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INSIDE



Potts celebrates 20 years as Judson College president

◆ Page 5



'Radically different' story comes out about Baptists jailed in Haiti

◆ Pages 9-11



'Crafty' FBC Pelham members help cancer patients keep port-a-cath area safe

◆ Page 13



IMB photo

GRATITUDE — An almost giddy atmosphere surrounds this well, provided by the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund. The well has changed the life of the villagers, who previously spent their days trying to find water. **Below**, a woman carries a container of water back to her home.

'We are dancing' Kenyan village receives clean water well thanks to Southern Baptists

Chin jutted out and eyes slightly closed, Nduri Isandap bobs to the low, resonating music. The shrill a cappella chorus quickly gains momentum and volume. Layer upon layer of beaded necklaces clank in perfect rhythm with each bouncing dance step the women take.

In the center of the tight circle, Isandap feels the excitement of the music. She lets out a "yelp" and jumps straight up, stiff as a board yet beautiful and regal. A smile slowly spreads across her weathered face, though her eyes remain sad. It's been a long time since Isandap had anything to smile about, let alone celebrate.

It's been a rough year. When her husband died, she and six children were left to fend for themselves dur-

ing one of the worst droughts in Kenya's history. Without adequate water, most of their livestock died and food was scarce. There hasn't been much cause for celebration — until today.

Today water came to her desert village. Thanks to a Southern Baptist water project, everyone will bathe and have enough to drink. Today Isandap didn't walk seven miles to the hand-dug well or worry about how to make 20 litres (5.2 gallons) of water stretch for household chores, seven people and a few goats.

"We are dancing because we very much appreciate what has been done for our village," Isandap said, point-



IMB photo

ing to the four donated water tanks not more than 100 yards away.

The project brought water closer for 4,000 people. While that's just a small drop in the ocean when compared

to the World Health Organization's estimates of 1 billion people without access to safe water, the difference it makes in Isandap's village is (See 'Before,' page 7)

Odds stack up against gambling in Alabama

By Sondra Washington and Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The showdown is over. Alabama's Supreme Court has spoken.

Gov. Bob Riley — not Attorney General Troy King — is the state's "supreme" executive authority, and King cannot take over Riley's Task

Force on Illegal Gambling. Combine this hit with the fact that the FBI is currently investigating several lawmakers about their connection to gambling money, and the gambling industry isn't finding quite the welcome mat it thought it would in Alabama.

In fact, many slot machine gam-

bling operations, referred to as electronic bingo facilities, remaining open in the state are now publicizing plans to close, at least temporarily.

Gambling operations statewide have come and gone over the past two years as this issue has been debated, most heatedly in the Alabama Legislature. (See 'Several,' page 3)

COMMENT

GCR Task Force Report Misses the Mark

It was with a growing sense of excitement that I listened to the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force's progress report Feb. 22. Earlier I had editorialized about pollster George Barna's observation that evangelicals had to stop "competing, complaining and condemning" if they want to reach America for Christ.

Barna called for Bible believers to start practicing "cooperation (and) communication and contributing." The progress report lifted up core values such as Christlikeness, truth, unity, relationships and trust to replace the "slash-and-burn" politics practiced in some Southern Baptist quarters for the past 30 years where it was common practice to label and demonize everyone who dared differ about some position.

Southern Baptists certainly need a new ethic that will help us regain a hearing for the gospel. Too many people have dismissed us as irrelevant because of our public image of "competing, complaining and condemning."

Thankfully the final GCR Task Force report continues to lift up those qualities. Unfortunately most of the other recommendations miss the mark of helping Southern Baptists "work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission."

The most serious shortcoming is seen in the way the GCR Task Force jumped from one priority to another during the past year. What started as a way to energize support for international missions resulted in a new way of doing missions in North America. What was supposed to be a study of all Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) life omitted a serious examination of the convention's seminaries because, as the chairman stated, there was not the political will to do so. What started as a drive to get a 50-50 split of Cooperative Program (CP) funds between state conventions and the SBC resulted in a call for state conventions to give more to SBC causes through the CP.

Some of the changes came as task force members learned more about the way Southern Baptists work together. Some of the changes came as the enormity of the task became clear and members rushed to have a report for the upcoming SBC annual meeting. Some changes came when a handful of task force members threatened to make a minority report unless changes were made.

The result of this Southern Baptist "sausage-making" exercise is the 17-page report containing seven recommendations to be voted on June 15 and 10 pages of challenges addressed to all Southern Baptists. Unfortunately none of the recommendations addresses how to increase the financial support for what Southern Baptists do in Great Commission ministries. The report laments the fact that the average Southern Baptist family gives only 2.5 percent of its annual income through its local church and urges families to tithe. The report points out that SBC churches give only 6 percent



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

to missions through the CP on average and urges increased giving. But no goal for church CP giving is recommended.

When asked about this in a telephone interview, task force members said they did not want to interfere with a local church's autonomy. Yet the task force felt able to urge 31 other specific actions such as starting parochial schools and establishing church discipline.

Instead the report recommends a new method of giving called Great Commission Giving, which is widely viewed as a salve for churches wanting to give to special projects (designated giving) rather than support the full Southern Baptist program in both their state and national conventions.

Competing with the CP

Some fear establishing a Great Commission Giving category will be another step toward societal giving in which various ministries compete with each other for funds rather than cooperative giving in which all ministries promote one plan that supports them all.

One thing is true. Until Southern Baptist individuals and churches are willing to commit to a greater percentage of giving to Great Commission ministries through the CP, all the commotion over how to divide the declining income is like arguing for a higher class ticket on the *Titanic*. It ignores the ultimate failure of the journey.

The task force recommendations for reaching North America are novel. The report calls for phasing out cooperative work with mature state conventions such as Alabama's. At the same time, the report calls for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to establish a national strategy for reaching the unsaved. How NAMB can do this when it is practically prohibited from working in an area of the nation that contains about 40 percent of the population is still speculative.

In new work states, new agreements will be worked out between NAMB and the state conventions. But there is no indication of what the new agreements will be, how they will operate or what they will cover. Many ask why commit to abandon an effective way of working together for something unknown and untried. At least the new approach should be tested before being adopted.

One must also ask where are the core values of unity, relationship and trust when one partner (the SBC) arbitrarily determines the way it will work with other partners (state conventions) without consultation or conversation.

At the same time, NAMB is commissioned to work directly in new church starts in areas where Southern Baptists are not well established. Some observers ask why local Southern Baptists — those who know the area, people and challenges — would not be a partner in these new church plants. What type of missiology is it that ignores the role of other churches, the local association and the state convention in order for a national entity to have direct control of a new church start?

Since when is an SBC entity to do the work rather than helping churches do the work?

Despite missing the mark in helping Southern Baptists work "more faithfully and effectively together," the report should not be rejected out of hand. Much work has gone into it, and each of the recommendations deserves careful and informed consideration. Neither should the report be adopted as it is. While most of the recommendations refer matters to various entities, there are many instances in which doing this has been interpreted as approval of the idea and thus it should be implemented.

A middle way is better. We suggest the report be received as information by the messengers and that each of the recommendations be referred to the appropriate entity for consideration and reaction. This approach honors the service of task force members. It places each recommendation before those charged by Southern Baptists to give close supervision to that area of work. It provides opportunity for evaluation and testing. It keeps the discussion going. It prevents being hurried into action before the body is ready to make a decision.

This is not a question of who can win the vote on June 15. It is a question of how can Southern Baptists "work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission." Surely that means more time can be taken and more voices involved before drastic changes are made.

To read the full GCR Task Force report, visit www.pray4gcr.com.

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

By Kristen Padilla, The Alabama Baptist

Carolyn Powell

Hillabee Baptist Church, Alexander City
Tallapoosa Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES: Proverbs 3:5-6

FAVORITE HYMN: "How Great Thou Art"

HOBBIES: Cooking, playing piano and fishing

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 34 years of marriage to Dwight; three children, Lamar, Ben and Suzanne; and three grandchildren



POWELL

Carolyn Powell has been serving as pianist at Hillabee Baptist Church, Alexander City, for 43 years. On top of that, she sings in the choir, when possible; teaches Sunday School; cooks for

the Wednesday night fellowship meal; and serves as church treasurer.

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: I had a really great childhood growing up in rural Alabama. Church was a big part of ... our social life. I was the oldest of five children and had a Christian mother and Christian grandmother.

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

A: I became a member at Hillabee in 1965, and my husband was saved in 1967. We've been involved in Hillabee ever since that time. I taught Mission Friends when my children were growing up and taught the youth church training class on Sunday nights. I've been teaching the Martha Sunday School Class, a class for women in their 60s, for around 12 years.

Q: What have you gotten from teaching Sunday School?

A: I have grown to love [the contemporary music]. We do a mix — some traditional and some contemporary. I have enjoyed learning to love contemporary.

Q: How do you hope to be involved in church in the future?

A: (I hope to continue) until the Lord changes me. If He gives me a new direction, I'm willing to change and do whatever He leads me to.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

A: Everything. I have been a widower for 15 years, and I never thought I'd be able to survive by myself. It's been a wonderful experience to realize that He is all I need.

Several gambling operations remain open despite 'no more controversy about the law'

(continued from page 1)

Operations still open at press time were VictoryLand in Macon County, Greenetrack in Greene County and more than 10 facilities in the Bessemer Cut-off section of Jefferson County.

The facility first raided by the task force, White Hall Entertainment Center in Lowndes County, remains closed and has been since early this year when the legal battle between it and the task force began.

Bobby Segall, who represents Cornerstone Community Outreach, which runs the White Hall casino, told *The Alabama Baptist* he does not believe the recent ruling has any "long-term impact" on Cornerstone and its plans to reopen since both the governor and attorney general were going to "pursue legal proceedings to determine the legality of the (electronic bingo) games."

"The difference was that the governor would raid and the attorney general would not raid, apparently," Segall said, noting he believes the facility will not reopen unless the machines are found to be legal.

But "supporters of electronic bingo in Macon County say they are prepared to take their fight to the highest court in the land if the governor makes any move to shut down [VictoryLand]," according to the *Montgomery Advertiser*.

Greenetrack officials could not be reached before press time.

Bessemer area still operating

In Jefferson County, the ruling's impact in the Bessemer Cut-off is not yet clear.

While Brandon Falls, Jefferson County's district attorney, shut down all gambling operations under his jurisdiction April 7, Bessemer Cut-off District Attorney Arthur Green allowed the facilities in his area to remain open in April and May.

Green noted he would make his decision about what to do once the Supreme Court ruled whether King or Riley was in charge of the task force or when task force commander John Tyson shut down the larger facilities in Macon and Greene counties.

But operations in the Bessemer area have

remained opened even though Green reportedly announced that gambling in Alabama is "over" and called for the facilities to close.

Green could not be reached before press time, but Fairfield City Attorney Michael Trucks reportedly said Green told him he had no problem with the facilities staying open until June 4. The significance of June 4 was not known as press time.

Tyson said he doesn't know why Green isn't "doing his job."

"What we have now is all three separate and equal branches of our government — Supreme Court, governor and Legislature — saying the same thing. ... There is just no more ... controversy about whether or not that is ... the law."

Even Country Crossing in Dothan — the newest and one of the most aggressive gambling establishments in the state — is listening. It has been shut down since January in an attempt to avoid a raid by the task force. News reports in late May indicated Country Crossing owner Ronnie Gilley toyed with the idea of reopening the gambling operation but decided against it.

"Owners of the electronic bingo machines at Country Crossing would not give their support (to reopen) because the governor's gambling task force has threatened a raid," Gilley said, according to the *Dothan Eagle*.

Gilley and the other gambling facility owners counted on King being named head of the task force, indicating they would be allowed to open if he were in charge.

