinion — one that some say violates the constitutional amendment allowing bingo in the county.

In the opinion, King responded to a request made by former Rep. Warren Beck, R-Geneva, explaining how Gilley was to receive money from the center's "bingo" gambling operation.

"Your request states that a private club will operate bingo games in Houston County on premises leased at a fixed rate from an affiliated entity of a real estate developer," King wrote. "The bingo games will be operated by the club's employees. The club will, through a development and license agreement, purchase a license from the developer to operate the club's electronic bingo machines and will obligate the developer to meet the economic development objectives set forth in a separate agreement between the developer and the county. The club will license ... the name Country Crossing from the developer or its affiliate. The compensation to the developer under the development and license agreement will be a percentage of bingo revenue less prizes paid. This office understands that the compensation to the developer or its affiliate under the trademark license agreement will be a percentage of bingo revenue before prizes are paid."

Houston County's bingo amendment states, "No nonprofit organization or club may pay consulting fees, any compensation or salary to any individual or entity for any services performed relating to operating or conducting any bingo game. ... One hundred percent of the net revenues derived from operating bingo games shall be designated and expended for charitable or educational purposes."

Yet in his conclusion, King said, "The club may pay compensation to a developer or its affiliates under a development and license agreement and trademark license agreement ... in the form of a percentage of bingo revenue. A 'special permit' holder is only required to comply with the rules and regulations for the operation

of charitable bingo in Houston County (the constitutional amendment) in regards to operating bingo games under that special permit."

King's ties to Country Crossing don't end there. Randy Owen, lead singer of the country group Alabama, owns one of the venues at Country Crossing. Owen campaigned extensively with Gilley to garner support for slot machine-type gambling for the development.

Just one month after the development held its official Dec. 1, 2009 grand opening, Owen honored King with a Jan. 5, 2010 fund-raising event in Birmingham for King's current reelection campaign. The invitation read "Please join Randy Owen of the Country Music Group 'Alabama' for an event honoring Alabama's Attorney General Troy King." Cost of the event was \$500 per couple.

Yet in the aforementioned Montgomery press conference, King said Gilley had not held any fund-raising events for him and he "never attended an event in support of" the development.

He said nothing about campaign efforts on his behalf by Owen and Country Crossing.

At the same time events were being held in King's honor, Riley's task force had planned a raid on Country Crossing for operating illegal slot machines. King refused to get involved but sent several letters to Riley strongly opposing his actions.

"As a native son of the Wiregrass, I can tell you that some of Alabama's finest citizens call Dothan and southeast Alabama home," he wrote. "I am now in receipt of a letter from Houston County Commission Chairman Mark Culver and Dothan (Area) Chamber of Commerce President Matt Parker asking that I superintend these matters, restore civility and order to the process and litigate responsibly the issue of whether the machines at Country

Crossing are bingo machines or slot machines. ... Because the integrity of this office has been questioned, in light of your accusations, I am refraining from superintending this case at this time."

'Lay down the guns'

When one Dothan official asked King to "step up to the plate in regards to what is going on down here in Houston County with Riley's task force," King responded, "I have been outraged by the governor's attacks on my friends in the Wiregrass, and I have told him so. I am attempting to find a civil way for us to lay down the guns and the rhetoric and to take up the law and settle this matter once and for all. I hope you can respect my approach."

In a letter responding to one of King's letters, Riley wrote, "At the outset, we can agree on one thing: Houston County is populated by people of outstanding integrity and character. The illegal slot machines being operated at Country Crossing do not cast any cloud over those fine people. As you know from your experience as attorney general, even the best communities have criminal elements within them. And even the best communities can fall victim to the alluring promise of jobs and tax revenue that criminal enterprises used to gain a foothold for their illegal operations."

(Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)



I have been outraged by the governor's attacks on my friends in the Wiregrass, and I have told him so."

Troy King
Attorney General of Alabama



Photo courtesy of Chisholm Baptist

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Targeting unreached areas

Missionary penetrates pockets of lostness in Arizona

As a Southern Baptist pastor for the last 30 years — and as a North American Mission Board missionary for the past six — Louis Spears has conducted many a funeral. But none of them prepared him for the long, lonely walk behind his wife's casket almost two years ago.

