

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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Photo courtesy of Mel Johnson

TAKING IT IN — A four-person Alabama Baptist disaster relief team surveys damage in the Jacmel area of Haiti during a recent assessment trip. Alabama Baptists are adopting the area, with teams heading out in the coming weeks. For information about needs, visit www.alsbom.org/haiti.

'Front-line missions'

Plans firm up for Alabama Baptists to adopt Jacmel area in Haiti

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Visiting Haiti was everything you've seen on TV and then some, said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for Alabama Baptists.

"You can't begin to imagine the level of devastation that's there," he said.

But the Jan. 12 earthquake that claimed a quarter of a million lives in Haiti also opened up "so many doors of ministry," Johnson said. "The people there are open to the gospel and are eager to hear."

In the face of such great need, Alabama Baptists have decided to adopt the area of Jacmel, a town about two-and-a-half hours from Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital city and the city closest to the quake's epicenter.

"Jacmel and the surrounding villages have received a tremendous amount of refugees fleeing the earthquake zone,"

said Johnson, who took an assessment team to the area in mid-March. "The population of that area probably doubled or more."

Because of the sweeping effects of the earthquake, state Baptists will be needed for a variety of missions opportunities in Jacmel in the coming weeks and months. Trained volunteers

will be called up to go, and individuals and churches interested in organizing teams can be trained for their specific assignments, too.

The needs include

► **Deconstruction teams.** These volunteers would help with cleanup and debris removal in damaged areas.

(See 'Haitians,' page 13)

Alabama DOMs challenge GCR plan

By Bob Terry
The Alabama Baptist

If Southern Baptists want to see baptisms and church planting increase, then they must make changes that will be painful.

That was the message delivered by Ronnie Floyd, chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force. Floyd delivered that message during a recent teleconference with

associational directors of missions (DOMs) sponsored by the Network of Baptist Associations, which represents 370 of the 1,100 associations across the nation.

Several Alabama DOMs who participated in the conversation wondered if the changes recommended by the GCR Task Force will have the desired results.

Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., said changes have to

be made because Southern Baptists are not making a significant impact on "lostness" in North America.

"The process precedes the product," Floyd told the DOMs. "If I want a different product, I have to change the process. Some of the processes in Southern Baptist life need to be addressed."

Among the changes recommended by the task force are the elimination of
(See 'Alabama,' page 11)

COMMENT

Glenn Beck Is Wrong

His target may have been socially active theological liberals, but the words of Glenn Beck, the host of a nationally syndicated radio show and a FOX News Channel TV show, were an attack on all Bible-believing Christians, including Southern Baptists. And his words were wrong.

On March 2, Beck said to listeners of his radio show, "I beg you; look for the words 'social justice' or 'economic justice' on your church Web site. If you find it, run as fast as you can. Social justice and economic justice — they are code words. Am I advising people to leave their church? Yes!"

He went on to equate these two biblical principles with communism and Nazism.

Definitions may be helpful. Since the mid-1800s, the term "social justice" has been used in Christian circles to mean that Christians are not merely to give to the poor. They also are to work to correct unjust conditions that keep people poor. Economic justice has been defined as the right of individuals to earn a livable wage through work.

Unfortunately Beck's knowledge of what the Bible teaches on these topics seems to be as limited as most Americans. A November 2009 American Bible Society survey asked people to identify the source of the statement "You must defend those who are helpless and have no hope. Be fair and give justice to the poor and homeless."

The most often cited sources were President Obama, the Dalai Lama or Oprah Winfrey. Only 13 percent correctly said the statement came from the Bible (Prov. 31:8-9). Few respondents thought poverty and justice were even mentioned in the Bible even though it has more to say about poverty than about heaven, hell, adultery, pride or jealousy. More than 2,000 verses deal with the topic of poverty.

Unmistakeable call

The Bible is unmistakably clear. Proverbs 29:7 states, "The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern." Jewish society in Old Testament times was constructed to care for the poor through individual actions and government actions from the king.

The New Testament brings that concept forward. James 2:17 says, "Faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself." Baptists understand this to mean that works are an expression of one's living faith. Romans 13 teaches government can be a gift from God for doing good. Again individual action and community action go together.

Southern Baptists understand this teaching. In the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) state-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ment of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message (2000 edition), Article XV says, "All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. ... Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth."

Deep Baptist roots

Article XV, titled The Christian and the Social Order, even outlines some of the areas where Baptist Christians should work to establish God's justice and righteousness. The article reads, "In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness and vice and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death."

As recently as the 2008 SBC annual meeting, messengers adopted a resolution asking Christians to be active in the political process for causes reflecting God's righteousness. The resolution, titled On Political Engagement, urged Baptists to "participation in the democratic public policy and political process in order to help fulfill the Kingdom mandate ... 'to bring industry, government and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly love.'"

The resolution was a clear call to social and economic justice on the part of individual Christians and Baptist churches.

Perhaps that is why Richard Land, president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, observed that if taken literally, Beck would be asking people to leave Southern Baptist churches. Baptist roots are deep in social and economic justice simply because we are a Bible-believing people.

That does not mean we forsake the message of salvation through a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Unapologetically we

preach Jesus as God's gift of forgiveness of sin and practice God's call for social and economic justice in our personal lives and the life of society.

The Bible does not present these as polar opposites. Rather they are inseparably linked — faith and good works.

What is true of Baptists is true of other Bible-believing Christians. Nicholas D. Kristof recently wrote in *The New York Times* that "Evangelicals have become the new internationalists, pushing successfully for new American programs against AIDS and malaria and doing superb work on issues from human trafficking in India to mass rape in Congo."

He pointed out that World Vision, with its strong evangelical roots, is the largest U.S.-based international relief and development organization with 40,000 employees. Recently six World Vision staff members were murdered in Pakistan for helping victims of an earthquake. The organization averages losing one staff member per year to violence, but still believers go in the name of God.

Bible-believing Christians, whether they are associated with World Vision or the SBC, understand God's clear teaching to care about justice for the poor. Bible-believing Christians are working and giving their lives to make God's teaching a reality. To have those efforts compared to communism and Nazism is insulting and wrong.

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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CELEBRATE



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM
Sunday on April 11

Dodd would warn against 'fractured' CP

If he were alive today, Cooperative Program (CP) originator M.E. Dodd would warn Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches not to circumvent the CP by designating their gifts to specific entities rather than giving through the SBC's unified giving program.

That is the opinion of Dodd's granddaughter, Virginia Joyner, church historian at First Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., where Dodd served as pastor for nearly 40 years. During that pastorate, he chaired the committee that recommended the CP to the SBC in 1925. The committee's goal was to devise a way to fund the denomination's work permanently rather than having to do fundraising campaigns.

Though Dodd died in 1952, Joyner knows that his preaching and his advocacy of the CP remain relevant. If he were still alive, she said, he would call Southern Baptists to oppose any plans that encourage churches to fund convention ministries in piecemeal fashion rather than through the CP.

'Keep it all together'

"He would say, 'Keep it all together. Do the missions. Do all of the work. Do the relief and everything out of the Cooperative Program,'" she said of her grandfather.

Lamenting the fact that some congregations replace a portion of their CP giving with designated offerings to specific SBC causes, Joyner said such a plan distorts Dodd's original vision.

"I think the Cooperative Program is being fractured, and we need to pull it back together again and keep it intact," she said.

Joyner also noted that her grandfather had unique leadership skill and likely would have used it to combat disunity in the SBC today.

"I think that if my grandfather had been living today, the Southern Baptist Convention would not be in the condition it's in today," she said. "I believe that he would have kept it together because he was that kind of man. He was kind and sweet, and he would have kept all the sides together if he could have."

Before the CP, fielding financial appeals from various Baptist ministries detracted from Dodd's pastoral work, Joyner said. She noted that he would not want contemporary pastors to reassume funding allocation decisions and voluntarily take on the burden that he helped them cast aside. "He would say, 'Keep up the Cooperative Program. Do not let it break off and do missions out of part of it,'" Joyner said. (BP)

'Bingo' bill back on track

Sen. Roger Bedford's gambling bill passes Senate, awaits House vote

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, could not convince enough Alabama senators to pass his 43-page Senate Bill (SB) 380 legalizing slot machine gambling labeled as electronic bingo. But when he shortened the bill and allowed legislators — not voters — to regulate the number, location and operations of the casinos, Bedford found the 21 votes needed to pass it from the Senate.

Now gambling opponents and supporters have turned their attention to the Alabama House. Opponents are attempting to maintain the illegal status of slot machine gambling while supporters are attempting to legalize the activity that has repeatedly stalled the Legislature, clogged the court system and deadlocked two of the state's top executive officials.

The 21-13 vote came March 30 after Bedford acquired three key votes from Sens. Bobby Denton, D-Muscle Shoals; Jim Preuitt, D-Talladega; and Larry Means, D-Attalla. If it passes the House, it will go before Alabama residents for a vote.

Strategic move in debate

Hours before the vote, senators opposing the bill were not allowed to participate in the debate. Right after the bill was introduced, pro-gambling Sens. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro, and Quinton Ross, D-Montgomery, began filibustering until another senator asked for cloture to stop the debate.

Anti-gambling senators had hoped to present an amendment giving Alabamians what they called a "clear vote" on gambling, but they were kept from speaking until less than 30 minutes before the vote was called.

"It's time the people understand what's going on in the Senate," said Sen. Paul Sanford, R-Huntsville, after he realized there was not enough time to present his amendment. "They don't want the truth to be out. They don't want to discuss the positives and negatives of this issue. ... Why is it they stand up here and say let the people vote but they do not let the senators have a say on the bill? ... It is a disservice to the state of Alabama. ... Today is a perfect example of how government does not function for the citizens of Alabama."

Sen. Hank Erwin, R-Montevallo, said the vote was a "display of brute, raw power."

"They did their deed for the gamblers of Alabama," he added. "We fought gallantly, and I'm proud of all 13 (senators) that stood there tall and determined. They gave their best effort, but we came up short and it's now up to the rest of the Legislature."

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama

Citizens Action Program, said pro-gambling senators "rammed the bill through."

"It was never a debate," he said. "They talk about letting the people vote, but if they run it through the House like they did the Senate, only one side will get this story out."

Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, said the push to pass the bill was so strong no amendments from either side were allowed — amendments that would have made "the bill more tolerable and better for the people of Alabama."

"It just shows the power that gambling interests have in the state of Alabama right now," he said. "They ran the senators. They ran the lieutenant governor. They had a complete solid front."

At press time, SB 380 redefined bingo to include machines that perform the game without player interaction and allowed an unlimited number of gambling operations around the state. The bill requires at least a 25 percent tax on bingo revenue (the amount after payouts are given) but left it to legislators to decide whether to add license fees to bingo operations.

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

After the vote, Erwin tried to raise concern with Lt. Gov. Jim Folsom, D-Cullman, about possible conflicts of interest within the Senate body since some voting senators represent charities operating gambling facilities. Although Folsom took several voice votes supporting SB 380, he refused to answer Erwin saying he did not hear the question.

