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'Blessed to be his legs'

Munford pastor runs more than 30 races pushing church member's wheelchair

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Thirty-seven-year-old William Gower has one of the most recognized faces at Munford Baptist Church.

Even though about 500 people attend worship each Sunday, everyone knows Gower. He is a deacon and helps with Awana activities every Wednesday.

Gower serves in these front-line positions despite the fact that speech is almost impossible for him and he uses a wheelchair, because he has cerebral palsy.

He's formed an especially close bond with Pastor Tim Thomas, and together they have embarked on a rather remarkable venture — running races.

"We've been running for four years together," Thomas said. "I'm blessed to be a part of William's life like I am now."

"You'll not meet another more liberated man as far as his mind-set," he added. "When we run and I push him, he has a freedom you and I can never understand."

The inspiration for this unique partnership stemmed from a similar duo in Massachusetts: the father/son running team of Dick and Rick Hoyt, who formed Team Hoyt. Rick Hoyt, like Gower, was born with the umbilical cord around his neck, leading to cerebral palsy.

"We were watching a video on the Hoyts in church, and I leaned over in the middle of the video and said to William's mother, 'We can do this,'" Thomas said. "So we modified a wheelchair and started racing."

Now, more than 30 races later, Thomas and Gower are seasoned runners.

Recently they've formed a foundation, Team Gower, to help raise

money for Gower's expenses. At the moment, he needs a new van to help him get around. The one he and his mother are using currently is a 1986 model with almost 300,000 miles on it.

The inaugural Team Gower event was held April 17, helmed by the five-person Team Gower Committee. Together Thomas and Gower ran 15 miles from the campus of Jacksonville State University to Chick-fil-A in Oxford.

"He's taught me things that seminary and Bible studies have never taught me."

Pastor Tim Thomas
Munford Baptist Church

"It was so touching to see the support of the community," said Kelly Rollins, a member of the Team Gower Committee and financial secretary at the Coosa River Baptist Association church. Roll-

ins drove a van just ahead of Thomas and Gower during the run, so she had a front-row seat to the outpouring of support.

"The finish was the ultimate," she said. "Our church really showed up and supported this. We had sold bright hot pink T-shirts, and that's all you could see. It was like someone had poured Pepto everywhere. It was very moving at the finish line."

And it was monetarily successful, (See 'Team,' page 7)



Photo by Steve Gross

CLOSE BOND — Tim Thomas, pastor of Munford Baptist Church, pushes church member William Gower through the streets of Oxford during the inaugural Team Gower event April 17. Gower has cerebral palsy.

GCRTF report: Refocus NAMB, affirm CP

The Great Commission Resurgence Task Force (GCRTF) final report, posted May 3 at www.pray4gr.com, calls for "a new level of sacrificial giving" among Southern Baptists by "celebrating and empowering Great Commission Giving" and affirming the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) giving channel "as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our reach."

The report also continues its call for phasing out cooperative agreements between the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and state Baptist conventions. It also continues the call for state conventions to "take the lead" in promoting the CP and stewardship.

The report says while "so much good work is being done" by Southern Baptist congregations and entities, the

average Southern Baptist gives only 2.5 percent of annual income to the local church and beyond, local churches retain an average of 94 cents of every offering plate dollar and approximately 63 percent of all CP receipts remain in the state conventions — the greatest percentage in states with the largest Southern Baptist populations.

Giving challenge

The report calls on Southern Baptists "to celebrate all giving to our common work" by recognizing "the total of all monies channeled through the causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, the state conventions and associations as Great Commission Giving." It also calls on Southern Baptists "to recommit to the Cooperative Program as the central and preferred conduit of Great Commission funding, without which

we would be left with no unified and cooperative strategy and commitment to the Great Commission task."

The report also gives a significant focus on asking Southern Baptists to evaluate budgets at every level and maximize giving to CP causes. It challenges Southern Baptists to meet challenging goals for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions (\$200 million annually) and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions (\$100 million annually) by 2015.

The "progress report" presented to the SBC's Executive Committee on Feb. 22 reaffirmed the CP "as our central means of supporting Great Commission ministries" and proposed establishing the broader category of "Great Commission Giving" to celebrate all (See 'Task,' page 5)

COMMENT

Needed: Worthy Examples of CP Support

Albert Mohler was right when he told students at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., that “we do need a great example from the leaders of our convention in terms of support for the CP (Cooperative Program).”

He was on target when he added that Southern Baptist churches committed to the Great Commission are going to have to send more than 6 percent of their undesignated gifts to missions through the CP and individuals are going to have to give more if churches are to send more.

Unfortunately it is still an open question about who will provide those “great examples.”

Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., made his initial observation during a panel discussion. He was joined on the panel by fellow Great Commission Resurgence Task Force (GCRTF) members Johnny Hunt, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC); Ronnie Floyd, GCRTF chairman and senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark.; Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary; and North Carolina pastors Al Gilbert and J.D. Greear. (Visit www.thealabamabaptist.org to read the story.)

Of these six task force members, only Hunt serves a church — First Baptist, Woodstock, Ga. — that reported an increase in giving to missions through the CP in 2009. True to his pledge when first elected SBC president, Hunt led his church to increase CP giving by about \$45,000 even though the church experienced a decline in undesignated receipts of about \$500,000 for the year.

A decrease in CP giving

The other five all reported on the Annual Church Profile a decrease in their churches’ percentage of missions giving through the CP during the year in which they served on the task force. Two reported lower percentages even though their churches showed increases in undesignated receipts.

Three of the six reported CP gifts below 2 percent of their churches’ undesignated receipts. The other three reported CP gifts below 3 percent.

Of the task force as a whole, 12 members reported percentage declines in CP giving for 2009, while six reported increases. Four members’ churches reported incomplete information, and one reported the same percentage of CP giving as the previous year.

To be fair, the 2009 church year ended soon after the task force began its work. The commitment to CP giving that appears to have grown during the yearlong study may not have had time to be evidenced. Certainly Floyd is putting himself on the line promising increased CP giving from the church he serves and urging other pastors of large churches to do the same.

The task force’s report says a lot of good things about the CP. The report calls on Southern Bap-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

tists “to honor and affirm the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our reach.” The CP is called “the central and preferred conduit of Great Commission funding” and “the most effective and efficient means of channeling the sacrificial support of our churches.”

Individual church members are urged to use 10 percent of their income as the beginning point of Christian stewardship. State conventions are urged to channel half of their receipts to the SBC. The SBC is asked to allocate 51 percent of its CP receipts to the International Mission Board.

Surprisingly the report sets no goal for churches related to CP giving. It laments the current 6 percent SBC average for CP giving and calls upon churches to “increase the percentage of their Cooperative Program giving.” When asked about this in a telephone press conference, Floyd said because each church is autonomous, the task force did not want to appear to be giving directions to churches.

It is also true that some prominent megachurch pastors are sensitive about their CP giving records. Many equate reporting their giving records with criticizing their giving records.

During the telephone press conference, Hunt explained that CP giving would be much lower than it is if not for the large dollar amounts given by the larger churches. He also asked why small churches that give nothing at all to the CP are not mentioned by the denominational press.

What could not be said in the press conference is that in Alabama, the CP giving record of every cooperating church is printed in the state Baptist paper. And every church that does not give is encouraged to contribute to missions through the CP by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The task force report calls for no action by the messengers to the SBC annual meeting related to the CP. Instead messengers will be asked to support new “language and structure related to Great Commission Giving.” This would recognize “all monies channeled through the causes of the SBC, state conventions and associations as Great Commission Giving.”

Only two sentences of the 11 paragraphs in the section on giving deal with Great Commission Giving but from those two sentences, comes the recommendation to be considered by messengers to the annual meeting. The rationale offered in the press conference was that the current “Total Missions Giving” category allows a church to count money spent on a non-Baptist project and the new designation better tracks what is spent on a cause supported by the association, state convention or SBC.

This column was not written to criticize anyone. As we have said before, each church makes decisions as it understands the leadership of God’s Holy Spirit. This column was written to affirm Mohler’s observations about the importance of examples set by convention leadership.

Words aren’t enough

Because we believe missions giving through the CP has helped mobilize Southern Baptists’ efforts for worldwide missions and ministry, as the report states, it is important that leaders set worthy examples in CP missions giving. Words alone are not enough.

We believe the task force report would be stronger if messengers were asked to reaffirm the CP, churches were asked to set worthy examples for members through CP giving — including targeted goals — and convention leaders were asked to set worthy examples in their support of the CP.

This could be much more helpful than changing “Total Missions Giving” to “Great Commission Giving.”

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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Baptists respond to Tennessee flood victims

Churches and Baptist associations across middle Tennessee are reaching out to members and residents who were impacted by a record-setting flood that damaged thousands of houses, killed a dozen people statewide and even shut down sections of three interstate roads.

More than 13 inches of rain fell in Nashville May 1–2, nearly doubling the two-day record and pushing the Cumberland River — which flows through downtown Nashville — more than 10 feet above its flood stage. It was expected to crest at more than 51 feet Monday evening. The rain's impact was worsened because the region experienced a heavy rain just one week earlier.

Worst flood in decades

Houses across the region near streams, creeks and rivers were the most in danger. Entire neighborhoods were under water, and some people had to be rescued by boat or helicopter. Other cities near the Cumberland River, such as Clarksville — about an hour northwest of Nashville — also were heavily impacted.

The flood, the worst in decades, did not discriminate. The famous Gaylord Opryland Hotel had at least 10 feet of water damage and might be closed for months.

The flood shut down sections of Interstates 24, 40 and 65 for parts of the weekend, stranding hundreds of cars and making it impossible to get through the city at a normal pace. The river also overflowed in downtown Nashville, flooding businesses and creeping up to 2nd Avenue. Mayor Karl Dean urged people to stay off the roads.

Baptist churches responded by opening their doors as shelters, and Baptist disaster relief teams are working to assess and meet needs in the area.

At press time, Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams were ready and waiting should they be called up to go help in Tennessee. (BP, TAB)

Bassett Creek Baptist Church turns 200, still going strong preaching the gospel

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The sound of chimes floated out from the open doors of the little white church and down the red dirt road through Clarke County the morning of May 2.

It was soft but jubilant.

And jubilant it should be, said Chris Baker, director of missions for Clarke Baptist Association.

After all, Bassett Creek Baptist Church, Grove Hill, was turning 200.

And it's showing no signs of closing up shop.

"I can't help but think of all the lives that have been changed over the 200 years of Bassett Creek Baptist Church's ministry," Baker told a packed sanctuary that morning during the church's anniversary celebration.

"And there is more to celebrate. It is not going to close its doors, but the doors are wide open, and Christ continues to be preached out across these hills from the little church in the woods."

It's a gospel legacy that started in 1810, when about 20 members started meeting in the Bassett Creek area — then part of the Mississippi Territory — in a crude log building with no floor. Split logs served as pews and wood torches provided light.

Meetings were irregular — probably no more than once a month — but Christ was the main thing then as He's the main thing today, Pastor Chris Kynard said.

"I believe God is honored when we have genuine worship today and when we remember the past," he said.

Preaching from Matthew 10, Kynard challenged the congregation to carry on the church's gospel-preaching legacy by being sold-out disciples of Christ.



Photo by Grace Thornton

'THE LITTLE CHURCH IN THE WOODS' — A capacity crowd gathered May 2 at Bassett Creek Baptist Church, Grove Hill, to celebrate the congregation's two centuries of ministry.

"Have you changed any part of your world to be a disciple of Christ? To be His disciple, you have to change the world," he said.

Bassett Creek Baptist members need to discern the risk and then preach urgently, knowing that it will cost them, Kynard explained.

"What He's given you is of no value if you choose not to use it," he said.

In honor of the church's two centuries of ministry, E.P. Walker, Bassett Creek's longest-tenured deacon at 49 years, opened the service with a special prayer.

As a tribute to the past, the choir took those in attendance on a musical journey through the history of the church, singing songs from different eras and reading historical highlights in between songs.

The tribute started with the congregation singing "Amazing Grace" a cappella much

as the congregation would've when it met in its first rustic log building in 1810.

And though the style of worship has changed over the years, illustrated by the songs sung, the message preached and the Savior worshiped have never changed, the presentation pointed out.

Monumental moment

As part of the celebration service, Kynard presented the church with a flag that had been flown over the nation's capital in honor of Bassett Creek's 200th anniversary.

Local and state officials made presentations and sent letters of commendation, and Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a plaque.

"This 200th anniversary celebration is a demonstration of God's faithfulness to the people of Bassett Creek Baptist Church and to your faithfulness in service to our Lord," Berg said.



KYNARD

Four in 10 'unchurched' have been hurt by churches, Barna poll says

Nearly four of every 10 "unchurched" Americans avoid worship because of negative past experiences in churches or with church people, according to new research by The Barna Group.

The research firm that tracks the role of faith in the United States and provides ministry resources said while many churches place high value on attracting people who do not participate in the life of a church, the unchurched may be different than they expect.

Rather than being "lost," or without faith, 61 percent of nonattending adults label themselves as "Christian."

That's lower than the 83 percent of all Americans who self-identify as Christians, but it still outnumbers by a 3–2 margin the 39 percent of unchurched who do

not embrace Christianity as their religion.

Instead of being foreigners to church culture, a majority of the unchurched (53 percent) have distanced themselves from being Protestant or Catholic but at one time were associated with one of those groups.

Thirty-seven percent said they stopped going because of painful experiences in a church setting.

Nearly a fifth (18 percent) answered a standard set of questions used by Barna to categorize them as "born again."

Few have clear purpose

Two-thirds of the unchurched (68 percent) believe God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the universe and still rules that universe today.

A third (35 percent) believe the Bible

is totally accurate in all that it teaches.

One in five (22 percent) agree that the ultimate purpose of life is to love God with all their heart, mind, strength and soul, but just one in seven (15 percent) claim their religious faith is very important in their life.

Just 14 percent — about one in seven — claim to have a clear sense of the meaning and purpose of their life.

Barna's data indicates that 28 percent of adults have not attended any church services or activities within the last six months. That translates to nearly 65 million adults. Adding children under 18 who

may be living with them, the number swells to 100 million.

