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Alabama on the ballot

State convention president Jackson to be nominated for SBC president

Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) President Jimmy Jackson will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at the June annual meeting in Orlando, Fla.

"I've been encouraged to be a candidate for the Southern Baptist Convention president," he said. "As we move forward as a state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention to reach the world for Jesus Christ, I would like to be a part of that."

"As I've prayed about the opportunity, I have a peace about it and have consented to be nominated."

Jackson has been pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, for 31 years and has served as ABSC president for the past two years. He was the SBC's first vice president for 2006-07 and has been an assistant parliamentarian at the SBC's annual meetings for nearly 25 years.

Information from the 2009 Annual Church Profile (ACP) for Whitesburg Baptist lists 163 baptisms and primary worship service attendance of 1,556. The church gave \$295,748, or 4.65 percent, through the Cooperative Program (CP) from total undesignated receipts of \$6,364,921. According to the ACP, the church also received \$236,735 for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and \$138,548 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

Under Jackson's leadership, Whitesburg has grown from less than 3,000 members in 1978 to more than 7,000 today.

And nearly 6,000 baptisms have taken place at the church since he became pastor.

But pinning down those numbers just by talking to him is pretty difficult to do, said several Whitesburg members. That's because he's never let the numbers become more important than the people they represent.

"One thing about Brother Jimmy is that he's never cared about the numbers," said Karen Tidwell, his executive assistant for the past six years and a church member for more than



Photo by Chris Rudd

TOSSING HIS HAT INTO THE RING — Alabama Baptist State Convention President Jimmy Jackson has served as pastor of the 7,000-plus member Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, for 31 years.

30 years. It's always been about the people.

In fact, the names of the people who make up Whitesburg have been on Jackson's lips every day of all his years there. One of his first requests as pastor was for a list of members so that he could pray for each one

by name every week. That's a practice he's continued for 31 years, and he credits God's response to those prayers as an underlying source of strength for the church.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, described Jackson as

"a statesmanlike figure in Alabama Baptist life."

"Jimmy has strong leadership qualities and has remained consistent through the challenges of more than 30 years as pastor of one church," he added.

(See 'Only,' page 16)

Gambling bill dies; focus turns to courts, elections

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

The earth did not stand still April 21 when Rep. Marcel Black, D-Tuscumbia, announced he did not have the 63 House votes needed to pass the latest electronic gambling bill, Senate Bill (SB) 380.

Alabamians did not march in protest as some predicted.

Statehouse phones did not ring off their hooks with calls from disgruntled citizens complaining of civil rights violations.

House Speaker Seth Hammett, D-Andalusia, simply commended Black for his hard work to pass the gambling bill and moved to the next order of business.

With that action, gambling opponents felt a David and Goliath-sized (See 'Withstanding,' page 3)



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

NO VOTE TAKEN — Rep. Marcel Black, D-Tuscumbia, tells House members April 21, 'It has become apparent to me that we do not have the votes (for Senate Bill 380) to send this vote on to the people.'

COMMENT

When Gambling Never Has a Chance

How close the electronic gambling bill came to passing no one will ever know. At different times, legislative supporters in the Alabama House of Representatives claimed they were within two or three votes of being able to pass Senate Bill (SB) 380.

Opponents said it was never that close, that several representatives counted on by the gambling crowd were prepared to vote “no” to keep slot machine gambling from being legalized in Alabama.

No one will ever know for sure. What is known is that some legislators were still playing games on showdown day in Montgomery. Heading into the chamber April 21, everyone knew the gamblers did not have the votes. That made some last-minute declarations of opposition to SB 380 a little suspect even though they were appreciated.

What is clear is the commitment of a number of House members like Arthur Payne, of Trussville, who helped organize the opposition and turned back a gigantic effort by the state’s gambling crowd to spread its vice across Alabama. The list provided by legislative leaders of House members committed to vote “no” on the gambling bill (see graphic, page 3) is the best information available since no vote was actually recorded.

The list of state senators who voted against SB 380 is a report of the actual vote when gamblers were able to ram through their plans after their initial effort failed.

Alabama citizens are indebted to the legislators who fought with conviction and courage against pressures and threats from major gambling power brokers inside the state Legislature and the influential lobbyists hired by the gambling crowd. These legislators deserve the thanks of a grateful citizenry for helping to keep the evils of gambling curtailed in Alabama.

Critical scrutiny

Those legislators whose names do not appear on the list of those opposing SB 380 deserve critical scrutiny for their openness to spreading gambling across the state.

Legislators were able to defeat slot machine gambling, in part, because of the efforts of concerned citizens who wrote and called expressing their opposition to gambling. That effort, orchestrated by Alabama Citizens Action Program, helped legislators know that a large portion of Alabama’s people wants no part of gambling and does not want to waste precious time and money fighting this battle again.

Someday a study may be made to determine what part the announcement of an FBI corruption investigation around the efforts to pass SB 380 played in the bill’s final outcome. The announcement certainly took the wind out of gambling’s sails for a few days. It also offered irrefutable evidence that corruption is the handmaid of gambling. In addition to the charges of fixed slot machines paying



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

out more than \$1 million to one prominent public official, the FBI investigation turned up allegations of offers up to \$250,000 for votes approving slot machine gambling.

It does not take many such instances to bring back images of Phenix City in the 1950s and the stranglehold gambling and corruption had on Alabama. No decent human being wants to return to those days.

At this writing, most of the gambling casinos in Alabama are closed. We hope all will be closed soon. The Alabama Supreme Court has clearly outlined what constitutes bingo in Alabama, and none of the machines in the casinos has passed that six-point test yet.

The Governor’s Task Force on Illegal Gambling has sought only to enforce the laws of Alabama. We hope the legal maneuvering over who heads up that task force will be settled soon and all of the casinos will be boarded up. After all, in this state, it is against the law to own a slot machine or have a slot machine in one’s possession.

In the meantime, some of the gambling crowd is howling like a kicked dog. Ronnie Gilley, owner of Country Crossing in Dothan, publicly pouted on a blog April 20 and 21, threatening to leave the state if he could not get electronic gambling. What a change from the beginnings of his development when he planned to put a country music center in Enterprise, a place where gambling was never a possibility. So much for his commitment to “family entertainment.”

The legislative session has been like a roller-coaster ride on the gambling issue. One side seemed to have the edge and then the other. But now it is over — at least for the time being.

Now Baptists can ask how a state where almost one out of four people is a member of a Southern Baptist church came so close to passing electronic gambling. That was the question of a prominent Baptist leader visiting Alabama during the final week of the legislative session. After reading about the gambling debate and learning about the number of Baptists in Alabama, he asked if the majority were “nominal Christians.” By that, he wanted to know if they were Baptist Christians in name only.

That is a serious question. When a Baptist spon-

sors SB 380, when a Baptist attempts to define slot machine gambling in a way to get around the Supreme Court’s decision, when Baptist legislators, county officials and businessmen support gambling, when gambling can come within a breath of becoming law in a state so largely Baptist, one can legitimately ask about the vitality of the Christian faith here.

Are we guilty of “quoting the Bible by the yard and living it by the inch,” as one person recently suggested?

The unfortunate truth is that people’s morals are more likely to resemble those of their peer group than to take shape around the tenets of their faith. That was the conclusion of a Barna Group survey released in October 2006.

Barna examined 16 moral issues, including gambling, and found behaviors of born-again and non-born-again subjects to be “virtually identical.” The survey also noted a growing acceptance of behaviors such as gambling by younger born-again believers.

The church’s responsibility

It found that younger believers “feel that shaping influences such as family, church and community have failed them.”

Perhaps that is a key to understanding what is happening in Alabama. Perhaps the church has failed to be clear about biblical moral teaching regarding gambling and other important issues.

To be sure, playing a slot machine does not determine one’s eternal destiny. But one who loves God through faith in Jesus with heart and soul, mind and strength will reflect such a personal character that evils like gambling will never have a chance. ☞

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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Someone You Should Know

By Kristen Padilla, The Alabama Baptist

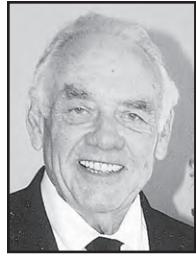
Harold Proctor

New Temple Baptist Church, Dora
Sulphur Springs Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES: Isaiah 53:5-6

FAVORITE HYMN: "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place"

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 26 years of marriage to Peggy, seven children, 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren



PROCTOR

Harold Proctor, a graduate of Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, is a retired pastor.

Proctor, who has served as a pastor, an interim pastor, a minister to single adults and an evangelist, presently ministers to young pastors. "My biggest thrill is to invest my life in younger ministers who will impact lives for Christ," he said.

Q: When and how did you become a Christian?

A: I accepted Christ at 11 years of age at Hunter Street Baptist Church at the last service of a revival in 1941. The Lord had been dealing with my heart that entire week. That Sunday morning, I made a profession of faith. I learned that afternoon that my father had come forward during the earlier service for baptism, and we were baptized at the same time.

Q: When and how were you led into the ministry?

A: In the summer of 1947, I was at a youth camp. It was during the concluding service that I had a clear, conscious call from God to serve the Lord in the ministry.

Q: What did you get from the ministry?

A: The unspeakable joy and privilege to partner with God in what He's doing. What an awesome privilege it is when God gives us a special calling to serve Him. Being in the ministry is not just about influencing others for Christ but being reciprocally influenced by great men and women of Christ.

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

A: I'm so thankful that God saved me when I was very young because I'm afraid of what I may have turned out to be if He hadn't. It has also helped me to know how to deal with some issues of life that I never could have known had I not been a Christian.

Withstanding pressure

Senators, representatives say 'no,' defeat 'bingo' bill

(continued from page 1)

battle had been won in Montgomery. But instead of breathing easy, they are shifting their focus to upcoming elections and Alabama Supreme Court decisions, which they believe could drastically affect the war against slot machine-style "electronic bingo" gambling.

'Not going away'

"This is an issue that is not going away," Black warned his colleagues before pulling SB 380, which was originally sponsored by Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville.

Black said he made the call to pull the bill because he did not want it to prohibit the passage of other good pieces of legislation. House Minority Leader Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, said he believed Black lacked seven to eight votes, which may have been impacted by an FBI investigation of corruption surrounding the bill.

According to Hubbard, someone changing from a "no" vote to a "yes" vote would be in a very difficult position with the pending investigation.

Eric Johnston, a Birmingham attorney and president of Citizens for a Better Alabama (CBA), commended legislators for refusing to vote for the bill.

"It was a small group of people pitted against a wealthy and powerful group of people," he said, adding, "They withstood the pressure."

According to Gov. Bob Riley, the bill's opposition was bipartisan.

"I believe enough Democrats and Republicans in the House became truly offended by the deceptive tactics of some on the pro-gambling side," he noted in a press release. "The gambling lobby tried to deceive lawmakers, and that eventually caught up with them."

A 'great victory'

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), called the lack of gambling votes a "great victory for the people of Alabama."

"Gambling bosses wanted to take over the state, and they failed in their attempts to do so," he said.

"I am also encouraged because churches and pastors and associational directors of missions all came together to take positive action to stop this bill by phone calls, writing letters and sending e-mails. It just shows you what can be accomplished when churches get engaged in the culture."