'Reeks of conflict of interest'

"We were trying to raise the point that you've got a vote here that is very difficult to justify because it reeks of a conflict of interest," Erwin said. "I tried to present the evidence to the lieutenant governor for a ruling, but he refused to hear the point of order."

According to The Associated Press, Bedford said the state's financial problems helped him pass the bill.

"We need the hundreds of millions of dollars of voluntary revenue that will come from electronic bingo," he reportedly said. "It's time

we end these nighttime raids without search warrants or subpoenas."

Gov. Bob Riley said this bill is about "corruption" not gambling.

"This is the most corrupt piece of legislation ever considered by the Senate," he said in a press release. "Gambling always brings corruption with it wherever it goes. Alabamians should ask themselves one question about this bill: do they think we will have less corruption or more corruption if it passes?" Riley calls the bill a "blank check."

"It lets legislators come back next year and decide where to put casinos, and they will put them wherever the powerful gambling interests who contribute to their campaigns want them. ... This bill doesn't limit gambling. It expands it to potentially every community and to all forms of gambling, not just slot machines. ... This bill also allows gambling interests to continue laundering campaign contributions through [political action committees]. Other states that allow gambling have restricted campaign contributions from gambling interests to prevent corruption. This bill does not."

Although disappointed, Godfrey said gambling opponents at the Statehouse "still trust in the Lord and know He is in charge."

Although disappointed, Godfrey said gambling opponents at the Statehouse "still trust in the Lord and know He is in charge."

'Pressure is intense'

"Time is running out, but the pressure is going to be intense," he said. "We are already hearing that pro-gambling forces are already applying pressure to House members to get them to vote for this bill. ... We don't think they have the votes, but just like they peeled votes off here (in the Senate) they are going to try to peel votes off in the House."

Godfrey said it's more important than ever for Christians to contact their representatives and respectfully ask them to oppose SB380.

"They need to call in large numbers," he added. "We need to burn the phone lines up at the Statehouse and send letters, cards and e-mails. There needs to be an outpouring that would stun the House members. ... They shouted us down (at the anti-gambling rally) in February. They didn't allow the opposition to debate the bill March 30, and if it passes the House and goes to the people for a vote you can rest assured they are going to try to silence us and control the airwaves and media so the people of Alabama will not get to hear the down side of gambling." ☞

Getting In On The Action

To contact your representative about the 'bingo' bill that is now in the House of Representatives, call 334-242-7600.

Court denies stay on VictoryLand, expedites case schedule

Alabama Supreme Court justices issued two orders March 30 concerning an ongoing court case between Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling and Macon County's VictoryLand casino.

The court denied the task force's motion to stay an injunction issued by Circuit Judge Tom Young since the case is still "pending in the trial court."

Young set a hearing on the injunction for April 8.

"We assume a ruling on the motion will be made at that time or immediately thereafter," the Supreme Court's order stated.

Seconds after the first ruling, the Supreme Court released a second order setting an ex-

pedited briefing schedule to ensure the rest of the case be heard in a timely manner.

A series of motions, temporary restraining orders and injunctions by VictoryLand casino attorneys have prevented a task force raid, but the battle has raged on in Young's courtroom without resolution.

'Rapid resolution' possible

Riley said he is pleased with the Supreme Court's decision, which he said "is moving the case along and expediting our appeal."

"It is encouraging that the Supreme Court wants to go forward with this case and has set such an aggressive briefing schedule," task force Commander John Tyson said in

a press release. "The unprecedented order by Judge Young preventing state troopers from enforcing the law cannot be allowed to stand. The Supreme Court's order should allow for a rapid resolution of the task force's appeal."

The high court gave the task force until April 7 to file its brief. VictoryLand is to file its brief by April 14. Then the task force has until April 19 to respond.

Tyson said if Young doesn't grant the task force's stay motion, then it will immediately re-file the case in the high court.

"The Supreme Court's order will allow Judge Young the chance to fix the mess that he created," he said. (TAB)

Keeping it creative

Make message memorable, meaningful by stimulating children's senses, expert says

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

Probably every adult can remember songs they were taught as children," said Rod Marshall, vice president of counseling for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. "But the ones they can probably remember the best were ones with motions attached to them. We all remember Sunday School lessons or VBS (Vacation Bible School) lessons where we prepared things, tasted things and smelled things."

Have tactile activities

It's things with tactile stimulation like arts and crafts, cooking, drama and music that make an impact. "Anything that involves more of a child's body than just the eyes and ears will be a doorway into creativity," he said.

And creativity is a vital part of VBS because the more sensory channels teachers can tap into, the more likely it is their intended message will take hold, added Marshall, a registered play therapist supervisor and past president of Alabama Association for Play Therapy.

It's that stimulation through creativity that opens doors for sharing the gospel, said Mandy Marbutt, director of children's ministries at Clements Baptist Church, Athens, in Limestone Baptist Association.

Make it fun

"They have so many other things that draw their attention, so it's important to do things that will encourage them to want to come to VBS. ... If it's not fun, engaging and creative, children won't want to come," added Marbutt, who has worked in various VBS roles for more than



Day 1: Who Am I?

Bible Story: God Creates Adam & Eve (Gen. 2)
Application: I am God's greatest creation. I can praise Him.

Day 2: Does God Care About Me?

Bible Story: Joseph Recalls God's Provision (Gen. 45)
Application: God cares about me. I can trust Him no matter what.

Day 3: What Is God's Plan for Me?

Bible Story: Jesus Visits Zacchaeus (Luke 19)

Application: God has a plan for me. I can have a relationship with Jesus.

Day 4: How Can I Be Like Jesus?

Bible Story: Jesus, Our Example (Luke 4 and 5; Mark 6)
Application: I can be like Jesus. I can follow His example.

Day 5: What Do I Do Now?

Bible Study: Go to it! Do it! (Phil. 4:4-9)
Application: I know what to do. I can live in ways that honor God.

25 years and currently serves on Limestone Association's VBS team.

Marshall said some ways to keep things engaging for children include

▶ Putting things to music.

Children are rhythmic and quickly respond to the opportunity to move around.

▶ Decorating the room.

Use props and demonstrations that affirm the lesson themes.

▶ Making the lesson experiential.

Instead of talking about harvesting and planting, let the children plant seeds. Instead of talking about being fishers of men, let them fish.

▶ Committing to a wholesome, affirming touch.

Greet the children with a squeeze on the hand. Hug them when they leave. Make eye contact.

▶ Making a game out of the lesson.

Take care to ensure the game is age appropriate and not overly challenging.

Set the tone

It's also important for the teacher to be brave and remember he or she sets the tone for a child's attentiveness and involvement, Marshall added.

"The teacher is the thermostat for the classroom, and what they set the temperature for is the way the children will react," he said. "If you

want children to have fun and participate, you have to have fun and participate."


And if you feel as if creativity is not your sweet spot, then ask for help, Marbutt said.

"The biggest thing for us is to try to get the whole church involved," she said. "When you get the whole church involved, you find people with talents in certain areas, people with expertise, who can then take things off of you or use their resources to do something for VBS. ... I feel like by getting the whole church involved and letting them know what's going on, they may think of something I never would have thought of."

And brainstorming for this year's ranch theme from LifeWay Christian Resources — "Saddle Ridge Ranch," based on James 1:5 — should come easy, Marbutt said, noting a ranch is something with which many people in Alabama are familiar.

Use familiarity

"For most people, even if they weren't raised on a farm or around animals, they have some knowledge of it — a point of reference," she said.

For more creative ideas or information on this year's theme, visit www.vbs.lifeway.com or contact your association's VBS director. 

Club VBS: Route 254

a condensed option for weeklong, weekend or missions events

ROUTE 1:

Destination Worship

(Washington)
• Bible Story: Journey to the King (Matt. 2:1-15)
• Application: I can choose to worship Jesus.

(Matt. 26, 27, 28)

• Application: I can choose to accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord.

ROUTE 4:

Destination Belief

(Yellowstone National Park)
• Bible Story: Believe It! (John 20)
• Application: I can choose to believe Jesus is real.

ROUTE 2:

Destination Thankfulness

(Chicago)
• Bible Story: Where were the nine? (Luke 17)
• Application: I can choose to thank Jesus.

ROUTE 5:

Destination Obedience

(Knott's Berry Farm)
• Bible Story: Choices on the Open Road (Acts 8)
• Application: I can choose to obey Jesus.

ROUTE 3:

Destination Salvation

(Lebanon, Kan.)
• Bible Story: The Road to Salvation

vbs.lifeway.com/clubvbs

Important things for VBS teachers to remember:

1. Develop real relationships.

It's important for teachers to know each child — what he or she likes and his or her interests and favorite color — so they can share in relationship with him or her.

"If we just evangelize without relationship, it can be off-putting sometimes," said Rod Marshall, vice president of counseling for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. "For some kids, if an adult who's not their parent really invests themselves in relationship with that child, it may be the first time that's happened so that child will be interested in what they have to say."

2. Be a role model.

When it is the end of the day, things didn't go as planned and teachers are tired, it is still important for the fruit of the Spirit to be manifested in their behavior.

"Kids learn by observing so for every teacher of VBS, their prayer should be for the fruit to shine through in everything they say and do — to be peaceful, loving, merciful, kind, gentle, patient, especially when [they're] tired."

3. Create bite-size activities.

"Take education objectives and break them down to bite-size pieces so no activity is planned to last more than

5-10 minutes but there are more activities and they build on each other," Marshall said. A general rule of thumb is to consider the age of a child, and that is approximately the number of minutes his or her attention span will last.

4. Have fun.

Children learn best when they are having fun, so it is vital for teachers to leave their inhibitions at the door and have fun with the children. "The potential to significantly impact them with, what we believe is, the most important thing they'll ever learn is much greater if we're ... having fun with age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate methods; keeping it short; and being nontraditional."

5. Don't get too self-important.

A teacher must remember not to be discouraged if he or she is not the one to reap the harvest of a child coming to Christ. "You might be the sower and someone else the cultivator and someone else the reaper, so don't think because you taught VBS and no one made a profession of faith that you wasted your time. ... You've been faithful and obedient and God knows that so don't get too focused on the results the way we tend to define them by the showing of hand and counting of decisions." (TAB)

Vacation Bible School

What people are saying on

facebook

“What do you think are some important factors to keep in mind when planning for VBS?”



Felicia Key Marlowe

Prayer for God to send kids who have homes that need to hear about Jesus & hope & pray the parents take an interest too & start coming to church with their children



Tammy Winton

For every leader trained, statistics show that a child will become a Christian — so go to training in your area!



Janie Whitt Smith

Don't get so hung up on decorations and food and STUFF that you forget about the children!



Cindy Navarro

This may be the first, maybe the only, encounter some kids have with the gospel. Have fun but make sure they hear about Jesus!!! I attended church faithfully as a child, but the memories of VBS are the strongest.



Stephen A. Dedman

The children may walk away with a certificate, Kool-Aid stains and a T-shirt that won't even last all summer, but the memorized Scripture and memories will last a lifetime! If the workers don't enjoy it, neither will the children! I am a VBS junky and pastor!



