

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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## INSIDE



**Gambling in Alabama: Part one of an eight-part series**

◆ Pages 5-8



**Mixtec people group focus of unique ministry opportunity**

◆ Page 9



**Vestavia Hills teen 'horrified' over human trafficking victims, seeks to help**

◆ Page 14

## 'You name it, they need it'

### Alabama Baptist volunteers care for Haitian orphans in Jacmel

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on Jan. 12, perhaps no story was more distressing than the plight of thousands of children orphaned by the quake.

Reporters told of babies sleeping in the backs of pickup trucks, teenagers sleeping outside and children wandering the streets unprotected.

In a country long plagued by extreme poverty, 380,000 Haitian children were already orphans, according to UNICEF. After the earthquake, aid groups estimated that the number of orphaned children would rise by the tens of thousands.

In Alabama, Tanya Birchfield, a member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, had been praying for an opportunity to be involved in orphan care. She and her husband, Andy, had recently added a daughter to their family through adoption, and she felt God leading her family to work toward involving her church family in ministering to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children both at home and abroad.

#### Answered prayer

The Birchfields shared their ideas with Brian Gay, minister of missions at First, Montgomery, and Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). They learned of the efforts of Alabama Baptists already ministering in Haiti (see story, page 4), and Tanya Birchfield immediately knew the Lord had provided a unique opportunity to work with other Alabama Baptists to help Haitian orphans.

"We shared our heart with Mel about what we wanted to do, and he already knew where we could help," she said.

In May, the SBOM adopted the city of Jacmel in southern Haiti as part of Southern Baptist relief efforts in the Caribbean country. Through his connections with a pastor in Jacmel,



Photo by Brian Gay

**ALL ABOARD** — 'Samuel's orphans' climb into the back of a tap-tap cab, a type of taxi in Haiti, as the Alabama Baptist team gets ready to depart for the United States. They are pretending to go with the team.

Johnson knew of Samuel, a 22-year-old man in the city who was caring for 16 orphaned children. The earthquake destroyed Samuel's home, and though he had found temporary lodging for eight of the children, he and the remaining children were living in a tent.

The Birchfields, Gay and Johnson were part of a team who went to Haiti in early August to introduce the Birchfields to Samuel and the children in his care. They heard their stories — emotional stories of abandon-

ment and abuse that moved them to action.

With Johnson's help, the Birchfields secured a rental home for Samuel and all the children and found furnishings for it. They left praying for God to send more volunteers to help the children and His guidance as to what would be next for all of them.

On Aug. 15, Dr. Victor Norman, a member of First Baptist Church, Red Bay, in Franklin Baptist Association, visited Samuel and the children for

medical evaluations. The needs he and other missions volunteers working with him saw in the children reflected those he saw in patients of all ages during his week in Haiti.

"You name it, they need it," Norman said.

"The people have a lot of health issues related to nutrition, clean water, parasites, stomach problems and skin diseases especially."

A veteran of several missions trips, most of them to Ecuador, Norman (See 'Long-term,' page 4)

## Van crash leaves FBC Montgomery thankful

By Kristen Padilla  
The Alabama Baptist

Nate Conte knows being the oldest child means he may need to help his two younger brothers from time to time. What he never expected was extending that help in a potentially fatal situation.

But when a group of youth from First Baptist Church, Montgomery, wound up upside down in the church van on Interstate 85, 15-year-old Nate was the one who kept 13-year-old Jacob safe.

"It just makes you proud to be a dad," Jesse Conte, an associate in the office of communications ser-

vices for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, choking up. "I remember thinking, 'God, you are there.' I remember breathing prayers. I was still thinking, 'God, I know you are in control,' and I had a peace from that perspective. But I was terrified."

#### Day trip turned sour

Conte's sons were part of a church caravan of youth on their way to Lake Martin for a day trip Aug. 21. The Conte brothers were in a van with nine other youth and three adult leaders when the right rear tire of their van blew out causing it to fishtail and flip several times across the median.

Stuart Davidson, minister to students at the Montgomery Baptist Association church, was driving the van and was trapped until the Jaws of Life was used to get him out. One student landed on the asphalt of the southbound lanes, and one was pinned under the van.

It was Jacob's first youth trip and first trip without his parents.

"I had been telling Nate to watch [Jacob] closely," Conte said. "[Jacob] was almost ejected from the van, but Nate grabbed him."

Nate, who was sitting over the tire that blew, said protecting his brother (See 'Miracle,' page 15)

# COMMENT

## A Song for the Saints to Sing

In case you missed the central points of the many-sided issues about which the apostle Paul wrote in the first part of his letter to the Romans, he provided a CliffsNotes summary in the last nine verses of Chapter 8. And he did it with what many biblical scholars believe became a hymn of the early church.

The writer of the International Critical Commentary observed, "It is clear that the whole subsection (Rom. 8:31–39) has been carefully constructed with an eye to rhetorical considerations."

Other scholars describe the passage as a "cap" of all that has come before. Most note the passage's rhythmic quality in its original language and point to the repeated literary patterns and other features as marks of a "liturgical tradition."

The familiar verses about the power of God's love that produces assurance for every believer are broken down into four stanzas, much like a free-verse poem. The first three stanzas each begin with a rhetorical question: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31); "Who is he that condemns?" (v. 34); and "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (v. 35). Each of the stanzas uses the first-person plural pronoun.

Each stanza also repeats a major theme found earlier in the letter, such as the love of God in Christ for us, the assurance that is based on that love, the final vindication because of God's love in Christ and how all tribulations of life become unimportant in comparison to God's love.

### God as our advocate

Verse 31 begins this hymn of celebration with the declaration that God is for us. The "if" is not a question. The word is used more like a statement of fact — "since God is for us." God is our advocate. God took the initiative when He did not spare His Son. One can hear the echoes of Romans 3:21ff about all that God did to create a new righteousness through Christ Jesus.

God did this "for us all" (v. 32).

Since God has already given believers the greatest gift — His Son — He also will give



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

them "all things." This is not a reference to material possessions but points to the gifts of forgiveness, the presence of the Holy Spirit, eternal life and more.

The love that characterizes the relationship between the Father and the Son also characterizes the relationship between the Son and the saints.

Not only is God for us, He is with us against the Adversary. That is the message of stanza two (v. 33–34). The rhetorical question "who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen" (v. 33) reflects Isaiah 50:8–9. This is the "Sovereign Lord" who helps. In this passage Paul declares, "It is God who justifies," and He declares us not guilty through the work of Christ Jesus.

Verse 34 outlines the four-fold work of Christ — He died (became obedient unto death); He was raised by the power of God; He sits at the right hand of the Father; and He makes intercession for believers. As the apostle John wrote, "We have an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1).

Because God is for us and because God is our advocate, stanza three assures us there is no separation from the love of Christ (v. 35–37). Again the stanza begins with a rhetorical question and is followed by seven perils representing the worst of the human, visible world.

The first two possibilities are general in nature — trouble or hardship. The next five are specific perils Paul faced in his own experience. That is why some believe the use of Psalm 44:22 is a

description of how the apostle viewed his own life situation.

Verse 37 begins with a powerful "no." It is the negative answer assumed to the question that begins the stanza. Not only can the worst of the physical world not separate the believer from the love of God, in the midst of it all, the believer is "more than a conqueror."

One can almost anticipate the words written to the church at Philippi, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13). It is not physical power on which Paul relies. It is the power of "Him who loves us."

### Assured of God's love

Here, at stanza four (v. 38–39), the tenor of the hymn changes. It is as if Paul's personal affirmation overflows. His confidence in the ultimate victory explodes on the page. Behind the fortress of God being for us, of God being our advocate, of there being no separation from God's love, he can rest safe and secure. Nothing in this world or the world to come, nothing now or in the future "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 39).

Whose heart would not break out in praise for what God has done? God is for us. He has demonstrated it in Christ Jesus. God is our advocate against the Adversary. And nothing can separate us from His love.

What a song for the saints to sing!



## Letters to the Editor

### MINISTER-CARE

Thank you for the article, "Ministers urged to rest, take time off" in the Aug. 19 edition.

The information is timely and warrants notice by congregations who care about ministering to their ministers.

The Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence at Samford University in Birmingham has provided funding and resources to nearly 90 pastors for them to have sabbatical leaves.

A sabbatical is not a vacation; it is time away for rest, spiritual renewal, continuing education and other activity that renews physical, mental and spiritual resources.

Our program provides resources for leaves as short as one week or as long as three months. We have found that most churches can offer time for their pastor or other ministers to be away. What they usually lack are sufficient funds to provide the cost of the minister's renewal plans.

Sadly, of 90 ministers who have participated in our sabbatical program, only 13 are from Alabama Baptist churches.

Samford's Resource Center provides a valuable — if overlooked — service to churches and ministers that has proven to benefit both.

Michael Wilson  
Program director  
Resource Center  
for Pastoral Excellence  
Samford University



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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# State paper prompts missions experience

By Anna Swindle  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Frank Banks and Charles Banks have been pals and members of First Baptist Church, Jasper, for a few decades now, and their compatibility has prompted them to take several missions trips together.