Rep. Richard Laird, D-Roanoke, said the lobbying efforts of churches directly increased the number of representatives who would have voted against SB 380.

"There were some that were leaning toward voting for gambling, but over the weekend, they got so many calls and contacts that they came back and said they would vote against it," Laird said.

With the legislative push for slot machine-style gambling resolved for this session, Johnston believes the gambling industry is in trouble.

"Once all the frivolous lawsuits have settled and all the rulings are final, they (so-called electronic bingo facilities) will be closed down," he said. "They will only be able to have paper card bingo."

But this process may take months, Johnston added.

Standing strong

Standing up to the pressures to vote for gambling legislation during this year's regular session of the Legislature deserves commendation.

Below are senators and representatives who stood strong.

The list of **senators** represents those who voted "no" on Senate Bill 380, which would have 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 would have required 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.

The bill also would have established a five-member gaming commission appointed under the heavy influence of the Senate.

The bill did not repeal or affect any of the local constitutional amendments but did not require "bingo" operators to follow the amendments if their businesses were approved by the proposed gaming commission.

The list of **representatives** represents commitments Rep. Arthur Payne, R-Trussville, received for a "no" vote if a vote had come up. Payne led the gambling opposition efforts in the House.

Gov. Bob Riley and his staff also worked consistently against the gambling legislation.

Senators voting 'no'	Representatives committing to vote 'no'		
Beason, Scott	Allen, Gerald	Galliher, Blaine	McLaughlin, Jeff
Bishop, Charles	Baker, Alan	Gaston, Victor	McMillan, Stephen
Brooks, Ben	Ball, Mike	Gipson, Mac	Millican, Mike
Butler, Tom	Barton, Jim	Grimes, David	Moore, Pat
Dixon, Larry	Bentley, Robert	Hill, Mike	Newton, Charles
Erwin, Hank	Bridges, DuWayne	Hubbard, Mike	Payne, Arthur
French, Steve	Brown, K.L.	Hurst, Steve	Sanderford, Howard
Marsh, Del	Canfield, Greg	Ison, Jamie	Sherer, Thomas
Orr, Arthur	Collier, Spencer	Johnson, Ronald	Thigpen, William
Pittman, Trip	Curtis, Mike	Laird, Richard	Thomas, Elwyn
Poole, Phil	Davis, Randy	Love, Jay	Treadaway, Allen
Sanford, Paul	DeMarco, Paul	Mask, Barry	Ward, Cam
Waggoner, Jabo	Drake, Owen	McClendon, Jim	Williams, Jack
	Dukes, Bill	McClurkin, Mary Sue	Williams, Phil
	Faust, Joe	McCutcheon, Mac	Wood, Randy
	Fincher, Chad	McDaniel, Frank	Wren, Gregory

"It is important to understand that the Supreme Court can only deal with cases as they are brought to them from the lower courts," he said, adding, "This can be frustrating and seem to take a long time but it in the long run, it works best."

Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb sat in the gallery during Black's announcement but would not comment on the "bingo" issue since several gambling cases are pending in the Supreme Court. At press time, she did not know if any oral arguments would be scheduled in the cases but said she thinks more cases should be argued orally.

'A transparency issue'

"It's a transparency issue," she said. "I think it brings the people into the courtrooms and helps focus the courts on the most serious issues of the cases."

Alabamians on both sides of the issue believe upcoming elections will play a large role in the gambling debate during next year's session.

"I expect the money men of gambling to ... come from another angle," said Tom Anderson, chairman of Concerned Wiregrass Citizens. "They will seek to sponsor can-

didates of their own desire and makings."

If voters get engaged in the election process, then ALCAP Director Emeritus Dan Ireland believes they will see a "new climate" in the Statehouse next year.

"The people are tired of do-nothing legislative sessions and letting pending gambling legislation decide the direction of the Legislature," he said.

But this change requires believers to change their approach, according to Catherine Snow of CBA.

"Instead of trying to play defense, we need to go on the offense and elect candidates who support our convictions," she said.

Godfrey agreed and said Christians need to look beyond the surface and do a little research.

Pro-gambling forces are "putting up candidates in both party's primaries," he noted. "People need to attend public forums or even sponsor public forums. Invite candidates and ask them where they stand on the gambling issue. If they are incumbents, you can research their voting records over the last four years. The church has got to be involved in this representative republic on a national level as well as the state and local levels."

Bill to shield faith-based substance abuse care fails

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

Faith-based substance abuse programs will have to try again next year after a disappointing loss at the Statehouse on April 22.

Senate Bill (SB) 342, which would have exempted all religious entities providing substance abuse care from certification by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (DMH), failed in the House of Representatives after passing the Senate unanimously the week before.

Those supporting the bill had enough votes to pass it April 21, according to Eric Johnston, a Birmingham attorney and president of Citizens for a Better Alabama. But when the House convened the next day, bill supporters lost by one vote in a procedural vote to table the bill.

'Retribution'

"The main thing that killed the bill was retribution by the gamblers, because preachers have had a con-

tinuing presence at the Statehouse opposing the gambling, which resulted in the gambling bills being defeated," Johnston said.

"When the gamblers realized that the churches were asking to protect their religious freedom, then they took out their loss on us by lobbyists getting House members to fight us," he added.

"If the gambling lobbyists had not been against us, I think we would have had no problem to pass it."

Closer look

The certification issue first arose in 2008, when an incident at The Bridge Inc., a noncertified faith-based substance abuse program in Double Springs, was reported to DMH.

While existing law does not distinguish between faith-based and medical-based substance abuse care, it does give DMH the right to oversee and certify any program.

This incident and the reporting

of other similar incidents caused DMH to look more closely at uncertified programs, visiting some treatments centers and compiling proposed standards of care.

Rick Hagans, founder and president of Harvest Evangelism in Opelika, which operates three substance abuse care facilities, got scared.

He told *The Alabama Baptist* that his fear was that if the state required faith-based programs to become certified, then it could tell them whom to hire and what to teach.

Hagans contacted Sen. Ted Little, D-Auburn, and Rep. DuWayne Bridges, R-Valley.

Bridges said the concern was valid since part of the existing law "wasn't clear."

Valid concerns

"[Faith-based programs] had the fear that (the Department of) Mental Health would come in and require them to be certified even though they didn't administer any

drugs or give any psychological treatment," Bridges said.

So he and Little co-sponsored SB 342.

Approximately two years of dialogue between DMH and faith-based substance abuse programs led both groups to agree that the law needed to be amended to protect the faith-based programs from future state involvement and clarify that any group giving medical or psychological help be certified.

But the majority of the House did not seem to see it the same way.

Better luck next year

While the failure of the bill means there is still no clarification regarding certification of substance abuse treatment programs, DMH has pledged to work with faith-based programs.

"We are confident that we can continue to work with our partners in the faith-based community to clarify the department's mission and encourage the development of ministries that provide pastoral care for individuals who benefit from a discipleship faith-based environment," DMH said in a statement.

Bridges was very disappointed that the bill did not pass and said he plans to bring it back next year.

"We are not giving up the fight," Bridges said. "We need those ministries and they need to have the support of all the people." ❧

Want to know God?

By Pastor Bobby Earls
First Baptist Church, Center Point

If there is a God, He must be a good God." I recall so very clearly having this thought about God as a young boy. I grew up in the Carolinas, the buckle of the Bible Belt. Yet even in my early teens, I had a very limited understanding of God.

My family never attended church. We were not Christians. My father was an agnostic. My mother said she believed in God but didn't live like it. I was confused. Maybe you find yourself where I once was when it comes to really understanding just who God is.

Because I thought God was good, I also thought I must be good, too, if He was to accept me. I believed I could earn God's approval by being a good person. So I was, good that is. Good son, good student — I was the consummate Boy Scout who helped little old ladies across the street.

But then I came to a real turning point. At 16, I attended a "church event," an area-wide tent revival of all things. I heard the gospel for the first time in my life. Christians say the gospel is good news. It's the good news of God's love for man and His offer of forgiveness and eternal life.

At that moment, my understanding of God was challenged and corrected. For the first time, I heard what the Bible says about my goodness and my effort to do good things in order to go to heaven. I heard Romans 3:10 (NLT), "As the Scriptures say, 'No one is righteous — not even one.'" And Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT), "God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done."

It became very clear to me that it wasn't up to me. I could not nor did I need to earn my salvation. God had provided for me. I heard how God had given His only Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for me so I might have everlasting life (John 3:16). That indeed was good news. I prayed a simple prayer asking Jesus to forgive me and give me His gift of eternal life. Maybe it's time for you to stop trusting your own goodness and accept God's good news. He loves you and He'll forgive you. Just ask Him. I did. ❧

Christian higher ed conference calls for papers

The University of Mobile (UMobile) will host its first University of Mobile Forum on Christianity and the Liberal Arts.

The conference will address the topic of Values and Character Formation in the Liberal Arts Classroom Sept. 24-25 on the Baptist university's campus.

Stephen Schuler and Chad Stutz, assistant professors of English and conference co-chairs, said private and public university professors, graduate students and independent scholars are invited to submit academic papers dealing with the topic of values in the classroom to present at the conference.

Presentations may address issues of virtue, postmodernism, scholarly impartiality, the value of a liberal arts education, preparing students for church service, Christians teaching in secular institutions, conflicts between ideas in academic disciplines and theological commitments, historical interactions between Christianity and the

liberal arts and other similar topics.

Dwight Steedley, dean of UMobile's college of arts and sciences, proposed hosting an academic conference and has worked with Schuler and Stutz to initiate it.

Schuler said this type of conference is important because of its positive effect on education. "A conference gives academic professionals the chance to share their research and discuss developments in their field, making them better informed about new research and thus stronger teachers in the classroom."

Sharing research

He said the purpose of the conference is to bring academic scholars together to discuss the purpose of a Christian liberal arts institution.

David Lyle Jeffrey, distinguished professor of literature and humanities at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, will be the keynote speaker.

Presentations should be 15-20 minutes long. A 500-word abstract

summarizing an intended presentation must be sent to sschuler@umobile.edu or cstutz@umobile.edu by May 14. For more information or an extensive list of possible topics, contact Schuler at 251-442-2426 or Stutz at 251-442-2376. (UMobile)

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Believer's baptism by immersion

Open membership threatens Baptists' most central distinctive

By James Leo Garrett Jr.
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Baptists have not always agreed among themselves on doctrinal or ethical issues, but they have had some common beliefs that they have defended and on which they have been united. When one of these is challenged or rejected, the Baptist community is likely to be in a crisis as to how to respond.

Open membership

Currently a movement has been launched to convince Baptist churches to adopt open membership. That means that Baptist churches should no longer insist that all people received into membership (barring some physical disability) have been baptized upon and after profession of faith in Jesus Christ by the mode of immersion. Instead people who have had only infant baptism and baptism by pouring or sprinkling and possibly those who have had no baptism may be received into Baptist churches without immersion so long as they profess faith in Jesus. Open membership is to be clearly differentiated from open communion, even though open communion has sometimes led to open membership.

Should Baptist churches be encouraged to adopt open membership, or are there good reasons for not doing so? I would like to offer five of the latter.

The central distinctive

First, believer's baptism by immersion is probably the all-time central Baptist distinctive.

