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Who has authority?

AG King, Gov. Riley go head-to-head for control of task force on illegal gambling

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

Hours after Attorney General Troy King announced he would take over Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling, two of the state's largest slot machine casinos publicized they would reopen.

But when Riley and task force Commander John Tyson refused to hand over the reins, gambling operators at Houston County's Country Crossing and Lowndes County's White Hall Entertainment Center decided they wouldn't take the chance of facing a raid. White Hall officials said they still plan to reopen at some point.

Country Crossing's attorney Will Matthews told the *Dothan Eagle*, "My advice to our clients was that I thought we could open with Troy King superintending the task force and firing John Tyson." He added if King has Tyson removed, then "we're back in business."

Jeff Emerson, communications director for Riley, said, "It's clear to see the casino bosses are pulling hard for Troy King to win. ... They've admitted it. Not even Troy King can deny that."

Although King said he planned to "bring order" to the "chaos" caused by the task force's raids and legal investigations, Riley said King's announcement almost immediately led to "expanded gambling" with a "promise of protection" for "casino bosses."

Attempt to call off raids

In his March 22 announcement, King said he wrote letters to Emory Folmar, administrator of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, and Col. Christopher Murphy, director of the Department of Public Safety, advising them to "refrain from conducting additional raids until further notice."

King said he had appointed Montgomery attorney J. Douglas McElvy as lead lawyer for the state.

Folmar and Murphy told King he had no authority to call off their law enforcement efforts. "In fulfilling our oaths to uphold Alabama's laws, we cannot and will not agree to pledge not

to enforce the law, including Alabama's laws against illegal slot machine gambling. Any facility that engages in illegal slot machine gambling is subject to law enforcement, and those facilities should not expect our agencies to adhere to the 'moratorium' you suggest. No criminal is entitled to engage in criminal activity while a civil declaratory judgment proceeding winds its way through the courts."

'In conformity'

Riley agreed. "The attorney general has no authority to tell the Task Force on Illegal Gambling what to do," he said in a March 23 news conference.

"I created the task force as a working group of executive branch agencies and officials to ensure the laws against slot machines are enforced. All of my actions and appointments have been in conformity with the constitutional and statutory authority of the governor."

Riley said King's statements "amount to a power grab."

"I will vigorously defend the authority of the office of the governor, and I suspect that these issues will ultimately be decided by the Alabama Supreme Court," Riley said.

Tyson said the Supreme Court already seems to be positioning itself to discuss the power of the governor and the authority of the attorney general. On March 25, the High Court refused to dismiss the task force's appeal of a recent Circuit Court ruling giving King authority to represent the state in its gambling cases.

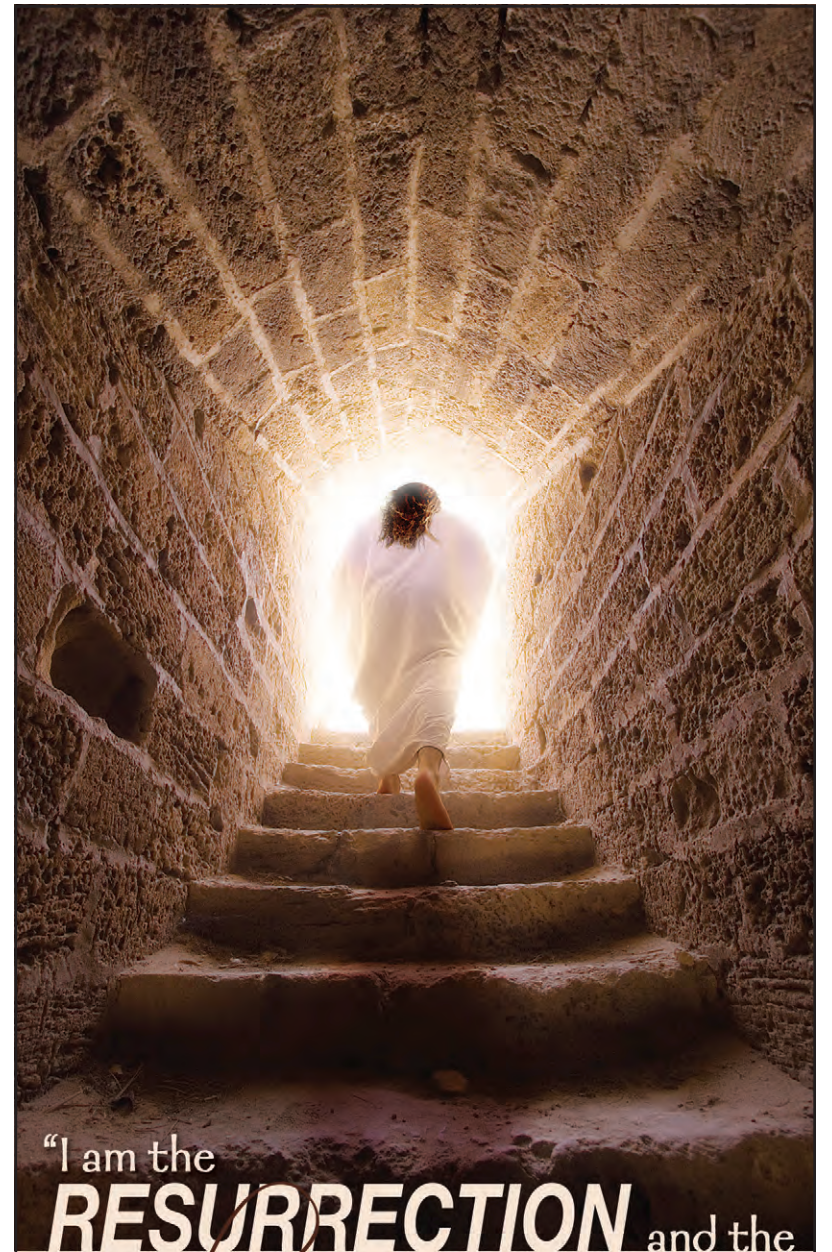
A dismissal of the task force appeal could have implied the justices thought King should take over the task force, which the governor's office believes would lead to expanded gambling around the state.

(See 'Tyson,' page 7)

Social networking adds momentum to GPS

The community prayer walks and door-to-door visits that define the God's Plan for Sharing (GPS): Across North America evangelism campaign make it an intensely local effort in one sense. But online social networking makes it feel as if Southern Baptists are all in it together.

Across North America includes a coordinated advertising campaign that began in most areas March 15. Most of the ground activity began the weekend of March 20 with prayer



"I am the **RESURRECTION** and the

life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

— John 11:25b-26a

walking and March 27 with door-to-door distribution of Find it Here materials inviting people to Easter services at Southern Baptist churches across the continent.

For Across Alabama, the story is no different.

"Larry Roberts has joined with others from Bethel to pray for over 600 family dwellings in our community," Roberts, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Newton, posted on his Facebook page March 20.

Just a few days prior, he used the same outlet to remind his Facebook network and Dale Baptist Association church of the prayer-walk/drive event and the importance of praying for Easter services just around the bend.

"Our little church of Fourmile has already prayed over our area, and our bags are packed and ready to be delivered," Renee' Jones Wilder, a member of Fourmile Baptist Church, Wilsonville, in Shelby Baptist Association, (See 'Alabama,' page 4)

COMMENT

The Bloom Is Off Gambling's Rose

With one word, the commander of the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling took the bloom off the rose gamblers are trying to sell to Alabama. That word was "corruption."

Speaking to a Birmingham service club March 23, John Tyson said corruption is the biggest threat facing Alabama today. He specifically pointed to "casino operators who openly defy the law thinking they can be protected by the influence they wield with public officials."

Recent revelations have made Tyson's charge believable. Citing the tax records of former Birmingham Mayor Larry Langford, *The Birmingham News* reported March 3 that Langford won 555 slot machine jackpots during 2006, 2007 and 2008. His total winnings came to at least \$1.5 million.

He won 36 jackpots in one night — Feb. 9, 2008. Such miraculous "luck" is beyond belief. Mathematically the odds of hitting so many jackpots are astronomical. Perhaps that is why a recently filed civil lawsuit against VictoryLand, Alabama's largest casino located in Macon County, and its owner, Milton McGregor, seems believable to many. In the suit, Michael Knowles, a VictoryLand security guard, testified that VictoryLand staff escorted Langford to certain slot machines that had been rigged for his benefit.

VictoryLand attorneys called the charges "frivolous" when they were first made. But since Langford's winnings — as reported on his income tax returns — were made public, the lawyers have been strangely silent.

'Almost no limit to the corruption'

Now when Tyson says, "When a public official can walk into a casino, sit down at a hand-picked machine and walk out with tens of thousands of dollars and over \$1 million over time, it becomes clear that there is almost no limit to the corruption that the casino syndicate is capable of," people respond with an understanding look.

Langford's relationship to McGregor, Alabama's gambling czar and a frequent contributor to the former mayor's many political campaigns, may be Exhibit A in Tyson's charge of corruption, but it certainly is not the only example.

Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb had to remove a judge from a White Hall gambling case after it became public that the judge had ties to the gambling industry.

Unfortunately the judge who was removed had already rendered a decision protecting the White Hall casino from further raids by the task force. That ruling was overturned.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

People who follow gambling activities closely say there is a small cadre of legislators, judges and attorneys in the state whose names surface again and again on gambling activities. And Tyson ticks off a list of questionable deals in which family members of local officials in Houston County reportedly have jobs or contracts with casino operations in the area.

Their protection is 'a serious problem'

"When casino operators who openly defy the law can be protected by the influence they wield with public officials, we have a serious problem in Alabama," Tyson said. And we do.

That point was illustrated March 22–23. First Attorney General Troy King announced that he was taking over the task force and that Tyson could return to his duties as district attorney for Mobile County. He also demanded that all the evidence Tyson had seized in his raids on illegal gambling activities across the state be turned over to the attorney general's office.

Within hours, casinos shut down by the task force and others, including Country Crossing in Houston County and White Hall in Lowndes County, announced they would reopen.

But when Gov. Bob Riley pushed back, saying he alone had executive authority and that Tyson would continue to lead the task force, the casinos quickly changed their minds and stayed closed.

Riley pulled no punches with the attorney general. He said, "The actions of the attorney general have already had the effect of increasing, not decreasing, illegal gambling in the state."

He added, "Although the attorney general says that he is against gambling in Alabama, he was presented in 2004 with a letter from the federal government that stated that there was illegal gambling taking place in Alabama. If the attorney general had done his job then, we never would have had this explosion of slot machines that we now have to deal with."

It is a sad day for Alabama when the attorney general refuses to enforce the state's criminal code regarding illegal gambling. Is it any wonder that some observers are asking if King is the mysterious source that Country Crossing owner Ronnie Gilley refuses to name as the "state official" who called

him in 2007 suggesting electronic bingo gambling could pay for his projected entertainment center?

Meanwhile McGregor continues to operate as if immune from the ruckus over illegal gambling. His influence is seen in the state Legislature, where another massive gambling bill is on the horizon. When the first effort to expand gambling in the state, Senate Bill 380, failed earlier in the session, sponsor Roger Bedford promised the bill would not come back. But with a slight of hand, a tweaked version of Bedford's bill is back. It is back because of McGregor's pervasive influence. Whether it will pass is still in doubt.

But observers are beginning to ask if the civil suit against him and the revelation about possible criminal activity related to Langford will bring McGregor and his empire down like a civil suit brought down former HealthSouth CEO Richard Scrushy's house of cards.

And if McGregor falls because of alleged activities with Langford and back taxes on his gambling income since his slot machines did not meet the Supreme Court's definition of bingo, then how many others will fall with him? Will there be other revelations of corruption, of influence peddling, of pay-for-play schemes?

Corruption. Gambling. The two are inseparably linked, and that certainly takes the bloom off gambling's rose.

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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Letters to the Editor

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Someone You Should Know

By Kristen Padilla, The Alabama Baptist

Justin Lesley

Bethel Baptist Church, Odenville
St. Clair Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Romans 10:9
FAVORITE HYMN: "It Is Well With My Soul"

HOBBIES: Golf and disc golf
FAMILY STATUS: Single



LESLEY

Justin Lesley, a 21-year-old senior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham studying biomedical engineering, is a leader in his collegiate ministry — The Campus House Christian Student Center — during the week and in his church — Bethel Baptist in Odenville — on the weekends.

Q: In what ways are you involved in ministry?

A: I teach eighth-grade boys Sunday School at my church. While I'm at school, I'm involved in my campus ministry. I lead a Bible study and help with all the activities in my collegiate ministry.

Q: What do these ministries demand?

A: Preparation, obviously, for Bible studies. With The Campus House, it takes more of my time physically. I'm the groundskeeper for The Campus House, and I do all the cleaning and groundwork.

Q: What do you get from these ministries?

A: I get the satisfaction of furthering the Kingdom, and I get the blessings of seeing people learn more and seeing God work. I hope to be a good example to the younger guys. I'm just trying to do my part.

Q: As a college student, why is it important to be active in church and in church leadership?

A: Because there is so much else available to draw your attention away. I feel like it is much easier to stay involved and stay studious biblically. It's very beneficial to have responsibility to give you accountability.

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

A: It shapes my choices in everyday life, knowing that this life isn't all I have to live for. Knowing that the almighty Creator is looking out for me and wants the best for me gives me confidence and strengthens my desire to do my best in everything I do.

Executive Committee study challenges GCR Task Force recommendation

Information about the history of Cooperative Program (CP) promotion and stewardship education provided to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) contradicts a basic premise of one of the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force interim report proposals released Feb. 22.

The historical review, conveyed in a white paper (official document) by Roger S. "Sing" Oldham, vice president for convention relations with the SBC Executive Committee, specifically addressed "Component 4" in the GCR Task Force progress report.

That particular component of the report recommended "to move the ministry assignments of Cooperative Program and stewardship education from the Executive Committee" and "return" them to each state convention.

The proposal also called for state conventions to "reassume" their primary role in these assignments.

Omitted part is 'fascinating'

The GCR Task Force proposal stated that Southern Baptists "have struggled with where to place both of these assignments (CP promotion and stewardship education) in order to serve our churches most effectively."

The GCR Task Force proposal also referred to the "1930 minutes of the Executive Committee," saying that the 1929 Cooperative Program Commission placed responsibility for "promoting" and "gathering funds" with the states.