A native of Guthrie, Okla., Spears and his wife, Shelley, had been married for 32 years — ever since they were both 20-year-old church planters in Oklahoma. But in May 2008, she succumbed to a pancreas-related illness only 11 days after its sudden onset.

"Shelley was an incredible person, a woman of many talents," Spears said. "The main thing I miss about Shelley — other than just being together as not only my spouse but also my best friend — is the amount of prayer-time she spent on my ministry. She was really my partner in ministry. It's a huge loss and huge gap in my life."

Spears' strong, tried-and-true personal faith prevented him from caving in to the temptation of chucking his whole ministry and blaming God in the process. Still after almost two years, the 54-year-old missionary said the grief is still "like big ocean waves that just swell up over you and you can't fight them, but you know the Lord is the Lord, that He is supreme and that in His design, He had a purpose for it."

Spears is one of some 5,300 missionaries in the United States, Canada and their territories who receive a percentage of their support from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

'Tactical' churches

While no one or nothing can ever replace the vacuum in his life caused by his wife's death, Spears depends on his challenging missionary work in Arizona to take up some of the slack, ease the pain and bring new victories.

With an estimated 71 percent of Arizona residents as unbelievers, Spears, a church-planting strategist with Valley Rim Southern Baptist Association, faces a huge challenge. In addition to Mesa, the association serves 50 churches and missions in the Tempe, Scottsdale, Chandler and Gilbert areas of metro Phoenix.

Because land and buildings are so expensive in the greater Phoenix area, Spears focuses on planting "tactical" churches instead of brick-



NAMB photo

REACHING COMMUNITIES — Children from Seyenna Vistas Mobile Home Park munch popcorn and view a movie as part of a summer kids' program sponsored by NAMB missionary Louis Spears (center).

and-mortar churches, which can financially strap a congregation with huge indebtedness in its infancy and make survival more difficult.

"Tactical churches are collections of people who have not been reached before," Spears explained. "We try to target an area where the kingdom of God hasn't been before. Some may be apartment complexes, mobile home parks, house churches or just a gathering of people at a Starbucks."

According to Spears, the Phoenix area is the 12th largest metro area in the United States. "We're in a vast multicultural setting. We have a lot of unchurched, unsaved individuals."

"We're way behind on the number of churches we need in order to impact these individuals' lives. We have only one church for every 23,000 people in Arizona. Since we don't have many churches that run 23,000 every week, it's vital for us to have funds to do evangelistic outreach, buy Bibles and other resources to help posture the churches we do have."

Evangelical Christians — of which Southern Baptists represent the largest group — only represent 2 percent of the state's population, trailing Catholics and Mormons.

"We have some churches that are in senior adult communities. We have multiethnic churches like Na-

tive American, Filipino and African-American churches. We have a large Spanish-speaking population. Over 35 percent of the people in Arizona speak Spanish."

On top of the diversity, the uncertainty in the Phoenix area housing market is driving people to multihousing developments — whether apartments, townhouses, condominium communities or mobile home parks.

"Statistics show that only a small percentage of those people will ever come out and go to anyone's church, so we believe it's important to take church to them," Spears said.

Spears begins by meeting a multihousing development's property managers — to get in from the ground up and establish good working relationships.

"We begin by asking the managers what their needs are," he said. "We try not to assume that we know the industry better than the people who work in it. ... But what they don't understand is the human element. They lose money every time somebody moves so by building a ministry and a partnership with them, it helps to build a sense of community. The people are more likely to stay."

To assist both the property managers and the tenants themselves,

Spears and his team do things like forming kid's clubs in the afternoon to give them a place to go and something meaningful to do. Latchkey children, who are on a break from school and whose parents work, may be fed lunch. Afternoon soccer games are offered. Summer sports camps via mobile trailers can be deployed to various

multihousing communities.

An offshoot of Spears' work with multihousing communities was his introduction to the Travelers, the substantial "gypsy" culture and population of Arizona.