Others may note different aspects that make Baptists distinctive. Soul competency can hardly be traced behind E.Y. Mullins, leading Southern Baptist theologian who made it the clue to Baptist identity in 1905. Congregational polity has from the beginning been shared with Congregationalists. The priesthood of all believers has also been strongly affirmed by Lutherans. Religious liberty for all was originally a Baptist distinctive, but today it has been affirmed by most other Christian denominations. The Lordship of Christ has been claimed by others, if not applied as thoroughly.

Although a few non-Baptists today practice believer's baptism by immersion, the majority of professing Christians in the world practice infant baptism. English Baptists were attacked for their baptismal beliefs and had to defend such; indeed it was this belief that provided Baptists their name. Texts such as Romans 6:1-4 and 1 Peter 3:21 were employed in that defense. To make believer's immersion optional in Baptist churches would be to denigrate the central reason for a Baptist witness and denomination.

According to William H. Brackney, a respected present-day his-

torian of the Baptists, "believer's baptism by immersion is essentially Baptist" and it is "the major Baptist contribution to modern Christian ecclesiology [doctrine of the church]."

It is, of course, true that John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, having recovered believer's baptism in 1609, did not practice immersion. The Particular Baptists, who believed that the death of Christ was intended for and actually brings about the remission of the sins of only those elected by God, a third of a century later adopted immersion.

The General Baptists, who believed that the death of Christ is adequate for the remission of the sins of all human beings but is effective only among those who believe, soon followed, unless, as Stephen Wright of England has recently argued, some Generals began to immerse a few months earlier. Thereafter immersion became the normative mode of baptism for all Baptists.

Uncommonly practiced

Second, open membership has been a very marginal deviation in Baptist history. John Bunyan is often cited, but we must remember that his church in Bedford, England, was in the beginning and still is in the 21st century a mixed Baptist-Congregationalist (infant-baptizing) church — a pattern not followed by most later Baptists.

Open membership has only become common during recent decades in England, and now a few churches in the United States have embraced it.

Should others join in the adoption of open membership? Ask Benjamin Keach, who was jailed and put in the pillory for explaining to children the Baptist understanding of baptism; William Kiffin, who insisted that infant baptism is not genuine baptism; Obadiah Holmes, who was publicly whipped and jailed in Boston for his Baptist convictions; Henry Dunster, who had to resign as the first president of Harvard College because he was a Baptist; or Adoniram Judson, who lost his appointment as a Congregationalist missionary and in Burma, wrote to affirm his Baptist convictions about baptism.

A replicated trend

Third, adopting open membership would not be prudent for today's



BP photo

DISTINCTIVE — Baptists have traditionally accepted members into their churches by way of baptism by immersion.

Baptists because the cause of believer's baptism by immersion has not been a failure. Between 1850 and 1950, half a dozen new Christian denominations in the United States adopted believer's baptism by immersion, and this trend is being replicated today in various indigenous Christian movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We should be grateful that believer's baptism by immersion is no longer a Baptist distinctive. We should have the Spirit-led wisdom not to trivialize or abandon this foundation for Baptist life.

To do so could leave Baptists with an uncertain and undefined ecclesiology, drifting on the high seas when Mormons, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals and, yes, Muslims are more confident and explicit about their beliefs.

False ecumenism

Fourth, the adoption of open membership may be based on a false ecumenism. For Southern Baptists in particular, who have been influenced in the past by Landmarkism, the problem may be acute. Landmarkers insist that only Baptist churches have the authority to administer believer's baptism by immersion, and hence Baptist churches should not recognize "alien immersions," that is, immersions of believers performed in non-Baptist churches and/or by non-Baptist ministers. The growing rejection of anti-alien immersion,

especially after other denominations have adopted believer's baptism by immersion, has led some Baptists to "throw out the baby with the bath water." They are ready to jettison the earlier, historic, pre-Landmark Baptist understanding of baptism in order to be accommodating to members of other denominations.

Healthy dialogue

Three things need to be said in reply. The first principle of healthy interdenominational dialogue is to represent one's own beliefs faithfully and accurately. It is not a prerequisite to such dialogue to deny one's own beliefs.

Second, Baptists have defended immersion from the Greek verb "baptizein," meaning "to dip, plunge, or immerse," from examples of baptism in the New Testament (Acts 8:36, 38-39 and Rom. 6:1-4). But current advocates of open membership discredit that evidence.

Third, truth and unity need to be kept in balance. Jesus both made truth claims and prayed for the unity of His followers. We should indeed seek more extensive Christian unity but not at the price of the compromise of truth. Nor should Baptists deny that infant-baptizing churches may be true churches in some sense. Believer's baptism by immersion is not merely a practice such as whether to use wine or grape juice in the Lord's Supper; it is a principle with deep theological connections. Does one expect Roman Catholics to renounce the primacy of Peter or Pentecostals to deny a post-conversional bap-

tism in or with the Holy Spirit?

Gospel ordinances

The fifth reason for not adopting open membership is believer's baptism by immersion, as well as the Lord's Supper, is closely connected with and proclaims our Lord's death, burial and resurrection.

Paul understood this and made it the basis for the Christian life (Rom. 6:1-14). No other mode can picture these events — death, burial and resurrection. Moreover, for Paul, these events were veritably the center of the gospel proclamation (1 Cor. 15:3-8). The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are gospel ordinances. Among the advocates of open membership concern has been registered about "toddler baptisms" (under the age of 8) in Baptist churches. One should not deny the existence of problems in this regard. But concern must also be registered about the dry baptis-tries, few baptisms and plateaued congregations that are so prevalent. The effective proclamation of the gospel needs to be accompanied by the great symbols of that gospel.

For these reasons and in the awareness of the gravity of the issue, I ask you to reject open membership and give renewed and celebratory emphasis to believer's baptism by immersion.

EDITOR'S NOTE — James Leo Garrett Jr. is distinguished professor emeritus of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and the author of "Baptist Theology: A Four-century Study." ❏

BAPTISM
in
Baptist Life
Part 2 of 2

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing May 1, 7 p.m., with To the End. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Mount Pleasant Church, Uriah**, will hold revival April 29–May 1, nightly at 7, with Royce DuBose Sr., pastor of Evergreen Church. The church also will celebrate homecoming May 2, 11 a.m. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service. Pete Dunn is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Pioneer Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate its 24th homecoming May 2, 10:30 a.m., with John Marks as guest speaker. Jim Minor will lead the music. Sunday School will be at 9:15 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service. Meat will be provided. There will be an afternoon service at 1 p.m. John Michael Colburn is pastor. ► **Shades Crest Church, Hoover**, will hold a yard sale called Community Chest on the Crest May 8, 7 a.m.–2 p.m. Proceeds will go to the church's construction loan. For information call Mary Swedenburg at 205-403-9941. Dennis Foust is pastor. ► **Vestavia Hills Church** will host the University of Michigan's Women's Glee Club and the Birmingham Girls Chorus in concert May 5, 6 p.m. The church also will host Bobby Horton and Bill Bugg in a concert of American folk songs and homespun humor May 9, 6 p.m. For information call 205-979-5920. Gary Furr is pastor.

EAST CULLMAN

► The brotherhood ministry of **First Church, Fairview**, in Cullman, will host the sixth annual Kris Banister Memorial Golf Tournament May 22 at Chesley Oaks Golf Course in Cullman to benefit the Decatur campus of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Registration and warm-up will be at 6:30 a.m., and the shotgun start will be at 7:30 a.m.

The format will be a four-person scramble. Lunch will be provided. There also will be competitions for closest to the hole, long drive and hole-in-one. For information or to sign up visit www.krisbanistermemorial.yolasite.com. David Chambers is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Westview Church, Sylacauga**, will host Cruise-in Twenty Ten May 15, 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Bring your classic car to show. There will be a 50-50 drawing, door prizes, '50s and '60s music and food. For information visit www.wherefriendsbecomefamily.com. Jimmie Roberts is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Robinsonville Church, Atmore**, will celebrate 108 years of ministry with a homecoming May 2, 10:30 a.m. Pat Andrews, director of missions for Escambia Association, will speak. Mike McMorris is pastor.

HALE

► **Moundville Church** will celebrate its 110th homecoming May 2, 10:45 a.m., with Jerry Drace of Hope for the Home as guest speaker. A covered-dish lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Scott Stevens is pastor.

MADISON

► **Bailey Alderson** is the new ministry assistant for **First Church, Huntsville**. She comes from Columbia, Tenn., and recently graduated from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. David Hull is pastor. ► **Oakley Church, New Market**, celebrated Easter April 4 with a baptismal service. Twelve people were baptized. The church also observed the Lord's Supper during the evening service. Charles Hammons is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Chris Kelley** is the new minister of worship for **First Church, Irvington**. He and his wife, Erin, have two children. Ron Griffin is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Calvary Church, Fayette**, will hold a conference called Not Ashamed May 2–3 with Brian Catalucci of Answers in Genesis. Sessions will be Sunday at 9:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m., 5:30 p.m. and 6:45 p.m. and Monday at 6 and 7:15 p.m. For information visit www.answersingenesis.org/go/family. Blake Thompson is pastor.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Reno Church, McCalla**, will hold a ladies luncheon May 15, 10:30 a.m., with Fern Ronsivalle as guest speaker. For information call 205-477-5058. Roasco Kornegay is pastor.

RANDOLPH

► **Trinity Church, Roanoke**, celebrated its 108th anniversary April 25, 10 a.m., with former member Jamie Taylor, pastor of Paran Church, Roanoke, as guest speaker. A covered-dish lunch followed in the new Trinity Life Center. Richard L. Richie is pastor.

SELMA

► **Jerry W. Light Sr.** is the new senior pastor of **First Church, Selma**. He comes from Fellowship Church, Thomaston, Ga., where he served as pastor. Light holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Mercer University in Atlanta, Ga., master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary and doctor of ministry from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Suzanne, have three children. ► **Northside Church, Selma**, will hold a gospel singing May 16, 6 p.m., with the Dixie Echoes. Doors will open at 5 p.m. For information call 334-874-8276. Kenny Hatcher is pastor.



LIGHT

► **Fourmile Church, Wilsonville**, will celebrate its 186th homecoming May 1, 10 a.m., with former Pastor Gary A. Jones as guest speaker. Lunch will follow. Roger Chambers is interim pastor.

SHELBY

► **Walker Association** will hold its annual senior adult revival May 10–12, 10:30 a.m., at New Canaan Church, Jasper. John Foles will speak, and Shannon Knight will lead the music. Coffee and doughnuts will be served at 10 a.m. For information call 205-387-1820. Bill Martin is pastor of New Canaan. Lucky Teague is director of missions for Walker Association.

WALKER

► **Walker Association** will hold its annual senior adult revival May 10–12, 10:30 a.m., at New Canaan Church, Jasper. John Foles will speak, and Shannon Knight will lead the music. Coffee and doughnuts will be served at 10 a.m. For information call 205-387-1820. Bill Martin is pastor of New Canaan. Lucky Teague is director of missions for Walker Association.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

TBFA's trust operations assistant VP to retire

Glenda Mims, assistant vice president of trust operations for The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, is retiring after nearly 26 years with the organization. After working for the state of Alabama for 17 years, Mims joined the Foundation as trust administrator. Her title was changed to assistant vice president around 2000.