However, Oldham, in a white paper dated March 12, noted that contrary to the GCR Task Force assertion, the record shows Southern Baptists have been clear from the beginning that responsibility was intentionally vested at each level of cooperation — local association and state and national conventions.

They also have been clear that they intended for the national convention to represent the interests of national causes in the cooperative effort, while aiding state conventions and local associations with material support.

In an interview with Baptist Press (BP),

Oldham said the GCR Task Force information relating to its "Component 4" told only "a part of the story."

"It's the part that is omitted that is so fascinating," he said.

"Over the past few weeks, I revised my first submission as I reread the more than 100 pages of Executive Committee minutes from 1927 through 1931, as well as the entire proceedings of the SBC annual meetings beginning in 1923 into the 1930s," Oldham said.

"While it is true that the SBC and the states have always maintained a collaborative relationship in Cooperative Program promotion, at no time has the SBC failed to fulfill its spiritual obligation to promote funding for its own ministries," he continued.

Oldham's paper includes timelines showing a continuum from 1925 (conception of the Cooperative Program) through the present that indicate the ministry assignments for CP and stewardship promotion "have always been entrusted to an SBC committee or commission."

Oldham also said although at the national level these responsibilities have shifted among entities, "there has never been a time these two ministries were not assigned to and conducted under the watch of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Peril of competition

Oldham explained that the pastors who crafted the language of the early reports about cooperation "were very wise" in that they recognized the peril of competition that could threaten cooperation without the formalizing of mutual responsibilities among local associations and state and national conventions.

"They recognized that 'no Baptist body

has authority over any other,'" he said, "They affirmed that 'there can be no question of dictation on either side.'"

Providing for CP promotion

Moreover, he said, the drafters of the early reports were aware of the frustrations that would strain relationships if the SBC attempted to dictate an unfunded mandate from the national convention to the states to raise money for national ministries.

"From 1925 to the present, the convention has never failed to exercise its responsibility to provide seed money to and through an SBC committee or commission for the promotion of its ministries," he told BP, citing from his paper.

"The convention has always spent its own money to promote the Cooperative Program," he said.

Oldham also said although "the SBC has always encouraged the states to assist in raising funds for both state causes and convention causes," the SBC has never "tried to impose on the states" the responsibility to raise money for national entities nor bear the costs alone.

"From the beginning," Oldham noted, "they made provision for the states to deduct the costs associated with promoting the whole Cooperative Program before the states made the state/national split with the convention.

"In fact, in the Sept. 10, 1930, minutes of the Executive Committee, the committee 'respectfully suggested' that each state name or employ a full-time stewardship and budget secretary to assist the states in this task," he said.

"Of course, they reaffirmed that all administrative costs associated with promoting the national portion of the CP were to be deducted before the state/SBC split," Oldham said. (BP)



The GCR Task Force information relating to its Component 4 tells only "a part of the story."

Roger S. "Sing" Oldham
Vice president for convention relations with the SBC EC

Cordle retires from financial role at The Alabama Baptist

Maxine Cordle grew up in a Baptist preacher's home. When she wasn't there, she was sitting at the piano or organ in a small Alabama Baptist church.

Every now and then, she'd move to a different one in a different part of the state, but the story was always the same.

"I loved it. And I got to know so many different people in different churches in different parts of the state," she said.

So when Cordle came to work at *The Alabama Baptist* in 1999, it was like coming home to a place where everybody knows everybody.

"I felt like this is where I could serve the Lord and serve Baptists while using my gifts — that's what made this place unique," she said.

And after 11 years of serving as financial administrator for the state Baptist newspaper, Cordle decided it was time to retire, effective March 31.

"Maxine has managed the financial area

of *The Alabama Baptist* with the utmost credibility and professional ethics," said Bob Terry, president and publisher of *The Alabama Baptist*.

"Under her leadership, our financial integrity at the paper has been flawless. We have had clean audits each year with no management letter, and for that, we are thankful for Maxine and her leadership in this area."

Bob Forbus, chairman of the newspaper's board of directors, agreed.

"She has my utmost respect for the way she has handled her work," he said. "She is very professional in her dealings with the board — with anyone. And she is so knowledgeable about all facets of the operation that there is never any question about her advice."



CORDLE



DUNLAP

Cordle, a member of First Baptist Church, Jasper, and occasional organist for other churches in the Jasper area, said she plans to travel and do volunteer work now that she's no longer at the paper.

"I plan to keep serving," Cordle said.

Coming along behind her April 1 as the new financial administrator is Bethany Dunlap, who previously worked in payroll/human resources, accounting and project administration at Myrick, Gurosky & Associates Inc. in Hoover for 12 years.

Dunlap holds a bachelor of science degree in business administration/management from Samford University in Birmingham. She is a member of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover. (TAB)

Spain crowned new Miss UMobile, preparing for state competition

Sarah Becky Spain, of Huntsville, was crowned Miss University of Mobile (UMobile) 2010 on Feb. 6.

She will compete in the Miss Alabama Pageant June 9–12 in Birmingham. The winner of Miss Alabama will go on to compete for the title of Miss America 2010.

As Miss UMobile 2010, Spain will promote her platform, Honoring Veterans. As an ambassador for Honor Flight Network, Spain said she would work to “help bridge the gap between generations of Americans by concentrating on educating children, supporting families and recognizing veterans.”

‘Such a blessing’

The daughter of Kenny and Jerrie Spain is a junior majoring in early childhood and elementary education, with a minor in music. She is a member of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

“It is such a blessing to serve as Miss University of Mobile 2010. Both my family and my church have been my core support system throughout my life, and I know that they will continue to be throughout this new experience. I look forward to the opportunities that will arise this year as I represent my university, promote my platform and participate in the Miss Alabama Pageant,” Spain said.

As Miss UMobile, Spain will par-



Photo courtesy of UMobile

HONORED — Sarah Becky Spain (center) stands with her parents, Kenny and Jerrie Spain, after she is crowned Miss UMobile 2010.

ticipate in alumni activities, dedications, receptions, various community and student events and serve as the official hostess of the university.

Other winners at the pageant include Paige McCauley, first runner-

up; Rebekah Clements, second runner-up; Rebekah Dearborn, Miss Congeniality and swimsuit winner; Elyn Collier, talent winner; and Kristin Oliver, People’s Choice. (UMobile)

Alabama Baptists share GPS stories, reminders online

(continued from page 1)
reported March 24 on *The Alabama Baptist* Facebook fan page.

Never before have people had the opportunity of sharing their experiences so broadly in real time in conjunction with a coordinated campaign that includes more than 25,000 television ads, more than 7,000 radio spots, print ads, billboards, yard signs and banners, as well as 17 million pieces of literature to be distributed to households across the continent.

The Find It Here Facebook fan page has garnered more than 1,000 “fans” and offers sharable links to www.FindItHere.com as well as encouragement and support for volunteers.

Twitter also allows Southern Baptists a chance to link “followers” to the Find It Here Web site — in 140 characters or less.

“Join us in praying that God uses the Across Alabama effort for a great harvest!” the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (@alsbom) encouraged its Twitter followers.

Pastors are also using Twitter to offer encouragement to their members.

“Across Alabama GPS initiative is not for bringing people to church. It is about bringing them to JESUS,” wrote Mark Wood

(@markwood40), pastor of First Baptist Church, Fultondale.

Denny McClendon (@den-nymcclendon), pastor of Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Horton, told his Twitter followers, “The world knows what Southern Baptists are against. Across Alabama [is] the opportunity to share with them what we are for — Jesus Christ.”

To spur even more discussion, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) is inviting people to share their experiences at www.namb.net/GPSstories.

Join the conversation

Posts can be conventional written stories, or users can pull out their mobile phone or Web cam to create a video report.

“It’s easier than ever for Southern Baptists to join the conversation about our shared mission, and we just thought this would be a good opportunity to see if we could help make that happen,” said Mike Ebert, team leader for communications at NAMB.

A Google map showing locations of published stories also is featured on the NAMB site.

The Alabama Baptist is taking updates on its Facebook fan page (*The Alabama Baptist* newspaper) and Twitter (@alabamabaptist). (BP, TAB)



GETTING OUT — Like thousands of others across Alabama and North America, McGehee Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, members Mary Jernigan (above, left) and Nelma Ausley (above, right), as well as Sandi Faulkner (at right, center) and Kathryn (at right, right) and Haylee Murks (at right, left), daughters of Pastor Greg Murks, gathered in their neighborhoods March 20 to prayer walk and drive. The day of prayer walking was the first leg of Across Alabama, the local thrust of the North American Mission Board’s 10-year evangelism initiative God’s Plan for Sharing (GPS). This event was followed by gospel distribution throughout the neighborhoods March 27, inviting residents to evangelistic Easter services April 4.

GPS: Across Alabama

A DAY OF PRAYER WALKING



Photos by Doug Rogers

Tickling the ivories

99-year-old Eileen Fulton still ministers through piano recitals with daughter

By **Jeremy Henderson**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Eileen Fulton — Grand Darlin' to most — is mostly blind from macular degeneration and can't really hear, but she only lets Charlotte cancel their piano recitals for the serious stuff.

"She's had a heart attack since we had our last recital, and she had a stroke [a few weeks ago]," said Charlotte Walker, Fulton's daughter. "She won't go to the hospital, just wants me to take care of her. I'm an RN so that helps. She just wants to go to heaven from here. I'm just honoring her request."

And in the meantime, she — along with Fulton — is taking requests. At the last performance, someone wanted "Whistle While You Work."

Mother, 99, and daughter, 74, obliged.

'We've had a good time'

For the past two years, the two women, both of whom belong to (but do not regularly attend because of Fulton's health) Hopewell Baptist Church, have been entertaining guests in their Tuscaloosa home with duet versions of classic hymns, classic Disney songs and just plain classics like "The Entertainer."

They've performed 16 recitals on the back-to-back baby grand pianos in their living room.

"We've had a good time, and it turned into a ministry," Walker

said. "We've had over 260 people come in small groups to hear us."

Pat Garyotis, a member of Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, is a regular.

"It's wonderful," Garyotis said. "This lady is 99 years old, and she can't see out of one eye, and she can't hear one note. When I was there, they didn't have to start over or anything."

Fulton, who taught piano into her 70s, counts off and plays the songs mostly by memory; Walker keeps pace and handles the harmony.

"I give her the hardest parts," Walker said, laughing. "She's a spirited lady but [playing] gave her more zest for life. She says it doesn't hurt when she concentrates."

And she does concentrate.

"I couldn't believe this spry little lady could be playing the piano like she was," Garyotis said. "Of course, Charlotte is a good musician herself."

Walker spent 21 years in the African missions field with her husband, Jimmy, who served as pastor of several churches across Alabama after the couple returned to the United States in the early 1980s. They moved to Tuscaloosa to help take care of Fulton in 1991.

He passed away in 2005.

The recitals are her way of continuing God's work, Walker said.

"We've tried to invite people who don't get much entertainment, who don't get out," she said. "We've



Photo courtesy of *The Tuscaloosa News*


DOING IT TOGETHER — Eileen Fulton (left) sits with her daughter, Charlotte Walker, beside one of the two pianos in the living room of their home Feb. 6 after performing for family and friends.

had quite an assortment. Some from the nursing home. I went to pick up some to bring them to our house. Some that can't see very well. Some that are new widows.

Some with husbands that have very serious chronic health problems.

Fulton has chronic health problems of her own.

"But she just laughs," Walker

said. "After [her last stroke] was over, she said, 'I told the Lord I can't come now. Charlotte doesn't have anyone to play the piano with her.'" 

Samford's Old Howard 100 Bike Ride set for April 17 at Judson College

The sixth annual Old Howard 100 Bike Ride will bring bicyclists from throughout the U.S. to three counties in Alabama's Black Belt on April 17.

The ride, sponsored by Samford University's Howard College of Arts and Sciences, will begin and end at Judson College in Marion. Routes of 30, 45, 75 or 100 miles through picturesque countryside are available. All riders will start at 9 a.m.

The 100-mile route goes from downtown Marion through the Perry County countryside into Hale County and Greensboro, back to Marion, south to the Perry Lakes wetlands region and to Selma in Dallas County before returning to Marion.

Support and gear rest stops will be at five historic sites: Auburn University's Rural Studio project in Newbern, Magnolia Grove in Greensboro, Holmstead Plantation

in Folsom, a site in Suttle and First Baptist Church, Selma.

Proceeds from the ride will benefit Sowing Seeds of Hope, a ministry that seeks to improve the quality of life and work in Perry County through improved education opportunities, health care, tourism, transportation and economic development. Since the first ride in 2005, more than \$13,000 has been raised.

The Old Howard 100 celebrates the rich history of Samford and the Perry County area, where the school was founded as Howard College in Marion in 1841. The school moved to the East Lake area of Birmingham in 1881 and to its present location in Homewood in 1957.

For information and registration, call 205-726-2229 or visit www.samford.edu/oldhoward. (SU)

Former pastor Howard Williams dies at 77

Former Alabama Baptist pastor and associational worker Howard W. Williams died Feb. 7. He was 77.

Williams served as pastor of Klein Baptist Church, Harpersville, in Shelby Baptist Association and Happy Home Baptist Church, Leeds; Cook Springs Baptist Church; Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Pell City;

and Prescott Baptist Church, Pell City, all in St. Clair Baptist Association.

He also worked with St. Clair Association's Camp Sonshine.

Williams was an Army veteran who served during the Korean War.

He is survived by his wife, Jettie; four children; and seven grandchildren. (TAB)

Pianists, organists getting harder to find; keyboard festival encourages more

Hey, church pianists and organists, do you happen to know just how unique you are?

Music ministers statewide agree that finding good church pianists and especially organists is not an easy job anymore.

"An organist is next to impossible to find," said Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). "It's like you're a specialty item. You can almost name your own ticket anywhere anybody needs one."

Rick Willis, music minister for 25 years at Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden, said, "If you're a [church] that uses piano and has a pianist play congregational music, the good ones are getting fewer and fewer and harder and harder to find."

Fewer people taking lessons

"It's getting harder and harder to find people that can just come in and play a variety of music and can do it well," he said. "I've heard this all over the state."

But according to Hibbs, the reason is simple.

"There are fewer people taking piano lessons than when I was growing up," he said.