The two men (who are “probably related somewhere down the line,” according to Charles) have traveled internationally, but their latest joint trip was a domestic one to Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

“What prompted me to go on this trip was an article I read in *The Alabama Baptist* in the summer of 2009 by Dr. Bob Terry (and Carrie Brown McWhorter) about the need up in Michigan,” Frank Banks said. “The project we accepted was mentioned ... in this particular article.”

Connecting Frank and Charles Banks with the Michigan project is a perfect example of a role the newspaper plays, Terry said.

Connecting Frank and Charles Banks with the Michigan project is a perfect example of a role the newspaper plays, Terry said.

## Plugging readers in

“Each week, the state Baptist paper plugs readers in to missions efforts across the state and around the world,” he said. “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.”

The article that caught Frank and Charles Banks’ attention said an estimated 8 million people in Michigan are lost. So the men answered the call to share the gospel among them July 21–28, working with a house church to grow its congregation.

In addition to mentoring the church members and offering support any way they could, Frank and Charles Banks hit the streets, reaching out to the community in a very hands-on way:

They went door to door.

The men would start out around 9 a.m., stop for a brief lunch break and then knock on more doors until about 4 p.m. At the end of the week, they had netted 12 new converts and about 25 prospects for the church.

“This was a new experience but a very rewarding experience,” Charles Banks said. “This was the first time I’ve been on a missions trip where they were trying to get a church established.”

He and Frank Banks encountered a lot of need in the community and left knowing that much follow-up work remained to be done.

“I saw a need for people, probably older Christians with experience, to act as mentors,” Charles Banks said. “We learned there was so much to be done with planting a church.”

And for that very reason — the needs in the Upper Peninsula as well as across the globe — the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) is hosting a series of conferences across the state dubbed Acts 1:8 Connections. There will be four conferences, two Sept. 7 and two Sept. 9, complete with personal testimonies from volunteers who have been a part of past missions projects.

“The purpose is to link churches with our partners and the projects we have for 2011,” said Reggie Quimby, director of the SBOM office of global missions. “People can learn more about the Michigan partnership, among many others.”

In 2006, the Alabama Baptist State Convention embarked on a five-year partnership with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

For more information, visit [www.alsbom.org](http://www.alsbom.org) or 1-800-264-1225.

**“What prompted me to go on this trip was an article I read in *The Alabama Baptist*.”**

Frank Banks  
FBC Jasper

# An eternal win

## Sharing Christ with players part of Bowden’s routine

Former Florida State University football coach Bobby Bowden recently told a Baptist newspaper that it was his duty as coach to share his Christian faith with all his players, even though it wasn’t the “politically correct” thing to do.

“I felt like it was my job to witness to every player I coached,” Bowden, one of the winningest coaches in the history of college football, said in an interview with the *Florida Baptist Witness*.

He noted that before a game he would share a devotional with the team.

He quipped that he was at times “reminded of the separation of church and state” but his devotionals with players never became a point of controversy because “we won too many games.”

## Obedying his calling

Bowden, 80, a longtime member of First Baptist Church, Tallahassee, Fla., is currently promoting his new autobiography, “Called to Coach.”

He told the *Witness* that his calling to coach was similar to the call of preachers to the ministry.

Bowden said he did not coerce players to profess faith in Jesus Christ and that no player was ever rewarded or punished for his faith or lack thereof with playing time.

In an earlier interview with the *Witness*, Bowden expressed frustra-

tion with criticism and regulations leveled at coaches for sharing their beliefs when a professor can espouse their beliefs with few consequences.

“Why can’t a coach express to his players what he believes?” Bowden asked. “You’re trying to help the kid.”

Bowden said he would tell his players and their parents up front that they could be excused from devotions, prayer or services if they didn’t want to participate, but only two had taken advantage of the option in his previous 31 years at Florida State.

Bowden also bemoaned that during his coaching tenure the political climate had changed to where “political correctness” had become a mantra.

“If our nation goes down, it’s because of political correctness, in my opinion, because political correctness might not be the truth,” he said.

“I’d rather be spiritually correct than governmentally correct.”

A 2001 profile of Bowden in Baptist Press said that when a stu-

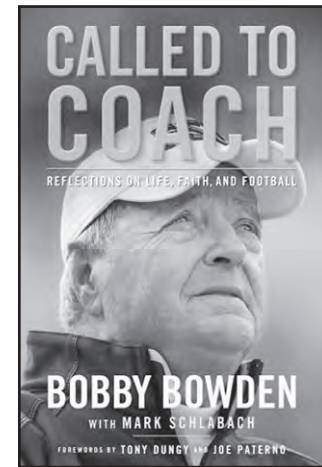
dent athlete signed to play football at Florida State in Tallahassee, one of the first things Bowden did as coach was to send a letter to the parents asking for permission to take the student to church. Bowden would then take his players, as a team, to church twice during the football season.

With 389 career wins, Bowden is the second-most-winning coach behind Penn State’s Joe Paterno. He is the first coach in college football to lead his team to 27 straight bowl games and won national championships for Florida State in 1993 and 1999.

Thirty-one of Bowden’s wins came under his coaching tenure at Samford University in Birmingham.

Bowden played his college football there — at the time called Howard College — and he returned there after getting his master’s degree to serve as assistant football coach in 1954 and 1955 and later as head coach from 1959 to 1962.

Bowden was raised in the former-Ruhama Baptist Church, Birmingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association. (ABP)



# NAMB event provides training, rejuvenation

Our church plant is in the middle of one of the most dangerous areas of our city,” said John Smith, a church planting missionary in Pontiac, Mich.

Less than 25 miles from Detroit, Pontiac is a mini version of the city that often ranks as one of the top five most dangerous cities in the U.S. “We minister to people who are homeless, involved in prostitution and addicted to drugs. But our greatest area of ministry is to the city’s teen population,” Smith said.

Smith and his wife, Kia, are not strangers to the challenges of growing up in the inner city. Both grew up in Pontiac.

“Our missions field is right at home,” said Smith, who planted Shepherd’s Fold Baptist Church in the high school he attended as a teenager.

“The teens we work with long for community and the relationships of a family unit,” Smith said. “Unfortunately, many of them find that sense of community in gangs.”

“We’re trying to help them understand the value of the body of Christ as community.”

The Smiths were among 138 missionaries who attended a North American Mission Board Mission-

ary (NAMB) Connection event in Chicago, Ill., Aug. 12–14, for training, encouragement and spiritual rejuvenation.

“I can’t leave here and be the same,” said Smith, speaking of the impact the connection event had made in his life. “I’m looking forward to getting back home and putting the spiritual jumper cables on our church.”

NAMB Interim President Richard Harris led NAMB staff mem-

bers in providing encouragement, training and networking. The two-day event was filled with workshops on evangelism, mobilization, leadership, apologetics, money management and prayer.

Those who attended the event serve in central Canada and mid-west and western states including Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Montana, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota. (BP)

## Former missionary Tcherneshoff dies

Rheta Nell Thrasher Tcherneshoff, former missionary to Brazil, died Aug. 24. She was 75.

A native of Hillsboro, Tcherneshoff, along with husband Pete, served with the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) in Brazil from 1963 to 1977.

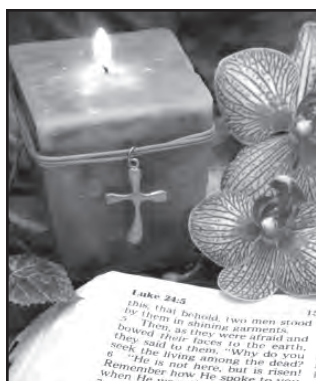
After returning from the missions field, she served alongside her husband at Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, Decatur, where he served as pastor, and Friendship and Marshall Baptist as-

sociations, where he served as director of missions.

Tcherneshoff graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and attended classes at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, while her husband was a student.

At the time of her death, she was a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Tcherneshoff is survived by her husband of 56 years, four children and 10 grandchildren. (TAB)



**F**or as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will.

John 5:21



Photo by Brian Gay

## Long-term plans being discussed

(continued from page 1)

said the poverty in Haiti, exacerbated by the earthquake, made the needs seem greater there. "We saw a lot of sick children and a lot of sick adults who have many long-term needs in terms of food, clean water and health care," he said.

Johnson said volunteers from around the state are excited about the opportunity to help some of Haiti's youngest residents with their most basic physical and spiritual needs. As more volunteers go to Haiti, they will be able to build upon and strengthen the work that other Alabama Baptists have begun.

"This is a collective effort from all of our [Alabama Baptist] churches, and anyone who wants to participate, we'd love to have them come alongside and assist," Johnson said.

As she thinks about "Samuel's kids," as she calls them, Tanya Birchfield believes there are several areas in which volunteers could help.

"Pray for Samuel, who is really young to take on such responsibility. Pray for these children, who need money for school fees, uniforms and supplies," she said.

Tanya Birchfield also sees a need for volunteers who can teach the children hair care and hygiene, financial management and the value of work. "These children are so used to getting help from others, and they need to learn ways to earn money for their education and their basic needs," she said.

