

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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INSIDE

Christians in the Middle East

A series describing life for believers in several Middle Eastern countries



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Short-term outreach effort expands with statewide exposure, partners

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Samford missiology students put 'hands, feet' to studies

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Photo courtesy of Alabama WMU

LET'S PLAY BALL — Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, leads children in Jacmel, Haiti, in a game as part of a WMU missions experience June 26-July 3.

Hope in tragedy

Alabama WMU missions team reaches Haitian women, children

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Haiti was thrust into the spotlight when it was devastated by a magnitude-7 earthquake in January, and six months after the event, relief efforts are still ongoing. Homes were destroyed and families displaced, but one positive thing that has happened as a result of the quake has been the number of Haitians interested in Christianity.

To help foster that growing curiosity about the Lord, a group of men and women with Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) traveled to a small mountain village to minister to the women and children June 26-July 3.

"After the earthquake, we were told many people came to the churches because they were scared," said Susan (See 'Haitian,' page 3)



Photo courtesy of Alabama WMU

LET'S TALK — Susan Bartholomew (left) and Shirley Smith speak to the children through their interpreter Amors in Jacmel as part of the work they did with women and children while in Haiti.

Six Alabamians survive bombing in Uganda

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

While six Methodist missions volunteers from Alabama survived a recent terrorist bombing in Uganda, a volunteer connected to a Baptist church in North Carolina was not as fortunate.

The group from Birmingham's Asbury United Methodist Church was working with Sozo Children International, which provides homeless children with shelter and safety in a loving, Christ-centered environment in the capital city of Kampala, in early July. On July 11, it was at the Ethiopian Village restaurant located outside Kampala watching the final World Cup match between Spain and the Netherlands when the bomb exploded.

"A sound we didn't expect — the sound that every person fears — shook the earth," 23-year-old Asbury member Allen Nunnally wrote on his blog July 12. "The window my shoulder [was] on imploded into the room. A bomb? I almost didn't want to say the word, fearing that me stating it would confirm our biggest terror just became our biggest reality."

"A sound we didn't expect — the sound that every person fears — shook the earth."

Allen Nunnally

All six Asbury members — half of them recent college graduates and the other half college students — managed to escape without a scratch. The restaurant was one of two venues attacked by the Somali Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab on July 11. Less than an hour after the restaurant was hit, two bombs exploded at Kampala's Kyadondo Rugby Club, where more people had gathered to watch the final World Cup match.

The two terrorist attacks claimed the lives of at least 74 people, according to CNN.

"The church is so grateful to God for keeping a hand of protection on our children," said Mike Gibbs, Asbury's church administrator.

Nunnally, an Auburn University graduate, and Jay Clark, a University of Alabama graduate, went to Uganda in March and April, respectively, to do missions work. By the middle of May, the two had helped start Sozo.

(See 'Six,' page 3)

COMMENT

Plugged in to a World of Need

Baptists can pray for only those things about which they know. Baptists can participate in only those things about which they know. And Baptists will support only those things about which they know.

That is why regular reading of *The Alabama Baptist* is essential for any Baptist concerned about sharing the love of God with a lost and hurting world.

The Alabama Baptist State Convention has entrusted the state Baptist paper with the task of informing readers about what God is doing in and through Baptists in the state and nation and around the world.

In other words, the paper keeps readers plugged in to a world of need.

Sometimes the stories are dramatic. I remember the first story I ever wrote about the impact of an article in *The Alabama Baptist*. God's spirit used a relatively small article about a situation in southern Mexico to prick the heart of a building contractor. The contractor took one of his trucks, loaded it with special equipment and, together with four other men, drove to that remote town and worked for two weeks helping the local Baptist church with a building project.

That was only the first of hundreds of stories that have been shared across the years about how God used articles in the state Baptist paper as catalysts in readers' lives to get them involved in specific ways of sharing His love. Those articles highlighted opportunities like collecting medical and dental equipment for Baptist outreach efforts in different parts of the world, volunteering for evangelistic campaigns as part of partnership missions efforts, leading short-term programs for children of international missionaries, building projects, sports camps and missions trips of all kinds.

Read it with an open heart

In each case, it was an article in *The Alabama Baptist* that God used to plug the reader's passion in to a world in need of His mercy and grace.

Occasionally the situation is reversed, and God uses the information in the paper to help one in desperate need. A family in one church I served as interim pastor told me about a wayward daughter who had a history of drug abuse. The daughter had come home to say goodbye before taking her own life. The night she had planned to kill herself, she got up in the middle of the night and was sitting in her parent's living room. On the coffee table was a copy of *The Alabama*



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Baptist with a front-page article about a nearby drug rehab program.

Instead of taking her own life, she decided to try one more time. Today she is drug free and active in her church.

Even though staff members pray over every article and issue, there is no way of knowing how God will use an article or issue of the state Baptist paper to make a difference in the world. But He always does.

Use it as a resource

During the past year, God used articles in the paper to help galvanize opposition to electronic bingo gambling in Alabama. Some readers used information from *The Alabama Baptist's* emphasis on hunger to become more involved in helping hungry people in the state and around the world. Still others used the in-depth coverage of the House of God movement in Selma to help draw distinctions between Baptists and this cult-like group. The articles even helped some members come out of the movement.

Each week, the state Baptist paper plugs readers in to missions efforts across the state and around the world. Articles may feature innovative ministry ideas that can be duplicated in a reader's community. The articles may report how God is blessing a ministry somewhere in the world.

Even the act of reading about how God is using Baptists to share the gospel helps plug readers in to a world in need of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Reading the paper is missions education in action, and it often results in missions action on the part of the readers.

Perhaps that is why *The Alabama Baptist* often is called a missions publication. Some missions organizations even use it as a resource. It is the only publication offering information about missions in the state, nation and world all in one place.

A growing number of readers use the state Baptist paper to help them plug in to a world of need through prayer. The paper has become a weekly prayer guide. Readers pray for personalities and ministries featured in various articles. They pray for issues facing Baptists in our state and nation. They pray for needs of which they have become

aware, including the needs of persecuted Christians around the world.

Again it is *The Alabama Baptist* that keeps them plugged in to a world of need for which they can pray day after day after day.

This Sunday, Baptists across Alabama will highlight the ways the state Baptist paper keeps them plugged in to a world of need as they observe Read *The Alabama Baptist* Sunday on the convention calendar. Nearly three out of four Alabama Baptist churches provide the paper for members because they recognize how important it is that members stay plugged in to a world of need. The cost is only 25 cents a week plus taxes.

Share it with a friend

Individual subscriptions are also available at a slightly higher cost. And while *The Alabama Baptist's* award-winning website, www.thealabamabaptist.org, archives information from each issue, an official online version of the paper is not available.

Thank you for allowing the state Baptist paper to help you stay plugged in to a world of need. Share the paper with a friend who does not receive it, and urge him or her to subscribe. And make sure that every active family in your church is plugged in to a world of need through regular reading of *The Alabama Baptist*.

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Someone You Should Know

By Matthew Stephens, Correspondent, TAB

Lucille Martin

Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence
Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: 1 Corinthians 10:13

FAVORITE HYMN: "How Great Thou Art"
HOBBIES: Oil painting, photography and playing bridge

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Charles for 59 years, two sons, six grandchildren (three are deceased) and one great-grandchild



MARTIN

Without Lucille's strong leadership and work ethic, Woodmont would celebrate its 50th (anniversary) in 2011, but the church would not have a written record of its history to commemorate this special event," Gary M. Green, a member of the history committee at Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence, said of committee chairwoman Lucille Martin. She is also one of the founders of Woodmont Baptist's In-church ministry, which provides meals for people during a crisis.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I came to know the Lord when I was 8 years old. ... My mother's sister was a missionary at the time. She told me a lot of things that Christ had done in her life and that changed my perspective and that is when I decided to dedicate my life to Christ.

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

A: During my time at Woodmont, God has opened many, many doors for me. I have served as VBS (Vacation Bible School) director when my children were little. I have also served as WMU (Woman's Missionary Union) director. I have always been a member of the church choir. ... I have served on the history committee for the past seven and a half years. As you can see, I have gone from one thing to the next just doing what God has led me to do.

Q: What did you get from those ministries?

A: It is very rewarding to serve the Lord ... It really gives me a way to share my gifts that He has given me.

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

A: I will continue to do whatever and go wherever God leads me. I will continue on until I cannot move a bone in my body. ... I live by the saying "Wherever He leads, I'll go." ❧

Haitian pastor's wife to Alabama team: 'You will never know what you have done for us'

(continued from page 1)

Bartholomew, director of Baldwin Baptist Association WMU.

"The pastors were overwhelmed at first by all the people, but now they're working to do all they can to minister to everyone," she said.

And that's why the nine-person WMU team traveled to Haiti — to share in some of the outreach efforts. The team went armed with Bible studies and activities based on Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God."

Traditionally most Haitians practice Voodoo, and so the fear of evil is strong. In fact, a prayer request team members often heard from women was to sleep well through the night without worrying about evil spirits. Initially the children were cautious about suckers because they made their tongues change colors — something they interpreted as black magic.

Bartholomew said being able to alleviate those fears by bringing the hope of Jesus was a remarkable thing.

"One day, we saw 32 children accept Christ," she said. "To be able to pray with those little children, who say to you, 'I want Jesus to come live in my heart,' was such a blessing."

And to witness "true from the gut laughter" by the children as they participated in



Photo courtesy of Alabama WMU

SMILES — Judy Nuss of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, gives high-fives to a child in Jacmel, Haiti. The WMU team saw laughter and joy as it ministered to the children in the community.

the hokeypokey touched Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU.

"How wonderful it was to see that joy expressed," she said. "When we left that day, the pastor's wife said, 'You will never know what you have done for us today.'"

That sentiment was expressed at each of the eight churches the WMU team members visited, McIntosh said, noting the time at the churches consisted of games, songs and Bible stories with the children as well as Bible studies and sharing times with the women.

"It was important to us that the women knew they were valued, were loved and had hope," McIntosh said. "The unique thing

for us was that we had Marie (Toussaint) with us, so we could understand the culture of the people and the church.

Toussaint is a Haiti native who has lived in the United States for 20 years.