Don Blakely

Bible school is probably one of the most important witnessing tools that we have. We get children and people in church who won't come on Sundays. I think that it is important to share Christ's love to them and pray they will accept Him.

**Are you on Facebook?
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Training conferences 'crucial' part of successful VBS, excited workers

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

Every year, consultants from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) spend the majority of their spring traveling around the state, hosting Vacation Bible School (VBS) training conferences for associational VBS teams.

“It brings Vacation Bible School to a local level,” said James Blakeney, an associate in the SBOM's office of Sunday School.

This year, VBS training teams have been established in at least 63 associations.

And for the first time in many years, if not the first time ever, Pine Barren Baptist Association is one of them.

“People don't get seriously involved if they have to travel or feel like they're not a part of it,” said Denise Morgan, VBS director for Pine Barren Association and Gulletts Bluff Baptist Church, Camden.

‘More local’

That's why she and John Marks, director of missions for Pine Barren Association and Bethlehem Baptist Association, knew hosting training for Pine Barren Association's 13 churches was important, despite the sessions hosted each year for Bethlehem Association.

“I think with it being more local, it will get those people to seeing that they don't have to go somewhere else to get the information or actually do the program. ... I believe it will get some people excited about [VBS].”

And that's part of the reason associa-

tional training conferences are important, Blakeney said. “It gives teachers an early head start on preparation for Vacation Bible School. ... Most of the time when a person leaves an associational training clinic, they have at least one day's VBS in mind as to how things will fit together.”

Meg Stringer can attest to that.

Stringer, Butler Baptist Association's VBS director, said although she had helped with VBS for many years at Damascus Baptist Church, Greenville, she never understood the importance of early planning until she attended a training conference.

“I realized it takes more than a month or so of preparation — a lot more,” she said. “I just really, really find [training] important to get excited about [VBS] so you can go back to your church and get everyone else excited.”

Because if workers are excited about VBS, then they'll be eager to share it with children they know, Stringer added.

“VBS is the best tool we have anywhere in our Southern Baptist arsenal” and the associational training conferences “make all the difference in the world,” she said, noting they not only train workers but also serve as a resource for workers and churches that have never done VBS before.

Big help

“I cannot imagine a year without early preparation for Vacation Bible School,” Blakeney said. “It's crucial to get people excited about VBS” and provides great opportunities for talking with directors and pastors about things like preparation and budgeting, enlistment of workers, training and follow-up.

Adult, youth VBS offer additional outlet for Bible teaching

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

Vacation Bible School (VBS) isn't just for the little ones with the Kool-Aid mustaches anymore.

It's for people of all ages.

“It's a great outreach tool for adults and youth to study the Bible just like children,” said James Blakeney, an associate in the office of Sunday School for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“Some of our churches have found a very effective way of ministering to adults at the same time they are ministering to the children.”

And every year, there are churches that try VBS for adults and youth for the first time, Blakeney noted.

This year, in addition to its normal VBS for children and youth, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Moulton, in Muscle Shoals Baptist Association will offer VBS for adults and special-needs adults, as well as a missions VBS in Honduras.

“We need to teach the Bible more and more, and adults need more exposure to Word of God,” Associate Pastor Neil Carter said, adding that VBS is a great outlet for that.

Another reason to open VBS to older age groups is because even adults “are looking for activities,” said Carter, who serves on Muscle Shoals Association's VBS team, helping lead adult VBS training courses.

“It never hurts to try new things, never hurts,” he said. “And

after traveling the state, talking with folks throughout the state who are already doing a great job at this, (I know) it's something that can really benefit a church.”

Carter said just like any other VBS, preliminary planning stages for adult and youth VBS include prayer, planning follow-up and worker training (see ‘When planning’ at left for more reminders).

“If a church is getting ready to start planning any kind of VBS, the first thing it needs to plan is the follow-up,” he said. “Sometimes we leave it until the last thing and it gets neglected.”

‘Reach people’

Of course, recruiting and training workers is essential to having a great VBS, Carter pointed out.

“But before any of that — even the follow-up — start praying,” he said. “Praying first, then (planning) follow-up and then training.”

No matter which age a church chooses to focus on with VBS, Blakeney said it's important to remember that “it's just a new way to reach people.”

“I encourage that every year — find as many ways as you can to use Vacation Bible school to minister to people,” he said.

For more information about or resources for adult and youth VBS, contact your associational office or call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 286.

Upcoming training conferences

Alabama Crenshaw — April 10	East Liberty — April 29	Muscle Shoals — April 20
Autauga — April 13	Elmore — April 22	North Jefferson — April 20
Baldwin — May 3	Etowah — April 22	Pickens — April 29
Barbour — April 26	East Liberty — April 29	Pine Barren — April 18
Bessemer — April 10	Fayette — April 13	Pleasant Grove — April 19
Bethlehem — April 8	Franklin — April 15	Russell — April 19
Birmingham — April 27	Geneva — April 12	Sardis — April 25
Butler — April 18	Judson — May 1	Salem-Troy — April 27
Carey — April 18	Limestone — April 22	Sipsey — April 24
Central — April 26	Madison — April 19	St. Clair — April 12
Cherokee — April 25	Marshall — April 12	Tallapoosa — April 22
Cleburne — April 17	Mobile — April 19	Tennessee River — April 18
Columbia — April 29	Morgan — April 8	Walker — April 22
Dale — April 24	Mud Creek — April 10	West Cullman — April 24
		Winston — April 27

For times and locations, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org or contact your associational office.

When planning ...

- Establish a budget
- Coordinate staff, dates and times
- Build enthusiasm
- Recruit workers
- Divide workers into departments
- Schedule worker training
- Choose supplies and order materials
- Establish a rotation/schedule
- Bring in people to do new stuff
- Coordinate the schedule with rooms
- Look for unique ideas
- Publicize
- Decorate
- Show appreciation

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Ed Cruce** is retiring as director of missions for **Bessemer Association** effective April 30 to become pastor of **Fairfield High-**

lands Church, Midfield, effective May 1. He has served as director of missions for Bessemer Association for 15 years. Cruce also served as pastor in Alabama Baptist churches for 33 years before that. He and his wife, Evelyn, have four children, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



CRUCE

BIBB

► **Bibb Association** collected more than 140 packages of children's items for The Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Bill Russell is director of missions.

BIRMINGHAM

► **South Roebuck Church, Birmingham**, will host Gaither Homecoming recording artist Allison Durham Speer in concert April 25, 11 a.m. Chris Crain is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Hol-**

ly Pond, will hold its third Sunday night singing April 18, 6 p.m., with Strait Way Quartet. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Oakey Ridge Church, Andalusia**, will host singer, speaker and musical ventriloquist Lee Pitts and Nicky, God's Little Talking Tree, April 10, 5 p.m., for a special children's ministry event. Lee and Nicky will also be present April 11, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. For information call 334-222-3806. Tommy Green is pastor. ► **Victory Church, Andalusia**, collected snack items for the Opp Cancer Center. The ladies of the church also raised \$247 for the Sav-A-Life campaign with baby bottles.

EAST LIBERTY

► **Cusseta Church** will celebrate its 175th anniversary April 18, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. There will be an afternoon service at 1:30 p.m. with special singing. Charles Whitson is pastor.

HALE

► **Hale Association** will hold a Woman's Missionary Union prayer retreat April 27, 10 a.m., at Antioch Church, Greensboro. Registration will begin at 9:45 a.m. Frances Ann Higdon Smith, who is currently serving with her husband,

Shelby, as missionaries in Nicaragua, will speak. Smith will be going on a missions trip to Ecuador in the summer and will be taking goody bags prepared at the retreat. Bring a covered-dish vegetable, salad or dessert. For a list of items needed for the goody bags or to RSVP contact Debbie Holley at 205-799-1165 or dholley54@comcast.net by April 20. Arthur Thomas is pastor of Antioch. Bill Wallace is director of missions for Hale Association.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Montevallo**, will hold spring revival April 11-14, nightly at 6:30, with Roger Willmore, pastor of Deerfoot Church, Trussville. Terry Sutton is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**, will host Christian humorist Brother Billy Bob Bohannon April 25, 6 p.m. Mark Brumbeloe is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Missionary Grove Church, Cullman**, will hold revival April 18-21 with Toby Shedd, pastor of Smoke Rise Church, Warrior. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Jimmy McClenon is pastor.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Georgia Baptists target church with female pastor

DULUTH, Ga. — For the second straight year, the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC) is poised to cut ties with a historic member congregation over the issue of women in ministry. The convention's executive committee voted March 16 to declare Druid Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta not a "cooperating church" as defined in the GBC constitution and to recommend the congregation be excluded from membership at the convention's annual meeting this fall.

The action is based on a vote by the convention in November 2000 affirming the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message as the state body's doctrinal statement. The document includes the phrase, "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

"We are keeping faith with the Baptist Faith and Message with regard to women serving as pastor," said Robert White, executive director of the state convention. "The GBC has never been opposed to women serving in ministry positions other than pastor."

Graham Walker, co-pastor of Druid Hills Baptist with his wife, Mimi, said White acknowledged in a Jan. 25 meeting that Mimi Walker, who has been listed as a pastor in the state convention's annual record book since 2003, would not have been a problem before the state group voted to adopt changes made to the document in 2000 as the convention's standard. Under the revised standard, White reportedly said, the convention "no longer" accepts autonomous churches that choose to call a woman as their pastor.

Graham Walker said unlike First Baptist Church, Decatur, which did not send messengers to last year's convention meeting to challenge its removal for calling a woman pastor in 2007, Druid Hills plans to be present at the Nov. 15-16 GBC meeting at Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, to respond.

SBC Pastors Conference nominee announced

NORTH PORT, Fla. — Troy Gramling, lead pastor of Flamingo Road Church, Cooper City, will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference during its June meeting in Orlando, John Cross, pastor of South Biscayne Church, North Port, announced March 18. Cross said he will nominate Gramling because he embodies the Great Commission Resurgence "we're praying and believing God for ... in our churches and convention."

Gramling is the first announced nominee to lead the Pastors Conference, which meets two days prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Flamingo Road has led the Florida Baptist Convention in baptisms during the last four years, with 1,535 in 2009, according to the Florida Baptist Convention. The church ranked fifth in baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention in 2008, according to LifeWay Christian Resources.

According to the church Web site, Flamingo Road exists in six campuses: three in South Florida — Cooper City, Doral and Hallandale Beach; Pensacola; Lima, Peru and an Internet-based campus. "Today Flamingo Road Church is running after an ambitious goal called '50, 100, 150': 50 campuses; 100,000 in attendance and a \$150 million budget," the Web site reports.

Information from the 2009 Annual Church Profile (ACP) for Flamingo Road lists 1,535 baptisms and primary worship service attendance of 10,000 with 8,200 resident members. According to the Florida Baptist Convention, the congregation gave \$12,500, or 0.18 percent, through the Cooperative Program from total undesignated receipts of \$6,800,000, as reported in the church ACP.