Willis agreed.

"It concerns me even in our own church," he said. "We have just a few (youth) that are even taking piano lessons. That's kind of sad because of course, you can pretty much do a whole worship service and have your whole services prerecorded, and we do a lot of that. But I still like live music."

'Use their talent'

The SBOM is concerned enough about live worship music to hold an annual keyboard festival each November in locations all over Alabama.

Participants, who range from school age to young adult, play hymns, scales and other things typically studied with a piano teacher for a judge who gives them feedback.

"It's not a competition. It's an encouragement ... if they're taking piano to use their talent in a worship setting in a local church," Hibbs said.

For more information about the festival, visit www.alsbom.org or call 1-800-264-1225. (TAB)

Across Alabama's Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► **Cary Hughes** is the new youth minister for **Berney Points Church, Hoover**. He is a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton and is currently pursuing a master of divinity from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He is engaged to Laura Parsons. Anton Fourie is pastor. ► **E.J. Waldron** is the new ministry coordinator for **Berney Points Church, Hoover**. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University, master's degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, master of divinity with a concentration in apologetics and theology from Liberty Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va., and will be pursuing a doctor of philosophy in higher education administration soon. Anton Fourie is pastor. ► **First Church, Overton, in Irondale**, will hold an Easter egg hunt for ages 3-10 April 3, 2 p.m. The church also will hold a "Sonrise" service April 4, 7 a.m. Morning worship will be at 10:30 a.m. Jimmy Ray is pastor. ► Members and friends of the former **South Avondale Church, Birmingham**, will hold a reunion April 24, 11 a.m., at First Church, Irondale. Sack



HUGHES

lunches will be served. For reservations call Fannie Daniel at 205-956-5407 or e-mail LaVelle Wright at lavellemw@charter.net.

CLEBURNE

► **Heflin Church** will hold a grief recovery support group led by Ted and Nora Embry Tuesdays, 6 p.m., during April and May. For information call 256-463-2576 or visit www.heflinbaptist.org. Philip R. Morris is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **First Church, Russellville**, will hold a special Easter service April 4, 10:30 a.m., with Grammy and Dove Award-winning musicians Dick and Mel Tunney. A nursery will be provided. Barry Holcomb is pastor.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold a luncheon meeting April 13, 11 a.m., with guest speaker David Grier. Grier also will provide special music. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by April 8. Mike Shirah is pastor. ► **Union Church, Hartford**, will present the Easter musical "Our God Reigns" April 4, 6 p.m. Carolyn Watford is minister of music. John Johnson is pastor.



WALDRON

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will hold a special Easter celebration with Squire Parsons

April 4, 11 a.m. For information contact Pastor Mike Clark at 256-420-8172 or mhbc@ardmore.net.

WINSTON

► **Winston Association** will hold a music festival April 25, 6 p.m., at First Church, Arley. The worship celebration will include choirs from different churches. Roger Houston is pastor of First, Arley. Phil Guinn is music director for Winston Association. The association also will hold Vacation Bible School clinics April 27, 6:30 p.m., at Meek Church, Arley, and April 29, 6:30 p.m., at First Church, Double Springs. The training is for all VBS workers using the theme Saddle Ridge Ranch. Richard D. Welch is pastor of Meek. John A. Whaley is pastor of First, Double Springs. Al Hood is director of missions.

OTHER

► **First Church, Mobile**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary at its location on Government Street April 18, 11 a.m. There will be an opening of the cornerstone on the front steps of the sanctuary at noon. Lunch will be at 12:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Bedsole Chapel (Admiral Semmes' home) and the archive displays will remain open following lunch. For lunch reservations call 251-432-6513 by April 9. Chris George is pastor.

Young adults trending pro-life

Young adults ages 18-29 were once among the top supporters of legalized abortion. But now they are its leading opponents when compared to other age groups, ac-

ording to a Gallup analysis of survey trends since the 1973 landmark Roe v. Wade decision.

Gallup examined the views on abortion of four age groups and found that in an average of polls from 2005 to 2009, 23 percent of young adults believed that abortion should be "illegal in all circumstances."

That's an increase of five points from the period of 1975-1979 and nine points from 1990 to 1994. The 23 percent figure tops all age groups, ahead of those ages 65 and older (21 percent) and those ages 30-49 and 50-64 (both of which are at 17 percent).

Opposition to abortion is "growing fastest among young adults," Gallup said in its analysis. Gallup's Lydia Saad wrote that "18- to 29-year-olds are now roughly tied with seniors as the most likely of all age groups to hold this position on abortion — although all four groups are fairly close in their views.

"This is a sharp change from the late 1970s, when seniors were substantially more likely than younger age groups to want abortion to be illegal," she wrote.

Of the four age groups, 18- to 29-year-olds were the only ones to see a decline (although slight) in total support for abortion rights since the mid to late 1970s. (BP)



Photo courtesy of Centreville Baptist Church

CENTREVILLE BAPTIST HOLDS WILD GAME SUPPER

More than 300 people attended the annual Centreville Baptist Wild Game Supper in February. Shown here are (l to r) Mike Pierson, Shirley and James Burnett and Jacki and Chuck Farley. Ken Fuller is pastor of Centreville Baptist.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Calvary college students give big to help missionary

When Moses asked the Israelites to give and give and give to build God's tabernacle (Ex. 35-36), they gave until he told them, "Stop; you've given too much," explained Chris Brooks, college minister at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, in Tuscaloosa Baptist Association.

So he passed the challenge to give along to his students, asking them to raise \$9,000 to help support College Ministry Associate Lindsey Lee, who is moving with her husband, Ben, to serve a San Francisco church plant, Epic Church.

Brooks said at the same time he was praying for his students to literally step up to the plate, he was making "just-in-case" plans to pull \$4,500 from the college ministry's missions budget to make up for what they lacked.

"But I still laid the smack down and asked them to give," Brooks said.

He told the students if they didn't know where to start, then they should go to their closet and look at the most expensive shoes they own — "That's how much you should give."

When it came time to collect Feb. 3, the students didn't give \$9,000.

They gave \$16,297.

They gave some Chick-fil-A coupons, American Eagle Outfitters gift cards and even some euros.

Some students pledged their entire summer's paycheck.

"So when we added the \$4,500 we were already planning to give just to meet our goal, we wrote a check to Lindsey Lee for \$20,797," Brooks said, "I was able to stand up in front of 600 to 700 college students and say, 'You gave too much. It's too much.'"

He remembers when he went into college ministry, people told him, "College students don't pay and don't stay."

"It's great to know just the opposite is true. They will give and they will go," Brooks said, noting two of his students who recently graduated have already moved to San Francisco to help with Epic.

He plans for the college ministry to continue to partner with the church plant.

Tim Lovett is senior pastor of Calvary Baptist.

FBC Jasper's Powell honored for senior adult work

Charles W. Powell served as senior adult pastor of First Baptist Church, Jasper, in Walker Baptist Association for 17 years before retiring in 2001. And he's been a member of the Association of Baptist Ministries With the Aging (ABMA) even longer.

For his longtime church and associational work with senior adults, Powell received the Adkins-Kerr Award during the ABMA annual meeting Feb. 21-23 in Phoenix. He said he was "very honored" to be nominated by his peers in the ABMA and selected by its board of directors to receive the award.

"It's something you never expect but it's very rewarding," Powell said.

A graduate of Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Powell served as a consultant in senior adult ministry for the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) and led senior adult conferences across Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina.

Before serving as senior adult pastor of First, Jasper, Powell spent 13 years as the church's minister of education. He previously served in similar roles at Gardendale's First Baptist Church in North Jefferson Baptist Association and First Baptist Church, Hapeville, Ga.

Powell currently serves as president of J.O.Y. (Just Older Youth) at First, Jasper, visiting the homebound and those in hospitals and nursing homes.



POWELL

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Legislation on moral issues stalled at Statehouse

By **Sondra Washington**
The Alabama Baptist

Whether to expand gambling in the state is not the only moral issue facing Alabama's legislators this session. But with so much energy dedicated to attempting to legitimize illegal slot machines, bills dealing with alcohol, abortion, same-sex "marriage" and tobacco are flying below the radar.

"So far, I'm tracking about 129 different bills that deal with moral issues," said Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program. "There are a lot of good bills that are not getting passed. ... Those things are being kept in committees, while pro-gambling and pro-alcohol bills are getting out of committee and tying up the House and Senate. It's time for people to call their legislators and say, 'Stop what you are doing. No more gambling or alcohol expansion bills.'"

Although Godfrey said alcohol bills are not usually pushed as aggressively during legislative sessions that fall within election years,

17 bills dealing with alcohol have been filed this year.

Alcohol

One of those bills is House Bill (HB) 565, sponsored by Rep. Chris England, D-Tuscaloosa, which would allow voters to authorize Sunday liquor sales in Tuscaloosa. It was passed by both houses and awaits Gov. Bob Riley's approval or veto.

Senate Bill (SB) 98, sponsored by Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, was passed by the Senate but immediately pulled by Bedford to make a technical change. It would remove the "fortified wine" definition applied to beverages with an alcohol content between 16.5 percent and 24 percent, allowing it to be sold anywhere regular table wine is sold. Currently this type of wine is sold only in ABC (Alcohol Beverage Control) liquor stores. Godfrey believes such a law would be dangerous for young people because it would give them greater access to more potent alcohol.

"They (alcohol supporters) want

more days that alcohol can be sold," he said. "They want more locations where it's sold. They want higher alcohol contents. They are always wanting more because they stand to make more and more money at a faster rate. They don't care about the destroyed lives and broken homes that come as a result of the use of alcoholic beverages. ... Somebody needs to call them into account."

Several legislators have sponsored what Godfrey calls "family-friendly" legislation, but most of it has been placed in committees where the bills are "dying a slow death."

Abortion

Rep. Robert Bentley, R-Tuscaloosa, sponsored several abortion-related bills at the beginning of this year's session but none have moved. HB 40 proposes a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion except in extreme cases "where the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother or where there is rape or incest."

He also filed HB 41 seeking to

protect health care professionals from taking part in any medical procedure or service that violates their conscience and a resolution opposing the Freedom of Choice Act.

"The reason these pro-life bills are not going anywhere is because too many Alabama state legislators are not willing to push them through or let them out of committee," Godfrey said.

Like Rep. Bentley, Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, and Sen. Hank Erwin, R-Montevallo, filed several pro-life bills that have not moved.

Beason's SB 365 would require medical professionals to perform ultrasounds on pregnant women before doing abortions. His SB 335 would require abortion facilities to tell women "the abortion will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being."

Erwin, and seven other senators, sponsored SB 301 to "define the word 'person' as including any human being from the moment of fertilization."

Lynn Thompson, a member of Faith Baptist Church, Moulton, and American Right to Life, wishes Alabama's Baptist community would become more active in issues dealing with the lives of unborn babies.

"Issues like alcohol sales and gambling move us to action on a grand scale," she said. "Oh how I wish the same could be said about abortion issues. Where is the call to action to save the unborn? Where are the press conferences and television advertisements?"

Some Alabama legislators are also facing off against same-sex "marriages."

Same-sex 'marriage'

Sen. Wendell Mitchell, D-Luverne, is sponsoring a resolution calling for a constitutional convention

to amend the U.S. Constitution and adopt the Marriage Protection Act identifying marriages in America as "the union of a man and a woman."

For the convention to be called and the amendment to be passed, at least two-thirds of the nation's state legislatures would have

to pass similar legislation.

So far, Alabama senators have passed the resolution and are awaiting the representatives' response.

Smoking

This year's smoking ban bills have not been as successful.

Rep. Mary Sue McClurkin, R-Pelham, sponsored HB 615, which would repeal the Alabama Clean Indoor Air Act. This act prohibits smoking only in certain public places, and would establish the Alabama Smokefree Air Act of 2010, which would include "enclosed public places, places of employment, private clubs, enclosed residential facilities and outdoor areas." It is still in its original committee.

Sharing a similar fate is SB 541, sponsored by Sen. Vivian Figures, D-Mobile. This bill would prohibit smoking in restaurants. It is scheduled for a public hearing March 31 at 8:30 a.m.

Tyson says King has 'no right' to take over

(continued from page 1)

"We thought it was an important decision," Tyson said. "The defendants had moved to throw us out because of the action of the attorney general. The Supreme Court denied that motion and further directed briefs immediately on whether the governor, the task force or any member of the task force needed to get any prior approval from the attorney general before we do anything."

A ruling could be delivered as early as April.

In the mean time, drama continues between King and the task force.

Tyson said King is declaring "war on the rule of law" and "is determined to undermine the fundamental principle that no one is above the law. He is determined to do whatever it takes to protect the gambling bosses."

King discredited the task force's efforts, said it is time for a "new approach" and gave it 24 hours to "turn over" all evidence gathered in gam-

bling cases against so-called "electronic bingo" operations in Greene, Houston, Jefferson, Lowndes and Macon counties.

"Judging by the dramatic nature of the events that the task force has taken based on this evidence, I can only anticipate that the evidence is overwhelming," he said. "I will use this evidence to implement the advice I suggested to the task force. Delays in providing this evidence will delay our court filings and could even allow the two halls that voluntarily closed to reopen."

Determining legality

With the task force under his leadership, King said he would file lawsuits in the aforementioned counties seeking declaratory judgments to determine if "electronic bingo" machines are legal. He added that his approach would be a "clear path" to answer the question everyone in Alabama wants resolved — whether electronic bingo gambling is legal.

"We simply can wait no longer. We simply will do it ourselves."

Riley said giving King the requested evidence would be like handing it over to the state's gambling bosses.

"That evidence was part of a criminal investigation, but the attorney general has made clear that he has no intention of filing criminal charges," Riley said. "Instead he wants to file civil cases. In civil cases, the other side gets to see every document you have. So if we give that information to the attorney general, he will have to give it to the casino bosses. That will destroy the criminal investigation and could endanger our undercover law enforcement officers, and we are not going to do that."

Tyson took it a step further. "The attorney general has cited no rule of law that entitles him to obtain the evidence held by these law enforcement officials and I know of none," he said.

Sen. Bedford's new 'bingo' gambling bill 'even worse'

As predicted, pro-gambling legislators have not given up their fight to legalize and expand the state's "slot machine gambling" referred to as electronic bingo.

Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, plans to substitute a new eight-page bill for the original 43-page Senate Bill 380, which could not get enough votes to be brought up for debate in the Senate.

Bedford's new bill redefines bingo to include machines that perform the game without player interaction and allows an unlimited number of gambling operations around the state.

The revised bill requires at least a 25 percent tax on bingo revenue (profits) leaving it to legislators to decide whether to add license fees to bingo operations.

Senate control

Bedford's bill also establishes a five-member state gaming commission appointed "with advice and consent" of the Senate. Unlike his initial legislation, this bill does not repeal or affect any of the local constitutional amendments that does not require "bingo" operators to follow the amendments if their businesses are approved by the proposed gaming commission.

Gov. Bob Riley said the new "blank check" bill is much more dangerous than the first draft.

"I said the first gambling bill they proposed was the most corrupt piece of legislation I'd ever seen. I was wrong," he said.

"They were able to come up with one that's even worse. This isn't the so-called 'simple' bill its supporters claim. ... It allows an unlimited number of casinos and lets legislators decide where they will go. Could they ... put a casino across from [a] school? Down the road from your church? If they win this vote, it would be up to them. That's downright scary." (TAB)

Most "family-friendly" legislation is "dying a slow death (in the Legislature)."

Joe Godfrey
Alabama Citizens Action Program

Bessemer 'bingo' committee seeks new ordinance, sues mayor May

Bessemer City Council's bingo committee is suing Mayor Edward May to validate an electronic bingo ordinance he vetoed last year. But instead of waiting on a verdict in the case, which could cost the city \$150,000 to resolve, it is already working on another ordinance to legalize slot machine gambling being called "electronic charity bingo."

Birmingham attorney Kim Davidson gave the committee copies of a new ordinance to review during a March 23 bingo committee meeting. She said it is based on Fairfield's "charity bingo" ordinance.

Councilor James Stephens, who has consistently voted against legalizing and expanding gambling in Bessemer, said the bingo committee is wasting the city's money with these actions.

"If it was their money that they were spending instead of the citizens' money, they would be much more prudent," he said. "They are taking money away that would benefit the citizens to pay a lawyer to support their bingo facilities."

Disputed involvement

Davidson also announced that City Attorney Aaron Killings would be presenting an ordinance to the committee, but Killings did not show up for the meeting.

May said he has not asked Killings to work on a "bingo" ordinance. He believes the bingo committee is trying to "throw him (Killings) under the bus."

Killings, Davidson and Council President Earl Cochran could not be reached by press time. (TAB)



Photo by Chris Mills

SHARING CROSS-CULTURALLY — Zach Pratt (standing, right), a junior at Troy University, leads a Bible study in San Cristobal, Dominican Republic, while Ryan Buttes, an IMB representative, translates.

Investing in the work

More than 300 Alabama BCM students use spring break for missions

By Chris Mills
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For many college students, spring break is a time to catch up on schoolwork and sleep and maybe even hit the beach for a few days. But for more than 300 students from 15 Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) across the state, it was a time to focus on missions.

A group of students involved in the Troy University BCM went to the Dominican Republic to work with Southern Baptist representatives Ryan and Emily Buttes.

The students spent most of their time on the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo, UASD) campus.

"The presence of evil was evident on this campus, as there were many

spiritual strongholds that have gripped this campus for the last several hundred years," said Darreyel Laster, a sophomore at Troy. "There is a huge presence of religious cults on the UASD campus."

It was very different from what Laster is used to.

'Reminded me to tithe'

"At Troy, there are 10 religious organizations for the 7,000 students on campus. For the 150,000 students at UASD, there are no religious organizations," Laster noted. "God used this experience to open my eyes to what we have here and to (teach me) not (to) overlook the blessing of the BCM."

He said the experience also challenged him to be more faithful in giving. "God used this time to allow

me to see missions giving at work. He reminded me to be more faithful and diligent in my tithe so that His work can continue."

Ryan Buttes applauded the students' work at UASD.

"These students were sent onto the university campus and what they did in one afternoon, would have taken one missionary exponentially more time," he said. "More people hear sooner with short-term teams."

Emily Buttes added that short-term missions experiences also can "grow" and "mold" the students "into who He called them to be."

"Short-term trips in college are what God used to clarify what He had for me in the future," she said.

Bethany Rogers, a sophomore at the University of Alabama (UA), said God used her BCM missions experience during spring break to speak to her and through her.

"God used this time to remind me that we all deserve the opportunity to know Christ and His truth," she said.

Rogers and other UA BCM students served in Acuña, Mexico, with Hope's Children, a nonprofit, faith-based organization that aids underprivileged children and families nationally and internationally.

"Our group divided into four teams, doing everything from construction to work at a food bank to cleaning up an orphanage," she said. "We laid the foundation for the work that teams in the future will come and finish. Others that come after us will be more successful because of what we started."

For more information about BCM, visit www.thestudenthub.org.



Photo by Bethany Rogers

'WE LAID THE FOUNDATION' — Students of the University of Alabama's BCM did construction work, cleaned up an orphanage and did other ministry work in Acuña, Mexico, during spring break.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

GBC asks task force to strengthen CP wording

DULUTH, Ga. — "Don't mess with the Cooperative Program" (CP) is the message the Georgia Baptist Convention's (GBC) executive committee is sending to the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force, according to a report by *The Christian Index*, the state convention's newsjournal.

The GBC executive committee unanimously adopted a request March 16 that the task force strengthen its language assuring that the CP will remain the dominant funding channel for Southern Baptist causes, *The Index* reported.

The state convention, where the denomination was founded in 1845, additionally asked the GCR task force to "formally encourage and challenge local churches specifically to increase their support and sacrificial giving through the Cooperative Program."

The 483-word document, with three subsections, was approved by the Georgia convention's executive committee during its regular session March 16. It thus becomes the first state convention to address the 32-page report by the task force.

Executive committee members fear a watering down of the CP if "Cooperative Program Giving" is regarded as only equal to designated giving. The Georgia document states its concern that "wide application of the phrase 'Great Commission Giving' for monies given through the Cooperative Program as well as to designated causes may cause some Baptists to surmise wrongly that the Cooperative Program is merely a subset of giving instead of the primary means of missions giving for Southern Baptists."

BWA receives thanks, more requests for quake relief

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Chilean Baptists' top leader tearfully thanked Baptist World Alliance (BWA) officials March 10 for the aid and support shown to her country since its Feb. 27 earthquake — and said the needs and opportunities remain great in the devastated South American nation.

"Maybe because Haiti is so big we have forgotten maybe how in Chile needs are tremendous at this point," said Raquel Contreras, president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Chile, during the BWA executive committee meeting at the group's headquarters just outside the nation's capital.

"There are so many needs in our country, but there are also so many ways that the Lord has shown us His love, through your offerings and love for the people," said Contreras, who is also a BWA vice president. "People are looking for the Lord. Our churches last Sunday were packed; we know that in time of crisis is when the people are closer to the Lord."

Contreras said approximately 250 churches affiliated with her denomination — the larger of two BWA member bodies in Chile — were destroyed or suffered severe damage in the quake.

Her remarks came during the report for Baptist World Aid (BWAid), BWA's relief-and-development arm. BWAid Director Paul Montacute said Baptists worldwide had raised about \$600,000 for relief for the cataclysmic Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti. "We know more is in the pipeline. We need to do likewise for Chile," he said.

Baylor University slated to receive largest gift ever

WACO, Texas — Baylor University has announced the largest gift in the school's history — an estate provision estimated at \$200 million from an anonymous donor. Much of the gift will benefit the Baylor school of social work.

The deferred gift is designated for the school of social work as well as medical research in Baylor's college of arts and sciences and for other programs. It is the second-largest donation ever made to a Texas college or university and ranks among the top 20 private gifts made to higher education in the United States, according to the most recent data reported by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

A news release from Baylor simply identified the donor as "a Baylor graduate whose family has a history of providing gifts to the university supporting programs that are both innovative and have high potential to significantly advance the field of knowledge and experience in diseases, disorders, care, treatment and other issues associated with aging."

The interdisciplinary nature of the gift enables Baylor to address physical, psychological, social, emotional and spiritual needs and strengths of the aging in a truly holistic approach, a university spokesman noted. Diana Garland, dean of the school of social work, said approximately half of the \$200 million estate gift will be directed to the school of social work to expand "social-work research and cutting-edge development in response to issues of aging." The school's current operating budget is \$3.7 million.

Want to know God?

By Bobby E. Hopper
Director of missions
Bethel Baptist Association

One night at prayer meeting, I watched as an elderly church member reached for a newborn baby. The baby's mother slowly and tenderly handed the newborn to the woman. In that single moment, I thought, "God, what are you teaching me?" The oldest member of church was holding the newest addition to the church family, and the profundity of it has intrigued me since that moment.

An elderly woman holding a baby boy does not sound profound, but the significance of the moment is. Ninety-plus years of wisdom was holding innocence. The experience of that woman who had witnessed many innovations caressed an immature babe who would see advancements the woman could never imagine. A mind full of memories was staring at one who would not remember this moment. One dear woman nearing the end of her journey was blessing a little boy just beginning his.

I pondered the love that Miss Martha gave to little Mac that night. It was a special flash to see how wonderful God is. Was Miss Martha passing the Christian baton to Mac? Was she praying for Mac's health, his journey in life or his salvation? How many newborns had she held and blessed in her lifetime? Did she ponder the thoughts Nicodemus mulled over when Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7)? She had been born again many years before and now walked feebly toward the end of one journey yet spiritually ran boldly toward the beginning of eternity.

Was Miss Martha rejoicing over the apostle Paul's saying, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" as she held a new baby (2 Cor. 5:17)?

I do not know Miss Martha's thoughts or Mac's mother's feelings, but I know I felt a sense of awe when God's saint held a newborn in the house of the Lord. I felt as though I saw Anna when she saw baby Jesus. "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age. . . . And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:36a, 38).

Religious expression a 'sacred zone'

Baptists have rich legacy of religious liberty, church-state separation, Land says

An individual's right to religious expression is a "sacred zone" that no other man should breach, Richard Land said March 4 at Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga.

Addressing the chapel audience at the Georgia Baptist Convention-affiliated school, Land focused on the subject of religious liberty, past and present, which he called "Baptists' peculiar gift to the Reformation."

"A man's relationship with his God is so holy that it is wrong for any man to coercively interfere with it," said Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, adding that it doesn't matter if the authority is a king, a pope or a bishop.

Land defined religious liberty as "the freedom to worship as you

please according to the dictates of your own conscience, working out your own relationship with God, without any coercive interference from the state, and no civil penalties for religious infractions."

Land recounted Baptists' support of religious liberty, beginning in 1612, when Thomas Helwys wrote the first plea in the English language for religious freedom, "A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity."

Baptists triumph

Roger Williams, a Puritan, preached against the restrictions on religious freedom in Massachusetts Bay, Land said. Nine of the original 13 states had tax-supported state churches, and those nine states persecuted Baptists, Land said.

Land reminded those in chapel that in the 10 years before the

American Revolution, "500 Baptist preachers were thrown into jail for disturbing the peace" because they were preaching without a license from the church authorities.

Before the Constitution of the United States was ratified, many Baptists feared a new federal government would establish a national church that would harass them, he continued. However, the Baptist position of religious liberty gradually triumphed, Land said.

John Leland, a Baptist whom Land described as the "Billy Graham of his time" because of his evangelistic efforts, met with James Madison and, as a messenger to the constitutional convention, "cut a political deal" with him.

Land told how Leland agreed to support the passage of the Constitution and would encourage Baptists to do the same, as a condition

of Madison agreeing to offer an amendment to the Constitution in the first Congress — an amendment that would guarantee there would never be a "national government church."

Madison was the author of what became the First Amendment.

Regarding current matters of religious liberty, Land addressed confusion about the separation of church and state and what may or may not be done in today's society. He challenged the statement that "you can't legislate morality."

"Laws against murder, laws against theft, laws against rape, laws against racism and laws against abortion are the legislation of morality," Land said.

He described the laws as attempts to "keep others from imposing their immorality on their victims."

Christians can't use the First Amendment as an excuse not to become involved in civic affairs and those who oppose faith-based arguments in the public square can't use the amendment to restrict believers from speaking, he said.

Noting there has been a lot of confusion on this topic in society, Land said much of it centers on erroneous teaching on the concept of the separation of church and state.

"All the restrictions in the First Amendment are on the government, not on people of faith," Land said. The "government can't get into the religion business," he continued, saying the government cannot interfere with citizens' right to express their faith.

The rest of the world aspires to these protections, Land said, lamenting that many Americans take their freedoms for granted. (BP)

Widow files suit in police shooting death of pastor

The widow of a Baptist pastor shot and killed last fall by police in Toccoa, Ga., has filed a federal lawsuit alleging "gross and plain incompetence" displayed by an officer's use of deadly force.

The lawsuit filed March 15 by Abigail Ayers seeks monetary damages for the fatal shooting of her husband, Jonathan Ayers, 28, last September. He was pastor of Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Lavonia, Ga., at the time he was shot outside a gas station where he had just got-

ten money from an automated teller machine.

A Stephens County grand jury in December found that Billy Shane Harrison, the police officer who fired the fatal shot, and Kyle Bryant and Chance Oxner, his partners in a multicounty narcotics team working on an undercover drug sting, were justified in the use of lethal force, because the way Ayers drove his vehicle as he attempted to leave the scene put them in reasonable fear for their lives.

The civil lawsuit filed in a federal district court in Gainesville, however, alleges that the officers acted in ways that would cause a reasonable person to believe they were not police officers, but armed criminals.

The lawsuit says the men's dress and grooming were intended to convince the public they were not police officers but drug dealers as part of their undercover role.

The lawsuit says a police badge around Harrison's neck was so camouflaged by his T-shirt that it was barely identifiable as a police ID and could easily be confused as a piece of "bling" or decorative jewelry, especially if a weapon were being simultaneously pointed at a startled private citizen. (ABP)



So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12

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Photo courtesy of Bullock-Centennial Association

HISPANIC MINISTRY TAKES OFF IN BULLOCK-CENTENNIAL
Hispanic ministry is growing in Bullock-Centennial Association, where a mission church meets at Eastside Baptist on Saturday afternoons. (L to r) Hilario Lara is the mission pastor in training, Abimael Arenas is pastor, Earl Hinson is associational moderator and Curtis Rich is director of missions.