In March, King announced he would take over the task force and use declaratory judgments to determine the legality of "electronic bingo."

But the Supreme Court shot down King's proposed plan. It repeated its ruling in an Etowah County gambling case that the courts have no jurisdiction to "interfere with the enforcement of the criminal laws."

In turn, Etowah County Circuit Judge Al-

len Millican threw out the case dealing with a company attempting to legalize efforts to open a gambling operation in Etowah County. Millican said he recognizes "the court does not have the luxury of not following the law" when it comes to illegal gambling.

"The attorney general's plan ignored prior Supreme Court decisions that made clear that declaratory judgment actions in these circumstances are not permitted," Riley stated in a press release.

But King said, "The gambling laws in Alabama had been sorted out for a long time by declaratory actions including declaratory judgments that the Supreme Court upheld. ... We constructed a strategy based on the law, and the Supreme Court has now, evidently, changed the law."

King expressed disappointment with the Supreme Court's ruling, which he told *The Alabama Baptist* reversed its past decisions and those of the writers of the state's constitution in 1901. King believes "there will come a time when this opinion is going to create a crisis in the state."

"Since 1901, this premise that the attorney general is subservient to the governor has not been the law of Alabama," he said. "Alabama has always been a place where being in its government had limited power. I think that's good. Unchecked, unlimited power lends itself to abuse."

King said the same power could be used if a pro-gambling governor is elected. "He would have ... the same powers to come in and reverse all this, and nobody would be able to ... dispute it," King explained. "Normally you would have a balance of power. Now you have a situation where nobody can disagree with the governor."

But Tyson believes King's intentions in the case were disingenuous.

"There was not confusion about whether or not slot machines were illegal until Troy King became the attorney general," he said.

"[With the recent High Court ruling,] the casino bosses' days of protection from law enforcement are over."

Gov. Bob Riley
State of Alabama

ERLC restates anti-online gambling stance

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) has reiterated its opposition to congressional efforts to legalize and tax Internet gambling.

ERLC President Richard Land told a House of Representatives committee by letter that it continues to support a 2006 law restricting online gambling. Regulations enforcing that law finally will go into effect June 1.

Land urged opposition to a bill pending in the Ways and Means Committee that would tax Internet gambling revenues. He also called for resistance to legislation that would legalize online gambling and authorize its regulation by the federal government.

"No amount of regulation or taxation ... could make online gambling an acceptable form of business," Land said.

"Its lure can wreak havoc on marriages, cause financial ruin and lead to lamentable actions such as child neglect, divorce and suicide. At its core, online gambling's predatory, addictive pull exacts a tremendous cost from

families and communities that far outweighs any tax revenue that the government could hope to receive from its legalization."

The bill under consideration is the Internet Gambling Regulation and Tax Enforcement Act, H.R. 4976. Its sponsor, Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash., has only four co-sponsors.

Fighting legislation

Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., is the sponsor of the Internet Gambling Regulation, Consumer Protection and Enforcement Act, H.R. 2267, which would enable the Treasury Department to license and regulate Internet gambling firms. His measure has 69 co-sponsors.

Frank said May 19 the Financial Services Committee, which he chairs, will take action on his bill in July, Congressional Quarterly reported. Land previously wrote another letter urging the members of that committee to reject Frank's legislation.

Frank said the 2006 ban inappropriately restricts personal freedom, according to testi-

mony prepared for the Ways and Means Committee hearing. He said the bills McDermott and he are sponsoring would protect U.S. gamblers' consumer rights and make sure online wagering does not benefit only the operators, who are located primarily overseas.

The 2006 law effectively bars online gambling in the United States by requiring financial institutions to block credit card and other payments to Internet wagering businesses. The ERLC was among the organizations that joined the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the major professional sports leagues for baseball, basketball, football and hockey in supporting that ban.

When President Bush signed into law in October 2006 a bill containing the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act, the action dealt a dramatic blow to online gambling companies. A couple of firms sold their American operations for \$1 apiece, and others saw their shares fall by as much as nearly 60 percent on the London Stock Exchange. (BP)

'Takes courage to believe in yourself'

Armed with diplomas, advice, prayers, some 800 Samford graduates go forth

Samford University graduated about 800 seniors during a series of commencement programs in May.

Graduates from Samford's largest school, the Howard College of Arts and Sciences, along with graduates of the school of the arts and Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education and Professional Studies, received diplomas May 15. About 400 undergraduate and graduate students participated in the program in the Pete Hanna Center on the Samford campus.

Another 400 graduates of Samford's Brock School of Business, Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing, McWhorter School of Pharmacy and Cumberland School of Law received diplomas May 14 during graduation programs in the Wright Center. Samford's Beeson Divinity School had its commencement exercise and service of consecration May 5.

At the May 15 event, Pam Siddall, the new president and publisher of *The Birmingham News*, challenged graduates to believe in themselves "even when others don't" and to pursue high standards.

"It takes courage to believe in yourself, to be able to adjust and adapt to an ever-changing world, to take risks knowing that you'll sometimes fail," she said. "You must have a strong belief in yourself to do the right thing, even when faced with criticism.

"Life is all about trade-offs. Have the courage to make tough choices," she told the audience of more than 5,000.

In remarks to the graduates, Samford President Andrew Westmoreland noted that he felt a special kinship to the class of 2010. He became president in the summer of 2006, when this year's seniors were entering as freshmen.

The top student award winners were recognized at the close of the program.

Sarah Michelle Franklin, of Taylorsville, Ga., a graduate of the nursing school, received the President's Cup for the highest academic average. Crystal M. Martin, of Wayzata, Minn., a midyear graduate of the business school, received the Velma Wright Irons Award for the second highest average.

The John C. Pittman Spirit Award went to two students: Meredith Shaw, a communication studies major from Lexington, Ky., and Trey Montgomery, a family studies major from Destrehan, La. The Pittman Award



Photo courtesy of Samford University

HATS OFF — More than 5,000 family members, friends and graduates participate in Samford University's commencement activities May 15 in the Pete Hanna Center. The May 14 commencement activities were held in the Wright Center.

honors a Samford alumnus and longtime trustee.

Samford Provost and Executive Vice President Brad Creed recognized three faculty members who are retiring: music professor Timothy Banks, associate librarian Sue Peterson and German professor Terry Pickett.

Speakers at the May 14 programs for the four professional schools were pharmacy — Josh Benner, research director with the Brookings Institution's Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform in Washington; business — David Carrington, president of RacingUSA.com and a member of the Samford board of overseers; nursing — James Harris, deputy chief nursing officer with the Depart-

ment of Veterans Affairs' Office of Nursing Services in Washington; and law — Brig. Gen. John Miller II, commanding officer of the Army Judge Advocate General School at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and a 1986 Cumberland graduate.

Entering the field of pharmacy can be rewarding and challenging in the midst of national health care reform, Benner told pharmacy graduates. They are entering the profession at "a time of important change in the health care system, and that transformation will change our profession," he said.

"You're the first class of pharmacy graduates that will deal with health care reform," Benner said. "I want you to know that the

pharmacists who succeed and thrive in a changing health care system will be those who figure out how to take care of more patients, improve the outcomes that matter to those patients and do it at a lower cost."

He cited three ways that the graduates could improve health care: embrace change, see opportunities and seek accountability.

At the law ceremony, Adam Sanders, of West Point, Ga., received the Daniel Austin Brewer Professionalism Award given to the graduating law student who best embodies the professional ideals expected of a Cumberland lawyer. Sanders, who received Juris Doctor and master of business administration degrees, is a U.S. Marine Corps captain who will soon be assigned to a combat battalion in Afghanistan.

The weekend schedule began with a Friday morning prayer breakfast that Westmoreland called "the most recent addition to Samford traditions." The first-ever prayer breakfast continued a centuries-old tradition of providing a time of prayer, worship and reflection during Samford's commencement activities, he explained. A series of students and faculty members spoke on the importance of friendships, scholarship and faith as part of the lifelong learning experience.

Following the breakfast, graduating students processed along Centennial Walk, replicating the traditional "freshman walk" during new student orientation and the "senior walk" that formerly preceded baccalaureate. The prayer breakfast replaced the baccalaureate service.

Also May 14, graduating seniors Jason M. Gossett, Jordan L. Anderson and Thomas A. Fister were commissioned second lieutenants in the U.S. Air Force during a ROTC commissioning ceremony. (Samford)

Evangelical leaders support immigration reform

In the shadow of Arizona's strict immigration law, a broad range of evangelical leaders are speaking in support of comprehensive immigration reform, with more specifics than some were able to embrace before.

The renewed push came in the form of a full-page ad in the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call*, paid for by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and a three-page policy proposal from Liberty Counsel, a conservative Christian legal firm. The NAE statement calls for keeping families intact, securing national borders and establishing a path to legal citizenship.

"Initiatives to remedy this crisis have led to polarization and name calling in which opponents have misrepresented each others' positions as open borders and amnesty versus deportations of millions," the ad reads. "This false choice has led to an unacceptable political stalemate."

The Liberty Counsel blueprint was even more specific, calling for a "just assimilation" of those seeking legal citizenship that includes lessons in English and U.S. history. It says temporary worker visas recognize the need for "field workers to engineers" in U.S. companies.

'Securing, not closing, borders'

"America deserves a just immigration policy," the statement said, "one that begins with securing, not closing, our borders, one that provides a temporary guest-worker program, and one that offers a pathway for earned legal citizenship or temporary residency."

Mathew Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel and a signatory on both the ad and the statement, said there has long been consensus on the need to secure the nation's southern border, but evangelicals are now focusing on the future of the nation's estimated 12 million un-

documented immigrants. "I think that's where the consensus is building," he said.

Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land said the Arizona law — which gives local authorities new powers to round up suspected illegal immigrants — has prompted evangelicals to feel more strongly about the need for federal reform and to speak up for their Hispanic "brethren."

"I think evangelicals have said 'Enough is enough is enough,'" he said May 12 in a teleconference call hosted by the group Conservatives for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. A lack of federal government action will "rend the fabric of our society," he added. The federal government has failed regarding immigration for more than 20 years under both Democrat and Republican presidents, he said. "This is a moral issue. It's an issue that ... must be dealt with or it's going to lead to deep fissures in our society." (RNS, BP)



Photo courtesy of Judson College

FAITHFUL SERVICE — Jimmy Jackson (right), president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, presents Judson College President David Potts with a certificate of recognition on behalf of Alabama Baptists.

Potts celebrates 20 years as Judson president

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Judson College is the smallest of our three Alabama Baptist colleges, but it has been fortunate to have the quality leadership and the high character of David Potts," said Jimmy Jackson, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

It's a distinction Judson has held for nearly 20 years.

Since Potts became president of the college July 1, 1990, almost every building on the campus in Marion has been rebuilt, as has the endowment. It is now approximately \$14 million, noted Charles Dunkin, chairman of the board of trustees.

The trustees recognized Potts at their spring meeting May 6, presenting him with a crystal vase hand-etched with a likeness of the college's Jewett Hall and a check for a family vacation.

Jackson presented Potts with a certificate of recognition on behalf of Alabama Baptists.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, praised Potts' leadership.

'Leads by example'

"David Potts leads by example, and Judson College is all the better for it," Lance said. "During his 20-year tenure, Judson has met the needs of numerous generations of students who have attended the college. Under his leadership as president, Judson has improved their facilities, enhanced their endowment, developed a quality faculty and, most importantly, made an eternal difference in the lives of students."

Potts, a Birmingham native, earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Samford University in Birmingham and

doctorate from the University of Alabama. He served as executive vice president for administration at Judson from 1987 until his election as president.