Krutko new president of Belarusian Baptist Union

MINSK, Belarus — Chairs revolved in Minsk's large Bethlehem Baptist Church as Viktor Nikodimovich Krutko was elected president of the Belarusian Baptist Union on March 20. More than a two-thirds majority of the assembled 289 delegates voted for him to succeed Nikolay Vassilovich Sinkovets as the union's president.

Krutko was born June 18, 1953, and grew up in Vileysky region near Minsk. He studied theology for three years at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, graduating in 1992. He served thereafter as superintendent of Minsk district and became head pastor of the Bethlehem congregation in 2002 — a capacity in which he still serves.

The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Republic of Belarus has 13,500 members gathered in 290 congregations. Besides a relatively strong presence of the International Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (IUCECB) with nearly 4,000 members within the country, a sprinkling of autonomous Baptist congregations also exists. This IUCECB was known during Soviet times as the "underground church;" its congregations remain unregistered up to the present.

Baptists blitz state with gospel as part of GPS effort

Dillon Pannell (left) and Trent Deason, members of Millbrook Baptist Church in Elmore Baptist Association, were among thousands of Baptists in Alabama and the nation who got out March 27 to blitz neighborhoods as part of the Across Alabama effort.

Across Alabama, the local thrust of the North American Mission Board's 10-year evangelism initiative God's Plan for Sharing (GPS), started with a day of prayer walking and driving March 20, followed up by gospel distribution the next weekend.

It culminated in Harvest Sunday — Easter — on which churches were encouraged to preach specifically evangelistic messages.

On gospel distribution day, two-person teams walked through the same neighborhoods covered with prayer walking and handed out gospel fliers and invitations to their church's Easter service. (TAB)



Photo by Doug Rogers

After quake, Baptist volunteers share God's love in Chile

Mercedes Iturra has something she didn't have before Chile's 8.8-magnitude earthquake — a newfound love of Scripture.

A group of Chilean Baptist volunteers arrived March 10 in Pangu Abajo, a rural community where Iturra lives in a makeshift tent outside her collapsing home. Her children's families — including 14 grandchildren — are living with her. When the volunteers visited the family, they brought balloons and coloring books for the children and gospel tracts for the adults.

"One of the volunteers marked places in my Bible for me to read," Iturra said through a translator. "We had those handy, so when the next aftershocks came, we pulled them out and started reading from the Bible."

"A lot of people are scared, so a lot of people are paying more attention to God," said one of Iturra's daughters.

Though Iturra and her family are still searching spiritually, the help they have received from Baptist efforts in the wake of the disaster has given them hope in God's Word. The volunteers who shared their faith with the family came from a combined Chilean Baptist and Southern Baptist relief effort.

Food, games and the gospel

A field kitchen set up in the parking lot of Iglesia Evangelica Bautista El Sembrador (Evangelical Baptist Church of the Sower) in Talca is the headquarters for this project. The kitchen equipment and food are provided through Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist partner that has been coordinating two-person volunteer teams from churches in the U.S. who work with Chilean volun-

teers for a week at a time.

When Steve Wise and George Kay, the first volunteer team, arrived at El Sembrador church, there was no kitchen staff lined up and no one who spoke English. Using only hand gestures, the South Carolinians struggled to set up the kitchen. But with the help of International Mission Board representatives, they soon had staff and translators. And in its first couple of days of operation, their field kitchen produced meals for 750 Chileans each day.

The lead cook, Maria Teresa Cerda, helped organize the volunteers from various Baptist churches around Talca.

Once the food is prepared, it is stored in coolers until distribution. Each cooler holds 100 servings. Chilean Baptists with the Union Nacional de Jovenes Bautistas (National Union of Young Baptists) are helping with distribution. Some of the young volunteers deliver meals to those unable to cook in their present situations or too busy with home repairs to take time to cook.

Others drive truckloads of meals to public areas in surrounding communities. Once set up for distribution, they honk the horn sig-



BP photo

HELPING RECOVERY — Johanna Caverro Delgado (right), a National Union of Young Baptists volunteer from Puerto Montt, Chile, delivers a meal to an earthquake survivor in Talca. Chilean Baptists and South Carolina Baptists working together prepared the food.

naling for local families to receive the food. Sometimes volunteers organize games for the children or a pastor gives a gospel message. Always the volunteers build relationships and lead the people in prayer.

Southern Baptist volunteers will help with

this and other field kitchens until the end of April, when the food distribution will transition to the Chilean volunteers.

"We want to do all we can to facilitate a smooth transition back to independence for the families," Wise said. (BP)

Someone You Should Know

SS
YK

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

EMMA "FRANKIE" BOWERS

First Baptist Church, Clanton
Chilton Baptist Association



BOWERS

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: John 3:16
FAVORITE HYMN: "In the Garden"
HOBBIES: Sewing and yard work

FAMILY STATUS: Married for 58 years to Robert; two children, Robert and Barbara; and four grandchildren

Emma "Frankie" Bowers, a retired school principal, is no stranger to missions. Bowers has served as vice president of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and a trustee of World-Song Camp (Alabama WMU's camp and retreat center) in Cook Springs. She has gone on missions trips with Alabama WMU to Spain and Ukraine. In addition, she has done missions work in the Caribbean and Venezuela.

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: I grew up at Mitchell Dam. My father was with the Alabama Power Co. We were great outdoor children. I went to a one-room elementary schoolhouse.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: My mother was a very de-

vout Christian. She loved the church and was always active. I've always been in Sunday School and had a Christian home. So I just grew up believing. When I was 12 years old, I made a decision to join the church and make a public statement. By that time, we had moved to Clanton and had joined First Baptist Church, Clanton.

Q: How have you been involved in church through the years?

A: When our children were at home, my husband and I were always trying to be active in church with the same age groups as our children. After our children left, I began to teach adults in Sunday School and did some WMU work. WMU has been my favorite work. I'm currently the Chilton Baptist associational director for the WMU.

Q: What did you get from those ministries?

A: A great deal of spiritual growth and an opportunity to meet a lot of missionaries. This (past) April, I went with Alabama WMU to Ukraine. ... I was so impressed with the hope that I saw.

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

A: I just hope that I'll be able to do missions work and maybe inspire younger people.

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

A: I think being a Christian has definitely helped me in making important life decisions. My personal walk with Jesus has been a very important part of my life.

Cullman couple respond to family, needs in Chile

By Cathy Ponder
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Our daughter, Angel; her husband, Trent Tomlinson; and their four children serve as full-time International Mission Board (IMB) representatives to Chile.

For 19 days, we were repeatedly reassured that our children had survived the massive earthquake. Once they shifted from survivor mode to servant mode, they requested our help in order to meet the needs of the Chilean people affected by the earthquake and tsunami. If we could come and return some stability to their own children's lives, they would be available to be more fully involved in disaster recovery and relief efforts. We went, and finally being able to hold our children and grandchildren was pure relief.

Most of the damage to the Temuco area — about 175 miles from the quake's epicenter — is not immediately evident. Much of the damage is to inside plaster or sheetrock walls in the newer buildings. But rides to the older sections of downtown reveal the irony of nature. One building exhibits almost no damage while two doors down, it looks as if a bull had been released inside. Some buildings have a few fallen bricks while others show nothing but the original wood studs remaining. The first assessment by the IMB

Mapuche Team revealed a threefold need. Clean water, food and shelter were needed for fishing villages in the Gulf of Arauco which had been decimated by the tsunami.

Faces of the people reveal the gamut of emotions in the midst of the recovery effort. One young boy wandering through the camp offered only a blank stare when asked about his parents. Fishermen sitting in what remains of their boat display their despair. A construction supervisor hangs his head despondency as he reacts to the destruction of work finished only the day before. Yet joy is found in the smallest things — a found puppy, a warm meal or the beauty of a peaceful ocean.

Long recovery ahead

The responsibilities of the IMB workers are often overwhelming. Housing, feeding, assigning tasks and transporting teams to various locations is a challenge beyond belief. Yet the Lord continues to provide strength and wisdom as needed.

Though the urgency of the quake is no longer headline news, recovery will be long in coming and the need for people who care is unending.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Cathy Ponder and her husband, Mike, are members of Greater Vision Baptist Church, Cullman.

Worthy Winks

Getting a Good Night's Sleep

By Susan P. Moore

Statistics reveal the story – more than 200,000 vehicle accidents annually are sleep-related. Still not convinced of the value of a good night's sleep? Remember the Exxon Valdez? Three Mile Island? Both accidents were found to be sleep-related.

Three of the hospitals of Baptist Health System (BHS) offer sleep services to help diagnose and treat a variety of sleep disorders – Shelby Baptist Medical Center in Alabaster, Princeton Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham and Citizens Baptist Medical Center in Talladega.

And, now, BHS offers a free, online SleepAware risk assessment, which can be accessed from the BHS web site (www.bhsala.com), along with the BHS HeartAware risk assessment.

“SleepAware is a good first step in determining if you have a sleep disorder,” said Donna Wilson, RN, director of cardiology/pulmonary medicine at Shelby Baptist. “This online assessment takes only five minutes. At the end, you are given a personalized report with your risk score and health information based on your assessment.

People found to be at risk for an obstructive sleep disorder are offered a free screening and consultation by a certified sleep specialist at one of the three BHS sleep centers.

Apnea, narcolepsy & insomnia most common

Sleep apnea, narcolepsy and insomnia are some of the most commonly found sleep disorders.

Sleep apnea, in which sufferers repeatedly stop breathing, is the most common of the 84 different sleep disorders. “A recent study attributed 38,000 cardiovascular deaths to sleep apnea. But, while this sleep disorder can be life-threatening, it responds well to treatment,” said Wilson.

Insomnia, which is difficulty in falling asleep or staying asleep, plagues one in three Americans. With narcolepsy people experience uncontrollable sleep attacks, sometimes accompanied by paralysis or vivid dreams.



Over time, sleep deprivation affects an individual's performance, ability to concentrate, motor skills, mood and memory. Even illnesses may become more frequent.

“Sleep disorders may be accompanied by other problems, such as obesity, diabetes, depression, restless leg syndrome or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease,” Wilson said. “Some chronic problems – such as heart disease, high blood pressure or seizures – may worsen over time with the lack of good sleep.”

Sleep studies can pinpoint problems

Sleep studies for adolescents and adults allow physicians to see exactly what occurs during sleep. The patient is video-monitored while other devices reveal electrical patterns of the brain and muscles.

Overnight studies are performed in the Baptist sleep centers' comfortable, hotel-like accommodations. Each room is handicapped-accessible with a private bath. Patients frequently have the study performed overnight and leave directly from the sleep center for work the next morning.

Treatment depends on the results of the study. In conjunction with the patient's primary care physician, treatment could include education on better sleep habits (reducing caffeine, changing sleep position, etc.), use of breathing devices (such as CPAP or BiPAP devices), use of medications or a variety of other avenues – whichever is in the best interest of the individual patient.

“Good sleep is critical to our overall well-being,” said Wilson, “and the sleep disorders professionals at Princeton, Shelby and Citizens Baptist can help you find the answer to getting a good night's sleep.”