Attacks increase in Israel

Messianic Jews cautious as persecution grows into violent attacks

After their teenage son was nearly killed in 2008 by a bomb disguised as a holiday gift basket, few people were as eager for Ya'acov Teitel to see justice as Leah and David Ortiz.

Teitel, an Orthodox Jewish loner who confessed to placing the package in the family's stairwell, said he targeted the Ortiz family because they are Messianic Jews — Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

"We want justice, not revenge," said Leah Ortiz, who has lived in this religiously mixed city since the late 1980s. "This happened because Teitel had hate in his heart. He needs to be in prison."

The attack, which left 15-year-old Ami with shrapnel wounds and burns over much of his body, has highlighted the vulnerability facing Israel's small and increasingly beleaguered Messianic Jewish community.

Community members say the decades-old harassment has intensified in recent years, as ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups dedicated to stopping missionary activity have grown stronger and more confident.

Anti-missionary activists hold protests outside Messianic places of worship and post photos and the addresses of believers on lampposts.

They tell the Ministry of the Interior that Messianic Jews are converts to Christianity, something that would make them ineligible to immigrate to Israel.

Although Israeli law permits missionary activity — provided the evangelizer does not offer any material incentive to a potential convert — the persecution and forced conversion of countless Jews for generations have made Jews extremely wary of proselytizing.

Accusations of deception

Messianic Jews, who publish and distribute the New Testament in Hebrew, say they are eager to share the "good news" with anyone willing to listen but insist that they do so within the parameters of the law.

Aaron Rubin, who heads the anti-missionary department at Yad L'Achim, Israel's leading anti-Messianic organization, insisted that Messianic Jews lure unsuspect-

ing Jews by speaking Hebrew and quoting Jewish texts.

"They lie. They try to convert people but say they're not Christians. They're fundamentalist Christians who call themselves Jews," Rubin asserted.

Several of Israel's estimated 100 Messianic Jewish congregations are reporting an unprecedented level of harassment:

► In the southern cities of Beer-sheva and Arad, fervently Orthodox Jews regularly protest outside Messianic Jewish congregations and the homes of worshipers. A chess club run by one of the congregations was burned to the ground.

► When ultra-Orthodox Jews in central Ashdod learned that Israel and Pnina Comforti are Messianic

believers, they convinced local rabbinical authorities to revoke the all-important kosher certification for the couple's bakery. Despite an order from Israel's Supreme Court, the rabbis continue to refuse to recognize the bakery as kosher.

► In early December, two ultra-Orthodox men were arrested for torching the car of the Levine family, Messianic Jews who live in the north-

ern town of Beit Shean. Activists armed with a megaphone go around town, telling residents the Levines are Christian missionaries who bribe children to convert to Christianity.

Barry Segal, a Messianic leader who co-founded Joseph's Storehouse, a humanitarian aid center, with his wife outside Jerusalem, attributes the recent rash of high-profile incidents to his movement's growing popularity.

"The number of believers in Israel was roughly 300 in 1981, and today it's over 12,000," he said. "I'm talking about those of us who are Jewish born, who were married in Jewish weddings."

Thousands more Israelis, primarily Russian and Ethiopian immigrants whose Jew-



RNS photo

STRENGTHENED FAITH — Leah and David Ortiz are Messianic Jews in Ariel, West Bank. Their teenage son was badly wounded when an ultra-Orthodox loner left a bomb disguised as a gift basket in the family's home.

ish status is questionable, combine Jewish and Christian ritual in their daily lives.

"In times past, the harassment mostly consisted of mail tampering and phone calls with vicious intent," Segal said. But in recent years, "there has been a rising tide from harassment into violent acts."

Segal is quick to point out that Sudanese and Pakistani Christians face more deadly threats than Messianic believers in Israel. Still "any violence, actual or threatened, is unacceptable."

Death threats, slander

Pnina Comforti, the bakery owner, said anyone who wants to understand the fear she faces should watch a YouTube video that re-enacts a phone call in which a man tells her, "I am coming to take your soul. How do you feel knowing you are about to die?"

The man in the video proceeds to recite her address. "You will know my name when I write it on the wall with your blood."

Comforti said business has been down 50 percent since her bakery's kosher certification was torn off the wall. "People come and say, 'We heard you do something to the cakes'" that renders them unkosher. "What the rabbis say, people do."

Still she is undaunted. "What those who threaten us don't understand is that they strengthen our determination and our faith."

Leah and David Ortiz said much the same thing.

Seated in the apartment that was badly damaged by the blast that nearly killed the youngest of their six children, Leah said half the town came to visit their son in the hospital.

"They said prayers; they cooked us meals. We've lived here so long, people know us to be good people."

David, who serves as the spiritual leader of this town's 50-family Messianic Jewish congregation, produces grim photos of Ami taken about a month after he opened the package at the kitchen table.

"It blew off three of his toes, the muscle from his thighs and caused second- and third-degree burns on his chest and thighs," he said. "Bolts and screws tore through his eye and it's a true miracle he wasn't blinded."

Ami has undergone 12 operations and has at least four more to go. After spending five months in the hospital, he returned to school and now plays on two basketball teams.

As grateful as they are for Ami's recovery and community support, the Ortiz family is still upset by how Israeli authorities handled their case.

"There was a condescending attitude, almost like they were saying, 'What did you think would happen if you live as Messianic Jews?'" Leah said. "Government officials told us privately, 'You don't have many fans.'"

A police spokesman said the Ortiz attack "was investigated thoroughly for months and Teitel was ultimately apprehended. We act on every complaint that is filed."

God 'makes me feel safe'

Mostly, though, the family is looking forward, not back.

"I'm doing great, but I have to see what my physical abilities will be," said Ami, who at 6 feet 6 inches tall, would normally be drafted into the military at age 18. "I hope to play basketball professionally."

Ami said the bombing strengthened his spirituality.

"I've seen a lot. I've been through a lot. I've seen what God can do, and it makes me feel safe."

His parents said they have forgiven the bomber, who was indicted at the end of last year in the March 2008 attack.

"Otherwise he would have control over us and we would be victims twice," Leah said, stroking the family's 15-year-old dog, who became deaf due to the bombing. "Forgiveness frees you and frees God to work His miracles." (RNS)

In recent years, "there has been a rising tide from harassment into violent acts."

Barry Segal
Messianic leader



Photo courtesy of Balkum Baptist Church

BALKUM CHURCH COMPLETES ACTIVITIES BUILDING

Balkum Baptist Church, Headland, in Judson Association recently completed a 10,000-square-foot activities building to serve the needs of area churches and reach the lost through sports and other events. Tom Chestnut is pastor.

World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Christians refuse to let officials close church

BEKASI, Indonesia — Efforts by local officials in Bekasi, West Java, to close a church met with stiff resistance as a defiant lawyer and weeping women refused to allow it.

Women of the Huria Christian Protestant Batak Church cried in protest March 1 as officials from the Bekasi Building Department placed a brown signboard of closure on the church building in Pondok Timur, Bekasi, 12 miles from Jakarta.

The seal stayed in place for about two minutes before some of the shrieking women tore it down. The sign was trampled as furious church members stampeded over it, shouting and screaming, and Bekasi city officials turned and ran as the congregation fanned out.

The defiance followed a heated debate within the same church building minutes before, as the Christians had invited the Bekasi officials inside to discuss the matter when they arrived to seal the building. The discussion soon became heated as a city official asserted that the church did not have a building permit and had to be sealed. The church had applied for a worship building permit in 2006 but local officials had yet to act on it, according to Pastor Luspida Simanjuntak. At the meeting inside the church building, attorney Refer Harianya said the sealing was illegal because officials had failed to follow proper procedures.

“Because you have not followed the procedures which I have outlined, we will act as if the sealing never took place,” Harianya told city officials as members of the congregation cheered. He said if the city tried to close the church, then they would be named in a lawsuit. One of the officials responded, “Go ahead and sue.”

Morocco begins expulsion of foreign Christians

RABAT, Morocco — Moroccan authorities deported more than 40 foreign Christian aid workers during one week in an ongoing nationwide crackdown that included the expulsion of foster parents caring for 33 Moroccan orphans.

Deportations of foreign Christians continued at press time, with Moroccan authorities expressing their intention to deport specifically U.S. nationals. Sources in Morocco said the government gave the U.S. Embassy in Rabat a list of 40 citizens to be deported.

Citing Western diplomats and aid groups, Reuters reported that as many as 70 foreign aid workers had been deported since the beginning of March, including U.S., Dutch, British and New Zealand citizens. At the Village of Hope orphanage near Ain Leuh, 50 miles south of Fez, the government March 8 expelled 16 staff workers, 10 foster parents and 13 natural-born dependents from the country. The orphanage arranges for orphaned children to live with a set of foster parents rather than in a traditional dormitory setting.

Police first came to the orphanage the afternoon of March 6 questioning children and looking for Bibles and evidence of Christian evangelism; by late Sunday night, they had told all foster parents and staff that they had to leave March 8.

New Zealand-native Chris Broadbent, a worker at Village of Hope, said the separation of the foster families and the children under their care was traumatic. As much as they hoped to be reunited, he said that did not seem likely; officials told them they could visit as tourists in the future, but in reality, authorities do not allow re-entry for those who have been expelled.

Christian who fled Iran wins asylum in Kenya

NAIROBI, Kenya — Mohammad Azbari, a Christian convert from Islam who has fled to Kenya, knows what it's like to be deported back to his native Iran.

When it happened in 2007, he said Iranian authorities pressured the government of Norway to return him and his wife, Gelanie, to Iran after hearing rumors that he had forsaken Islam.

“When we arrived in Iran, we were interrogated by security and severely beaten,” he said in Nairobi, where he and his family fought to persuade the Kenyan government to decline Iran's demand to deport him back.

Azbari had been employed in the Iranian army before fleeing, he said, and authorities were monitoring his movements because they were concerned that he might betray his country and reveal government secrets. When he and his Christian wife, a native of the Philippines, first fled Iran in 2000, he was still a Shiite Muslim; he became a Christian in the Netherlands in 2003.

Azbari and his family were returned to Iran from Norway in 2007. Police began looking for him in October 2009 and he eventually made it into Kenya — where he was charged with illegal entry. On March 4, a court in Kenya ruled that Azbari's family deserved asylum from religious persecution in Iran. ☞

HEART OF MISSIONS

Dave Swanson, a member of **North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown**, in Bessemer Baptist Association, worked with Action Ministries International (AMI) to share the gospel Feb. 12–22 at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia.

AMI presents the gospel through pin trading, which is a popular activity at the Olympics.

This was the fourth Olympic Games Swanson has gone to with AMI.

“This was, by far, the most exciting Olympics that I've been to,” he said. “[Going to do this work] is like having my own personal revival.”

Dave Melvin and **Ken Knight**, members of **First Baptist Church, Pell City**, in St. Clair Baptist Association, traveled to India Jan. 28–Feb. 13 with Tom Cox World Ministries of Mountainburg, Ark.

The men were part of a larger group of people from across the South. Once in India, the group was split into five teams. Each team held medical clinics, and a couple of teams also had eye clinics.

The teams saw more than 9,700 people come to the medical clinics and more than 3,400 people accept Christ as Savior.

“It was an incredible trip,” Melvin said. “I saw God do some really

wonderful things with people with God using me and, more humbling, in spite of me.”

An 11-member medical missions team from **Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham**, recently ministered to the physical and spiritual needs of earthquake victims in Haiti.

The team concentrated its work in the Gressier community, located about 15 miles from the capital, Port-au-Prince, and saw 48 people make professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

In addition to providing medical care for 1,151 people, the team donated tents for local families and medical supplies for a clinic located in a local church orphanage.

While the team was in Haiti, members of the Birmingham Baptist Association church gathered 424 Buckets of Hope to provide food for Haitian families.

Four members of **NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville**, in Birmingham Baptist Association — **David and Melissa Chism** and **Bob and Carolyn Hall** — traveled to Iquitos and Lima, Peru, Feb. 2–12 to provide biblical and practical training to local church leaders.

They joined fellow NorthPark Baptist member Tim Miller, who is serving as an independent missionary in the South American country.

The team led two pastors conferences — one each in Iquitos and Lima, a youth conference and a women's conference. The primary theme of the pastors conferences was how to study the Bible, while the women's conference focused on the fruit of the Spirit.

The team also took part in a dedication service for a church planted by a group David Chism led from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary extension center in Birmingham last October.

“I felt a great presence of the Holy Spirit in all the work,” Bob Hall said. “It was hard work but it was very fulfilling.”

This trip was a precursor to a March trip David Chism has planned for a group of Birmingham-area Baptist churches that will assist four Peruvian Baptist churches in planting a new church.

Jason Dunlap, pastor of Sharon Heights Baptist Church, Birmingham, led a team from **North Jefferson Baptist Association**, including 18 members from his church, to Guatemala Feb. 20–27.

The trip was part of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' partnership with Baptists in the Central American country.

The team led Vacation Bible School, did door-to-door evangelism and saw approximately 70 people make salvation decisions. ☞

Letters to the Editor

THE RAPTURE

In your March 11 issue, a writer to the editor rebutted a Sunday School lesson that referenced Mark 13 as a reason to refute the pre-tribulation Rapture. The writer stated one should not take Scripture out of context nor fail to interpret by comparison and alignment with all other related Scripture.

I would add my own slant and say one should never take away from or add to God's Word regardless of interpretation. At the risk of perpetrating dogmatism, let me state there is no mention of a church Rapture in the Hebrew or Greek translations of the canon.

Mark 13 seems to refute the idea of a church Rapture along with 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15, Matthew 24 and Revelation 6.

Christ said the Church would suffer for His sake and if we denied Him, He would deny us (Matt. 10:33). The Scripture and its prophecies were given for the Church's benefit. If it was not to be involved in the tribulation to come, if the Church would not be on earth, there would be no sense in giving us the

warning. The yoke is light because the price has been paid, but we must be willing to pick up our own cross. In spite of how uncomfortable this may sound, the Scripture cannot mean that any of the Church present or future will get a free pass.

Lon Pearson
Decatur, Ala.