Reflecting on his tenure, Potts said he is grateful that the providence of God has sustained Judson in a time when many small institutions have been forced to greatly modify their mission. He also expressed gratitude to Alabama Baptists for their support of the college, even in the face of economic hardship.

"Judson College remains committed to Christian education and has become America's Christian college for women," Potts said, noting that it is the only college affiliated with both the Women's College Coalition and Council for Christian Colleges & Universities.

Potts said he will always be proudest of the influence, faith and service of Judson graduates.

"The development of these young women represents the work of a lot of people, both faculty and staff, who do good work every day," Potts said. "It's been my privilege to serve along with them."

As he looks to the future, Potts hopes that trustees, alumnae and others will pray that he and others who lead Judson would have the "vision to see God's path for the college in the future." Noting the recent additions of a baccalaureate degree in social work and a major in equine studies, Potts said he is "quite excited about ideas within the institution."

"These new programs fit within our vision and purpose and offer growth and development opportunities to grow our students academically and to help them strengthen their faith."

(Michael Brooks contributed)

Catt challenges UMobile graduates to 'be mavericks'

As he presented the honorary doctorate of letters to Michael Catt, University of Mobile (UMobile) President Mark Foley cited the pastor's "insight, inventiveness, courage and determination to honor God."

"The world has been touched and changed in the name of Christ" through the work that Catt has done, Foley said.

Catt, senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., and executive producer with nationally acclaimed Sherwood Pictures, delivered the commencement address to 340 UMobile graduates and an audience of thousands gathered at the Mobile Civic Center on May 8 for the university's 44th commencement ceremony.

Catt, a member of the school's board of regents whose two daughters are graduates of UMobile, challenged the 2010 graduating class to "think how you can use your education and experiences, your ups and downs, to change your world."

He said people are either mimics or mavericks. "We are a culture driven by trends and fads and peer pressure and so we become mimics. My challenge to you today is to be a maverick, to cut your own path, to make your own way," Catt said.

"God put this university in this community for a reason and a purpose — not just to exist but to impact. You are part of making the vision come to pass. Don't be afraid to stand up and speak up," Catt said.

Miles McCauley, of Montgomery, was chosen as the recipient of the William K. Weaver Jr. Excellence Award. The award is presented to the most outstanding graduating male senior for excellence in exemplifying the mission of UMobile and is considered the highest recognition possible for a graduating male senior student.

McCauley graduated summa cum laude, earning a bachelor of science in music with a secondary education certificate. He has committed to work with Teach for America for two years, teaching music to students in low-income and at-risk communities in Greenwood, Miss.

McCauley was a leader in the Center for Performing Arts, a member of the ensemble IMPACT and section leader and soloist in the Symphonic Winds. He also serves in a local church and community organizations.

Carissa Pletcher, of Chipley, Fla., was chosen as the recipient of the Annie Boyd Parker Weaver Excellence Award. The award is presented to the most outstanding graduating female senior for excellence in exemplifying the mission of UMobile and is considered the highest recognition possible for a graduating female senior student.

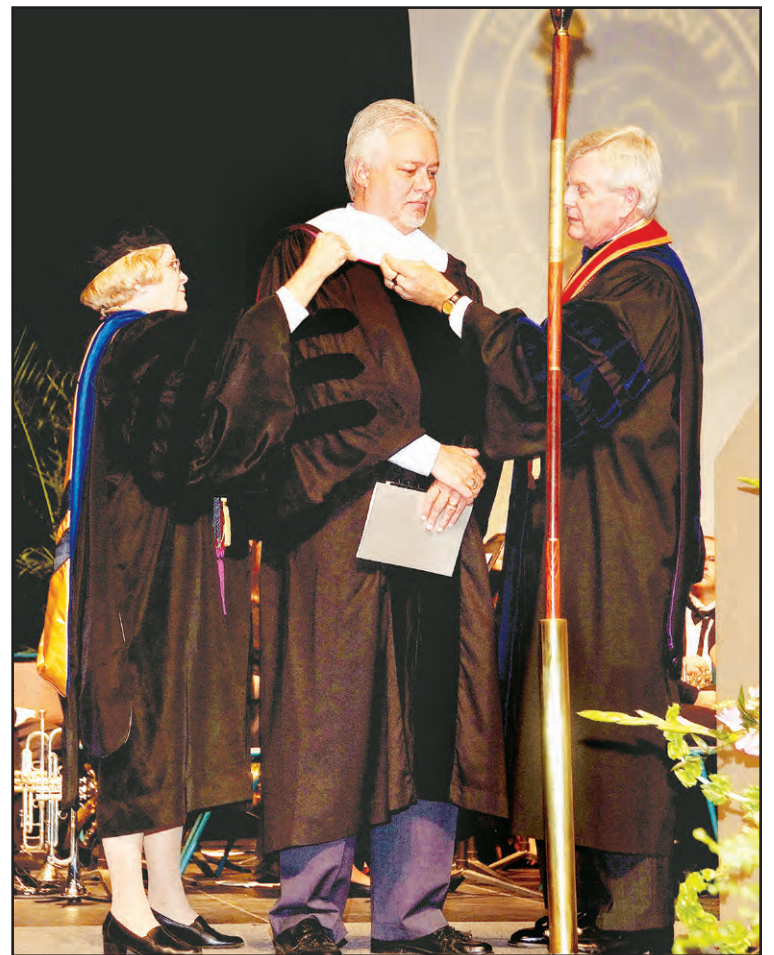


Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

HONORED — UMobile President Mark Foley (right) and Audrey Eubanks (left), vice president for academic affairs, place a hood signifying an honorary doctorate of letters on Michael Catt.

Pletcher graduated summa cum laude, earning a bachelor of science in elementary education with an elementary education certificate. She will spend the next two years as a full-time missionary in Spain teaching English as a second language.

Additional awards

Pletcher served as vice president of the reading council and was active in many organizations at UMobile. She worked with inner-city children at The Light of the Village ministry and was a camp counselor and on the leadership staff for two years at CentriKid, a camp sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources.

The university presented additional awards at the Honors Convocation on May 7 at Ram Hall on campus.

The President's Scholastic

Award for bachelor's degree students earning perfect 4.0 grade point averages was presented to Judith R. Boone, of Mobile, bachelor of science in nursing; Amber Lee Collinsworth, of Pensacola, Fla., bachelor of arts in English and bachelor of science in communication; Michael Tyler Davenport, of Lebanon, Tenn., bachelor of science in nursing; Alyssa Jean Mueller, of Ocala, Fla., bachelor of science in sociology and psychology; Ashley Miranda Murphy, of Atmore, bachelor of science in early childhood and elementary education; Marty Albright Naugle, of Spartanburg, S.C., master of business administration; Shantee Marie Reed, of McIntosh, bachelor of science in accounting; and Angeliq Sturm, of Coral Springs, Fla., bachelor of arts in art. (UMobile)



Hear my cry, O God,
listen to my prayer; from the
end of the earth I call to you
when my heart is faint. Lead
me to the rock that is higher
than I.

Psalm 61:1-2

Across Alabama's Associations

BALDWIN

► **Durant Chapel Church, Crossroads**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary June 26–27. On Saturday, there will be a welcome by Pastor Henry Cox at 10 a.m. followed by singing and remarks by former pastors and members. A fish fry lunch sponsored by the deacons and Baptist men will follow in the fellowship hall at noon. On Sunday, the service will be at 10:30 a.m. with speaker Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions. The ladies ensemble of First Church, Bay Minette, will provide music. There will be a brief reading of the church's history by church historian Gloria Hart. A potluck lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. There will be no evening service. For information call 251-937-9364.

BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will host decorated war hero and former Marine Tim Lee June 13, 6 p.m. For information call 205-425-4381. Morgan Bailey is pastor. ► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing June 5, 7 p.m., with 4 Given. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Jason Scott** is the new pastor of **Mineola Church, Uriah**. He comes from Lucedale, Miss. He and his wife, Nette, have three children.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Frank Jones**, minister of music for **First Church, Sandusky**, will celebrate 40 Years of Music and Memories June 13, 5 p.m. Jones also will be celebrating 20 years at First, Sandusky. He will present a concert with music and memory segments by former music directors who have been instrumental in his ministry. A nursery will be available. Herman Pair is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Ocmulgee Church, Selma**, will celebrate 190 years of service with homecoming June 13, 10 a.m. There will be a guest speaker and special music. Lunch will follow in the family life center. Danny Sumnerlin is pastor.

CHOCTAW

► **Christopher Giles** is the new pastor of **Cullomburg Church, Silas**. He comes from Mount Vernon Church, Thomasville. He and his wife, Mechele, have three children.



GILES

CLARKE

► **Pleasant Grove Church, Jackson**, will celebrate homecoming and hold revival June 6–9 with guest speaker Chris Kynard, pastor of Bassett Creek Church, Grove Hill. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. with no evening service and weeknights at 7. A potluck lunch will follow the Sunday service. E. John Gillis is pastor. ► **Stave Creek Church, Jackson**, is holding W.O.W. (Worship on Wednesdays) each Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. The regular worship service is geared toward those who work on the weekend. There is also a separate meeting for youth and children. Jamie Lay is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **First Church, Talladega Springs**, will celebrate its 100th homecoming June 13 with guest speaker Luther Williams. The Sweeny Family of Mississippi will sing at 9:30 a.m. Lunch will follow in the senior center across from the church. Wesley Higginbotham is pastor.

DEKALB

► **Antioch Church, Fyffe**, will begin a new Wednesday night children's program called L.A.M.B.S. (Living as My Bible Says) June 16, 6:30–7:30 p.m. Call 256-717-7482 if you need transportation. Paul Long is pastor. ► **Broadway Church, Rainsville**, will host a reception for Jim and Etta Griffin June 13, 2–4 p.m. The Griffins will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary June 16. Jim served various churches as pastor for more than 50 years. No gifts please. Donations

can be made in their honor to the Alabama Baptist Children Homes & Family Ministries. The reception will be given by the church and the Griffin's children and grandchildren. Kevin McCress is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **First Church, Gadsden**, will host Bobby Bowden June 13, 6 p.m. For information call 256-547-6828. Bryan Blass is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **Mount Tabor Church, Blountsville**, will celebrate its 200th anniversary June 13, 11 a.m., with former Pastor Mike Murphree as guest speaker. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Ray Long is pastor.

MADISON

► **Murphy Hill Church, Toney**, will celebrate homecoming June 13, 10:30 a.m. The Joymen Quartet will provide special music. For information call 256-828-3171. Mike McFarlen is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Pintlala Church, Hope Hull**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary June 6, 10:50 a.m. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Gary Burton is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► **Bob Weber** is the new pastor of **Camden Church**. He comes from Clear-Point Church, Lees Summit, Mo., where he served as pastor. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile and master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Weber and his wife, Charlette, have four adult children.



WEBER

SIPSEY

► **Bevan Chapel Church, Berry**, will hold revival June 13–18. Guest speakers will be pastors of Sipse Association. Services will be Sunday at 5 p.m. and weeknights at 7. There will be special music each night. Randal Trimm is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Seddon Church, Pell City**, is holding Wednesday Manna each Wednesday through Aug. 25. The service will be at 6:30 p.m. with a different speaker each week. Dinner will be at 5:15 p.m. There will be children's activities and a nursery for 0–2 years old. For dinner reservations visit www.seddonbaptist.net/manna.htm. Dale Foote is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

FBC Andalusia honors pianist Merrill for long tenure

Practically everyone at First Baptist Church, Andalusia, knows Mary Clyde "M.C." Merrill.

It would be difficult not to. For the past 25 years, Merrill has served as the church's Sunday morning pianist, and for almost 60 years, she has played a major role in its music ministry.

That's why when she decided to retire as pianist, the Covington Baptist Association church decided to honor her by naming May 16 Mary Clyde Merrill Day.