A graduate of Massey-Draughon Business College (later incorporated as the college of business at South University) in Montgomery and Auburn University at Montgomery, Mims is a member of Bethsalem Baptist Church, Billingsley.

Although she's enjoyed her time with the Foundation, "working with the people and the clients, different churches and entities," she hopes to do "the least I can get by with" in retirement, she said, laughing. Mims' activities will include caring for her mother, volunteering at her Chilton Baptist Association church and stepping back into the church choir.

But she'll be missed at the Foundation, where she helped open more than 1,700 new accounts, totaling around \$175 million, President Barry Bledsoe said. "She has spoken with literally hundreds of Alabama Baptists over the years, providing them with information and answering their questions," Bledsoe said. "Glenda has been a vital part of our administration team, and her depth of knowledge and helpful attitude will be missed."



MIMS

Oxford's Meadowbrook Church celebrates 50 years

Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, in Calhoun Baptist Association celebrated its 50th anniversary April 18 with a special service, lunch and an Afternoon of Remembrance. Dale Huff of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions delivered the sermon; former pastors Don Phillips, Charles B. Stroud and James Paul Hunter were honored; and former staff members shared stories of the ways the church had played a roll in their later ministries.

Started as a mission of First Baptist Church, Oxford, in 1957, the church was constituted as Meadowbrook Baptist on April 24, 1960. Since that time, Meadowbrook has added a kindergarten ministry, an educational facility and an "Abundant Life Center," complete with educational and day-care facilities.

"I think the way to grow a church is to find needs and meet those needs," said Gary W. Rivers, who has served as pastor for nearly 11 years.

So Meadowbrook is in the process of launching a Celebrate Recovery program and planning summer missions trips.

"[Meadowbrook] is a wonderful group of Christlike, friendly folks who are real missions-minded people and make people feel welcome and wanted," Rivers said. "I think those are the things that go into the makings of a growing church."

Grace Church music leader Smith dies

David Smith, minister of music at Grace Baptist Church, Montevallo, died April 5. He was 52.

Smith served as the Shelby Baptist Association church's music minister for 17 years, as well as a deacon and Sunday School teacher. He also served about three years in the National Guard.

"He was a true man of God and lived in such a way that there was no doubt his faith was both genuine and powerful," said Greg Walker, pastor of Grace Baptist.

Smith was preceded in death by a grandchild and is survived by his wife, Vivian; two children; and two grandchildren. (TAB)



SMITH



Photo courtesy of Siloam Baptist Church

SILOAM CHURCH HONORS OLDEST MEMBER

For her 100th birthday, Siloam Baptist Church, Cuba, and family members (pictured here) honored Nell Woolf (seated) April 18 as the church's oldest member. Woolf taught Sunday School at the Bigbee Association church for more than 70 years. Brad Campbell is pastor.

FOCUS on One Mission

FOCUS on ONE Mission

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission
ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program
MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries

news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (800) 264-1225 www.alsbom.org

ALABAMA BAPTIST CONVENTION STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!

Alabama Baptists are a Great Commission people. There is **NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!** The Across Alabama effort in relationship to the national GPS strategy (God's Plan for Sharing) is just one case in point. I cannot recall a time when so many churches in our state were involved in a major endeavor to share the good news of Christ with people in their own Jerusalem and Judea. This represents the kind of Great Commission spirit so evident in Alabama Baptist life.

What about beyond Alabama? Despite the eroding economic conditions in Alabama, Alabama Baptists continue to be the leader in giving through the Cooperative Program for SBC mission causes. This is an encouraging indication of the commitment Alabama Baptists have to reaching people in North America and around the world. Alabama is not the wealthiest state in the U.S., but Alabama Baptists are among the most missional in going beyond our borders with the Gospel and

being sacrificial in giving to missions.

Consider these facts: In 2009 Alabama Baptists sent through the State Board of Missions \$21,533,332 to the International Mission Board. That is almost one-third of all funds received in that particular year. If you count monies sent for North American missions in that category, then the total comes to \$31,818,505 dollars or more than 47 percent of funds received in 2009. In fact, of total receipts from Alabama Baptists through missions offerings (Cooperative Program, Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon and World Hunger), 59 percent of those funds goes to SBC causes.

Alabama has only one state convention charged with the responsibility of reaching the 50-60 percent of its population who are, by their own admission, unreached. There are 42 conventions supporting the work of reaching North America and

the ends of the earth. In the future, we are all going to have to be even more effective in pushing back the darkness of a lost world. We have to tackle the huge challenge together as Southern Baptists. To seek to do otherwise is to fragment the fragile sense of cooperation

By Rick Lance
State Missionary
Executive Director-Treasurer



which has made us the largest evangelical group and arguably the most missional people in the history of Christianity.

Personally, I grieve over the mischaracterizations offered by some who question the commitment and loyalty of Alabama Baptists in Great Commission Ministries. These uninformed people, no matter how well placed, are not encouraging the kind of cooperation needed to reach a

lost nation or world. Baptists do not have a structural problem, but admittedly, like any other Christian people, we do have a spiritual one. Can we be more effective in reaching people for Christ in Alabama and around the world? Yes, absolutely yes we can, but name calling and disseminating inaccurate information through blogs and tweets are not the answers for our future.

Baptists are not Republicans and Democrats arguing for particular legislation in Washington or in Montgomery. We are God's people on mission with the Great Commission in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. That is the spirit of Alabama Baptists. **NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!**



ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

Stay Connected With RICK LANCE and
Your State Board of Missions

www.facebook.com/rlance

www.facebook.com/alsbom

www.twitter.com/ricklance

www.twitter.com/alsbom

Get Acquainted Day

At the Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd. in Montgomery

**Tuesday, May 4, 10 am - 3:30 pm
9 - 9:30 - Check-in and refreshments**

- Meet your state missionaries
- Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission
- Tour the Baptist Building
- Spouses welcome
- Lunch provided

Ideal for pastors, church staff, secretaries or associational staff who are new to Alabama, new to their position, or who have never attended a Get Acquainted Day

Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, chobbs@alsbom.org, or go online to www.alsbom.org/gad.



ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADER TRAINING I & II

August 6-7, 2010
August 13-14, 2010
Shocco Springs

This year's training will be an exciting conference focusing on making disciples through Sunday School.

If you are a Sunday School leader, teacher, helper or church staff member — or if you think you would like to work in Sunday School in your church and have never attended Sunday School Leader Training at Shocco — consider making it a priority in 2010. Even if you have been coming many years, there are always new things to learn and new ideas to explore.

Dawne Tynch from Forest Hill Baptist Church in Mobile said this about the 2009 Sunday School Leader Training at Shocco: "I'm not a Sunday School teacher; I am actually a worship leader/music director. This conference was helpful in the areas of morale, organization and recruiting members to work along with me."

To register, go online to www.shocco.org/reser or call 1-800-280-1105. For other information, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org.

FOCUS on One Mission

LEADERS
OF
PROMISE
EVENT

 Vaughn Forest Church
presents the
 LEADERCAST

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

FRIDAY,
MAY 7, 2010
8 A.M. – 3 P.M.
VAUGHN FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH
8660 VAUGHN RD., MONTGOMERY

SPEAKERS:

- **Jim Collins:** author of *Good to Great* and *How the Mighty Fall* and co-author of *Built to Last*
- **Tony Dungy** (pre-recorded): retired head coach for the Indianapolis Colts
- **John C. Maxwell:** leadership expert and best-selling author of *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*
- **Steve Uzzell:** award-winning corporate photographer and former staff member of *National Geographic*
- **Mark Sanborn:** Best-selling author of *The Fred Factor*
- **Connie Podesta:** expert in the psychology of human behavior and leadership development
- **Jim Goodnight:** chief executive officer of SAS Institute, Inc.
- **Ed Bastian:** president of Delta Air Lines

- **Ben Carson:** neurosurgeon and professor of pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom
- **Chip Heath:** author of *Made to Stick*, columnist for *Fast Company* and Stanford professor

The Chick-fil-A Leadercast is a one-day leadership event featuring the world's best leaders speaking about the leadership principles that matter most. Broadcast live by GiANT Impact from Atlanta to hundreds of locations around the world, the Chick-fil-A Leadercast is a catalyst for new ideas and better leadership practices.

Our focus for this year's event is to help you be the one leader to make a lasting impact in the lives of those you lead. Join

us on May 7 and set your sights on being the one to make all the difference by living out the leadership principles that guide your decisions and your life.

On May 7 experience an event that will inspire you to be the one to make a difference. It all starts with leadership training.

Some of the topics you will learn about:

- keys to connecting with others
- new ideas for creative problem solving
- best practices for leading in challenging circumstances
- how to create strong team cultures

To register or for more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, jallen@alsbom.org.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

For all pastors, staff ministers, lay leaders and spouses

LEADER LAB

Tuesday – Friday
July 20 - 23, 2010
Baptist Building
2001 E. South Blvd.
Montgomery



Jeff Iorg

Special Guest: Jeff Iorg, president, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, teaches leadership, preaching and church ministry courses. His publications include three books, dozens of articles and curriculum materials. Iorg will be teaching from his new book, *The Painful Side of Leadership*.

Labs include curriculum courses in: Lead Like Jesus, Divine Connections, Leadership

Greatness, Emotional Intelligence, Coaching and a special lab just for ministers' wives.

Cost: \$150 for double occupancy, \$250 for single occupancy or for couples.

To register or for more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, jallen@alsbom.org.

Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

Monday, May 3, 2010
9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Deerfoot Baptist Church
5450 Mount Olive Church
Road
Trussville, AL 35173

**FREE ADMISSION
NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED**



Blackaby

**MORNING SESSION,
9-11 AM**
Featuring music by
Squire Parsons and
message by Richard
Blackaby

LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

**AFTERNOON
SESSION, 1-3 PM**
Featuring music by
Squire Parsons and
message by Junior Hill



Hill

*For more information,
please contact State Missionary
Daniel Wilson at 1-800-264-1225,
ext. 368, dwilson@alsbom.org.*

Updates: www.alsbom.org/saec



Parsons

MUSIC NOTES

Mix456

**Monday through Friday,
July 12-16
Shocco Springs**

Mix456 is a challenging, hands-on, fun-filled worship arts camp experience for 4th-6th graders.

TO REGISTER (deadline June 7):

- Step #1: Visit www.shocco.org/reser or call 1-800-280-1105.
- Step #2: Order t-shirts by getting the order form at www.alsbom.org/mix456 and submit to Office of Worship Leadership & Church Music, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.

COST, UPDATES AND OTHER DETAILS:
www.alsbom.org/mix456

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Keith Hibbs, ext. 217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish, ext. 230, cparrish@alsbom.org.



Together: Children's Choir Summit

**Friday and Saturday,
July 9-10
Shocco Springs**



Discounts available for those registering by **May 3**.

COST, UPDATES AND OTHER DETAILS:
www.alsbom.org/children-summit

REGISTER: Visit www.shocco.org/reser or call 1-800-280-1105.

Registration begins Friday at 2 p.m. with lodging rooms available at 4 p.m. Session 1 begins Friday at 2:45 p.m. Grand prize drawing on Saturday at 3:15 p.m.