### 'Care for the orphaned'

Though Tanya Birchfield does not know exactly what the future holds for these children, she does know that her family and others will continue to stay involved with them.

"We want them to have some sense of permanency and a future — education, an adequate home environment and all that. But more than that, we want them to know the love of Christ. Our main focus is to get our church and others involved in carrying out the commandment to care for the orphaned."

For more information about volunteering or making a donation, visit [www.alsbom.org/haiti](http://www.alsbom.org/haiti) or call 1-800-264-1225.



Photo by Mel Johnson

**OPPORTUNITY TO HELP** — **Top**, Tanya Birchfield blows bubbles with some of the orphans in Jacmel. **Bottom**, Alabama Baptists and their Haitian partners — (back row, left to right) Reggie Quimby, Pastor Paul, Samuel, Tanya Birchfield, Andy Birchfield and Brian Gay — plan to continue working together to help the orphaned children in Haiti.

## Alabama Baptist volunteers needed in Haiti

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Following the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams, in coordination with Southern Baptist Convention efforts, began to respond to the Haitian people's needs. In May, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) adopted the city of Jacmel, located on Haiti's southern coast about 25 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince, for long-term ministry efforts in the Caribbean country.

Mel Johnson, SBOM disaster relief strategist, called the opportunity for Alabama Baptists to help Haiti "an evangelistic opportunity of a unique form."

Though Jacmel's population was around 25,000 prior to the earthquake, many people who fled Port-au-Prince in the quake's wake found shelter in Jacmel, almost doubling its population and creating a ministry opportunity.

Johnson said the threefold purpose of the effort in Jacmel is to evangelize, disciple be-

lievers and plant churches. This will be accomplished by missions teams from Alabama Baptist churches who will help with everything from construction to water purification to medical assistance. Eighteen teams have been to Haiti thus far, and Johnson said other teams are being assembled and making preparations to go to Haiti in the coming months.

### Tailored missions trips

Volunteers are needed to help build emergency shelter for refugees in tent cities and churches, work with children orphaned by the earthquake and meet the Haitian people's most basic physical and spiritual needs. Johnson said the office of global missions will assist volunteers by tailoring a trip to meet their abilities, as well as by arranging travel and all their needs while in the country. While volunteers are responsible for the cost of transportation to and from Haiti and food and lodging while in the country (estimated to be about \$70 per day), the SBOM provides transportation and security while in Haiti, as well as translation services, emergency travel

## 'Only the power of God can save them now'

Tattered red, yellow and green umbrellas edge Port-au-Prince's broken and battered roads, providing shade for street vendors who struggle to eke out a day's wages by selling everything from groceries and clothes to tires.

Even as signs of commerce have reappeared since the 7.0-magnitude earthquake of Jan. 12, Port-au-Prince residents are forced to scrounge for life's basic necessities.

Seas of tents and blue tarps form makeshift cities covering open fields, barren lots and river beds as the nation grapples with providing housing for the estimated 1.5 million homeless.

By some estimates, 3,000 NGOs — nongovernment organizations — are operating in Haiti. Yet there is still much work to be done.

"The people are still living a difficult life, living in the streets and existing with no food," concedes Phito François, the Confraternite Missionnaire Baptiste d'Haiti director of missions for the Port-au-Prince area. "They fear their life will never be like before. They believe they will die in the streets."

Those who live in tents cope with daily seasonal rains that soak their belongings and leave them susceptible to diseases and pneumonia.

People bathe in the streets and many young women turn to prostitution for money, which results in unplanned pregnancies, François said.

Yet a spiritual movement is gaining momentum as Haitians cry out to the Lord, he noted. "There are no places to sit in the churches, more benches are needed to hold the people."

More than 150,000 people have made professions of faith and 135 new churches have been started.

"They know only the power of God can save them now," he said. (BP)

insurance and other miscellaneous expenses.

"Someone will handle every detail down to the water so that volunteers can do what is needed to share the gospel message with the people of Jacmel," Johnson said.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, will join Johnson and others from the SBOM on a trip to Haiti in September to visit new church starts and gather information for future projects. He encourages Alabama Baptists to continue to pray for the Haitian people and specifically the needs of those in Jacmel and surrounding areas, especially the spiritual needs.

"We all know that the good news of Jesus Christ is the best help we can offer the people who need to know Christ. In a place where disaster has reigned, hope in Christ can be presented. People in Haiti are responding to the gospel. May we be faithful in praying, going and giving so that they can know the Way, the Truth and the Life," Lance said.

For more information, visit [www.alsbom.org/haiti](http://www.alsbom.org/haiti) or call Johnson at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 273.

# GAMBLING

## IN ALABAMA

**1 OF 8  
IN A  
SERIES**

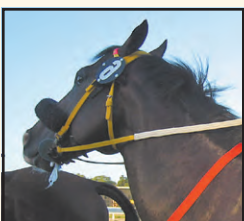
**Macon County**

### A glimpse of VictoryLand



Dog racing was legalized in Macon, Greene, Jefferson and Mobile counties in the 1970s.

VictoryLand was built in Shorter in Macon County in 1984.



Birmingham had live horse racing 1987-1992, but all tracks have simulcast horse, dog racing.

While video poker/gambling machines first appeared in Alabama in the late 1990s, electronic gambling came to VictoryLand in 2003.



The Oasis hotel was built as part of the new casino atmosphere in late 2009.

## For-profit, big business

### Macon County touted as lead dog in 'electronic bingo' race in state

By Sondra Washington  
The Alabama Baptist

**M**acon County was not first in Alabama to pass a constitutional amendment allowing bingo gambling. Actually it was dead last.

But once the amendment was voted into law Nov. 4, 2003, it changed bingo as most Alabamians knew it and created a for-profit Las Vegas-style gambling business that many have tried to imitate around the state.

Now the county's sole casino, VictoryLand in Shorter, is fighting to keep its empire intact while Gov. Bob Riley and his Task Force on Illegal Gambling are closing in ready to issue the business a final death blow.

Initially Alabama House Bill (HB) 660, which would become Macon County's bingo amendment, was introduced to legislators in 2003 looking almost identical to the 17 other laws allowing charitable bingo across the state.

Gambling opponents and supporters worked together to make the bill suitable for both sides. But in what some gambling opponents call a "sneaky" last-minute move, the bill's sponsor, former Rep. Johnny Ford, of Tuskegee, submitted a new bill. Only a few words were changed, yet the bill legalized a new form of electronic gambling in the state (see *Birmingham News* article from 2003 for more on the bill, page 7).

"We were doing it like traditional types of bingo where you operated it on your own premises ... not paying rent for the premises, not paying anybody a consulting fee to run the game, not paying anybody any expenses and limited on the amount of prizes that could be paid," Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston said. "Those were three things taken out by Ford, and he told everyone it



Photo courtesy of Montgomery Advertiser

**STATE'S LARGEST CASINO** — Milton McGregor's 'electronic bingo' casino on the bottom floor of VictoryLand now sits behind plywood after the entrance points were boarded up Aug. 9 following a threatened raid by the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling.

was the same bill. ... Before it could be given to anyone to look at, they voted on it and passed it. Then, within minutes, we found out it was a different bill."

### Connecting the dots

"I am the representative who wrote and originated HB 660 (which passed the state Legislature on June 11, 2003), the bill that actually brought electronic bingo to Alabama," Ford told *The Alabama Baptist* during the 2010 legislative session.

"The original intent was just to satisfy the senior citizens, but at the same time, I realized VictoryLand was on the verge of closing and losing jobs," he said.

"The bill I introduced said bingo could be played in any form," Ford explained. "I did my due diligence."

While representing Alabama at an event in San Francisco in July 2003, Ford said IGT (International Game Technology) introduced him to the machines being labeled electronic bingo.

"IGT is one of the sponsors of the mayor's conference (an event in Las Vegas Ford had attended previously as mayor of Tuskegee)," he said. "Jerome Young (who supplied video machines at VictoryLand at that time) was in charge of minority affairs and had a session at the conference."

"He had a conference on gaming and how it impacted communities," Ford said, noting it was Young and Chuck Brook of IGT who were at the IGT booth in San Francisco.

While Ford said he first saw the "bingo machine" the month after the the Macon County bingo legislation passed, he had been involved with the company and one its representatives prior to the legislation passing.

"I'm responsible for changing the gaming industry in Alabama forever," Ford said.

### New level of gambling

The bill allowed nonprofit organizations to let other businesses operate the games on their behalf and pay consulting fees for services related to the games' operation. It also did not specify what legislative body was responsible for setting cash or prize limits associated with the games.

Johnston said these changes to bingo operations took the state's gambling business to the next level.

"Because of the bill that Johnny Ford got passed, they didn't have any limitations on it," he said. "VictoryLand ... had a big facility (See 'Battle,' page 7)



Photo courtesy of Montgomery Advertiser

**JUST THE TRACK NOW** — Milton McGregor, owner of VictoryLand, talks to the media Aug. 13, when the Shorter facility reopened after closing to shut down the 'electronic bingo' section.