If the unchurched population of the United States were a nation of its own, it would be the 12th most populous nation on earth.

Barna says the demographics of the group also defy common assumptions.

There are more unchurched women than men.

Boomers and their elders outnumber the young. Conservatives are more likely than liberals to be unchurched, and whites outnumber minorities nearly 3–1. (ABP)

If the U.S. unchurched were a nation of their own, they would be the world's 12th largest nation.

Christians defy judge's ruling, mark Day of Prayer

For years, the annual National Day of Prayer observances on Capitol Hill had become almost routine affairs as mostly conservative Christian groups bowed with legislators to pray for the soul of America.

But this year, after a federal judge ruled the law creating the day is unconstitutional, May 6 events took on an air of defiance as organizers accused nonbelievers of threatening their religious freedom.

"I think it is waking people up across this land," said Evangelist Franklin Graham, the honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, who was disinvented from Pentagon observances because of his remarks on Islam.

"I think people realize, many Christians, how we're losing our religious freedoms a little bit every day and if we don't stand up and exercise the freedoms that God has given us in this country, we will lose them."

Graham began the day praying on the sidewalk outside the Pentagon, after military officials withdrew his invitation to speak because his comments about Islam — he's called it an "evil and wicked religion" — were "problematic."

At press time, organizers said more than 40,000 events were scheduled to be held at parks, churches and courthouse steps across the country — more than any

other year and an increase of more than 15 percent from last year.

Shirley Dobson, leader of the task force and the wife of Focus on the Family founder James Dobson, noted that the nationwide observances are voluntary.

"Citizens can choose to pray or not to pray," she said. "No one is required to participate, despite what the opponents of public prayer say."

She was thankful that the Obama administration is appealing the April 15 decision by Wisconsin federal judge Barbara Crabb —

who ruled observances could continue as her decision is appealed.

In his keynote address at the Cannon House Office Building, Graham acknowledged that people "of other faiths" might hear his message but he could only speak as a "minister of the gospel."

"I don't want to be offensive to anyone," he said, "but I only know how to pray and I only know how to preach the way that the Bible instructs me."

The printed program called for "executive branch remarks," but no representative of the White House

spoke. The audience of about 400 prayed for the White House, turning in its direction down Pennsylvania Avenue and reaching out their hands in prayer.

"I thank you that President Obama has issued a proclamation, a powerful proclamation for this day of prayer," said Dave Butts, president of Harvest Prayer Ministries of Terre Haute, Ind. "I thank you, Lord, that he is instructing the Justice Department to take a stand against this judicial ruling that would declare this day unconstitutional."

While Obama issued a proclamation — as he did last year — he has not continued the tradition of his predecessor, George W. Bush, who held an observance at the White House with task force leaders during his presidency.

"Prayer has been a sustaining way for many Americans of diverse faiths to express their most cherished beliefs, and thus we have long deemed it fitting and proper to publicly recognize the importance of prayer on this day across the nation," Obama said in his proclamation. (RNS)

The Alabama Baptist says goodbye, hello to staff members

Brittany N. Howerton, an assistant editor at *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB), has left her position to join the ministry of Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters in Andrews, N.C.

Her fiancé, John Ragon, has been serving in a full-time capacity for the past year at Snowbird, a high-adventure Christian wilderness camp.

The two will wed in September. "*The Alabama Baptist* offered me more than a job. It offered me challenges, blessings, growth and family," Howerton said. "I look forward to the ministry to which God has called John and me and the ways He will continue to grow us there, but Alabama Baptists will forever hold

a special place in my heart and in my ministry.

"Train them up," Proverbs says. I am proud to say *The Alabama Baptist* and its churches have been a part of my training ground."

She joined the staff of the state Baptist newspaper in 2008 and helped it win multiple national awards. She also won two individual awards for feature writing and photography.

"Brittany will certainly be missed at *The Alabama Baptist*," said Jennifer Davis Rash, TAB managing



HOWERTON



PADILLA



COXE

research and contributing to the publication in page layout and design.

"Kristen has already proven to be a valuable asset to *The Alabama Baptist* and will fit right in as a full-time staff member," Rash said. "Growing up a preacher's kid in Southern Baptist

churches, combined with her divinity school education, only accentuates her research and writing abilities, her professionalism and her sweet spirit.

"We are excited to bring Kristen on board full time."

Padilla, who recently married, is a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. She will begin her new role May 17.

TAB also welcomes Don Coxe to the staff as financial administrator.

Coxe holds a bachelor of science in accounting from Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond and a master of business administration in finance from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

"I'm excited to be a member of the team at *The Alabama Baptist* and look forward to serving the readership and organization," he said.

Coxe fills the position vacated by Bethany Dunlap. (TAB)

editor. "We knew right away she had star potential. She has worked hard, learned quickly and contributed in countless ways to the production of the state Baptist paper. It won't be the same without her around, but we wish her well in her new ministry and know she will shine there as well."

Howerton's last day at the paper was April 30.

As she leaves, Kristen Padilla joins the editorial staff as news writer.

Padilla holds a bachelor of arts in Christian studies (with a minor in speech communication) from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and master of divinity from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.

She has worked in a part-time capacity at the paper for a year, writing news and feature stories, doing

Christian writers conference set for FBC Tuscaloosa in June

First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, will host the 2010 Southern Christian Writers Conference June 11-12.

Crystal Bowman and Edna Ellison will be the conference's keynote speakers. Bowman, who is a best-selling author of more than 60 children's and women's books, will lead a workshop session called Writing for Children, and Ellison, who is a humorist, storyteller, international speaker and author of 19 books, will lead a session called Writing Bible Studies.

Fifteen other speakers will be in attendance, including Betty Hassler, editor of *Open Windows*, and Carla

Jean Whitley, managing editor of *Birmingham* magazine.

Workshop registration for June 11 begins at 11 a.m. with sessions taking place 1-9 p.m., and workshop registration for June 12 begins at 8 a.m. with sessions taking place 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

The deadline for pre-registration is June 5 with attendance limited to 220.

The Southern Christian Writers Conference is an annual workshop and is one of the five largest writing seminars in the United States. For more information, call 205-333-8603 or visit <http://web.mac.com/wmdsloan/iWeb/SCWC>. (TAB)



Photo by Scotty Goldman

Alabama Baptists receive disaster relief awards

Four Alabama Baptists and one company were recognized April 16 at the State Disaster Relief Training at Shocco Springs for their contributions to Alabama Baptist disaster relief work.

In the front row, from left, are Mel Johnson, state disaster relief strategist; Larry Teel, recipient

of the Mac Johnson Award; Sandy and Charles Sanders, recipients of the Emmette Jones Distinguished Service Award; and Joe Bob Mizzell, director of Christian ethics and chaplaincy.

In the back row on the left is Don Henderson, representing BR Williams Trucking, Inc., which provided warehouse space and labor assis-

tance for thousands of Buckets of Hope collected for Haiti relief. They also transported two shipments of buckets from Aniston to Jacksonville, Fla. On the right is Ray Baker, associate in the office of Christian ethics and chaplaincy who received the Clifford McMahan Outstanding Achievement Award. (TAB)

Task force proposes decentralizing NAMB, giving states lead in CP promotion

(continued from page 1)

the financial support — CP giving and designated giving — provided by local congregations for Southern Baptist missions.

“We are not recommending any changes to the Cooperative Program,” GCRTF chairman Ronnie Floyd said during his report.

“We also believe our local associations, state conventions and national entities should celebrate whatever amount a church gives through the Cooperative Program. In the spirit of one of our desired core values, which is unity, we need to work together in love for the sake of the gospel.”

North America

The final report also continues its call for NAMB to be “refocused and unleashed for greater effectiveness,” retaining the Feb. 22 report’s emphasis on making a priority of church planting, reaching cities and “underserved regions and people groups” and clarifying NAMB’s role “to conduct and direct a strategy of reaching the United States and Canada with the gospel and planting gospel churches.”

The final report says, “Our hope and vision is to see NAMB reprioritized, decentralized and fully authorized

to lead Southern Baptists in this great work. This will mean the phasing out of cooperative agreements, a structure in place since the 1950s, that return a tremendous percentage of CP monies back to the regions where Southern Baptists are most greatly concentrated and often leaves NAMB with insufficient mobility to appoint personnel directly and ensure missional focus.”

The final report calls on NAMB to budget for a national mission strategy and to “establish a new pattern of strategic partnership with the state conventions that will penetrate lostness and ensure greater responsiveness to the Southern Baptist Convention and greater effectiveness for NAMB in the appointment of missionary personnel and church planters.”

CP and stewardship

“If we are going to reach the 258 million lost people in the United States and Canada, we must address the fact that the vast majority of our Cooperative Program mission funds devoted to North America are expended in the most evangelized

regions of our work,” the report says.

The final report also casts a vision of Southern Baptist congregations becoming “church-planting congregations ... [r]egardless of the size or location”; calls for NAMB to “reclaim its mission of assisting churches to make disciples, working with LifeWay Christian Resources and other partners”; and recommends NAMB be charged with the task of leadership development.

The final report continues the call of the Feb. 22 “progress report” for the state Baptist conventions to “take the lead” in promoting the CP giving channel and educating Southern Baptists about stewardship of the resources God has entrusted to them.

The report also acknowledges the national convention also must be involved in promoting both cooperative missions giving and stewardship.

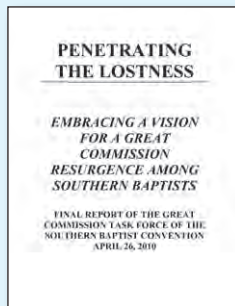
“This means an important and continuing leadership role for the SBC Executive Committee as well,” the report says. “We strongly encourage the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to work with the state conventions, charged with the responsibility of Cooperative Program and stewardship education, in developing a strategy for encouraging our churches to greater participation and investment in the Cooperative Program. Our hope is that a unified strategy with clearly established goals will be in place by the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2013.”

The final report also calls on Southern Baptists to raise the percentage of CP funds received by the International Mission Board to 51 percent “through a reduction in the budget granted to Facilitating Ministries, thus making a statement about our commitment to reduce denominational infrastructure in order to set the pace for growth in commitment to reaching the nations.”

The SBC Executive Committee is responsible for such facilitating ministries as the planning for each year’s SBC annual meeting and the SBC news service, Baptist Press.

The report closes with a long section of challenges addressed to virtually every segment of Southern Baptist life: individual Christians, local churches and pastors, local associations, state conventions, SBC entities and “all Southern Baptist leaders.” (BP)

To read the full
GCR Task Force report
released May 3, visit
www.thealabamabaptist.org.



Plan contains seven components; changes vary from earlier report

With the substance of changes varying for each respective component of its February progress report, the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force (GCRTF) issued a final report containing seven recommendations it plans to present to messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., June 15–16.

Missional vision, values

Stating that “our churches need a new missional vision,” the task force calls for the SBC “to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations,” identical to its progress report.

Likewise, the GCRTF outlined the same values from before (Christlikeness, truth, unity, relationships, trust, future, local church and kingdom). However, they developed them as a separate component instead of an element of the vision.

Both the mission and values are presented as separate recommendations (#1 and #2).

Great Commission Giving

The GCRTF final report also calls for “a new level of sacrificial giving” among Southern Baptists” and to “celebrate all giving to our common work” by calling “all monies channeled through the causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, the state conventions, and associations as Great Commission Giving.”

This recommendation repeats the emphasis of the task force’s progress report of Feb. 22 to create new nomenclature that would apply equally to contributions whether given through the Cooperative Program (CP) for the whole of SBC work or by designated donations to individual ministries.

A new element to “Great Commission Giving” is that the task force asks Southern Baptists to “adopt goals of giving no less than \$200 million annually through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and \$100 million annually through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions by 2015.”

The latest reports available for both mission boards showed: the International Mission Board (IMB) received \$141 million of a stated 2008 goal of \$170 million. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) received \$56.5 million of a stated 2009 goal of \$65 million.

The task force’s recommendation “3” asks for “the adoption of the language and structure of Great Commission Giving” and that trustees of the respective mission boards adopt offering goals “outlined in this report.”

NAMB changes

The task force repeats a call for phasing out cooperative agreements between NAMB and state Baptist conventions. However, the GCRTF extends its recommended timeline for making the change from four years to seven years.

NAMB has stated the agreements would affect directly \$51 million, but about \$62 million total in all that NAMB contributes to state work, and that more than three-fourths of all the money involved (about \$48 million) would be taken from Canada and 36 “pioneer states” — some have large populations and even contain several top 10 global urban cen-

ters, but all are referred to as “pioneer” because of the relatively few SBC churches in each.

The GCRTF expressed an expectation that NAMB more directly control this retained money for “reaching the United States and Canada with the gospel and planting gospel churches.”

The report calls for “liberating” and “re-invention” of NAMB but does not repeat an earlier recommendation that NAMB create seven regional centers “responsible for the three main emphases of the board” (which in effect would have displaced operations at Alpharetta). However, recommendation “4” requests the “Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention” to consider “any revision” to NAMB’s ministry assignment “that may be necessary in order to accomplish the redirection of NAMB” and that NAMB’s trustees consider the report in “all matters under their purview.”

Remove IMB’s geographic limits

Stating that the U.S. has as many as “586 unreached and underserved people groups,” the task force generally followed its earlier view that the IMB should be unleashed “upon American soil” to reach these non-English speaking people. The GCRTF affirmed that NAMB “retains the leadership mission of reaching North America with the gospel” but asks in recommendation “5” for the removal of “any geographical limitation” on the IMB’s mission “to reach unreached and underserved people groups wherever they are found.”

CP promotion passed to states

The task force asks in recommendation “6” that the SBC’s Executive Committee “consider working with the leadership of the state conventions in developing a comprehensive program of Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship education” — an assignment the SBC Executive Committee already performs. The Executive Committee received the assignment for CP promotion in 1995 and in 2006 messengers transferred stewardship education from LifeWay to the SBC Executive Committee.

The recommendation includes the wording that the move is to happen “in alignment with this report” which apparently points back to a statement in the report that “state conventions must take the lead in both CP promotion and stewardship education.”

