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Crafting a new ministry phase

Mobile's Parkway Southern Baptist Church re-enters world of VBS

By Kathy Dean
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As best as anyone at Parkway Southern Baptist Church, Mobile, can remember, it had been more than 30 years since children skipped through the halls at Vacation Bible School (VBS). With the average age of the 30 or so people who normally attend worship being 60, few expected anything to change.

Then the people prayed. The workers came. So did the children. And during VBS June 21-25, the Mobile Baptist Association congregation was so inspired that it voted to start a children's ministry and hire someone to lead it.

"It's far exceeded my expectations," said Pastor Ron Prater.

He said the congregation had been praying about holding VBS but didn't feel capable of handling a group of children.

When Prater was attending a meeting of bivocational pastors in Mobile Association, someone asked if anybody needed help running VBS.

That's when he first heard about Danny Wiggins and Coffee Baptist Association.

For the past 10 years, Wiggins, pastor of County Line Baptist Church, Enterprise, has led a group of about 50 youth and adults from a dozen churches throughout Coffee Association to do regional missions like holding a backyard Bible club and VBS at churches and towns in the Mobile-area for one week in the summer.

"For us, it's a combination missions trip and youth camp," Wiggins said.

Phil Cooley, associate pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Enterprise, led the team who took on the challenge of leading VBS at Parkway Southern Baptist.

Team members passed out fliers in the community on Saturday to get the word out and then worshiped at Parkway on Sunday, where four VBS-aged children were in Sunday School.

The weeklong VBS averaged 13 to 20 youth each day, reaching 28 children, some from unchurched families.



Photo by Kathy Dean

EXPRESSING THEMSELVES — A group of children participates in crafts during Vacation Bible School (VBS) at Parkway Southern Baptist Church, Mobile. Jasmyne Paulini, 7, shows off her work and said she likes crafts best. Parkway Pastor Ron Prater said the church 'didn't know how we were going to pull ... off' the first VBS in 30 years but 'we just knew we were being led in that direction.'

Some children were brought to the church by parents, while others were picked up by a church van driven by Prater.

Team member Stephanie Goedert of County Line Baptist was in charge of the crafts. "This is my favorite part of the summer. They're really eager to learn and they're so enthusiastic," Goedert said of the Bible schoolers.

Michael Logsdon of Mount Pleasant Baptist taught Parkway members how to run the recreation program for a VBS.

"It feels strange being looked up to

by older people," said Logsdon, also 18. "I'm showing them how to do everything we're doing."

Parkway members plan to take all of the advice they received this year and make VBS a part of its outreach again.

In a part of the state where events are marked by hurricanes that change lives, member Diana Wilson said the last time the church held VBS was some time before Hurricane Frederic, which destroyed the church building in 1979.

"Our church has a lot to offer," Wilson said, with tears in her eyes. Hold-

ing VBS is a way "to let people know God is here."

Parkway joined the thousands of other Baptist churches holding VBS this summer. At press time, 457 Alabama Baptist churches had reported the results of their VBS experiences.

Information reported includes: 66,201 total VBS enrollment, 1,858 salvation decisions and 5,221 Sunday School prospects made.

For more information on VBS resources, contact James Blakeney at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 286. ☞

Beginning next week

Christians in the Middle East: A series describing life for believers in several Middle Eastern countries



COMMENT

It Is Not 'Bad Evangelism'

What did Jesus mean when He told His disciples, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Matt. 10:32)?

What did Jesus mean when He declared in Matthew 18:3, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"? The word translated "change" in the New International Version is "straphete," which is normally translated "convert."

What did the apostle Peter mean when he stood on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, preached Jesus as the risen Messiah and told the Jewish crowd to "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19)?

Why did the apostle Paul declare "to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21)?

Answers to those questions are key to responding to a recent indictment of evangelical Christians for practicing "bad evangelism."

The charge was made by Antonios Kireopoulos, senior program director for faith and order and interfaith relations for the National Council of Churches. Kireopoulos was speaking at the 100th anniversary of the historic 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference. The event, which ended June 6, drew hundreds of participants representing 60 nations and at least 30 Christian traditions.

Kireopoulos cited the experience of the fall of the Soviet Union and the rush of evangelical Christian missionaries into Russia and Eastern European countries. He accused missionaries of "taking advantage of the weak" by trying to "make Christians from among people [who] are already Christians."

Referencing Iraq, Kireopoulos said there have been "particularly egregious mission efforts" by evangelical Christians. He said the witness to Christ would have been stronger if missionaries had supported the local Christians. In each case, evangelical missionaries were guilty of what he called "bad evangelism."

For Kireopoulos and others, identifying with the Christian church and being a believing Christian are synonymous. In the Roman Catholic tradition, most Orthodox traditions and even some Protestant traditions, one is born into the Christian faith at infancy.

In some parts of the world, these Christians are referred to as "cultural Christians" or "traditional



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Christians." Often national citizenship is equated with membership in the national church. The two are inseparable. Baptists and other evangelical believers hold a different understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

When Jesus said it is necessary to acknowledge Him before men, it means it is necessary for individuals to acknowledge Jesus. Being a member of a Christian family cannot take the place of an individual decision to acknowledge Christ.

When Jesus said one has to "change (convert) and become as little children," the statement pointed toward a personal decision to turn or change one's mind.

Personal action

Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 3:19) again affirms the requirement of personal action. The apostle urged people to "repent and turn to God." That his listeners were already children of Abraham seemed to make no difference in what Peter said was required of them.

Paul made the same point. To Jews and to Greeks, he preached the same message. Both needed to repent before God. It was not religious identity that was advocated. It was personal confession (Acts 20:21).

Repentance, confession and faith — these constitute the "front door" to the gospel for those who hear and respond to the saving work of Jesus Christ.

That is why Paul wrote in Romans 10:9–10 about the necessity of confessing with the mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead in order to be saved.

Repentance, confession and faith cannot be done for an individual by someone else. In Acts

17:30, Paul wrote, "[God] commands all people everywhere to repent." Repentance is something individuals must do for themselves.

At the same time, Christians recognize it is God alone who grants forgiveness (Acts 11:18). He grants it to the Jew, the Greek and all who respond to the gospel because He does not want any to perish but desires that all come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

Evangelical Christians (including Baptists) make up that segment of the Church known as the "Believer's Church." Our understanding of the Bible is that a personal and open confession of faith in Jesus Christ is a prerequisite to being a believing Christian.

So deep is this understanding that we apply it to everyone, including those most precious to us — our own family members.

As Jesus said in John 3:18, "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

The direction of the gospel message is individual accountability to believe, repent and confess.

As one has said, these are the "first duties of every sinner" and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Calling people to personal faith in Jesus Christ through repentance and confession is not "bad evangelism" as Kireopoulos charged.

It is the faithful response of believers to our Lord's command to go and make disciples of all nations.

Hopefully the day will come when those Christian groups that focus on identity with the Church will lift up the necessity of a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps then Christians can stop condemning one another over their evangelism practices and celebrate the sharing of the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

Letters to the Editor

PASSION WITHOUT PRIDE

"Passion or Division at the SBC?" (*The Alabama Baptist*, June 24) Sir, the arguments I'm aware of regarding the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR), both pro and con, are mostly from folks that are passionate, not

divisive. They are passionate about Christ, passionate about the gospel, passionate about how to best evangelize. Even as they differ, their passion for the cross abounds.

Yet it seems that you, instead of seeing passion for the cross in GCR, only see division. And the divisive crowd

is easy to spot. So easy they should be obvious to all. Of course, the villains are the people who disagree with Bob Terry.

Mr. Terry, I fear you've been so blinded by your prejudices that you've missed the point.

(See 'Letters,' page 10)



"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 Matthew Stephens, Correspondent, TAB

Dale Godwin

Hodgesville Baptist Church, Dothan
Columbia Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES:

Proverbs 3:5-6

FAVORITE HYMN: "Blessed Assurance"

HOBBIES: Crafts, scrapbooking, fishing, cooking and visiting other people

FAMILY STATUS: Married to David; three children, Duane, Delane and Darenee; eight grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren



Dale Godwin started the first Vacation Bible School (VBS) at Hodgesville Baptist Church, Dothan. "We had no tables and no supplies to do a VBS. We just worked with what we had and did the best we could," she said. This year, VBS was held at the football stadiums at Rehobeth High School and Cottonwood High School to reach more people in the community.

GODWIN

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: I grew up in a Christian home. I was taken to church.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I came to know the Lord during a revival at my church when I was 13 years old. The pastor was preaching a sermon in Revelation, and I had this fear come over me that I was going to be left behind.

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

A: I did everything in the church. I started the first VBS at Hodgesville Baptist Church and was the director for many years. I taught Sunday School for 50 years. I worked with the youth for 50 years. I was the director of WMU (Woman's Missionary Union) for many years. I sing in the choir.

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

A: I will continue to serve the Lord with all that I have. It is my joy. It is my peace. It is my happiness.

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

A: It has made me more compassionate. It has also made me have a greater love for others.

With the touch of a button

Texting increases youth attendance at Five Points' Bethel Baptist

By Jeremy Henderson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Sunday morning attendance at Bethel Baptist Church, Five Points, has shot up nearly 30 percent and the number of youth has more than quadrupled with the touch of a button — specifically the "send" option on a Samsung Solstice.

That's the smartphone 20-year-old Chris Sellers said he used, uses and will continue to use to make sure he's not the youngest person in the pews of the tiny East Liberty Baptist Association church.