# Recent debates over gambling ignore original purpose of bingo in state

By Sondra Washington  
and Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

**B**ingo may be considered a big-money game in Alabama today, but it didn't start out that way. Experts say when legislators began passing constitutional amendment bills allowing the charitable games in 1980, most Alabamians believed they were voting for traditional paper bingo not the so-called electronic bingo being housed in Las Vegas-style casinos that have tried to open across the state.

While state law prohibits the electronic slot-type machines that have been introduced to and pulled from numerous communities at one time or another over the past seven years, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians currently has three casinos in Alabama because federal regulations and laws allow them. (An explanation of how gambling on reservation land functions will be part of this series in an upcoming issue.)

Still VictoryLand in Macon County became the first non-Indian and largest casino in the state when more than 6,000 machines were added to the already-existing facility housing one of Alabama's four legal dog tracks. It recently shut down its electronic "bingo" operation to avoid being raided (see story, page 5). Wind Creek Casino & Hotel, located on the Poarch Creek Indian reservation in Atmore, is currently the largest casino operating in the state with more than 1,600 machines.

But no matter which one has the most machines or the glitziest facility, large-scale bingo operations were never meant for enterprise, said Jefferson County District Attorney Brandon Falls.

## 'Narrow exception'

"It is supposed to be a way for charities to raise money," he said. "There were organizations — churches, senior centers, etc. — that were already operating bingo games, and they didn't want to be in violation of the law. So they went to the Legislature and asked them to pass this narrow exception to the Alabama



TRADITIONAL  
PAPER BINGO

Constitution's prohibition on lotteries.

"The gambling interests have taken this narrow exception and tried to drive an armored truck through it by using the names and entities of certain charities and introducing slot machines that they claim are only playing bingo," Falls said. "However, bingo has nothing to do with the machines they are using and they are in violation of the law because they are establishing for-profit businesses instead of charitable bingo operations."

Legal bingo operations must be run by a charity, he explained. "They have to do it on their own premises or property that is rented by them. They cannot pay anyone to operate the game on their behalf, and all of the money has to go to the charity. They can't pay employees and they can't run it like a business."

This description doesn't seem to match any of the current operations garnering endless headlines and generating court cases.

But Dan Ireland, executive director emeritus of Alabama Citizens Action Program, isn't surprised. He warned legislators when the first bingo amendment

was being considered that this would happen. They didn't listen.

"I argued then that if the gambling interests got their foot in the door, there would be outright gambling, and that's what we've got today," Ireland said. "It was just a gateway to what we're facing right now."

Some state senators and representatives fighting for legislation to legalize the electronic slot-type gambling being labeled electronic bingo admit the gambling interests are using the constitutional amendments permitting bingo in certain areas to expand gambling in the state. (For a list of places where bingo is legal, see story this page.)

And operations managers at some of the casino-style facilities that were open earlier this year told *The Alabama Baptist* that the tiny digital bingo card tucked in the corner of the machine's screen is only there "because we have to have that to be legal."

They said the spinning symbols are what matters. "The bingo card is just there because we have to have that in Alabama."

But outgoing Attorney General Troy King contends the machines really are playing bingo — at least in some areas of the state.

"The game is playing bingo, but the look of the slot machine is just a façade," he said, noting people want slots, so it is just to give them what they want.

## What constitutes bingo?

King — who researched the machines at VictoryLand, Greentrack in Greene County and the three facilities run by the Poarch Creeks in 2004 — found the machines in those five operations legal under Alabama law.

"(These) are machines with bells and whistles but with a bingo card in the corner," he said. "When you put money in the machine, bingo balls start falling."

Experts who work for slot machine manufacturing companies disagreed. During several electronic "bingo" court cases in the state, they said electronic bingo (See 'Machines,' page 7)



LAS VEGAS  
SLOT MACHINES



STYLE OF MACHINES  
BEING CALLED ELECTRONIC  
BINGO IN ALABAMA



ELECTRONIC BINGO

## Significant moves related to gambling

### 1901

Article IV, Section 65 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901 prohibits games of chance in the state. Because of this constitutional provision, the Legislature cannot simply pass laws that permit types of gambling. All legal gambling is allowed only by additional constitutional amendments. Also based on this constitutional provision, the Legislature passed the provisions of the Alabama Criminal Code that make gambling a crime.

### 1971

Pari-mutuel wagering at dog and horse tracks was found constitutional in *Opinion of the Justices*, 251 So.2d 741. The Alabama Supreme Court said while Section 65 of the constitution prevents the Legislature from authorizing a lottery, it does not prevent the Legislature from authorizing forms of gambling that do not constitute a lottery. There is a significant degree of skill involved in dog and horse racing and therefore it is constitutional.

### 1980

Bingo has always been considered a game of chance. In Act 80-431, Amendment 386 to the constitution, **Jefferson County** became the first county to authorize limited charitable bingo.

### 1980-2004

Since that time, there have been 17 additional constitutional amendments that permit bingo in one form or another in various counties and municipalities in Alabama.

- 1980 — Madison County
- 1982 — Montgomery County
- 1984 — Mobile County
- 1990 — Etowah County
- 1990 — Calhoun County
- 1992 — St. Clair County
- 1993 — Walker County
- 1993 — City of Jasper
- 1995 — Covington County
- 1996 — Houston County
- 1996 — Morgan County
- 1996 — Russell County
- 2000 — Lowndes County
- 2000 — Limestone County
- 2002 — Town of White Hall
- 2003 — Greene County
- 2004 — Macon County (passed Legislature in 2003)

### 1990s

Numerous efforts took place to expand gambling through various types of legislation, such as video poker. These efforts failed.

### 2003

As a result of developing electronic technology that increased the potential for bingo gambling, bingo-related bills began to be introduced in the Legislature. Act 2003-124 (**Amendment 744 for Macon County**) was the major bill that passed (ratified in 2004).

### 2004

There continued to be a question about what is a game of skill and what is a game of chance since Section 65 forbids games of chance. In *Ex Parte Ted's Game Enterprises v. Ted's Game Enterprises*, 893 So.2d 376, the Alabama Supreme Court held that if chance is the dominant factor, then it is a prohibited game of chance. The court noted the history of Alabama was to make broad prohibition of games of chance and specifically noted that "bingo" was such a game that needed to be excepted from Section 65 by additional constitutional amendments.

Timeline provided by attorney Eric Johnston with additional reporting by *The Alabama Baptist*

# Battle of the wills

## Federal court proves VictoryLand charitable giving 'negligible,' but locals OK with crumbs

(continued from page 5)

already ... so they pushed everything to the limit from the number of machines to what they were doing. They were using more sophisticated machines — slot machines — and others began to follow suit. ... They set the standard so to speak."

Dan Ireland, who served as executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program during that time, agreed and called VictoryLand's setup "major league" compared to other "sandlot"-type gambling operations around the state.

"The only thing about it is that it went in under the guise of being charity bingo, and the charity part is almost negligible," Ireland said. "From all I have read, the biggest part of the money is going to the (dog) track and not to charity or for the benefit of county functions."

Recently a federal court ruling found that VictoryLand and owner Milton McGregor "profited" more than \$162 million in 2008 but gave less than 1 percent of that to charities. Still county and charity leaders have expressed satisfaction with the amount they received, according to a *Tuskegee News* article.

And some claim their organizations' existence depends on VictoryLand.

John Anderson, chair of Macon County's Share and Care Committee, which provides free food to the needy, reportedly said, "The \$25,000 we get as our share for charity bingo is basically our entire budget." Others had similar stories since VictoryLand also gives money to "nine volunteer fire departments, several schools, nutrition centers, Tuskegee-Macon County Head Start and the Tuskegee Area Chamber of Commerce." According to the article, taxes from VictoryLand provide more than one-third of the county's budget.

### Additional services needed

But some question whether that is enough money to cover the additional services needed as a result of the increased traffic, social problems and other issues arising from a gambling facility the size of VictoryLand. In 2009, Shorter Mayor Willie Mae Powell's plea to Alabama legislators indicated it is not.

While Powell said she supported a bill legalizing VictoryLand's gambling activities, she asked state lawmakers to consider allowing "host municipalities" to tax the facilities

in their jurisdiction. With only five police officers at the time, she said VictoryLand was a facility "greater than we can maintain and cover." She added, "We are trying to maintain all of this coming into our town. We need money to take care of the people that we have been elected to take care of."

Fearing a task force raid, VictoryLand voluntarily closed its doors Aug. 9 even though McGregor reportedly maintains his machines are legal bingo machines. He blames Riley for intruding in county business.

"Consider the fact the constitutional amendment that authorized charity bingo in Macon County went through the Alabama Legisla-

ture, was pre-cleared by the Department of Justice and approved by 76 percent of voters in Macon County," McGregor told the *Tuskegee News*. "Yet after seven years of operation, Riley with his signature vetoes all of those actions at the expense of Macon County and the state. Nothing like that has ever happened in the history of this state. His actions (resulting in the shutting down of the 'electronic bingo' operation at VictoryLand) have cost thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in taxes."