Spears said outsiders like him are usually not successful at trying to penetrate the closed gypsy culture. "American gypsies actually discovered me and began to attend our church in Mesa," he explained. "Eventually I was accepted into their fascinating culture." (NAMB)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 7

Explore the Bible

By Jeffrey S. Quiett

Associate professor of marriage and family counseling, University of Mobile

COMPASSIONATE ACTION

Exodus 2:23–3:10, 19–20

Not Forgotten (2:23–25)

The story begins approximately 40 years after the birth of Moses’ son Gershom. In self-imposed exile, Moses seems to be engaging in an “ordinary life” apart from the riches of Egypt. While Moses participated in the typical pastoral activities of his day, the people of Israel were still under the oppressive rule of Egypt. Although Moses was absent from the sufferings of his people, Scripture makes it clear that God was never absent from them. God understood the plight of His people.

Even under the persecution of a repressive regime, the Israelites still managed to “cry for help” to God. This reality implies the source of help even when things look bleak. Difficult times have a way of drawing out what we really believe. The Israelites were surrounded by multiple Egyptian deities, yet they remained devoted to the one true God. Their faith was not based on emotion or experience. It was based on the reality of the promise that God had made to their ancestors. Faith is not just a feeling. Faith is a conviction “of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

The Call of Moses (3:1–10)

While Moses was engaged in his daily activities, God made an appearance. We often believe that God “shows up” only in religious activities but Moses’ experience suggests otherwise. Horeb, which literally means “desolate,” is another name for Sinai. The exact location of this “mountain of God” is still debated today although early Christians identified it as Jebel Musa in the southern Sinai Peninsula.

God uses an ordinary object (a bush) to appear and speak to Moses. The designation “angel of the Lord” (2) has long been a subject of theological debate, but most scholars agree that it is a visible manifestation of God Himself. These visible manifestations are usually called “theophanies” and occur periodically in the Old Testament. Theophanies are not present in the New Testa-

ment since Jesus is the ultimate theophany (God become flesh).

The remainder of the passage begins what turns out to be a lengthy discussion between God and Moses. God speaks to Moses personally, which affirms God’s personal relationship with His people. God answers Moses’ doubt concerning the identity of the voice by calling on Moses to remove his sandals. This was an ancient indication of divine presence and a custom that servants practiced in the presence of their masters. God further identifies Himself not as an unknown god but as the God of Moses’ ancestors — the one true God.

Verse 7 marks the first time in the Old Testament that God uses the term “my people.” God has heard the cry of His people and has now decided to take action. Concern without action is incomplete. His method of action is to use the man Moses. This is a common theme throughout Scripture. Most of the time, God chooses to work through people to accomplish His purposes.

We often expect that God will intervene directly and personally in the world. As the call of Moses demonstrates, God almost invariably chooses to work through people who obey His call. Moses was 80 years old at the time of his call. God is always calling us to do something to further His purposes and work. Age, experience, intelligence and social standing make no difference to God in light of His calling on our lives. God is always looking for those who will obey His call.

The Power Behind the Man (3:19–20)

While Moses is called upon to obey God’s commands, God does not leave Moses to “fend for himself.” God understands the heart of Pharaoh and affirms that it will take a “mighty hand” to convince the king of Egypt to relent.

When God calls us for His purposes, He will always provide the power to carry out His wishes. We can be confident that God will give the necessary resources and strength to accomplish what He calls us to do.

Bible Studies for Life

By Mark DeVine

Associate professor of divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

WHEN MEMBERS WON’T GET ALONG

1 Corinthians 1:10–15, 26–29; 3:1–4

Misplaced Loyalties (1:10–15)

The ancient poet Horace said this of the Romans: “They are absurd slaves to fame, a people stupefied by titles and masks.” Unfortunately the apostle Paul’s first epistle to the church at Corinth only confirms the accuracy of Horace’s assessment. Here they were spiritually gifted converts to Jesus Christ, members of the body of Christ, the Church, set within a divinely created and eternal siblinghood, the family of God meant to reflect the love of God displayed and enacted in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross. Here they were the blood-bought objects of mercy and grace, not celebrating the extraordinary circumstance of their adoption into the family of God but jockeying for position, hankering after spots in emerging cliques sporting the names of the spiritual superstars — Paul himself, Apollos, Cephas (Simon Peter) and even Jesus.

Human Pride (1:26–29)

But what is so wrong with such comparison and competition between the followers of Jesus Christ? Might not such attachment to the various spiritual superstars evidence just the kind of spiritual ambition that leads to spiritual maturity and achievement? According to Paul, no, it cannot. And the reason Paul gave can be captured in two words — the cross.