Raise IMB’s CP percentage

Recommendation “7” does not mention CP promotion or stewardship education, but asks messengers to the 2010 annual meeting to request the Executive Committee to “increase the percentage allocated to the International Mission Board to 51 percent by decreasing the Executive Committee’s percentage of the SBC Allocation Budget by 1 percent” — meaning 1 percentage point of the 3.4 percentage points allocated to the SBC Operating Budget/Facilitating Ministries. This move essentially removes funding for the Executive Committee to complete the assignment stated in recommendation “6.”

This recommendation is framed around the idea of breaking what has been described as a 50 percent barrier for CP giving to the IMB. Currently IMB receives half of all CP receipts for national causes. (BP)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Tannehill Valley Church, McCalla**, will hold Miles for Missions 5K Walk/Run June 5, 8 a.m., at the Tannehill Preserve across from the church. Registration and packet pick-up will be at 7 a.m. You can pre-register at the church June 1-4, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Proceeds will benefit Casa Betania Orphanage in Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico. Medals will be given to the top male and female finishers in each age division. There also will be door prizes and gifts. T-shirts will be given to the first 150 registrants. For information call Nicole at 205-477-1281 or visit www.tannehillvalley.org. Jonathan Reaves is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Enon Church, Goodway**, will host the puppet and drama team from Southside Church, Greenville, May 16, 6 p.m. C.L. Langford is pastor. ► **Poplar Springs Church, Uriah**, will celebrate homecoming May 23, 11 a.m., with former Pastor Frank Morrison as guest speaker. A covered-dish lunch and singing will follow. The church also will hold revival May 24-26, nightly at 7, with Wayne McMillian, pastor of Mexia Church. Walter Sheffield is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Overton**, in Irondale, will host the southern gospel group Cross4Crowns May 16, 10:30 a.m. For information call Pastor Jimmy Ray at 205-681-4996. ► **Westmont Church, Birmingham**, held Orville Gay Appreciation Day April 25 in honor of his 50 years of service as a deacon. Gay was ordained at Trinity Church, Birmingham, in 1951 and recently retired from service. There were testimonials and special guests, and lunch was served. Birmingham Association presented Gay with a gift card and certificate. The church gave him a Bible and certificate and gave his wife a dozen roses. C.B. Scott is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Cahaba Association** held a Yard Give May 1 at Siloam Church, Marion. Donated items were given to families in need. The event was led by Debbie Harrison, of Siloam Church; Abbey Green, of Uniontown Church; and Tammy Hobson, of Hopewell Church, Marion. Circle of Friends to Dress Nicaragua sold lemonade and cookies to benefit an associational missions trip to Nicaragua in June. Bill Wallace is director of missions.

CLARKE

► **First Church, Jackson**, will host singer/songwriter Greg Day in concert May 30, 11 a.m. The first song that Day and his brother, Chuck, wrote was "Midnight Cry," one of the most recorded Christian songs in the history of gospel mu-

sic. For information call 251-246-4497. Tim Huie is pastor.

CLEBURNE

► **Beulah Church, Muscadine**, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, will host Dining with Diabetes cooking school June 3, 10 and 17 at 5:30 p.m. To register call 256-579-7806. Bill Brown is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Morgan Palmer**, a member of **Southside Church, Andalusia**, was selected as the 2010 Miss Teen Alabama-World. She will represent Alabama at the national pageant in Houston in June. Palmer's platform is a local organization called Meredith's Miracles. She is a junior at Andalusia High School and an ambassador for the city of Andalusia. Bill Pritchett is pastor of Southside.

MADISON

► **Don Mitchell Paris** is the new pastor of **Sherwood Church, Huntsville**. He comes from First Church, Wedowee, where he served as pastor. He also has served churches in Tennessee and Kentucky. Paris and his wife, Carolyn Sue, have two children.



PARIS

MOBILE

► **Ben Purvis** is the new minister to students for **Spring Hill Church, Mobile**. He has served as the church's interim minister to students since November 2009. He holds a bachelor's degree in religious studies and a minor in exercise science from the University of Mobile and is currently pursuing a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Samantha.

MONTGOMERY

► **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will host The Kempter Family in concert May 30, 5:30 p.m. A fellowship will follow in the activity center. Mike Stephens is pastor. ► **Ridgecrest Church, Montgomery**, will hold Jeff Slaughter Weekend May 15-16. Slaughter is the composer/choreographer of the music for LifeWay's Vacation Bible School (VBS) theme Saddle Ridge Ranch. There will be a workshop Saturday from 1-3 p.m. Slaughter will lead in worship during the Sunday morning service at 10:45. At 6:15 p.m., the children's choir will sing the Saddle Ridge Ranch music while Slaughter shares the stories and inspiration behind this year's VBS music. For workshop tickets call 334-277-

0011. Michael Cas-city is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Westside Church, Warrior**, will celebrate homecoming May 16, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. New Vision Quartet will sing at 1:30 p.m. Fred Chapman is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Prospect Church, Wilsonville**, will celebrate homecoming May 16, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. Heaven Strings will sing at 1 p.m. Travis Trimble is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **McEntyre Church, Ashville**, will hold a fifth Sunday singing May 30, 2-4 p.m., with the Gadsden Christian Fellowship Worship Team. Refreshments will follow. For information call Henry Jester at 205-594-7468. Bobby Joe Winningham is pastor. ► **Mount Moriah Church, Pell City**, will celebrate 85 years of ministry with a homecoming May 16, 10:30 a.m. Second Coming will provide special music. A covered-dish lunch will follow at noon. Second Coming also will sing in the afternoon. Zane Smith is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Fleetwood Church, Peterson**, will hold a prayer meeting called On Our Knees in Tuscaloosa May 15, 6:30-8 p.m. Rick Davis is pastor.

WALKER

► **Dennis R. Culbreth** is the new pastor of **First Church, Jasper**, effective May 23. He comes from Eastside Church, Marietta, Ga., where he served as interim associate pastor in charge of discipleship and community outreach. He has served as senior assistant to the president for the North American Mission Board and several churches in Virginia, Georgia, Alabama and Texas. Culbreth holds a bachelor's degree in religion with a minor in psychology from Samford University in Birmingham, master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and doctor of ministry with an emphasis on church growth and evangelism from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He also has done an additional doctoral level study at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. Culbreth and his wife, Marybeth, have three children. ► **First Church, Parrish**, will hold a tent crusade May 16-21 with Bunky Smith. Services will be Sunday at 6:30 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Charles Underwood is pastor.



CULBRETH

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Campbellsville awards its first master of social work degrees

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. — Campbellsville University's Carver School of Social Work and Counseling awarded its first master's degrees 12 years after acquiring the Carver name for its baccalaureate program from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS).

The Kentucky Baptist Convention-affiliated school awarded 15 master of social work degrees May 7, according to John Chowning, vice president for church and external relations.

The 2,600-student private school founded in 1906 established its first program of social work in 1974. The program was phased out in 1989 and reborn in 1994. In 1998 Campbellsville purchased the Carver name from SBTS — located in nearby Louisville, Ky. — which the year before closed its long-standing Carver School of Church Social Work.

The legacy of the original Carver school began in 1907 when the Woman's Missionary Union established a training school on the SBTS campus to prepare young women to serve in missions and social work. In the 1960s the training school merged with the seminary, making SBTS the only seminary of any denomination to offer an accredited master's degree in social work.

Seminary President Albert Mohler fired Diana Garland as dean of the Carver school in 1995 after she complained to students about his decision to declare a prospective faculty member unfit because he believed God could call a woman to preach. Mohler told students that modern social work was no longer "congruent" with theological education. Accreditation problems followed, and in 1997 SBTS trustees voted to abolish the Carver school.

Polish Baptist Association focuses on multiplication

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — With 11 million people of Polish descent across North America, one of the greatest challenges facing Polish pastors and church planters is how, with limited resources, to reach them with the gospel.

It may be a greater challenge than even the Polish population's devout Catholicism: Only about 30 churches of any evangelical denomination are focused toward reaching the Polish population in the United States and Canada. The question of how to multiply leaders and congregations filled much of a two-day meeting of the Polish Baptist Association at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Ga.

"Right now we have one church for every 400,000 Poles," said Mark Hobafcovich, NAMB's urban church planting consultant. "If a fully funded pastor were required for each church start, the costs would be astronomical just for salaries alone."

But through a multiplication model, Hobafcovich envisioned Polish churches reaching people by multiplying themselves and raising up new leaders. The Polish association embraced a vision for 500 churches among the North American Polish by the year 2030, beginning the initiative in conjunction with NAMB, field partners and other evangelical networks during the coming year.

The Polish population is most heavily concentrated in the Midwest and Northeast. Chicago boasts the highest concentration of Poles of any city and New York the highest of any state.

American Baptist National Ministries reclaims historic name

NEW YORK — National Ministries of American Baptist Churches USA marked the 178th anniversary of its founding April 27 by announcing the agency will reclaim its historic name of American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

"Outside of American Baptist circles and often within it as well, we spend a lot of time explaining what National Ministries is," Executive Director Aidsand Wright-Riggins said in a ceremony at Mariners' Temple Baptist Church in New York. "American Baptist Home Mission Societies is much more straightforward and self-explanatory."

Mariners' Temple, the oldest Baptist church location in Manhattan, was site of the sixth Triennial Convention of the General Missionary Convention of the United States of America for Foreign Mission.

The name National Ministries was adopted after the organization joined in 1955 with the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, which was founded in 1887. Later it merged with the Baptist General Tract Society, founded in 1824, and the American Baptist Education Society, founded in 1888. Clifford Johnson, president of the National Ministries board said using the plural American Baptist Home Mission Societies honors the "various threads of our history."

Accountability for handouts

Benevolence network allows churches to see where assistance is going

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A church's doors are always open to those in need. But what if those needs are not so dire or even non-existent?

Thanks to a pastor pinpointing that need to know whom his church was helping and sharing it with an experienced computer programmer, churches nationwide can now access a network that allows for more accountability and cooperation when it comes to benevolence ministry.

"I've been in the pastorate for a few years now, and wherever I went, I always had people come to me or our church office asking for benevolence help," said Robert Lutz, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Saraland. "What surprised me was how many times my heart was broken over people trying to take advantage of us.

"Sixty to 70 percent of the people coming into our office were people coming in without real needs, and other pastors said they faced it all the time, too," he said. "I

thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if we could get the assistance to people who really need it?'"

Luckily Sandy Litaker, a member of Shiloh Baptist and vice president of Wise Technology in Saraland, was able to provide a way to do just that. With the help of his 11-person team at Wise Technology, Litaker crafted special software — Wise Hope — to act as a platform for churches to communicate with one another and form a benevolence network.

Staying in touch

"This system allows an individual to go to different locations for assistance," explained Sue Phillips, a part of the Wise Technology sales department and a member of First Baptist Church, Bay Minette. "And they can, say, go to one church and get \$25 toward a utility bill, then go to another church and get \$25 and so on. And each church documents it in the system. So each church knows that person is getting partial payment from each church they go to. We want to make this software more of a way to help other people and keep churches and benevolent organizations networked so they can stay in touch with each other."

The folks at Wise Technology officially rolled out the first version of Wise Hope last July, and they've seen the network really grow and flourish.

So far, about 150 organizations — both churches and other typical providers of be-

nevolence ministry like the Escambia County Red Cross — are part of the Wise Hope network.

Atmore Area Christian Care Ministries, an inter-denominational emergency needs-based ministry is another group that has incorporated Wise Hope into its operations. Michael McMorris, Atmore's chairman, says he and his co-workers have been using Wise Hope since the beginning of 2010, and they're quite pleased with the way the software has fit into their organization.

"We were seeking a program to serve as a way to better track those who were coming to us for assistance, in an effort to try to curb abuses of the system," McMorris said. "While the program works best for a network of agencies connected and sharing information about who is coming to them for assistance, we have been using it in house to better help share information between volunteers who are assisting our clients."

Sending out alerts

And it's not just a way for churches and organizations to monitor the needs they're meeting; it's also an effective way to share needs with others.

For example, if a family's home burns down and its church isn't able to offer enough help, then the church can use Wise Hope technology to send out an alert to other organizations, listing specific needs (girls' clothes size 10, a refrigerator, etc.).

"It's gotten to that point now where it's starting to catch and snowball," Litaker said. "And it's something that does hit home with these pastors. They want to be good stewards of their benevolence."

In order to allow as many organizations to join the network as possible, Wise Technology has worked hard to keep the price affordable. Wise Hope software costs \$183 per organization, and it can be accessed from any computer with Internet capability.

"I really believe in this product as a way of helping people be good stewards of the money and resources they have," Phillips said.

"That's why we're so dedicated to it, and I want to see it through and see as many churches get involved as possible. The more people that get involved, the more effective it will be."

For more information, visit www.gowise-now.com.

"It's something that [hits] home with these pastors. They want to be good stewards of their benevolence."

Sandy Litaker
Wise Technology

CLARIFICATION ON GAMBLING

A list of representatives who had committed to vote against gambling legislation was printed in the April 29 issue. Rep. Henry White, D-Athens, was not on the list, but he has since said he is committed to vote against gambling legislation.

Someone You Should Know

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

GAYLE SMITH

Providence Baptist Church, Opelika
Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association



SMITH

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: James 1:22
FAVORITE HYMN: "My Faith Looks Up to Thee"
HOBBIES: Teaching children music,

gardening and cooking
FAMILY STATUS: Married to Tom for 41 years; two children, Marisha and Eron; and two grandchildren

Gayle Smith is a retired public school music teacher. In 2007, she founded the East Alabama Children's Choir, which she currently directs. Smith also directs the discipleship program Deeper Roots at Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, where her husband has served as music minister for the past 36 years. She is also the first and only director of the Alabama Singing Women, which was formed seven years ago, and serves as substitute pianist, organist and music director at Providence.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was the fifth of seven children growing up in a Christian home, and my mom and dad were very firm in our participation in church. My mom and dad lived a very Christian example before me.

Q: How did the East Alabama Children's Choir come about?