Riley and his team say the machines are illegal slots and McGregor knows it.

"These attacks are just another example of the contemptible lies the gambling interests regurgitate over and over again," Riley said. "It truly is despicable."

Jeff Emerson, Riley's communications director, agreed.

"If One-Percent McGregor really, honestly believed his slot machines were legal, he would keep his casino open," Emerson said. "Then he could argue his side in a court of law, but that's the last thing One-Percent McGregor wants because he knows his slot machines are illegal. ... The Alabama Supreme Court has ruled unanimously, members of both parties, and has been very clear. ... One-Percent McGregor tells people the opposite because he wants to continue breaking the law."

During the war of words between VictoryLand's supporters and opponents, the Alabama Supreme Court even came under fire when a Montgomery newspaper printed an article correctly detailing a forthcoming ruling on VictoryLand, which included the author's name. This information is confiden-

legal, King explained. The hard part is knowing which ones are adaptable and which ones aren't, he said. "There are machines that are legal and some that are illegal."

And while King has maintained his stance on the legality of electronic "bingo" in Alabama, questions still remain over what bingo, in an ever-changing world of technology, looks like and whether Alabamians have forgotten the real reason bingo was legalized in some areas in the first place.

For additional reporting on the 'electronic bingo' debate in Alabama as well as other gambling-related articles, visit [www.tinyurl.com/electronicbingo](http://www.tinyurl.com/electronicbingo).

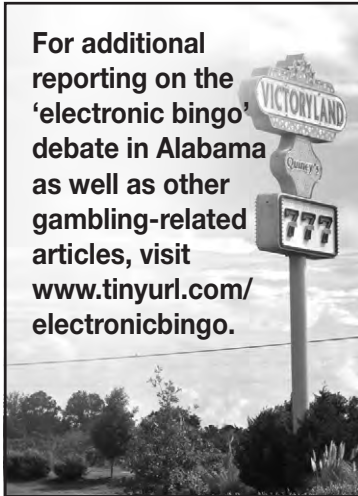


Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

**LOBBYING FOR EXPANDED GAMBLING** — Johnny Ford, former mayor and former state representative of Tuskegee, tells reporters Feb. 11 at the Alabama Statehouse that the VictoryLand casino is a good thing for the people of Macon County.

tial until the high court releases its opinions.

As rumors circulated suggesting improper communications between the court and Riley's office, the justices responded with a news release denying the accusations.

"Information concerning the assignment of cases to members of this court and the anticipated date of release of such cases is highly confidential," the release stated. "Any unauthorized disclosure of such information is detrimental to the integrity of the judicial

system. The court is conducting an internal investigation of the source or sources of such unauthorized disclosure or disclosures."

Retired Supreme Court Justice J. Gorman Houston Jr. is leading the investigation.

Meanwhile a plywood wall now separates VictoryLand's gambling machines from its pari-mutuel dog and horse racing business. The task force said if the electronic games are reopened to expect a raid of the facility. (Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)

— Article from *The Birmingham News* Nov. 7, 2003 —

## Bingo amendment surprises lawmakers

By Bob Johnson  
The Associated Press

To the surprise of some legislators, the amendment approved by Macon County voters Tuesday will allow bingo games to be played at the VictoryLand dog track and other venues with unlimited pots.

Players could win "a million dollars," said Rep. Johnny Ford, R-Tuskegee, who pushed the proposed bingo law through the House. The amendment Macon County residents voted on was not the one many legislators thought they had passed.

In fact, at one point the Alabama House rejected the version with no limits on the winning pots. But Ford said Thursday he used a little "clever maneuvering" to substitute his version before the bill received final passage. He said he did it to pump money and jobs into his mostly black and low-income county.

"You see our county has been treated unfairly down through the years," Ford said. "It is necessary to use whatever political maneuver I could to get our people the right to vote."

Voters in Greene County also passed a bill Tuesday that legalized bingo games, which could be held at the GreeneTrack dog track. It was originally introduced with an unlimited pot, but lawmakers amended it on the last day of the session to limit pots for one bingo session to \$10,000.

Under both the Macon and Greene County bills, the bingo revenues have to be for a nonprofit organization, but the nonprofit could contract with VictoryLand to operate the games.

VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor said if a charity or nonprofit group picks his track as a site for the games, it could pump new life into his track, which he said has struggled to keep up with American Indian gaming centers in Wetumpka and Montgomery. He said bingo could mean as many as 100 new jobs at the track in Shorter, about 20 miles east of Montgomery.

"This is the best thing to happen to Macon County since 1982, when VictoryLand was approved," McGregor said. He said that besides pumping money into local charities, it would help VictoryLand by increasing the amount of tax revenue the track pays the county.

### Unlimited purses

He said the unlimited purses would make it easier for the track to compete with the Indian casinos, which offer unlimited cash payouts.

"I'm not opposed to Indians. I'm opposed to being treated differently. They pay no city or county or state taxes," McGregor said.

Rep. Dick Brewbaker, R-Montgomery, said he did not like the way the bill was handled by Ford. He said he felt that many legislators did not know the bill allowed unlimited purses until after it had passed.

"Frankly it was a cheap trick. I hope it was worth it to Ford and to the people who operate dog tracks," Brewbaker said. "The next time they have legislation, nobody is going to believe a word they tell them."

Ford got the unlimited pot version passed with the help in the Senate from Sen. Myron Penn, D-Union Springs.

## Machines look like, act like slots

(continued from page 6)

does exist but not in the form found in Alabama.

Electronic bingo is still the game of bingo in how it looks and is played; it is just on a computer monitor rather than paper, the experts said. The machines in Alabama are slot machines with a small bingo card icon added through the software, they noted.

But as long as the machines cannot be converted into true slot machines, then they are

# Macon County remains in ‘economic misery’

By Sondra Washington  
The Alabama Baptist

One million dollars may seem like a lot of money until you realize it's less than 1 percent of what you could have had. It also doesn't help to know hundreds of millions of dollars have entered a repressed county, yet very little changes have been made to the surroundings.

This was the reality facing Macon County residents when a June 30 federal court ruling revealed VictoryLand's "sizable" gambling profits and "marginal" charitable giving (see sidebar).

Although county and charity leaders receiving donations from the multimillion dollar casino have continued defending its practices, some people are

asking why the county has changed so little in the seven years VictoryLand has operated its slot-style gambling machines in Shorter.

For years, gambling opponents have speculated about how much money Alabama casinos generate and how much of it was being reinvested into the areas housing the casinos. But when the federal court studied financial records from the state's largest casino, the speculators' fears were confirmed.

"The gambling doesn't make it (Macon County) a better place to live," said Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston. "It gives a few jobs to a few people but takes the mon-

ey to pay for those jobs out of the economy."

In a recent *Montgomery Advertiser* guest opinion article, U.S. Rep. Artur Davis commented on gubernatorial candidate Ron Sparks' plans to use legalized and expanded gambling in Alabama to create jobs and revenue and the state of Macon and Greene counties.

"Ron Sparks' strategy is straightforward and it just isn't good enough: he would extend the footprint that the casino operators hold in Greene and Macon counties to communities all over the state," Davis wrote in a *Montgomery Advertiser* guest opinion article. "The problem is that even with the casinos, Greene and Macon are still impoverished and are centers of the worst examples of economic misery. As recent reports documented, the 'mandatory' charitable donations from the casinos to these counties are woefully inadequate."

Davis' claims are reinforced by U.S. Census Bureau statistics, which reveal a poverty rate far higher than the state's poverty level, both before and after slot machine gambling began in both counties.

Milton McGregor, VictoryLand's owner, maintains his business provides millions of dollars in taxes, much-needed jobs and critical services in Macon County and the state.

In a press release issued Aug. 9

## People living below poverty level in Macon County:

- 1999 — 26.8 percent
- 2003 — 26 percent
- 2004 — 28.3 percent
- 2005 — 32 percent
- 2006 — 30.2 percent
- 2007 — 29.6 percent
- 2008 — 30.5 percent

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Charity contributions from VictoryLand

|       | GROSS PROFITS                | GROSS RECEIPTS | MONEY TO CHARITY                               |
|-------|------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 2004  | \$49,902,963                 | \$64,070,688   | <b>\$546,350</b><br>(0.9% of gross receipts)   |
| 2005  | \$89,148,794                 | \$112,693,949  | <b>\$978,250</b><br>(0.9% of gross receipts)   |
| 2006  | \$110,936,378                | \$139,853,391  | <b>\$797,650</b><br>(0.6% of gross receipts)   |
| 2007  | \$126,706,748                | \$157,498,710  | <b>\$797,650</b><br>(0.5% of gross receipts)   |
| 2008  | \$125,860,684<br>(estimated) | \$162,571,464  | <b>\$1,300,026</b><br>(0.8% of gross receipts) |
| TOTAL | \$503 million                | \$637 million  | <b>\$4.4 million</b> (0.7%)                    |

Note: Gross receipts refers to money collected by the casino, minus money paid out to winners. Gross profits is the amount the casino has after paying winners and paying lease fees for the bingo machines but before operating expenses have been paid.