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: Music Specialist Karen Gosselin, ext. 318, kgosselin@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Susan Corley, ext. 279, scorley@alsbom.org.



worship arts camp

ReMix

**Monday through Friday, July 12-16
Shocco Springs**

ReMix is an exciting experience for 7th, 8th and 9th graders that continues the growth process begun in Mix456.

TO REGISTER (deadline June 7):

- Step #1: Visit www.shocco.org/reser or call 1-800-280-1105.
- Step #2: Order t-shirts by getting the order form at www.alsbom.org/remix and submit to Office of Worship Leadership & Church Music, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.

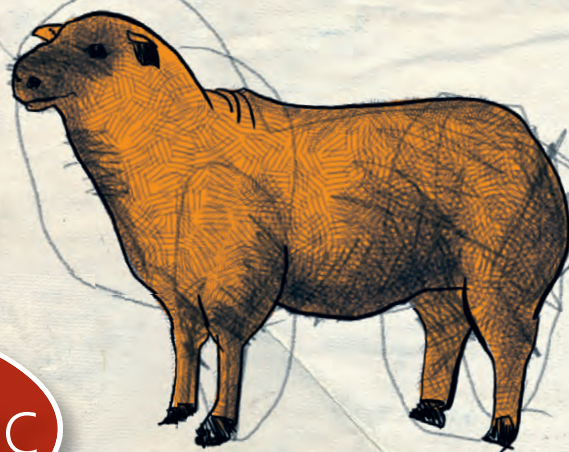
COST, UPDATES AND OTHER DETAILS:
www.alsbom.org/remix

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Keith Hibbs, ext. 217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish, ext. 230, cparrish@alsbom.org.



BREAKABLE

YOUTH EVANGELISM CONFERENCE 2010



REGISTER NOW at
www.thestudenthub.org/YEC

\$20
PER PERSON

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY,
PETE HANNA CENTER

for more info visit
WWW.THESTUDENTHUB.ORG
call 800.264.1225 EXT. 275



Chris Brooks Speaker
Chad Norris Speaker
Dave Rhodes Speaker
David Walker worship

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

Session 1 **break in.**
Session 2 **break through.**
Session 3 **break out.**

JULY 16-17

FOCUS on One Mission



Baptist Men's State Softball Tournament

August 6-7, 2010

Lagoon Park & Fain Park

40-team maximum
Round-robin tournament
(eight divisions with five teams each)

Single elimination in championship round of 16 teams

Every team will play at least two games (\$135 for complete tournament).

For a complete list of regulations to participate, please contact State Missionary Mondene Coker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 273, mcoker@alsbom.org.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

ROYAL AMBASSADOR/ CHALLENGER CAMPS 2010

For additional information call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or email gburlingame@alsbom.org or visit www.alsbom.org/ra



Lad & Dad or Man & Boy Adventure Camp

July 15-17
July 22-24
July 29-31

Cost: \$180/pair
These camps are for boys in grades 1-6 and their dad or a significant male adult.



Challengers

July 12-15, Challenger Camp #1
July 26-29, Challenger Camp #2

Cost: \$180
For young men in grades 7-12. Follows the schedule for the RA Camp but with the addition of time on the ropes course and rappelling wall.

Lad & Mom RA Camp

July 22-24
For boys in grades 1-6 and their moms. Moms participate in all activities with their sons.

Cost: \$180/pair
Includes hatchet throw, archery, air rifle, swimming, campcraft, canoeing and meeting missionaries.



RA Adventure Camp

July 12-15, RA Camp #1
July 26-29, RA Camp #2

For boys in grades 4-6. Those completing the third grade are eligible. This camp includes missions education, opportunity for decisions, relationship building, campcraft and recreation.



Thursday – Saturday, August 26-28 Shocco Springs

Missions University is a multi-faceted training opportunity designed to equip you in a variety of missions-related areas. The courses will be offered twice during the three days. The schedule is designed so church staff can attend Thursday afternoon through Friday afternoon and bivocational staff and laypeople can attend Friday evening through Saturday morning. The cost for training will vary based on which course(s) you take and your lodging choice.

Listed below are the courses being offered at Missions University 2010. The number in parentheses is the length of the course in hours. If there are two numbers, the first number indicates a brief overview of the topic is available for those who do not wish to take the full course of study in that area this year.

COURSES OF STUDY

Church Planting/Literacy Missions/Multi-Culture

Basic Training for Church Planters-Spanish or English Congregation (1 or 12)
 Literacy Missions (1 or 12)
 Spanish – Adult Reading and Writing (1 or 16)
 Tutoring Children and Youth (2 or 16)
 English as a Second Language (14)
 Church Renewal/Lay Renewal – How to Have Renewal in Your Church (2)
 Fellowship of Baptist Educators – What Is It and How to Join (1)
 Project Help: WMU's Annual Ministry Initiative (1)

Missions

Creative Ideas for Promoting the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong Offerings (1)
 Finding Your P.L.A.C.E. (Spiritual Gifts Discovery) (1)
 Connecting with Hispanics (2)
 Global Missions – Alabama Baptist Partnerships (Appalachian Region, Guatemala, Ukraine, Michigan, New York) (2)
 Understanding the Muslim Religion and Sharing My Faith (2.5)
 Understanding the Hindu Religion and Sharing My Faith (2.5)
 Setting Up and Leading a Mission Trip (national or international) (1)

Men's Ministries/Brotherhood Directors

Leadership Training for Men's Ministries/Brotherhood Directors (2.5)
 Using Technology to Reach Men (1)
 Man in the Mirror/No Man Left Behind (5.5)
 Men's Fraternity (1 or 3)
 Overview of Alabama Disaster Relief Ministries—How to get involved (1)
 Reaching Every Man – Introducing a Strategy to Leave No Man Behind (1)
 Pastoring Men—What Works, What Doesn't, and Why (1)
 Calling Men to Relevant Faith (Man in the Mirror) (1)
 Ark Almighty – Finding Opportunities to Do Missions in Your Church Field (1)

Royal Ambassador Leadership/Challenger Leaders

Leadership Training for RA Leaders (2.5)
 Leadership Training for Challenger Leaders (2.5)
 Opportunities for Youth in Missions (1)
 Pinewood Derby Demo – Track, Computer, Sound Effects (1)
 Discipline in the RA Room (1)
 Interest Activities for RAs and Challengers (2)

For more information, visit www.alsbom.org/missionsuniversity, or call State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268. You can also ask to be placed on the Missions University update mailing.

Missions University is a ministry of the Global Missions and Associational Missions & Church Planting offices of the State Board of Missions and Alabama Woman's Missionary Union. It is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

MISSIONS
UNIVERSITY



Seeding the State with the Gospel

ACROSS
ALABAMA



Alabama Baptists covered the state with prayer, copies of the Gospel and invitations to church as part of Across Alabama during March. According to Sammy Gilbreath, state missionary and evangelism director for the State Board of Missions, Alabama Baptists requested enough materials to reach more than 980,000 homes in Alabama. "The Across Alabama evangelism effort has been incredible," Gilbreath said. "The excitement is beyond explanation, but the anticipation of having this state seeded with the Gospel is another joy all by itself. This seeding will produce harvests for months to come."



Across Alabama is the first planned emphasis in GPS (God's Plan for Sharing), a 10-year effort to have every believer sharing and everyone hearing the Gospel by 2020. Following the prayer walking and gospel distribution, evangelistic worship services were held in churches across the state on Easter Sunday. Now a time of follow-up is taking place, as churches make contact with those who visited.

The Great Commission



Participating in Across Alabama has encouraged many churches to conduct similar evangelistic efforts in the future. "There is growing excitement now from churches that plan to do this again related to their VBS in early summer," Gilbreath said. "This will provide another way to get the Gospel out and invite people to participate in a local VBS where we know we have more decisions for Christ than any other evangelism event."



Future GPS-related evangelistic emphases are scheduled for 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020. For more information about GPS and Across Alabama, visit www.GreatCommissionGPS.com.

Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude



Photo courtesy of Hollins Baptist Church

HOLLINS CHURCH BUILDS NEW FELLOWSHIP HALL

Hollins Baptist Church in Central Baptist Association completed a new multipurpose fellowship hall in March. It includes a kitchen, classrooms and handicapped bathrooms and accommodates about two and a half times more people than the previous fellowship hall. Jason Gravette is pastor.

50 Years Ago April 1960

Busy Preacher: One of the most beloved citizens of Butler County, Ralph Mullins, recently completed his 37th year as pastor of Spring Hill Baptist Church. "Brother Ralph," as he is known to his many friends, is also pastor of five other churches in Butler and Crenshaw counties, and he has been pastor of each church for at least 20 years. He has served Midway for 20 years, Antioch East for 21, Southside for 23, Spring Creek for 28 and Siloam in Crenshaw County for 29. These six churches have a total membership of 1,400. Brother Ralph does not keep a record of the weddings or funeral services he performs; however, he does record each baptismal service and said he has performed 3,400 baptisms. He also estimates he has preached more than 10,000 sermons during his years in ministry.

40 Years Ago April 1970

Alabamian's Book Emphasized: A book by an Alabama Baptist author has been selected for emphasis by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board during its observance of National Liberty Week-Church Library Emphasis April 12-18. "Trumpets in the Morning," by Harper Shannon, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dothan, and second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is among several books, films and recordings being emphasized.

30 Years Ago April 1980

Significant Landmark: County Line Baptist Church in East Liberty Baptist Association has been deemed a significant landmark by the Alabama Historical Commission and added to the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage. The church was established May 2, 1835, with a charter membership of 12. The present site was chosen and a log structure erected to house the congregation on land bought from the Creek Indian Nation by one of the charter members. The present building replaced the log structure in 1889. Plans for a 145th anniversary celebration include a message by Mabry Lunceford, a Samford University professor and native of the County Line community.

20 Years Ago April 1990

Flood Damage: The Alabama Baptist State Convention's disaster relief committee has presented checks of \$25,000 each to First Baptist and Westside Baptist churches in Elba to assist with restoration from the flood that devastated the city March 17. First, Elba, Pastor Doug Dortch reported 16 feet of water in the church's sanctuary. Westside Baptist suffered extensive damage with its organ and pews floating in the choir loft. The home of its pastor, Robert Kirkland, was severely damaged also. Coming just before the Easter season and the Alabama Baptists' Here's Hope revivals, the flood carried an ironic message. For many people of Elba, spring — the time of promise — has been the cruelest.

10 Years Ago April 2000

Music Minister Retires: Bill McKinney retired April 1 after 35 years as minister of music at University Baptist Church, Huntsville. After such a long tenure, he sees generations of faces in the choir loft whom he has known throughout their lives. McKinney said retirement does not mean an end to his music ministry. He will continue to direct the Jubilee Singers, a senior adult ministry he began in the early '90s, and Madison Baptist Association's senior adult choir.

— HOLY LAND TOUR —

hosted by Dr. & Mrs. Ed Hayes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman



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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: First Baptist Church, Glencoe, is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Mail resumés to: First Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 103 N. College Street, Glencoe, AL 35905.

PASTOR: Faith Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Mail to: Faith Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 3979 Co. Road 434, Moulton, AL 35650.

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.