"To see how much courage they have after what happened to them, I can't even describe it," said Toussaint, who serves on the Haitian women's team with Florida Women's Missions and Ministry of the Florida Baptist Convention. "They ministered to me.

"I learned so much from my own people," she said. "There was so much faith even though there was so much poverty. After five days there, we could see hope, joy and smiles on their faces."

The Haitians are determined, too. Many of the churches the team visited didn't even have complete roofs, yet locals filled the makeshift pews to worship. After seeing things like that, the team members left with an extreme awareness of how fortunate Americans are and the knowledge that "there are some very obvious needs" such as with the education system for children.

To learn more about this experience, watch the video provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at www.thealabamabaptist.org. For more information about missions opportunities in Haiti, visit www.alsbom.org/haiti. ❧

Six Alabamians live to tell about bomb; 1 American does not

(continued from page 1)

On July 2, a team from Asbury arrived in the east African country to work with Nunnally and Clark at Sozo. Most of the team members left July 9, but four remained with Nunnally and Clark.

Early on July 11, Nunnally told one of the others that he wanted to be early to the restaurant in order to get good seats in front of the 25-foot screen on which all the World Cup games were being shown. The group was delayed, however, and was forced to sit behind a small brick wall and a curtain covering a window in the wall.

"The curtain I wanted gone just minutes before just saved [us]," Nunnally wrote on his blog. "The projector screen we all flocked to watch now lay in pieces."

He also wrote that he and the others rec-

ognized God's protective hand on them as people just feet from them were killed while they were left unharmed.

"We checked ourselves for injuries. Nothing. The blood that stained our clothes we realized was not our own," Nunnally wrote. "We were untouched, unharmed, unscratched. ... We circled, with our arms shaking around each other's shoulders, and prayed to God."

But Nate Henn did not live to tell the same story.

Henn, whose parents are members of the North Raleigh campus of Summit Church, Durham, N.C., was killed at the rugby club.

He had been in Uganda working with Invisible Children, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization that makes documentaries with the goal of ending the

use of child soldiers in northern Uganda.

In a statement, his family wrote that his "heart was for making the world a better place."

"Nate's legacy is the pursuit of peace and a future for the children of Uganda and the Congo," the statement reads. "We glow with pride at the man he was, and while we mourn today, we will celebrate him forever. We hope people will feel compelled to join his legacy and support others to live this life of service."

The Alabama group arrived back in Birmingham on July 14 and was provided counseling by Asbury.

To read more about the Asbury group's experience, visit Nunnally's blog at www.foundationonrock.blogspot.com.

(BP contributed)

Retired American Indian pastor Gallasneed Weaver dies at 76

Gallasneed Weaver, a retired American Indian pastor in Alabama, died July 13. He was 76.

A native of McIntosh, Weaver served as pastor of Rivers Baptist Church, McIntosh, for 30 years until he retired in the mid-90s. Rivers Baptist is one of only a few American Indian churches affiliated with the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

While serving as pastor of Rivers, Weaver also was an educator for the Washington County School Board.

For 25 years, he served as principal of Reed's Chapel Elementary School in McIn-

tosh and was a recipient of the National Education Award for Alabama.

Weaver also was involved with American Indian work. He was a former chairman of Alabama Indian Affairs Commission and a former council member of the Mowa Choctaw tribe. He was appointed by three Alabama governors to serve as a member of the National Congress of American Indians.

A graduate of Bacone College in Muskogee, Okla., Weaver also served in the U.S. Army and was awarded the National Eagle Feather Award for Alabama Indian Affairs.

"He and the others of his generation were

very important in keeping [the American Indian] churches alive and very important in serving the community. They've been very, very important to the community and Baptist work in Washington County," said Glenn L. Vernon, director of missions for the Isbell Indian Baptist Fellowship. "[Weaver] was very compassionate and very caring."

At the time of his death, Weaver was a member of First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland.

Weaver is survived by his wife of 50 years, Laretta; two children; and nine grandchildren. (TAB)



LEBANON

Christians in the Middle East



*Lebanese people among first
in world to accept Christian faith*

By Nabil Costa
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Lebanon, a remarkably small and beautiful country endowed with a very strategic location in the Middle East, is mentioned 70 times in the Bible, along with 35 of its cities and towns. In addition, there are various terms known to refer to Lebanon, including the cedars.

Perhaps Lebanon's proximity to the Palestinian town of Bethlehem, the cradle of Christianity, is one reason for this privilege. Another, as revealed by Scripture, is that Jesus visited Lebanese towns and cities, touching and transforming lives. We see this in several passages, including

► Mark 3:8: "When they heard all He was doing, many people came to Him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon."

► Matthew 15:21: "Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon."

► Luke 10:13: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and

ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you."

In his book "Lebanon in the Bible," Ghassan Khalaf highlights that fact that the Church's relationship with Lebanon started with Christ's relationship with the country and its people. Jesus took His disciples with Him when He visited Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:23); He took Peter, James and John to the Mount of Transfiguration. Follow-up visits were also made later on by Jesus' disciples as we see in Acts. Moreover Acts 11:19 notes that the early church fled from Jewish persecution and sought refuge in Lebanon — Phoenicia — where no doubt it shared the message with its hosts.

'Galilee of Nations'

The same point is further emphasized in "The Roots of Christianity in Lebanon," in which author Antoine Khoury Harb concludes that "Lebanon first received the Christian message from Christ Himself and then again from Christ's closest disciples. Christ lived and preached in the 'Galilee of Nations,' which encompasses much of the southern part of Lebanon. He was transfigured in front of His disciples on one of Lebanon's sum-

mits; He addressed the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon directly. ... When His disciples set out on their preaching mission, they found in the Lebanese cities ... a safe refuge for them and a favorable environment for accepting the teachings of the gospel." This perhaps explains why the people of Lebanon were among the first to accept the Christian faith.

History records that the country eventually became all Christian before Islam came. And thereafter, under the Byzantine Empire, Christianity in Lebanon came to be known as Byzantine Christianity. In other words, there were Arab Christians in Lebanon and the Middle East before Islam. Consequently the language, the social and family structure and customs are the same to a large extent.

Over the years, the country's strategic geographic position rendered it a haven for minority ethnic and religious refugees from various parts of the region, such that Lebanon became distinguished by its very enriching diversity. It also came to be referred to as a unique mosaic that brings together a religious mix of the following 13 Christian and five Islamic communities: Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic,

**"MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS
IN THE MIDDLE EAST ARE
CONDEMNED TO DECIDE
TO LIVE TOGETHER.
THERE IS NO THIRD WAY:
EITHER THEY CHOOSE
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COEXISTENCE BETWEEN
CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS
IS NOT SOMETHING
PREMEDITATED BUT
IT IS A CHOICE."**

— Mohammad Al-Sammak —

*Christian-Muslim
Committee for Dialogue*

Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt and Protestant and Muslim Shiites, Sunni, Druze, Isma'elite and Alawite.

Today, however, Christians are no longer the majority population in Lebanon. There are several reasons, including emigration. Christians now form 39 percent of a population of slightly over 4 million people residing in Lebanon, with Christian Maronites and Greek Orthodox forming the majority of the minor-



ity, followed by Catholics. Evangelicals come in last, forming the minority of a minority. As a matter of fact, while the various denominations — Christians and Muslims — are equally represented in the Lebanese parliament, Protestants have one member of parliament among the Christians representing them.

Each denomination has its own personal status law and courts.

Indeed it is not surprising that in such a highly sectarian country, almost every denomination has its own faith-based organizations, schools, universities, hospitals, etc. Evangelicals, including Baptists, are no different and have continued over the years to serve the communities to which the Lord has called them.

Overwhelmed by their minority status, many Lebanese Christians have emigrated in search of a possibly better future elsewhere. Others unable to travel, particularly following the Lebanese civil war (1975–1989), have isolated themselves

within their internally focused communities and churches almost totally detached from the majority Muslim community. Not surprisingly, fear of the other is on both sides — Christian and Muslim — and this is primarily because of the atrocities that took place during the years of war during which all militias, including those with a religious affiliation, had blood on their hands.

Still there is also a population of Lebanese Christians — albeit a minority — who appreciate the uniqueness of their identity and hence the responsibility before them to reflect Jesus in their lives as well as in the choices they make. And this again is true of both evangelicals and nonevangelicals.

Another positive sign is that a study on Muslims and Christians in Lebanon covering six communities — three Christian and three Muslim — revealed that the participants “expressed almost identical levels of willingness to forgive, whether the offender was from the same religion or from a different religion.”

We realize that we have many a challenge as a Christian minority in a majority non-Christian culture, particularly with the rise of fundamentalism. But still let us revisit these challenges in light of our calling — why do we think we are here in Lebanon, the Middle East and the Arab world?

Diverse challenges

We’re aware of the challenges and their impact on Christian presence in the region. And like any other part of the world, our challenges are diverse. Yet we want to light a candle, not curse the darkness. We want to make a difference — no matter how difficult and challenging. We seek with His grace to follow in His footsteps, adopting Christlike attitudes and approaches toward the different “other.” That is our calling as Middle Eastern Christians. Of course, the impact would be greater if we were to put our hands together — evangelicals and nonevangelicals. Not only that but our witness also would be much brighter then.

“Muslims and Christians in the Middle East are condemned to decide to live together.

There is no third way: Either they choose to live together or they are forced to live together. ... Coexistence between Christians and Muslims is not something premeditated but it is a choice,” said Mohammad Al-Sammak, secretary general of the Christian-Muslim Committee for Dialogue, in a recent interview with the international news agency ZENIT about the Lebanese government’s decree that the Feast of the Annunciation is a common feast for Christians and Muslims. Celebrated on March 25, the feast recalls the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary that she was to give birth to Jesus.

In response to a question about the emigration of Christians, Al-Sammak stated that this is equally a loss for Muslims as well as for Christians and “a defeat for Islam-Christian coexistence.” He added that “it is in the interests of Muslims ... to maintain the presence of Christians in the Arab world and to protect their presence with all its might not only out of love for Christians but because this is their right as citizens and inhabitants of the region, who were there before Muslims.”

For our part, as Arab Baptists, we were quite encouraged when the Baptist World Alliance made an important contribution putting together a very thoughtful, theologically profound and carefully crafted response to the Common Word letter in December 2008, which is today published on www.acommonword.com. The letter was written in 2007 by 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals to Christians to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam.