The church presented her with a bouquet of flowers and a financial gift and held a reception in her honor following the morning service.

"Sunday morning, we spent time [focusing] and [reflecting] on M.C.'s contribution to our church," Pastor Fred Karthaus III said. "She is gracious, loving, very talented and very creative and has been extremely faithful for the last 25 years."

Merrill's involvement in the music ministry actually began in 1951 when she moved to Andalusia to take a position as music director for the entire city school system.

She joined the choir immediately after joining the church. At that time, there was not a permanent pianist, so several women, including Merrill, took turns playing the piano for Sunday morning worship.

In 1985, Merrill became the official church pianist. Since then, she has served under five music ministers and as interim choir director on three occasions.

"Music was just my thing. I felt the Lord gifted me in that field, and I felt like that was my mission and that I was put here to do that," Merrill said. "I felt the Lord ... has enabled me to hang in there for these 25 years."

But just because she is retiring as pianist does not mean she is retiring from music ministry all together, she said. Merrill will still be singing in the choir and playing the piano as needed.

"The main thing about M.C. is the example that she has put Christ in front of us in her daily walk and in her service," said Dwight Crigger, associate pastor of music. "She has been a great example to all of us."

Montgomery church's ministry featured on '700 Club'

A Montgomery church's neonatal ministry earned it national recognition recently as the Christian Broadcasting Network's (CBN) Church of the Week.

Footprints Ministry of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association was featured on "The 700 Club" during the week of May 10.

The ministry's mission is to let families with infants admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) know they are not alone and provide comfort when a baby is premature or needs extra care after birth.

Founder Kim Wilson and eight other women listen to the families' stories, pray for and with them and also deliver gift bags to them.

The gift bags include travel necessities, gift cards to local stores and restaurants, a disposable camera, a scent blanket for the mother to sleep with and return to the baby, a burp cloth monogrammed with footprints, a baby magazine, a Bible and a prayer request card.

Wilson said a stay in NICU can be a nightmare for parents. She would know. Her son John Parker stayed in NICU for 10 days in September 2006.

"[God] knew that placing me there would rock my world," Wilson said, adding, "I hope through our feature on CBN that people will be encouraged to use a storm in their life to start a new ministry."

Heritage Baptist supports the ministry by providing meeting space for monthly meetings, helping to promote fund-raising events and assisting with counseling for families.

"We are very proud of Kim Wilson and to be a partner with her ministry," said Jeff Dickey, Heritage's discipleship minister, adding the church was also very honored to be featured on "The 700 Club."

To watch the feature, visit CBN's website, www.cbn.com.



MERRILL

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.



Water: Facts are heartbreaking

▶ The average North American uses 158.5 gallons of water a day. The average person in the developing world uses 2.6–5.2 gallons a day for drinking, washing and cooking (U.N. Human Development Report).

▶ An American taking a 5-minute shower uses more water than the typical person living in a developing country's slum uses in a whole day (U.N. Development Programme).

▶ The water and sanitation crisis claims more lives through disease than any war claims through guns (U.N. Development Programme).

▶ The average weight of water women in Africa carry on their heads is 50 pounds, the same as the average airport checked luggage allowance (U.N. Human Development Report).

▶ 98 percent of water-related deaths occur in the developing world, and 84 percent of water-related deaths occur in children ages 0–14 (World Health Organization).

▶ 1 billion people in the world do not have access to safe water, roughly 1 in 8 of the world's population. In Africa, 2 out of 5 people lack clean water (World Health Organization/U.N. International Children's Emergency Fund).

▶ Every year, there are 4 billion cases of diarrhea as a direct result of drinking contaminated water — resulting in 2.2 million deaths, equivalent to 20 jumbo jets crashing every day (World Health Organization).

▶ About 2 in 3 people lacking access to clean water survive on less than \$2 per day, with 1 in 3 living on less than \$1 (World Health Organization).

▶ 1.4 million children die every year from diarrhea caused by unclean water and poor sanitation. That's 4,000 child deaths a day, or 1 child every 20 seconds (U.N. International Children's Emergency Fund).



IMB photo/Graphic by Lauren A. Chow

Before well, people walked up to 7 miles for water

(continued from page 1)
significant. The closest hand-dug well is about a two-mile walk. When it dries up — which happens every dry season — Isandap treks seven miles to a deeper well.

With clean water access increasingly scarce, the burden of securing a daily water supply has become a daunting task for women and young children in rural sub-Saharan Africa — threatening an ancient way of life.

Isandap and her pastoralist clan

live in gumbdrop-shaped thatch huts scattered across the sandy plateau, herding animals to survive in average daytime temperatures of 100 degrees.

In an effort to beat the heat, Isandap bends through the small opening of her hut just as the sun peaks out from the horizon. She grabs her scratched-up 20-litre yellow jug and leans back into the smoky hut, giving last-minute instructions to her groggy teenage daughter. Then she's off to the well.

The footpath rises and falls with the gentle sandy slopes, weaving around pesky thorn bushes. Sun-bleached remains of once-mighty herds of goats, sheep and camels that died of thirst are scattered as far as the eye can see. The piles of bones are a constant reminder of how important water is. A person can survive without food for 30 days. Without water, survival is possible for only five to seven days.

The arid lands of northern Kenya have been the hardest hit by the drought. In some villages, it has not rained in years. Isandap's village is one of the lucky ones. Even if it's only a sprinkle here and there, rain dramatically changes the area. Tufts of green adorn the trees and bushes, brightening the normally dull brown landscape. But this day, more importantly, the closest well — a 17-minute walk — has water. Just a week ago, the well was bone dry.

"Even last week I walked to the other well. I left at 7 a.m. and returned home at 7 p.m.," Isandap said. "The lines were long because it was the only well with water. Some women spent the night there so they could keep their place in line."

They manually lower makeshift buckets down the 30-foot well and back up again using homemade ropes. Isandap is eerily skinny from

the tough year, yet her arm muscles ripple as she repeats the process twice more, filling the container with muddy, arsenic-laced water. She straps the 44-pound jug onto her back and starts the arduous trek home.

Isandap and her daughter will make this trip three more times today.

In sub-Saharan Africa, UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) estimates 40 billion hours of labor are wasted each year carrying water over long distances. The tragedy is that the water they work so hard to collect is often dirty and polluted.

The cost of clean water

Women trapped in this situation have little time for other activities, such as child care, rest or productive work. So when water gushes out of the nearby water tanks provided by Southern Baptists, word spreads quickly among the women.

Now an almost giddy atmosphere surrounds the water tanks at Isandap's village. Women smile, laugh and tease. Mothers give their toddlers a good washing. Boys plop down in the mud, building dams and mud pies. Girls playfully splash each other.

The tanks and series of pipes con-

necting to the borehole miles away cost around \$20,000, provided by the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund. It takes about \$6 worth of diesel — an expense the community intends to cover — to run the borehole long enough to fill all four tanks, which hold enough water for two days.

Village elder Andrew Amalo insists that raising their own money is, in fact, local custom and exactly how they want it, even though World Health Organization estimates that two-thirds of those without access to safe water live on less than \$2 a day.

"That is how it is done here," Amalo nevertheless said. "When a boy goes off to school, the entire village collects money to support him. Whether it is 5 shillings (6 cents) there or 20 shillings (26 cents) here, we pull our resources together. Everyone shares. It is our way."

This type of partnership between Southern Baptists and Isandap's village allows the community to have ownership over the project. They decide when water is needed most.

No one knows when the tanks will be filled again, so everyone tries to get as much as they can. In less than an hour, Isandap and her children gather enough water for two days. (BP)

Want to know God?

By Evangelism office
State Board of Missions

God wants to have an intimate relationship with you. He has placed an emptiness in every person that can only be filled by God. People often seek to fill this emptiness with things other than God: material possessions, success in business, sports, alcohol, illicit drugs, immoral sex and so forth. Nothing can permanently satisfy this emptiness other than God Himself.

The problem is our sinfulness keeps us from having this relationship with God. The Bible teaches "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Our sin is separating us from a holy and just God. Moreover, God's Word makes it clear that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Our only hope rests in the love of God demonstrated in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

As is stated, "For God so loved

the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus lived a sinless life, a life totally in submission to God's will. Christ is the spotless sacrifice to remedy our sin problem. He paid the wages of our sins by His death upon the cross. He died for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day.

You can receive this salvation and have an intimate relationship with God by turning from your sins and placing your faith in Christ alone. "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 10:9–10).

This very moment you can have eternal life if you will:

1. Admit you are a sinner.
2. Be willing to turn from your sins.
3. Believe Jesus died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
4. Through prayer invite Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. ☩

Former pastor, RA camp director Gilbert dies

Clayton Andrew Gilbert, retired Alabama pastor and former Royal Ambassador (RA) camp director, died May 18. He was 88.

Joining the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions in 1958 as the associate in charge of RA work, Gilbert became the first RA camp director in 1965. He was also instrumental in building the camp facility between 1963 and 1965 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega and was known to RA campers and staff as "Mr. G."

Before his RA work, Gilbert served as pastor of First Baptist

Church, Maplesville; Hopewell Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa; and a church in Kentucky.

After leaving his position as RA director in 1970, Gilbert moved to Memphis, Tenn., to work with the Brotherhood Commission, which is now part of the North American Mission Board, from 1971 to 1974.

In 1974, Gilbert moved back to Alabama to take a position as associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Alexander City. A year after retiring from this position in 1986, he took a position as pastor of Pine Grove Baptist Church, Camp Hill,

and served there until 2006.

A native of Walker County, Gilbert graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham in 1944 and from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in 1947 with a bachelor of divinity and in 1948 with a master of theology.

Gilbert was preceded in death by his wife, Nancy, and his daughter, Mary Anna.

He is survived by two children, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Chisholm Church draws big crowd for 100th anniversary

By Greg Heyman
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Chisholm Baptist Church saw a marked increase in attendance when it celebrated its 100th anniversary April 25.

On an average Sunday, between 45 and 55 people attend worship but approximately 425 attended the Montgomery Baptist Association church's centennial celebration, according to Pastor Robert Bradley.

"We were so excited to see so many people coming back. It was just like a family reunion," said Henryette Bailey, who has been a member of the church since 1949.

"Everybody was so excited about seeing old friends," Bailey added.

Many friends did indeed come back to Chisholm Baptist that day, including Andrew Smith, who delivered the morning message.

Special recognition

On Sept. 11, 1949, Smith was licensed to preach by the church. He went on to serve as pastor of churches in Alabama and Florida and Sunday School director for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Another friend who returned for the landmark occasion was Kenny Hoomes, who led worship. Hoomes, associate pastor for spiritual maturity/senior adults of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, served Chisholm Baptist as minister of music and education from 1983 to 1987.

While Gov. Bob Riley did not attend the anniversary service, he did send a letter of recognition that was read to the congregation. Chisholm Baptist was also recognized by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, which presented a plaque.

A catered lunch, singing and a time of sharing testimonies followed the service.

According to historical records, the church was organized Feb. 13, 1910, with 32 charter members. Meetings were held in a building at the corner of Lower Wetumpka Road and Michigan Avenue.

In anticipation of building its own house of worship, the congregation purchased an organ in November 1910 — seven months before a building committee began its work. Subsequently a lot was purchased at 2938 Lower Wetumpka Road, and deacon J.D. Brooks and his sons began hauling lumber to the site.

The first service held in the new building was Brooks' funeral in December 1915. At the time, the building had only a subfloor and chairs had to be brought in for seating.

Chisholm Baptist's history tells of how the congregation ministered to servicemen and their relatives during World War I because the U.S. War Department had designated Montgomery as a mobilization center.