GUTS TO SPEAK UP

Every Southern Baptist in the state of Alabama needs to stand up and speak up about this plight of “electronic bingo.” If we do not have the guts to get out of our pews and fight this, the money folks pushing this gambling business will win and we deserve what we get or lose.

Ron Sorrells
Samson, Ala.

HOW TO SEEK PASTORS

Bob Terry's March 11 article on pastoral leadership is excellent. A few points need to be added.

First the church should be a theocracy, not a democracy. Jesus said, “I will build My church.” True, the church must vote at times, but the vote should be preceded with much

prayer that brings discernment of God's will (Rom. 12:1–2).

Second we often say, “The church calls a pastor.” However, the Lord should be the one calling a pastor to a church. The church should validate that call, as the church at Antioch did before Paul and Barnabas went to the mission field (Acts 13:2).

Third Bob Terry made a very good statement: “Not every pastor fits every church, and not every church fits every pastor.” God has given us two processes by which a church can determine who they are, their values, their critical issues and seek God's vision for the church, giving them a foundation upon which to seek a pastor. The processes are transitional pastor and intentional interim ministry.

Dr. Dale Huff, director of the LeaderCare and church administration office of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, can direct a church to an interim pastor trained in the processes.

(To contact Huff, call 1-800-264-1225.)

Jere W. Patterson
Decatur, Ala. ☞

'Countries of conflict' enhance control tactics, increase persecution

The annual human rights report by the U.S. State Department has cited increased repression in countries around the world, including China and North Korea.

"There are several trends that we identify in the report. One is that increasingly, governments are becoming more restrictive in their tolerance of nongovernmental human rights organizations, in particular," said Michael Posner, assistant secretary from the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, at a news conference for the 2009 report's release.

"Governments are becoming more restrictive in their tolerance of nongovernmental human rights organizations."

**Michael Posner
State Department**

The report, which is a requirement by Congress, is an annual evaluation of human rights in 194 countries. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who also spoke at the news conference, described the report as an "essential tool" for activists who work to protect human rights.

Attacks, killings

According to the report, there were alarming accounts of imprisonment, attacks and killings in "countries of conflict," such as China and North Korea, as well as Iran and Russia.

"In many of these conflict zones, insurgents, terrorist organizations, paramilitary forces and government security forces used murder, rape and inhumane tactics to assert control over territory, silence opponents and coerce the cooperation of civilian communities ...," the report said.

The report criticized China's government for its increased persecution of its citizens last year. The government's human rights record "remained poor and worsened in some areas." Chinese activists, journalists and public interest lawyers were harassed and imprisoned, and there were reports of religious abuse of ethnic minorities.

The Chinese government also was accused of violating human rights by limiting Internet use.

"The government of China increased its efforts to monitor Internet use, control content, restrict information, block access to foreign and domestic Web sites, encourage self-censorship and punish those who violated regu-

lations," according to the report.

Following China's model, North Korea's government denied citizens freedom of expression and continued to gain control over their lives. The government maintained heavy media censorship as well, and only the political elite were allowed to listen to foreign media broadcasts.

Media censorship

"The government sought to control virtually all information: there were no independent media, Internet access was limited to high-ranking officials and other elites and academic freedom was repressed," the report said. "Domestic media censorship continued to be strictly enforced and no deviation from the official government line was tolerated."

Iran's human rights record declined after the presidential election in June, the report stated, noting that the government took away citizens' rights to a free and fair election and more than 4,000 protesters were imprisoned.

Similarly, Russian journalists and major media outlets were banned from covering media-sensitive news, including reports on government officials. Several human rights activists and journalists were killed for their media coverage. (BP)

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WMU to launch program to fight human exploitation

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

How could the exploitation of a human being go unnoticed? It's easy. Just ask Jean Roberson.

About five years ago, Roberson, ministry consultant and leader of national Woman's Missionary Union's (WMU) adult resource team, witnessed how human trafficking can begin. While on a WMU visioning trip to Moldova, she was eating at McDonald's with some colleagues and their hosts and noticed two men in leather jackets talking to a young girl nearby.

"Our hosts told us, 'They're trying to talk her into leaving the country for work,'" Roberson remembered. "It was poignant because it was in a McDonald's — a familiar place. And it was happening right next to me."

Project HELP

Because people often don't know what constitutes human exploitation, they miss it and miss an opportunity to help stop it.

To raise awareness, WMU is planning to introduce a two-year initiative, Project HELP: Human Exploitation, in September. The goal is to educate people about various types of human exploitation — including human trafficking — and then encourage them to help eradicate it in their communities and around the world.

"Through our work to fight poverty, human exploitation came to the forefront," Roberson said, explaining why the organiza-

tion chose to tackle the topic.

It's a topic that involves more than just trafficking, said Sheryl Churchill, a WMU ministry consultant.

"We must consider all of our age levels from preschoolers through adults when we choose a critical issue. For example, trafficking would be very difficult for preschoolers to understand," she said.

WMU's emphasis on human exploitation will deal with issues such as pornography, "sexting," bullying and cyberbullying, media exploitation of children and families and human trafficking, which includes forced labor and sex trafficking, Churchill explained.

WMU is pulling from a number of resources to develop educational materials about human exploitation, and when it comes to human trafficking, Sara Jane Camacho, director of Birmingham-based Freedom to Thrive, is one of those.

Like Roberson, her interest in human exploitation was piqued by personal experience.

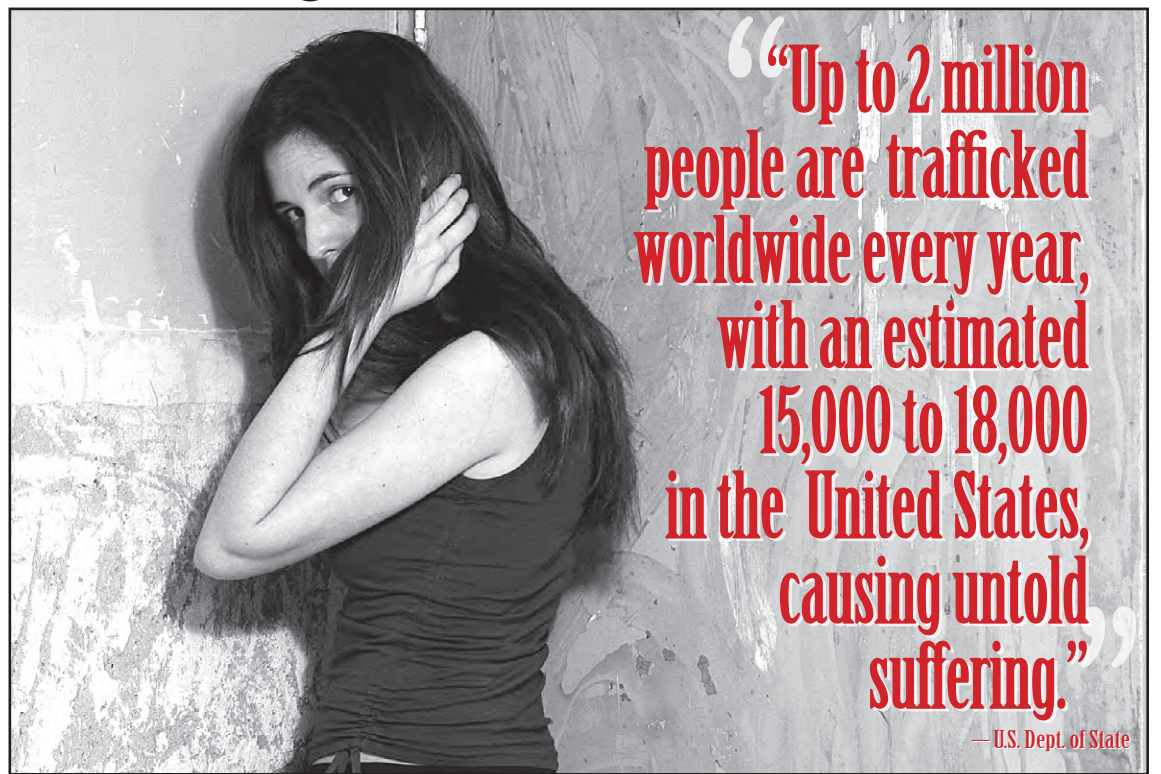
On a visit to Thailand, Camacho remembers walking through neighborhoods and seeing Western men with local children. She remained burdened by what she'd seen and when she returned to the United States, began raising awareness about human trafficking.

"I decided there was a need for a coalition for trafficking here to advocate for the victims," Camacho said.

So Freedom to Thrive was created to raise awareness of trafficking on a local level — to help the "average" person become aware of the definition of trafficking and how to spot and report it.

The biggest misconception is that trafficking is just an international issue, Camacho said, but anyone in the United States can fall victim, too.

"Most of the trafficking that happens here domestically affects homeless and runaway youth," she said. "They don't have food or clothing, so sometimes they'll trade sex to get those things. The definition of human trafficking is any commercial



"Up to 2 million people are trafficked worldwide every year, with an estimated 15,000 to 18,000 in the United States, causing untold suffering."

— U.S. Dept. of State

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exchange for sex or sexual acts with a minor."

One large problem that stems from unawareness of trafficking is the lack of legislation put in place to fight it. Currently Alabama is devoid of a law that addresses human trafficking, although a bill has recently been drafted and has made some progress in the House of Representatives. Having no law on this issue leads to trafficking going unprosecuted or even being mislabeled.

Sometimes, for example, moth-

ers trade sex with their children for drugs or money, and while this is often called abuse, it technically falls under the definition of human trafficking.

'Civil rights crime'

To Joyce Vance, U.S. attorney for the northern district of Alabama, the absence of legislation is unacceptable.

"We see trafficking as a civil rights crime, and it's a priority for us," Vance said. "Our goal is to cre-

ate jurisdiction and then enforce it in such a way that traffickers realize it's too tricky to practice trafficking here."

Like WMU, she recognizes that awareness is crucial.

"People see trafficking in their daily lives and would be able to (help us) enforce it if they knew what they were looking at," Vance said.

Information on Project HELP: Human Exploitation will be available closer to September on www.wmu.com.

Good Hope residents plan for upcoming wet/dry vote

By Brittany N. Howerton
The Alabama Baptist

After House Bill 175 passed in Alabama's Legislature last year, reducing the municipal population requirement for holding a wet/dry referendum in most dry counties from 7,000 to 1,000, many communities were left to bide their time until it hit home.

Good Hope was one of them.

So when a referendum was set for June 1, local Baptist churches made plans of action.

The first move came March 25, when approximately 75 people from five area churches gathered at Good Hope Baptist Church to hear from Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program.

'Big alcohol'

"What we're dealing with is 'big alcohol,'" Godfrey said.

He explained that bringing alcohol to new areas only creates opportunities for alcohol addiction and for alcohol companies to make more money.

"Why do you want to sell it here? It's because you know the more it's available, the more people are going to drink it," Godfrey said. "That's

what big alcohol is interested in. They want to make more money and don't care about the broken homes and destroyed lives."

It's important to "inform people about the laws and dangers of alcohol," said Jack Collins, director of missions for West Cullman Baptist Association.

And that's why he knows these kinds of meetings are important.

"Everyone who was there was there to help fight the wet/dry referendum," said Ralph Andrews, pastor of Good Hope Baptist. He added that he hopes the information presented at the meeting validated "how devastating it is when a community does go wet ... and all the different ways it negatively impacts the community."

Godfrey said those include economic, social and health costs. "If you track the numbers for the last 10 years, it averages 12,000 to 15,000 deaths per year for alcohol-related deaths in traffic accidents. And that's not including [cirrhosis] of the liver, hepatitis or other health issues that develop as a result of alcohol use."

"And tax revenue is just penance," Godfrey added. "It's a small fraction of how much [money] really goes

out." Take Chambers County for example, he said. In 2001, the county sold almost \$1.8 million in alcoholic beverages but the tax revenue was between \$7,000 and \$8,000.

"So there was \$1.8 million coming out of the residents' pockets, and the county only got \$7,000 to \$8,000. Where did the rest go?" Godfrey asked before answering his own question. "It went out of state. It went to big alcohol."

'For the children'

Andrews said because his father was an alcoholic, "I know firsthand what happens.

"I know those who want it to go wet say, 'Do it for the children' (for tax revenue)," he said. "We're saying, 'Vote no and do it for the children because they'll be impacted.'"

Andrews said the meeting was not only to show the community that there are people against alcohol but also that they are for the community and the children. Several Good Hope residents took time at the meeting to sign up to be a part of organizing to fight alcohol. Collins said the next step is to form committees, share information and statistics about alcohol and organize people to vote.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 4

Explore the Bible By Jeffrey S. Quiett Associate professor of marriage and family counseling, University of Mobile

RESURRECTION HOPE Luke 24:1-8, 36-49

Remembering the Reality (1-8)

On the Sunday after Jesus' crucifixion, a group of women (three of them later identified in verse 10) went to prepare His body for formal burial. They were not able to do this when Jesus was first buried because of the quickly approaching Sabbath (Luke 23:54-56). One can imagine their shock once they discovered the stone was rolled away from the tomb and Jesus' body was missing. The severe grief the women experienced at Jesus' death was hard enough to bear, but now they could not perform their final act of respect. Their despair, however, was soon met with explanation as two men who were not normal men greeted the women. Although not identified as angels in Luke, the other Gospels make it clear that these were divine messengers. Though the women were inclined to fear the angels, they quickly pointed them to Jesus, reminding the women that Jesus predicted His resurrection. Of all the events in the Gospels, the most criticism and doubt is levied at the truth of Jesus' resurrection. These verses reveal the reality of the event. Women in the first century were second-class citizens. Their testimony was not admissible in court, and they had very few rights. Yet in this passage, the first eyewitnesses to the bodily resurrection of Jesus were women. If the early church were going to "make up" a story about Jesus' resurrection, then it would not have identified women as the primary witnesses.

Beyond the real evidence for Jesus' resurrection lies a spiritual truth. The angels reminded the women of Jesus' prediction of His resurrection. When we find ourselves in despair, it is good to be reminded of the real presence of Jesus and the power He has over death. The women's shock and grief were turned to joy, as they remembered the truth found in Christ.