A: During the time I taught public school, I was the children's choir coordinator at Providence Baptist Church. After retirement, I really wanted to get back to working with children. I started East Alabama Children's Choir while I was also teaching at Chattahoochee Valley Community College (in Phenix City). The choir consists of fourth-through eighth-graders, and right now, there are 20 in [it]. The East Alabama Children's Choir is such a joy. It is designed for kids who are musically talented but who don't have a school that offers music and who want to learn and grow in music.

Q: What does ministry demand?

A: It demands staying true to your calling and staying in touch

with the Lord because He will tell you exactly what to do.

Q: What do you get from the ministry?

A: Wonderful feedback and wonderful people to work with.

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

A: Doing the same until the Lord tells me to quit. It's so much fun. I love it.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

A: Impossible to answer. I can't imagine any other way. The best thing that He did for me was to give me a Christian home to grow up in and leading me to a Christian husband. Our involvement in church has proved that He is faithful to His promises.

Ozark, Troy hold annual Bible reading marathons

It's the best-spent 90 hours, Wilma Hart, member of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Ozark, will tell you.

Since 2004 Hart has organized Ozark's Bible Reading Marathon — 90 hours devoted to reading the Bible continuously from Genesis to Revelation.

The Ozark marathon took place at the courthouse square May 2-5 ending at noon with a special service commemorating the National Day of Prayer. Kenneth Hale, director of missions of Dale Baptist Association, gave a small sermon and Ron Hendrickson, music minister of Post Oak Baptist Church, Ozark, sang.

"It was wonderful," Hart said. "We were grateful to God for all who were there."

The best thing about the marathon has been the opportunity to minis-

ter to someone or lead someone to Christ each year, she added.

"This year as we were putting up the tent, a young man drove up and said, 'Please pray for me,'" Hart said. "We stopped what we were doing and we prayed for him. That's what it's all about."

Salem-Troy Baptist Association also held a Bible Reading Marathon for its fourth year at the downtown park in Troy.

"The thing that impressed me this year as you listened to the Bible being read was it just seemed that every word of it was very pertinent to today's times," said Director of Missions Averly Walker. "[The Word] revives us."

This is the 59th annual National Day of Prayer and the 21st annual Bible Reading Marathon in Washington. (TAB)

Team raises funds for medical needs

(continued from page 1)
too. In just two weeks, Team Gower raised \$21,000 to go toward Gower's new wheels.

Even though Thomas is the one pushing roughly 160 pounds in front of him each race, he said he's been the one who has been blessed.

"I see the introspective part of

William's heart that I wouldn't have seen otherwise," Thomas said.

"I'm seeing life through his eyes, and I'm so blessed that I have. I have this one-on-one relationship with him, and he's taught me things that seminary and Bible studies have never taught me. I'm so blessed to be his legs when we run."

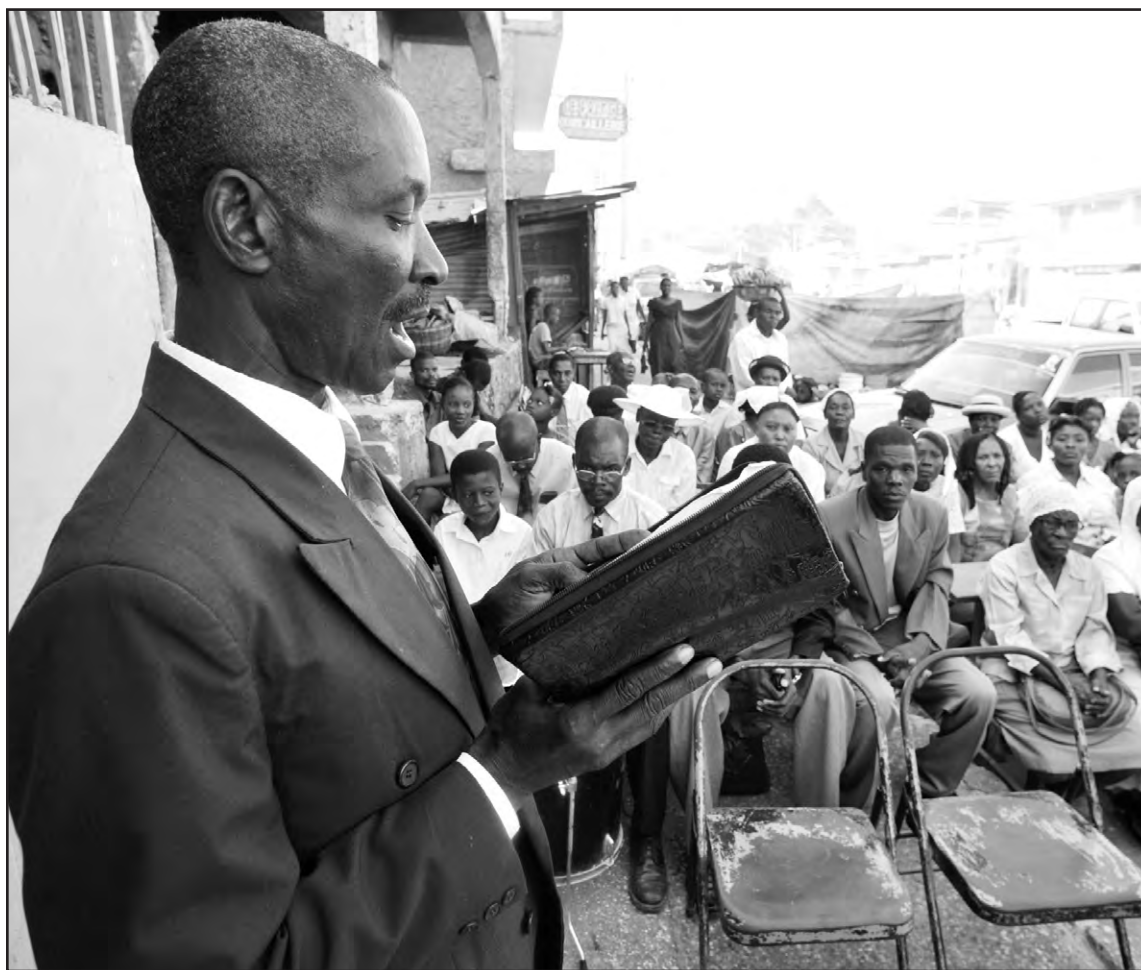


Photo courtesy of the Florida Baptist Convention

HARVEST — Haitian Baptist pastors affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention, anxious to win a nation ripe for the gospel, have seen 85,000 professions of faith since the Jan. 12 earthquake.

‘Hallelujah time’

Baptists bring relief, God brings revival in Haiti

With 152,000 Buckets of Hope en route, 85,000 professions of faiths and 64 new churches, John Sullivan has declared it’s “hallelujah time in Haiti!”

“Only the Father knows the great impact for the gospel that is emerging out of this earthquake,” said Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention. “He is allowing us to share in moving a nation from tragedy to triumph.”

In the months since the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated Haiti, Florida Baptists have worked alongside their Haitian brothers and sisters and Southern Baptists from across the country to distribute food, staff medical clinics, provide counseling and fill countless physical and spiritual needs.

“Our feeding and food distribution continues at full speed,” Sullivan said. “On an almost daily basis we are sending food supplies of rice, beans and pasta, having processed over 200,000 pounds of rice, 85,000 pounds of beans and 7,500 pounds of pasta.”

Open hearts

They have been able to accomplish this, Sullivan said, through the generosity of Florida Baptists, sister state conventions and Baptists across the nation. By May, some \$4 million in contributions had been received.

At the request of the Haitian pastors who yearned to reap a spiritual harvest while the hearts of their countrymen are open to the gospel, Florida Baptists have

underwritten the cost of regional and local crusades throughout the country, resulting in more than 85,000 professions of faith and 64 new church starts.

Jeff Howell, pastor of Church on the Rock, Plant City, was an eyewitness of God’s triumph in Haiti as he led a team from the Florida congregation to minister in the midst of the tragedy.

“The needs are all over that land, but God is bringing revival and people are getting saved. It is nothing short of phenomenal,” Howell reported.

The Plant City team, which was in Haiti March 27–April 2, worked alongside a church in Mirebalais, about two hours northwest of Port-au-Prince. They led Bible study conferences for leaders, deacon training, Vacation Bible Schools and crusades, seeing dozens of Haitians indicate they were making professions of faith.

The team also provided food for children and families in the Mirebalais church.

And they helped defeat Satan, Howell said.

Many of those who were led to Christ were from voodoo backgrounds, he explained, and the team helped several new believers abandon relics, vials and potions used in voodoo practices.

“God is working in Haiti, and He allowed us a place of service,” Howell said. (BP)



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

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



Exercise Your Right to Vote This Year

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Anyone who watches TV realizes it is time to elect the state officials who will govern Alabama for the next four years. The primary election to select party nominees will occur June 1, followed by runoffs July 13 and the general election Nov. 2. Over the next few weeks, every citizen should learn about the candidates and then vote.

It is important to focus on selecting good legislators, because the Legislature is the “board of directors” for state government. Its members vote on the state budget, adopt state-wide laws and have great power over local governments in their home counties.

Only legislators can submit proposals to the people for amending or rewriting the state constitution. Thus legislative involvement is critical to improving Alabama government. Legislators earn a minimum of \$52,596 annually and should be expected to accomplish more than just passing a budget on time.

Make your vote count

Each voter helps elect two legislators: one to serve in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate. If you are unsure which of the 105 House districts and 35 Senate districts you live in, then visit www.legislature.state.al.us and search by your ZIP code. Knowing your legislative district numbers will help you find

the right information to study.

Voters also will fill other state and federal offices. The secretary of state has a list at www.sos.state.al.us/elections/2010/2010Offices.aspx.

Finally voters will decide on proposed constitutional amendments in the June and November elections. Today the constitution has 828 amendments, many of them purely local.

Constitutional issues

In June, Alabama voters will consider amendments to

- ▶ create a promotional program for propane gas, funded by industry assessments;

- ▶ prohibit land applications containing “treated human sewage biosolids” (local votes in three counties); and

- ▶ allow the Legislature to set court charges (local votes in three other counties).

The Legislature this year approved at least 25 other proposed local constitutional amendments for future consideration. One would allow Madison County to control dangerous dogs.

You may wonder why these are constitutional issues or why every county needs its own version of a local amendment. These are hard questions to answer — ask a legislative candidate to explain.

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

Kentucky mission board passes CP resolution

One day after the release of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Great Commission Resurgence Task Force’s final report, Kentucky Baptist Mission Board members passed a resolution reaffirming the Cooperative Program (CP) as “the essential avenue of support for missions and ministries.”

The resolution was approved without opposition during the mission board’s annual spring meeting, May 3–4 at Cedarmore Conference Center in Shelby County. During the opening

session, Kentucky Baptist Convention President Don Mathis cautioned board members to be wary of “any effort to place the Cooperative Program in a group of missions giving.”

“My opinion is that it will be the destruction of the Cooperative Program, and when the Cooperative Program is destroyed, it will remove the effectiveness of our special giving because CP is the foundation of what we do,” said Mathis, staff evangelist at Eastwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green. (BP)

Want to know God?

By Pastor Greg Walker
Grace Baptist Church, Montevallo

Have you ever asked yourself the question "Where will I go when I die"?

If so, then you are among almost every person who has ever lived, is alive and will be born.

Man has searched for the answer to that question for ages. Every people group, nation and ethnicity has its own ideas about the afterlife.

What about you? What do you think happens when we die?

The Bible has an answer to that question.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus spoke about the afterlife in the 14th chapter. In verse 6, He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

The disciples and followers of Jesus in the first century asked Him the same question that we all ask today. The answer was clear and to the point.

Aside from a relationship with Jesus Christ, we cannot gain access to heaven when we die.

How then do you begin that relationship?

You begin by following the Bible's answer found in Romans 10:9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

With this in mind, where will you go when you die? God is ready to receive you today.

'A time of blessing'

Central Asian Christians see spread of gospel in face of persecution

We are experiencing a time of blessing," said Genrich (Heinrich) Foth, president of the persecuted Baptist Union of Kyrgyzstan, at this year's 53rd session of the Euro-Asian Federation of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

The event was held at Moscow Theological Seminary April 22-24.

"We have no idea what tomorrow will bring, but we know what we are called to do," he said.

"We are experiencing wonderful opportunities to proclaim the gospel."

Feeling the pressure

The Protestants of the five Central Asian states once belonging to the Soviet Union — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — share a similar fate. They all suffer persecution at the hands of Muslim governments seeking to emulate the models of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

"Mosques are sprouting like mushrooms," Foth reported. According to him, Kyrgyzstan's 150 Protestant chapels are confronted with an increasing number of mosques — presently approximately 3,000.

"We feel the pressure of Muslims from all corners," he added.

A number of church leaders, including Vassily Korobov from the Turkmen Baptist Union, are no longer permitted foreign travel. The three Uzbek Baptists sentenced to heavy fines in 2009 — Pavel Peichev, Dimitry Pitirimov and Yelena Kurbatova — are barred from leaving their country for three years.

In several countries, visits by guests in residential high-rises are watched closely.

A guest from Turkmenistan reported that even private discus-



TAB graphic

sions at home around the coffee table can irk the police. Persons participating in such gatherings are consequently trained to make all suspicious objects, like Bibles, disappear when the doorbell is rung.

'Much worse'

"It's much worse than during Soviet times," the guest said.

The importing of Christian literature has become nearly impossible and the erasing of hard drives and flash sticks at border crossings commonplace.

"I keep seeing terrific Christian literature here in Russia," a guest from Uzbekistan said. "But how

can I get it back to my country?"

In most cases, work among children and youth is only unofficially possible.

Uzbekistan, for one, also produces highly-defamatory, anti-Protestant propaganda.

National TV repeatedly sends a report on a converted ex-Muslim woman who, after being killed in a road accident, could not be buried in a Muslim cemetery. In the end, she was reportedly left behind in an open field as fodder for jackals. The report's commentator concludes: "This will happen to every Muslim who changes his faith."

A second program shows the country's leading Baptists inter-

persed with scenes of Charismatics in a state of ecstasy. In no way are the two groups distinguished from each other.

In view of their common context, Franz Tissen of Saran, the president of the Kazakh Baptist Union, intends to hold a conference this month for workers from all five countries. About 150 are expected to attend.