"When [I came as pastor] two years ago, he was the only youth that would come," Jimmy Brown said. "I challenged him. I said, 'We're not going to build a class unless somebody gets to work.' Now every Sunday morning, he gets up and texts all the young people and tells them it's Sunday morning and time to get ready for church."

Invite them — they will come

Sellers said he actually prefers to send the texts Saturday night.

"We're just a small church out in the country, and for a while, maybe just one or two would show up, but for a while, it was just me," said Sellers, a student at Southern Union Community College in Opelika who has attended Bethel Baptist his whole life. "A lot of my friends didn't go to church every Sunday, and I just felt like maybe if I invite them, maybe they'll come if I'm there. So I started sending out text messages on Saturday night, reminding them."

These days, he doesn't have to work so hard; Sellers said over the past year, regular attendance among those 21 and under has gone from one to seven.

The church averages just 25 people on



Photo courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church

SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH — The youth and college group at Bethel Baptist Church, Five Points, has grown from one to seven in the past year due to Chris Sellers (back row, second from left) inviting people through text messaging.

Sunday morning.

"I guess that's what you could call substantial growth," Brown said with a laugh. "So on the second Sunday in June, we decided we'd have a youth Sunday because Chris had been wanting to share his testimony. We had one young man do all the announcing, a young lady that led the music and her brother came in and played the guitar and a brother and sister (who) took up the offering. Everyone of them had a job and they did great."

Though Bethel doesn't have an official youth program, Brown's wife, Pam, said the

high school and college students are close-knit and active in the church, one of the oldest in the association.

"We try to show that they're important, just as important as the senior citizens and those in the middle," she said. "We don't have anyone in the church that works with the youth, but we try to do something quarterly with them."

But Sellers still thinks in weekly terms.

"If my group starts slacking off, I'm going to have to start sending text messages again: 'Come to church, come to church, come to church.'"

RockSolid provides music outlet for teens



Photo courtesy of Keith Hibbs

BAND BOND — RockSolid, a musical group made of Alabama Baptist teens, most recently performed the opening night of Mix 456 Worship Arts Camp at Shocco Springs as well as served as praise team leaders during the camp.

For about 15 years, RockSolid has provided a unique outlet for high school-aged Baptist musicians across the state. The group, which performed July 4 at Lake Martin Amphitheater in Eclectic for an audience of 800, is the result of a dream Director Keith Hibbs had as a young man.

"I wished for a group that would be an arm of the (Alabama Baptist) State Board of Missions (SBOM) that could perform in non-church venues to let people know that Christians enjoy all kinds of music," said Hibbs, director of the SBOM's office of worship leadership and church music.

This year, RockSolid's 16 members (10 instrumentalists and six singers) performed songs by Zac Brown Band, Chicago, Lynyrd Skynyrd, TobyMac and more. Hibbs chooses and arranges the songs and enjoys including a wide variety of musical styles.

"I grew up loving all different kinds of music, which, I guess, is

reflected in the eclecticism of this group," he said. "We try to sing songs that are not offensive with their lyrics and have a positive, upbeat message."

And although the group receives consistently glowing feedback and has been able to travel to places like Spain, the Caribbean and Maine, Hibbs believes the best thing about it is the bond members form with one another.

Collin Clardy, a rising junior and member of Thomasville Baptist Church in Clarke Baptist Association, agreed with "Mr. Keith's" assessment of the relationships RockSolid encourages.

"We just become a family and love to be around each other and have fun doing the concerts," Clardy said. "We're really close and really united. There are no cliques or people we don't talk to."

For more information about RockSolid, visit www.alsbom.org or e-mail Hibbs at khibbs@alsbom.org. (TAB)

Plugging people in to world of need

State Baptist paper provides resource, ministry to its readers

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

For about 35 years Ken Megginson, a member of Moffett Road Baptist Church, Mobile, has been a faithful reader of *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB).

Why has he been faithful for so long?

For one, because “it keeps us abreast with what’s going on with the Southern Baptists in our area, which I think is very important,” he said.

Megginson, who serves as an adult Sunday School teacher at Moffett Road Baptist, said one of the best things about TAB has been its great resource value for his Sunday School lessons.

“I like the reviews of what the Sunday School lesson is about. It really helps me prepare for the lesson,” Megginson said. “If there are any articles in *The Alabama Baptist* that I can relate to the lesson, I use that also.”

For example, Megginson recently incorporated the editorial in the July 1 issue, “Religious Liberty — The First Freedom,” into his Sunday School lesson, as it related to Independence Day.

Raising awareness

“When you read in *The Alabama Baptist* about some of the countries that don’t have some of the religious freedoms we do ... when you read about people being put into jail ... it makes me and the people in our Sunday School class appreciate our freedoms and the efforts of those who are making a stand,” he said.

TAB also has prompted Megginson’s church to become more missions-minded over the years.

“Under Brother Terry’s leadership, by his example ... (*The Ala-*

bama Baptist) has led us to incorporate missions more into the vision of our church,” he said.

Katrine Moore, a member of First Baptist Church, Red Bay, agreed. Reading TAB encourages her own ministry and missions involvement as she reads about what others are doing, she said.

Staying current

“It’s been an excellent resource of what Baptist churches across the state are doing,” Moore said. “It makes me aware of how other churches are reaching out to help people, and I like to read about the different ministries that have helped people in the community.”

Not only does the paper connect people like Moore and Megginson, who live in different cities and attend different churches, with what each other’s churches are doing in the way of ministry and missions, but it also keeps them informed on social and moral issues.

“I look forward to receiving [TAB] each week because it keeps me abreast of issues,” Moore said. “*The Alabama Baptist* helps us stay current. I feel like *The Alabama Baptist* is an important way to keep all of Alabama and all Baptists aware of all sides of an issue that need to be explored and reported.”

Megginson agreed. “I like it when *The Alabama Baptist* brings to our attention issues that we need to take a stand on,” he said. “In Alabama and in the Southern Baptist Convention, we need to take a stand on these issues rather than just accepting them. *The Alabama Baptist* brings [those things] to our attention.”

In addition to calling people to take action on an issue or connecting Baptists with what other Baptists are doing, TAB

also ministers to its readers.

Just ask Dianne Greer, also a member of Moffett Road, who choked up when retelling the story of how TAB classifieds section ministered to her family just this year.

Greer, who is married with two children, takes one family vacation per year. Because her family is on a tight budget, it is sometimes difficult to find a nice place her family can stay that is affordable.

But in February of this year, while scanning the classifieds, Greer came upon an ad for a beach rental property.

“I was able to find a house for my family the week of spring break for very reasonable,” she said. “It really ministered to me.”

The children of an older couple, who had passed away, turned their parents’ home in Gulf Shores into a beach rental property for families or small Christian groups to use, Greer recounted.

“I thought it was really neat that whenever you look at [the classifieds] you know they are Christian people,” she said. “Thank you Lord that you opened that door for our family knowing that the people who lived [in that house] were His children.”

“I thought that was a wonderful tool that [TAB] made available through that section to link Christian companies to (Christian) people. It was a wonderful experience,” Greer added.

Without TAB Greer said she would never have known about

this particular Christian rental property, and without TAB, Steve Stephens, an associate in the office of men’s ministries and disaster relief at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said his office would not have a way to promote what they do throughout the state.

“Anytime there’s something that we are trying to promote as Alabama Baptists, *The Alabama Baptist* covers it for us and promotes it for us,” said Stephens, who oversees the SBOM’s Royal Ambassadors (RAs) and Challengers ministries. “We do not

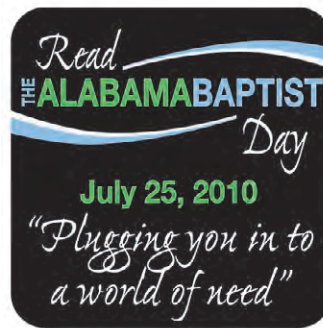
have a resource like *The Alabama Baptist*. You’re it. You’re our resource.”

But Stephens uses TAB for more than just promotion. It also has been the missions resource used with RAs and Challengers groups.

“Even in our recommendation for what the youth ought to study in missions we put *The Alabama Baptist* as our No. 1 resource because it has information about local, national and international missions,” he said. “We tell them that [TAB] has what they need.”

And for TAB to be that resource for more people like Megginson, Moore, Greer and Stephens, churches are encouraged to take part in the annual *The Alabama Baptist* Day emphasis, which promotes the ministry of the newspaper, on July 25.

July 15 is the last day churches can order free bulletin inserts. To order, call 1-800-803-5201. ☞



Want to know God?

By Pastor Bo Brown
Community Baptist Church, Maylene

I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop” (John 12:24).

Who would not have been Peter that day in the garden as he sought to protect our Lord? After all, this was the Son of God, the Messiah, and here a company of armed soldiers came to take Him away from the ones who had given up everything to follow Him. Peter had watched Jesus heal the sick, walk on water, calm the storm and, most importantly, change the lives of those around Him.

Peter had sat with Him at the Passover table and even sworn loyalty unto death. So here, under the black of night, the soldiers came to take Peter’s Jesus.

You may ask why I phrase it that way, but I believe at that moment, it was exactly what Peter was feeling, exactly when sin reared its head in his life. You see in Peter’s mind, Jesus was his and no one would take Him. Peter was comfortable with Jesus where He was, as He was, not wanting things to deviate from the plan or the feeling.

As Peter drew the sword, Jesus yelled at him to put it up, and at that moment, we see Peter did not understand the lesson taught him earlier. Jesus must die and through that death and coming resurrection, there would be life and Peter then could be with Him for eternity.