Montgomery also was the site for the 2,000-acre Camp Sheridan, to which soldiers from Ohio were assigned. Not only did soldiers from the camp attend services at the church but their relatives also attended when they came to Alabama for visits.

Bell sold during war

The SBOM, with assistance from its counterpart in Ohio and the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board), helped the church to call J.M. Blankenship as full-time pastor. He also served as camp pastor.

When the camp was dismantled at the end of the war in 1918, the lumber was salvaged and purchased to build a pastorium, which was completed in 1919.

When the United States found itself in another world war in the 1940s, the church sold its bell in response to a plea for scrap iron to help in the war effort.

Near the end of the war, on Feb. 12, 1945, the church was damaged beyond repair by a tornado. As a result, congregants met in several locations — members' homes, Chisholm Methodist Church and Chisholm Elementary School — until a new facility could be completed on the same site.

In May 1946, services were held in the new building, which had only a subfloor and a few partitions between classrooms, no ceiling and no light fixtures. Construction was completed later and the congregation continues to meet in that building.

At the peak of the church's ministry, 142 people were baptized in 1948. The next year, 139 people were baptized.

In addition, the church history shows that more than 100 people were baptized for three consecutive years in the 1960s and Sunday School attendance was at its highest in 1964 with 465 people. ❧

*"We were so excited.
... It was just like
a family reunion.
Everybody was so
excited about seeing
old friends."*

Henryette Bailey
Chisholm Baptist Church

HEART OF MISSIONS ...

MeadowBrook Baptist Church, Gadsden, in Etowah Baptist Association sent a group of 19 people to La Romana, Dominican Republic, Feb. 27–March 6.

Partnering with Iglesia Bautista Cristo Solo Cristo (Christ Only Christ Baptist Church) in La Romana, SCORE International and Baptist representative Nathan Jude, the missions team helped complete the construction of the church, along with making curtains and a colorful backdrop.

The team also helped a second church in the area.

Team members took part in street evangelism efforts and nightly preaching in local churches.

"It was great to work alongside of church members and local construction crews," MeadowBrook Baptist Pastor Randy

Gunter said, noting his church plans to continue its partnership with Cristo Solo Cristo.

Nine people with Escambia Baptist Association went to Reynosa, Mexico, to work with the Big Heart orphanage April 10–17.

Led by Director of Missions Pat Andrews, the missions team did electrical work and painted for the orphanage and hosted an evangelistic block party one evening.

Approximately 280 people came to the block party during which the team served hot dogs, chips and drinks and gave out care bags for women and children, which included diapers, shoes and school supplies.

"We had a great time working together," Andrews said.

The association plans to take another team in October. ❧

CORRECTION

Information provided to *The Alabama Baptist* about the page 1 photo "A Hero's Welcome" in the May 27 issue incorrectly identified the officer speaking as a naval officer. He is an Army officer.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Azerbaijani house church threatened by police

ALIBAD, Azerbaijan — Zaur Balaev, pastor of a Baptist house church in the town of Aliabad in the northwestern region of Zakatala in Azerbaijan, was warned that he does not have the right to gather church members for worship, as the church is not registered.

On April 30, police officers "warned me of 'unpleasantness with the law' if we carry on meeting," Balaev said.

Balaev stated that the police officers filmed the room in the house where the church meets and examined religious materials. He fears the footage and information gathered will be used to justify future actions against the congregation.

"They were studying how they might move in the future," he said.

The congregation, which is affiliated with the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Azerbaijan, has sought registration since the mid-1990s, but it has been repeatedly denied by the authorities.

This is not the first time that authorities have attempted to close down Balaev's congregation.

Balaev was arrested May 20, 2007, during a raid on a church service at his home. He was originally accused of resisting arrest and setting dogs on police officers, but he was later charged, convicted and sent to prison on allegations that he beat up five policemen and damaged a police car door.

The congregation of the church denied these charges saying the pastor went peacefully. More than 50 people, including members of the congregation and non-Christian villagers, signed written statements testifying to Balaev's innocence.

After protests from the Baptist World Alliance, the European Baptist Federation and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Balaev, who was sentenced to two years in prison Aug. 8, 2007, was released from prison March 19, 2008.

Missouri Baptist pastor charged with defrauding church

ST. LOUIS — A former Southern Baptist pastor in Missouri has been indicted on charges of using his position to defraud church members into loaning him money that he did not repay.

According to St. Louis media, a four-count federal indictment for mail fraud accuses Danny O'Guin, former pastor of Parker Road Baptist Church, Florissant, Mo., of using false pretenses to convince elderly church members to loan him money that he told them was to repair residences he owned out of the state.

He allegedly told the parishioners to "keep quiet" about the loans. When church members inquired about his failure to repay the loans, the indictment alleges, he would borrow money from other church members to pay the debt. Other alleged schemes include writing letters promising that payment was forthcoming and sending checks with "mistakes" on them.

Church leaders said O'Guin was pastor of the suburban St. Louis congregation from 2006 until February 2009, when he resigned after allegations against him prompted conflict in the church. He reportedly now lives with his son in Texas.

Before coming to Parker Road, O'Guin was pastor of Tower Grove Baptist Church, St. Louis, for 10 years. He was elected as a trustee of the Southern Baptist Convention North American Mission Board in 1999 and in 2003 and chaired the Missouri Baptist Convention's credentials committee in 2008.

Authorities say O'Guin, 62, stole thousands of dollars between June 2006 and March 2009 from church members who felt obliged to lend him money because he was in a position of religious authority. If convicted, each of the four counts carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and/or fines up to \$250,000.

GCR Task Force report not a threat to CP, Floyd asserts

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptists who worry the Cooperative Program (CP) will be undermined if the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force recommendations are adopted should ask whether the CP isn't already in more danger than they realize, the chairman of the task force said May 12.

Whether promoting undesignated contributions under a new "Great Commission Giving" banner would harm CP giving is "a very legitimate question," said Ronnie Floyd during an online panel discussion hosted by CAA (Church Administration Assistance) Ministries at outreachandevangelism.org.

"But if they think the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force report is a threat to the Cooperative Program, then the Cooperative Program is in more danger than any of us realize." ❧

'RADICALLY DIFFERENT'

Volunteer says media's story about Baptists jailed in Haiti strays from what happened

In the weeks following the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated Haiti, a separate story began unfolding that brought shock and confusion — a Southern Baptist missions team had been arrested on charges of kidnapping.

In the days that followed, as the team of 10 sat in a jail in Port-au-Prince, the rest of the world heard a barrage of rumors about their motives for attempting to transport orphans across the border to the Dominican Republic. They wanted to harvest their organs and sell them, some said. Others said they wanted to sell the children themselves.

Such rumors were false, but it took more than 100 days to finally resolve the matter. Eight of them were freed in February, a ninth one released in March, and the final one — Laura Silsby — was let go May 17, more than 100 days after the ordeal began.

The following story is based on interviews with Paul Thompson, one of the 10 Baptists held in prison in Haiti.

Thompson said that ever since he was released from jail Feb. 17 — after spending 19 days there — he's wanted the group's side of the story told but feared going public would endanger members of the group that were still in prison. Everyone, though, is now free, so he is telling it for the first time.

What really happened, he said, is completely different from the story the media portrayed.

Paul Thompson reads the media accounts describing the journey of him and nine other jailed Baptist volunteers in Haiti who are all now free and scratches his head.

He was there. What he reads is not what he experienced.

Thompson, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church, Twin Falls, Idaho, was one of those 10 Baptist volunteers who went to Haiti in late January with the goal of taking orphans out of the earthquake-ravaged country and into an orphanage being started in the Dominican Republic. That trip took a disastrous turn Jan. 30 when the 10 were shocked to learn they were being charged with child kidnapping, with allegations swirling that the group had plans to sell the kids into slavery, or worse, to harvest and sell their organs.

The story Thompson tells is far different from what has been described repeatedly in most media accounts.

"It's radically different," Thompson said. For instance:

▶ The 10 Americans did not, as has been alleged in some accounts, go through the streets of Port-au-Prince passing out flyers and going door-to-door looking for children, Thompson said. Instead, the 33 children they were trying to take across the border in a medium-sized bus came from two orphanages, and orphanage workers told them that none of the children had parents.

▶ The group was told multiple times before they got to the border that their documentation and paperwork — the source of the controversy — was sufficient, Thompson said. A Haitian child services official said

as much, as did a Haitian policeman and an orphanage director who has extensive experience transferring orphans from Haiti to the Dominican Republic.

▶ The 10 Baptists were arrested in Port-au-Prince and not at the border. They thought they would go free until UNICEF — a United Nations agency — got involved and pressed charges, Thompson said.

▶ They were arrested Jan. 30, and not Jan. 29 as has been reported repeatedly.

▶ Their only goals, Thompson said, were to spread the gospel and to help children. That latter goal seemed to be on track until that disastrous afternoon of Jan. 30 when they were arrested and their lives were forever changed. Until that afternoon, Thompson said, they saw no "red flags," nothing to make them think, "Wait a minute, something's not feeling good."

Their first trip into Haiti

The group's Haiti story actually began five days prior to their arrest, when they boarded a Greyhound-sized bus at 6 a.m. Jan. 25 for the six-hour drive from Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic to Port-au-Prince. The closer they got to the earthquake zone, the more destruction they saw, until finally, arriving in Haiti's

JANUARY 25

Arrived in devastated Port-au-Prince on bus from Dominican Republic.

capital, it quickly became clear they were "in a leveled city." Only a few buildings were left standing, and many of the city's orphanages had moved their children to tent cities.

Before entering Haiti the group had made contact with a handful of orphanages, being told by the orphanage directors that they were overcrowded and had quake orphans who could be moved to the Dominican Republic. But the first orphanage the group went to that day — despite being crowded and having children who were needing food — "completely changed" its story when Thompson and the others showed up. The orphanage was receiving food and water from outside agencies based on head count and didn't want to lose any residents, Thompson said.

The Baptists did receive cooperation late that day at another tent city orphanage, which gave the group approximately six children to take to the Dominican Republic orphanage. The children were placed on the bus but taken off when a Haitian policeman named Leonard — who Thompson said became a "very helpful ally" — told the group the orphanage was not a "recognized" orphanage. He also told the group that they needed written permission from an orphanage director in order to cross the border with the children and take them to the Dominican orphanage, New Life Children's Refuge.

"And so we took these kids off our bus, gave them back into the care of the tent-city orphanage," Thompson said. "We cooperated with every government agency and personnel that we talked to."

The policeman was "the first to tell us that all that is necessary for us is to have written documentation from an orphanage director transferring the custody of the children from his orphanage to New Life Children's Refuge," Thompson said.

Because the first orphanage didn't cooperate and the second one didn't have the proper paperwork, the group decided to go back to the Dominican Republic, where it would regroup, get a smaller bus — thus making it easier to navigate the streets — and make phone contact with other orphanages in Port-au-Prince to see if they had children who needed to be housed elsewhere safe. They also asked their three translators, whom they were leaving behind and who had grown up in orphanages, to contact any orphanages they were close to and inquire about children. After a night's sleep in Port-au-Prince, the Baptists drove to Santo Domingo on Jan. 26.

JANUARY 26

Returned to Dominican Republic to regroup.

Paul Thompson's son, Silas, sits with a Haitian child.

Their second trip into Haiti

The group headed back toward Haiti on Jan. 27, and at the border was surprised when — without the group's permission — border guards began loading strangers onto the bus

JANUARY 27

Drove back into Haiti. Confirmed second time that their paperwork was sufficient.

for the trip into Port-au-Prince. Fearing for their safety the Baptists told the guards to take the new passengers off the bus. Yet amid the chaos and

confusion they did allow one man and his assistant to stay. His name was Jean Sainvil, a pastor who — providentially — directs orphanages in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He had never met members of the group, but their shared interests quickly sparked a conversation on the bus about orphanages and needy children.