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Coordinate music, direct choir and lead singing. Send resumés to: Henagar Baptist, P.O. Box 398, Henagar, AL 35978 or contact church office at 256-657-4800.

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 resumé to: office@fbcfoley.com or mail to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 307, Foley, AL 36536.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Montevallo, Ala. Should have experience in leading choir/worship service, traditional worship style, SBC church. Send resumé to: glwalker20@gmail.com or call 205-910-8631.

PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR: Fairhope Avenue Baptist Church (www.fairhopeabc.com) is seeking a part-time youth director. Salary will be based on maturity, experience in related posi-

tions and/or professional degrees. With prayerful consideration please mail resumés with references to: Pastor James W. Hill, P.O. Box 1086, Fairhope, AL 36533 or fax 251-928-1328.

OTHER POSITIONS

CUSTODIAN/MAID: Needed for Montevallo First Baptist Church. Please call 205-665-2566. Experience helpful.

BUSINESS

CHURCH SIGNS: Reliable Signs offers design, fabrication, installation and service. All types of signs from electronic messaging to traditional. Ask about our exterior light maintenance service. Statewide coverage. Christian-owned. Church references available. www.reliablesigns.com. 800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

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pand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders, Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

TRAVEL/VACATION

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS CABIN: 2 BRs, 2 BAs furnished cabin. Wheelchair accessible. \$500/week (3 night minimum). \$125/night. Located in mountains of Blue Ridge, Ga. Call 941-755-3655.

TRAVEL SHOW: Greece 2011. "Footsteps of the Apostle Paul" May 4, 7 p.m. Grace Place, 5730 Shellfield Road, Enterprise. Information on show or tour contact Julie at jabjwb@roadrunner.com.

GULF SHORES CONDO: King bed, twins, sleeper sofa, 2 1/2 BAs, huge balcony, facing gulf, heated pool, kiddie pool, workout room. 251-543-7339 or 251-968-3810.

LOG CABIN: Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log onto www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

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MOUNTAIN COTTAGE: Hayesville, western North Carolina. Lovely, almost new mountain cottage for rent. April-October, weekly/monthly. All conveniences. 2 BRs, 2 BAs on beautiful Hiwassee River. Low price: \$500 weekly plus tax. Sleeps 5. Children welcome. No pets. 828-389-3302.

FOR SALE

CHURCH BUS: 28-passenger bus, Chevrolet 3500, diesel, 37,000 miles, commercial driver's license driver required, TV, DVD, CD changer, AM/FM stereo. E-mail: kdavis2106@bellsouth.net.

BUS: 1997 Champion bus, 24-passenger, e350 v10 Ford. Looks good, runs good. See pictures on Craigslist. Call Leon, 205-833-7625.

Best advice: Handle crises last

EDITOR'S NOTE — The Alabama Baptist staff is happy to introduce a new women's column to the state Baptist paper. This new column will focus on resources women can use in their lives of faith, whether lived out at home, in the workplace or in the church. The columnist is Jean Roberson, MSW, LCSW — a ministry consultant for national Woman's Missionary Union. She serves as team leader for the adult team and as director of Christian Women's Job Corps/Christian Men's Job Corps and International Initiatives. The column will run the first issue of each month beginning with the June 3 issue. Until then, we will run the column each week as a way of introduction to this new segment of the paper.

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson



in. Every day, at home and at work, we are presented with unexpected crises and issues that demand our attention and consume our time. Even our prayer life becomes consumed with urgent issues. By the time we have discussed the issues, thought through solutions and determined on a way to proceed, our time and energy are gone.

Unfortunately this is the norm rather than the exception, because each day brings its own set of crises.

While we have done a good job managing the immediate issues, the cycle of this leaves little time to be creative and talk through the deeper, less urgent issues we face.

At home, this may be spending time with your spouse talking through how God is speaking to you. At work, this may be taking time as a group to be creative and

refine your work so that it better suits your audience. At church, this may be working to meet the needs of the less vocal individuals in the faith community.

Some of the best advice I ever received was to deal with the crises last.

I was in a seminar on supervision, and the speaker was talking about setting an agenda for team meetings. Her point was that we have to be intentional to set aside time to deal with the less urgent issues if we ever want to improve the quality of our work and relationships.

Crises create their own time. It is the quieter, less demanding issues that have to be scheduled. Otherwise we simply maintain and end the day feeling as though we are treading water.

In your workday, consider setting aside time when you do not answer the phone or read e-mail so you can focus on a project. In your meetings, plan them so the committee or team can first address the less demanding issues and then deal with the crises. At home, set aside time — such as a meal — when you talk about how you are instead of what needs to be done.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Be intentional and schedule time to work on creative, foundational elements.

Militia leader in Michigan had ties to Baptist church

The ringleader of a group in Michigan accused of plotting to kill police officers had ties to a Southern Baptist church, according to media reports.

David Brian Stone, 45, ringleader of the group accused of plotting to kill police officers, had attended Thornhill Baptist Church, a congregation in Hudson, Mich., affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Elton Spurgeon, pastor of Thornhill Baptist Church, told the *Detroit News* that Stone had attended infrequently for about eight years. Stone's 21-year-old son, Joshua, who is also named in a federal indictment unsealed March 29, had recently gotten married in the church, but Spurgeon did not officiate.

Both Spurgeon and his wife, Donna, said they did not condone the group's activities and had no clue about what was going on. They said they knew the family owned guns and wore camouflage but thought they were hunters. Donna Spurgeon said she recently had lunch with Joshua Stone, who described himself as "second-in-command" to his father, but she did not know what he was talking about.

Authorities say the Hutaree (pronounced hu-TAR-ay), the name that Stone picked for the group, planned to kill an unspecified law-enforcement official and then ambush other officers by using homemade bombs to attack the funeral motorcade. They then would retreat to a staging area defended by booby traps. They hoped the attacks and retaliation would become a catalyst for other militia groups to engage in a more widespread uprising against the government.

A Hutaree website defines the term as "Christian warrior."

7 groups in Alabama

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which has been investigating the Hutaree since 2009, said the 1990s saw the rise of several anti-government paramilitary groups. In a report released in March, the SPLC documented 512 anti-government "Patriot" groups, which include armed militias, operating by the end of 2009. The number of armed militia groups rose from 42 in 2008 to 127 in 2009. Seven of those groups are in Alabama.

For more information, visit www.splcenter.org. (ABP)

Only Alabama pastor to serve as SBC president was late 1800s

(continued from page 1)

And Jackson will be the first sitting state convention president from Alabama to be nominated for SBC president.

If elected, Jackson would be the second Alabama Baptist pastor to serve as SBC president. Jonathan Haralson was the first to fill that role (1889–1898).

Jackson holds a divinity degree and doctorate in Hebrew and Old Testament from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a native of Greenwood, Miss., and a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton.

He also served on the SBC Executive Committee for eight years and is currently a trustee for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

In Alabama, Jackson served as first vice president of the state convention and second vice president of the state convention before being elected president.

He and his wife, Bobbi, have three children (one deceased) and six grandchildren. They will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this June.

Georgia pastor, too

Jackson is the second nominee for SBC president, joining Bryant Wright, senior pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga.

In a Baptist Press story, Johnson Ferry Baptist's CP giving was reported as 2.5 percent, but the church reports it gives 3.5 percent through the CP. (TAB)

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Family Matters

April 2010

ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S
HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

Building hope, Restoring lives

*Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice
to the afflicted and needy. Psalm 82:3*

Susan talked with Bob Murdaugh with a heavy heart, wondering what she and her small son would do now that her husband was dead. As she made the funeral arrangements, Bob mentioned he also worked for a place that could help her with counseling and some immediate needs.

Tears sprang to Susan's eyes as she saw the logo for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. "This is where I was raised, Bob. This is my family."

So begins the story of Susan's homecoming, a return to the people who helped her as a child and would now help her and her son. Susan's full story is featured in our Annual Offering DVD for churches who order Annual Offering materials, and is available for viewing on www.alabamachild.org.

Mother's Day
May 9th

Mother's Day, May 9th is also
the Annual Day of Prayer for
the Children's Homes



Dear Alabama Baptists:

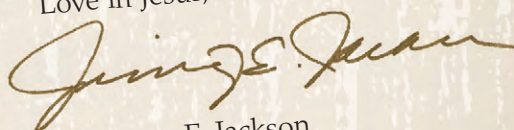
We are all very much aware of the financial climate in which we live. Such times as these tend to create a fear of what may lie ahead. To deal with the uncertainty, many people cut back on their giving. Others do not have as much to give because of a reduction in income or the loss of a job.

In spite of these concerns, God's work must go on. In fact, the financial problems cause an even greater need for sacrificial, generous giving. A case in point is our Alabama Baptist Children's Homes ministry. With the increased financial pressure has come an increase in the number of homes being disrupted. Counseling needs are more pressing.

While the resources may be less than needed, the ministry responsibilities are multiplied. **What is the answer? You and me.** Can we trust God to take care of us as we give to take care of those whose needs are even greater than ours?

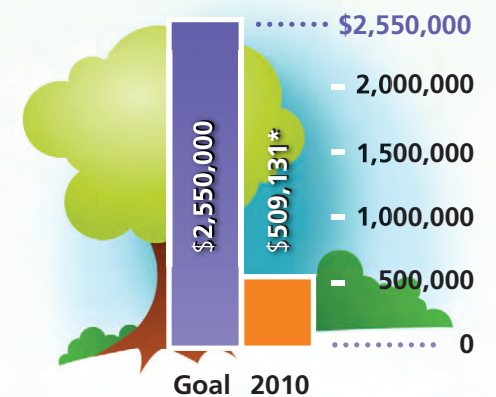
We have answered that question over and over again. Yes, Alabama Baptists can trust our Lord. Every extra gift means so much. Let us join together to meet the growing demands of the life-altering work of our Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

Love in Jesus,



Dr. Jimmy E. Jackson
President, Alabama Baptist State Convention
Pastor, Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville

2010 ANNUAL OFFERING



*Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice
to the afflicted and needy. Psalm 82:3*

The 2010 goal for the Annual Children's Homes Offering is \$2.55 million. Please encourage your church to give.

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 2

Explore the Bible By Jeffrey S. Quiett

Associate professor of marriage and family counseling, University of Mobile

WHAT IF YOU FALTER?

Exodus 32:1-4, 30-34; 34:6b-9

The People's Apostasy (32:1-4)

When Moses failed to return from the mountain, the Israelites concluded that something had happened to him and went to Aaron with a demand that he make them other "gods." The Israelites were finding it difficult to adjust to the leadership of an invisible God and seemed to be deliberately rejecting Him by attributing their deliverance from Egypt to Moses. Once again, we see the Israelites' weak faith in the face of discomfort and confusion. The presence of hardship gives us opportunity to live out what we truly believe.

More striking than the people's faithlessness was Aaron's acquiescence. He instructed the Israelites to bring him their golden earrings, which were probably part of their loot from Egypt. From this jewelry, Aaron fashioned an idol in the form of a "golden calf" or a "young bull," which was a symbol of vigor, strength and reproductive power in the ancient world. When Aaron presented the completed image, he proclaimed, "These are your gods ... who brought you out of the land of Egypt." Almost identical words are found in 1 Kings 12:28 when Jeroboam made two golden calves for Dan and Bethel.