Seeking understanding

Again we’re aware of context-relevant challenges in our region, yet we need to seek first to understand then be understood, which is exactly what Arab Baptist Theological Seminary’s (ABTS) Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES), under the leadership of Director Martin Accad, pursues through its annual Middle East conferences (third week of June).

The mandate of IMES is to bring about positive transformation in thinking and practice between Christians and Muslims in the Arab world and beyond. In other words, we are fully aware that as Arab Christians we have a global role, too, which is why we encourage our fellow Christians from all over the world to join us at ABTS during the third week of every June to learn more about Islam and the Middle Eastern context and so dispel prevalent misperceptions that are at the roots of many conflicts in the world today.

The summer 2006 war on Lebanon transformed us — the caregivers — as well as our fellow Lebanese who sought shelter on our campus. As Christians and Muslims, we each had misperceptions about the other. Yet, to our amazement, we “connected” and were able to see each other as God sees us and relationships were built.

Rather than be discouraged by our minority status, let us instead meditate on the impact that a small amount of yeast can have when mixed with flour. We can only make a difference when we get out of our isolation and en-

gage with our neighbors as the Lord expects us to.

The mission at hand requires the entire body of Christ working together. The Lebanese Baptist Society pursues a mission to serve the Church in Lebanon and the Arab world through spiritual, social and educational development. And we do so through several ministry tracks, including

- ▶ ABTS (www.abtslebanon.org), which equips faithful Arab men and women from nine countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon;

- ▶ IMES (www.abtslebanon.org/IMES), which challenges the local, regional and global church to adopt Christlike approaches toward Muslims;

- ▶ publications, or Dar Manhal Al Hayat (www.bplebanon.org), which seek to provide the church with much needed Christian resources in the Arabic language;

- ▶ Beirut Baptist School (www.bbslebanon.org), a K–12 academy that serves as an oasis of tolerance and understanding where more than 92 percent of the student body is Muslim;

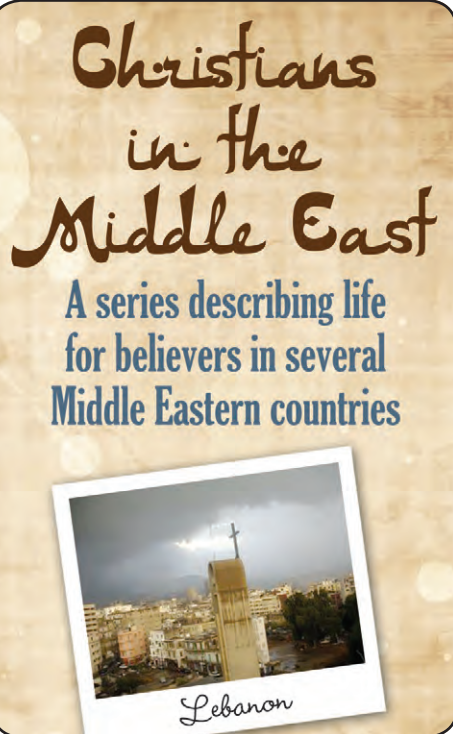
- ▶ Baptist Children & Youth Ministry (www.bcymlebanon.org), which works with children that they may develop a relationship with Christ and youth that they may stand steadfast despite contemporary challenges; and

- ▶ community relief and development through which we plan to initiate new platforms for Christian witness and ministry.

Each of these ministries was founded on prayers. And dear brothers and sisters — our global family and body of Christ — we count on your prayers and support.

Please pray for improved relations among Christians in the Middle East — evangelical and nonevangelical; that we will be able to focus on the big picture and choose to light a candle, rather than curse the darkness; and for wisdom for the church’s leadership that we may all perceive and pursue our biblical mission.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Nabil Costa is executive director for the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD). LSESD is the parent organization of several ministries, including Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Beirut Baptist School and the Dar Manhal Al Hayat publishing house.



Photos courtesy of Nabil Costa

SEMINARY CLASS-STYLE GATHERING — Salim Sahiouny, president of the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Churches in Syria and Lebanon, begins a public lecture at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary with prayer.

Across Alabama's Associations

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **Bradleyton Church, Highland Home**, baptized its first person, Opal Atkinson, indoors May 23. Since Atkinson is in a wheelchair, the church made a small, make-shift baptismal "pool" for her. In the church's 113 years it has never had a baptismal pool. Mickey Castleberry is pastor.

CHOCTAW

► **Cullomburg Church, Silas**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 1, 11 a.m. Former Pastor Frank Morrison Sr. will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow. There will be an afternoon program featuring the Cullomburg Quartet, pianist Jonathan Gunn and other local musicians. The church also will hold revival Aug. 2-4, nightly at 7, with Henry "Buddy" Deason, of Thomasville. Christopher Giles is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Chaplain Col. Alvin M. "Sonny" Moore III** is the new pastor of **First Church, Enterprise**. He previously served as the church's interim pastor and as pastor of Church on the Circle, Enterprise. He served as a pastor for 16 years before going on active duty and also served in the Mississippi National Guard and Army Reserve for eight years.

Moore retired in 2008 having served 34 years in uniform. He is a graduate of Northwest Mississippi Junior College (now Northwest Mississippi Community College) in Senatobia, Delta State College (now Delta State University) in Cleveland, Miss., New Orleans Seminary, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa. Moore and his wife, Martha (deceased), have three children and seven grandchildren. ► **Damascus Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming July 25. The Hendersons, of Milton, Fla., will sing at 10 a.m. Former Pastor Buddy Nowell will speak at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. For information call 334-347-2198. Hubert McWaters is pastor. ► **Goodman Church, Enterprise**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 1, 11 a.m. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Bruce Williams is pastor.



MOORE

► **Tallaweka Church, Tallas-**

ELMORE

► **Tallaweka Church, Tallas-**

see, will host the Kempters Gospel Band July 24, 6:30 p.m. The band consists of a father and six children ranging in age from 6 to 19 each playing an instrument. Isaac Kervin is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **First Church, Athens**, will celebrate its 190th anniversary July 30-Aug. 1. On Friday, there will be an old-fashioned weiner roast at 5 p.m. Fred Lackey will speak. On Saturday, there will be a reception from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and a Walk Through the Past in the main building with tables depicting important events throughout the church's history. Other church's with significant relationships to First, Athens, also will participate. Aaron Johnson will speak at 7 p.m. On Sunday, the service will be at 10 a.m. with guest speaker Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions. Edwin Jenkins is pastor.

MADISON

► **University Church, Huntsville**, will host Gospel Heritage IV, of Tullahoma, Tenn., in concert July 25, 6 p.m. Two members of the group are former members of the church. John "Bobby" R. Burt is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Prospect Church, Wilsonville**, will hold a singing with the Gospel Aires July 24, 6 p.m. Refreshments will follow. Travis Trimble is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Pine Forest Church, Ashville**, will hold revival July 26-28, nightly at 7, with Ken Maddox, pastor of Argo Church, Trussville. Paul Williams is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**, will celebrate homecoming July 25. There will be a southern gospel singing at 9:30 a.m. Bobby DuBois, associate executive director for the State Board of Missions, will speak at 10:45 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow at noon. For information call Pastor Mark Brumbeloe at 334-257-4498.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Central Church, Cullman**, will hold revival July 25-30, nightly at 7, with Jerry Lake. There will be special singing. Elton Rutherford is pastor.

WINSTON

► **New Prospect Church, Haleyville**, will hold its 15th revival celebration July 25-28. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Jamey Ragle will speak Sunday, Phil Waldrep Monday, Jackie Kay Tuesday and Junior Hill Wednesday. Ron Horton is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Russellville's Calvary Church celebrates 50 years

To comprehend what has happened in the life of Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville, in the past 50 years is "a little overwhelming," Pastor Wade Wallace said.

Starting with 18 charter members in July 1960, the Franklin Baptist Association church has grown to more than 900 members today. And while the number of people saved through Calvary Baptist's ministry is unknown, records indicate that 700 people making professions of faith have been baptized during the past 50 years.

"God has used the people of the church," Wallace said. "They have had a vision and passion to move forward and are open to the Lord's leadership.

"They have always been that way ... and they continue (to be) that way today."

Calvary's growth and success were woven throughout the July 11 golden anniversary celebration. Testimonies by current and former members, including charter member Delano Lawrence, detailed specific ways the church has impacted lives and reached a lost world for Christ. "This is my first church home," member Jenny Pace said. "I was saved and baptized here. ... It is a family here. There is unconditional love."

Member Chris Willis said it is the people who mean the most to him. "When I think of Calvary Baptist Church, I think of the people and how they molded my life. ... They taught me to be a leader. ... They showed me God's faithfulness."

Current and former staff members also took part in the service, and three former pastors were present: James Warren (1968-1970), Ralph Jones (1972-1977) and Joe Lenox (1984-1999). Warren delivered the anniversary sermon, preaching from Deuteronomy 31:1-8.

Also during the service, presentations were made to the church by Larry Dover, director of missions for Franklin Association; Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission; and Jennifer Davis Rash, managing editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Those who attended the service received a special 50th anniversary historical booklet, enjoyed a fellowship lunch after the service and had the opportunity to purchase a special edition Christmas ornament commemorating the occasion.

Judy Pounders, who helped organize the anniversary celebration, delivered the historical report during the service.

"The service was very emotional," she said. "It was a blessing."

Selma's Ocmulgee Church marks 190 years

One hundred and ninety is probably not the biggest number you've ever thought of but go ahead and consider it for a moment. What happens when you think of that number in years? Suddenly 190 seems a little more significant. Now imagine a body that is 190 years old, a church body that is.

Ocmulgee Baptist Church, near Selma, celebrated its 190th anniversary June 13. Pastor Danny Sumerlin said when people think of 190 years, they might imagine something old and dying but "our church is not dying; it is very much alive and ready to reach our world."

Ocmulgee Baptist celebrated with a two-hour service that highlighted the talent within and history of the church.

A men's quartet, a ladies ensemble and several soloists provided special music. Those who have been members of the Cahaba Baptist Association church for more than 50 years were recognized. Following the service, lunch was served in the fellowship hall, giving members new and old, special guests and friends the opportunity to connect and share stories.