"He explained who he was and that he was trying to get back to his family in Port-au-Prince to assess more of the damage on the orphanages that he's director of," Thompson said. "This director, this pastor, confirmed what the policeman told us the day before: that all that's necessary to transfer orphans from orphanage to orphanage is custody transfer, written documentation from the orphanage director. So there's a second confirmation for us that that's the documentation that's required and necessary."

Sainvil told the group that at least one of his orphanages was destroyed and that it would be helpful if he could transfer some of its residents to New Life Children's Refuge in the Dominican Republic. The two sides agreed to meet the next day at Sainvil's. First, though, Sainvil was dropped off at a relative's and the group went to a Christian school compound where they stayed the night.

The next morning Thompson and the others met up with their translators, one of whom had made contact with an orphanage he grew up in that was overcrowded. When the bus arrived at the orphanage — located in a

JANUARY 28

Received children. Confirmed with orphanage they had no parents.

(continued on next page)

(continued from page 9)
mountain village — the children, about 13 of them, were ready and waiting to board. Following protocol, Silsby got each child's name, birth date and closest living relative, and the children boarded.

Everything appeared to be in order, but when the bus started pulling away one boy began to cry, screaming in Creole that his dad was outside the bus. The bus stopped.

"He was weeping and had tears rolling down his eyes," Thompson said of the boy. "As soon as we discovered that that kid's dad was outside the bus, we put him back in the custody of his dad."

The fact that a child who had a living parent was at the orphanage underscored the country's desperate situation.

"We had heard," Thompson said, "that this was a common practice — that an actual parent would take their children to an orphanage and insist that this child has no parents, knowing that that child could be better taken care of at an orphanage."

Silsby then phoned Sainvil, who told her he was not yet ready for them to come to his orphanage. With time on their hands, the group headed to the Dominican Republic embassy in Port-au-Prince to try and obtain a document the Baptists had learned the Dominican Republic requires to transfer orphans into that country.

No one at the consulate, though, had the document. Silsby's wait inside the consulate lasted so long — at least an hour — that

the Baptists on the bus decided to feed the children.

"There were several delays," Thompson said. "She came out one time

and said that the person that is supposed to meet her with the document was on their way."

The person never showed up.

"From this side of things, that kind of dialogue is probably better interpreted as delay tactics, because they didn't have the paperwork," Thompson said. "Nobody had it, and it was not there. These are government agencies telling us the person with the paperwork is on their way. So we waited and waited and waited. Eventually we told them that we have this appointment to meet at the orphanage with Pastor Jean Sainvil. We left the embassy building."

Were they really orphans?

Sainvil's orphanage — and most of the neighborhood around it — was destroyed. Despite that, the 20 or so kids from Sainvil's orphanage were dressed and ready, and they boarded the bus one at a time as

Sainvil gave Silsby each child's name, birth date and closest living relative.

It would later be learned that none of the children — not the 20 at Sainvil's orphanage and not the 13 at the mountain village — were orphans. Thompson says now he does not know who was deceiving whom, but that he and the others believed they were receiving children who were orphaned because of the earthquake.

"That's still an unknown for us," Thompson said. "But as far as we knew, these kids that this pastor was giving into our care and our custody had no moms and no dads. We had communicated above board that this is the purpose of this ministry — it is to only minister to kids that have no moms and no dads. And it was communicated frequently. So somewhere along the way, a deception was communicated to us who these kids were."

With 33 children now in their care, the group headed back to the Dominican Republic embassy to see if the official who supposedly had the necessary document had arrived. The person, though, had not, but Silsby was told the document would be waiting for them at the border.

The group members now faced a dilemma: they did not have the proper documents to cross the border but — with it now being close to nighttime — they also did not have a place for them and the children to sleep. Officials with the Christian school compound previously had told Silsby and the others that they would not be allowed to bring children into the facility, but the group felt it had no other choice but to try. Sure enough, though, the school turned the group away. So that night, the 10 Baptists and the 33 children slept on the streets just outside the compound, with military personnel on the compound grounds making it feel at least somewhat safe. Despite that setback, the group was heartened when medical personnel came out of the compound to check on the children.

Thankfully, the area around the compound saw no violence or looting that night.

"Nobody even wandered down the street upon us," Thompson said.

'You might as well go to the border'

Thompson and the others woke up on Jan. 29 after a rough night's sleep intending to obtain not only the Dominican Republic document but also a Haitian document they had learned about.

They spent nearly the entire day looking for both documents — "going to every government agency we were told to go to" — while at the same time entertaining and feeding the 33 children. The friendly Haitian policeman they had met during their first day in Haiti assisted them throughout the day, guiding them to the necessary buildings.

In a video aired by CBS News in February, several members of the Baptist volunteer team are shown in the hours after their arrest with a number of Haitian children they were seeking to relocate to an orphanage that group leader Laura Silsby was planning to open in the Dominican Republic.



Paul Thompson arrives at a judicial police office in Port-au-Prince.

Reuters photo

The group attempted to obtain the Haitian document, going to a Port-au-Prince child services office and also a Haitian child services office but got a similar story each time:

"They would say, 'This is a brand new document, we actually don't have the docu-

ment' or 'We don't have anyone here to sign the document. You'll have to go to [another] office to get it.'"

The final Haitian government

office they visited wasn't any more helpful, and — in hindsight — may have helped lead to their arrest. After Silsby showed an official there the documents she had been given by the two orphanages, the person, Thompson said, responded, "This document that you have, you might as well take it to the border and see if they'll let you cross with this document because this other document — that everyone knows is a new document to have — nobody has it. And nobody is here to actually produce the document."

So, late that afternoon, the group decided to head to the border.

"We made that decision based off what a government official told us to do," Thompson said. "We felt we made every attempt to be above board with this process."

The bus left Port-au-Prince and got to the border around 6 o'clock.

"As soon as we got there, Laura stepped out and she had all the documentations with her,"

Thompson said. "She was explaining to the border guards, 'Here's the situation, here's where we're going.' ... They felt comfortable that everything she was sharing was on the up and up — that's the feeling we got. Then there began to be some dialogue amongst themselves in Creole or French about this new document that Haiti was now requiring for transfer of orphans. They were in a bit of an argument, some of the guys saying, 'This is all they need,' and others saying, 'No, they've got to have another document.'"

The border guards called the chief border guard, and Silsby and Thompson went into his office.

"She was telling these guys the same story," Thompson said. "The border guards were listening, the chief border guard's listening. You can tell that he's confused."

The chief border guard made several calls and then got off the phone and broke the bad news: "I cannot let you cross the border." The group, he said, must go back to Port-au-Prince to get the Haitian document that no one could provide.

"He did not arrest us," Thompson said. "So we complied and said, 'OK.'"

But the group now had the same problem it had the night before: 33 kids, with no place to sleep. Desperate, the Baptists made a proposal to the chief border guard: They would stay at the border that night, and the next morning, the bus driver would take Silsby to Port-au-Prince to get the document, with the others staying at the border until she got back. The chief border guard agreed to the plan, and the bus was moved into the gated area.

The Baptists and the border guards — many of whom had grown up orphans and who appreciated what the Baptists were do-



BP photo

Arrested in Haiti

ing — then began working together to ready the children for bed. Their sleeping area would be a porch area, with blankets spread out.

“[The border guards] were very grateful and expressing a lot of gratitude to us for what we were doing to help their country,” Thompson said. “We got a good sense of reception from them.”

Soon a group of medical personnel showed up who had somehow gotten word about the children. These officials ran a medical facility in Haiti five miles from the border and offered to give the children physicals — including de-worming medication — the next day. The Baptists agreed. The new plan for Saturday — OK’d again by the chief border guard — now had the bus dropping the children off at the medical facility while Silsby went to Port-au-Prince to obtain the document. The Baptists’ frustrating predicament now seemed to have a silver lining, and perhaps things would fall into place the next day. That hint of optimism soon turned to joy that night when the conversation between the Baptists and the border guards turned spiritual.

‘I want to become a Christian’

With the children falling asleep and the group members preparing MREs (meals, ready to eat), the border guards and Baptists practiced their lingual skills — the border guards’ limited English and the Baptists their rough Creole. Out of the blue, one of the border guards, speaking through a translator, told the Baptists, “I want to become a Christian and I want to know how to become a Christian.” The Baptists, amazed at what had just been requested, led the man to the Lord.

“Our act of compassion upon his country — God was using that to draw this man to Himself, I’m sure with a lot of other things,” Thompson said. “Because of what just happened we became very satisfied that this was God’s ordained moment for this man’s life.”

The Baptists rejoiced with the man, and the experience made the fact that they were still in Haiti — and would be sleeping without a bed for a second straight night — significantly more palatable. It would be their final night sleeping in freedom before being placed in jail.

They awoke the next morning ready to tie up all the loose ends and finally get the proper documents to travel into the Dominican Republic — where a church group from Idaho awaited — but soon were told that there had been a change of plans. They would not be allowed to take the children to the medical center, and Silsby would not be allowed to travel to Port-au-Prince alone. Instead everyone — the 10 Baptists and the 33 children — were told to board the bus and travel to Haitian child services, which just happened to be housed in the same building in Port-au-Prince as the police station. They were not given any detailed explanation.

“Our understanding was we were going back to get the documentation,” Thompson said. “So we complied.”

UNICEF gets involved

The bus passed the medical compound en route to Port-au-Prince and arrived at the police station around 8 or 9 o’clock that morning. Ironically it was one of the buildings the group had been at the day before trying to

obtain the Haitian document that officials had been unable to find.

The police escorted Silsby and her translator into an office, leaving behind the other nine Baptists and 33 children in a waiting area. The discussion between the police and Silsby lasted more than an hour, and she exited the meeting optimistic that everything was OK.

“Laura came out of this meeting pretty satisfied that the police were ready to put us back on the bus with the kids and head back to the border because she had produced the documentation from the orphanage directors,” Thompson said. “She told them the whole story. We were actually in a building where we had been the day before trying to get documentation. So she was able to say, ‘We’ve already been here, we’ve tried this. Nobody was here to get this paperwork for us.’”

Yet they weren’t allowed to leave the police station just yet because a representative from child services was on her way to the building to meet Silsby. After that — at least they thought — they would be good to go.

Finally the woman arrived, and Silsby and the others knew something could be amiss. The woman was a UNICEF worker who Silsby recognized from previous visits to child services offices. She walked into the building with a group of UNICEF employees, all of them wearing shirts with the UNICEF logo. A “spiritual shift,” Thompson said, took place.

Still, though, there was no reason to worry. “You guys are going to be OK,” policemen told the team. But the group soon began questioning that logic. The lengthy meeting between the UNICEF woman, Silsby and the police had barely begun when the other UNICEF employees brought cameras and microphones into the waiting area to film video of the kids, talking to them in Creole. The children began crying, and the footage made it into news broadcasts around the world.

“This was a complete setup,” Thompson

said. “They were beginning to build their case for us as being kidnapers and child traffickers.”

Even worse for the Baptists, the UNICEF employees told the children that the 10 were kidnapers who wanted to sell the kids into slavery or sell their organs, Thompson said.

“What those cameras won’t show — which is ironically amazing — is that these kids were sitting in our laps, crying on our shoulders and they were not running away from us,” Thompson said. “We’re the very people that the UNICEF people were saying we kidnapped them. There’s no policemen that is taking these kids away from us at this point. Nobody’s removed us from the kids. We were still in complete care of the kids. They’re not even turning to the policemen. For us, that really began to tell us that we were right in the middle of something very spiritually active. For us, it was clear that there was a spiritual battle that we were right smack dab in the middle of.”