Attempts to follow or please or benefit from association with the Lord Jesus Christ must reflect the path along which His own Lordship manifested itself, namely along the path of humble service and sacrificial love, not spiritual one-upmanship and slavish pursuit of status. But the Corinthian believers remained so sunk in the decadent culture of their fair city that they could not see the shocking contrast between what they said they were — spiritually gifted followers of the crucified Lord and Savior — and how they behaved.

Unconsciously the Corinthian believers drug into the church the culture of their proud city, not realizing its utter incompatibility with the values that must prevail where the Lord they worshiped willingly died on a cross in or-

der to make them the children of God. Corinth was an unusual city even in its own day, facilitating an economic and social upward mobility rare in the ancient world. It was a city that rewarded the go-getters of that day.

The Corinthians and we must learn that within the Church headed by the Crucified One, maturity proceeds downward. He who exalts himself will be put down, and he who humbles himself (as Jesus did) will be exalted. Love, not pride, is the characteristic mark of the family of God.

Spiritual Immaturity (3:1–4)

Paul acknowledged the exceptional spiritual giftedness that prevailed within the church at Corinth. Yet, in the hands of these Corinthian believers, rather than serving to transform the church into a relational reflection of its Lord characterized by humility and sacrificial love, these undeserved, divinely bestowed gifts have been converted into tools for personal ambition, resulting in unseemly boasting, envy and strife. They thought they could draw closer to the top where Jesus abides by climbing over the heads of their brothers and sisters.

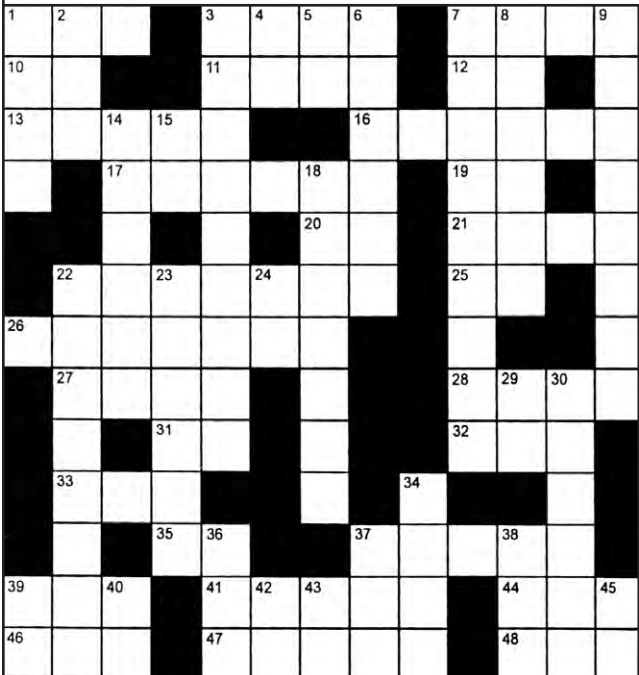
But Jesus is not up there; is He? Where can their Lord be found? Not strutting on an exalted perch above others, but girded with a towel to wash the disciples’ feet on His way to a cross to suffer and die for His enemies, namely, us. Within the Church, the upward path is, first of all, a downward path.

We may not live in Corinth, but, like those first followers of Jesus from that ancient metropolis, we come to our Savior and Lord out of a culture that inculcates and rewards the very same behaviors and aspirations that were poisoning the church Paul addressed. God’s word for us matches Paul’s admonitions to those Corinthian believers: The values of this fallen and doomed world are incompatible with the values of the kingdom of God.

What wins applause in the world is not welcome within the Church of the crucified and risen Savior whose name we have appropriated to ourselves. Where envy and strife took root among the prideful and the status hungry, now humility and love must take hold and grow.