Source: Federal court ruling/*The Birmingham News* July 21, 2010

## Amendment 744 ratified (2004) Relating to bingo games in Macon County

The operation of bingo games for prizes or money by nonprofit organizations for charitable, educational, or other lawful purposes shall be legal in Macon County. The sheriff shall promulgate rules and regulations for the licensing and operation of bingo games within the county. The sheriff shall insure compliance pursuant to any rule or regulation and the following requirements:

1. No person under the age of 19 years shall be permitted to play any game or games of bingo, nor shall any person under the age of 19 years be permitted to conduct or assist in the operation of any game of bingo.
2. No bingo license shall be issued to any nonprofit organization, unless the organization shall have been in existence for at least three years in the county immediately prior to the is-

To find the constitutional amendments dealing with bingo in the 16 counties and two cities in Alabama, visit <http://law.justia.com/alabama/constitution/index.html> and search for the area plus the phrase "bingo amendment" (Ex.: Macon County bingo amendment).

suance of the permit or license.

3. Bingo games may be operated on the premises owned or leased by the nonprofit organization operating the bingo game.

4. A nonprofit organization may enter into a contract with any individual, firm, association, or corporation to have the individual or entity operate bingo games

or concessions on behalf of the nonprofit organization. A nonprofit organization may pay consulting fees to any individual or entity for any services performed in relation to the operation or conduct of a bingo game.

5. A nonprofit organization may lend its name or allow its identity to be used by another person or entity in the operating or advertising of a bingo game in which the nonprofit organization is not directly and solely operating the bingo game.

6. Prizes given by any nonprofit organization for the playing of bingo games shall not exceed the cash amount or gifts of equivalent value set by rule or regulation during any bingo session during any calendar week.

Source: [www.justia.com](http://www.justia.com)

Yet actions by McGregor and Macon County Sheriff David Warren to keep another casino from opening in the county — which could have provided additional taxes and jobs — are what led to the federal case revealing VictoryLand's donation history.

Todd Stacy, Riley's press secretary, said, "The evidence is irrefutable. Casinos are a drain on local and state economies. They squeeze money out of communities and send it to out-of-state gambling bosses. Places that have legalized casino gambling have paid a high price.

They've paid an economic price, losing jobs and exporting billions of dollars from local economies. They've paid a social price, seeing crime rates skyrocket. They've paid a political price, too, as powerful, organized gambling bosses have taken a stranglehold on governments. Gov. Riley doesn't want to see any of that happen in Alabama.

"Building casinos for economic development is like someone quitting their job to play the lottery," he said.

"You're just going to lose."

## Notes of interest dealing with Milton McGregor, VictoryLand

Circuit Judge Tom Young continually has passed restraining orders against the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling, refusing to follow the Supreme Court's earlier orders clearing the way for the task force to raid VictoryLand.

VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor also owns the Birmingham Race Course. His primary office is located in Montgomery, where he lives. He is a member of Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church, Montgomery.

The electronic gambling section of VictoryLand is referred to as Quincy's Triple Seven Bingo Casino and was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week until McGregor voluntarily closed the casino section down Aug. 9.

Alcoholic beverages were available at VictoryLand until earlier this year when the task force threatened to raid the facility. If no alcohol is sold, Alcoholic Beverage Control Board officers have no reason to enter the facility.



Next week's focus ...

## GREENE COUNTY

## Want to know God?

By Pastor Ken Daniel  
Lake Highland Baptist Church,  
Birmingham

Robert Fulghum wrote a best-selling book several years ago titled "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." This book communicates the idea that at young ages, children are taught fundamentals that will benefit them in their learning processes. The basics are simple and understandable; once a foundation is established, one can build and expand his or her knowledge.

To modify Fulghum's simple message to fit a spiritual viewpoint, we might consider a title such as All I Really Need to Know About God I Learned in Children's Sunday School. My earliest recollection of learning who God is comes from children's Sunday School. I remember my teachers sitting in a circle with the class singing, "Jesus loves me, this I know ..." I knew that God loved not only me but also people of every skin color all around the world. That we were all precious in His sight was plain to me.

Though I could not see or hear God, I knew He was with me and watched over me. I had no idea of complex doctrinal issues concerning the nature of God. My thoughts were solely centered on God's love.

As God revealed Himself to me as my Savior when I was young, I developed an interest in learning more about His nature. I discovered that not only did God love me but He also wanted to be in a personal relationship with me. I found that God was close to me in times of need. In times of crisis, He guided me and gave me strength. In times of struggle, He encouraged me. In times of loss, He took me by the hand and walked with me through dark valleys. In times of great joy, He shared in my celebrations.

All of this knowledge that I have of who God is started with my sitting in a little wooden chair among friends singing about His love. First John 4:7-8 tells us to "love one another because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love." God desires to be in a personal relationship with us. It is our choice to allow God to have a prominent place in our lives.

# Mixtec group focus of unique ministry opportunity

By Kristen Padilla  
The Alabama Baptist

Montgomery's Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Ridgecrest Baptist Church and Yarborough Street Baptist Church all have a story about how they first discovered Mixtec children and how they are better because of them.

But it wasn't until December 2009 that the Montgomery Baptist Association churches realized they weren't alone in reaching Mixtecs (also called Mixteca or Mixteco), a non-Spanish-speaking people group from southern Mexico living in Montgomery.

Community of Hope, which plants churches in multihousing communities; Forest Park Ministry Center, which provides assistance with food, clothing and utilities; and a few individuals were also ministering to this people group.

Because Mixtecs speak a completely oral American Indian language that has at least 50 dialects, reaching them would take all of these groups and individuals working together, so Lisa Rose, director of church and community ministries for Montgomery Association, began identifying those with an interest in these people and brought them together to form the Mixteco Task Force.

"The task force basically serves two purposes: [education] — how to communicate with [Mixtecs]

and how to do cross-cultural ministries — and coordination — it gives us the opportunity to touch base," said Michael Cassity, pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist. "It really is a united effort."

Cliff Stever, pastor of Yarborough Street Baptist, agreed.

"It's not just about Yarborough Street Baptist Church; it's about a group of us that is reaching out," he said.

This summer, the task force received help in reaching Mixtec parents from Oscar Gonzales, a Campus Crusade for Christ missionary who has worked with Mixtecs in Mexico.

### Building trust

Gonzales and a team from Rey de Reyes Iglesia Bautista (King of Kings Baptist Church) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, spent two weeks working with the churches and community centers, helping them build trust with Mixtec families through home visits, backyard Bible clubs and school supply giveaways.

"It's a long road of building relationships and of building trust," Rose said. "This people group is very poor and looked down upon

## Task force members

Community of Hope

Eastern Hills Baptist Church,  
Montgomery

Forest Park Ministry Center

Ridgecrest Baptist Church,  
Montgomery

Yarborough Street Baptist  
Church, Montgomery



in Mexico. I'm sure from their perspective ... it can be kind of scary to open up to complete strangers."

One of the most encouraging moments for the task force was the night it showed the "JESUS" film in a Mixtec dialect.

"One of the greatest joys was that we had over 50 people attend the 'JESUS' film," Rose said. "People were enamored to hear something in their own language."

And several Mixtec men accepted Christ. The men in these families are THE influence and it is anticipated that their family members will follow suit, Rose noted.

Greg Gosselin, minister to children at Eastern Hills Baptist, hopes that what happened this summer, along with the ongoing ministry to

Mixtec children, will lead to a way to better reach entire Mixtec families.

"I'd love to have a church for Mixteco people with a good pastor, good Sunday School material and all in a language they can understand," he said.

But until that happens, Eastern Hills, which picks up Mixtec children every Sunday morning, feeds them breakfast and brings them to Sunday School, will continue to find ways to intentionally involve Mixtecs in the life of its congregation.

"They are the sweetest and most wonderful kids you'll ever meet," Gosselin said. "Everything we do with them is intentional."

At Yarborough Street, Mixtec children are a "vital part of the church membership," Stever said.

Members of Yarborough Street pick them up for church activities on Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday night, and several adults have "adopted" the children while they are in church.

As for Ridgecrest, it is OK with being called the "Awana church" by its Mixtec children. The church first started bringing the children to Awana, and it quickly became identified with that program. Ridgecrest also now picks up the children for Sunday School.

"Jesus said to go into all the world and we do but the world is (also) right around us," Cassity said. "God has brought the world right next to the doorsteps of our church."

Rose said it will take time and patience for everyone involved to learn the Mixtec culture and build relationships with Mixtec families, but in the end, it is all about sharing God's love with all people.

"These churches went out of their comfort zones to reach a people very different from their own folks," she said. "I think it's been a stretch for the Mixtecs and our churches but God's love conquers all. We see that God has provided an opportunity and a door to reach a people group we never expected would be living in Montgomery, and our people have stepped out in faith."

For more information about the task force or ministry opportunities with Mixtecs, contact Rose at lrose@mgmbaptist.org or 334-271-6227.