Regional conferences reaching as many as 7,000 active believers are to take place in these countries soon as well. This is to occur despite significant political instability such as the closed border between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

(Russian Evangelical Alliance)

Heflin's New Hopewell Church celebrates 100 years

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In 1910, four individuals gathered prayerfully, with the vision of starting a church. Today New Hopewell Baptist Church, Heflin, flourishes as "a country church that loves people and loves the Lord," according to Charlene Brown, the church's clerk.

Love is what stands out to Shelby Camp, too.

'Seeing the lost saved'

"We believe in treating people fairly, loving everyone and seeing the lost saved," said Camp, a member of the Cleburne Baptist Association church since 1972.

And those whose lives have been touched by the church showed their love for it by gathering to mark its 100th anniversary April 18.

An overflow crowd listened to special music provided by Tri-City Quartet and a message preached by Pastor John Brown and watched

as the church received a plaque from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Prior to the anniversary celebration, the congregation recognized Esteus Camp as the oldest living member. The 93-year-old has been a member of New Hopewell Baptist for more than 60 years.

After the service, attendees enjoyed a potluck lunch.

When the church began its ministry, services were held in a schoolhouse for the first two years.

Building progress

In 1912, Pastor B.R. Layton guided the congregation to construct its first building across the road from the school.

The congregation worshiped in that building for 60 years.

By 1971, it had become apparent that the building needed to be torn down so that a new one could be constructed.

The congregation depended on God's supply of volunteer labor, donations of building materials and sacrificial giving in order to construct its new facility.

The first worship service was held in the new building in March 1972.

Additional changes

A cemetery was added to the church property in 1971. Sixteen years later, the church bought two acres of land and Loyd Owens' donated two more, allowing the cemetery to be enlarged.

Through the years, additions and improvements have been made to New Hopewell, including a steeple in 1990, a fellowship hall in 1997 and, most recently, new Sunday School rooms, handicap entrances, stained glass windows and improved parking.

And as the church begins its second century of ministry, one thing remains unchanged.

"Our goal is to share the gospel and reach people for Christ," John Brown said.

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Casting, maintaining a vision

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



sion. When we can draw a picture of the future in a person's mind, he or she can better understand and work toward it.

Think of how many sermons on the prodigal son or the lost coin you have heard. How often have those stories spoken to someone you know? How many times in your own life have you applied those parables to help you know what to do or how to respond?

Anytime a group of people is working toward something, there must be a vision. For those of us who struggle with debt, we have to maintain a vision of being debt-free as we work to reduce our loans and outstanding financial obligations.

For those of us planting a church, we have to keep in front of us that picture of what God intends the church to be. For those of us strug-

gling with infertility, we have to hold on to a vision of parenthood.

The problem with maintaining that vision, however, is that it frequently wanes. The struggles and obstacles we encounter on our way distract us, lead us off the path toward the vision and discourage us. However, it is our responsibility to continue to cast the vision. Just as Jesus cast the vision repeatedly and used various images, so we have to do when we are casting a vision at work or home.

What visions are you working toward? In our faith, the vision has been cast already. What about at work? What is the vision? How has it been cast for you? How are you helping to continually cast that vision? In your personal life, what is the vision? How are you casting that vision for yourself and others?

Without a vision, we become scattered and unfocused. We never will achieve that vision unless we hold that picture in our minds. Then we must cast it for others in order to bring them along and empower them to achieve it.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Casting and maintaining a vision for myself and others is critical to achieving it.

The kingdom of God is like a man with two sons, a woman who lost a coin, yeast and many other things, as Jesus taught us.

When Jesus drew these comparisons, He was not only revealing to us characteristics of God and God's Kingdom but also casting a vision for us. He was helping us envision a future and giving us something toward which to strive.

That is the beauty of casting a vi-

British street preacher charged for calling homosexuality 'sin'

A Christian street preacher in Britain will stand trial for telling a passer-by — in earshot of a policewoman — that God views homosexuality as a sin.

Police arrested Dale McAlpine, a 42-year-old Baptist, under Britain's Public Order Act 1986, which forbids "using threatening, abusive or insulting words ... tending to and causing harassment, alarm or distress."

McAlpine told *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper that he was ar-

rested after a part-time police officer said she heard him reciting a list of "sins" against God, including same-sex relationships.

The preacher denied mentioning homosexuality, but he did concede he had told a passing shopper that it was a sin in the eyes of God.

At a magistrates court hearing in Workington, England, on April 30, McAlpine pleaded not guilty but was arraigned for trial at an unspecified date.

"My freedom was taken away on

the hearsay evidence of someone who disliked what I said, and I was charged under a law that doesn't apply," he said.

The newspaper report said McAlpine was fingerprinted, given a DNA swab and retina scan, and was locked in a police cell for seven hours April 20.

McAlpine's arrest comes days after a top British judge was criticized for ruling that Christian beliefs are not entitled to special protection under the laws of the nation. (RNS)

Alabama Baptists to celebrate Associational Missions Week

Alabama associations will once again participate in the North American Mission Board's Associational Missions Week, which will take place May 17-23.

And one association, Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA), will begin a new emphasis this year called The Week of Prayer for Associational Missions.

In a letter BBA Executive Director Mike McLemore sent to his churches, he wrote, "I hope this new emphasis will be productive in that it will inform each church of the ministries that we do together and also provide ministry opportunities for those who are looking to be involved in a ministry area through your church and association."

To facilitate that, BBA has put together online promotional materials; a prayer guide called 8 Days, 8 Ways to Pray for

BBA; and a video, and it has set a goal of \$150,000 for a special offering to go to associational ministries.

Gary Swafford, director of the associational missions/church planting office for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said Associational Missions Week is meant "to draw specific attention the ministry of the local association."

He added that each association is encouraged to make the week its own. Some use the week to have missions fairs or other special events, while others use the week to honor the director of missions or pray, Swafford said.

"There's a common phrase that many associations use: 'We can do more together than we could separately.' We are a team of churches and together everyone accomplishes more," he said. (TAB)

Associational Missions Week is May 17-23



When my life was ebbing away, I remembered You, LORD, and my prayer rose to You, to Your holy temple.

Jonah 2:7

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tion of bivocational youth director. We are located in rural Chilton County. E-mail resumé to: jvjsmith@bellsouth.net, or mail: Hillcrest Baptist Church, ATTN: Valerie Smith, 10045 US Hwy. 82, Maplesville, AL 36750.

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Jasper couple champion organ donation after daughter's death

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Sandy Sides' 5-year-old daughter Savannah asked her about organ donation one day in 2007, she had no idea how life changing those words would become.

"I told her, 'You're just a baby. We have a long time to worry about that,'" Sides recalled. "But

she said, 'Mommy, you need to put my name down there, because I'm not gonna need my organs once I get to heaven.'"

About a month later, she and Savannah were in a head-on car accident. It left Sides terribly injured and killed her daughter. Savannah's father, Stephen, stood by her decision to donate her organs. She gave her kidneys, liver, heart

valve and eye tissue to five people in need.

Honoring Savannah

Now tuned in to the impact of organ donation in such a real and personal way, the Sideses were ready to help others as a way to honor Savannah's decision to be a donor.

They started the Savannah Faith

Miracle Ride, an annual motorcycle event to raise money for transplant costs, in 2009. With about 40 riders, the event raised about \$1,200 toward a kidney and liver transplant for a man at the Sideses' home church, New Prospect Baptist, Jasper.

But the Sideses wanted to do more.

"In the beginning, we wanted to make it a nonprofit so we could do other things besides just a motorcycle ride, but we thought that was going to cost a lot to let it happen," Sandy Sides said. "We knew that if that was something God wanted us to do, He'd make a way for it to happen."

Broader reach

Sure enough, God did provide a new option. A fellow New Prospect member did some research and discovered that setting up a nonprofit organization was actually pretty simple, requiring a few small fees and some brief paperwork. So Savannah Faith Miracle Ride Inc. was born, enabling the Sideses to have a broader reach in spreading the word about organ donation.

Dianne Grace, Savannah's grandmother, serves as the organization's treasurer and said she's been amazed to watch how people have been inspired by her granddaughter's decision to become an organ donor.

Healing experience

"If people look at the website, they usually sign up to be a donor," Grace said. "They'll come in and think, 'If a 5-year-old can make that decision, a grown person should be able to.'"

For the Sideses, founding and working with the organization truly has been a healing experience that has allowed them to help people in a way they never could have before.

"Many times, I thought I'd trade it all to have Savannah back," she said. "And I've thought, 'God, couldn't we have learned the same lessons and not have to go through all this?'"

"But we couldn't have. People get involved in causes because they've affected their lives."

For more information, visit www.savannahmr.org.

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SBC CP giving slightly behind last year's pace

Year-to-date contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Cooperative Program are 0.14 percent below the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Morris H. Chapman.

As of April 30, the year-to-date total of \$116,064,730.52 for Cooperative Program missions is \$161,853.03 behind the \$116,226,583.55 received at the end of April 2009.

Monthly Cooperative Program receipts totaled \$16,659,851.16.

Month-to-month swings reflect a number of factors, but largely result from the timing of receipts from state conventions. The end-of-month total represents money received by close of business on the last business day of each month.

For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$116,064,730.52 is 97.35 percent of the \$119,224,929.03 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1–Sept. 30 fiscal year. (BP)

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor Johnnie Lee Brigman dies at 80

Johnnie Lee Brigman, a retired Alabama Baptist pastor, died April 27. He was 80.

Licensed to preach in 1949, Brigman served as pastor of churches in Florida and Mississippi before being called to First Baptist Church, Bessemer, in 1972. He served there for 15 years and retired in 1987.

After retiring, Brigman moved

to Huntsville, where he became a member of First Baptist Church and sang in the Hallelujah Choir.

He also served as interim pastor of Hillsboro Heights Baptist Church, Huntsville Park Baptist Church, Northside Baptist Church and Woodland Hill Baptist Church, all in Huntsville, and Piney Grove Baptist Church, Ardmore.

Brigman received a bachelor of arts from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and bachelor of divinity, master of theology and doctorate of theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Martha; four children; 14 grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. (TAB)

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'Cautious about such claims'

Baptist scholars view Noah's Ark discovery claims with skepticism

As the newest reported discovery of Noah's Ark raised doubts even among fellow ark-hunters, two Baptist seminary professors said Christians should not rest their faith on whether remains of an ancient vessel are ever found high in the mountains of Turkey.

Agence France-Presse first reported that a team of Chinese and Turkish evangelical explorers said April 26 that they recovered wooden specimens from a structure on Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey. The fragments were carbon-dated as 4,800 years old, around the time biblical literalists believe the events described in the Genesis story about a worldwide flood would have occurred.

"It's not 100 percent that it is Noah's Ark, but we think it is 99.9 percent that this is it," said Yeung Wing-Cheung, a Hong Kong documentary filmmaker and member of the 15-member team from Noah's Ark Ministries International.

'No doubt' ark existed

Within hours an e-mail written by Randall Price, a Liberty University professor who was the archaeologist with the Chinese expedition in the summer of 2008, declared the photos of the supposed discovery a fake. After it went public on websites, Price clarified that while he did not retract his statements, they were not meant for public dissemination.

"The only public statement

he wishes to make at this time is that he believes that the greater the claim the greater the evidence needs to be to support it and urges the Chinese-Turkish team to make their collected samples from the structure available to scientists and scholars for comparative analysis," said a statement on the website of World of Bible Ministries, of which Price is president. "While he has reservations about the nature and procedure of the Chinese-Turkish expedition and the artifacts related to it, he believes that a decision concerning this matter must wait until independent examinations of the site and the structure can be made and published."

Bob Cornuke of the Bible Archaeology Search and Exploration Institute, who produced a 2008 DVD about his own search for Noah's Ark in 2005 and 2006 in Iran, called the Chinese team's discovery a "fraud ... of the highest caliber" in a story on the WorldNetDaily.com.

Even Answers in Genesis, which offers several resources presenting what the ministry believes is geological evidence supporting a literal reading of the Bible's account of the Genesis flood, reacted with caution.

"Every few years we hear of claims that Noah's Ark (or what may remain of it) has been found on the mountains of Ararat in Turkey," read a statement on the ministry website. "Over the decades, we have learned to be cau-



INSPECTION — Panda Lee examines mortise-and-tenon construction, suggesting it was built before the invention of metal nails.

tious about such ark claims."

"We have no doubt, however, that there once was a massive ark that served as a vessel of salvation during a global flood and landed on the mountains of Ararat, as recorded in the book of Genesis," the statement went on to say.

Gerald Keown, associate dean and professor of Old Testament interpretation at the M. Christopher White School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina, said his skepticism over claimed blockbuster archeological finds is not related to the veracity of the Bible stories, but the lack of

veracity on the part of con artists eager to exploit public naivete.

Keown cited the James Ossuary as an example. The limestone burial box, "discovered" in 2002, supposedly at one time contained the bones of the brother of Jesus. It turned out to be the work of a master forger who embellished ancient artifacts with what appeared to be inscriptions of biblical names.

'Overreaching'

"I question the survival of any wooden artifact from ancient times which has been exposed to air," Keown said. "Even materials from the

relatively recent past — the 1600s to 1700s — which have been under water and sand are notoriously fragile and disintegrate upon exposure to the air. The desire to make a buck off of people who are willing to be conned has no expiration date."

Keown said most historical questions that intrigue most Christians will never be "answered" by archeology, but the most important message in the Bible is not historicity but faithfulness.

"I wish more Christians were as interested in how seriously they/we respond to the life challenge of the gospel as they/we are in whether this or that 'really' happened," he said. "The latter tends to get us into heated debates that have no bearing on the true life of faith, but represent our straining gnats and swallowing camels."

Jackson said when stories in the Bible don't fit with the evidence scrutinized by modern historians and scientists, believers should look for the spiritual, theological, and moral teaching of the texts. That, he said, is something the early church fathers recognized long before the scientific age.

"Those who search for Noah's Ark are so intent on proving that the evidence exists to show the correspondence of that biblical story to actual historical events that they always overreach in their conclusions about the pieces of wood they find high in the mountains of Turkey," Jackson said. (ABP)

175-year-old Cusseta Church 'right in there with the big ones'

By Greg Heyman
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The story of Cusseta Baptist Church is a dramatic one, complete with growing pains and a near-death experience.