Christian Crossword

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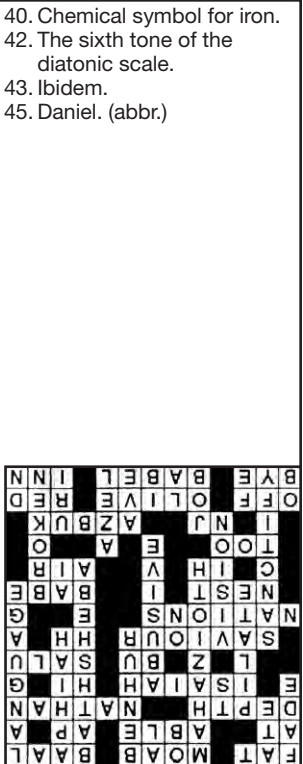


Across

1. The ___ that covereth the inwards. (Lev. 3:3)
3. Went to sojourn in the country of _____. (Ruth 1:1)
7. Jehu destroyed ___ out of Israel. (2 Kings 10:28)
10. He placed ___ the east of the garden. (Gen. 3:24)
11. ___ also to save them to the uttermost. (Heb. 7:25)
12. Associated Press. (abbr.)
13. Nor height, nor ___, nor any other. (Rom. 8:39)
16. The Lord sent ___ unto David. (2 Sam. 12:1)
17. Unto ___ the prophet the son of Amoz. (Isa. 37:2)
19. Short for “hello.”
20. Bureau. (abbr.)
21. Zimri, the son of ___, a prince. (Num. 25:14)
22. He shall send them a _____. (Isa. 19:20)
25. Her Highness. (abbr.)
26. In thee shall all ___ be blessed. (Gal. 3:8)
27. An eagle stirreth up her _____. (Deut. 32:11)
28. Ye shall find the _____. (Luke 2:12)

Down

31. Hi in the mirror.
32. Of fowls also of the _____. (Gen. 7:3)
33. In addition, also.
35. New Jersey. (abbr.)
37. Nehemiah the son of _____. (Neh. 3:16)
39. Not on.
41. Being a wild ___ tree. (Rom. 11:17)
44. Though they be ___ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
46. Short for “good-bye.”
47. The name of it called _____. (Gen. 11:9)
48. There was no room for them in the _____. (Luke 2:7)
7. David comforted ___ his wife. (2 Sam. 12:24)
8. The son of a Benjamite. (1 Sam. 9:1)
9. Heard them speak in his own _____. (Acts 2:6)
14. ___ then went out unto them. (John 18:29)
15. Tensile strength. (abbr.)
18. Proud, ___, disobedient to their parents. (2 Tim. 3:2 NIV)
22. ___ them through thy truth. (John 17:17)
23. Seal up the ___ and prophecy. (Dan. 9:24)
24. To be upon.
29. Joshua had taken _____. (Josh. 10:1)
30. Because of unbelief they were ___ off. (Rom. 11:20)
34. ___ had six sons. (1 Chron. 9:44)
36. These three men, Noah, Daniel, and ___ were in it. (Ezek. 14:14)
37. Avenue. (abbr.)
38. I have called by name Bezaleel the son of _____. (Ex. 31:2)
39. Obstetrics. (abbr.)



World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Pakistani Christian beaten for refusing to convert

KALLUR KOT, Pakistan — The four older Muslim brothers of a 26-year-old Christian beat him unconscious in Kallur Kot in early February because he refused their enticements to convert to Islam, the victim said.

Riaz Masih, whose Christian parents died when he was a boy, said his continual refusal to convert infuriated his siblings and the Muslim cleric who raised them, Moulvi Peer Akram-Ullah. On Feb. 8, he said, his brothers ransacked his house in this Punjab Province town 145 miles southwest of Islamabad.

"They threatened that it was the breaking point now and that I must convert right now or face death," Masih said. "They said killing an infidel is not a sin; instead it's righteousness in the sight of Allah almighty."

He said Akram-Ullah and his brothers offered him \$11,790, a spacious residence and a woman of his choice to marry in order to lure him to Islam, but he declined. The Muslim cleric had converted Masih's brothers and sisters in like manner, according to human rights organization Rays of Development (ROD), which has provided financial, medical and moral support to Masih.

Adnan Saeed, an executive member of ROD, said that when Masih's parents passed away, Masih and his siblings were tenants of Akram-Ullah, who cared for them and inculcated them with Islamic ideology. ROD began assisting Masih after a chapter of the Christian Welfare Organization (CWO) brought the injured Christian to ROD.

A spokesman for CWO who requested anonymity said that Akram-Ullah had offered Masih's brothers and sister a large plot of residential land, as well as \$5,895 each, if they would recite the "Kalimah," the profession of faith for converting to Islam.