The loss of patience and lack of perseverance are dramatic in this passage. The Israelites quickly lost faith despite their extensive experience with God's faithfulness and provision. Their impatience gave way to apostasy as they sought out false gods to secure a weak faith. Many times, patience and perseverance are the most severe tests of one's faith and morality (2 Thess. 3:13).

Punishment and Intercession (32:30-34)

Moses bitterly denounced the Israelites' sin as a "great sin" but added that he would go to the Lord to try to make atonement for their transgression. Moses pleaded with God to forgive them. If God would not forgive them, then Moses insisted on being "blotted out" from "the book [He had] written." "To blot out" may mean simply "to die," or it may be one of several references in the Bible to a

book in which God has inscribed names of those who belong to His Kingdom. Many ancient cities kept registers of their citizens. If one was not enrolled in the official register, then he or she did not enjoy the rights and legal protection afforded a citizen.

God rejected Moses' offer, making it clear that no person can atone for the sins of another. Each individual was responsible for his or her own sins, which would later be clearly enunciated by Jeremiah (31:29-30) and Ezekiel (18:1-32; 33:10-20). The Lord, however, did reaffirm His promise to take the people to the promised land under Moses' leadership and said His angel would go before them.

Although modern worldviews claim that sin is a result of upbringing or other outside causes, the Bible affirms that each person is accountable for his or her actions. Sin is a serious offense against God that carries individual, relational and spiritual consequences.

Although God forgives sin through repentance and trust in Christ, the immediate and possible long-term consequences of sin remain.

Forgiveness and Consequences (34:6b-9)

Verses 6 and 7 contain a summary of God's chief attributes. They emphasize both His righteousness that requires punishment of wrongdoing and His love that permits forgiveness. In response to God's revelation, Moses bowed low and worshiped. He then renewed his appeal to the Lord to go with the people, even though they were stubborn; forgive them; and take them for His inheritance. Moses demonstrated a crucial leadership quality of accountability coupled with grace.

This passage gives a dramatic background for the coming of Jesus. God's holiness and love cannot be separated. Although God loves us and wants to forgive us of our sin, He cannot excuse or ignore our tendency to rebel against Him. Our rebellion against God comes with a great price — death. But God's love and grace compelled Him to provide a way to himself through Christ (Rom. 6:23). An intense awareness of our sin and its consequences drives us to Jesus (Gal. 3:24). ☞

Bible Studies for Life By Mark DeVine

Associate professor of divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Genesis 1:26-28a; 2:7, 15-22

"We are gathered here today in the presence of God." This opening line of the traditional marriage ceremony should remind us that marriage is not a human invention but rather a divinely established institution. Whether we realize or acknowledge it, marriage is, in a real sense, always holy matrimony in the eyes of the only true God who established it. In marriage, we have business, not just with one another but also with God.

Nobody's Business?

Perhaps few words ever exchanged between two human beings in this world are so personal as, "I do," expressed by the "almost wife" and the "almost husband" just before the presiding minister says, "I now pronounce you husband and wife." Yet, although these words are undoubtedly among the most personal ever spoken, it is appropriate that they traditionally have been articulated, not in private but, "before these witnesses" and "in the presence of God." It is likewise appropriate for the words "I now pronounce you husband and wife" to be proclaimed not by the newly wedded couple but by the presiding minister of the Word of God. It is further appropriate when that increasingly odd-sounding charge is posed to the witnesses — "If anyone gathered here today knows of any reason why these two should not be joined together in holy matrimony, let him speak now or forever hold his peace."

This charge conveys insight regarding the kind of seriousness marriage deserves, according to the Bible's teaching. Since God established marriage in the creation and bringing together of our first parents, Adam and Eve, the whole community has a stake in the success of every marriage. Should a marriage survive and flourish, the whole community stands to benefit. Likewise should a marriage fail and perhaps even disintegrate, the whole community bears the cost of that failure.

A couple, in other words, cannot legitimately insist that their impending union is nobody's business but theirs. Yet the gathered

community of faith's invitation to object to the union is not open-ended. There is a time limit. As soon as the marriage bond is sealed, the efforts of both the couple and the community must be for the strengthening, nurturing and blessing of the union — "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder!"

Bridge-burning Commitments

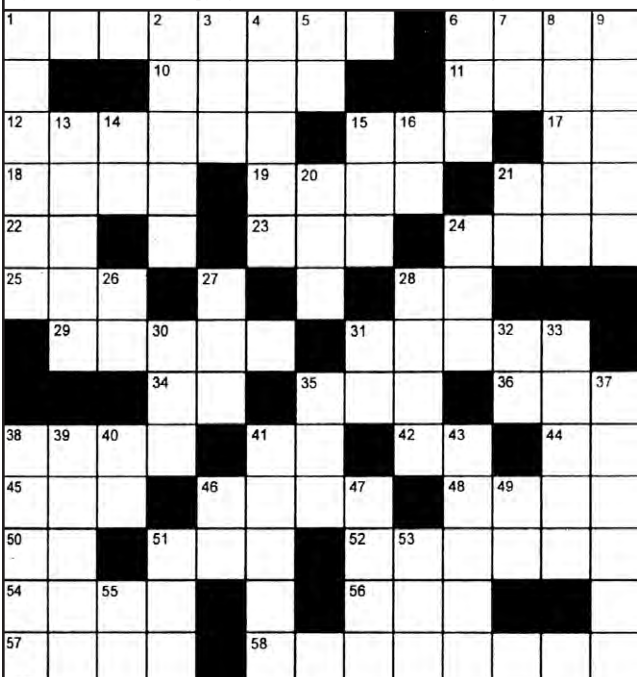
Covenant-shaped, vow-infused, bridge-burning commitments to anyone other than ourselves seem to be vanishing from our world. Even those who take marriage vows bring ever-diminishing levels of confidence regarding the durability of their own marriages. Why? Not least because of the relational wreckage they see all around them. Fewer among us have personal acquaintance with any couple who actually have kept their vows "till death they did part." Increasingly the notion of a lifelong commitment seems like a fantasy, not a real possibility in the real world.

But our passage this week raises a protest against such forgetful, wrongheaded and dangerous retreat from the divinely established institution of holy matrimony. We cannot toy with, manipulate, distort, discard or defy what God has established on this earth anymore than we can successfully defy the force of gravity. The church's efforts to minister to divorced people are welcome. Treating divorced people like lepers or semi-demonic creatures branded with a scarlet letter "D" has always been wrong but so is the normalizing of divorce.

We Christians speak much of the need for God's power in order to bear up under the burdens of this mortal life and so we should, for without supernatural divine enablement, none of us can hope to live the victorious life of God's children. But what does God promise to empower? Why the keeping of His law, the doing of His will? Immersed within a culture of divorce, let us pray not just for the forgiving and comforting power of God for the perpetrators and victims of divorce. But let us also pray for the strengthening power to defeat divorce, the power to build strong and lasting marriages. Based on our passage, we can be sure that divine power is available for this. ☞

Christian Crossword

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- Across**
- That he might ___ us alive. (Deut. 6:24)
 - Pitcher.
 - ___, which was the son of Seth. (Luke 3:38)
 - River in Bolivia.
 - Property agency.
 - O. T. book. (abbr.)
 - Naval vessel designation.
 - Canadian Indian.
 - Where is ___ thy brother? (Gen. 4:9)
 - Till he should pay all that was ___ unto him. (Matt. 18:34)
 - Comes after em.
 - Celtic sea god.
 - Right to property.
 - Fr. article.
 - Yes. (Spanish)
 - A word appearing 73 times in Psalms.
 - Woman's title.
 - They could not enter ___ because of unbelief. (Heb. 3:19)
 - Minister's title.
 - Missing in Action.
 - Top of the head.
 - Academic degree.
 - Printer's measure.
 - Symbol for element

- tellurium.
 - Japanese sash.
 - Became captain over a ___. (1 Kings 11:24)
 - Put him to an ___ shame. (Heb. 6:6)
 - Northwest state. (abbr.)
 - According to the prince of the power of the ___. (Eph. 2:2)
 - Now therefore ___ thyself what word I shall bring. (1 Chron. 21:12)
 - Full of ___, murder, debate. (Rom. 1:29)
 - As the loving hind and pleasant ___. (Prov. 5:19)
 - Sendeth ___ on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
 - Solomon reigned over all ___. (1 Kings 4:21)
 - Wane.
 - Us.
 - Let him seek peace, and ___ it. (1 Pet. 3:11)
 - If ye then be ___ with Christ. (Col. 3:1)
 - Sea eagles.
 - ___, ___, I, O, U.
 - Possessive pronoun.
 - ___ Haig.
 - Egyptian pleasure god.
 - Double. (prefix)
 - Top.
 - Compass point.
 - ___ shall be a serpent by the way. (Gen. 49:17)
 - Can faith ___ him? (James 2:14)
 - Eternal life, which God, that can not ___. (Titus 1:2)
 - Northeast state.
 - I ___ Alpha and Omega. (Rev. 1:8)
 - A certain poor widow, threw in two ___. (Mark 12:42)
 - His father saw him ... and ___ and fell on his neck. (Luke 16:20)
 - He found a certain man named ___. (Acts 9:33)
 - Ye shall receive ___. (Acts 1:8)
- Down**
- In a ___ of ground which Jacob bought. (Josh. 24:32)
 - But ___ died without children. (1 Chron. 2:30)
 - Within. (comb. form)
 - If ye fulfill the ___ law. (James 2:8)
 - Competing against.

- Are not ___ and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better? (2 Kings 5:12)
- Musical note.
- And Deborah said unto ___, Up; for this is the day. (Judg. 4:14)
- All the city was ___ about them. (Ruth 1:19)
- Occurring in intervals of two.
- Mend socks.
- Greek "P."
- ___ Rand.
- Beware of ___s. (Phil. 3:2)
- Roman numeral 6.



World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Local Indonesian gov. official forbids church to meet

BEKASI, Indonesia — A local government official in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia has forbidden all worship of the Filadelfia Huria Kristen Batak Protestan Church (HKBP) in Jejalan village.

On April 12, Regent Sa'duddin ordered a halt to all activities of the church, including worship services that have been held on a strip of roadside land since the government Jan. 12 summarily sealed the church's building, which was under construction.

Announcing the order at a meeting of government officials with HKBP Pastor Palti Panjaitan present, Vice-Regent Darip Mulyana said the reason for the closure of the church's makeshift site was that worship interfered with "community activities," though the site is on a nearly deserted roadside bordering vacant fields.

The regent also suggested that the church join with another HKBP congregation in the Graha Prima housing development, far from the Filadelfia church's site. Panjaitan said the church objects to this suggestion as it would be impractical, creating time and transportation difficulties.

Mulyana said Sa'duddin had ruled that the church needs to find a new place to construct its prospective permanent church building because local residents had rejected it — even though the church had secured approval from local residents when it submitted its application for a permit in 2008. The government has never acted on the application, and since then Islamic organizations have organized protests to try to pressure government officials to deny approval.

Groups of Uzbek protestants targeted, raided by police

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — Protestants in Uzbekistan continue to be targeted, Forum 18 News Service has learned.