After the UNICEF cameras left, though, the children calmed down, and the Baptists were allowed to go back to their bus where they got food and water to feed the kids. With

the meeting dragging on, the kids ate, and everyone waited for a report from Silsby.

Finally — about an hour and 45 minutes after it started —

the meeting ended. As if on cue, the UNICEF camera crew once again put microphones in the faces of the kids, who, once again, began crying and screaming. The UNICEF woman — whose name Thompson still does not know — then headed to a press conference in an adjacent part of the building, where she announced that the Baptists had just been charged with kidnapping and child traffick-

ing. Thompson watched the press conference, as did some of the children. A policeman actually interpreted the press conference for Thompson. It was a surreal scene.

“He’s just standing next to me, he was not acting on the charges that she’s telling the press conference about,” Thompson said. “And still, no large group of policemen has showed up. Nobody has showed up with handcuffs. We’re still taking care of the kids, and she’s telling the world we’re kidnapers and traffickers. ... They’re definitely still crying and I’m sure heavy in thought about what was going on. It’s hard to know really what these kids are processing in their minds.”

Soon, though, the 10 Baptists were arrested, beginning an ordeal that forever changed their lives. That night would be Day 1 of nearly three weeks in jail for eight of them and 100-plus days in prison for Silsby. (BP)

JANUARY 29

Spent night on ground at border. Led border guard to Christ.

FEBRUARY 17

Paul Thompson and seven others released.

MARCH 8

Charisa Coulter released. Leaves only Laura Silsby.

MAY 17

Laura Silsby convicted and released for time already served.

Laura Silsby arrives at the court house in Port-au-Prince.



Reuters photo

Providing support, motivation

Have you ever known someone who was very capable of doing something but too afraid to actually do it? I am thinking of a well-known Christian artist who has a beautiful singing voice.

However, she struggles with stage fright, so she has all but given up her career. It really is a loss for all of us, because she can bring such insight into the Christian life. Now few, if any, will ever hear that insight and miss hearing her use her gift.

That is an extreme example of how fear and discouragement can sometimes paralyze a person with great ability. A more familiar way of describing this would be the importance of getting back on a horse after you have fallen off or not letting a bad experience stop you from doing what you are good at doing.

It is a common experience for all of us, struggling with discouragement, and we are surrounded by people in the midst of this struggle. They are the people we look to for insight or suggestions on an issue they know a lot about but they remain silent.

They are the people we expect to volunteer for a task they are really skilled at, but they never offer to help.

They are the children and teenagers who suddenly are reluctant

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



to get involved in something they usually enjoy.

The problem is we tend to become frustrated with people when this happens. We take it personally and begin to wonder why they refuse to help. Sometimes we even want to tell them to just get over it.

However, imagine what would happen if a person were dealing with discouragement and I came to her angry that she was not getting involved. What would be her reaction? Would it lessen her discouragement or would it deepen it? The truth is expressing my frustration would only serve to make me feel better.

Instead this is the time to be supportive. When you see someone

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at work, church or home dealing with this, try approaching him or her with "Are you OK?" instead of "Why didn't you ... ?" This is the time to listen, help the person make decisions and continually encourage him or her. This is the time to invest in that person and remind him or her that he or she can do it. Basically it is building back confidence — getting back on that horse.

A Takeaway Value . . .

If someone is capable of doing something but seems to lack the motivation to do it, then that is the time to provide support and build confidence.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jean Roberson, MSW, LCSW, is a ministry consultant for national Woman's Missionary Union. She serves as team leader for the adult team and director of Christian Women's Job Corps/Christian Men's Job Corps and International Initiatives.

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A 'little pillow' of comfort

'Crafty' FBC Pelham members help cancer patients keep port-a-cath area safe

By Kathy Dean
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, Abbey Thompson wanted to bring meals to her, clean her house, drive her to the many doctor's appointments, sit with her following surgeries and just spend time together each day.

But she couldn't. Thompson's mother, Jeanne Chenault, lived more than two hours away in Florence, and she had family responsibilities with three young children in Pelham.

So Chenault, a member of First United Methodist Church in Florence, came up with a way they could both find comfort in the situation and founded a ministry in the process.

It is the Comfort Now Protect-A-Port, a small rectangular pillow with Velcro straps designed to wrap around the shoulder strap of a seatbelt, cushioning the area near the collarbone where a port-a-cath is installed beneath the skin to deliver medication for people facing rounds of chemotherapy.

"I guess you could say it is an invention, but I call it a gift," Chenault said. "God gave me this inspiration, this idea, and the name. This little pillow would give comfort to a person now and also give the hope that they will not always need the pillow, that they will recover and then pass the pillow on."

She said God gave her the idea for the pillow as she was walking to her car and dreading the ride home following a visit to her surgeon. The site of the port was more painful

than her bilateral mastectomy, especially during a car ride when the seatbelt would rub and press against the port.

Chenault drew a pattern for the pillow and, with the help of a co-worker who could sew, designed several prototypes before finding the right shape and amount of stuffing to sit comfortably over the port and protect the site from the seatbelt. With the help of a sewing group from Florence Boulevard Church of Christ, the first pillows were made from donated fabric.

Thompson, a member of First Baptist Church, Pelham, enlisted the help of Barbara Moore, whose husband is the associate pastor in charge of senior adult ministry. Moore took the idea to the Sonshine Club, a senior adult group at the church that meets monthly for lunch and fellowship. In October 2009, the Crafty Chicks, another church group of primarily senior adults, took over the project.

The women meet every Monday at First, Pelham, for two hours to work on individual and group projects, including the pillows. They bring sewing machines from home and set up an assembly line, sewing and stuffing the pillows.

Thompson packages pillows made by both groups with turbans and hand-painted scarfs provided by the Church of Christ group, an inspirational poem, a story about the creation of the pillows, her mother's story and Psalm 18:2. A sticker on the outside of the package reads, "To God be the Glory, Psalm 115:1, God blesses things great and small."



Photos by Kristen Padilla

ASSEMBLY LINE — FBC Pelham members Debbie Reeves (right) and Barbara Woods (left) make the Comfort Now Protect-A-Port pillows at a Crafty Chicks gathering May 24.

Children's pillows designed for a car seat are packaged with a pink or blue teddy bear and suckers.

Thompson and her mother pray over each pillow, asking blessings on the recipient. She estimates between 500 and 700 pillows have been made and given away.

Anne Murphy, a member of the Crafty Chicks who is a former radiation and oncology nurse and a cancer survivor, said it is wonderful to be of service to others and give

them something that will bring some comfort. "You may never meet [the people who receive the pillows], but still you think about them. And you hope they do well," she said.

Those making the pillows receive something in return, Moore pointed out.

"You have such a feeling of completeness when it's done. You know it's going to help somebody," she said.

While some people have urged

her to sell the pillows, she said that's not what you do with a gift from God.

"These are not meant to be sold. They are meant to be shared," Chenault said.

For more information, visit the Facebook page for Comfort Now Protect-A-Port kits, e-mail Thompson at hndbagrep@aol.com or Chenault at msfundirector@comcast.net or call First, Pelham, at 205-664-0237.

WMU ministries respond to Albertville tornado

When a tornado struck Albertville on April 24, many people responded quickly, including those involved with Marshall County Christian Services' (MCCS) Christian Women's Job Corps (CWJC) and Christian Men's Job Corps (CMJC).

"We were immediately called out to help displaced families," said Linda Henry, executive director of MCCS and CWJC/CMJC consultant for Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). "We were asked to set up a help center for the victims."

So one of the CWJC sites, Cahill Baptist Chapel, Albertville, became a food and clothing center.

The first week following the tornado, CWJC and CMJC canceled classes and focused on meeting needs. Some CWJC and CMJC participants also volunteered at Cowboy Church of Marshall County, Albertville, serving meals to victims.

"I am in awe at the things that have been happening in Albertville

in the last few weeks," Henry said. "I am so proud of my CWJC/CMJC participants, both current and past, (who) have joined in to help with the recovery efforts here."

Giving back

The men and women have worked early and late hours sorting and sizing clothing donations, setting up and tearing down tables, unloading donations, cleaning up debris left by the tornado and working at the help center, she said.

Retired pastor Willis dies at 75

Jimmie L. Willis, a retired Alabama Baptist pastor, died May 9. He was 75.

A native of Greensboro, Willis received a bachelor of arts from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham in 1953, master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1961 and doctor of divinity from Universal Bible Institute in Atlanta.

"All of them will tell you that they feel blessed," Henry said. "A big part of CWJC/CMJC is being able to give back, and these men and women have been such a blessing to me by doing just that."

CWJC and CMJC are ministries of national WMU, and their purpose is to "provide a Christian context in which men and women in need are equipped for life and employment and a missions context in which women help women and men help men." (TAB)

In Alabama, he served as pastor of Ariton Baptist Church; Old Town Creek Baptist Church, Moulton; and Harmony Baptist Church, Hillsboro. He also served as pastor of churches in Georgia, Florida and Mississippi. He retired from full-time ministry in 1993.

Willis is survived by his wife of 58 years, Kathleen; five daughters; and nine grandchildren. (TAB)



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World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Indian groups aim 'to cleanse Mandla of Christians'

BAMHNI BANJAR, India — Hindu nationalist organizations in Madhya Pradesh state have declared their intentions to rid Mandla district of all Christian influence by starting preparations for a large "reconversion" event next year.

As a result of anti-Christian sentiment stirred at the April 22 ground-breaking ceremony for the Madhya Pradesh "reconversion" rally to be held next February, Hindu nationalists attacked a house church in the district's Bamhni Banjar village May 2, Christian leaders said.

Hindu leaders reportedly announced a list of objectives to be achieved before the festival, with one prominent agenda item being to drive away Christian pastors, evangelists and foreign aid workers from the district. The leaders pledged to "cleanse Mandla of Christians" by means of the Feb. 10-12 event.

A week after the ground-breaking ceremony, around 40 Hindu nationalists from the Bajrang Dal group surrounded the home of Pastor Bhag Chand Rujhiya during a house church service and accused him of forceful conversion as they shouted anti-Christian slogans. Using abusive language, they pelted his house with stones as about 60 people were attending a worship service, Pastor Rakesh Dass said.

"The mob was carrying deadly weapons like knives and rods," he said.

Police forced the pastor and his wife to sign statements that they would no longer lead Sunday worship or pray with friends or relatives inside their house, and that they would not evangelize again in the area.

Great Britain airs first abortion television ad

LONDON — Great Britain's first abortion television ad has upset pro-lifers, who say such a controversial subject should not be advertised in tandem with soap and car commercials.

Abortion advertising in the country actually is banned, but only if the organization makes a profit. Marie Stopes International, the abortion provider behind the ad, is nonprofit.

The 30-second ad actually doesn't mention the word "abortion" but will simply ask, "Are you late?" The ad then points women to a phone number, the *Telegraph* newspaper reported. The May 24 ad aired around 10:10 p.m. local time during a game show, the newspaper said.

"To allow abortion providers to advertise on TV, as though they were no different from car companies or detergent manufacturers, is grotesque," said Michaela Aston from the pro-life organization Life.

"By suggesting that abortion is yet another consumer choice, it trivializes human life and completely contravenes the spirit of the 1967 Abortion Act, which was supposed to allow for a small number of legal abortions in a limited number of hard cases, but has been twisted and distorted to allow for mass abortion on demand."

"These adverts will just mean more women will end up on the abortion industry conveyor belt," said Peter Saunders of the Christian Medical Fellowship. "Marie Stopes may not make profit but they don't get paid at all if they don't carry out any abortions."

Morocco expels more than 100 foreign Christians

RABAT, Morocco — In another wave of deportations from Morocco, officials of the majority-Muslim country expelled 26 foreign Christians in 10 days without due process in May.