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Letters to the Editor

QUESTIONING GCR

Let me be clear concerning the belief I hold. I believe the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force is working with the best intent. They are missions-minded. Each of them can give statistics to prove their hard work and great results.

Though we share the goal of getting the gospel to the ends of the earth, we hold different opinions in relation to the best way to improve our stewardship as a convention.

As I see it, we already embrace the thoughts and vision presented in component one of the task force's progress report (see Acts 1:8). The responsibility to take the gospel to the ends of the earth is already our task set forth by Christ Himself. That is the case with or without a GCR.

Changing the structure of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and how it funds this task will still not change the heart of SBC church members.

Reinventing the North American Mission Board is a lofty and worthy goal but not at the expense of souls in the rural areas of North America.

Focusing on areas through a population gauge as the body of Christ is just wrong. Jesus left the multitudes to minister to the individuals, not the stereotype or the cultural curve.

Jesus said if one sheep leave, He would leave the 90 and nine to retrieve the one. Of course, it will cost more to take the gospel to a man in rural Alabama than it will to share with 100 residents in a metro high-rise. Good stewardship does not mean neglect the one to go to the 100.

Let me end by saying if there were only one point I could disagree with in the GCR report, it is component two.

Anytime it is suggested we should leave the one to go to the 100 I am appalled.

If this one point doesn't cause you to question the motives of the GCR Task Force, it should.

Brett Clements
Centre, Ala.

BEING MORE EFFECTIVE

Since the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force's report has come out, I have read nothing but negative articles about it in *The Alabama Baptist*, most of them attacking the jobs that will be lost if the GCR is passed at the convention.

The reason that this bothers me is because of the overwhelming support for the GCR at the last convention, and it seems that *The Alabama Baptist* has portrayed the GCR as a group of men getting together and changing everything without any input from the church.

Although the loss of these jobs are going to be hard if the GCR is accepted, it will be a hard thing that must be done to improve the convention.

God intended for the Church to be His missionary force to spread the gospel throughout the world, and so by putting the majority of funding into church plants, these missionaries who are losing their job will be replaced by churches — churches who will not only reach out to these people and share the gospel with them but will also bring them into a local community of believers.

So it's not that the convention

is saying, "Well we don't have the money to reach these people, so we're going to stop giving to them," but rather that we need to take the money we do have and reach these people in a more effective way — through churches.

Lee Harper
Montgomery, Ala.

BENNY HINN'S HEALING

Concerning your article on televangelist Benny Hinn (in the March 11 issue), I believe you are wrong when you say he claims to heal people.

I have seen many of his miracle crusades. I have never heard him claim to heal anyone.

As a matter of fact, I have heard him say many times that he cannot heal anyone but Jesus uses him and many are healed in Jesus' name.

Thank you for allowing me to respond to this article.

Billie Maloy
Ozark, Ala.

PRAY FOR PERSECUTED

The Alabama Baptist recently ran an article pointing out the Fulanis — one of the largest tribal groups in Nigeria — attack on the Beroms near Jos. I have personally worked with a Fulani missionary in Nigeria, and while the Fulanis are heavily Islamic, some have turned to Christ.

For 30 years, missionaries shared with the Fulanis before a few accepted Christ in the late '90s.

For a Fulani to accept Christ means potentially losing your wife or husband, your children, your possessions or even your life. The persecution after you leave Islam is very intense, and some even go back to Islam because of the intense pressure to conform.

The most recent attacks actually caused some Fulani Christians to be displaced and move to areas where the Muslims did not realize there were Christians there, and a number of Fulanis were attacked and some killed.

But praise God that three new fellowships were started when unbelieving Fulanis saw the peace the Fulani (Christians) had in dying.

Many career missionaries have retired in Nigeria, and only a few are left.

A large number of volunteer teams are reaching out to Muslims and pagans all across northern Nigeria. Some teams have had to cancel because of the conflict.

The Lord led me to another tribal group for me to share with in northern Nigeria, and my evangelist is a Fulani Christian who was poisoned but survived and later fought off his father who wanted to poke out his eyes.

Our group of about 300,000 is surrounded by many Fulanis living right next to them.

Pray for both the Beroms and other Christian tribes that these

attacks will not stop the spread of the gospel and that Fulanis will come to Christ.

Ron Simpson
Calera, Ala.

ONLY WAY TO KNOW

Thank you for making me aware of the religious persecution of many of my Christian brothers and sisters in other countries.

At first, I, too, felt like letter writer Charlie Jones, Madison, Ala., regarding the fact that the majority of the news reported in the World of Religion column in *The Alabama Baptist* was negative.

But then I realized this is the only way I will know of these persecutions because the secular press will not report this type of news.

These people who are giving up homes, families, freedom and even their lives are in great need of our prayer support, and your column is an excellent way of making Christians aware of these needs.

Keep up the good work.

Diane Meyer
Cullman, Ala.





Want to see your news in *The Alabama Baptist*?

E-mail your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org; fax it to 205-870-8957 or call 1-800-803-5201. Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.

MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF *THE ALABAMA BAPTIST*, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR E-MAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Senior pastor wanted for growing SBC church. Church averages 950 in worship, 800 in Sunday School. Exciting worship services with blend of traditional and contemporary elements. Three Sunday morning services, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening services. Praying for a Godly pastor to lead pastoral staff and church as we seek to reach our community for Christ. Resumés to: Search Team, 501 W Sixth Street, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661 or searchteam@hpbaptist.com.

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

MINISTER OF ADMINISTRATION & EDUCATION: First Baptist Church of Mount Olive is now accepting resumés for a full-time minister of administration and education. Please submit resumés or questions by e-mail to: sheila@fbcmo.org.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP/ASSOCIATE PASTOR: Valley Creek Baptist Church

in Hueytown is seeking a full-time minister of worship/associate pastor. Candidates should have adequate experience in contemporary and traditional worship leadership, leading choirs/praise teams, musicals and pastoral care. Submit resumés to: kevin@vcchurch.com or mail to: Music Search Committee, 3253 Virginia Drive, Hueytown, AL 35023.

MUSIC PASTOR: Hunter First Baptist Church, Elizabethton, Tenn., is accepting resumés for a music pastor position. We are a conservative Southern Baptist church (Baptist Faith & Message 2000), 350-400 average attendance, with a blended worship style. Bachelor's degree required, master's degree and experience strongly preferred. Mail resumés to: Hunter First Baptist Church, 693 Highway 91, Elizabethton, TN 37643.

MINISTER OF MUSIC/SENIOR ADULTS: Blended worship. 40- to 50-voice choir. Orchestra. Minimum five years experience and ability to direct major pageants required. E-mail resumés to: office@fbcfoley.com or mail to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 307, Foley, AL 36536.

OTHER POSITIONS
PART-TIME FINANCIAL SECRETARY:

Clearview Baptist Church in Pinson, Ala., is seeking a part-time financial secretary. Please e-mail resumés to: Chuck Allen, Personnel Committee Chair, at cba400@aol.com.

BUSINESS

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Tony Barber
Bluff Park Baptist Church

"I believe in God." The middle-aged man who said those words to me had not been in church since he was a child. My first inclination was to try to convince him that he did not believe in God or berate him for not going to church if he did believe in God. In fact, in my younger years, I had done just that to the many people who expressed that thought even as they were not involved in His church. But this time, I simply asked, "Wouldn't you like to know that God?"

There is a huge and important difference in knowing there is a God and knowing God. It is the latter that makes a difference in your life and death. Knowing God implies a relationship with Him. It speaks to an intimate communion with your Creator. Through knowing God, you will find comfort, peace and purpose in this physical life and an eternal spiritual life in His presence in heaven.

Perhaps you believe there is a God. You may phrase it differently by stating that you believe in a "higher power" or a "creator," but you believe there is One who caused the very existence of all that is. My question to you is "Wouldn't you like to know that higher power or creator?" You can. You can know God.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that there is only one way to know God. In John 14:6-7, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well."

The first step, though, is this: You have to know yourself. You must acknowledge that you are a sinner. Not necessarily a bad person but a sinner — one who has not met the high ideals and standards of God. Then you must repent of sin in your life and ask Jesus to forgive you and save you from the consequences of sin. He promises that He will do that.

Now you must grow. Find a good Southern Baptist church near you, and join that family of believers. Study His Word, the Bible, so that you not only know God but also know more about Him. You will be thankful that you made the leap from believing in God to knowing Him. ☞

Alabama directors of missions weigh in on GCR Task Force recommendations

(continued from page 1)

cooperative agreements between state conventions and the SBC's North American Mission Board (NAMB) through which the groups partner to support agreed upon programs and projects. The report calls for NAMB to develop a national strategy of church planting and do "direct" church planting, especially in major cities.

Alabama DOM Hugh Richardson of Shelby Baptist Association questioned the focus of the recommendation. "The biggest problem in penetrating lostness is not on a national level but on the local level," he said. "That is where the 'rubber meets the road.' Many churches have a maintenance mentality. When they think of reaching people, it is for the purpose of maintaining what they already have."

Pleasant Grove Baptist Association DOM Dan Wiggins responded, "I am not inhibited by the current processes (in penetrating lostness). I am inhibited by the lack of leaders in the harvest. I am inhibited sometimes by my apathy and need for renewal in my heart. I am inhibited by lack of prayer power and lack of vision and faith."

Changing church priorities

Thomas Wright, executive director of Mobile Baptist Association, agreed, adding, "The report does not address how to rearrange the priorities in local churches of any size."

Ken May, DOM for Montgomery Baptist Association, said, "I am not convinced the changes at the SBC level will challenge the ineffectiveness of so many of our existing churches in reaching the lost."

Floyd told the teleconference audience, "We just believe that we need an overall national strategy. ... Just like the International Mission Board is the guiding strategist toward touching the world ... we're saying that we want NAMB to be that. We're saying they're not going to do that in and of themselves."

Wright commended the task force for acknowledging that NAMB struggles for relevancy but placed the problem on leadership, not strategy. "The failure of NAMB came because of a politically astute but strategically ineffective administration," he said.

Wiggins observed NAMB could have had a national strategy "with the right leadership."



RICHARDSON



WIGGINS



WRIGHT



MAY



GALLUPS

"We certainly did not have it (leadership) with the last two presidents of NAMB," he declared.

Wright, a former NAMB missionary, placed much of NAMB's struggle with a change of philosophy. He said the partnership philosophy of Southern Baptists has been replaced by a megachurch philosophy that emphasizes a societal approach to missions.

"The megachurch philosophy replaced a strategic missions philosophy and brought NAMB to catastrophic, strategic irrelevancy," he charged. "Any attempt to reorganize the SBC around a megachurch philosophy will result in equally catastrophic irrelevancy."

Wright said megachurches generally do not need associations or state conventions and are often staff (top-down) driven. This allows them to conduct their own programs with multiple full-time staff, change directions quickly and appoint and support their own missionaries. All of this allows them to work societally rather than cooperatively with sister churches.

May pointed to the Acts 1:8 emphasis as an example of a national strategy led by NAMB and

said he had found NAMB staff to be "significantly helpful to me in understanding and identifying key issues."