The church has come a long way from its humble beginnings in a log cabin in 1820. The congregation has grown from the original 12 members to nearly 500, and the meeting place has expanded through the years. The most recent expansion project, adding Sunday School rooms, a nursery, a children's church chapel and bathrooms, was completed in June 2002.

Ocmulgee has its place in Alabama Baptist history since its founding pastor, Charles Crow, was the first president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. The church also hosted the state convention annual meeting several times.

But Ocmulgee still has the same zeal for outreach as it had in its early days, Sumerlin noted.

Bob Edwards, who has been a member for 65 years, agreed, pointing to Awana, an evangelism and discipleship program for children, and Safety Net Academy, a ministry for wayward boys in the community.

Retired DOM Blackburn dies at 93

Harold Blackburn, retired director of missions (DOM) for Baldwin Baptist Association, died July 10. He was 93.

Blackburn served as Baldwin Association DOM for 12 years (1972-1984). He previously served as DOM for East Liberty and Clarke Baptist associations. Before becoming a DOM, Blackburn was pastor of Airport Boulevard Baptist Church, Mobile.

A native of Citronelle, Blackburn graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and attended

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

During his ministry, he was a member of the Alabama Baptist State Convention's Christian Life Commission. At the time of his death, Blackburn was a member of First Baptist Church, Silverhill, where he served as outreach director for more than 15 years.

Blackburn was preceded in death by his son and grandson. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Miriam; two daughters; six grandchildren; and 19 great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Alabama Ministries

Christian Library International

► Christian Library International (CLI), a North Carolina-based ministry that provides books, Bibles and other Christian resources to prison inmates across the United States, is requesting Bible and book donations.

CLI sends approximately 100,000 Christian books and Bibles per year to about 1,000 jails and youth detention centers. Nineteen of these are in Alabama. CLI accepts donations of new

and gently used Christian books, Bibles, CDs, audio cassettes and DVDs. Specific needs are large-print Bibles, Christian books and Bibles in Spanish, gospel tracts, youth material and Christian fiction and nonfiction books.

Churches and Christian groups are encouraged to hold a book drive. CLI provides on its website a free downloadable poster, bulletin insert and brochure to use with a book drive.

For more information, visit www.cli-nc.org.

'Something we could do to help'

Originally a short-term missions project, Circle of Friends expands reach with state Baptist paper

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

Abbey Green, a member of Uniontown Baptist Church in Cahaba Baptist Association, thought that Circle of Friends was going to be no more than a summertime ministry.

But then an article about the sewing ministry ran in the Aug. 20, 2009, issue of *The Alabama Baptist* and the phones started ringing.

Members of approximately 10 churches across Alabama read about the ministry and wanted to help.

"The article running in *The Alabama Baptist* helped us greatly because it started getting other churches involved," Green said. "It has spread like wildfire.

"We thought it'd be like a summer program in the church, but it shows that if God has His hand in it, He's going to do what He wants to."

Circle of Friends began with long-time friends and co-workers Green and Debbie Harrison, a member of Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, in Cahaba Association.

They went on a missions trip

to Nicaragua with First Baptist Church, Minden, La., in April 2009. They could not forget the children they had seen and their desperate need for clothes so they got to work.

By the beginning of summer, the women had started Circle of Friends to make clothes for the needy children of Nicaragua and teach school-age girls in Marion about sewing and missions. By the end of summer, the girls had made and sent to Nicaragua 300 pillow-case dresses for girls, 175 shorts for boys and numerous flip-flops and sun visors.

And that's when the article ran in the state Baptist paper.

When Patsy Jones, a member of Spring Valley Baptist Church, Springville, came across Green and Harrison's story, she knew immediately that this was something she wanted to do.

"I read the article in *The Alabama Baptist*, and I thought, 'Hey, this is something that we could do to help,'" Jones said. "The need of the children (struck my heart). ... I was helped when I was a little girl, so I knew what it felt like to have something new."



Photos courtesy of Abbey Green

GIFTS OF LOVE — Abbey Green, a member of Uniontown Baptist Church, along with 10 others, built a home for a Nicaraguan family of 11 and gave clothing and hygiene items to Nicaraguan children June 19–25.

So she called Green right away and began enlisting the help of her Sunday School class and others in her St. Clair Baptist Association church to make dresses to send to Circle of Friends.

Within two months, Jones and her group had sewn more than 100 dresses.

The article, along with family connections, also helped members of Greensboro Baptist Church in

Hale Baptist Association to get involved with the ministry.

"Practically every one of our members gets *The Alabama Baptist*, so we were aware of what was going on. I think it assisted ... members in the church," Pastor Dee McGuire said. The fact that one of the founders of Circle of Friends — Green — is the stepgranddaughter of Greensboro Baptist members, Tommy and Regina Washburn, also helped church members connect with the ministry.

Hygiene items and clothes donated to the ministry, along with some it made, were delivered to children in Nicaragua when Circle of Friends completed its latest missions project — building a house for a family of 11 in the Central American country.

The idea to do "something bigger" was born of a death.

Green's grandfather Bill Wheeler died in November, but during the last few months of his life, he and his wife, Bobbie, had immersed themselves in Circle of Friends' missions projects, even opening their home to serve as the ministry's meeting place.

So upon Wheeler's death, his

family asked people to give a memorial gift to Circle of Friends instead of sending flowers.

"We got so many memorials we decided we needed to do something bigger (than making clothes)," Green said. "So we decided to use the money to build a house."

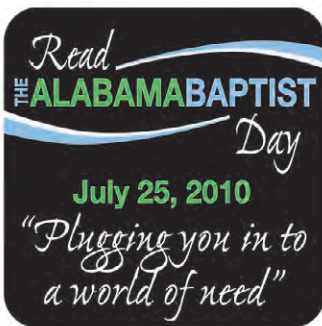
Providing clothes, homes

The week of June 19–25, she and 10 others, representing four Alabama churches, a Florida church and a Louisiana church, traveled to Diriamba, Nicaragua, with Nicaraguan Christian Outreach, a Louisiana-based nonprofit organization that seeks to minister to the spiritual, physical, mental and domestic needs of the Nicaraguan people, and built a house.

And there are already plans to build two more houses and distribute more clothes in early 2011.

"This ministry has truly blessed us," Green said. "I hope we can get more people on board with the Nicaraguan ministry or any other mission that God lays on their heart."

For more information, visit www.thealabamabaptist.com and search for "Abbey Green" or contact Green at abbeywgreen@gmail.com.



UMobile seeks to develop civic leaders

How do I fulfill my responsibility to God as an American citizen? The University of Mobile (UMobile) has established a new center to help answer that question.

The Center for Leadership Development opened in May "with the goal of transforming America by strengthening Christian faith and character in all areas of public and private life ... and to bring national attention to the goal of helping leaders fulfill their responsibility to God as American citizens," according to a UMobile news release.

The center is directed by Joe Savage, president and founder of Winners Influence and Joe Savage Ministries. He is a motivational speaker, author, evangelist and former pastor. A UMobile alum, Savage has a master of divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and a doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

As its first initiative, the center has launched the twelve23 Prayer Movement for America, which calls on Christians to pray

for the nation each day at 12:23 a.m. or p.m. Oct. 1–Nov. 2, the day of America's midterm elections.

Savage and others involved in the movement encourage individuals to sign an online contract committing to pray daily at www.twelve23.org.

The numbers 12 and 23 in the name of the movement refer to three significant events that call individuals to action: the bravery of a World War II private Dec. 23, 1944, who dug a foxhole in the sand with the intention that no enemy soldier would get past him; John 12:23, which says, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified;" and a citywide prayer meeting in Mobile on Dec. 23, 2009, which drew together individuals of all denominations and races.

The movement crosses political and denominational lines as it draws together leaders in business, education, entertainment, law, media, medicine and ministry, Savage said. "We are finding patriotic Christians everywhere who want to see a return to the values and freedoms with which our nation was formed,"

he said. "We are inviting these individuals to unite together and to become the influential leaders which our nation so desperately needs right now."

UMobile President Mark Foley, the architect of the twelve23 contract, said the time is right for American Christians to take a stand for what they believe.

"The ethics, values and character of our nation's soul are in dire straits. We need great leaders who will not retreat into a place of apathy or cowardice but instead will lead with godliness, character and selflessness," he said.

Savage said the movement is an initial step in a continuous process of helping and encouraging Christians to take a stand and lead in all areas of public and private life.

The center will develop and provide seminars, webcasts and other tools to help American Christians maximize their influence in transforming the nation, he added. (TAB, UMobile)



Savage

'Ignite' to feature Christian artists

The summer break from school may be nearing its end, but churches in the Pell City area want to offer one more festival-type event before football becomes everyone's main focus.

Ignite, a Christian music festival for all ages, is set for Aug. 14 in Pell City. While it is a worship event for believers, festival sponsors encourage those who plan to attend to use it as an outreach opportunity.

The rain-or-shine, outdoor event will begin at 1 p.m. and run until

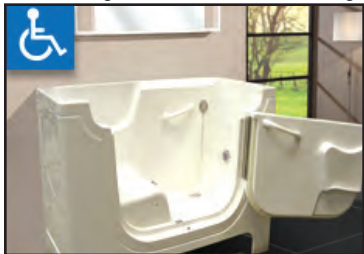
about 9:30 p.m. Gates will open at noon and food will be provided.

Ignite is sponsored by area businesses and churches, including Mount Pisgah Baptist Church and Mount Zion Baptist Church, both in Cropwell, and Eden Westside Baptist Church, First Baptist Church, Heritage Baptist Church, Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, New Hope Baptist Church, Prescott Baptist Church and Seddon Baptist Church, all in Pell City.

For more information, visit <http://ignitepellcity.com>. (TAB)

Church Resource

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For senior adults or those who have mobility challenges, Charlie recommends a popular tub-to-shower conversion which allows you to enter and exit with ease. Since 60 percent of all household injuries are from getting in or out of the bathtub, Charlie says this option is a wise choice for senior adults. The conversion includes an oversized shower pan which allows room for a portable bench seat, two safety grab-bars and a handheld shower wand so that you can sit and not have to stand for long periods of time.