Muslim groups demand closure of Protestant church

BEKASI, Indonesia — Hundreds of Muslims from outside the area where a 600-member church meets in West Java staged a protest there in February to call for its closure in an attempt to portray local opposition.

Demonstrators from 16 Islamic organizations, including the hard-line Islamic Defenders Front (IDF), gathered Feb. 15 to demand a stop to all activities by the Galilea Protestant Church in the Galaxy area of Bekasi city. Pastor M. Tetelepta said that church has had the required consent of local residents and official permission to worship since its inception in 1992.

At the Galaxy-area demonstration, IDF Bekasi branch head Murhali Baeda tried to impugn the legal status of the church by telling ANTARA, the official news agency of the Indonesian government, that he was "certain" that "a number of the church buildings" in the area "do not have complete permission."

"This is proved by the large number of posters and banners that are displayed in the alleys and public gathering places rejecting the presence of these (church) buildings," Murhali told ANTARA.

Local organizations represented at the demonstration included the Bekasi Dakwah Council, the Bina An Nisa Dakwah Council of Bekasi and the Galaxy Mosque and Mushola Forum, but Tetelepta said he was sure that 95 percent of the protestors were not local people.

European court censures Turkey over religious ID

ANKARA, Turkey — A European human rights court has condemned Turkey for requiring citizens to specify their religious status on national identity cards.

"This is in breach of the state's duty of neutrality and impartiality, since it leads the State to make an assessment of the applicant's faith," the European Court of Human Rights said in a ruling issued Feb. 2. "Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs has a negative aspect — namely, an individual's right not to be obliged to disclose his or her religion, or to act in a manner that might enable conclusions to be drawn as to whether he or she holds such beliefs."

The case was taken to the court in Strasbourg, France, in 2005 by Sinan Isik, a member of Turkey's Alevi community, after local courts refused to allow him to remove the "Muslim" tag from his national identity document.

The court said the practice violates the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, which upholds "freedom of conscience, thought and religion."

The ruling noted that the Alevi community is "deeply rooted in Turkish society and history" and widely regarded as a faith apart from Islam, which is nominally professed by most of the country's 77 million inhabitants.

Campus News



University of Mobile

► Lecture Series Coming to UM: Eric H. Walther, professor of history at the University of Houston, will deliver a lecture titled "William Lowndes Yancey, the Conventions of 1860, and the Coming of the Civil War" as this year's installment of the University of Mobile's (UM) Billy G. Hinson Lecture Series.

The lecture will be held March 11 at 7 p.m. in Moorer Auditorium on the UM campus.

The event, which includes the lecture, a reception and a book signing, is open to the public.

According to Lonnie Burnett, professor of history at UM and director of the lecture series, this is the first in a series of programs designed to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War. Walther's presentation will examine the role of secessionist William L. Yancey in Alabama politics just prior to the presidential election of 1860 and the subsequent secession movement.

For more information, call Burnett at 251-442-2319.

► **Symphony Orchestra, Guests in Concert:** The University of Mobile (UM) Center for Performing

Arts presents the UM Symphony Orchestra and guests in concert March 9 at 8 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Mobile.

The concert will showcase the 25-member UM Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Randy Davis, assistant professor of music, and the A Cappella Choir, under the direction of Alan Miller, dean of the Center for Performing Arts.

The concert will also feature Robert Holm, associate professor of music at the University of South Alabama in Mobile.

For more information, call 251-442-2420.



Judson College

► Judson's Three-year Program Cited as Model for Other Institutions: Judson College's three-year degree program was recently cited as a worthy model in Masslive.com, a Springfield news site for western Massachusetts.

Judson has offered the three-year program for more than 40 years — an option the site says is especially helpful since it is taking undergraduate students more than six

years to complete degree programs. According to the college catalogue, students can take up to 10 hours during Judson's "short term" in May and June to lighten class loads during the fall and spring semesters or to advance their accumulation of hours needed for graduation, making the three-year option possible.

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► **Judson Equine Team Scores High in Georgia Show:** Judson College equestrians finished well at the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association competition Feb. 6 at Georgia Institute of Technology.

In the first show, the Judson team tied with Berry College in Mount Berry, Ga., for the "High Point Team" award.