You see this beautiful story is a reminder that Jesus loves us and He came to save you and me, not vice versa. It is in humbleness that Jesus, the one and only Son of God, came to where He did not have to, to do what only He could do and to present us with the gift of salvation. So now if we will only repent of our sins and accept who He is and what He has done for us, then we will be saved. I admire Peter for his boldness but still wonder if, in later years, he ever pondered how if he had had his way, then he would have derailed the plan put in place since the beginning. I wonder if he ever sat down and prayed in the later years of his life, “Lord, please forgive me for that night ... and not my will, Lord, but yours.” ☞

Brierfield’s Six Mile marks 150 years with monthlong emphasis

By Ashley Anderton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The faces in a congregation change a lot over 150 years, but at Six Mile Baptist Church, Brierfield, one thing has remained the same — the people love God and others.

“If there’s a need and we have the funds to do it, we try to help people,” said Pastor Bob Hope.

A monthlong celebration of the Bibb Baptist Association church’s 150 years of giving culminated June 6 as about 100 people gathered to mark the anniversary.

During the morning service, Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque; Bill Wallace, director of missions for Cahaba Baptist Association, delivered the sermon; and Eddie Rew, minister of music, led in worship.

After the service, attendees enjoyed a fellowship meal, special music and a time of sharing history and favorite memories.

“We look back to remember what God has

done,” Hope said. “But we don’t want to live in the past. We’re still going [forward].”

Since his arrival in 2000, the church — which has an average Sunday attendance of about 45 — has increased its benevolence ministry and started a scholarship fund to aid local high school graduates in pursuing an undergraduate degree. Six Mile Baptist recently awarded \$3,000 in scholarships to college-bound students.

Supporting ministries

The church also gives financial support to the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries, as well as Bibb County United Christian Ministries, which provides necessities and assistance with utilities to those in need.

This year, Six Mile members supported international missions work in Thailand and Central America.

“I hope [that in] the next 150 years, Six Mile will still be here, and if Christ comes back, He’ll find the church doing the work,” Hope said.

The church’s beginning can be documented

with the acceptance of its constitution in 1860. However, it is believed that Six Mile may have been founded as early as 1848. Determining the actual date is difficult, because the church’s early records are missing. There also is no record of the specific location of the congregation’s first building.

Nonetheless some aspects of its history are certain. For example, Sunday School dates back to April 3, 1864. Also the belfry was added to the church in 1906. In May 1997, an addition to the building created a fellowship hall, more Sunday School rooms, a pastor’s study and nursery.

In 2002, the sanctuary was closed as wind damage was repaired. That year, members met in the fellowship hall. During the renovation, history was found hiding underneath the sanctuary floor in the form of pillars made from sawed off pines and two huge rocks holding up the northeast corner of the building. One weight-bearing rock remains as part of the cornerstone today. The church rededicated the sanctuary Nov. 16, 2003. ☞



istockphoto.com

Gulf oil spill could be a 'defining moment' for evangelicals

The head of a committee that drafted a recent Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) resolution on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill said on National Public Radio (NPR) that the ecological disaster could be a "defining moment" for evangelicals and the environment.

"I remember once an evangelical figure spoke of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision as the Pearl Harbor of the evangelical pro-life movement," Russell Moore, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said on NPR's "Weekend Sunday Edition" on June 27.

"What he meant by that was that

prior to Roe, most evangelicals really thought of those issues of life and protecting the unborn as being a Roman Catholic issue — somebody else's issue," Moore said.

"But then after Roe v. Wade, suddenly evangelicals saw what was at stake and became involved. I think that this catastrophe in the Gulf could be that kind of defining moment."

Moore chaired an SBC resolutions committee that brought a resolution adopted by convention messengers June 16 calling on industry, the government and churches to work to prevent such a crisis from ever happening again. He explained on NPR the rationale behind a statement that many ob-

servers view as out of character for a conservative denomination that in past years has downplayed environmental concerns like global warming.

"There's really nothing conservative — and certainly nothing evangelical — about a laissez-faire view of a lack of government regulation, because we, as Christians, believe in sin," Moore said.

"That means if people are sinful, if all of us are sinful, then all of us have to have accountability — and that includes corporations," Moore said. "Simply trusting corporations to go about their business without polluting the water streams and without destroying ecosystems is really a naive and utopian view of human nature. It's not a Christian view of human nature."

"God cares about the Creation," Moore said. "He displays Himself in nature, and so the more that people are distanced from the Creation itself and the more people

become accustomed to treating the Creation as something that is disposable, the more distanced they are from understanding who God is.

"People are designed to be dependent on Creation and upon the natural resources around us," he continued. "In order to love future generations, in order to love cultures, we have to love the ecosystems that support those things."

Caring about Creation

"What's happening is that you have entire cultures and communities of people now imperiled," he said. "That's an issue of love of neighbor."

Moore is a native of Biloxi, Miss., one of the communities under threat from the leaking hulk of the Deepwater Horizon offshore oil rig, which has been dumping oil into the Gulf since an April 20 explosion that killed 11 workers and destroyed the platform.

"I have to tell you this is the most traumatized I've ever seen my hometown," he said. "And I'm including the devastation of Katrina in that. It's kind of like a slow-motion hurricane with no end in sight."

Moore said he recognizes that all evangelicals are not of one mind about the specifics of creation care.

"There are some evangelicals, of course, who hold to a much more libertarian understanding of the relationship between government and protecting natural resources, but I think for the most part, evangelicals are ready to have a conversation about protecting the Creation," he said.

"And especially younger evangelicals, who are just as conservative as their grandfathers and grandmothers on many issues but also understand that human flourishing means a healthy natural environment." (ABP)

"I think ... evangelicals are ready to have a conversation about protecting the Creation."

Russell Moore
Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary

Nursing educators needed; new loan money available

Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing has received a federal grant designed to help ease a national shortage of nursing educators.

The \$655,000 grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, will provide loans for graduate and doctoral students pursuing an advanced degree with the intent to serve as faculty in a school of nursing.

Students who participate in the Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) for master's or doctoral

degree programs can have up to 85 percent of the loan forgiven in exchange for service as full-time nursing faculty members at an accredited school of nursing.

Currently 55 Samford nursing graduate students receive funds from the loan program. Students can continue to receive loans as long as they maintain good academic standing, explained Jane S. Martin, associate dean of Samford's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing.

The loan program was approved by Congress in 2002, and Samford was one of the first 55 nurs-

ing schools from across the U.S. to receive funds.

"Over the past eight years, Samford's grant amount has increased each year as our nursing program has grown," Martin said. "The 2010-11 grant is exponentially larger than any of the previous years, and we are incredibly grateful."

Samford is among the top seven institutions nationally in the amount of grant funds received for the 2010-11 grant.

To date, Samford has received more than \$1.25 million in NFLP grants. (SU)

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving
Year to Date through June 30, 2010

JUNE	
CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,875,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$3,824,291
Under Goal for Month	\$50,709

YEAR TO DATE	
CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$23,250,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$21,212,953
Under Goal for Year	\$2,037,047

Across Alabama's Associations

BARBOUR

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Eu-faula**, will celebrate its 62nd homecoming Aug. 1, 11 a.m. Crimson River Quartet will sing. Lunch will follow. Crimson River Quartet also will sing following lunch. For information call 334-687-4062. Terry Birdsong is pastor.

BESSEMER

► J.O.Y. Fellowship, the senior adult ministry of **The Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will hold a program July 27, 11 a.m., with Geraldine and Ricky. DVDs will be available. For information call 205-477-8265. Bill McCall is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Deerfoot Church, Trussville**, will host pianist Frank Jones in concert July 18, 6 p.m. Jones serves as associate minister of worship and minister to senior adults for Calvary Church, Tuscaloosa. For information call 205-655-0798 or visit www.deerfootbaptist.org. Roger Willmore is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will kick off its summer revival with a singing July 18, 6 p.m., with The Galileans, of Arab. Revival services will be July 19–23, 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m., with Evangelist Chad Allbright. Lunch will be served daily following the morning service. There will be a prayer band at 10:15 a.m. and 6:45 p.m. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Steve Creek Church, Jackson**, will host a southern gospel concert with Dove Award-nominee The Bradys, of Dothan, July 31, 7 p.m. Jamie Lay is pastor.

CLEBURNE

► **Heflin Church** is holding Terrific Tuesday in July at 6:30 p.m. On July 20, there will be a wild game supper at the Heflin Recreation Center. Levi Skipper, of Austell, Ga., founder of First Day Ministry, Inc., will speak. There will be door prizes. On July 27, Joe Fain, pastor of Goodwater Church, will speak. For information call 256-463-2576 or visit www.heflinbaptist.org. Philip R. Morris is pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE

► **Rickey "Ric" Camp** is the new pastor of **First Church, Florence**.



CAMP

He comes from Sunrise Church, Mobile, where he served as pastor since the church's founding in 2003. Camp has also served several other churches in

Alabama, Florida and Louisiana. He holds an associate's degree from Snead State Junior College (now Snead State Community College) in Boaz, bachelor's degree in religion from Samford University in Birmingham, master of religious education from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and doctor of educational ministry from New Orleans Seminary. Camp and his wife, Lisa, have two children.