But this East Liberty Baptist Association church has persevered and lived to celebrate its 175th anniversary April 18.

An estimated 200 people attended the anniversary celebration compared with the two dozen or so who usually attend worship.

"It was just wonderful to see so many people who had been away from Cusseta for years and years," said Anne Al-

sobrook, a church member since 1957.

Though the congregation is small in number, its spirit of giving is something to marvel at, said Interim Pastor Charles Whitson.

"We are in the top 5 percent of churches in the Southern Baptist Convention in per capita giving for active members. Other churches give so much more than we do, but it comes down to one on one. We're right in there with the big ones," he said.

"I tell our people, 'We're not many but we're much.' They work together and they are excellent in giving. I am amazed at it," Whitson added.

During the celebration, Calvin Milford of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque commemorating Cusseta Baptist's years of service. State Rep. DuWayne Bridges, R-Valley, also offered a commendation.

Whitson said about 10 adults who were members of the church's youth choir as far back as 30 years ago returned to sing with the sanctuary choir during the anniversary service and the afternoon singing that followed lunch.

According to a church history prepared by Alsobrook, what would become Cusseta Baptist Church was begun April 18, 1835, as Bethesda Baptist Church. Seven individuals met with three men from Cusseta, Ga. who helped them constitute the church during a meeting at the home of James Taylor Sr.

The church's first building was a log cabin located three and a half miles west of the Cusseta, Ala., city limits.

Francis Callaway served briefly as pastor until John Blackston was called in July 1835. During the latter part of 1836, Blackston wanted the church to declare nonfellowship with churches favoring missionary activity.

But the congregation firmly supported missionary work. As a result, Blackston resigned. Blackston was succeeded by Benjamin Lloyd, who began as pastor in October 1836. Sometime in 1837, Lloyd also

expressed his support for a nonmissionary church.

Subsequently Lloyd resigned after church members again affirmed their support for missions. He was followed by John Humphries, who became pastor in 1838 and remained at the church for 14 years.

The church history also highlights the church's ministry to the Creeks living in the area at this time. But hostilities between the Creek Nation and the U.S. government caused church services to be suspended from May to August in 1836 and the Creeks to be relocated to a reservation in Oklahoma following their defeat.

Humble beginnings

Four years later, the church constructed a large frame building near the log cabin that had served as the congregation's meeting place. The congregation met in the frame building until 1856, when church members voted to move into the city limits of Cusseta.

Services were held at Cusseta Methodist Church until a building for the Baptist church, which by this time had begun to be referred to as Cusseta Baptist Church, was finished in the spring of 1857.

The church constructed another building in 1901 at the same location at a cost of \$1,200. There have been renovations and additions to this building, which still serves as the place where Cusseta Baptist worships. ☞

Iraq bomb attack injures Christians

At least 50 Iraqi Christian students are receiving hospital treatment following a bomb attack May 2 outside Mosul that killed at least one person and has forced nearly 1,000 students to drop classes for the rest of the semester.

Nearly 160 people were injured in the blasts targeting three buses full of Christians traveling to the University of Mosul for classes. The convoy of buses, which brings Christian students from villages east of Mosul, was making its daily route accompanied by two Iraqi army cars.

The explosions happened east of Mosul between two checkpoints. A roadside bomb followed by a car bomb reportedly exploded as the buses were clearing the second checkpoint in the area of Kokjaly.

The checkpoint was staffed by U.S., Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish soldiers. The owner of a nearby car repair shop, Radeef Hashim Mahrook, was killed in one of the blasts as he tried to help the students, sources said. They said that lately there have been indications that Islamic extremists intend to increase attacks against Christians. (CD)



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In April alone, Shocco hosted groups of all kinds -- from a Christian NASCAR racing team to a statewide FOCUS rally for teens to the Primary Consumers of the Alabama Department of Mental Health to the Christian Chinese of the Southeast organization that numbered more than 800 people bringing God's message to almost 300 for the first time.

Shocco was the setting for several events sponsored by the State Board of Missions: State Disaster Relief Training, Spring Senior Adult Retreat, SpringRing, BCM Leadership Training, AL Raceway Ministries, Church Weekday Education Training, the 42nd Human Relations Conference with the Alabama Inter-Baptist Fellowship Committee, and the Associational Leadership Training Conference. Church groups of varying

sizes and missions made their way to Shocco as well.

The long list of guests is by no means complete with dozens of other groups traveling to Shocco in April. May will bring many people who will hold their meetings, conferences and retreats at Shocco.

In May, groups look just as diverse. Members of the Alabama Foster Parents, Salvation Army Women, Southern Methodist General Conference, Student Life Training and the Child Evangelism Fellowship will choose Shocco as their host this month.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 16

Explore the Bible By Jeffrey S. Quiett

Associate professor of marriage and family counseling, University of Mobile

DO RIGHT WHEN YOU DO WRONG Leviticus 5:1, 4-5, 14-16; 6:1-7

Confession (5:1, 4-5)

Leviticus serves as a commentary on and expansion of God's law found in Exodus with the Ten Commandments as the foundation. Including this passage, Leviticus reveals the depth and application of God's universal law for mankind. One of Leviticus' primary themes is God's holiness by which all human thoughts and behavior are measured. The first four verses of Chapter 5 give examples of unintentional sins but sins nonetheless. One can regard verse 1 as a "sin of omission," meaning the failure to do what is right by not doing anything at all. This verse also stresses the importance of speaking out to defend the integrity of others. In a "me" obsessed society, verse 1 implies a responsibility to others as well.

Verse 4 concludes the examples of unintentional sins by addressing integrity of speech. This verse can be regarded as an injunction to be careful of one's speech by considering the meaning behind what one says. A similar, but stricter, command is found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. Jesus maintained that a true Kingdom citizen stays away from oaths completely by making his or her speech truthful at all times (Matt. 5:33-37). A simple "yes" or "no" from an honest person is better than an oath from a liar. Verse 5 presents a key understanding of sin. Offenders of God's law must acknowledge (confess) their sin to Him in order to receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). This principle is even more striking considering that the sins enumerated before verse 5 are unintentional sins. Though to some this may seem burdensome or unfair, this passage emphasizes the responsibility people have to God and others with all their actions. Notice that the confession is specific, not for a general unnamed sin but a tangible behavior.

Restitution (5:14-16; 6:1-7)

This passage specifies the restitution needed for committing unintentional sins. "Holy things" refers to sacred objects set apart for service to the Lord. Most of these objects were found in the tabernacle and were part of

the sacrificial system and worship. God's holiness is absolute and He expects us to mimic His holiness (Lev. 11:44-45). Modern statements that "nobody's perfect" or casual dismissal of sinful actions is foreign to a biblical worldview. Jesus admonished His listeners to be "perfect" as God is "perfect" (Matt. 5:48). God's expectation has always been holiness and moral perfection for people made in His image. God's holiness, however, is balanced by His love for us that compels Him to forgive. The price of forgiveness is blood as evidenced in these verses. The ultimate sacrifice, Jesus' death, was necessary to fulfill both God's demand for holiness and God's love for us (John 3:16). The "guilt offering," also called the "trespass offering," was very similar to the "sin offering." The Hebrew words for the two were apparently interchangeable. The major difference between them was that the guilt offering was brought in cases in which restitution for the sin was possible (i.e., replacing stolen property), while the sin offering was brought in cases in which restitution was not possible. The animal sacrificed as a guilt offering was always a ram.

Verses 1-7 in Chapter 6 continues instruction concerning the manner of restitution when one has sinned. Most of these verses involve ill-gained property through theft or deceit. They provide more examples of making things right when one has wronged another. The return of the property plus additional payment was required once one confessed his or her sin. Though "confession" is a principle frequently cited in church services, the concept of "restitution" is a seldom-heard topic. Forgiveness is indeed found through Christ, but God often calls us, when feasible, to make amends for intentional or even unintentional sins. Restoring broken relationships and making wrongs right are just a few examples of restitution found in both testaments. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9). This characteristic of a follower of Christ implies individuals who actively restore broken relationships that may occur because of intentional or unintentional sin. Restitution completes the cycle of confession, repentance and forgiveness. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By Mark DeVine

Associate professor of divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

'TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH' Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Peter 3:7

Understanding Submission

"Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the Church." "Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her." Let us be reminded also that humanity was created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). Unless and until we recover something of the theological significance, wonder and mystery of marriage, our attempts to find the divinely intended satisfaction it is meant to provide will continue to fail. Marriage is meant for us, but it was created by and still belongs to God.

Marriage is meant to reflect God Himself, His character and His love. Where God's claim upon marriage is neglected, marriage becomes the scene of trouble rather than the source of joy. What should be a beautiful model of the relationship between Christ and the Church becomes instead a cauldron of hurt and grief. The two indispensable ingredients to a divinely intended and healthy marriage are submission and love. Here we see clearly how marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church. Christ, though equal with God, emptied Himself, became obedient and gave Himself up for the Church. The Church, in loving gratitude, responds to Christ, her head, with submission and respect.

Understanding Love

But what does it mean for the husband to love his wife? Too often, Jesus' command to love one's neighbor as oneself is wrongly understood as including a command for us to love ourselves. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Instead Jesus was cutting through the hypocrisy that lurked behind the feigned ignorance about what love requires. Jesus stripped away the cloak of pretense with the injunction, "Just love your neighbor as you already love yourself; we know you possess great expertise in self-love!" Paul used a similarly powerful device in our focal passage: "He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh, but provides and cares for it,

just as Christ does for the Church." Utter and comprehensive love for our wives, the same kind of love we unthinkingly and without hesitation bestow upon ourselves. "Submission" is a bad word in a culture recently enamored with the quest of self-esteem and habituated to the pursuit and exercise of individual rights. But in Jesus, submission becomes a beautiful and powerful thing because through it, the only true God takes on human flesh, suffers and dies for sinners and, in so doing, not only rescues us from hell but also models for us what true freedom and authentic human life are. The husband who refuses to submit to God's command to love his wife and the wife who resists God's loving command to submit to her husband cut themselves off from the blessings marriage was meant to provide.

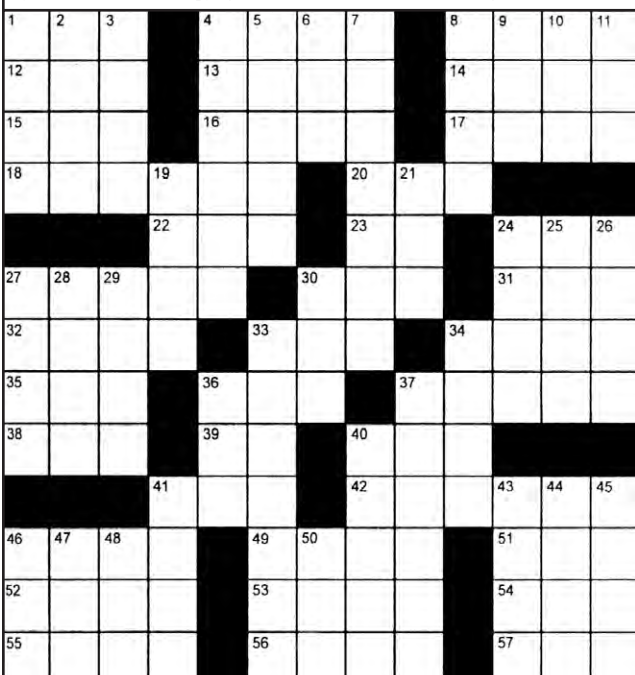
Understanding Respect and Honor

At the heart of this teaching is a piece of one of the deepest paradoxes of the Christian faith itself: Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Christ and the gospel will save it unto eternal life. This paradox becomes tragic when it is resisted because by seeking our own way, by making our own personal happiness our chief aim, we lose the happiness and joy we were created to enjoy. Peter characterized the treasure squandered by such rebellion against God's revealed will in this way — we give up, as married couples, the benefits of being "joint-heirs of the grace of life." Furthermore recalcitrant husbands can expect their prayers to be hindered. God's admonitions to husbands and wives regarding marriage are not helpful hints for making marginal improvements to the otherwise more or less fair to middling marriage. No, God's instruction is grounded in the divinely created, permanent reality of marriage itself as certain and stable and unmovable as the laws of physics. Neglect of such loving commands grounded in reality can only lead to heartache and, ultimately, marital shipwreck.

But when we do embrace God's truth about marriage, we embark upon a wondrous divinely intended adventure of love between two people. "This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the Church." ☞

Christian Crossword

By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



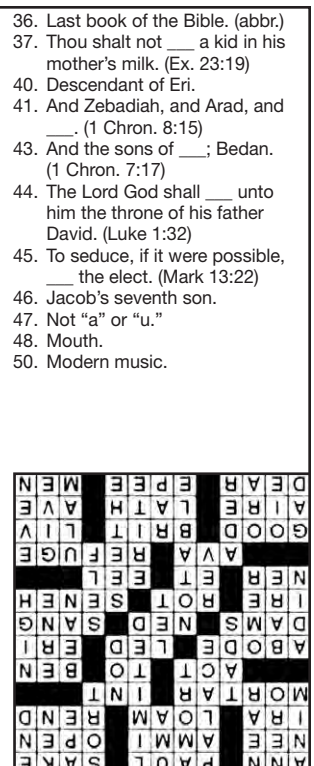
Across

1. Massachusetts cape.
4. ____, a servant of Jesus. (Rom. 1:1)
8. Not only for wrath, but also for conscience ____. (Rom. 13:5)
12. Born.
13. "My people." (Hos. 2:1)
14. Ye shall see heaven ____. (John 1:51)
15. And ____ also the Jairite was chief ruler about David. (2 Sam. 20:26)
16. Rich soil.
17. Neither ____ your clothes. (Lev. 10:6)
18. He shall take other ____ and plaister the house. (Lev. 14:42; modern sp.)
20. Money earned on account. (abbr.)
22. Play division.
23. I have made known ____ thee this day. (Prov. 22:19)
24. Their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, _____. (1 Chron. 15:18)
27. We will come unto him and make our ____ with him. (John 14:23)
30. For as many as are ____ by the Spirit of God. (Rom. 8:14)
31. A son of Gad. (Gen. 46:16)
32. Horse mothers.