In the second show, the team tied with North Georgia College & State University in Dahlonega, Ga., for the "Reserve High Point Team" award.

Among those placing in their classes were Joy Hays, Andrea Luckie, Samantha Marcella, Heather Hodge, Sarah Dunn, Megan Kingsmore, Corey Finlay, Meagan Bennett and Lindy Cowart.



Samford University

► Samford University School of the Arts to Host Concert, Recital:

Samford University school of the arts will present its top student musicians in the annual Concerto-Aria concert, performing solo with the Samford Orchestra. The concert will be held at Wright Center Concert Hall on Samford's campus March 9 at 7:30 p.m. On March 23 at 7:30 p.m., the school will host the faculty voice recital "An Evening of Opera Arias" at Brock Recital Hall.

For more information, call 205-726-2851.

Men's Hall of Fame seeks nominations

The Alabama Men's Hall of Fame is seeking nominations for its 2010 induction class.

The hall of fame recognizes Alabama men who have made significant contributions on a state, national or international level.

All nominees must be native to or closely identified with Alabama and have been deceased for at least two years.

A nomination form and list of all inductees is available at www.samford.edu/groups/amhf/.

Nominations will be reviewed by a selection committee designated by the hall of fame board.

Nominations must be postmarked by March 8, 2010, and mailed to Alabama Men's Hall of Fame, P.O. Box 292307, Samford University, Birmingham, AL 35229.

For more information, contact Annette Green at 205-879-3935. (TAB)

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Many calling on God

Voodoo priest's son leads Haitians to Christ

On a hot afternoon in a crowded, makeshift camp in Port-au-Prince, Jean Junior Cineas sits under a tarp suspended by a broomstick. He shares his faith with five Haitians left homeless after the Jan. 12 earthquake rocked their island nation. Soon all five pray to receive Christ as their Savior.

The irony: Cineas is the son of a voodoo priest.

"It gives me joy to [share Christ]," Cineas said as he moved through the rows of tents. "I love to do that. It is my life."

Cineas, 26, who prefers to go by Junior, has had plenty of opportunities to share his faith since disaster struck. He said voodoo's influence has diminished and many Haitians are now calling on God.

"There are a lot of people who came to Jesus from voodoo ...," Junior said. "I heard that during the earthquake, my father called on Jesus. He said 'Oh Jesus. I know what You can do.' But I wasn't there. I do not know if it's true."

Some Haitians were awed by the power displayed in the earthquake — a power greater than anything they see in voodoo, Junior said. Others are grateful to have survived and want to give their lives to the God who saved them. It is rare for Junior to meet someone who does not want to be prayed for or to hear about his faith.

And much like the apostle Paul, Junior helps disciple those he leads to Christ. He plans to buy five Creole-language Bibles and return to the tent city to teach his five new friends to study God's Word.

The transformation of Junior and many of his countrymen has not come easily, though.

Junior grew up in Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti, in a family immersed in voodoo religion. In Haiti, Voodoo is a mixture of Catholicism and African Traditional Religion and deeply rooted in the culture. Like most voodoo priests, Junior's father has multiple wives and so many children that Junior doesn't know them all. He was alienated from his family early on when his father's wives rejected him and made him live in a peristyle (voodoo temple) in the yard.

Junior grew up not knowing his mother — she died when he was young — but he knew what his future held. He was expected to follow



BP photo

SHARING HIS FAITH — Jean Junior Cineas, a Haitian Baptist and son of a voodoo priest, prays with a woman who lost her home and now lives in a makeshift camp in Pétionville, Haiti, following the Jan. 12 earthquake.

in his father's footsteps and become a voodoo priest.

"I didn't know [all that my father knew about] voodoo — but what I knew, I loved," Junior said.

Much of his childhood revolved around voodoo and learning about its mysticism. But he also learned about the darker, dangerous parts — the belief in the ability to kill people by sending evil spirits.

"If you believe in it, you can understand it," Junior said. "I used to understand it, but now I know Jesus. I know [evil spirits] cannot hurt me now, because I have Jesus."

Junior's future changed at age 16 when an International Mission Board (IMB) representative visited his father's house. The IMB worker told Bible stories, and Junior heard the gospel for the first time. His father did not accept the stories and continued to practice voodoo, but he gave Junior permission to become a Christian.