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Charlie points out that Dream Baths also provides walk-in safety tubs with hydrotherapy for arthritis, back problems, lupus, muscular dystrophy, fibromyalgia and aches and pains.

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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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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."

'No limit to His blessing'

Jemison's Center Hill Church observes 150 years as congregation

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

In a church that averages 50 in Sunday School, there was no better way to conclude its 150th anniversary celebration June 27 than with the baptism of its newest member, communicating to the approximately 180 present that the church is "going to go on."

"[The] service and anniversary was an indication from God that we should continue," said Euleta Guy, clerk of Center Hill Baptist Church, Jemison, and chairwoman of its anniversary committee. "We are going to go on. God's going to be faithful to us; we've got to be faithful to Him."

And it was God's faithfulness that was the focus of the celebration. One way this was shown was through three former members sharing what the Chilton Baptist Association church has meant to them.

One of these, Shawn Lowery, answered the call to full-time ministry

while serving as the church's minister of music and youth. He remained at Center Hill Baptist for four years before going to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"It was a place that I grew and learned about ministry," said Lowery, who now serves as minister of students and activities at First Baptist Church, Portland, Tenn. "They were loving and accepting and allowed me to learn how to do ministry."

Members' faithfulness

The faithfulness of Center Hill members, both past and present, was also recognized.

Former and current deacons and staff members present that day were given a certificate and a glass Communion cup that the church used approximately 40 years ago.

Everyone who had been baptized and married at Center Hill was recognized, and the church itself was recognized by the Alabama Baptist Historical Com-

mission and Chilton Association.

Charles Langston was singled out to receive the title of deacon emeritus — the first person in Center Hill's history to be so honored. It was a "total surprise" for the 71-year-old who has served as a deacon 42 out of the 43-and-a-half years he has been a member of the church.

"I was crying like a baby," Langston said. "It was an extreme honor."

Center Hill has a rich heritage with many members being the sixth and seventh generation of direct descendants of its founders. Although not much is known about the church's beginnings other than it began in 1860, records show that the first church building was used as a church and schoolhouse until 1895. Since then, there have been three

other church buildings. The most recent building was completed in 1967.

With more than 40 pastors in its 150-year history, Center Hill has taken on the mission of giving newly ordained pastors a start in the ministry. "In fact, we started so many young pastors until we began to think that this was the work that God wanted us to do, even if we were a small church," the church

"We are going to go on. God's going to be faithful to us; we've got to be faithful to Him."

Euleta Guy
Center Hill Baptist Church

history states.

God also wanted Center Hill to be in this particular community, Langston said, noting not too many churches have the privilege of celebrating their sesquicentennial.

"God has blessed it for this many years, and there's no limit to His blessing," he said.

Enon Grove marks 125 years during homecoming service

Neither a fire nor a tornado have stopped Enon Grove Baptist Church, Cedar Bluff, from doing the Lord's work for 125 years.

And June 27, the Cherokee Baptist Association church celebrated those years of ministry during its annual homecoming service.

During the service, longtime member DeAnne Burt sang a solo and several members shared testimonies of how God has used the church. Scott Hosey, pastor of

Sand Rock Baptist Church and former pastor of Enon Grove Baptist, preached the morning message.

Deacon Carl Money said he appreciates the church and wants "to do whatever I can for the church."

And Enon Grove's history is filled with members who shared a similar philosophy. In 1885, a group of farmers erected a one-room church building in Cedar Bluff where Yancey's Bend, Clifton Camp and Hardwick Road came together. The

church was named Enon Grove. In the 1920s, the church building doubled as a school for children in the community. The building stood for 61 years until it caught fire just a few days before Christmas in 1946. Leaders from the church and community got to work rebuilding the church. Local farmers cut their own logs, hauled them to a sawmill and pitched in on the building effort.

But in March 1947, a second tragedy struck. With work on Enon

Grove's building almost complete, a tornado scattered the wooden church structure over the community. But church members picked back up and soon had a building that would serve them for about a decade.

In the late 1950s, Enon Grove sold its building and property to Alabama Power Co. as Weiss Dam and Weiss Lake were being developed in the surrounding area. Alabama Power, in turn, gave the building back to the congregation, and in 1960, it was moved from Yancey's Bend to a location on Sewell Ferry Road.

"It's been amazing what the church has withstood," longtime member Vivian Mobbs said. "The people have remained committed and dedicated to the Lord. I am amazed at what God has done with the church's limited funds. We've never had a big bank account."

During the decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Enon Grove enlarged and remodeled its facility as the congregation grew. In 1994, the church purchased property on Highway 9 in Cedar Bluff, its current location, and broke ground in September 1998. The erection of the new facility received a huge boost when volunteer work crews from Carpenters for Christ and Campers on Mission came to help with the construction. The congregation held its first service in the new building in May 1999.

Today Enon Grove's ministry focuses on the next generation: children, youth and young families, Pastor Gary Hardin said.

"We have wonderful people, a spacious facility and a terrific location," he said. "Now we just need to go after the folks who need to be reached for Christ." (TAB)



Photo by Doug Rogers

LADONIA BAPTIST CHILDREN SUPPORT STATE DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

Children and their leaders from Ladonia Baptist Church, Phenix City, present a check for disaster relief to Mel Johnson, state disaster relief strategist, July 12. They raised the money through GA and RA missions projects and offerings from the church's Vacation Bible School.

Samford missiology students put 'hands, feet' to studies

By definition, missiology is the area of practical theology that studies the mandate, message and work of the Christian missionary.

Students in a summer term missiology course at Samford University in Birmingham applied their classroom study to real world needs during a working three-day missions trip to rural central Alabama.

"We thought it would be good to put some hands, feet and heart into what we were studying," course instructor Jim Barnette said.

At the end of the five-week course, the students teamed with Mountain Brook's Brookwood Baptist Church to assist with a sports and academic enrichment camp in Wilcox County. Located in the middle of Alabama's Black Belt region, Wilcox County is among the poorest counties in the state.

Brookwood Baptist, which Barnette serves as teaching pastor, has sponsored various missions programs in the Black Belt since 2004.

At an elementary school in the small Wilcox County town of Pine Hill, the students helped coordinate and lead the camp for 200 children and teenagers. The daily agenda included Bible studies, worship services and reading and science tutorials. Personal development sessions offered information on educational opportunities and how to prepare for college.

On the last night of the trip, the students initiated a meeting with a county commissioner and other community leaders to explore



Photo by Caroline Summers

HIGH-FIVE — Samford University missiology student Clay Huffaker gets a high-five from a young camper at a sports and academic enrichment camp missiology students helped lead in Wilcox County.

ways to strengthen and expand Samford's presence and ministry in the area. Such an effort would complement Samford's ongoing social ministry programs in neighboring Perry County.

The students were especially concerned with the need for programs that address mentoring and college preparation, Barnette said.

'Rich,' 'intense'

"The discussion was rich, intense and insightful," said Barnette, whose course syllabus included a study of poverty in the area through research and class discussion.

Even though well armed with data — such as the fact that Wilcox County's 25 percent unemployment

rate puts it on par with many third world countries — class member Clay Huffaker was surprised at what he saw during the visit.

"I have been amazed at how neglected the area is," said Huffaker, a senior religion major from Signal Mountain, Tenn. The experience opened his eyes to a need for churches to support local projects as well as world missions, he said.

"We often forget our next-door neighbors," Huffaker said. "There are people with just as much need in our back yard."

The class roster also included religion majors Austin Davis and Billy Shepard, sports medicine major Meagan Sloan and graphic design major Lauren Bond.

Pine Hill Baptist Church Pastor Carl Williams, who observed the students' interactions with camp participants, believes such hands-on field experience is a good thing,

especially for those who plan a career in ministry.

"It is important for them to see the needs of small towns and to know that there is a large opportunity for them to make a difference," said Williams, a Samford graduate with a degree in religion.

He noted many new seminary graduates begin their careers in small rural settings such as Pine Hill, which can have barriers, including racial ones. "It is good for students to see the cultural and economic challenges that can exist," he said. Barnette is satisfied that the missions trip was a good way to end the course.

"People talk about the culture shock that they experience upon returning from overseas missions trips," Barnette said. "As we pulled back onto our campus after three intense days in the Black Belt, we all experienced a similar shock after being just down the road in our own state. All it took was a two-hour trip to remind us of our calling to address issues of poverty and injustice." (SU)

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Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Alabama's Burroughs elected CBF moderator-elect

BIRMINGHAM — Colleen Burroughs, co-founder of Passport, Inc., has been elected as moderator-elect of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) for 2010–2011 after which she will assume the role as moderator for 2011–2012. She has served as the state representative for Alabama on the CBF Coordinating Council and as the chair of the CBF finance committee. She will follow Christy McMillin-Goodwin, associate minister at Oakland Baptist Church, Rock Hill, S.C., who is the CBF moderator for 2010–2011.

Burroughs currently serves as vice president of Passport, a Birmingham-based international student ministry she began with her husband, David, while they were at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. She also is a University of Alabama graduate and the founder of Watering Malawi, a ministry advocating long-term solutions to poverty and hunger through access to clean water, sanitation and simple irrigation in the country of Malawi.

Fewer churches provide insurance for ministers

NASHVILLE — The mounting cost of benefits is forcing churches to provide fewer pastors with medical insurance.

That was one of the findings of the Southern Baptist Convention Church Compensation Study, a survey of 11,674 staff positions in Southern Baptist churches. LifeWay Research conducted the survey in cooperation with GuideStone Financial Resources and Baptist state conventions through June 2010.

The survey revealed that fewer full-time senior pastors receive medical insurance from their churches today than in 2008, with 61 percent of churches partially or fully paying medical insurance for their full-time senior pastors, compared to 65 percent in 2008. These reduced benefits occurred at the same time churches were being impacted by the economic downturn and as the U.S. Department of Labor indicates the cost of medical care rose 3.2 percent and 3.4 percent in 2009 and 2010, respectively.

Ten percent of churches provide at least partial medical insurance funding for the pastor alone, while 17 percent fund coverage for the pastor and his wife, and 33 percent supply coverage for the pastor and his family. For senior pastors, churches fully or partially pay for the following benefits dental insurance, vision insurance, life and/or accident insurance and disability insurance.