33. Man's nickname.
34. "Sing," past tense.
35. Anger.
36. The name of the wicked shall _____. (Prov. 10:7)
37. One was Bozez, and the name of the other _____. (1 Sam. 14:4)
38. The captain of his host was Abner, the son of _____. (1 Sam. 14:50)
39. And. (Latin)
40. Snake-like fish.
41. The king of Assyria brought men from _____. (2 Kings 17:24)
42. God is our ____ and strength. (Ps. 46:1)
46. None is ____, save one. (Luke 18:19)
49. Englishman.
51. Roman numeral 54.
52. River in Yorkshire, England.
53. Narrow strip of wood.
54. Thoroughfare. (abbr.)
55. Be ye therefore followers of God as ____ children. (Eph. 5:1)
56. Fencing sword.
57. Who will have all ____ to be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4)
- (Ps. 119:151)
4. As Peter was beneath in the _____. (Mark 14:66)
5. ____ize: arrange installment payments.
6. Hindu goddess of splendor.
7. Yea, they ... tempted God, and ____ the Holy One of Israel. (Ps. 78:41)
8. Took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser _____. (Acts 17:5)
9. Simian.
10. Knowledge.
11. Whose ____ is destruction. (Phil. 3:19)
19. Urchins.
21. And Cain went out ... and dwelt in the land of _____. (Gen. 4:16)
24. Vegetable.
25. Sea eagle.
26. Draw ____ to God. (James 4:8)
27. The children of ____, four hundred fifty and four. (Ezra 2:15)
28. Thou wast naked and _____. (Ezek. 16:7)
29. Now an ____ is the tenth part of an ephah. (Ex. 16:36)
30. Wherefore, do ye ... ____ the people from their work? (Ex. 5:4)
33. Of great reputation.
34. Individual character.

Down

1. And Anab, and Eshtemoth, and _____. (Josh. 15:50)
2. Fiddled while Rome burned.
3. Thou art ____, O Lord.



World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Indian theology student dies in Hindu attack

GRAM FALLAIYA, India — Hindu extremists raided Christian events in India's Madhya Pradesh state in April, leaving a visiting theology student dead and several other Christians injured.

The body of 23-year-old Amit Gilbert was recovered from a water well 25 feet from the site of a Christian revival meeting that 15 to 20 Hindu extremists attacked April 17 in Gram Fallaiya, Post Pathakheda, Betul district.

With covered heads, they carried iron rods and bamboo clubs, and these members of the Hindu extremist Dharam Sena and Bajrang Dal groups cut electricity at the nighttime event and began striking, sending the more than 400 in attendance running, Christian leaders said.

Eyewitnesses said the assailants chased Gilbert, a resident of Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh state, and beat him mainly on his legs. Police in the state controlled by the Hindu extremist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said for the moment they believe Gilbert accidentally fell into the well amid the chaos, but Christians present said that is unlikely. His body was found with his head and legs submerged in the 1.5-meter-deep water of the well, yet he had no water in his lungs or stomach when Christians drew him out, said Pastor Santwan Lal, organizer of the April 15-17 revival event, suggesting that Gilbert was dead before being thrown in.

In Balaghat on April 14 and 15, Hindu extremists attacked a three-day gospel meeting with fuel bombs in spite of the presence of police summoned beforehand to provide security. Police increased security for the April 15 meeting, but as it was drawing to a close about 150 BJP and Bajrang Dal members surrounded the stadium.

"Christians who were returning from the meeting and attempting to get away from Balaghat as soon as possible were attacked and beaten with sticks and pelted with stones," said Pastor Amos Singh of Jeevan Jyoti Ministries.

Muslims burn Christian center under construction

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Hundreds of people calling themselves the Muslim Community of the Puncak Route burned buildings under construction belonging to a Christian organization in West Java province on April 27.

Believing that a church or school building was being built, the mob set fire to the Penabur Christian Education Foundation's unfinished guesthouse buildings in Cibeureum village of Cisarua subdistrict, Bogor Regency. They also burned a watchman's hut and at least two cars belonging to foundation directors.

A foundation representative identified only as Mulyono denied that it was building a school or a place of worship. Mulyono added that the guesthouse, a term synonymous with "conference center" in Indonesia, will be used for education and training.

The representative said the foundation had received building permits in June of 2009. An official identified only as Nuryadi of the Bogor Regency office confirmed that all of permits for a guest house and use of the land had been granted in June 2009.

A consultant said the Penabur foundation, which runs approximately 60 schools across Indonesia, has been building Icharius Guest House since February and had expected to see it completed in August. Construction has been suspended, also as a precautionary measure.

At press time police had no suspects for the attack.

Buddhists pressure Christians to renounce their faith

DHAKA, Bangladesh — Four Christian families in southeastern Bangladesh left their village May 2 under mounting pressure by Buddhist extremists to give up their faith in Christ.

Sources said 20 to 25 Buddhists brandishing sticks and bamboo clubs in Jamindhonpara village, 211 miles southeast of Dhaka, began patrolling streets April 30 to keep the 11 members of the Lotiban Baptist Church from gathering for their weekly prayer meetings.

On May 1, the Buddhist extremists captured four men and beat one woman who had gathered in a home, threatening to kill them if they did not become Buddhists within 24 hours. The next day, the Buddhist extremists attacked the homes of the Baptists two hours before their 1 p.m. worship service, sources said.

The Christians captured May 1 were released after the extremists, who ripped crosses off the walls of their homes, threatened to kill them if they continued praying and worshipping in the area. After the May 2 attacks, all Christians in Jamindhonpara fled, taking shelter in another village.

Harvest multiplies after Christian worker gunned down in Africa

By Lettie Kirkpatrick Burress
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Christian aid and development worker Chris Leggett, 39, was gunned down in Mauritania, on June 23, 2009. Al-Qaida claimed credit, indicating Chris was "evangelizing the Muslims." But his murderers failed to grapple with Jesus' words in John 12:24: "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

Only hours after his death, a "brother" stood over the spot where Chris' blood had been shed. While he grieved his friend's death, it began raining, a rare occurrence in the desert. God then spoke to his heart, "I am watering the seed that has fallen." He left the scene with fresh strength and boldness.

What ultimately counts

When Chris and Jackie Leggett took their family to Mauritania in 2002, they understood the risks. But, according to Jackie, her husband's favorite response to God's call for Kingdom workers was "If not you ... who? If not now ... when?"

Jackie noted that in the months before his death, Chris had dem-

onstrated both a fresh awareness of the risk and an increased intensity to share Christ.

"He had begun challenging me and those who worked with us that life and the things of this life don't really matter," she said. "At the end of the day, only Christ and what we've done for Him really counts."

Jackie and her four children returned home to Cleveland, Tenn., two days after his death. Even then God was reminding her of His presence and "watering" Chris' sacrifice. On the plane flight, the reality of their circumstances hit hard. Trying not to panic, Jackie prayed. She then remembered an envelope placed in her hand as she was leaving for the airport. It was from the church in Mauritania. They had prayed for the family that evening and shared a passage in Psalm 116 that God had given them.

"As I read, I knew these verses were from the Lord, particularly verse 7, 'Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.'"

In the year since, Jackie has seen continual assurances that God is

multiplying her husband's harvest and continuing His work. Some examples:

► The minister of justice in Mauritania said, "We have seen and appreciate what Chris has invested in our country ... his work and legacy will continue. Though we are mourning his death, he has left a lasting impression that will not die."

► Although the foundation that Chris led in Mauritania was closed for safety reasons, the employees and volunteers (all nationals) insisted on continuing the work to honor Chris and his compassion for their people.

► A memorial was held at the Baptist Collegiate Ministries building in Cleveland where Chris attended community college — the permanent display there challenges students to follow his example.

► On April 18, Candies Creek Baptist Church, Cleveland, dedicated the Chris Leggett Memorial Mission home for Southern Baptist representatives on statewide assignment. During the dedication ceremony, hundreds of people made a fresh commitment to serve wherever God called them.

Still grieving the "incredible father" and "wonderful husband" she lost, Jackie said recently, "It was an honor I dared not take lightly to serve with him."

His death has only increased her passion for the Lord and His work, she said. "I feel a sense of urgency ... the same urgency that Chris lived by. The same urgency mentioned by Christ in John 9:4. Even our children have dreams of following in their dad's footsteps."

Militants shoot Somali Christian

Islamic militants killed another leader of the underground church movement in Somalia, sources said. Before he was fatally shot May 4 in Xarardheere, about 37 miles from Jowhar, 57-year-old Yusuf Ali Nur had been on a list of people the Islamic extremist group al-Shabaab suspected of being Christian, sources said.

Al-Shabaab, said to have links with al-Qaida, has vowed to rid Somalia of Christianity. Nur had lived in Xarardheere since leaving Jowhar in July 2009. Eyewitnesses said after al-Shabaab took control of the area, they went from house to house looking for enemy fighters. They arrived at Nur's rented home at about 10:30 a.m. and sprayed him with bullets at close range. Nur is survived by his wife and three children, ages 11, 9 and 7. (CD)



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Man's best friend

Canine helps missionary minister to kids in the Bronx

Squeezed between the Harlem River and the old Yankee Stadium lies the mostly forgotten neighborhood of Mott Haven. For decades, this South Bronx community has borne the brunt of crime, drugs and poverty in a city known for its luxuriously rich and desperately poor.

Mott Haven is a hodge-podge of storefronts, public housing, abandoned buildings and turn-of-the-century brownstones and recently was ranked by the *Daily News* as one of the worst neighborhoods in New York City to raise kids.

It's because of the depth of these problems that the red brick building with the bright green door at Brook Avenue and 141st Street stands out amid similar structures.

It's home to Graffiti 2 Church and Community Ministries, and as soon as the last bell rings at the elementary school around the corner, some 25 first- through fifth-graders will fill the room for Graffiti 2's after-school program.

Missionary Andrew Mann takes advantage of the quiet to prepare for the week ahead. Sitting at his laptop, he reaches down and scratches the head of a yellow Labrador retriever at his feet. The slumbering dog peeks one eye in recognition of her master's touch. Proof seems to know that now is the time to catch some Z's before the after-school crowd rushes in and the work begins.

The five-year-old lab is not your average pooch. She's a Canine Assistance Animal trained as a professional therapy dog that has become instrumental in Mann's ministry at Graffiti 2. Proof's calm and friendly presence makes her a natural draw to people in the neighborhood.

A 'missionary' dog

"More people in the neighborhood know Proof than know me," Mann said. "I have strangers who come up and greet Proof by name and I have no idea who they are."

No doubt they've heard of Proof from the kids at the after-school program where she earns her dog treats. Proof serves as a reading incentive, de-escalation tool and source of unconditional love for the children.

"For kids who struggle to read, it's good for them to read out loud," Mann explained. "Sometimes they're embarrassed to read to an adult because we know the mistakes they're making. Proof doesn't know their mistakes, and they're comfortable reading out loud to her."

Mann also uses Proof as an anger management tool. If a kid is mad or upset, Mann hands over Proof's leash and asks them to watch her. And then he walks away and lets Proof work her magic on the troubled child.

"I wait until they are calm and



BP photo

PUPPY LOVE — Missionary Andrew Mann (left) and his lab, Proof, walk kids in the South Bronx to Graffiti 2, where they will receive help with homework and learn about the Bible in a safe environment.

petting Proof, then I can walk over and talk to them," Mann said.

Pretty cool "tricks" for a dog, but what's amazing is her uncanny ability to evaluate a situation and problem-solve to find a solution.

Mann tells the story of a kid who was having a particularly bad day — "screaming at the top of his lungs, interrupting the rest of the program and making it difficult for the other kids."

"With no cue from me, Proof got up and walked toward us. She walked right up to the kid and started licking his hands. Like a light switch being flipped off, he stopped screaming and started petting Proof. He was calm the rest of the day.

"She's a very special dog," Mann said with a proud smile. "We call her the first missionary dog. For the kids, there's few better examples in our natural world of God's unconditional love than what comes through a dog."

An eternal impact

Mann has seen the effects of a culture that largely ignores God — crime, vandalism, malnutrition, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, gang activity. But that hasn't kept him from moving in and making Mott Haven home.

"We've been impacted by the love of Jesus Christ," Mann said. "And that in turn leads us

to impact everyone around us."

"We can't draw people to God, only God can do that," he said. "We can proclaim it, we can share the good news, and we're just going to keep doing that."

Mann is starting to see small seeds of change sprouting from the concrete jungle he calls home. When he needed more volunteers to work with kids in the after-school program, he recruited middle school and high school students from the neighborhood.

Today 20 teenagers are involved in a ministry called G.S.A.L.T. — Graffiti Serving and Leading Teenagers. They assist every day after school from 2:30–6 p.m., teaching and mentoring the younger kids. After they walk the kids home, they come back to the center for Bible study and help with their own homework.

Graffiti gives them a safe place after school, they hear the Word of God and get loved on, and in return they are affecting the lives of younger kids. Mann has watched God work in the lives of several students and their families.

"I can see how God is strategically planting seeds all over the place," Mann said. "I know the impact here is not going to be short-term. I believe the harvest is yet to come, and I believe the harvest is going to be more than we can ever dare ask, dream or imagine." (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Contraception, abstinence not contradictory, study says

WACO, Texas — Teaching young people the importance of sexual abstinence outside of marriage and sharing information about contraception need not be seen as contradictory messages, a Baylor University researcher has concluded.

Michael Sherr, director of doctoral studies at the Texas Baptist university's school of social work, together with Preston Dyer, professor emeritus at the school, evaluated Project U-Turn, a nine-week comprehensive sex education program for minority youth in Miami.

"A key finding is that teaching about abstinence and providing medically accurate information — including an honest discussion about sexually transmitted diseases and about contraception — are not mutually exclusive," Sherr said.

No evidence indicated comprehensive programs that include messages about both abstinence and contraception result in increased sexual activity, he reported. Comprehensive sex education can postpone the age at which young people engage in sexual intercourse — potentially until marriage — and it can increase the number of youth who discontinue sexual activity, research showed.