By Christine Kapurch  
Correspondent, TAB

## Someone You Should Know

### GINNY SIMS

First Baptist Church, Talladega  
Coosa River Baptist Association

**FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE:** Isaiah 40:31  
**FAVORITE HYMN:** "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"  
**HOBBIES:** Playing tennis, reading,

**cooking and visiting**  
**FAMILY STATUS:** Married to Marion for 19 years; four children; 16 grandchildren; and one great-grandchild



SIMS

*Ginny Sims has spent the majority of her life traveling the globe and spreading the gospel. She has participated in numerous missions trips to places like Haiti and Wyoming.*

**Q: What was your childhood like?**

A: I grew up in south Alabama but was born in Ohio. When I was 10, my daddy died so we moved to Tennessee with my mother's family. ... My mother was a wonderful Christian and read to us every night before we went to bed.

**Q: How did you come to know the Lord?**

A: I was introduced by my mother because she was very devout and read the Scriptures to ... me. I was baptized in the Tombigbee River when I was 9.

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

A: When I moved to Talladega, I went to [First Baptist Church] and I started teaching Sunday School to young people for at least 40 years. I am active in WMU (Woman's Missionary Union). Those are my best friends. I have been on several missions trips to Haiti, Antigua, South Africa, Pennsylvania, Indianapolis and Wyoming. In Wyoming, I was a camp nurse for 10 days.

**Q: What have you gotten from those ministries?**

A: Blessings over blessings. It's always a blessing when you can work with young people and see them grow and come to know Jesus.

**Q: How have churches changed over the years?**

A: Our dress code has changed. You used to dress your best going to church. Our lifestyles have changed and so has the music. We have praise songs now in our church. We also no longer have a Wednesday prayer service.

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

A: I will continue working for WMU as long as I can. I thank the Lord that He gives me the brain and energy to do so.

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

A: I don't have any idea of living without being a Christian. I have felt His presence in not only the bad times but the joyful times as well. The support of the church and Christian friends is wonderful.



# Senior Living Resource Guide

an advertising supplement • September 2, 2010

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



**Dream Baths of Alabama**  
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If you worry about falling every time you step into the bathtub you probably need to give Charlie Thornton, owner of Dream Baths of Alabama, a call. Charlie will give you a free, no-obligation estimate on converting your bathroom into

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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.

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

mold or mildew issues," he said.

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

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

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

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

For information call Charlie at 334-312-1825 or visit [www.dreambathsalabama.com](http://www.dreambathsalabama.com).

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**OCTOBER 11-13**

Begins with lunch on Monday and concludes with lunch on Wednesday

.....  
**Tim Childers**, preacher  
**Jamey Pruett**, celebration leader  
**Randy Sharpe**, music leader  
.....

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

**OCTOBER 18-20**

Begins with lunch on Monday and concludes with lunch on Wednesday

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

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

Cost is approximately \$146 per person double occupancy. Includes seven meals, two evening snacks, lodging and program. For more information contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at [emitchell@alsbom.org](mailto:emitchell@alsbom.org) or call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 221. For reservations call Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105. The theme for the conference is "God Will Make a Way."



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### Frankly, Scarlett ... You're DEAD! —

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fashioned Bar-B-Q for his friends and family, now will it? Colonel Simpson cordially invites everyone to celebrate the upcoming marriages of his daughters, Scarlett and Melody, at the ancestral plantation home of the Simpson family. The Colonel is delighted about the impending nuptials, and will be even happier when he actually finds two young men willing to marry the girls. The only single gentlemen around seem to be the Pinkney boys, and let's face it, they are a bit odd. Of course there is, a gambler of vague origins and questionable repute, Brett Rutgers. Who will suffice for the daughters? Come join us to find out and do remember to keep your eyes open for stray bullets and Yankee spies!



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

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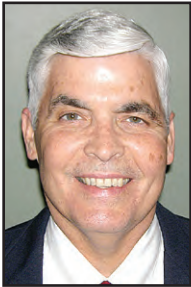
Church groups welcome for private bookings. Group discounts available.

# Considering a Reverse Mortgage? AVOID the CHANGE that's coming

By Jimmy Dixon  
McGowin & King Mortgage  
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On Aug. 4, Congress passed HR 5981. Regardless of the positive things this act will accomplish, it will lower the proceeds of a reverse mortgage and increase the percentage of mortgage insurance that FHA charges. To put it in layman's terms, anyone who does not have an FHA case number before Oct. 1 will get less money and be charged a higher rate of mortgage insurance.

If you or someone you know is considering a reverse mortgage, act now. To beat the deadline, you must apply, be counseled by a HUD approved reverse mortgage counselor and have the mortgage company secure an FHA case number. This usually takes around two weeks, so around mid-September the dark clouds



Jimmy Dixon

of "change" will start growing. If tens of thousands of senior adults (normally around 8,000 a month) try to get counseling in the next few weeks, it could jam the schedules of counselors and some could get left out. Don't let this happen to you.

Counselors can charge up to \$125 and most do. While I cannot recommend a counselor, I can give you a list of the ones who do not charge.

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



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DEC. 1-3, 2010



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# Across Alabama's Associations

## BESSEMER

► **Bill Short** is the new associate pastor/minister of worship for **Valley Creek Church, Hueytown**. He comes from Pates Chapel Church, Jemison. Short holds a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Montevallo. He is married to Alyssa. Kevin Blackwell is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Adamsville Church** will celebrate homecoming Sept. 12, 11 a.m., with Earl Tew, former director of missions for Birmingham Association. Emily Copeland will provide special music. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service. For information call 205-674-3123. Michael Hill Sr. is pastor of the church.

## COVINGTON

► **Zion Hill Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 12, 10:30 a.m., with former member Eugene Meadows, pastor of Red Oak Church, Florida. The church also will hold revival Sept. 13-15, nightly at 7, with Meadows. Roger Lee is pastor.

## MADISON

► **Harvest Church** will celebrate its 125th anniversary Sept. 12, 10:30 a.m. Former Pastor Arris

Cavender will speak. There will be special music by former members and others. A covered-dish lunch will follow in the activity building. Eric Fuller is pastor. ► **Lakewood Church, Huntsville**, will hold Bible-based Spanish for Beginners Thursdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. beginning Sept. 16. For information call Pastor Terrell Boyd at 256-653-1986.

## MOBILE

► **First Church, Irvington**, will hold revival Sept. 19-22 with Joe Youngblood. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Ron Griffin is pastor.

## SALEM-TROY

► **Southside Church, Troy**, will celebrate its Sunday School's 100th anniversary on founders day Sept. 12., 11 a.m. Former staff will be recognized. There will be singing of old hymns and a history presentation. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. There will be an old-fashioned singing at 1 p.m. in the sanctuary. Andrew Knick is interim pastor.

## SELMA

► **Selma Association** will hold men's fraternity meetings at four of its churches. Benton Church will meet Mondays at 6 p.m. for 24 weeks beginning Sept. 13. Elkdale

Church, Selma, will meet Wednesday nights at 6 p.m. for 16 weeks beginning Sept. 15. Shiloh Church, Sardis, will meet Sunday nights at 6 p.m. for 24 weeks beginning Sept. 12. Valley Grande Church will meet Tuesday mornings at 6 a.m. for 24 weeks beginning Sept. 14 and Sunday nights at 6 p.m. for 24 weeks beginning Sept. 26. The study will be Quest for Authentic Manhood except Elkdale, which will study Winning at Work and at Home. Lee Tate is pastor of Benton; Cory Horton is pastor of Elkdale; Bill Gardner is pastor of Shiloh; and Clarke Skelton is pastor of Valley Grande. Will Langston is men's ministry coordinator, and Tom Stacey is director of missions for Selma Association.

## TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Parkway Church, Auburn**, will celebrate its 40th anniversary Sept. 5, 10 a.m. A potluck lunch will follow in the Christian Life Center. Chris Bonts is pastor.

## WEST CULLMAN

► **First Church, Cullman**, held Bring a Friend to Worship Aug. 22. There were 99 more people in Sunday School than the church normally averages. The total number of people on campus that day was 647. Ed Hayes is pastor.

# Big Day prepares SBC churches to share faith

Southern Baptist churches have an opportunity to set aside one "Big Day" this fall to focus on the importance of every individual being prepared to share their faith.

Also known as Soul Winning Commitment Day, the event can be customized with a variety of train-

ing opportunities, sermon ideas and other tools to reflect the needs of individual churches, according to Dick Church, church evangelism and resource coordinator for the North American Mission Board's personal evangelism team. The mission board sponsors the annual em-

phasis, which has a suggested date this year of Oct. 3.

"The goal of Soul Winning Commitment Day is to encourage pastors and church leaders to dedicate one day of the year to motivate, inspire and challenge church members to make a commitment to reach beyond the walls of the church and engage in some form of evangelism," Church said.

For some that might mean committing to take a course on how to share their faith, he said. For others, it might be a commitment to participating in visitation or outreach events. Others might simply commit to looking for opportunities to share their testimony of how Christ has changed their life.

The theme is Every Believer Sharing, which ties into Southern Baptists' 10-year God's Plan for Sharing (GPS) initiative launched this year, Church said, noting the key GPS goal is to equip every believer to share the gospel.