The deportations were apparently the result of Muslim hardliners pressuring the nation's royalty to show Islamic solidarity. The latest deportations bring the number of Christians who have had to leave Morocco to about 105 since early March.

Christians and expert observers are calling this a calculated effort to purge the historically moderate country, known for its progressive policies, of all Christian elements — both foreign and national.

At least two Moroccan Christians were beaten during the same 10 days, sources said, and police have taken other Moroccan Christians to police stations daily for psychologically "heavy" interrogations. Authorities are inquiring about the activities of foreign and local Christians.

"I don't see the end," said Salim Sefiane, a Moroccan living abroad. "I see this as a 'cleansing' of Christians out of Morocco, and then I see this turning against the Moroccan church, which is already underground, and then persecution of Moroccan Christians, which is already taking place in recent days."

'Love and acceptance'

People with disabilities want churches to include them

People with disabilities don't want churches that just "welcome" them, but rather congregations that value them and include them in living a "full life of faith," according to a long-time advocate for special-needs ministry.

"Valued is being seen as someone who brings gifts and talents, being seen as a contributor," said Ginny Thornburgh, director of an interfaith initiative for the American Association of People with Disabilities.

"I think we have to do that quite intentionally, to make sure welcome isn't just a quick hello to someone or a pat on the head."

'Sacred friendship'

Thornburgh urged churches to become places of acceptance, offering the gift of "sacred friendship," a commitment that "I will journey with you through thick and thin" and "I will be your voice when your voice is hard to find."

That doesn't begin with know-

ing all the answers, she said. "When the new baby comes home, the baby that the church hadn't expected — the congregation had

"We all long to be loved by God. ...

And we long to be loved by the people of God."

*Ginny Thornburgh
American Association
of People with Disabilities*

watched the mom and dad during their nine months of pregnancy and when the baby is born not as the couple had hoped, but another wonderful baby is born — what do we say to that family? What does the pastor say to that family?

"We say, 'I don't know much about spina bifida,'" Thornburgh answered. "I don't

know about Down syndrome. I don't know much about the circumstance of your child's disability. But what I do know about is God's abiding love and that this congregation will journey with you and journey with your child as your child grows and learns.' That's the sacred gift of friendship."

As of the 2000 census, 54 million Americans had a legally defined disability, about one in five. Thornburgh explained that means one-fifth of the members of any

given church ought to be from that population.

"The goal of our work — to allow 54 million Americans to worship as they choose — is to transform our congregations, or let's say today to transform our church, into a place of love and acceptance," she said.

That begins when people with disabilities sense two things, Thornburgh insisted — they can feel safe revealing their disability and feel comfortable asking for assistance for themselves or a family member.

From there, she urges churches to ask, "What is a full life of faith?" in that congregation and to seek ways to include more people in experiences of worship, study, service and leadership.

'Called to be servants'

"We are called to be servants, and service is the highest possible joy," Thornburgh said. "So often, persons with disabilities have only been the receivers of service. They haven't had that opportunity to do for others.

"We need to be creative in thinking out of the box. How can any project, how can any missionary activity, how can all church activities involve all people?"

"Is the choir accessible to someone with a [wheel]chair?" she asked. "Is the man who is blind given the chance to read Scripture with his Braille Bible? Is the young man with depression given the opportunity to speak at the adult-education class about his journey with depression?"

"Those of us with disabilities, young and old, have leadership abilities, and it's up to us to create opportunities for them to be used," Thornburgh said.

"We all long to be loved by God. That is the deepest longing that we have. And we long to be loved by the people of God. Our churches — your church and my church — can demonstrate that love, and it can become a place called acceptance." (ABP)




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BP photo

PREPARATION — Russian-language student Will Thompson (left) practices Russian with an Udmurt man. Thompson is learning the language so that he can eventually share the gospel with the Udmurt people.

‘Virtual missionaries’

Christians blaze gospel trail in unreached Udmurtia

During one of his missions trips to Udmurtia, Jack Gilliland, pastor of Rea Valley Baptist Church, Flippin, Ark., asked a local believer, “Are we making any difference? Are we just coming and entertaining you, or is this helping?”

“Every time you come,” the man responded, “it’s like you drop a rock in a pool and whatever foggy, murky stuff that’s on the top brushes away a little bit — and we see a little more clearly.”

Today Gilliland volunteers from his Arkansas home as an International Mission Board (IMB) virtual strategy coordinator, which he described as “filling in where the missionaries can’t go or live.”

The Udmurts, an unreached people group in Russia, were the focus of Southern Baptists’ Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization emphasis in 2007. Since then, answers to those prayers are bringing Living Water to the spiritually thirsty in the Republic of Udmurtia.

One of the 2007 prayer requests asked Southern Baptists to pray that God would call an individual to coordinate efforts among the Udmurts. Shortly afterward, the Lord burdened Gilliland’s heart.

He began to pray with believers around the world for God to send someone to Udmurtia to live full time and serve as a catalyst among the churches. Through word of mouth, e-mails and the Internet, Gilliland amassed a prayer network of

more than 1,000 people who regularly intercede for Udmurtia.

During the past three years, Gilliland also led multiple short-term volunteer teams to serve as “virtual missionaries” in the absence of full-time missionaries.

Volunteers work alongside and encourage the seven small Baptist churches in Udmurtia and help approximately 200 indigenous believers minister to and present the gospel to villagers. Less than 0.3 percent of Udmurtia’s population is considered evangelical Christian.

“You go in and you build relationships,” Gilliland said. “You live there like you would at home, just like a missionary does, and you share the Lord.”

Gilliland and his prayer network recently saw their prayers answered by two American couples.

Charlie and Heather Murphy first met Will and Marie Thompson while attending school together in Texas. Their journey began when Charlie read the IMB prayer guide for the Udmurts.

“The Holy Spirit moved in me that day when I read that article,” Charlie said. At that moment he felt the Lord say to him, “I love these people, and that’s where I want you to go.”

About that same time, Will heard in class about the great need for people groups in Central and Eastern Europe to hear the gospel. As Charlie and Will shared these experiences with one another, they real-

ized it was not coincidence but the providence of God. They began to pray for and research the Udmurts, and God kindled their hearts for the people group. The Murphys and Thompsons are now Russian-language students living in Izhevsk, the capital city of Udmurtia. They have learned to rely on the Lord through prayer as they transition to the new culture and language.

“The most difficult thing is wanting so badly to be able to explain the gospel to people but not having the vocabulary to do it,” Charlie said.

“I don’t just want to be a language student. I want to be able to share God’s love with people, and right now I don’t have the vocabulary to do that. That causes a lot of tears some days, just weeping over the lostness and feeling like there’s nothing you can really do about it, and then hearing God’s still, small voice saying, ‘You can pray.’ That will forever be the most powerful weapon you have, even when you can speak the language fluently.”

Praying for that day

The couples pray for the day when more Udmurts will put their trust in Christ and boldly share their faith.

A local pastor believes Charlie and Will can be an encouragement to Udmurt believers, inspiring them to evangelize their friends and families.

Gilliland agreed. “The trails have been blazed, and we’ve laid some good groundwork,” he said. “We’ve built a trust relationship with the people so that now it’s a matter of them catching the vision.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Some names have been changed for security reasons. (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Americans more pro-life than pro-choice, poll shows

WASHINGTON — Americans described themselves as more pro-life than pro-choice on abortion for the second straight year, according to a new Gallup Poll.

The survey showed 47 percent of Americans consider themselves pro-life, while 45 percent say they are pro-choice, Gallup reported May 14.

Gallup referred to the results — first evidenced in May 2009 — as the “new normal.”

“While the two-percentage-point gap in current abortion views is not significant, it represents the third consecutive time Gallup has found more Americans taking the pro-life than pro-choice position on this measure since May 2009, suggesting a real change in public opinion,” Gallup’s Lydia Saad wrote. “By contrast, in nearly all readings on this question since 1995, and each survey from 2003 to 2008, more Americans called themselves pro-choice than pro-life.”

Last May, Gallup’s polling showed 51 percent of adults said they are pro-life, while 42 percent identified themselves as pro-choice. It was the first time a majority of Americans had called themselves pro-life since Gallup began asking the question in 1995. Until then, no poll had shown more than 46 percent of Americans saying they were pro-life.

In July 2009, the Gallup poll showed a 47 to 46 percent advantage for the pro-life identification over the pro-choice one.

The survey also found an increase in pro-life sentiments since 2005–06 among Republicans, independents who lean toward neither political party, Americans under 30 years of age and adults from ages 50 to 64.

FEMA apologizes for treatment of volunteers

JACKSON, Miss. — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has apologized to a Southern Baptist congregation and the Salvation Army after a FEMA photographer asked a couple of volunteers to change their T-shirts for an interview.

Angelia Lott and Pamela Wedgeworth, members of a small rural church in Mississippi, were helping clean up debris from a tornado that left a 149-mile path of destruction through the state in April.

The women were working in partnership with Crossgates Baptist Church, Brandon, Miss., a Southern Baptist congregation, and were wearing T-shirts with the Salvation Army logo on them.

When a FEMA photographer approached them to request an interview, he made clear the logos were unacceptable.

“He said, ‘We would like to ask you to change your shirt because we don’t want anything faith-based,’” Lott recounted May 18.

Craig Fugate, a FEMA administrator, released a statement apologizing for the photographer’s actions, saying they “in no way reflect FEMA’s policies or priorities.”

“The photographer in question was absolutely wrong,” Fugate said, according to The Associated Press.

Fugate apologized specifically to Crossgates Baptist and to the Salvation Army. He also called U.S. Rep. Gregg Harper, R-Miss., who is a member of Crossgates, to assure him that FEMA does not discriminate against religious groups.

Apple CEO applauded for keeping porn off iPhone

LOS ANGELES — A conservative group that monitors the entertainment industry is applauding Apple CEO Steve Jobs for his pledge to keep porn applications off the iPhone.

So-called “apps,” or programs, are wildly popular and can be downloaded through Apple’s iTunes store. There’s an application for nearly everything — including news, sports, maps and restaurants — but Jobs says the store won’t offer porn. Approximately 5,000 sexually explicit applications were removed from the store early this year after the Parents Television Council (PTC), the conservative group, urged citizens to complain to Apple. The PTC noted that children often browse the store, looking for games.

Jobs took a stance against porn when the iPhone was released in 2007 and reiterated that stance at least three times during May. ☞

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

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A Word from Jimmy: This past year we've seen several changes in the reverse mortgage world. In the last few

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Dream Baths of Alabama owner recommends bathtub remodeling for safety of seniors living independently



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.

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he said. Charlie points out that Dream Baths also provides walk-in safety tubs with hydrotherapy for arthritis, back problems, lupus, muscular dystrophy, fibro-

myalgia 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.



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For tickets — \$10:
LifeWay Women's Events
www.lifeway.com
Call: 1.800.254.2022

VULCAN BIRTHDAY BASH

Vulcan's 106th Birthday Bash Sunday, June 6, 12-4 p.m.
\$3 for ages 5 and up
FREE for children 4 and under and Vulcan Members

Admission includes entrance to Vulcan Center Museum, Observation Balcony and From Factory to Field: The Dream of Baseball in Birmingham exhibition in Linn-Henley Gallery. Make plans to attend the BIGGEST birthday bash in Birmingham! Vulcan may be the world's largest cast iron statue, but he still needs help blowing out his birthday candles! On Sunday, June 6, Vulcan Park and Museum will host a festive outdoor community celebration for Vulcan's 106th birthday. Enjoy an afternoon of fun festivities for the whole family at the biggest birthday bash of the year!

www.visitvulcan.com • 205.933.1409 • info@visitvulcan.com



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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!



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.

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