At the same time, among young people who persist in sexual activity, comprehensive sex education can increase their use of contraceptives to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and the potential for unplanned pregnancies.

Sherr and Dyer focused their study on programs involving 620 minority youth in Miami because research has shown about two-thirds of black teenagers and more than half of Hispanic teens engage in sexual intercourse. Those two ethnic groups also have demonstrated higher incidences of sexually transmitted diseases, sex with multiple partners, unplanned pregnancies and abortions.

When they compared outcomes from programs based in both church and in public school settings, Sherr and Dyer discovered young people in the church-based program ranked higher on every measure consistent with choosing abstinence until marriage.

Ban lifted on Virginia police chaplains' sectarian prayers

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell has lifted a two-year-old ban on sectarian prayers — including those referring to Jesus Christ — led by Virginia State Police chaplains at department-sanctioned public events.

The recently elected Republican governor instructed police superintendent Col. Steven Flaherty on April 28 to inform the nine troopers who serve as chaplains of the change in policy.

"The governor does not believe the state should tell chaplains of any faith how to pray," McDonnell spokesman Tucker Martin told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. "Religious officials of all faiths should be allowed to pray according to the dictates of their consciences."

Flaherty, who was reappointed superintendent by McDonnell on April 28, initiated the ban in September 2008 in response to a ruling by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that a Fredericksburg, Va., City Council member may not pray in Jesus' name during council meetings because invocations are government speech. Flaherty said the chaplain-prayer policy never applied to private ceremonies or individual counseling sessions, but only official public departmental events. In response, six chaplains — all troopers who hold the religious post voluntarily — resigned in protest. Then-Gov. Tim Kaine, a Democrat, said at the time he did not initiate the ban but supported it. Attempts to change the policy failed in the Virginia General Assembly in 2009 and 2010.

Globe reporters take Catholic abuse scandal to silver screen

BOSTON — *Boston Globe* reporters have inked a deal with film producers to bring an account of how they broke the Catholic sex abuse scandal to the silver screen.

Film producers Nicole Rocklin and Blye Faust have acquired the rights to the story of *Globe* reporters' yearlong investigation into child sex abuse in the Archdiocese of Boston.

The investigation uncovered widespread abuse, won the paper a Pulitzer Prize in 2003 and led to a cascade of similar stories nationwide and widespread changes in how U.S. Catholic bishops protect children and deal with abuse allegations.

According to the website Deadline.com, the film producers imagine the movie will be similar to "All the President's Men," the 1976 film starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman about how *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein broke the Watergate story that felled President Richard Nixon.

Globe Editor Martin Baron could not be immediately reached for comment.

Senior Living Resource Guide

an advertising supplement • May 13, 2010

Birmingham's Fair Haven Retirement Community opens latest addition: independent living apartments



Fair Haven Retirement Community

Paid Advertising

In keeping with their long established mission statement from 1961, Alabama's Methodist Homes Retirement Community continues to meet the needs of the state's senior adult population. In April, their flagship facility, Fair Haven, again expanded independent living housing options to the Birmingham community with the opening of Fair Haven West independent living apartments. These beautiful apartments, located in the main buildings of Fair Haven, offer studio apartments as well as one- and two-bedroom floor plan options. All apartment include full-size kitchens. Residents bring their own furniture, and may decorate to suit their individual tastes.

These apartments include community lounges on each floor where residents can enjoy quiet conversation in attractive common areas, as well as regularly scheduled entertainment in the large Fair Haven living room. Three nutritious meals a day are available in Fair Haven's beautiful dining room. (There is no daily large for lunch as the cost is included in the monthly rental fee.) Methodist Homes Corporation food service is recognized as one of the best, and every meal is prepared fresh in our own kitchens. We

strongly believe that meal times are very important times for our residents, and we work to make each meal time an enjoyable and satisfying culinary experience. Residents may choose to dine with guests in a private dining room available by appointment. The fellowship of enjoying meals together is a highlight of the day.

Other amenities that are part of the Fair Haven West Apartments include:

- pet friendly (deposit required)
- all utilities, except phone and internet
- month-to-month-leasing
- weekly housekeeping services with linens provided
- in-house beauty salon, medical and dental clinic
- weekly services in the beautiful Fair Haven chapel
- gift shop
- free coffee and juice bar
- scheduled daily activities including provided transportation
- 24-hour emergency call system
- personal transportation available (for a small fee)

For a private tour of the Fair Haven campus and the West apartments please call Mary Bess Price at 205-956-4150.



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Chronic bronchitis or emphysema - also known as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) - is a lung disease that gets worse over time. COPD is most often caused by cigarette smoking. Although there is currently no cure for COPD, research is being conducted to find treatments to help prevent and control symptoms. Research studies are now underway in our area to test an investigational long-acting treatment for COPD.

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A Reverse Mortgage Testimony

By Bro. Max and Carolyn
Youngblood, retired pastor and wife
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After more than 50 wonderful years in the ministry in Alabama, Carolyn and I found ourselves with a mortgage with more than 20 years left to pay. (Part of the reason for this comes from living in a pastorium for most of those years. Those years resulted in not having any equity in a home. Churches, if you are not already doing so, please consider giving your staff a housing allowance.)

I had heard of Reverse Mortgages but did not think we would qualify since we had less than 50 percent equity in our home. After I saw Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist* I decided to give him a call. Jimmy came to our home and we had a great time of fellowship and gained a great deal of information on the subject. We were still skeptical but we completed an application.

To shorten a long story, that was a little over one month ago and the other day we closed on the reverse mortgage, and we never left our home for any part of the pro-

cess. We also received enough cash to do the things we need to do.

Carolyn and I highly recommend this to anyone 62 or over that could use this kind of help. It has been an answer to prayer for us.

A Word from Jimmy: This past year we've seen several changes in the reverse mortgage world. In the last few weeks we've seen lenders make changes that will help the senior and, even while working on this article news came to me that the fixed rate has been dropped by one of our lenders. If you didn't qualify for a reverse before, perhaps you do today, so please give me a call and I'll be glad to run the numbers for you.

For a free brochure or more information please call Jimmy Dixon direct at 205-451-0676, or toll-free at 1-866-879-7775. Like The Alabama Baptist, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director, a FAITH team leader, deacon and Upwards coach at Valley Creek Baptist, Hueytown.



Jimmy Dixon

NMLS # 207518





You'll LAUGH 'til you DIE!

Murder on American Idle — Upbeat from the beginning, Paula Fazoul, Simon Cowan, and Niles Jackson work the crowd into a frenzy as the audience competes for a spot on "American Idle." The lucky contestants will be on-stage, singing karaoke and competing for the title of "American Idle." A panel of judges, some from the audience, will decide "Who will be the next American Idle!" As always, there will be a murder at the Murder Mystery Dinner Show and you are in charge of figuring it out. The winner will get a prize, and we will of course have a American Idle winner!



Frankly, Scarlett ... You're DEAD! — An antebellum evening of mystery, laughter and MURDER. Dinner guests will witness a crime and solve a mystery! The year is 1861. Yankee spies are everywhere! But that won't keep a true Southern gentleman from throwin' a good old fashioned Bar-B-Q for his friends and family, now will it? Colonel Simpson cordially invites



everyone to celebrate the upcoming marriages of his daughters, Scarlett and Melody, at the ancestral plantation home of the Simpson family. The Colonel is delighted about the impending nuptials, and will be even happier when he actually finds two young men willing to marry the girls. The only single gentlemen around seem to be the Pinkney boys, and let's face it, they are a bit odd. Of course there is, a gambler of vague origins and questionable repute, Brett Rutgers. Who will suffice for the daughters? Come

join us to find out and do remember to keep your eyes open for stray bullets and Yankee spies!

Dinner Menu — Creamy vegetable soup, garden salad, pot roast with baby carrots and seasoned boneless chicken breast, corn, green beans, mashed potatoes, roll, homemade cobbler with ice cream, soda, coffee, and ice tea. Vegetarian meals are available.

Great Smoky Mountain Murder Mystery Dinner Show
Pigeon Forge, Tenn. | www.murder-mystery-theater.com
Call 1-866-628-3959 for reservations, show dates and times.

Church groups welcome for private bookings. Group discounts available.



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Comfort Keepers®: Providing in-home, nonmedical services

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

Comfort Keepers® strives to provide a full range of care and services that maximizes the quality of life and reduces the physical and emotional stress for clients, their family members and friends.

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

The vast majority of Comfort Keepers® clients are seniors, but services are also available to others needing assistance such as new mothers, those recovering from illness or injury or those with disabilities.

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

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

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- ▶ Mobility
- ▶ Transferring and positioning
- ▶ Incontinence care
- ▶ Toileting
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- ▶ Special diet and meal preparation

ERRAND SERVICES

- ▶ Grocery shopping
- ▶ Respite or relief for family
- ▶ Medication

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- ▶ Grooming and dressing guidance
- ▶ Incidental transportation
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- ▶ Recreational activities and crafts

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- ▶ Incidental transportation services
- ▶ Medication reminders
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- ▶ Grooming
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- ▶ In-Home Safety Technology



www.comfortkeepers.com

BIRMINGHAM: Owner: Brent A. Watson, 205-981-1800. Service areas: Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, Chilton and Blount counties.

DAPHNE: Owner: Deborah Colebank, 251-621-5555. Service areas: Mobile and Baldwin counties.

AUBURN-OPELIKA: Owners: Chris & Brenda Jane, 334-749-8461. Service areas: Auburn-Opelika, Tuskegee, Tallassee, Dadeville, Valley and surrounding areas.



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The good news is that we are living longer. The bad news is that we are living longer — especially in a world with little financial security. However, there are now options that may provide not only a set income that will last for you and your spouse's lifetime, but also potential raises that may offset future inflation. In addition, the inheritance for your loved ones can be protected.

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Seniors should consider bathtub remodeling for safety, health benefits



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

The conversion includes an oversized shower pan which allows room for a portable bench seat, two safety

grab-bars and a handheld shower wand so that you can sit and not have to stand for long periods of time.

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

Charlie points out that Dream Baths also provides walk-in safety tubs with hydrotherapy for arthritis, back problems, lu-

pus, muscular dystrophy, fibromyalgia and aches and pains.

"We also provide wheelchair accessible showers, so you can roll into them and out with ease."

"Our customers are always surprised and pleased to learn how affordable our prices are and how much we save them compared to other companies. We are proud to be of service to our seniors across the state keeping them safe in their homes," he said.

Charlie and his wife, Debbie, are long-time members of Camellia Baptist Church, Prattville.

For more information call Charlie at 334-312-1825 or visit www.dreambathsAlabama.com.

Dream Baths of Alabama

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

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

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



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Birmingham's Rocky Ridge Retirement Community provides worry-free, independent living options

Rocky Ridge Retirement Community

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If you are looking for a caring, independent living retirement community that is more like family than neighbors ... look no further than Birmingham's Rocky Ridge Retirement Community. Situated on picturesque grounds in the tranquil Birmingham suburb of Hoover, Rocky Ridge Retirement Community provides retirement living at its best.

We take care of all life's worrisome day-to-day details so that our residents can focus on the joys of retirement. You'll be charmed by the inviting elegance of our campus facilities that compliment the multitude of amenities that our residents have come to expect.

We offer a carefree, independent retirement lifestyle for one all-inclusive and affordable monthly rent. We understand how family members worry about



their loved ones needing occasional assistance on an immediate basis ... that's why we have two resident management teams who live right in the community and are available around the clock to assist their residents in any way. We also know the importance of good nutritious meals so we have on staff professionally trained chefs who prepare three delicious, perfectly balanced meals from scratch every day for residents and guests to enjoy in our comfortable restaurant-style dining room.

And our residents love the convenience of our strategic location, which is minutes from nearby shopping, healthcare, dining, churches and beautiful Aldridge Botanical Gardens across the street. Our caring professionals know the importance of keeping the mind, body and soul active and energized. We offer a thoughtfully planned calendar of life-enriching activities, exercise classes,

educational lectures and off-site outings to keep our residents entertained and engaged.

Our goal is to provide many opportunities for our residents to discover a new purpose and passion that enriches their lives — and to enjoy every minute of it.

Rocky Ridge Retirement Community is owned by Holiday Retirement, one of the oldest and most reputable companies in the industry. Holiday has more than 300 retirement centers throughout the U.S. and their ongoing quest is to provide innovative services and activities that stimulate and rejuvenate their communities' residents. Holiday has as an award-winning volunteer program called Seniors Serving Seniors and Seniors Serving Society (SSS), which was named the most innovative program of the year in 2007 by the International Council on Active Aging. This program offers residents opportunities to participate in school reading programs, food banks, etc., thus allowing them to stay involved in the community.

Holiday Retirement knows that many of their residents have a passion for traveling. That's why they offer a one-of-a-kind

travel program that allows residents to experience the same lifestyle they receive at their own community at the majority of the 300 other Holiday Retirement communities across the United States and Canada at no additional expense. While traveling, residents can stay in a comfortable guest suite, enjoy the chef-prepared meals at no cost, and participate in all community activities.

So you can see why visiting Rocky Ridge Retirement Community should be the first stop you make before deciding on your independent living retirement community. Chances are ... it will be your last stop! For a personal tour and complimentary meal call 205-989-6500. For more information visit www.holidaytouch.com.



Enhance your life with NewBath therapeutic walk-in tubs and tub-to-shower conversions

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If you've been missing the comfort of a bath simply because it's too hard to get in and out, our walk-in bathtub is perfect for you. Simply walk in, sit down, relax and enjoy a warm, comfortable and therapeutic bath relieving your aches and pains. Best of all, your new walk-in tub system will be installed in just one day.



Or maybe a brand new walk-in shower is what you are looking for. Forty-five percent of all household accidents resulting in serious injuries take place in the bathroom. Con-

Other remodeling options take weeks to complete, cost thousands more and inconvenience your whole family.

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verting a tub to a shower can reduce the risk of injury. NewBath offers a wide variety of custom and standard sizes to easily convert your bathtub into a walk-in shower. Transform the look of your bathroom in just one day with NewBath.

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