Liberty University demotes Caner for false claims

LYNCHBURG, Va. — Liberty University has demoted the dean of its theological seminary after investigating claims that he exaggerated or fabricated parts of his testimony about converting from militant Islam to Christianity.

Trustees of the school issued a statement saying Ergun Caner made “factual statements that are self-contradictory.” He stepped down when his contract expired June 30 and accepted a contract to remain on the faculty as a professor for the next academic year.

Trustees said they accepted Caner's basic testimony of growing up a Muslim before converting to Christianity as a teenager but “found discrepancies related to matters such as dates, names and places of residence.” Liberty officials originally defended Caner against blogs questioning written descriptions of his academic credentials and recorded testimonies about being trained as a jihadist terrorist while growing up in Turkey.

After media outlets ran stories showing that Caner in fact grew up in Ohio the son of a divorced Muslim father and Lutheran mother, the university announced May 10 that a committee would conduct a formal review. The June 25 statement said Caner apologized for “discrepancies and misstatements that led to this review.”

Good News Bible translator Bratcher dies at 90

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Robert Bratcher, the New Testament translator for the “Good News Bible,” died July 11. He was 90.

Born in Brazil the son of L.M. Bratcher, a Southern Baptist missionary for 35 years, Robert Bratcher taught at Baptist Theological Seminary in Rio de Janeiro from 1949 until 1956. He then worked with the American Bible Society (ABS) until his retirement in 1995.

In the early 1960s, the then-Home Mission Board asked ABS to recommend the best translation for people who speak English as a second language. ABS leaders decided no single version really fit that need, so Bratcher was asked to do an English translation “for Southern Baptists.”

Released with the title “Good News for Modern Man,” the New Testament was first issued in 1966. The complete Bible was published in 1976 as the “Good News Bible,” also known as “Today's English Version.” It was once the best-selling Bible in America.

U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals ruling could increase profanity on TV

In a decision that could increase the amount of profanity on television, the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals July 13 struck down the Federal Communication Commission (FCC's) broadcast indecency policy, ruling that the standards the commission uses to monitor offensive language are “unconstitutionally vague.”

The case was brought by Fox, ABC and CBS and involved several instances of “fleeting expletives” on live TV.

During the 2002 Billboard Music Awards, Cher said the “f-word” and the next year on the same program Nicole Richie used the “s-word” and “f-word.” Both were broadcast on Fox.

The FCC found Fox in violation of the policy but the three-judge panel unanimously struck it down, saying the FCC's policy did not give broadcasters fair warning of what is and is not allowed. The panel criticized what it called unequal enforcement: While FCC found Fox guilty it allowed a variation of the s-word to be broadcast on CBS's “The Early Show.” The FCC ruled the CBS broadcast was exempt because it was a “bona fide news interview.”

Constitutional policy

The 2nd Circuit also questioned why the FCC declared the s-word on ABC's “NYPD Blue” to be offensive while not finding other curse words on the same broadcast to be offensive.

The FCC uses a series of criteria

in determining whether a program is in violation of the policy, among them whether the content is “patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium.” The FCC argues it needs latitude in its policy because networks are constantly trying to push the envelope.

“By prohibiting all ‘patently offensive’ references to sex, sexual organs and excretion without giving adequate guidance as to what ‘patently offensive’ means, the FCC effectively chills speech, because broadcasters have no way of knowing what the FCC will find offensive,” the court ruled.

“To place any discussion of these vast topics at the broadcaster's peril has the effect of promoting wide self-censorship of valuable material which should be completely protected under the First Amendment.”

Significantly, though, the judges noted, “We do not suggest that the FCC could not create a constitutional policy. We hold only that the FCC's current policy fails constitutional scrutiny.”

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the decision will only

make parenting more difficult.

“In the name of free speech, artistic expression, tolerance and self-determination, contemporary culture has grown gradually but relentlessly more coarse, more brutal and more outrageous to the point where it has all but lost its power to shock,” Land said.

“This federal court of appeals ruling will push society further down this alarming path.”

**Richard Land
Southern Baptist Ethics &
Religious Liberty Commission**

“This federal court of appeals ruling will push society further down this alarming path. While parents have the responsibility to hold the television remote firmly in hand, sudden outbursts of obscene and profane language, as well as so-called equipment malfunctions, often cannot be anticipated.

FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps, one of the five commissioners, labeled the decision “anti-family” and called for the FCC to act soon.

“In light of the uncertainty created by today's decision,” he said in a statement, “I call on this Commission to move forward immediately to clarify and strengthen its indecency framework to ensure that American parents can protect their children from the indecent and violent images that bombard us more and more each day. These parents — millions of them — are waiting.”

Parents Television Council (PTC) called the 2nd Circuit's ruling “unreasonable and unrealistic.”

“The judges claim the FCC's rules aren't clear enough about exactly which profanities, under exactly which conditions, are illegal. If this kind of illogical analysis would be applied to other areas, virtually every law on our nation's books would be overturned for ‘lack of clarity,’” the PTC said in a statement.

“The broadcast decency law, which the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld, is clear: broadcasters must refrain from violating community standards of decency during hours when children are likely to be in the audience.”

The ruling, PTC said, “authorized the broadcast networks to use the ‘f-word’ at any time of day, no matter how many children are in the audience.” (BP)



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 25

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen

Assistant Professor, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

Bible Studies for Life By James Barnette

Associate Professor, Department of Religion, Samford University

CAN I BELIEVE IN RESURRECTION? 1 Corinthians 15:1-6, 12-18, 50-52, 54b-57

It Is the Gospel (1-6)

Paul spent Chapter 15 dealing with the resurrection of the dead, a crucial element of the gospel message. In the opening verses, Paul set out to remind the Corinthians of the gospel that he preached and emphasized that this gospel is the only way to be saved. Some people today believe that there are many roads to get to heaven. In this chapter, Paul declared that there is only one gospel and if you believe otherwise, then you have believed in vain. After his opening, Paul expounded the gospel. First Christ died for our sins, a point that is supported with Scripture. This was not something that caught Christ by surprise; Christ came to earth fully knowing that He was going to die. Not only is this found in the Old Testament but also throughout the Gospels as Christ comments about His upcoming death. Because our sin separates us from God, our sin must be atoned for. The atoning work of Christ through His death is an important aspect of what takes care of this sin, washing it away. Paul then affirmed that Christ was buried, confirming His death — Christ was not merely knocked out or in some sort of coma; He truly died. However, He rose again on the third day, another point that Paul derived from the Scriptures. Paul contended that this is not some sort of myth, because the risen Christ was seen by many people, including Peter and the Twelve, not to mention more than 500 others. Paul declared that some of those who had seen the risen Christ were still alive, so that if one wanted to, then he or she could talk to an eyewitness. We can be certain of Christ's resurrection because this is an event attested by many witnesses. Not only can we find reasons to believe this but we also must believe this if we are to be saved from our sins.

It Is Reasonable (12-18)

In this section, Paul responded to some of the Corinthians' apparent denial of the physical resurrection. If this is the case, Paul

argued, then the preaching of the apostles is useless since it is a lie. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then even Christ was not raised, which Paul just established is the heart of the gospel. If Christ was not raised, then the gospel is false, and why should people believe a false gospel? What hope is there if Christ has not defeated death? Christ's death is necessary since it is through this defeat of death that we have hope in the resurrection of our own bodies. If Christ has not been raised, then His body lies in a tomb somewhere and death still holds power over us all. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then we are still under condemnation for our sins. The resurrection of Christ shows God's acceptance of this sacrifice, making it a true atonement. If the resurrection did not happen, then all of those who have perished died in their sins and had no hope. The resurrection of Christ is the completion of the atonement and provides assurance of the forgiveness of our sins.

It Is Certain (50-52, 54b-57)

In this last part of Chapter 15, Paul gave a glimpse of what will happen when believers die. The bodies that we currently have are perishable. We feel pain, we bleed, we cry and we grow old. But when Christ returns, when the trumpet sounds, believers (both those who have died and those living) will be made imperishable. We all will have new bodies at this point, bodies incapable of feeling pain and growing old. These bodies will never die because death has been defeated by Christ's resurrection, a point highlighted by Paul's quotation of two Old Testament passages. Death is defeated and this is the hope of Christians. Through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, Christians have an eternal hope, one in which we will live forever with God without any more suffering. This is why Christians preach the gospel to all nations, because apart from this belief in Christ and His atoning work, there can be no salvation. And as Paul established at the beginning of the chapter, there is no other gospel, no other way to heaven apart from this work of Christ.

THE POWER OF LOYALTY 1 Samuel 24:20-22; 26:1-2, 7-12, 21-25

Treachery Intended (24:20-22; 26:1-2)

Unless Saul knew and acknowledged David as Israel's future leader, the conflict and restlessness in the kingdom would never stop. Everyone else was aware of this reality. In 1 Samuel 23:17, Jonathan had reported to David, "Saul, my father, knows this." But thus far, we have only Jonathan's word for it. In verse 20, Saul finally uttered the words for which everyone had been waiting: "I know." Saul acknowledged to David, "You shall be king." The clause in Hebrew has an infinite absolute for emphasis ("being king you shall be king"), which means "You shall indeed be king." Saul was the last one to authorize David; he knew that nothing could stop the coming rule of his son-in-law. Note the major concern of Saul's request to David: The disgraced king was preoccupied with his own name and descendants, not the spiritual welfare of his people. Tragically Saul's sins would destroy his family, all but Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, whom David adopted at a later time.

David won many battles but one of his greatest triumphs took place in the cave when he restrained himself and his loyal soldiers from killing Saul. This composure is a good example for all of us to follow, particularly those whom God has entrusted with positions of leadership. "Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city" (Prov. 16:32).

Saul's hollow confession was short-lived. As in Chapter 24, he received a report of David's whereabouts and mobilized his troops to seek him out. The Ziphites were members of the tribe of Judah and should have been loyal to David. Hoping to gain the king's approval, for a second time, they betrayed David by supplying Saul with intelligence reports.