Experiencing the Reality (36-39)

In the middle of what may have been a debate concerning the reality of Jesus' resurrection, He appeared. The disciples' reaction to His appearance was shock and fear. Jesus responded to their fear by assuring them that He

was really alive. Notice that Jesus did not condemn the disciples for their doubt but offered proof of His bodily resurrection by allowing them to touch and see the scars on His hands and feet. One early Christian heresy, known as Gnosticism, denied that Jesus had a real body. This passage refutes that idea. The only kind of true resurrection is bodily resurrection. Many today hold a worldview that death is the end and there is nothing after death. These same people reject the reality that Jesus was resurrected bodily. Jesus challenges this worldview by offering the real experience of resurrection to those who follow Him. The disciples did not just have a sudden flash of insight or a group hallucination. They experienced Jesus' resurrection for themselves, which gave them hope and assurance of life beyond death. The worldview that there is nothing beyond death is shattered by the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

Living the Reality (40-49)

Jesus further affirmed the reality of His resurrection by eating. Taking a meal is definitely not something a ghost or hallucination would do. Jesus reminded the disciples of His teachings and prophecies that ultimately fulfilled Scripture. Notice that Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." A relationship with Jesus is a requirement to really understand the Bible.

The last part of this passage is important. Jesus' resurrection brought a responsibility to live and share the message of Christ. Simply doing nothing and enjoying a future life after death was not enough. He charged the disciples to live the resurrection by preaching the repentance and forgiveness of sins beginning first at home and then going out from there. They would preach alone. Jesus assured the disciples that "power from on high" would give them the necessary strength to carry out the task He assigned.

The reality of Jesus' resurrection brings responsibility. Many people celebrate Easter but never live out what it means to be resurrected with Christ (Rom. 6:4-5). To live the new life that Jesus brings means we share the good news of new life with others who are dead in their rebellion against God.

Bible Studies for Life By Mark DeVine Associate professor of divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

WHEN EASTER BECOMES JUST ANOTHER HOLIDAY 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 12-19, 54b-58

God's Pattern of Engagement

A pattern of divine engagement emerged from the earliest days of God's dealings with His people Israel. This pattern of relationship remains in effect today for every Christian and church and lies at the heart of Easter faith. Unless and until we comprehend and embrace this pattern, we will endure unnecessary confusion and frustration in our relationship to God. The pattern boasts three parts: promise, faith and fulfillment. The first and last parts belong to God and the middle one to us.

It has pleased our heavenly Father to deal with us by making promises that we gratefully embrace with the faith of loving, trusting children, promises for now left unfulfilled on purpose by our wise Creator. These promises must be believed if we are to live as God's children in this world. This dynamic of promise, faith and fulfillment defines God's dealings with us. God told Abraham that He had prepared a promised land He would give to the patriarch's offspring and that through his offspring, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Following the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Israelites in Babylon, God, through His prophets, promised that He would one day restore His people to Zion. And we, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, are not only taught that we serve and belong to a crucified and living Lord but also are promised that we, too, will one day rise from the dead with new eternally incorruptible and painless bodies. In these new bodies, we shall live together with our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and our crucified, risen and ascended Lord and Savior Himself. We shall look in His face and see Him as He is because we shall be like Him.

Tomorrow and Today

Do you believe these things today, brothers and sisters? They are true. This is what Easter is all about. The consequence of faith in these promises need not be a kind of pie-in-the-sky faith that becomes too heavenly minded to

be of any earthly good. In fact, the promise of resurrection and eternal bliss should have and does have just the opposite effect. God the Holy Spirit sees to this. According to the Bible, when we believe, embrace and benefit from the promise of Jesus' resurrection, we become so heavenly minded that we become of the greatest possible earthly good. That is what happened for those in Hebrews 11-12 who died "not having received what was promised" (Heb. 11:39) but lived in robust, courageous and sacrificial love because they looked forward to that city that has foundations and was not made with human hands. They knew themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in this world.

While they recognized that their home was not here but beyond this world, it did not lead them to treat this earthly life with contempt but freed them to expend their lives here for the sake of others and their Lord.

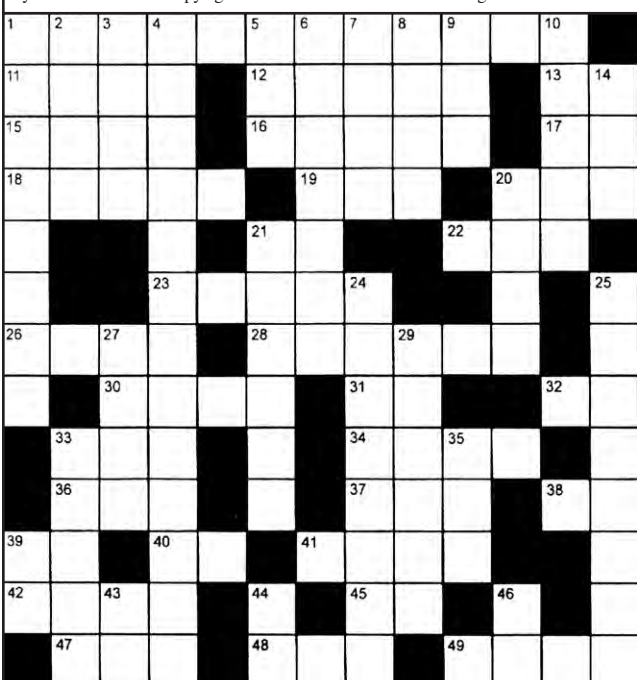
There are those today as there were then who treat the promise of resurrection and eternal life as perhaps optional, obsolete or even pernicious dimensions of biblical teaching. Those who do so typically insist that longing for heaven leads to the despising of this present life. But the apostle Paul would have none of this. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without foundation, and so is your faith." "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." "If we have placed our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone." Truly, according to the teaching of Holy Scripture, belief in Christ's resurrection, our own future resurrection and the eternal life made possible thereby belong to the very heart of the Christian faith and are absolutely essential to the Christian life itself.

Likewise our focal passage makes clear the effect faith in our future resurrection must and will have. Easter resurrection faith makes us "steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that [our] labor is not in vain."

If we would live as we should here and now, then we may and must keep one eye open to what is promised to us there and then.

Christian Crossword

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Across

- I am the ___ and the life. (John 11:25)
- First garden.
- Shiphai, the son of _____. (1 Chron. 4:37)
- I stand ___ the door. (Rev. 3:20)
- Ye do well that ye take _____. (2 Pet. 1:19)
- Abstain from ___ offered to idols. (Acts 15:29)
- ___ not steal. (Mark 10:19)
- Set in _____. (Titus 1:5)
- Positive votes.
- What you do at meals.
- Short for Ezra.
- Taxi ____.
- A Hebrew refrain found often in Psalms. (Ps. 4:2)
- Uncle's mate.
- The captain's name. (Jer. 37:13)
- His ___ are open unto their prayers. (1 Pet. 3:12)
- Rosemary's nickname.
- I am not come ____

- destroy. (Matt. 5:17)
- Benjamin's nickname.
- Joseph's uncle. (Gen. 33:1, 2)
- ___ thou not unto his words. (Prov. 30:6)
- Allow.
- They shall ___ comforted. (Matt. 5:4)
- Pronoun.
- A fool hath no delight ___ understanding. (Prov. 18:2)
- The harvest is _____. (Joel 3:13)
- Not fat.
- New Hampshire. (abbr.)
- England. (abbr.)
- A man shall ___ a pit. (Ex. 21:33)
- Have no other ___ before me. (Ex. 20:3)

Down

- Solomon's son. (1 Kings 11:43)
- Mushi, Mahli, and _____. (1 Chron. 23:23)
- The ___ is the Word of

- God. (Luke 8:11)
- Be not children in _____. (1 Cor. 14:20)
- Abraham's sacrifice. (Gen. 22:13)
- Aaron's son. (Num. 3:32)
- Bodies of _____. (Job 13:12)
- Small children.
- ___ and outs.
- And she bare him _____. (Ex. 6:23)
- Total. (abbr.)
- In lowliness of mind let ___ esteem others. (Phil. 2:3)
- Elijah's companion. (2 Kings 2:11)
- He that is an _____. (John 10:12)
- Book of wisdom written by Solomon.
- Help in time of _____. (Heb. 4:16)
- Israel's favorite son. (Gen. 37:3)
- ___ himself in water. (Num. 19:19)
- ___ it up. (Rev. 10:10)

- I will raise ___ up. (John 2:19)
- Opposite of "out."
- Edwin's nickname.
- ___ forth into Galilee. (John 1:43)





Photo courtesy of Lakeside Baptist Church

LAKESIDE GAS RAISE MONEY FOR MINISTRY

The Girls in Action of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, recently presented a check for \$1,739.14 to Wilma Patterson (back row, third from left), director of The Acknowledge Outreach Ministry at Wylam Baptist Church. The money was raised at a coffee-house hosted by the girls after the March 7 evening service.

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1,000 attacks in 500 days in Karnataka: Indian Christians face major persecution

Minority Christians in India's southern state of Karnataka are under an unprecedented wave of persecution, having faced more than 1,000 attacks in 500 days, according to an independent investigation by a former senior judge on the Karnataka High Court.

The spate began Sept. 14, 2008, when at least 12 churches were attacked in one day in the city of Mangalore, said Justice Michael Saldanha, who formerly served on the Karnataka court.

"On Jan. 26 — the day we celebrated India's Republic Day — Karnataka's 1,000th attack took place in Mysore city," Saldanha said.

Latest attack at funeral

Saldanha conducted a People's Tribunal inquiry into the attacks on Christians in Karnataka on behalf of the People's Union for Civil Liberties chapter in Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada district and the Karnataka chapter of Transparency International. There are just over 1 million Christians among Karnataka's 52 million people. "Attacks are taking place every day," said Saldanha, chairperson of the local Transparency International chapter.

The latest attack took place

March 17 when a mob of about 150 people led by the Hindu extremist Vishwa Hindu Parishad organization (World Hindu Council or VHP) and its youth wing, Bajrang Dal, stormed the funeral of a 50-year-old Christian, as reported by the Karnataka-based Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC).

According to GCIC, as pastor Sunder Raj of St. Thomas Church in Gijahalli in Karnataka's Hassan district was about to begin the funeral service, the mob pulled the coffin apart and desecrated the cross the relatives of the deceased were carrying. They dumped the body outside, claiming that his burial would contaminate Indian soil and his body should be buried in Rome or the United States, GCIC reported.

With police intervention, the funeral took place later the same day.

Saldanha, blaming the state government for the attacks, said the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Karnataka had "outdone Orissa," referring to another region where Christians in India have faced intense persecution.

Karnataka Home Minister V.S. Acharya denied the results of the inquiry led by Saldanha.

"The allegation of Karnataka having faced 1,000 attacks is ab-

solutely false," Acharya told Compass. "There is liberty in the state. Sections of the media are trying to hype it, and such claims are politically motivated. Karnataka is the most peaceful state in India, and the people are law-abiding."

Imprisoned 'falsely'

The wave of persecution in Karnataka began as fallout from the anti-Christian mayhem in eastern Orissa state, where Maoists killed a VHP leader in August 2008, with Hindu extremists wrongly accusing Christians. The attacks in Orissa's Kandhamal district, the epicenter of the bloodbath, resulted in the death of about 100 people; 4,640 houses were burned along with 252 churches and 13 educational institutions.

Violent attacks have stopped in Orissa, but Karnataka continues to be volatile. In addition to the attacks, numerous Christians also have faced false charges of fraudulent or forced conversions throughout Karnataka.

"I have been to many police stations where complaints of [forced] conversions have been lodged against Christians," Saldanha said, "and when I asked the police why they were acting on frivolous complaints, most of them told me that they had orders from above."

Saldanha, in his report, which has not been publicly released, recounts that Christians "are dragged to the police station under false allegations, immediately locked up, beaten up and denied bail by the lower judiciary, which functions as the loyal partner of the police department and refuses bail on the grounds that 'the police have objected.'"

The report states that 468 Christian workers in rural areas had been targeted with such actions since September 2008. (BP)

Islamic extremists kill Somalian church leader, torch house

Islamic militants in Somalia tracked down an underground church leader who had previously escaped a kidnapping attempt and killed him, Christian sources said.

Islamic extremist al-Shabaab rebels shot Madobe Abdi to death March 15 in Mahaday village, 31 miles north of Johwar. He had escaped an al-Shabaab attempt to kidnap him March 2.

In February, on the outskirts of Mogadishu, alleged members of the government-aligned Islamic Courts Union set fire to the house of an underground church member they suspected of having left Islam.

The assailants looted the home before setting it on fire. Area residents tried to extinguish the blaze, which left the house uninhabitable. (CD)



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'Reach these people'

Colorado Springs not a Christian 'mecca,' NAMB missionary says

What could be better than serving as a North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary in picturesque Colorado Springs, Colo.? After all, the city of 380,000 backs up to the base of snow-capped, 14,000-foot-tall Pikes Peak on the edge of the Rocky Mountains.

Money and *Outside* magazines have both deemed it as No. 1 on the list of the best places to live in the United States. It's perceived as a Christian "mecca" and nicknamed "The Evangelical Vatican" because so many evangelical Christian organizations have their headquarters here — Focus on the Family, The Navigators, the International Bible Society and Young Life, just to mention a few.

Colorado Springs is a military stronghold, the location of the Army's Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Air Force Base, NORAD and the United States Air Force Academy.

The 6,000-foot high city is headquarters to the U.S. Olympic Committee, the U.S. Olympic Training Center and the national sports federations for Olympic bobsledding, fencing, figure skating, basketball, boxing, cycling, judo, hockey, swimming, shooting, triathlon, volleyball and wrestling.

The Colorado Springs area is also a vast wilderness of "lost" souls. Just ask Bill and Carol Lighty.

Bill Lighty, 53, serves as a NAMB national missionary and director of missions for Pikes Peak Baptist Association, which includes about 50 Southern Baptist churches and church plants. In a metro area of more than 600,000, 83 percent (some 500,000) never darken the door of a church — any church.

"God really broke my heart over the lostness of the Pikes Peak region," said Lighty, who, with his wife of 32 years has worked in his current assignment two and a half years. Prior to that, he spent almost 21 years as pastor of Chapel Hills Baptist Church, Colorado Springs.

Worship of many 'gods'

Although Lighty said Mormonism and Catholicism are both strongly entrenched in the Colorado Springs area, "there's half a million people here who don't know Christ."