Police raided a Protestant youth conference, claiming to check identity documents. Many of the about 70 young people were playing football and basketball, and 43 were taken to a police station where they were fingerprinted and photographed.

Two leaders are under investigation for "violation of the procedure for holding mass events" and "violation of the law on religious organizations."

Two days after that raid, police, tax inspectors and local officials raided Eternal Life Protestant Church in the capital Tashkent. At the time of the raid, church members were feeding homeless people. Officials complained this was "not according to their [registered] charter" and police detained several church members. Police admitted to Forum 18 that the NSS secret police had led the raid.

Following an alleged "Anti-terror" raid on a birthday party, 10 Pentecostals — eight of them pensioners — were fined 100 times the minimum monthly salary.

Suspected Islamic extremists kill Nigerian pastor, wife

BOTO, Nigeria — Suspected Islamic extremists abducted and killed a Church of Christ Nigerian pastor and his wife in Boto village, Bauchi state in northern Nigeria.

Ishaku Kadah, 48, and his 45-year-old wife Selina were buried April 17 after unidentified assailants reportedly whisked them from their church headquarters home April 13 and killed them. Their burnt bodies were found hours later.

On Jan. 22, suspected Islamic extremists had set fire to their church building days after Christians displaced by violence in Plateau state had taken refuge on the church premises.

"This is yet another case of unprovoked killing of Christians, which we condemn and demand that the law enforcement agents must fish out the perpetrators of this act," Bishop Musa Fula, state chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Bauchi state, told Compass Direct News. Police have reportedly arrested two suspects and have launched a man-hunt for several other accomplices. Authorities are not releasing the names of the suspects.

Turkish Christians commemorate deaths of three men

MALATYA, Turkey — Christians around Turkey recently commemorated the deaths of three men slain April 15, 2007. The Malatya murders have become a milestone for the Turkish church. Turkish Christians Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel and German Christian Tilman Geske, who worked at a publishing house that distributed Christian material in this southeastern Turkish city, were found murdered three years ago.

"For the church, it's another one of those events in life which we don't understand but entrust it to the hands of a loving God who we believe in," said Zekai Tanyar, chairman of the Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey.

Campus News



Samford University

► Samford Interior Design Program Receives Full CIDA Reaccreditation:

Samford University's interior design department has received full six-year reaccreditation from the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), the international accrediting organization for postsecondary interior design education programs in the United States and Canada.

Fewer than 200 schools in the United States and Canada carry CIDA accreditation.

The Samford department first received accreditation in 2000, when the accrediting organization was known as Foundation for Interior Design Education Research.

Steps in the accreditation process include a self-study to determine program readiness, program analysis and a four-day site review by a visiting team.

A significant component in the site visit involves evaluating student work as an indicator of the adequacy of the required curriculum based on the CIDA 2009 Professional Standards. Student work is evaluated for demonstration of

knowledge, understanding, ability, skills, appropriate application and competency.



Judson College

► Three Judson Equestrians Receive Honorable Mentions:

Three Judson College equestrian team members competed at the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association Western semifinals, the final regional show, at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, N.C., March 27-28.

Joy Coppock Hays, of Wetumpka; Sarah Dunn, of Frisco City; and Heather Hodge, of Thomasville, accumulated enough points in previous competitions to qualify for the championship event. All three received honorable mention awards. Jennifer Hoggle is Judson's equine director and team coach.

► Birmingham Physician Honored as Judson's Outstanding Alumna:

Dr. Judi Favor, a Birmingham obstetrician and gynecologist, was honored as the outstanding alumna at Judson College's J-Day celebration April 10.

Favor and Dr. Jimmy Sparks

founded Sparks & Favor, P.C., in 1991. Their office is now located at Brookwood Medical Center.

A member of Hayneville Baptist Church, Favor was honored as Birmingham's Health Care Hero in 2005. Upon graduating from Judson, Favor received the Faulkner Award for best all-around student.

She went on to attend the University of Alabama School of Medicine, where she received the J. Marion Sims Award as the most outstanding student in obstetrics and gynecology.

She received a research award during her University of Alabama at Birmingham residency and the CREOG Award for scoring highest in the nation on the obstetrics and gynecology written board exams.

Favor has served on the Judson board of trustees since 1993 and chaired the board from 2005 until 2007.

► **Longtime Judson English Professor Retires:** English professor Daniel Thornton will step out of the classroom this spring after 41 years of teaching at Judson College.

A graduate of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn., and the University of Alabama, Thornton served as head of Judson's English department for 16 years and in 2009, received the Lula and Alton Holley Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching.



University of Mobile

► Musical Theatre Added to UMobile Summer Music Camp:

Classes in musical theater have been added to the 17th annual University of Mobile (UMobile) Summer Music Camp for senior campers, according to camp director Barbara Larendine.

Registration is open for the senior camp, grades 8-12, and junior camp, grades 4-7, for the day camp, June 14-18 in Martin Hall on the UMobile campus.

Instruction in all instruments, including voice, is offered. Participating students are required to have completed a minimum of one year of disciplined study in music and submit a recommendation by their music teacher.

For more information, call Larendine, camp director, at 251-442-2402.



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NAMB photo

'GOD IS MOVING HERE' — Mike McQuitty (second from right), a North American Mission Board missionary, leads a Bible study for Baptist Campus Ministries students at Syracuse University in New York.

'Amazing opportunity'

Syracuse BCM births church, engages students

Mike McQuitty has almost always seen himself as a missionary. He gave his life to Christ at the age of 6 and in high school, realized he loved ministry work and especially missions.

"In college I served as a summer missionary in Colorado and Russia. And while in seminary at Southwestern, I served in youth ministry and then collegiate work for three years at University Baptist Church in Forth Worth," McQuitty said. "Through these experiences, my heart for missions and college students continued to grow."

As McQuitty thought through ministry career options, he was drawn to campus ministry because he sees it as missions work.

"The college years are a time when young people are making the decisions that will shape the rest of their lives, yet often it is a time when faith is put on a shelf," he said.

"You have literally thousands of students gathered in one place where we're able to repeatedly expose them to the gospel and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit that comes through a relationship with Jesus. That's an amazing opportunity."

When McQuitty graduated from seminary, he and his wife, Vicki, began looking for the place where God would have them invest their lives.

"We began looking for needs and saw an urgent NAMB (North

American Mission Board) Mission Service Corps request to come to the Northeast," he said. "There were a variety of universities looking for campus ministers and Syracuse University was on the list.

"We flew up and investigated, prayed and began to feel God calling us here, to central New York, to invest our lives."

There had been some campus ministry at Syracuse in the past, but when the McQuittys arrived there was just one student left from the former ministry.

"Her name was Alaya," Mike McQuitty recalled. "She had a great heart for God and wanted to see Him do great things on this campus."

The McQuittys began with some very simple things — Bible study, discipleship and all kinds of outreach activities.

"A few students began to come and we began to invest our lives in them, and they began to

catch a vision for how God could use them to reach not only their peers, but the world with the good news of Christ," Mike McQuitty said.

Today Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) at Syracuse is thriving. In addition to the original activities, the BCM has added a large group gathering on Tuesdays. Mike McQuitty and the students also go out each week to share their faith and hold a prayer meeting every morning plus a Sunday worship.

"God is moving here," Mike McQuitty said. "A lot of students are beginning to get involved in ministry, and we are seeing lives changed."

One of those changed lives is Mayelin Nolasco, who began coming to the BCM with her roommate. "My first impression was that these people were very serious about their faith," Nolasco said. "They weren't in it just for show — they were earnestly seeking God. I'd never experienced anything like that before.

"It took about a year, but I'd gotten to know Christ pretty well and I knew I wanted to pursue a relationship with Him," she said.

'A bit peculiar'

Through the church that was born out of the BCM, Nolasco gave her life to Christ. The birth of a church was something Mike McQuitty never expected. But after much prayer and consultation with area pastors, he and the students felt God confirm they should become a church. Many of the students became members and the church has begun to flourish and grow.

"It's a bit peculiar," Mike McQuitty said. "Most of the members are between 18 and 22 years old. Yet it's exciting. The students serve in all the roles of the church. They have a great passion to both know God and make Him known."

Mike McQuitty feels a church on campus is important because a college campus is much like a missions field. "I just really believe that if God would grab hold of one generation, that set of students would be able to reach their parents, grandparents and their children and grandchildren. And the entire Northeast region of the nation would be changed." (NAMB)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

School counselor opposed to gay 'marriage' cleared

AUGUSTA, Maine — In what some are calling a victory for religious freedom and free speech, a Maine licensing board has dismissed all complaints against a high school counselor who came under fire last year for appearing in a TV commercial opposing gay "marriage."

In a 2-1 vote April 9, the Maine Board of Social Worker Licensure dismissed both complaints that had been filed against Donald Mendell Jr., whose social worker's license was in danger of being suspended. After Mendell appeared in an October commercial supporting an initiative known as Question 1 — which eventually passed, reversing a law that would have legalized gay "marriage" — a social worker at another school in the same city — Newport — filed a complaint with the board against Mendell, who is a counselor at Nokomis High School.

Mendell taped the ad only after a fellow teacher at his school appeared in a TV ad opposing Question 1. The school's name did not appear in either ad and Mendell was the only one facing a complaint.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), a Christian legal organization, represented Mendell. "The government should not punish people because they believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman and because they say so during a political campaign," ADF attorney Jordan Lorence said in a statement. "The licensing board was right to dismiss these complaints. The First Amendment protects the rights of citizens to speak out on important public policy matters being voted on by the people."

The Oct. 19 complaint argued that while Mendell was entitled to his own personal beliefs, "he does not have the right as a licensed social worker to make public comments that can endanger or promote discrimination." In the ad, Mendell warned that gay "marriage" would be "pushed on Maine students" if Question 1 didn't pass. A second complaint was filed Oct. 30 by another social worker.

Judge rules National Day of Prayer unconstitutional

MADISON, Wis. — A federal district judge in Wisconsin has ruled that the 1988 law creating the annual observance of the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional.

"It goes beyond mere 'acknowledgement' of religion because its sole purpose is to encourage all citizens to engage in prayer, an inherently religious exercise that serves no secular function in this context," U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb ruled April 15.

"In this instance, the government has taken sides on a matter that must be left to individual conscience."

The Madison, Wis.-based Freedom from Religion Foundation, which filed suit in 2008 to stop the prayer day, hailed the decision as a "sweet victory."

The White House issued a statement April 15 on Twitter saying: "As he did last year, President Obama intends to recognize a National Day of Prayer."

In 2009, Obama issued a proclamation but did not host the traditional White House observance that his predecessor, George W. Bush, had held while he was president.

The American Center for Law and Justice, which filed a brief in the case supporting the law on behalf of 31 members of Congress, called the decision "flawed" and predicted it could end up before the Supreme Court.

"It is unfortunate that this court failed to understand that a day set aside for prayer for the country represents a time-honored tradition that embraces the First Amendment, not violates it," said chief counsel Jay Sekulow.

The law creating the national observance dates to 1952 and was made more specific in 1988, calling for it to be marked annually on the first Thursday in May.

"A lot of students are beginning to get involved in ministry, and we are seeing lives changed."

Mike McQuitty
NAMB missionary



Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1