Trust Applied (26:7-12)

Abishai, David's nephew, accompanied him on a dangerous nocturnal mission into the very center of Saul's camp. Making their way past the perimeter, they found Saul's spear. The nephew requested the honor of killing Saul

with the spear. However, David perceived the situation to be a divine trial, an opportunity to demonstrate restraint and goodwill toward a God-anointed leader, not vengeance toward a human foe. David's fear of the Lord prevented him from laying "a hand on the Lord's anointed." However, David recognized the advantage of making off with Saul's spear, the symbol of his power, and water jug, the symbol of his life-sustaining resources. Having stripped Saul of his significant emblems of authority and security, David and Abishai made their way back out of the camp undetected and unharmed. The "deep sleep" induced by Yahweh is of the kind that Adam experienced in the creation of Eve (Gen. 2:21) and Abraham experienced in the promise of God (Gen. 15:12). This act of the Lord signals the way that He is working out His ordained plans for David.

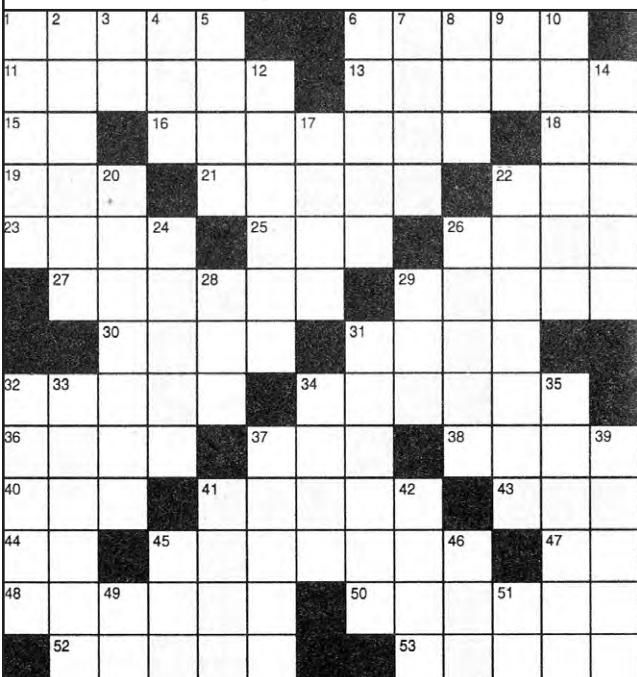
Loyalty Rewarded (26:21-25)

Once again, David's words and actions brought Saul to a temporary point of repentance. But this time, the words rang hollow in spite of Saul's strong words of self-condemnation. He promised never to harm David again. David recognized Saul's words for what they were — sincere lies. David tacitly declined the invitation to return. Instead he asked for one of Saul's men to come by and retrieve his spear. After issuing his gracious offer, David gave voice to the law of sowing and reaping. In ways that we might not always forecast or perceive, God rewards us for "righteousness and faithfulness." David's discourse proved a foreshadowing of Paul's words in Galatians 6:7: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." David's brief speech amounts to the last recorded words spoken by him to his father-in-law. Saul's last known words to David were gracious, offering blessing and predicting a triumphant future for him.

The two men parted with Saul headed for his demise and David headed for his glory. Soon David would sit on the throne and rule over God's people. One day, he would look back at such trying times and recognize that God's goodness and mercy had followed him through all of those days (Ps. 23:6).

Christian Crossword

By Evelyn M. Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- The ___ was like a lion. (Dan. 7:40)
- Thou shalt tread upon the lion and ___. (Ps. 91:13)
- The Lord is risen ___. (Luke 24:34)
- Recycled.
- The children of Gad called the altar ___. (Josh. 22:34)
- He hath cut ___ the cords of the wicked. (Ps. 129:4)
- Trade union. (abbr.)
- ___ not your heart be troubled. (John 14:1)
- Leah said, A ___ cometh. (Gen. 30:11)
- Cozbi, the daughter of ___. (Num. 25:15)
- They that ___ truly are his delight. (Prov. 12:22)
- Incline thine ___ unto me. (Ps. 17:6)
- Equalities.
- A broken spirit ___ the bones. (Prov. 17:22)
- Three times in a year did Solomon offer ___ offerings. (1 Kings 9:25)
- Lest thou ___ thy foot against a stone. (Ps. 91:12)

- He paid the ___ thereof. (Luke 24:34)
- Blouse.
- I will restore ___ unto thee. (Jer. 30:17)
- The ___ of the feet were part of iron. (Dan. 2:42)
- Therefore called she his name ___. (Gen. 30:6)
- ___, why persecutest thou Me? (Acts 9:4)
- The Lord ___ God shall deliver us. (2 Chron. 32:11)
- They would come and take Him by ___. (John 6:15)
- Compass point.
- Mind your ___ and Qs.
- The Father ___ such to worship him. (John 4:23)
- Southern state. (abbr.)
- Have their ___ exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:14)
- As they ___ He fell asleep. (Luke 8:23)
- All the land which thou ___. (Gen. 13:15)
- Masts.
- The Lord is risen ___. (Luke 24:34)
- Ave.
- The ___ and the waves roaring. (Luke 21:25)
- Exam.
- Zeal.
- All the fountains of the great ___ broken up. (Gen. 7:11)
- He set it up in the plain of ___ a. (Dan. 3:1)
- Plural ending.
- ___ unto Me; for I have redeemed thee. (Isa. 44:22)
- Hath he not root in himself, but ___ for a while. (Matt. 13:21)
- None of the disciples ___ ask Him. (John 21:12)
- And ___ builded an altar unto the Lord. (Gen. 8:20)
- Later.
- The city Adam, that is beside ___. (Josh. 3:16)
- All men are ___. (Ps. 116:11)
- Knitting stitches.
- Eastern Standard Time. (abbr.)
- Sheep's bleat.
- Barriers.
- Who ___ his ears from hearing of bloodshed. (Isa. 33:15)
- David made him ___ in the city of David. (1 Chron. 15:1)
- Listen!
- They shall not ___ nor thirst. (Isa. 49:10)
- ___ thou wilt to be angry? (Jon. 4:4)
- He ___ me beside the still waters. (Ps. 23:2 NKJ).
- Charges.
- Greek letters.
- Compass point.
- He smote them ___ and thigh. (Judg. 15:8)
- Maine direction.
- City on the west coast.



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Music, Literature and Movies



Southern Gospel Courtesy of Singing News magazine

WHISNANTS

Life Worth Living
UIA

If there's one thing that will help one have a long and healthy southern gospel career, then it is a thing called consistency. In the world of southern gospel music, having consistently good and strong songs, staying consistent to the sound that "brought you to the dance" and consistently offering fans what they want is a great way to make sure there are plenty of concert dates and church appointments to go around.



"Life Worth Living" is another example of how the Whisnants are following that consistency model. With songs written by some of the songwriters who are consistently at the top of the charts — Marty Funderburk, Geron Davis, Sandy Blythe, Dianne Wilkinson, Chris Binion, Rodney Griffin, Sandy Knight, Sheri LaFontaine, Kyla

Rowland and Marcia Henry (just to name a few) — this recording has many great songs that are sure to become favorites of Whisnants fans everywhere. Songs included on this CD are "Nothing but the Blood," "I Am Persuaded," "The Center of Your Will," "King Jesus Is Coming," "Send Me," "When He Calls Us Away," "I Want to Die Living," "I'm Saved," "He Crossed Out My Sin and Shame," "I'll Never Get Over the Cross" and "Arise."

(Danny Jones)

THE MCKAMEYS

The Message

Horizon/Crossroads

It's certainly appropriate that the first song on "The Message" is "Tell Me the Story of Jesus." The McKameys' career has been built on "the message" and telling the world about the story of Jesus.

"The Shepherd's Point of View" brings Sheryl Farris, Ruben and Peg's daughter, back to the mic after a considerable hiatus. She's been busy being a pastor's wife and mom, but she's back in rare form and does a wonderful job on this tune.

The group approaches "One Step at a Time" as a family quartet. With its punchy harmonies, The McKameys prove they can do more than their mountain style of southern gospel music, and by the way, Peg, you're a fine quartet lead singer. "I Keep Praying" is the first national release from "The Message." Keep this song close by at all times, as you've either just come out of a valley, you're in one or there's one on the way. As the song states, the only way you'll stand is if you keep praying.

If there's such a thing as a mountain-style, southern gospel praise and worship song, then "Above and Beyond" is it. I love the all-acoustic treatment to the song "This Is My Story." "There Is Much to Do" is an up-tempo, old familiar gospel song The McKameys bring back tapping into that wonderful family quartet sound yet again.



ing, but encouraging readers. The author uses her own experience and that of others throughout the first half of the book to illustrate her points. Although the centerpiece of Demetre's story is her divorce, the book is much broader, bringing in a variety of life circumstances women are likely to find themselves in, all a result of discontent. The devotions, all practical and pointed, end with the opportunity for the reader to check in on daily choices that shape the fiber of their lives and the quality of their relationship with God.

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates

What Happened to My Life

Danna Demetre. *Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revel, 2010. 287pp. (Paperback).*

Billed as a "40-day plan for reclaiming your life," Danna Demetre's newest book is an ambitious attempt to help women restore balance to their lives. The book is a two-in-one, the first half a self-help volume, and the second part a 40-day devotional written to help readers adjust their practices and thoughts to "break the cycle of discontent."

The author a speaker, writer and former talk show host presents her credentials early in the book: She has been there. To illustrate her experience and to set the stage for her advice to others, she details the breakup of her marriage. Blaming the insidious role of discontentment, Demetre notes that she cannot undo the past, but that she shares her story in the hope that the readers will decide to "think and act in a new way, in a way that honors God and builds up others."

The book is practical in every way, not preaching or condemn-

Movie Reviews

By Matthew Stephens

Letters to God

Director David Nixon

Courage. Bravery. Hope. These words describe a Christian movie called "Letters to God." It is a heart-warming story about finding the faith to fight cancer once and for all. Overall, it is an inspirational movie that can be preachy at times but tells a good story. The movie sends a message to never give up hope in a crisis. The movie tells the true story of what happens when one boy's

walk of faith crosses paths with one man's search for meaning. The resulting transformational journey touches the lives of everyone around them.