In addition to Pikes Peak, another of Colorado Springs' famous landmarks is the "Garden of the Gods," so-called because when it was named in 1859, it was described as a "place fit for the assembling of the gods." Lighty said this focus on the mythical gods — but not on the one true God — is symptomatic of many of the residents of the Colorado Springs area.

"In a very real sense, Colorado Springs is not godless because the people here have a lot of gods they worship," he said. "Some worship nature and the mountains. Some



NAMB photo

PEOPLE IN NEED — NAMB missionary Bill Lighty (right) and church planter Chris Nason sit in front of a popular bookstore catering to the needs of the spiritually eclectic community of Manitou Springs, Colo.

worship skiing. Some worship the metaphysical. Spiritualism is a big element of our culture, and we have a strong Wiccan movement. ... So our challenge is competing with all these other gods plus the mountains — where there's something to do 12 months out of the year — in order to help people worship the one true God versus their multiple gods."

Lighty said he wears different hats in his job — church-planting strategist, a coach to pastors and a consultant to churches.

"I have now come to the realization that one church cannot reach the Pikes Peak region for the kingdom of God," Lighty said. "If one church could have, it would have been done 100 years ago. I don't think one denomination can do it, but that it's going to take hundreds and hundreds of churches to reach these people significantly for God."

One of Lighty's "hot buttons" and key church-planting strategies centers on multihousing ministry, especially in nearby Manitou Springs. According to Lighty, 50 percent to 60 percent of families living in America (U.S. citizens and noncitizens) reside in apartment complexes or mobile home communities. But 95 percent of these people do not associate with a local church, and only 4 percent say they actually attend a church.

"So one thing we're trying to communicate to pastors is that these people may never come to your church building but perhaps we can plant a church in that multihousing community," whether an apartment complex or mobile home park, Lighty said.

Wynn Greene is Pikes Peak Baptist Association's multihousing coordinator for the Front Range area of the Rocky Mountains.

"We're not keeping up with what God is doing," Greene said. "God has brought the world to America and to multihousing communities. So we missionaries can put our passports back in the drawer and our suitcase back in the closet and start praying for the local community."

Challenge intensifies

Lighty said the challenge to reach Colorado Springs is intensifying because the percentage of unchurched in the Colorado Springs metro area is going up, not down, and Colorado Springs continues to grow.

"To the best of my knowledge, there has never been a revival west of the Mississippi River and that's sad," Lighty said. "I've been praying for 25 years that God would bring us a revival and that we would see a fresh movement of God in this region, whether it's along the I-25 corridor, in Denver, Colorado Springs, Fort Collins or wherever." (NAMB)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Cohabitation — normative but harmful, study says

ATLANTA — Cohabitation is increasingly becoming the first co-residential union formed among young adults, a new study has found, but those who practice some facets of marriage without the foundation of commitment are harming their relationship.

"Over the past several decades, there have been large increases in the number of persons who have ever cohabited, that is, lived together with a sexual partner of the opposite sex," said the study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics, released March 2.

The data, collected in 2002, showed that the proportion of women in their late 30s who had ever cohabited had doubled in 15 years, to 61 percent. Half of couples who cohabit marry within three years, the study said, but the likelihood that a marriage would last for a decade or more decreased by 6 percentage points if the couple had lived together first. Additionally a couple who lives together before getting engaged and married is 10 percentage points more likely to break up before their 10-year anniversary than is a married couple who didn't cohabit.

"Cohabitation is certainly a moral issue, but seeing it as a sociological and psychological issue as well reveals that cohabiting relationships tend — with all other things being equal — to be shorter-lived and more volatile than marriages because cohabitation is an ambiguous relationship," said Glenn Stanton, director of family formation studies at Focus on the Family.

Less than half of adults link Easter to resurrection

VENTURA, Calif. — While most Americans describe Easter as a religious holiday, less than half of U.S. adults surveyed link it specifically to the resurrection of Jesus, a Barna Group study shows.

Seven in 10 respondents mentioned religion or spirituality in their response to an open-ended question about how they describe what Easter means to them personally. But just 42 percent tied Easter to the resurrection. At 73 percent, baby boomers (ages 45 to 63) were the most likely to describe Easter as a religious holiday, compared to two-thirds of those ages 26 to 44 and Americans 64 and older. The youngest group of adults (ages 18 to 25) were least likely, at 58 percent, to use that kind of description.

Other than the day Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead, respondents described Easter as "a Christian holiday, a celebration of God or Jesus, a celebration of Passover, a holy day" or a special day to go to church, Barna researchers said.

The findings are based on phone interviews of a random sample of 1,005 U.S. adults from Feb. 7–10 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Americans don't see poverty relief as duty of faith groups

RICHMOND, Va. — Americans believe childhood poverty is a problem that demands urgent attention, but rank faith-based groups last when asked who should be responsible for meeting the need, according to a new survey.

The poll interviewed 1,002 U.S. adults via telephone and found 66 percent of Americans believe the United States has an obligation to assist poverty-stricken children around the world.

The survey asked respondents whose responsibility it is to provide aid to children in developing nations. Almost three in 10 (29 percent) said international nonprofit organizations should offer relief, followed by the governments where the children live (25 percent) and developed nations such as the United States (19 percent).

Faith-based organizations came in last, with only 16 percent of Americans holding them responsible for tackling childhood poverty.

The survey was released March 9 by ChildFund International, formerly named Christian Children's Fund. The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Salvation Army reports record Christmas donations

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Nickels, dimes and quarters added up quickly last Christmas despite the economic slump as Americans donated a record \$139 million to the Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign.

Bell ringers set up the signature red kettles in front of an estimated 25,000 locations across America on Thanksgiving Day. The Salvation Army reported a 7 percent increase in giving over the \$130 million record of 2008. The Red Kettle campaign, the nation's longest running annual fundraising campaign, helps Salvation Army provide more than 28 million Americans with food, shelter, rent, substance abuse treatment and Christmas assistance each year. ☛

Senior Living Resource Guide

an advertising supplement • April 1, 2010

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

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

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

ASSISTED LIVING

LiveOak Village Assisted Living Center is uniquely designed to offer a luxurious, professionally assisted lifestyle to those choosing to make the rest of their lives the best of



their lives. The spacious suites and studios of LiveOak may be leased on a month-by-month basis without any buy-in or endowment requirement.

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

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

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

LiveOak is pet friendly, allowing residents to keep small

pets if they so desire. Other amenities include a beauty/barber shop, walking trails, green area for horseshoes, croquet and putting, a pool and jacuzzi, library, barbecue grill and an activities room with its own director who oversees daily activities.

Residents are free to come and go as they please and resident parking is provided for personal cars.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

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

Residents enjoy the Clubhouse at Village Square, which boasts an indoor heated pool, an outdoor pool and sunning area, tennis courts, weight room, men's and women's card rooms and locker/shower facilities and a meeting room for potlucks, social activities and civic events. Residents enjoy lunches out, cooking breakfast together, shopping, cards and games, speakers, and lots of get-togethers and parties. Residents have privacy when they want it and socializing when they desire it.

Call LiveOak Marketing today for more information and to schedule a tour of the campus. LiveOak can be reached at 1-800-871-7066, 251-943-6733 or visit www.LiveOakal.com.

Seniors should consider bathtub remodeling for safety, health benefits

Dream Baths of Alabama
Paid Advertising

If you worry about falling every time you step into the bathtub you probably need to give Charlie Thornton, owner of Dream Baths of Alabama, a call.

Charlie will give you a free, no-obligation estimate on converting your bathroom into a safe environment instead of a danger zone.

For senior adults or those who have mobility challenges, Charlie recommends a popular tub-to-shower conversion which allows you to enter and exit with ease. Since 60 percent of

all household injuries are from getting in or out of the bathtub, Charlie says this option is a wise choice for senior adults.

The conversion includes an oversized shower pan which allows for a portable bench seat, two safety grab-bars and a handheld shower wand so that you can sit and not have to stand for long periods of time.

"In 1-2 days we can tear out your old tub and install a walk-in shower with only a 3-5 inch step. All of our tubs and shower pans are non-slip and our walls are made of acrylic, which means there will be no fading, cracking, peeling, mold or mildew issues," he said.

Charlie points out that Dream Baths also provides walk-in safety tubs with hydrotherapy for arthritis, back problems, lupus, muscular dystrophy, fibromyalgia and aches and pains.

"Our customers are always very surprised and pleased to learn about our very affordable prices," he said, adding, "We are proud to offer a senior citizens discount to anyone 55 years and older."

Charlie and his wife, Debbie, are long-time members of Camellia Baptist Church, Prattville. For more information call Charlie at 334-312-1825 or visit www.dreambathsalabama.com.



What is reverse mortgage?

By **Jimmy Dixon, McGowin & King Mortgage, LLC**
Paid Advertising

A reverse mortgage is a loan sponsored by the U.S. Government that enables senior homeowners (62 and older) to convert part of the equity in their homes into tax-free money or pay off an existing mortgage.

Increasingly, older homeowners are using reverse mortgages to supplement their retirement incomes, pay for health care, make home improvements and create cash reserves for emergencies.

The reverse mortgage is an excellent planning tool that has been used by homeowners from all walks of life to enhance their retirement years. The growing popularity of the product is evidence of its benefit in an array of financial circumstances.

To be eligible for a reverse mortgage you must be 62 years old and be a homeowner with some equity in your home. You may qualify even if there is an existing mortgage on your home.

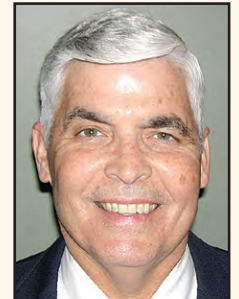
How much you can get depends on a few factors, including your age, the value of your home, the amount of equity in it and interest rates.

There are several options available for how you receive the money from a reverse mortgage. You can receive the money in an upfront lump sum, a line of credit, fixed monthly amounts or a combination of options.

For a free brochure or more information, call Jimmy Dixon at 205-567-4800, or toll-free at 1-866-879-7775.

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state, helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

He is Bible study director for Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown, as well as an Upward Basketball coach, deacon and volunteer.



Jimmy Dixon

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Alabama SenioRx Program

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Administered statewide by the Department of Senior Services through 13 Area Agencies on Aging that provide a variety of services.



Montrose Bay Health and Rehab Center completes newly remodeled rehabilitation wing, transitional living apartment to better meet patients' needs

Montrose Bay Health and Rehab Center
Paid Advertising

When it comes to cutting edge services for seniors needing rehabilitation care in Alabama, Montrose Bay Health and Rehab Center is making its mark.

This quaint facility is located just outside beautiful Fairhope, in the upscale community of Montrose. According to facility administrator Wayne Cole, "The No. 1 goal at Montrose Bay Health and Rehab is to provide compassionate, family-oriented, short and long-term care for our residents. We provide our residents with services specifically designed to help them acquire their highest level of functioning that their health limitations will allow," he said.

Montrose Bay's rehabilitation services are aimed at the goals of returning each patient to their prior level of function and improving their quality of life.

Comprehensive services that are provided include 24-hour nursing, physical, occupational and

speech therapy to residents who require rehabilitation services.

The facility offers rehabilitation programs for patients with a myriad of needs such as wound care, pain management, dementia care, diabetic care, post-operative care for total hip or knee replacement, cardiac by-pass, amputation reconditioning and strengthening and neurological disorders.

According to marketing director Rhonda Brown, the latest addition to Montrose Bay Health and Rehabilitation Center is the state-of-the-art transitional apartment and newly remodeled rehabilitation wing.

"This apartment provides the perfect setting for residents to get prepared for returning to their home or former place of residence once their therapy is complete. This transitional apartment allows them to practice everyday tasks with or without assistance, depending on their level of independence," she explained.

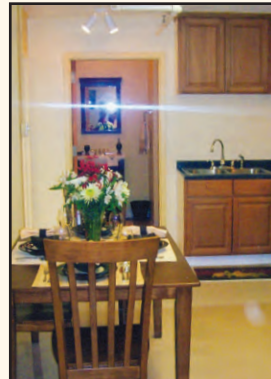
Brown says the apartment is furnished to resemble a typical home setting, complete with a HD flat screen TV, a dining table, bed-



room and a full kitchen. This controlled environment gives the patient the advantage of learning new, adaptive skills at their own pace so that once their rehabilitation is complete they can make a comfortable and stress-free transition to their previous lifestyle and place of residence.

Brown points out that another service that has just been implemented at Montrose Bay is the availability of inpatient hospice services within the facility. "We are pleased to be able to offer this service because not all skilled nursing facilities have inpatient hospice care. This is one more way we are working to provide a full spectrum of care to our residents," she said.

For more information contact Rhonda Brown, admissions and marketing director, at 251-591-2945 or 251-928-2177.



Comfort Keepers®: Providing in-home, nonmedical services

Comfort Keepers
Paid Advertising

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

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



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

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

The vast majority of Comfort Keepers® clients are

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

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

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

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

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

ERRAND SERVICES

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

COMPANION SHIP SERVICES

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

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LifeStic offers peace of mind for adult children of seniors

Total Identification Systems, Inc.
Paid Advertising

It's a scenario that we all hope will never happen. Your parent encounters a medical emergency that renders them unconscious or unable to communicate.

Emergency personnel arrive and because your parent is disoriented the EMTs are helpless to know what type of medications they are taking or if there is a serious medical condition they should be aware of as they try to administer care. Hospital personnel contact you to obtain vital information, which is critical for treatment, and in your panicked state of mind you can't remember all of his or her medications or dosage. Many times even minutes are critical in an emergency and having vital medical information such as blood type, medications, allergies and medical history readily available can mean the difference between life and death.

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

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

The LifeStic was designed to

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

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

LifeStic Plus

And now there is an enhanced version of LifeStic ... LifeStic Plus, which offers two additional features: a two-tiered security level and a full gigabyte of memory which is password encrypted. Included in LifeStic Plus is a medical records folder that holds medical records including x-rays, CAT scans, MRI scans, EKGs, etc.

A personal folder is also included on LifeStic Plus that can hold copies of a drivers license, pass ports, SSN account numbers, additional passwords, or any information you would need while away from home. For information call 251-990-3500 or visit www.LifeStic.com.

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