ELMORE

► **Santuck Church, Wetumpka**, will hold summer celebration July 18–21 with Rob Jackson. Chason Farris will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 9 and 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. For information call 334-567-2364. Gary R. Miller is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Sardis Church, Atmore**, will hold revival July 25–28 with Evangelist James Boyd. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. (refreshments will follow) and weeknights at 7 with a fellowship meal at 6 p.m. Earle Greene is interim pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Goodyear Heights Church, Gadsden**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary Aug. 1, 11 a.m. Gary Williams, a former member who was called into the ministry while attending the church, will speak. Former pastors will be recognized. A covered-dish lunch will follow. There will be a meet and greet with old photos and a slideshow in the afternoon. For information call 256-492-4321 or visit www.goodyearheights.com. Tommy Ferguson is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **First Church, Russellville**, will celebrate homecoming and 20 years of partnering with the Pines of Perinton in Fairport, N.Y., July 18, 10 a.m. Students held a day camp at the Pines July 12–15. This was the church's 20th missions trip there. The service will include special guests, a slideshow of photos from the years in New York and a display of memorabilia. Lunch will follow. Richard Parker is minister of youth and education, and Barry Holcomb is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Oneonta**, will host This Hope in concert July 18, 10:15 a.m. Larry Gipson is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will host national recording artists The Talley Trio from the Gaither Homecoming Tour in concert July 18, 6 p.m. Finger foods and homemade ice cream will be served at 5 p.m. For information call 256-420-8172. Mike Clark is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► The JOY Singers of **First**

Church, Montgomery, presented its 10th annual patriotic concert, "America Sings!" June 27. The 50-voice senior adult choir featured the JOY Boys and an instrumental ensemble. Jay Wolf is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Mount Zion Church, Hartselle**, will hold a Swamp John's meal July 16, 4–7 p.m. There will be fish, chicken, shrimp and combo plates. Benefits will go to the church's new building. For tickets call 256-773-6731. J. Wayne Penn is pastor. ► **Southwest Church, Hartselle**, will hold a singing with New Ground July 18, 5 p.m. DeWitt Crowe is pastor.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Jack Clary Jr.** will celebrate 30 years as pastor of **Evergreen Church, Vance**, July 1. There will be a tea in his honor July 18, 2–4 p.m., in the fellowship hall.

RANDOLPH

► **Mike Ramage** is the new pastor of **First Church, Roanoke**. He comes from Fifth Avenue Church, St. Petersburg, Fla. He has also served several other churches in Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee and Mississippi. Ramage holds a bachelor's degree in religion from Samford University in Birmingham and master of divinity and doctor of ministry from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Kathy, have one child and two grandchildren.



RAMAGE

SHELBY

► **Riverchase Church, Birmingham**, is holding a contemporary worship service Sunday nights at 6. For information call 205-985-4495 or visit www.riverchasebaptistchurch.org. Jeff Greer is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Fairview Church, Macedonia Church, New Prospect Church, Oak Grove Church, First Church, Palestine Church, Providence Church and Refuge Church**, all in Ragland; **Green-sport Church, Ashville**; and other area churches will sponsor Ragland Block Party July 30, 6–10 p.m., on Main Street. There will be live gospel music, games and food.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Rock Springs Church, Jacksons Gap**, will celebrate homecoming July 25, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. There will be an afternoon singing with Reunion. Jamey Williams is pastor.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Canadian Baptist body appoints first ethnic to top post

MISSISSAUGA, Ontario — Leaders of Canada's largest Baptist body have, for the first time, appointed a non-Caucasian to their top executive post as they bid farewell to their leader of 10 years.

Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM) — an association of four regional and language-based Canadian Baptist conventions — announced June 29 that Sam Chaise had been tapped to become the group's next general secretary. Chaise was previously the director of the William Carey Institute at Carey Theological College, a Baptist school in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Chaise — who was born in England, raised in Ontario, educated in Saskatchewan and British Columbia and has served in western Canada his entire ministry — is of Indian descent.

"Sam brings leadership and ministry experience at both the denominational and organizational levels," said CBM board president Brenda Halk. "He has a keen understanding of the international and Canadian context of our work and partnerships and is passionate about integral mission. We look forward enthusiastically to his leadership as we move into the future of this dynamic organization."

Chaise received his bachelor's degree from the University of Saskatchewan and worked for a brief time in the oil industry before following a call to ministry and earning his master of divinity degree through a program jointly run by Carey Theological College and Regent College in Vancouver.

He has been involved in Canadian Baptist life for many years, including stints as board president for the Baptist Union of Western Canada (one of CBM's constituent bodies) and as a member of CBM's board from 2007 to 2009.

Chaise will take over Oct. 1 for Gary Nelson, who became president of Tyndale University College and Seminary, a nondenominational Christian school in Toronto, on July 1. Nelson served for 10 years at CBM's helm.

Ronnie Floyd trades TV program for CP giving

SPRINGDALE, Ark. — First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., is suspending its national and international television broadcast to increase contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) by 25 percent.

Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of First, Springdale, and chairman of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force that completed its work in June, made the announcement in worship services June 27.

"For a few months, God has really been working in my life about what actions I need to take and our church needs to take to get the gospel to the nations in a more effective manner," Floyd wrote in a June 28 post on his website, www.ronniefloyd.com. "Serving as the chairman of Southern Baptists' Great Commission Resurgence Task Force has so changed my life and ministry perspective."

The reallocation will bring the congregation's CP giving to \$500,000 for the church fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, Floyd said. That represents a 25 percent increase over the 2009–10 budget and more than doubles the \$243,000 the congregation gave just two years ago.

Using figures for 2009, the \$500,000 CP contribution would have represented 3.7 percent of First, Springdale's \$13.37 million in undesignated receipts, as reported that year through the SBC's Annual Church Profile.

SBC CP giving slightly below last year's gifts

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) was 3.36 percent below the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Morris H. Chapman.

As of June 30, the year-to-date total of \$145,520,420.41 for CP missions is \$5,063,463.04 behind the \$150,583,883.45 received at the end of June 2009.

Monthly CP receipts totaled \$12,660,727.93.

For the SBC CP Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$145,520,420.41 is 94.93 percent of the \$153,289,194.47 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1–Sept. 30 fiscal year.

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Celebrating Judson's Class of 2010

'Stay current on your passion to learn,' Ellis-Grosse challenges recent graduates

Family, students and friends packed Alumnae Auditorium at Judson College in Marion on June 26 for the college's 172nd annual commencement.

Judson President David Potts presided and awarded diplomas to the graduating seniors.

"These young people have demonstrated academic achievement in exemplary ways," he said, noting the class of 2010 had distinguished itself in and out of the classroom.

"They showed prowess on the athletic fields and, no matter the outcome of the competition, invited the opposing teams to pray with them on the field. And they've been involved in service-learning, living the motto of the college — truth and light — in this community."

Judson alumna and chemist Evelyn Ellis-Grosse served as commencement speaker. A native of Centre and former corporate vice president of Wyeth Pharmaceuticals (now a part of Pfizer) in Radner, Pa., she directs e2g Biopharmaceutical Consulting in Marietta, Ga.

Potts bestowed an honorary doctorate on Ellis-Grosse on behalf of the college's trustees, noting her



Photo by Bill Mathews

GRADUATION PLATFORM PARTY — Evelyn Ellis-Grosse (front row, center) was the keynote speaker for Judson's June commencement. Pictured with Ellis-Grosse are: (front row, left to right) Betty Campbell and Anne Williamson Shumaker; (back row, left to right) Charles Dunkin, Joe Evans and David Potts.

"extraordinary contributions to science and humanity."

Ellis-Grosse commended the graduates for their achievement and urged them to have open minds

in their further studies and in their lives.

"With an open mind, there will always be a new frontier," she said.

"When I was at Judson, I never

thought about drug research and global development, but I've been privileged to visit more than 25 countries and learn about their culture. Travel challenges stereotypes

and most preconceptions are wrong."

Ellis-Grosse urged the graduates to learn from their mistakes and to laugh at them, illustrating with a couple of laboratory mistakes she made at the college.

"You have to fail but your desire to succeed must be greater than your fear of failure," she said.

"I encourage you to stay current on the passion to learn."

After conferring degrees, Potts presented the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Non-Student Award to alumna Anne Williamson Shumaker, of Centre, immediate past president of the Judson College Alumnae Association, and the student award to Christina Rae Lee, of Salem.

Tonya Elizabeth Morgan, of Woodville, received the J.C. Faulkner Award, and Kelly Lauren Patton, of Grove Hill, received the Bible Award for outstanding Christian service.

Lee also won the Scholarship Award for having the highest academic average in her class — 3.9 of 4.0.

Religion professor Scott Bullard was awarded the Lula and Alton Holley Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching. (JC)

Land applauds Obama's call 'to fix a broken immigration system'

President Obama called for the federal government "to fix a broken immigration system" in a July 1 speech that Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land commended as a necessary first step to reform.

Acknowledging Washington's failure to deal with an issue that has led to an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants, Obama called for continued work to secure the borders, increased enforcement of the law against employers who hire undocumented workers, and a series of requirements that people in this country illegally must meet to gain legal status.

The president rejected both "blanket amnesty" for and deportation of illegal immigrants. He also said the "legal immigration system is as broken as the borders" and needs reform.

Land, president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, applauded Obama for a "bold and important speech."

"There are some things that require presidential leadership, and the immigration issue is one of them," said Land, who attended the speech at American University in Washington. "This speech by the president, in and of itself, will not solve the immigration crisis, but this speech was a necessary prereq-

uisite to bringing about a fair and just solution to the immigration crisis that is rending the social fabric of our nation.

"In any marriage, you have to first have an initial proposal," he said.

"The president proposed this morning. It's up to the Congress to now accept that proposal or to construct its own proposal and to bring forth a bill that will consummate the marriage. We need to call upon our congressmen and senators to behave like statesmen. Politicians think about the next election; statesmen think about the next generation."