Richardson added that he believes NAMB has focused on "making resources available to assist local associations, churches and conventions in carrying out their calling."

The Alabama DOMs interviewed were unanimous that the task force recommendations will not increase partnership between churches, associations, state conventions and NAMB.

Wiggins said, "I believe this will decrease the partnership among us because where the money comes from and who controls it will become the focus of our attention. That will be the wrong focus and the wrong values to increase partnership. Many of the cooperative efforts to reach out to the downtrodden, jobless and Hispanic communities would be hard pressed to function if these agreements were done away with."

Richardson said, "Ronnie Floyd said in the GCR preliminary report we must return to the local church as central in our denomination. I think the proposal is moving away from that and creating a top-down hierarchy with persons in a regional or national office being in direct control."

Mark Gallups, DOM for Marion Baptist Association, warned that Southern Baptists should consider the potential impact of the changes proposed. "Changes in the past cost us the Home Mission Board and now we are losing America."

'Who is he talking to?'

Gallups said he agrees with Floyd's call for repentance and spiritual awakening "but wonder to myself, 'Who is he talking to?'"

"I am, as every DOM is, the face of the Cooperative Program (CP), Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong on the local level. ... Now I am being pressured and shamed into a vote for a reorganization idea that is hiding behind the Great Commission," he said. "I don't believe the GCR Task Force understands the Cooperative Program. If they did they would be leading their churches to support the CP sacrificially, not sparingly."

All DOMs in Alabama were contacted to find out who participated in the teleconference. Six DOMs indicated they had participated and, of those, five responded to questions posed by *The Alabama Baptist*. ☞

Supreme Court to name authority of gov.'s task force

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

Does Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling need Attorney General Troy King's approval prior to enforcing the law? Soon an Alabama Supreme Court decision could put the issue to rest once and for all.

Although King has threatened to take over the task force numerous times, Riley's advisers said this "constitutional conflict" began March 8 when Circuit Judge Robert Vance ordered King to "come in off the sidelines" and assume "direction and control" of the task force. Vance's ruling was issued in a case involving Lowndes County's White Hall Entertainment Center and the task force, which previously reached the Supreme Court on a different matter and led to the court's six characteristics for legal bingo. The case's remaining questions were returned to the circuit court from which Vance issued his order.

Riley called Vance's ruling "judicial activism" and "legislating from the bench." His team petitioned the Supreme Court for a writ of mandamus March 15 asking it to "remedy" Vance's "separa-

tion of powers" violation in trying to "micromanage a complex executive branch relationship."

One day later, the task force filed a motion to stay Vance's order in the Supreme Court while it made its decision. "The trial court's contrary conclusion was based on its mistaken belief that the Alabama Code requires the [attorney general] to expressly authorize a [district attorney] before he can represent the state in any suit," the motion stated. "That is not correct. ... To the extent that the trial court's reasoning assumed that the [attorney general's] views would necessarily prevail if they conflicted with the governor's, the governor submits ... that this assumption was wrong."

Court's response

Although the White Hall casino's attorneys asked the high court to dismiss Riley's appeals and extend their deadline to respond, the justices unanimously refused March 24 and gave the attorneys two days to present their arguments. Task force Commander John Tyson said the decision was "important" since a dismissal could have im-

plied the justices thought King had authority to take over the task force's gambling cases.

In their response, the casino's attorneys said the "governor lacks the authority to appoint special prosecutors to prosecute these cases without the consent of the attorney general." They also said, "If a dispute were to arise between the attorney general and the governor as to the continued course of this litigation, the attorney general has the ultimate authority to direct and control this litigation."

Riley and his team previously stated King "has no authority" to direct the task force and vowed to "vigorously defend the authority of the office of governor."

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

At press time, the task force was planning to respond to the casino's arguments and was waiting for the Supreme Court to rule. ☞



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Haitians open to gospel, but 'race for souls' ensues

(continued from page 1)

▶ **Help for orphanages and working with children.**

▶ **Limited construction teams.** "There will be some need for teams to come alongside locals and help with the rebuild process," Johnson said.

▶ **Medical teams.** Alabama Baptists are continuing to partner with Baptist Health System to meet medical needs in the area, with another team going out April 10. Hospitals in the Jacmel area were badly damaged, and much support is still needed there, Johnson said.

Though all the work done in Haiti will be vital to the nation's recovery, it will "not just be life supporting but also soul sustaining," he said.

Though the people there are hungry for God and eager for the gospel, other things are vying for the souls of Haitians, a traditionally voodoo people.

"Prior to the quake, there was almost no Islamic influence in Haiti, but now they are making a major push into Haiti and publicizing themselves in a huge way," Johnson said.

'Big' response urged

Muslims are now there working alongside other aid organizations to hand out tents and provisions and talk to the people in Haiti about their faith.

"We are in a race for souls there in Haiti, and we are asking Alabama Baptists to respond in a big way," he said.

Ways to respond include:

▶ **Chaplaincy ministries.**

▶ **Prayer or even prayer walking.** Johnson noted that the Islamic presence is a specific concern for prayer.

▶ **Evangelism and discipleship.**

▶ **Church planting.** Church plants have been taking root since the quake, with 90 people

professing new faith in Christ in the last month at one Jacmel-area church plant alone.

"Our effort will be to work through the local churches and help build them up," Johnson said. "The sites we have identified (for ministry work) have all been sites where churches have been established or are sites for potential church plants. ... We are doing disaster relief work down there, but it is also front-line missions."

Arrangements for teams

While in Haiti, the assessment team was able to set up transportation, housing and translators for future missions teams.

An Alabama Baptist disaster relief coordinator will also be on the ground in Haiti meeting teams as they arrive and making arrangements for their work, Johnson said.

"We will be rotating the people in that position in and out, because it's a very taxing atmosphere," he said.

Gary Walker, a member of the assessment team and pastor of Riddles Bend Baptist Church, Rainbow City, encouraged volunteers to respond and pray for the process as things are being set up for work in Jacmel.

"There's a great need for volunteers to go to work there," said Walker, who coordinated Alabama Baptists' partnership with Zone 6 in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

In addition to Walker and Johnson, the team included Gary Cardwell, director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association, and Lloyd Williams, a member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

For more information about how to help the Haiti recovery effort or serve in Jacmel, visit www.alsbom.org/haiti. ☞

'Food Revolution'

TV show sparked by church's effort to get healthy

A Southern Baptist congregation's emphasis on health and fitness has sparked a primetime series devoted to reversing a trend in a city regarded as one of the nation's most obese.

Jamie Oliver's "Food Revolution" premiered for two-hours March 26 on ABC, and First Baptist Church, Kenova, W.Va., in the Huntington area is featured throughout the six-week series.

"I started noticing all the health problems we had due to obesity. It sounds so strong, but that's what it was," said Steve Willis, pastor of First, Kenova. "We had a lot of health issues. I also started noticing when I was traveling around to other cities that people were just in a lot better shape."

"Just walking around the malls out in California and the beach area, people were in a lot better physical condition than here," Willis said. "I remember saying to my wife, 'It seems like every direction I go from home, everybody gets thinner.'"

Willis discussed the matter with the church leaders last summer and told them that even though it's an uncomfortable issue to address, obesity is a serious problem.

"Unlike the sins of pornography and just about every sin that we commit, people that struggle with gluttony, it's very obvious," Willis said. "So if I start preaching about that on Sunday morning, people are going to feel singled out. We discussed for about a month how to go about this, and they didn't really feel comfortable about it, but they agreed that the Lord put this on my heart and they agreed it probably was a problem."

The Friday before Willis was planning to broach the subject in a sermon, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study declaring Huntington the fattest city in America, with nearly half of the metro area residents classified as obese.

'We're the most obese'

"So I took the report and shared with the church, 'This is something the Lord has put on my heart for a long time. I just didn't know how to say it,'" Willis recounted. "'Here's hard and fast proof that we're the largest city in the largest region in the largest country. When I say largest, we're the most obese.'"

Amid the negative press about Huntington that emanated from the study, a member of First, Kenova, called the K-LOVE radio network to report that the church was taking steps to curb the epidemic by implementing exercise programs and healthy eating lessons.

"What I did was give an invitation



BP photo

CONTRIBUTION — Steve Willis (left), pastor of FBC Kenova, W.Va., and Jamie Oliver, host of ABC's 'Food Revolution,' exchange a key to the city of Huntington during a quest to improve the health of local residents.

and say, 'We're going to do our own Biggest Loser here and everybody who is more than 40 pounds overweight, I want you to join and I want you to start getting in shape,'" Willis said. "'This is what God wants you to do: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.'

"We talk a lot about the heart, soul and mind, but we don't talk a whole lot about loving Him with all our strength," Willis said. "We have these covered-dish fellowship dinners where we pile on the food, and it's not godly. Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins. So we needed to address that."

"So we started working out, we started eating healthier, we started doing our Wednesday evening fellowship meals a little bit healthier, and K-LOVE started running the story of what we were doing," Willis said. "ABC picked it up, CNN picked it up, the national news wire picked it up and Jamie Oliver heard about it over in England."

Oliver, a noted chef and media personality, had been working on a project with school lunch programs in England and called First, Kenova, to inquire whether he could help improve the school lunch programs in Huntington.

"I said, 'Absolutely. We'd love to have you,'" Willis said.

A crew started filming in Huntington last fall, and they've wrapped up everything except the final 10 minutes of the series, the pastor said. That will happen after Easter. The show focuses on the local school cafeterias, chronicling Oliver's efforts to introduce healthier foods and methods.

"I've seen the shows, and the church is the common denominator that is always shown in a positive light," Willis said. "I had a concern when they first came to town that they were going to make us look like dumb hillbillies and a bunch of condescending Baptists."

"Usually ABC doesn't necessarily present Baptist churches in the best light. But they assured me and there were some likeminded believers on the show that said we were going to be painted in a positive manner. Sure enough, they have, all through the show," he said.

The film crew asked Willis to preach again his sermon addressing obesity, and part of that is included in the show.

Addressing the issue

"Then they show me working with a family in the church, some visitation I've been doing. One of the families that goes to the church was having some health problems due to dietary issues and a lack of exercise. Then they start focusing on that family and how we're trying to get them healthier," Willis said.

As the series unfolds on television, First, Kenova continues to offer exercise programs and special dinners showing people how to prepare food in more healthy ways in an attempt to reach out to the community.

"We are just trying to raise awareness," Willis said.

The pastor expressed frustration with fellow Southern Baptist pastors who are reluctant to address one of the nation's fastest-growing problems.

"We'll jump on every bandwagon and talk about drinking ourselves to death and smoking ourselves to death, and we'll talk about the institution of marriage, and I agree we need to address those things," he said. "But more people are dying and more families are being disrupted because of eating disorders — gluttony included — than these other issues. More people are dying due to complications from obesity than alcohol and tobacco use combined."