Tyler Doherty, portrayed by Tanner Maguire, is an 8-year-old boy fighting brain cancer. Surrounded by a loving family and community, and armed with the courage of his faith, he faces the daily battle against cancer with bravery and grace. To Tyler, God is a friend and the best pen pal in the world. His prayers are

made in the form of letters, which he composes and mails on a daily basis. The letters find their way into the hands of Brady McDaniels, portrayed by Jeffery Johnson, who is a substitute postman standing at a crossroads in his life. At first, he is completely confused and in conflict over what to do with the letters. But the decision he makes becomes a living testament to the quiet power of one boy's unshakable faith.

"Letters to God" will be released on DVD on Aug. 10.

Finally the concluding song is just as appropriate to end the CD as the first song was to start this recording. You see the great thing about "The Message" is that Jesus is still "Standing at the Altar" for those who so desperately are in need of the message of the gospel — which is always the message of The McKameys.

(Les Butler)

MICHAEL COMBS

Rain on Me

Lamb Lover Music

The latest release from Michael Combs shows once again his prowess for penning songs that strike a chord deep in the heart of everyone. Unlike many southern gospel artists who search diligently for their next great song, Michael simply goes upstairs to his music room and starts writing. "Rain on Me" features varying styles of music, all of which, like in projects past, show off the versatility of Michael's capabil-

ity to use different types of music to deliver the message of Jesus Christ to a very broad audience. Building



of Michael Combs.

From the acoustic opening track "Almost Home" to a driving "Glorryland" to a lyrically powerful ballad, "Only a Fool," there are tracks on this CD that everyone will enjoy. If you listen closely, then you will probably recognize the background vocals on the end of "Only a Fool" — we're not going to tell you who it is. You'll have to get the latest project from Michael to figure it out for yourself.

(Richard Wick)

Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Predator**, Terri Blackstock (Zondervan)
2. **Take Three**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
3. **Her Mother's Hope**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
4. **Edge of Apocalypse**, Tim LaHaye and Craig Parshall (Zondervan)
5. **Take Four**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
6. **Shades of Blue**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
7. **The Shack**, William P. Young (Windblown Media)
8. **A Lineage of Grace**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
9. **The Telling**, Beverly Lewis (Bethany House)
10. **Who Do I Lean On?**, Neta Jackson (Thomas Nelson)

Nonfiction

1. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C. Cook)
3. **Bringing Up Girls**, James C. Dobson (Tyndale House)
4. **So Long, Insecurity**, Beth Moore (Tyndale House)
5. **Unnamed**, Chris Travis (Standard Publishing)
6. **The Love Dare**, Stephen and Alex Kendrick (B&H Publishing)
7. **The Five Love Languages**, Gary Chapman (Moody Publishers)
8. **Forgotten God**, Francis Chan (David C. Cook)
9. **Grace for the Moment: Morning and Evening Edition**, Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)
10. **Fearless**, Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)

All-star on, off field

Relationship, not religion, led Cardinals' Wainwright to Christ

One ... two ... three ...
As the pastor stepped to the pulpit, a young Adam Wainwright began counting.

74 ... 75 ... 76 ...

The preaching continued, and so did the counting inside Wainwright's head.

328 ... 329 ... 330 ...

"As long as he kept talking, I would keep counting," said Wainwright, a member of the National League team in the recent All-Star game. "There were times when I got up almost to 1,000, which is really embarrassing. I'm so competitive, and I was so lost at the time, that going to church was a game. That was the only way that I could make myself sit through it without complaining and whining and fussing, was to make a game of it. So I made it a counting game."

That competitive fire may not have been appropriate for the setting, as Wainwright now ashamedly admits, but it has served him well atop the mound. Over the past few years, the St. Louis Cardinals' Wainwright has become one of the game's most dominant pitchers. He won 19 games in 2009 and finished third in Cy Young balloting in the National League.

So far in 2010, he's second in the league with 13 wins and a sparkling 2.11 ERA, and was good enough to earn his first All-Star spot in a game July 13 at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, Calif.

Wainwright still competes fiercely on the diamond, but now Wainwright has a different attitude when it comes to attending church and hearing the Bible preached.

He grew up in a single-parent home in Brunswick, Ga., where his mom made sure he went to church every Sunday. He heard the Word of God preached year after year, but it didn't sink in.

Resisted at first

His counting games during the sermon continued until middle school. He then started attending regular Fellowship of Christian Athletes meetings, primarily because of his friends and the pretty girls who went.

"High school came, and I started to get farther and farther removed from the Christian way," Wainwright said. "I grew up going to Vacation Bible School. I could tell you about the Bible and all the parables and the stories and all that. But to me at the time, it was really a history book and not something that was talking about a messiah."

The Atlanta Braves drafted Wainwright in the first round of the 2000 amateur draft, and in rookie ball his first roommate was Blaine Boyer, now a relief pitcher for the Arizona Diamondbacks. In Boyer, he found someone who was a committed Christian and who lived a godly lifestyle. Wainwright took notice



Reuters photo

FASTBALL — Adam Wainwright, pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals, accepted Christ in 2002 and continues to live for Christ in the spotlight. He most recently pitched in the All-Star game in Anaheim, Calif.

and began talking to Boyer about why his life was different. Boyer told Wainwright about the change Jesus Christ had made in him, but Wainwright wasn't willing to make that commitment to Christ himself.

About that time agents began calling Wainwright, and he was drawn to Steve Hammond, also a Christian. Hammond signed Boyer as a client as well, and the two of them began tag-teaming Wainwright in their witnessing to him.

"They knew I had questions," Wainwright said. "I was coming to them all the time with questions about eternity and how do you know you're right, how do you know Christianity is the way and not Buddhism or Islam or any of these other ones."

The two convinced Wainwright to attend a conference sponsored by Pro Athletes Outreach (PAO) in 2002. They told him he could leave anytime if he didn't like it.

The headline speaker for the conference was Joe Stowell, former president of Moody Bible Institute and now president of Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Mich. Wainwright remembers hearing Stowell talk about the relationship side of Christianity. That was something he never re-

membered hearing about before.

"The message had probably been given to me a lot of times before, but my ears weren't ready to hear it," Wainwright said. "At this particular time at PAO, my ears were finally ready to listen."

On the second day of the conference, Wainwright repented of his sins and trusted in Jesus Christ for his salvation.

A year later, the Braves traded him to the Cardinals. He debuted with the team in 2005, and took over as the team's closer late in the 2006 season and during the playoffs. Wainwright moved into the St. Louis rotation the following year and has been an anchor for the Cardinals ever since.

Living life 'with Jesus'

"Without God, without Jesus in our life, it's always going to be empty," he said. "We're always going to be striving to get to that next plateau, and then when we get to the top plateau, there's nothing there."

"With Jesus in our life, He says no matter what we do, whether we fail or have the most success, He's going to love us the same. That message, to me, is so huge for this lifestyle we're in." (BP)

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Church of England closer to allowing women bishops

LONDON — The Church of England will proceed with legislation to allow the ordination of women bishops, despite fierce opposition from Anglican traditionalists.

After a marathon, 12-hour debate in York, the church's General Synod on July 12 rejected calls for further delays in developing a draft law to allow female bishops. The earliest women bishops could be ordained is 2014. But the decision did little to tamp down furious infighting that some fear could prompt conservatives to defect to the Roman Catholic Church.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams told London's *Daily Mail* newspaper July 13 that avoiding a schism over the contentious issue would be "desperately difficult."

Williams' attempt at a compromise — allowing conservative congregations to be overseen by male bishops — had been rejected earlier, but he insisted the Synod's decision to go ahead was "not the end of the road."

Williams added that merely dumping the problem into the "too-difficult basket" was not "really ... an option."

Meanwhile Rachel Weir of the group Women and the Church described the Synod's ruling as "momentous." Williams and his No. 2 official, Archbishop of York John Sentamu, will now draft legislation allowing women bishops and send it to all 43 dioceses for approval.

If a majority of the synods approve the draft, it will be presented to the 2012 General Synod. If all three houses — bishops, clergy and laity — approve the measure by the necessary two-thirds majority, women bishops could start being ordained in 2014.

Vatican reports third consecutive financial deficit

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican recorded a \$5.2 million deficit for 2009 as investment in communication and building upgrades offset revenues from donations, according to new figures from the Holy See.

The third consecutive deficit was also attributed to a decline in the property market and the global stock market, where the Vatican has significant investment in bonds and shares.

The negative result — \$314.7 million in revenue against \$319.9 million in expenses — came despite an increase in donations from Catholics worldwide. The Peter's Pence offering, which is collected to support Vatican operations, rose 9 percent, to \$82.5 million. Catholics in the United States, Italy and France were listed as the most prominent donors, with South Korea and Japan also making significant contributions.

The statement said the bulk of the Holy See's costs were spent on Pope Benedict XVI's activities and security, its telecommunications system, restoring monuments and treasure troves and media projects such as Vatican Radio.

The Vatican, which first released financial statements in 1981 to improve transparency amid claims it was making huge profits, was \$1.13 million in the red in 2008 and \$11.4 million in the red in 2007. A separate audit of the finances of Vatican City reported a \$9.8 million loss in 2009, just more than half the deficit of the previous year.

Christian communities under attack in Punjab

SARGODHA, Pakistan — Christian communities in two areas in Punjab province came under attack in July. In Sargodha on July 1, an unidentified motorcyclist tossed a grenade in front of the gates of St. Filian's Church of Pakistan, next to a small Christian-owned amusement park where children were playing, Christian sources said. It did not explode.

Pastor Pervez Iqbal of St. Filian's said the Bomb Disposal Squad and New Satellite Town police took the grenade away. High-ranking police officials cordoned off the area, declaring a "high red alert" in Sargodha, he added. At a small village near Sheikhpura, a church building and Christian homes came under threat of demolition July 5. Islamic extremists issued threats as, accompanied by local police, they intended to demolish the Apostolic Church Pakistan structure in Lahorianwali, Narang Mandi, with a bulldozer, area Christians said. Assistant subinspector Rana Rauf led Narang Mandi police and the extremists in an attempted demolition that was averted with the intervention of Christian leaders who called in district police.

Area Christian Zulfiqar Gill said the Islamic extremists threatened the Christians. "They said that if we ever tried to rebuild the walls or renovate the frail Apostolic Church building, they would create a scene here like Gojra," Gill said, referring to Aug. 1, 2009, attacks that left at least seven Christians dead.