List of requirements

In his speech, Obama cited some of the same requirements Land has listed as necessary for illegal immigrants to gain citizenship or legal work status. The president said illegal immigrants must acknowledge they broke the law, register, pay a fine and taxes and learn English.

Land, who supports comprehensive immigration reform, also has said illegal immigrants must undergo a criminal background check, pledge allegiance to the United States government and its values, serve a years-long probationary period and wait behind legal immigrants.

Land has called for the borders to

be secured before other aspects of immigration reform go into effect. Obama indicated, however, he does not have such a requirement.

"[T]here are those who argue that we should not move forward with any other elements of reform until we have fully sealed our borders," Obama said. "But our borders are just too vast for us to be able to solve the problem only with fences and border patrols. It won't work."

Land, who also has recommended a "biometric, tamper-proof Social Security card" for all workers, said, "The problem is always in the details, and I believe that any solution that will meet the fundamental requirement of being accepted by the American people will include securing the border first with measurable metrics that have been certified as met by the federal government in terms of stemming the flow of illegal immigration prior to the implementation of any program that would allow currently undocumented workers to begin a probationary pathway toward legal status, which would include going to the back of the line behind those who have been and are trying to come here legally.

"President Obama has laid out the groundwork for the beginning of an urgent conversation that must be taken up immediately to bring about a solution to this crisis so that

we can begin to mend the social fabric, rather than continue to rend it," Land said.

In 2006, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution on immigration that urged increased

border security, enforcement of the laws, and judicious and realistic dealings with illegal immigrants, while encouraging Christian outreach to immigrants regardless of their legal status. (BP)



Photo by Doug Rogers

BAGLEY HONORED FOR 25 YEARS AS CHURCH ORGANIST
Sara Jo Bagley was recognized June 27 for serving 25 years as organist of First Baptist Church, Montgomery. Bagley was presented with 25 roses. She is pictured with Chip Colee (left), minister of music, and Jay Wolf, pastor.



Senior Living Res

McGowin & King Mortgage: Finding rest from financial stress

By Jimmy Dixon
McGowin & King Mortgage
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The year is half over and what a busy year it's been at work and our church, Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. I know I'm ready for a little rest. At church, I started coaching my Upward Basketball team Jan. 9. As soon as the season ended, we started our second semester of FAITH. That semester ended last Sunday but before it ended my wife and I also taught the 5th and 6th graders in Vacation Bible School. By the way, she has just returned from chaperoning at our youth's camp week. Wow, talk about needing to rest!



Jimmy Dixon

As I look back over the names of people who we helped get a reverse mortgage these last five years, I see a long list of folks who are enjoying their rest from financial stress.

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Others contacted me because they had other debt, such as debt created by the use of credit cards. We've been able to help them get out of debt, and they'll never have to pay any of the money back as long as one of them still lives in the home.

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Source Guide

an advertising supplement
July 15, 2010



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If you were to ask for recommendations for a top-quality, professionally run home-care company in the Birmingham area with a reputation for compassionate and skilled caregivers ... chances are you would be referred to a team of angels. And that's exactly the reason why Rhonda Perez, founder of Angel Care chose the name that best describes the type of service she wants to provide for her clients. Perez, a registered nurse with 21 years of experience working in the senior care industry, started Angel Care in 2005 and currently serves the needs of seniors in Jefferson, Shelby and Chilton counties.

"When I decided to start Angel Care I wanted to offer seniors and their families a different approach in caregiving. I didn't want to operate just another 'sitter agency.' I wanted to offer my clients a compassionate, personal approach starting with the initial assessment. Angel Care's mission is to assist our clients with problem solving and assure them that we will explore ways to make life better for everyone involved," she explained.

"I promised myself when I started Angel Care that we would provide nothing less than the best care — the same type of care I would want for my mother

and father. That's why I only hire caregivers that I know will provide our clients with the best possible care delivered with a caring and compassionate heart. When I'm assisting families in making decisions I step into their shoes and ask myself, 'Is this what I would want for my mother?' If my answer is 'no,' then my recommendation to my client's family will be 'no,'" she emphasized, adding "I encourage and practice this mindset with my caregivers as well.



Rhonda Perez

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quality services by competent, caring professionals who possess the knowledge and skills necessary to perform care-giving duties that enhance and enrich the lives of the clients we serve," she concluded.

For more information, call 205-822-1000 or visit www.angelcaresitters.com.

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



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

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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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Randy Sharpe, music leader

Conference leaders: Henry Lyon, Sara Jane Lyon, Bill McCrary, Hebert Brown, Sue McWhorter, Debbie Childers and Beth Chapman

OCTOBER 18-20

Begins with lunch on Monday and concludes with lunch on Wednesday

Matt Brady, preacher
Keith Loomis, celebration leader
Frank Jones, music leader

Conference leaders: Henry Lyon, Sara Jane Lyon, Tim Childers, Debbie Childers, Bill McCrary, Beth Chapman and Tommy Gillon

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Missionary Eileen Mitchell at emitchell@alsbom.org or call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 221. For

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The theme for the conference is "God Will Make a Way."



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Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

Letters

(continued from page 2)

You've succinctly stated your position: "But remember, the game is about what methodology Southern Baptists should use to display their common passion to penetrate lostness." But sir, the methodology is not the object.

The object of the "game" is fulfilling the Great Commission. Oh, that we all would be passionate about spreading the good news of Christ without pride or prejudice.

Ken Askew
Russellville, Ala.

COOPERATIVE SERVICE

What was a report is now a document, which waters down and dilutes the very vehicle, which empowers us to reach the world with the gospel — the Cooperative Program (CP).

A reading of page 4 tells us there is a problem with the giving of our churches. The Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force wrote, "The average Southern Baptist gives only 2.5 percent of annual income to the local church and beyond. ... Local Southern Baptist churches are now giving an average of 6 percent of annual receipts to the Cooperative Program."

As part of the GCR report, the messengers affirmed and approved the "language and structure of

Great Commission Giving." But an amendment was made to this motion that reads, "Designated gifts to special cause are to be a supplement to ... and not a substitute for Cooperative Program giving."

To me, what this means is that the CP now becomes a part of the funding solution of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) instead of the funding solution. And it matters not what anyone says; when you allow designated funds plus mainline funding, you are taking away from one or the other, and in an economy which is teetering, this presents a problem of major implications.

Members of the GCR Task Force have issued a call to repentance and revival among Southern Baptists. While I agree we need to repent of our apathy regarding the lostness of the world, beginning in our Jerusalem (Acts 1:8) and extending to the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20) — our indifference, which seems to throw up walls of barriers and division — there is another element of repentance which must come to the surface. I would call to repentance churches and pastors who have sought to take away and/or reduce their giving to the CP. It amazes me these are the very ones who are calling on repentance and allowing the amendment for "designated gifts."

We as Southern Baptists need three things so we may impact the world and make a difference in the lives of 6 billion who are lost and need Jesus Christ.

First we need a true Holy Ghost revival, which will purge us of all impurities and pull us back to the centrality of the gospel of the cross and propel us into the world with

the message of hope.

Secondly we need the CP to stand as it was received in 1925 with no additions and with every Southern Baptist church giving at least 10 percent so the SBC may do the work to which it has been called.

Third Southern Baptists at the grass-roots (level) need to rise up and put to rest the continual elec-

tion of the popular and prominent to positions of leadership within the convention.

It is time to take a stand and serve cooperatively and humbly before the Lord and a lost world, which needs to see Jesus in everything we do.

Jeff Fuller
Rockford, Ala.

GraceGifts

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HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

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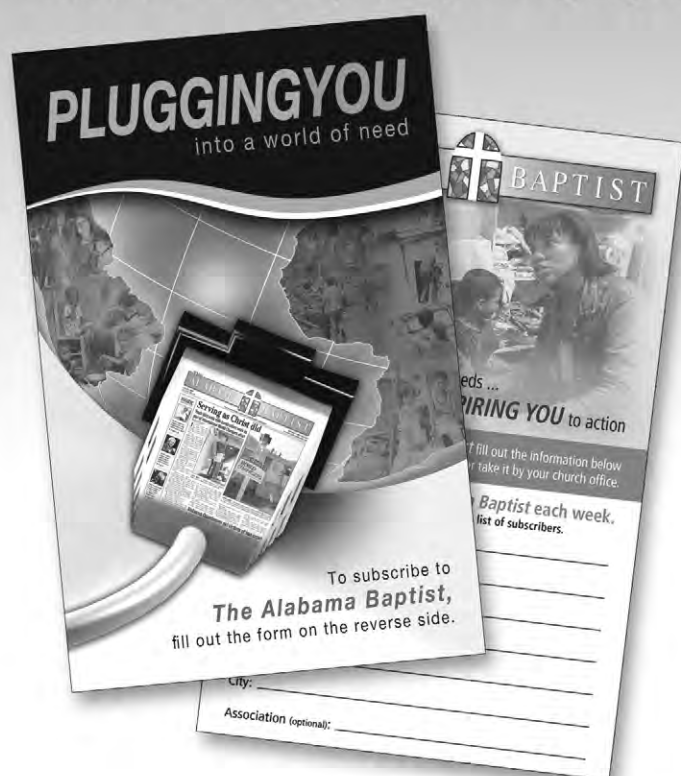


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About Alabama:

Alabama is diversifying socially, economically

By **Jim Williams**
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Alabama's economy is becoming more interconnected globally. This will benefit the state in the long run, but Alabama also is diversifying socially, and we must adapt to population changes as well.

Alabama has been very successful in attracting foreign investment. Government statistics indicate that foreign-owned companies employed about 80,500 Alabamians in 2007, which ranked 25th among all states.