"Why isn't the church at the forefront of this? It's frustrating to me that nobody wants to talk about this," Willis said. (BP)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 11

Explore the Bible By Jeffrey S. Quiett

Associate professor of marriage and family counseling, University of Mobile

TESTED DEVOTION

Exodus 16:2-4, 11-15, 18, 32-34

Victory Gives Way to Complaint (2-4)

The Israelites traveled for approximately a month and evidently exhausted all their food supplies. This harsh reality led them to complain against Moses. They forgot their recent victory over the Egyptians as they expressed a lack of confidence in God's ability to provide for them. Like Lot's wife (Gen. 19:26), the Israelites looked backward to their former life in Egypt, and it seemed preferable to what they were experiencing in the desert. Interestingly the Israelites' memory was faulty. The "flesh pots" referred to were kettles full of flesh, but meat was not part of the everyday diet of poor men or slaves in Egypt. It is like the man who remembers the "good old days," which probably weren't quite as good as he remembers.

God responded to the complaints by telling Moses He would "rain bread from heaven." "Bread" in the Old Testament frequently means "food" in general. There seems to be two purposes of God's provision. The first purpose was to feed the Israelites, but the second purpose was to "test" their obedience. The instructions were quite simple. The Israelites were to gather only enough for the day and twice as much on the sixth day to prepare for the Sabbath. Our tendency is to want more than what God has provided. This same tendency tested Israel's obedience.

Complaint Gives Way to Provision (11-15)

Once again, God took care of the Israelites through His miraculous provision. The provision's purpose was to point the Israelites to God. The provision itself was not the focus; the focus was God (12). We often confuse the gift with the gift giver. God is providing for our needs on a daily basis, which is meant to remind us of His presence and love.

In the evening, quail came and lit in the camp, covering the ground. These migratory birds can still be observed on the Sinai Peninsula, traveling in vast numbers. When they light, they are exhausted and can be captured easily by hand in great quantities.


The next morning, dew covered the ground.

When it evaporated, a small substance covered the ground and provided additional food for the Israelites. Scholars for centuries have sought to explain this miraculous provision through "natural" means. Some have suggested tree resin, while others have used insect secretions to explain the event. The text, however, suggests a miraculous event, considering the duration and timing of the manna. Moses, once again, made it clear that this unique food was from God. Daily provisions give us further opportunities to know and worship God.

God Provides (18)

Following Moses' instructions, the Israelites gathered the manna each day. What they gathered was just enough for their daily dietary needs. Recent economic problems have intensified the discussion concerning wants and needs. Scripture makes it clear that God provides for our needs as He did for the Israelites so many times. We tend to confuse wants with needs and, like the Israelites, complain that our perceived "needs" are not being met. These "needs," however, are often "wants" when we honestly look at our lives and how God would have us to live.

Remembering God for Needs Met (32-34)

Once the Israelites' needs were satisfied, God through Moses commanded them to set aside a portion of the manna as a testimony of His ability to meet their needs. God's provision gave rise to thankfulness. The needs that God met in the lives of the Israelites were to point them back to Him and give them a reason not to become prideful in thinking themselves self-sufficient. Most scholars agree that "Testimony" is a reference to the Ark of the Covenant. The purpose of God's provision for our needs is always the same. God's provision intends to direct our attention toward Him and not give us a false sense of self-sufficiency. The temptation is to focus on our needs and not on the One who supplies our needs. The manna kept the Israelites alive and challenged them to rely solely on God for their well-being. The ability to live and live fully comes only from God. This is why Jesus later identified Himself as "the Bread of Life" (John 6:58). 

Bible Studies for Life By Mark DeVine

Associate professor of divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

THE RIGHT STUFF

2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 3:4-5, 18; 4:1-2, 5-6, 16-18

Whether we know it or like it, it has pleased almighty God to use us — yes, you and me — to accomplish His eternal purposes on this earth. Already in the apostle Paul's first letter to the believers at Corinth, we learned that each of us fits into God's plan for the Church like the members of a body set in inextricable and mutual interdependence. In his second letter, Paul, with Corinthian believers questioning his apostolic credentials, defended himself and, in so doing, offered a lesson for every follower of Jesus Christ, namely that God does, in fact, use the likes of us to achieve His holy purposes in this world.

Only the Lowly Need Apply

Paul knew and we must know that none of us are competent for such an exalted calling as each of us has received. But not only does our insufficiency in ourselves not disqualify us for gospel ministry but it also paradoxically fits perfectly for such a task. That God displays His glory in "clay pots" such as us only ensures that "this extraordinary power" to serve as the instruments of divine activity is "from God and not from us." That God prefers to use the broken, humble and weak to advance His saving agenda in this world marks no change in His usual way of doing things.

He chose the childless Abraham and made of him who was not a nation a great nation, His chosen people through whom all the peoples of the world would be blessed. God did not choose the older, more accomplished, ostensibly more deserving and competent of Jesse's sons to serve as king but the youngest son, David, the lowly shepherd boy not even deemed worthy of consideration by his earthly father but picked out especially by his heavenly Father.

And now you and I like David and Paul, by virtue of our having been made partakers of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, have been chosen for gospel ministry, not on ac-


count of anything we bring to the table but because of the One to whom we belong and His decision to accomplish His purposes through us.

Trouble, Trouble, Trouble

"In this world, you will have trouble." These prophetic words of Jesus were meant to prepare His followers just as He was poised to wade into the teeth of that great trouble for which He came to this earth, trouble without which none of us could ever hope to be rescued from eternal trouble. None of us are called to do what Jesus did, and none of us are qualified to follow Him to the cross. Only the One who was fully human and fully divine and without sin could take the punishment for sin upon Himself and bring us sinners back into right relationship with the God against whom we have rebelled. And He has done so. Our task is not to die for sinners but rather to bear witness to the One who has died and risen.

But if we do this, if we fulfill our task of bearing witness to the One who died for us all, then we will face persecution and may even have to give our lives for the One who gave His life for us. More followers of Jesus Christ are doing just that around the globe today than at any time in history.

God does not utterly shield us from such trouble, but He does set a limit to it so that we can say with Paul, "We are pressured in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed. We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

When we do this, when we yield up our bodies, indeed our whole selves, our very lives in gospel ministry, we give life to others. But we are willing to do so not least because we know "that the One who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus." Through such suffering witness and love, "grace, extended through more and more people, causes thanksgiving to overflow to God's glory." This is exactly what we partakers of the gospel long to see happen. 

Christian Crossword

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Across

- In the beginning was the _____. (John 1:1)
- I _____ rather be a doorkeeper. (Ps. 84:10)
- Two of every _____ shalt thou bring into the ark. (Gen. 6:19)
- One of the Great Lakes.
- Come down _____ my child die. (John 4:49)
- Between blood and blood, between _____ and plea. (Deut. 17:8)
- God hath _____ the body together. (1 Cor. 12:24)
- Thou shalt _____ this law before all Israel. (Deut. 31:11)
- He loved them unto the _____. (John 13:1)
- Figures of speech.
- Signs, good or evil.
- To glance at quickly.
- Be ye _____ one to another. (Eph. 4:32)
- He that sweareth to his own hurt, and _____ not. (Ps. 15:4)
- Last book of the Bible. (abbr.)

- Blackboard or roofing tile.
- Confederate commander.
- In any place.
- Russian emperor.
- The very hairs of your _____ are all numbered. (Matt. 10:30)
- Your fathers _____ are they? (Zech. 1:5)
- Middle.
- To hasten.
- Entrance.
- Twirling.
- He loved Rachel _____ than Leah. (Gen. 29:30)
- Give _____ to my words. (Ps. 5:1)
- Applaud.
- I am alive for evermore, _____. (Rev. 1:18)
- Tint.
- Electrocardiograms.

Down

- They are _____ with the showers. (Job 24:8)
- Unrefined mineral.
- Edge.
- Rely.
- Thou shalt kill of thy _____. (Deut. 12:21)

- They _____ all plain to him. (Prov. 8:9)
- King David did _____ unto the Lord. (2 Sam. 8:11)
- _____ up, O well. (Num. 21:17)
- Butter substitute.
- A quantity of paper.
- Urchins.
- Dashes.
- Great _____. (Matt. 8:3)
- Vegetable.
- Manner.
- Let not thine heart _____ sinners. (Prov. 23:17)
- Broken pottery.
- His leprosy was _____. (Matt. 8:3)
- He is God; there is none _____ beside him. (Deut. 4:35)
- His anger did _____ perpetually. (Amos 1:11)
- _____ a little, and there a little. (Isa. 28:10)
- Karite tree.
- To bleach.
- Thou shalt by no means come out _____. (Matt. 5:26)
- That I may _____ Christ. (Phil. 3:8)

- Mother.
- Esau, who is _____. (Gen. 36:1)
- Dreadful.
- Weigh silver in the balance, and _____ a goldsmith. (Isa. 46:6)
- For this cause _____ ye tribute also. (Rom. 13:6)
- Kind, breed.
- Old horse.
- Gallons per second. (abbr.)

S	B	E	H	E	D	E	N	E	M	E
E	R	K	S	D	I	E	N	E	M	E
C	L	A	P	E	A	R	E	A	R	E
A	D	I	T	S	P	I	N	I	N	G
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H	E	A	D	W	H	E	R	E	H	E
R	E	S	A	R	E	T	S	A	R	E
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H	O	I	G	A	G	E	T	I	K	I
S	C	A	V	A	N	S	C	A	V	A
S	W	O	I	D	I	O	E	N	D	I
L	E	A	D	R	E	A	D	R	E	A
E	R	I	E	R	E	P	L	E	A	D
S	O	R	T	H	A	D	H	A	D	W

World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Sheik incites Muslims to attack Christians in Egypt

MARSA MATROUH, Egypt — A mob of enraged Muslims attacked a Coptic Christian community in a coastal town in northern Egypt, wreaking havoc for hours and injuring 24 Copts before security forces contained it.

The violence erupted March 12 after the sheik of a neighborhood mosque incited Muslims over a loudspeaker, proclaiming jihad against Christians in Marsa Matrouh, 200 miles west of Alexandria, according to reports. The angry crowd hurled rocks at the district church, Christians and their properties, looted homes and set fires that evening.

The mob was reportedly infuriated over the building of a wall around newly bought land adjacent to the district church building. The building also houses a clinic and community center.

"I was very surprised by the degree of hatred that people had toward Christians," said a reporter for online Coptic news source Theban Legion, who visited Marsa Matrouh after the attack. "The hate and the disgust were obvious."

Following afternoon mosque prayers, Sheik Khamis rallied neighborhood Muslims, gathering more than 300 people. The mob broke into groups, attacking the church and nearby houses of the Coptic Christian community.

Uzbekistan fines Baptists of unregistered church

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — Uzbekistan has fined 13 members of an unregistered Baptist church 100 times the minimum monthly salary.

The church has protested against the fines, claiming that more than 60 violations of Uzbek law were committed in the course of the arrests, detentions and interrogations which led up to the court proceedings. Among the criminal code articles said to be violated were those forbidding the use of violence by officials.

There have been several other recent raids and fines on Protestants. In one incident after fining three Protestants, Judge Makset Berdimuratov in the northwestern region of Karakalpakstan ordered the destruction of confiscated Christian books including the Bible.