He began ministering with the IMB representative, helping tell Bible stories to fellow Haitians. Before long, Junior's father changed his mind — he no longer wanted his son to be a Christian. Junior's new faith began causing conflict in his father's house.

"It was very difficult for me," he said. "I prayed for God to take me away from that family."

When his friend returned to the United States, Junior met IMB representatives Mark and Peggy Rutledge in Port-au-Prince — and found a new family. He was able to escape tensions and voodoo activity at home by staying with the Rutledges on weekends. When Junior finished high school, their house became his new home.

"Junior became like our son and a big brother to our girls," said Peggy, referring to daughters Shannon, 14, and Abi, 11. "As he lived with us, we tried to disciple him and show him what a Christian family is all about. We saw so much potential in him. We grew to love him as part of our family."

Junior also learned about living in a home that worships a loving God.

'Exuberance for God'

"He was part of our family Bible studies and often he sat in when we did Bible study with the girls [during their homeschooling]," Peggy said. "He began devouring God's Word. He loved it. And like all of us, he went through rough patches in life, where God was teaching him things that might be difficult. But we kept encouraging him to always go back to God's Word as the plumb line to measure by."

Junior still cares about his Haitian family and wants them to experience Jesus' love the way he does. Still tensions persist.

"I love my father. I really, really love my father. I want him to know Christ," Junior said. "It is really, really difficult. I try to be wise and share Jesus with him, but after a while, he doesn't want to talk to me anymore."

Others in Junior's family have been more receptive. He led a half-sister to Christ last summer and is currently witnessing to another half-sister. And his relationship with his heavenly Father is flourishing. He has a passion for evangelism and is a first-year theology student at Emmaus Biblical Seminary in Cap-Haitien, Haiti.

"He has such an exuberance for God," Peggy said. "He feels called to be an evangelist, and he's so gifted at it. He knows just what to say to people [when sharing his faith]. God really speaks through him." (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

ACLU files suit over USAID's abstinence programs

WASHINGTON — The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has filed suit against the U.S. Agency for International Development for not providing information about "religiously infused" abstinence programs the agency has funded.

The lawsuit, which was filed Feb. 18, follows a report last July from USAID's inspector general that found "some USAID funds were used for religious activities" during 2006 and 2007.

According to its complaint, the ACLU twice filed requests under the Freedom of Information Act seeking documents related to programs that promoted sexual abstinence. USAID acknowledged receiving the requests but never responded by sending the requested documents. The inspector general report said USAID funded an abstinence program for HIV/AIDS prevention for African youth whose curriculum included Psalm 119:9 as a Bible memory verse. "God has a plan for sex and this plan will help you and protect you from harm," the curriculum said.

ACLU spokesman Will Matthews said Wednesday the ACLU had not yet received a response to its suit from USAID.

When the inspector general report was released, a USAID spokesperson said its results are "not supported by the facts and is an unsupported legal conclusion regarding the constitutional requirement of separation of church and state."

Group says U.S. policy hampered by secular bias

WASHINGTON — The United States' foreign policy is hampered by a secular bias that causes policymakers to underestimate the role of religion in world affairs, a Midwestern think tank said in a 100-page report released Feb. 23.

A task force convened by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs recommended engaging religious communities instead of "an uncompromising secular political alternative" that now characterizes the United States' approach to international affairs.

The 32-member task force said ignorance about religion is a blind spot that inhibits "smart thinking" about U.S. decisions concerning foreign aid, building relationships with nations and tackling multi-national challenges like climate change, fighting disease and advancing human rights.

The task force said the influence of religious groups is growing in many parts of the world, affecting virtually all sectors of society from politics and culture to business and science. Since 9/11, however, U.S. foreign policy has viewed religion as a problem in the area of terrorism and not as a potential source of creativity, inspiration and commitment to resolve conflict.

"Many people are lost. This makes me sad. I want to evangelize."

**Jean Junior Cineas
Haitian Baptist**



Photo courtesy of Samford University

SAMFORD STUDENTS RAISE MONEY FOR HAITI

Samford University students Lauren Barry (left) and Matt Fennell were among performers at a Hope for Haiti benefit concert Feb. 4. Students and others crowded into Harry's coffee house in Beeson University Center to raise \$1,560 for the disaster relief fund of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.