A number of Alabama's largest and most successful companies are either owned by or subsidiaries of foreign businesses from around the globe — Europe, Asia, Canada and Latin America. Alabama and its people also have benefited from major foreign investments in auto, banking, steel and other industries. The high-paying jobs created by these investments have helped to make Alabama one of the fastest-growing states in personal income during recent years.

Demographic changes also are coming to Alabama but at a slower rate than in other parts of the country. According to the 2000 Census, 89 percent of the U.S. population is native-born, 60 percent of people were born in the state where they now live and 18 percent speak a language other than English at home.

In Alabama, 97 percent of residents were born in the United States, 73 percent were born in this state and only 4 percent speak a language other than English at home.

Since those who move tend to be relatively young, they are more likely to have children in the household, and the public schools experience social change on a bigger scale than we see in the overall population numbers. Ten years ago, students of Hispanic descent made up 1 percent of Alabama's public school enrollment. Today they make up 4 percent of statewide enrollment, with the largest concentrations in Albertville (33 percent), Russellville (32 percent) and Fort Payne (29 percent); in nine other school systems, they constitute more than 10 percent of students. Just more than 1 percent of Alabama students are of Asian descent, with the highest concentrations in Madison (7.5 percent), Hoover (6.5 percent) and Vestavia Hills (5.1 percent). Making sure that all students succeed is a key to Alabama's progress in the global economy in which we now compete.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Jim may be contacted at jwillia@samford.edu.

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MINISTER OF CHILDREN & YOUTH: Wayside Baptist Church is accepting resumés for a minister of children and youth. Salary and schedule contingent on applicant's education, experience and availability. Please send resumé to: ATTN: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 493, Alexander City, AL 35011, or e-mail to: waysidebaptist@bellsouth.net.

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Family Matters

July 2010

ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S
HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

Freedom *in* Christ

By Erin Tunnell, ABCH Communications Manager

July is the month we celebrate the freedoms won by our forefathers and defended by generations of our nation's military. For Christians, one of the most important freedoms is freedom of religion. Because of that freedom, we at Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries are able to share with the children in our care the freedom they can find in Christ.

Bradley is one such child.

He came to us, 11 years old, scared and desperately wanting a place to belong. His mother had left the family, and his father had lost his job and their house, leaving Bradley and his sister with nowhere to go.

They arrived at one of the Children's Homes campuses and quickly began adjusting to their new surroundings. Bradley, in particular, enjoyed going to church and being involved in the children's activities. He soon decided to become a Christian while talking with a church staff member.

He later attended an event where the leader invited all those who wanted to become Christians to pray the "Sinner's Prayer" with him. Bradley prayed it, and talked with that staff member as well.

After a while, church leaders realized that Bradley responded every time the invitation to receive Christ was given, because he did not understand the concept of eternal security in salvation. They met with Bradley's house parents and the campus director to talk about it.

"Bradley was obviously hungry for something stable in his life, and hungry for God's love," the director recalls. "He was confusing the idea of asking for forgiveness of sin with the (one-time) prayer of salvation."

As his house parents and director talked with him, Bradley became upset, feeling like they were trying to keep him from being saved and baptized. But they worked to help Bradley understand the difference. Then, one night, Bradley finally understood what it meant to become a Christian, and he and his house parent prayed together.

Although Bradley left the Children's Homes not too long after that, he was baptized before leaving, and went to his new home with the hope of eternal life.

And that is the vision of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries – that children will find hope and wholeness through knowing Christ.

"As one of God's ministries, we have an obligation to make sure we do everything to ensure the children come to a knowledge of Christ," Bradley's director says. "When kids have had people give up on them so easily, shame on us if we don't go the extra mile for them."

For an article on sharing about Christ and salvation with your child, visit the counseling articles section of www.alabamachild.org.

Is your church participating in the Annual Children's Homes Offering this fall?

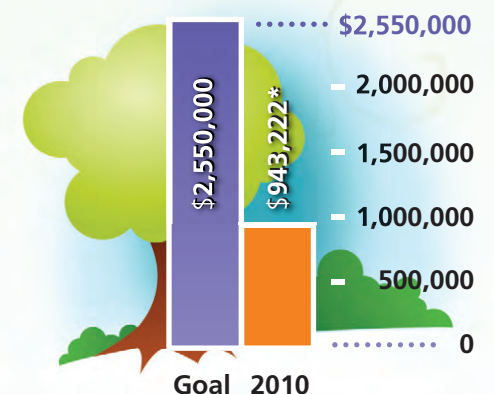
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Please also include the number of inserts needed and date you plan to hold the offering.

"We do everything to ensure the children come to a knowledge of Christ"

2010 ANNUAL OFFERING



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

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

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 18

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen

Assistant Professor, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

HOW CAN I EXPRESS LOVE? 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Understand Love's Importance (1-3)

In Chapter 12, Paul wrote to address the use of spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church. The believers had not been using their gifts in a loving manner, and so Paul spent Chapter 13 defining what real love is in order to unify the church through the appropriate use of spiritual gifts. Love in the Bible is not merely a feeling; it is a choice that we make through the help of the Holy Spirit to help others and provide what will benefit them instead of us. Paul emphasized that love is the most important aspect of Christian service through the use of spiritual gifts. In fact, if a Christian uses his or her spiritual gift without love, then the act is useless. This is a point made throughout the Old Testament and by Jesus in the Gospels. Love must accompany the use of spiritual gifts. When love is present with Christian action, then the church as a whole benefits and is unified. When believers turn toward selfish actions and pettiness, the church experiences division. This hinders the advancement of God's Kingdom by making the church look bad in the eyes of other believers and especially nonbelievers. If we understand how important love is, then we will choose to express love in all that we do within the church.

Demonstrate Love's Qualities (4-7)

In order to clarify, Paul went into detail regarding the various qualities of love. First, Paul stated that love is patient. This means that Christians need to look past differences with others in the church and strive for unity. Instead of being easily offended, Christians should remember that God loves us in spite of our imperfections. Love is kind; Christians should be known by how they treat others. We ought to be concerned for others, meeting their needs when we see them, not just when we are asked. Christians do not envy others but rejoice in that which God has given them. Christians do not boast because everything they have comes from God, not themselves. Paul also pointed out that Chris-

tians should not be rude but courteous to others. We do not seek to please ourselves, we do not get angry easily and we are not to keep a record of wrongs. Many of the problems in the church stem from grudges. God forgives us and commands us to forgive others perpetually. Therefore there is never a reason for a Christian to hold a grudge — ever. Furthermore Christians are to seek and promote truth. Lastly, in this section, Paul expressed that love protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. These are the characteristics that mark a Christian and need to mark our churches.

Exhibit Love's Permanence (8-13)

Paul finished the chapter by referring back to the original issue — the improper understanding and use of spiritual gifts. He hearkened back to prophecy, tongues and knowledge and showed that each of these gifts will pass away. The spiritual gifts are used for the purpose of building up God's Kingdom, but in eternity, the Kingdom will be perfect. The gift of prophecy, used to preach the gospel, will be obsolete, since it will no longer be necessary. Likewise we all will speak the same language (or at least understand each other) and have perfect knowledge. Paul likened our spiritual understanding to a child who reasons like a child and does not have the full knowledge of an adult. He furthered his analogy by comparing our spiritual understanding to looking into a bad reflection in a mirror. The mirror is not the real image, and if the mirror is a poor one, then the reflection is even more distorted. But when we see God face to face, we will understand completely. However, while these certain gifts cease, in the midst of this, love stands out, because love never ceases. In fact, God is love. In eternity, we all will continue to love and experience love. Therefore this gift is greater than other gifts because it is eternal. Paul completed the section by encouraging the Corinthian believers to abide in three characteristics — faith, hope and love — and then reminded them that of these three, love is the most important. When we realize how important love is, we will express love in everything that we do in our churches.

Bible Studies for Life By James Barnette

Associate Professor, Department of Religion, Samford University

THE POWER OF PETITION 1 Samuel 22:17-20; 23:1-13

Saul Plots (22:17-20)

Saul vowed to punish Ahimelech and his family, even though it was unlawful to punish an entire family for a father's crime (Deut. 24:16). Their offense was knowing that David had fled and not reporting it to Saul. The issues that Samuel had warned about the monarchy were now taking place. Saul had created a police state in which citizens spied on each other and the king executed those who opposed him. Israel had asked for a king "like the other nations," and that was just what it got. The men who received the command were Saul's bodyguards, who only days before had been under David's command. David had stated earlier that these men were careful to observe cleanliness regulations (1 Sam. 21:5), meaning that they were devout followers of Yahweh. It is not surprising, then, that Saul's bodyguards were unwilling "to raise a hand to strike the priests of the Lord." Doeg's savage and wholesale execution of so many is not unlike the ancient practice of herem, which, in its most extreme form, involved destroying entire villages — people as well as objects. It is ironic and telling that Saul refused to execute such massive destruction against the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:9), but in his deterioration, he was willing to do so against his own people. The perpetration of this act against a city of Aaronic priests was an unspeakable crime. Some suggest that Doeg used this savage act to get revenge on the priests of Nob for the detention he faced at the sanctuary earlier (1 Sam. 21:7). Abiathar the priest escaped and joined David at Keilah. The story depicts Saul as the destroyer of the priesthood and David as its protector. Later it is revealed that Abiathar brought the ephod with him (1 Sam. 23:6). Thus the true priesthood and priestly counsel and the divine oracle moved from Saul to David. Abiathar will be associated with David throughout the remainder of David's fugitive days and for the rest of his life. The priest will eventually share the position of high priest with Zadok during David's reign.