When asked why Christians cannot keep copies of Bibles in their homes, the judge — in a very calm voice — stated that Bibles "must also be registered with the State Committee, and if they are not they will be destroyed once found."

Muslims murder Pakistani Christian with ax

MIAN CHANNU, Pakistan — Six Muslims in Pakistan's Khanewal district, southern Punjab province, killed a Christian with multiple ax blows for refusing to convert to Islam, according to family and police sources.

The six men had threatened to kill 36-year-old Rasheed Masih unless he converted to Islam when they grew resentful that his potato business succeeded beyond their own, according to Masih's younger brother Munir Asi and a local clergyman. The rival merchants allegedly killed him after luring him to their farmhouse March 9, leaving him on a roadside near Kothi Nand Singh village in early the next day.

Pastor Iqbal Masih of the Mian Channu Parish of the Church of Pakistan said Masih was a devoted Christian, and that both he and his brother Asi had refused the Muslims' pressure to convert to Islam. Mian Channu police have registered a case against the six men and an investigation is underway but the suspects are still at large.

Groups seeks to restore Nepal as Hindu state

KATHMANDU, Nepal — Once the only Hindu kingdom in the world, Nepal was declared a secular state by its Parliament in 2006 and the monarchy was abolished two years later. Now, with a new constitution due in May, Hindu groups are pressuring the government to reinstate Hinduism as the state religion.

Kalidas Dahal, a Hindu who claims to have supernatural powers, recently launched a nine-day prayer meeting — including a visit by the deposed king — aimed at showing the coalition government that Hinduism continues to enjoy public support.

Dahal's demand is backed by the Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal, the only party in Parliament that supports the monarchy and Hinduism. The pro-Hindu party has paralyzed the Nepalese capital with a strike and a blockade of the prime minister's office and other ministries. It has warned of more protests unless its demands are met.

Campus News



Judson College

► **Judson Hosts Art Exhibit for Faculty Member:** The Judson College

art department is pleased to showcase the work of faculty member Jamie Adams in the Tucker Hall lobby beginning March 10. The work involves images appropriated from old science fiction and horror films, which are explored and re-contextualized through the vernacular of toys and comics. The works explore issues of contemporary masculine identity. Adams has been a member of the Judson faculty since August 2009. More of his work can be seen at the Web site www.dinosaurversusrobot.com. For more information about the Judson exhibit, call 334-683-5251.

► **National Survey Notes Student Satisfaction at Judson:** Students at Judson College reported significant satisfaction with their learning and environment compared to students at other American colleges and universities, according to results recently published by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

According to Judson, results

from its surveys demonstrated at least five areas of strength rated by both first-year students and seniors. The areas are participation in community service or volunteer work, relationship with faculty/administrative personnel, discussions about career plans, inclusion of community-based projects in coursework and opportunity for independent study or self-designed majors.



University of Mobile

► **UMobile Changes Art Exhibition Dates:** The third annual University of

Mobile (UMobile) Art Exhibition has changed the dates of the exhibition.

The opening reception will be April 18, 2-4 p.m. and the exhibition, which is open to the public, will be April 18-May 14. The exhibition will be held in Martin Hall on the UMobile campus.

The exhibition will feature more than 55 artists with more than 80 total works displayed. Judging the regional show will be Graham C. Boettcher, the William Carey Hulsy Curator of American Art at the Birmingham Museum of Art.

For more information, contact UMobile Art Exhibition Director Phillip Counselman, assistant professor of art, at 1-800-946-7267, extension 2283 or 251-442-2283, or e-mail umartexhibit@umobile.edu.

► **UMobile to Present 'An Evening of Puccini':** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Center for Performing Arts will present "An Evening of Puccini" on April 23 at 7 p.m. in the Chickasaw Civic Theatre.

The evening will open with scenes from multiple Puccini masterpieces, including "La Bohème" and "Gianni Schicchi."

Highlighting the evening will be Puccini's "Suor Angelica," featuring UMobile faculty members Allanda Small Campbell, assistant professor of music, in the title role and Patricia Ramirez Hacker, adjunct voice instructor, as the princess. UMobile students will sing all other roles.

Mihaela Buhaiciuc, assistant professor of music who worked with the Brasov National Opera House in Romania, will act as stage director of "Suor Angelica." Patrick Jacobs, associate professor of music, will head production and direct the opening scenes. Jacobs has worked with the New Orleans Opera and recently performed with the Mobile Opera. Christopher Lovely, instructor of music, will accompany the performances on piano.

For tickets or more information, call 251-442-2420 or 251-442-2554.



Samford University

► **Samford Faculty Member Ranked High in National Poll:** Samford

University director of debate Ryan W. Galloway has been ranked the third best judge of the past decade (2000-2009) in a national poll of his professional peers.

At the end of each decade, the National Debate Tournament judges' poll surveys collegiate debate coaches across the nation to rank teams, coaches and judges. The judges' category considers the competency and integrity of each coach's work as a judge at debate tournaments.

Galloway is assistant professor of communication studies.

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Photo by Rafael Suanes/Georgetown University

POLITICALLY CORRECT? — A panel of religious leaders, including Richard Land (left), president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, speaks about the topic of proselytism.

'Sacred dignity'

Religious leaders, others debate use of 'proselytism'

In a world wracked with religious divisions that too often spill over into violence, is proselytism a dirty word?

It may not always be popular, but experts say its presence has historically been a sign of religious and economic freedom.

That was the conclusion of prominent sociologists at a daylong conference March 3 at Georgetown University, which probed the political implications of sharing the faith — particularly among Christians and Muslims.

Part of the debate centers on the word itself, usually defined as sharing one's faith with the hope that others can be persuaded to join.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, called proselytizing a "politically correct negative term for sharing one's faith" and bemoaned its "negative connotation of inducement."

He said he prefers the terms "witnessing" or "evangelizing" and emphasized that any attempt to coerce others to one's faith is not permitted. In fact, he called it "soul rape," invoking a term used by Roger Williams, a 17th-century Baptist leader. "For Christians, this is an act of love, not an act of hostility," he said. "It has to be voluntary sharing and voluntary acceptance."

The topic of proselytism seems to be newly en vogue among prominent religious leaders. In January, the group Christian Churches To-

gether in the USA — composed of Catholics, evangelicals, mainline Protestants, Orthodox and Pentecostals — broached the topic for the first time at a summit in Seattle.

At a separate conference March 3 held at Washington National Cathedral, Christian and Muslim leaders from the U.S., Iran and the Vatican released a statement, saying, "To impose a system of belief on others, or to proselytize them to change their beliefs, is a violation of the sacred dignity of the human person."

Worries that proselytizing can cross the line from voluntary into coercive, as well as concerns that allowing the practice could diminish support for state-approved religions, have led some countries to pass laws that ban or restrict the practice.

But Roger Finke, a sociologist of religion at Pennsylvania State University, said his research shows such laws are hardest on minority religions and countries with anti-proselytizing laws are generally less peaceful and civil. For example, Finke said "religiously motivated violence" was widespread in 44 percent of the countries where proselytizing was limited or restricted, compared to just 14 percent with no limitations on proselytization.

"To the extent that a religious group achieves a monopoly and holds access to the temporal power and privileges of the state, the ever-present temptation is to openly per-

secute religious competitors," Finke said.

Robert Woodberry, director of the Project on Religion and Economic Change and a sociologist at the University of Texas at Austin, cited history and data to argue that Protestant missionaries have long been a key factor around the world in loosening the power of elites in societies.

For example, Woodberry said a number of Muslim and Buddhist countries lagged for centuries in sharing the printed word with the masses — only relenting when foreign evangelists started bringing copies of the Bible to the people.

New proposition

Historically the longer Protestant missionaries have been present in a given country, the healthier social indicators are, from higher gross domestic product to lower infant mortality rates, he said.

Not everyone, however, would agree with that assessment.

Salam Al-Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, proposed some sort of international body to regulate proselytizing because Christian missionaries are often seen by residents of the Muslim world as "agents" of the United States.

"We don't want to reinforce the notion of the clash of the civilizations" but "proselytizing creates the notion ... of the Crusades again," specifically when it involves American Christians, Al-Marayati said.

Finke and Woodberry objected, with Woodberry noting that many Islamic countries turned to Islam only after they had been conquered — and evangelized — by Muslims centuries ago. (RNS)

"For Christians ... it has to be voluntary sharing and voluntary acceptance."

Richard Land
ERIC

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Should ban on blood donations by gay men remain?

WASHINGTON — The CEO of the Christian Medical Association says the national ban on gay men making blood donations should be kept in place, despite calls from at least 18 senators for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to drop the ban.

Dr. David Stevens, CEO of the Tennessee-based doctors group, said "the risk is not worth the benefit," noting that gay men have a much higher HIV infection rate than heterosexual males.

"It's not a matter of trying to discriminate against people. ... The bottom line is medically we've got to make sure we keep the blood supply safe," he said in an interview March 17.

Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., and 17 other senators wrote to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg on March 4.

"We request that you initiate a review of the lifetime deferral requirement for men who have sex with men wishing to donate blood and that you re-examine the deferral criteria for all blood donors to ensure all high-risk behaviors are appropriately addressed," they wrote.

Stevens agreed with the senators that HIV testing has greatly improved since the ban went into effect in the 1980s. But he said he hopes the FDA will maintain its current policy because testing is "not 100 percent perfect."

Court says overtime pay doesn't apply to seminarians

SEATTLE — Two Catholic seminarians do not have the right to receive overtime wages from the Archdiocese of Seattle, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled March 16.

While training to become Catholic priests in Mexico, Cesar Rosas and Jesus Alcazar served a Washington state parish as part of a diocesan placement program. The men said they were forced to work overtime without pay cleaning the parish and assisting at Mass, in violation of Washington's Minimum Wage Act.

But employment decisions by religious groups are subject to a "ministerial exception" under the Constitution's First Amendment, the appeals court ruled.

"This 'ministerial exception' helps preserve the wall between church and state from even the mundane government intrusion presented here," Judge Robert Beezer wrote.

The seminarians argued that their primary functions at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Marysville, Wash., were nonreligious. But the circuit court, which upheld a lower court's decision, adopted a three-part test to determine that the ministerial exception applied: they were employed by a religious institution, chosen for the position largely on religious criteria and performed religious duties.

Anglican head calls new lesbian bishop 'regrettable'

LONDON — Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has called the confirmation of a second openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church "regrettable" and said it will have "important implications" for the U.S. church's role in the wider Anglican Communion.

Despite warnings from Williams, Episcopal bishops and regional committees ratified the election of Pastor Mary Douglas Glasspool, an open lesbian, as an assistant bishop in Los Angeles. The Episcopal Church announced Glasspool's confirmation March 17.

As Archbishop of Canterbury, Williams is considered "first among equals" among Anglican bishops in the communion, which counts 77 million members worldwide.

Williams had urged Episcopalians not to confirm Glasspool, 56, following her election last December, as he tries to preserve the fragile unity of the Anglican Communion despite its bitter differences on homosexuality. Tensions have increased since the consecration of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire in 2003.



During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. ... And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant.

Exodus 2:23-25