David Pleads (23:1-6)

Keilah was a border town in Judah, some 10 miles west of the forest of Hereth, where David and his men were camping. Situated that close to the enemy, Keilah was extremely vulnerable, particularly during the harvest season when the Philistine army needed food and supplies. Had Saul been genuinely concerned about his people, he would have dispatched an army to protect Keilah. Instead his obsession with finding and killing David was rendering him incapable of sound leadership. Some suggest that Saul's plotting included the misleading of his troops — claiming that their mission was to rescue the city of Keilah when his true motive was to capture David. Saul was not only willing to slaughter the priests of Nob but he was also willing to sacrifice a city of people to lay hands on David. David would not go to battle unless he was led and assured by the Lord. He inquired and received divine sanction. His men were frightened, however, so for their benefit, he inquired a second time. David received two answers from Yahweh. Both answers were positive but the second one was more explicit. First, David was given permission and authorization; second, he was assured that he would be victorious.

God Provides (23:7-13)

The central event of this passage is David's pursuit of Yahweh's direction by means of the ephod. David's ready access to Yahweh is highlighted here; the two conversed in a way that evokes easy trust. The incident shows his reliance on the Lord. Though he was Israel's greatest military leader, he would make no maneuvers without the consent and blessing of God. Furthermore he was careful to follow the means of receiving divine counsel as spelled out by the Torah. David wished to avoid causing harm to his men or the people of this city. As a result, he and his men left the city before Saul could set out against him. David's course of action proved wise, as Saul "did not go" to Keilah. At the time of his retreat from the city, David's troops numbered about 600. David's pre-eminence was ever increasing, while Saul's status was in downward spiral.

Christian Crossword

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ACROSS

- And ___ Israel that were round about them fled. (Num. 16:34)
- And ___ the son of Omri did evil. (1 Kings 16:30)
- Have ye not read in the ___? (Matt. 12:5)
- This is the ___ of the generations of Adam. (Gen. 5:1)
- There shall not a ___ of him fall to the earth. (1 Kings 1:52)
- Anger.
- With long ___ will I satisfy him. (Ps. 91:16)
- And they ___ him, and put on him a scarlet robe. (Matt. 27:28)
- Come, ___ the place where the Lord lay. (Matt. 28:6)
- Unsuitable.
- Be not afraid of their _____. (Jer. 1:8)
- Therefore called she his name _____. (Gen. 30:6)
- Aim.
- Alkali.
- Ye tithe mint and ___ and all manner of herbs. (Luke 11:42)
- He went and took ___ the daughter of Diblaim. (Hos. 1:3)

DOWN

- Our God whom we serve is ___ to deliver us. (Dan. 3:17)
- Having your ___s girt about with truth. (Eph. 6:14)
- The ___ of man shall be bowed down. (Isa. 2:17)
- To wash.
- Exclamations.
- "The Cat in the ___."
- Put on.
- Short.
- The ___ of truth shall be established forever. (Prov. 12:19)
- Your fathers, where ___ they? (Zech. 1:5)
- Married.
- Sharp.
- Green vegetable.
- Is there any taste in the white of an ___? (Job 6:6)
- Canal.
- The son of Naum, which was the son of _____. (Luke 3:25)
- ___ unto them that are wise in their own eyes. (Isa. 5:21)
- College official.
- The son of Arphaxad, which was the son of _____. (Luke 3:36)
- Light brown.
- On the seventh day God ___ his work. (Gen. 2:2)
- I will ___ me of mine adversaries. (Isa. 1:24)
- The king arose, and ___ his garments. (2 Sam. 13:31)
- We spend our years as a ___ that is told. (Ps. 90:9)
- They took their journey from _____. (Ex. 16:1)
- They that ___ in tears shall reap in joy. (Ps. 126:5)
- For ___, saith he, shall be one flesh. (1 Cor. 6:16)
- Brewed beverage.
- Radioimmunoassay. (abbr.)
- Ye have made it a ___ of thieves. (Matt. 21:13)

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

World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

British Methodists launch boycott of Israeli products

LONDON — The Methodist Church in Britain has launched a boycott of all products from Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories, prompting a wave of protests and accusations of anti-Semitism.

“The goal of the boycott is to put an end to the existing injustice. It reflects the challenge that settlements present to a lasting peace in the region,” said Christine Elliott, the church’s secretary for external relationships, after a vote on the issue June 30 at the denomination’s highest decision-making body, the Methodist Conference.

The church is also seeking to persuade Britain’s major supermarkets to comply with British government guidelines on distinguishing between products from Israeli settlements on the West Bank and Palestinian-manufactured goods. With about 265,000 members and about 5,800 local congregations, the Methodist Church says it is Britain’s fourth-largest denomination.

In a statement, the church said its decision on the products from Israeli settlements was in response to a call from a group of Palestinian Christians, a “growing number” of Jewish organizations, both inside Israel and worldwide, and the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. Speaking at the end of the conference in Portsmouth, in southern England, Anna Drew, a Methodist Church media officer, told Ecumenical News International, “We have been inundated with e-mails from people accusing the Methodist Church of anti-Semitism. People who make such claims are completely wrong. We are not anti-Semitic. We are looking for justice.”

Muslim mob murders family of Christian man

JHELUM, Pakistan — A Muslim mob in Jhelum, Pakistan, murdered the wife and four children of a Christian in June, but local authorities are too afraid of the local Muslim leader to file charges, according to area Muslim and Christian sources. Jamshed Masih, a police officer who was transferred 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Gujrat to Jhelum, Punjab Province, said a mob led by Muslim religious leader Maulana Mahfooz Khan killed his family June 21 after Khan called him to the local mosque and told him to leave the predominantly Muslim colony.

Masih’s Muslim neighbor, Ali Murtaza, said that after a shopkeeper refused to sell laundry detergent to Masih’s oldest son, 11, Khan led a Muslim mob to Masih’s home and confronted his wife. The mob accused the boy of blaspheming Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, and when she protested, they killed her and her children. When Masih tried to file a complaint against Khan for the murder, Station House Officer (SHO) Ramzan Mumtaz refused to do so, according to Murtaza and Presbyterian clergyman Saleem Mall. Murtaza said, “The SHO just said, ‘I am a poor man, I have a family, and I was pressured by higher authorities not to register the FIR [First Information Report] as Khan is a very influential man. I am sorry; I don’t have anything in my hands.’”

SHO Mumtaz confirmed that he responded to the request to file the complaint against Khan in these exact words. Masih has filed a complaint with the chief minister of Punjab Province begging him for justice, according to Mall.

Christian professor, students threatened

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — Muslim students attacked a Christian professor at Peshawar University College in Hayatabad in June after he refused their demand to convert to Islam, the instructor said. Psychology professor Samuel John, a father of four who has been teaching at the university for 12 years, said as he came out of his house on the university campus at 8:30 a.m. June 14, about 20 to 25 students rushed and assaulted him. When his wife learned what was happening she ran to help him, but the students beat her as well. Both John and his wife were rushed to Lady Reading Hospital, where they were treated for their injuries. John is listed in critical condition. “I am still getting threats,” John said. “They say, ‘Leave the university or accept Islam. If you don’t convert, we will kill your family.’”

Police have refused to register a First Information Report on the incident, he said. Separately, in Danna village in southern Punjab province, Muslim administrators told three Christian students in the eighth grade to leave the school because they refused to convert to Islam. A new teacher of Islamic studies at Government High School Danna urged students in his class — Sunil Masih, Shazia Masih and Nasir Naem — to convert to Islam, said Ejaz Masih, the father of Sunil. The parents complained to the principal, who told them, under pressure from other teachers, to remove their children from the school, Ejaz Masih said. The families have fled the area with their children.

Campus News



University of Mobile

► **UMobile to Hold Registration Day for Freshmen, Transfer Students:**

The University of Mobile will hold a special registration day for freshmen and transfer students enrolling for fall semester July 23.

Students planning to attend the registration day should contact the office of enrollment services at 251-442-2222 or RSVP online at www.umobile.edu/visit.

Registration begins at 1 p.m. in Weaver Hall. Students and their families may meet with admissions and financial aid counselors, register for classes with their faculty advisor, sign up for residence halls and learn about Ram Rush and other campus life activities.

► **Scholarships Available for Transfer Students:** Scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$9,000 are available for transfer students enrolling in specific majors at the University of Mobile (UMobile) for fall semester 2010.

The Next Steps program is designed for transfer students planning to major in nine specific areas: accounting, art, athletic training, business, biology, computer information

systems, communication, history, math or political science.

Scholarships may also be available for transfer students majoring in other areas, according to Marie Batson, associate vice president for enrollment services.

Students interested in learning more about scholarship opportunities and enrollment should call UMobile enrollment services at 251-442-2222 or e-mail adminfo@umobile.edu or askfinancialaid@mail.umobile.edu.

► **UMobile Announces Theater Production Schedule:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Upper Room Theatre (URT) will present two musicals and one romantic comedy in its 2010–11 season, and season tickets are on sale now.

The theater will perform “Singin’ in the Rain,” “Barefoot in the Park” and “The Music Man.” All performances will be held at the Performing Arts Center of Saraland High School. The URT is under the direction of Bruce Earnest, chair and director of musical theatre at the UMobile Center for Performing Arts.

“Singin’ in the Rain” will be performed Oct. 8, 9 and 10. “Barefoot in the Park” by Neil Simon will be performed Feb. 11, 12 and 13. The season will end with performances of “The Music Man” on April 15, 16 and 17.

The first two performances of each show will be at 7:30 p.m. and the last performance of each show will be at 2:30 p.m.

Season tickets are limited and individual tickets are available two weeks prior to the show. Group tickets are also available. For more ticket and show information, contact Rebeca Doswell at 251-442-2383.



Samford University

► **Samford Hosts Pastors School:** Samford University’s Beeson Divinity

School will host its 23rd annual Pastors School July 19–23.

“Respite,” as in the sense of rest and a refreshing interval from life and work — ministry included — is the theme of this year’s series of lectures, workshops and worship services.

Daily Bible teacher James Earl Massey will lead morning studies on the topic “The Book of Hebrews: Jesus and the Believer.” Other speakers are Alistair Begg, Steve Brown, Christian George and Haddon Robinson.

Workshops on dozens of topics will follow basic themes of Bible and theology, Christian living and spirituality, ministry and leadership, and preaching and worship.

There will be a pre-conference preaching workshop beginning at 10 a.m. on July 19. The theme will explore biblical and theological perspectives of the Holy Spirit’s work in preaching.

The Pastors School schedule also includes opportunities for fellowship and recreation as well as special programs for children and youth.

For registration information, including cost and complete schedule, call 205-726-2731 or visit www.beesondivinity.com.



Judson College

► **Judson’s Vice President for Business Affairs Retires:** Judson College’s

vice president for business affairs, Gerald Macon, has announced his retirement and return to his native North Carolina.

Macon began his work at Judson in October 2006 after working in private industry and at two other Baptist colleges.

Judson trustees adopted a resolution of appreciation May 6 noting that Macon “commended practices and policies that enabled the institution not only to persevere in the face of extreme adversity but also to plan important initiatives that promise growth for Judson College.”



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Change on the inside

Golden Gate seminary graduates its first class at state prison

Morris Curry Jr., a chaplain at San Quentin State Prison in California, said the prison has more in common with Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary than one would notice at first glance.

"God is behind those walls," Curry said of San Quentin, which is located only 20 minutes from the seminary's Northern California campus in Mill Valley.

During a graduation ceremony at the prison in June, four inmates received diplomas in Christian ministries from Golden Gate Seminary's Contextualized Leadership Development (CLD) program.

The 30-plus inmates in the program at San Quentin are taught by seminary graduate students and alumni on a volunteer basis during spring and fall semesters. The program takes two to three years to complete, and instruction includes eight classes that range from church planting and evangelism to ministry training.

Golden Gate is marking the CLD program's 30th anniversary this year. The program has 62 centers nationwide and is taught in 17 states and 11 languages, but San Quentin is the only prison location.

Most CLD graduates have the option of participating in commencement ceremonies at one of Golden Gate's five campuses. But for the San Quentin grads, the ceremony went to the prison. More than 150 inmates and guests attended the ceremony in the prison's Protestant chapel.

"These graduates are receiving the same experience as our other graduates," said Jeff Iorg, Golden Gate's president. "The program is the same; the people on the podium are the same; the diploma is the same; and we expect the same kind of results from these graduates as from our other graduates."

"Some may wonder why such a program would be offered in prison, where many of the graduates will never be paroled," Iorg said. "Our mission is training leaders to expand God's Kingdom. The church is in San Quentin and needs leaders here, too."

Curry, of Garden Chapel Christian Fellowship at San Quentin, agreed. "People on the outside need to see the work that God has done on the inside with these men," Curry said, adding that ministry is happening in the cells.

"It might be the only time some of these men get to make a decision for Christ," he said. "God has done some-



BP photo

HATS OFF — Four inmates of San Quentin State Prison in California are the first to graduate from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's Contextualized Leadership Development program.

thing to them on the inside. You can see the redeeming value of God in their lives."

The program provides classes at a post-high school level to train Christian leaders. For those without a high school or college diploma or for those with English as a second language, CLD offers an opportunity to become equipped and trained for effective Christian service.

Transformed lives

Donald Hart, a seminary graduate who has taught several CLD classes, said he was amazed at the difference in some men.

"Even without knowing them deeply, I could see transformation, could see what God had done in their lives. The work of God doesn't stop at the prison door," Hart said.

Ray Fox, another seminary graduate, said he was struck by how much the prisoners accomplish with minimal resources. San Quentin students are not allowed to use computers; and there are no PowerPoint presentations, no CDs

and no theological library available.

"We use blackboards as a teaching tool," Fox said. "I am humbled by these guys. They come in with their handwritten, crumpled assignments, and they spend 16 weeks proving you're not wasting your time with them."

Curry identified some obstacles to earning an education in prison.

"While it is available, it is sometimes inaccessible because of lockdowns, late and slow meal schedules and inclement weather," he said. "It would be easy to use these as excuses, but these brothers were determined to keep going."

Don Beall, the seminary's nation-

al CLD director, said, "All the hardcover theology books are purchased with donated funds. The prisoners don't own the books, but they check them out and are responsible for them. These books cost \$49 each, and if they lose a book, they have to pay for it."

Inmates' salaries are 28 cents an hour, Beall said.

"Even with this minimal income, the Garden Chapel congregation has sent \$6,000 to six missions so far this year," Curry said in April.

David Cowan, one of the four inmates who graduated, oversees the prison's missions ministry through prayer vigils and fundraising, and he corresponds with missionaries through handwritten letters.

The other CLD graduates have ministries within the prison. Mark Baldwin teaches an apologetics class and leads a daily Bible study; Darrell Cortez Hartley counsels people who are struggling with addictions; and Robert Butler is an ordained minister.

"Under the leadership of my pastor [Curry], I minister to the needs of this church. I preach, pray, welcome, teach and assist the pastor in whatever he needs," Butler said.

At the conclusion of his commencement address, Iorg recounted an earlier meeting with the CLD students.

"A few months ago, I was asked to be a guest lecturer in a course. The subject was my book, 'Is God Calling Me?' I was told to speak for a few minutes and then let the men ask questions about it.

"To my surprise, when it came time for questions, every man in the class pulled out his copy of the book — complete with Post-it notes dangling from multiple pages — and started asking me questions," Iorg said. "They weren't general questions. They asked things like, 'On page 68, you said ... How do you apply this ...?' It was one of the most invigorating teaching experiences of my ministry." (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Hawaii governor vetoes same-sex civil union bill

HONOLULU — Following weeks of speculation, Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle vetoed a same-sex civil unions bill July 6, calling the proposal "marriage by another name" and saying the issue should be decided only by citizens in a statewide vote.

It was a significant defeat for homosexual activists, who had pressured the Democratic-controlled legislature to revive and pass the bill on the last day of the session in April and had hoped the governor, a Republican who opposes gay "marriage," could be persuaded either to sign it or to let it become law without her signature.

But the bill's opponents, led by the Christian group Hawaii Family Forum, made their voices heard in those two-plus months. Lingle's office said 60 percent of the 30,000-plus e-mails, calls and letters were opposed to the bill, which would have granted homosexual couples all the state legal benefits of marriage, minus the name.

Opponents argued it simply would serve as a stepping stone to gay "marriage," and they pointed to three states — Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont — which previously had civil unions but now recognize gay "marriage." Hawaii would have become the 11th state to legalize either gay "marriage" or civil unions (or their equivalent).

Five states — California, New Jersey, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state — recognize civil unions or domestic partnerships.

Five other states recognize gay "marriage": Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. The District of Columbia also recognizes gay "marriage."

U.S. church attendance increasing, Gallup reports

WASHINGTON — A new Gallup Poll found that Americans' self-reported church attendance has increased slightly since 2008.

When asked "How often do you attend church, synagogue or mosque?" 43.1 percent of Americans in 2010 said they attended church "at least once a week" or "almost every week." That's up from 42.8 percent in 2009 and 42.1 percent in 2008.

Researchers previously believed that church attendance rises when economic times are bad. The Gallup data, however, indicates that the opposite may be happening.

"There has been well-publicized speculation about the possibility that church attendance has risen over the past two years as Americans became more despondent and worried as a result of the economic recession," Frank Newport of Gallup writes. "However, trends ... reflect just the opposite pattern, with both church attendance and economic confidence increasing from 2008 to 2009, and now into 2010."

Conservatives, non-Hispanic blacks and Republicans demonstrated the highest participation, with 55 percent of each group reporting frequent church attendance. Liberals and young adults (18 to 29) rounded out the bottom, with 27 and 35 percent respectively.

In its report, Gallup says "the small increase in attendance between 2008 and so far in 2010 is statistically significant, suggesting that there has in fact been an uptick in religious service participation in the real world over the last 2 1/2 years."

Wisconsin court upholds traditional marriage amendment

MADISON, Wis. — Supporters of traditional marriage gained a big legal win at the Wisconsin Supreme Court June 30.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the state's constitutional marriage amendment, approved by 59 percent of voters in 2006, does not violate the state constitution's two-subject ban. Opponents argued that because the amendment prohibited both gay "marriage" and same-sex civil unions, it was unconstitutional. But the court, in a 7-0 ruling, disagreed.

"Both sentences of the marriage amendment relate to marriage and tend to effect or carry out the same general purpose of preserving the legal status of marriage in Wisconsin as between only one man and one woman," the court ruled.

The suit was filed by William McConkey, a University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh political science instructor. Wisconsin is among the states whose constitutions prevent amendments that are placed before voters from dealing with more than one subject. Similar lawsuits in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Louisiana have failed. Thirty states have marriage amendments, although not all of them prohibit civil unions.

"It might be the only time some of these men get to make a decision for Christ."

Morris Curry Jr.
Chaplain