Resources for the Big Day include a comprehensive planning guide that can provide either a full plan for churches to implement or a set of tools to customize their own emphasis. Resources include a witnessing guide, sermon outlines, Sunday School/small group lessons and drama scripts.

All resources can be downloaded free at [www.thebigday.org](http://www.thebigday.org). (BP)

# Alabama updates

## People, churches making news across the state

### Pastor John Rigby retires after 58 years in ministry

After 58 years of ministry and 28 years as pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Smiths Station, John W. Rigby said if he had to do his life over again, then he would want to be a Baptist preacher.

And LaDonna Cowart, a member of the Russell Baptist Association church, would want Rigby to do it all over again as her beloved pastor.

"He's been there for me for the birth of two children and the death of a father," said Cowart, who serves as the church's homebound director. "It's unbelievable the way he went the extra mile. He had a genuine compassion for loving people; he was a real shepherd."

On June 27, Rigby preached his last sermon and retired from full-time ministry. The day was "special" as people from outside the state and former churches gathered to honor him and his wife of 58 years, Margie. Also present was the pastor whom he accepted Christ under at the age of 18. The church presented Rigby with a cash gift and a chest full of cards written by church members and held a luncheon in his honor.

"We felt honored, we felt blessed and we were very happy for that occasion," he said.

During his ministry, Rigby served as pastor of eight churches and an evangelist for nine years. After graduating from Trinity Bible College in Clearwater, Fla., Rigby served as part-time pastor of two churches in Brundidge: Richland Baptist and Shady Grove Baptist. He then went on to serve two churches in Georgia and four more churches in Alabama.

After coming to Philadelphia Baptist on March 13, 1983, Rigby led the church in building a new sanctuary, purchasing 47 acres of additional land and becoming debt-free. And all of it was a "joy."

"We operated as a church family, as a team. We were together on everything we did," he said. "God let us build a family-type, loving ministry. I'm thankful to have been their pastor."

Rigby said his ministry has been built around four things: teaching and preaching God's Word, a genuine love for people, being available to people when they needed him and a wife who supported him 100 percent. At 78 years old, he wants "to know what it is to relax" but will still occasionally preach and speak. Rigby and his wife will remain members of Philadelphia.

### Gadsden's Goodyear Heights celebrates 50 years

There was no better way to celebrate 50 years at Goodyear Heights Baptist Church, Gadsden, than with a profession of faith.

The Aug. 1 anniversary service was filled to capacity with around 400 people present to mark this momentous occasion, but it was one woman's decision to accept Christ that truly gave the congregation something to celebrate.

"This was an older lady who accepted Christ and it just made the day," said long-time member Ruby Lee Yarbrough.

The service for the Etowah Baptist Association church was special in other ways too. Gary Cardwell, director of missions for Etowah Association, presented the church with a certificate commemorating its 50 years, and a representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a plaque for its service. Gary Williams, who was called to the ministry while at Goodyear Heights Baptist and who is now pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Boaz, was the special guest preacher.

And while the church with the name Goodyear Heights and at its current location marked 50 years, the true timeline of the church is actually a little older. The church was organized May 15, 1932, as Rogers Street Baptist Church.

Then in 1938, the church sold its existing property and bought new property on Henry Street and thus changed its name to Henry Street Baptist Church.

In April 1959, Henry Street Baptist sold its building to another Baptist church in town and bought new property on Piedmont Highway. On June 26, 1960, the church voted to change its name a second time to Goodyear Heights, and by August the new church building was completed.

Goodyear Heights has since built a pastorium, remodeled its sanctuary and built a family life center that included church offices, Sunday School rooms, a kitchen, a gymnasium and a fellowship hall.

As for its future, Pastor Tommy Ferguson, who has been at Goodyear Heights for 16 years, said he hopes the church will continue being founded on biblical principles. "(My hope is that we) remain true to the Bible in the days we are living in," he said.



Photo courtesy of Fellowship Baptist Church

### VERNON'S FELLOWSHIP CHURCH BURNS NOTE

Fellowship Baptist Church, Vernon, in Lamar Baptist Association celebrates paying off the church's sanctuary with a noteburning. Pictured are (left to right) Pastor Doug Bridges, Darwin Mixon, Jerry Black, Paul Perkins (back), Mark Anderson and Jerry Robertson.

# Judson College marks 95 years with Rose Sunday

Participants in Judson College's 95th annual Rose Sunday service Aug. 22 were happy after a rain-soaked weekend to find a clear morning, though very warm, as they walked the few blocks from the college to Siloam Baptist Church, Marion.

Underclassmen donned white gloves and many wore hats while seniors wore caps and gowns for the traditional procession and worship service marking the commencement of the new academic year which began the previous week. Each senior wore over her heart a single red rose — the college's signature flower.

## The value of worship

Rose Sunday was first observed on Sept. 19, 1915, but has its origins much earlier in a practice begun by the founder and first college president Milo P. Jewett. Jewett underscored the value of worship by walking with students to Siloam Baptist every Sunday.

Judson seniors began the day, appropriately in front of Jewett Hall, by passing through a woven ivy chain, crafted and held by the underclassmen in their honor — another long-standing tradition at the college.

Judson president David E. Potts then lead the procession to the church for worship.

In his presidential address, Potts brought laughter from the crowd by



Photo courtesy of Judson College

**KEEPING TRADITION** — Judson College seniors process from Judson's Jewett Hall to Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, as part of the traditional Rose Sunday on Aug. 22. Seniors wore a red rose — the college's signature flower — over their heart and their academic regalia.

reading some "general regulations" from early college catalogues.

Students had to have permission from the principal to leave campus, to receive any magazines or newspapers and to open accounts in Marion. They were allowed to spend no more than 50 cents per month from their "pocket money." Letters were subject to inspection

unless written to parents or guardians, and two offenses merited expulsion: dipping snuff and "communicating with unmarried gentlemen."

Potts then turned to the purpose of the day, urging students to trust God in times of adversity.

He noted that the founders of Judson College were

no strangers to difficulty.

Gen. Edwin D. King was a Marion planter who suffered during the War of 1812. Julia Tarrant Barron gave land for the building of the college, and was instrumental in the establishment of Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and the *Southwest* newspaper (now *The Alabama Baptist*).

After the Civil War, Barron was penniless, Potts noted.

And Jewett, Judson's first president, was an abolitionist who faced censure from fellow Southerners.

Potts urged students to find strength in Christ.

He quoted from the book, "Harbingers of Hope," by former Samford University provost William Hull in which he writes of his ALS disease.

## Depending on God

"I am slowly but surely being saved: from depending upon my own strength to depending upon God's strength . . . [with] gratitude that I can spend my days helping you to live out a story worth telling to others."

Potts concluded his remarks, "I pray that something you hear or sing or pray or speak today will resonate within your soul and something so bright will reside within you that darkness will never come again and that you will 'live out a story worth telling to others.'"

After music by the college's concert choir, John Nicholson, Siloam's pastor, delivered a challenge to the students based on Psalm 143:5-6.

"We stretch out our hands to God, not to receive anything other than his presence in our lives," Nicholson said. "He is the one for whom we are truly thirsty." (JC)

# Exiled Palestinian pastor returns to homeland, ministers to Gazans

The exiled pastor of Gaza Baptist Church began teaching Aug. 16 at Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary following a three-week visit to his homeland to preach, teach and distribute food and medicine to the poor.

"While food is available in Gaza, it is very expensive, and few can afford to buy it due to the siege and high unemployment," Hanna Massad said in an e-mail report.

The "siege" referred to Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip enacted after Hamas gained control there in June 2007. Israel wants to weaken and end cross-border rocket attacks by Hamas militants. Critics say the blockade punishes innocent Gazans and has caused a humanitarian crisis.

Massad said his Christian Mission to Gaza spent about \$35,000 to help poor families in Gaza last year alone.

Denied permission to travel through Israel, Massad traveled between 14 and 18 hours each way to enter Gaza through Egypt. He said the opportunity to minister in Gaza was worth it.

He led a special one-day women's event and preached and taught three Sundays at Gaza Baptist Church. He led home Bible studies, visited families and counseled church leaders throughout the week.

## 'Accepted in Christ'

"The focus of my teaching and preaching was how we already have been accepted in Christ," Massad reported. "And I reminded people who have lost their hope about the very real hope we have in him."

Massad, who spoke at the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta in 2008 and a regional New Baptist Covenant gath-

ering in Oklahoma in 2009, left Gaza for Jordan in 2007 after a member of his church was murdered because of his faith. Since then he has traveled between Amman and Gaza to help the Christian community in Gaza.

"As Palestinians, we have experienced and continue to experience rejection and disappointment — probably more than any other ethnic group under the sun — at checkpoints and borders, in our own homes and neighborhoods," he said. "We are not treated as human beings, created in God's image. We are treated according to the identity documents we carry in our pockets."

He said that rejection comes not only from the Israelis. "As Palestinian Christians, we are often rejected by our own people, as Christians are throughout the Middle East," he said. "It is no wonder that so many

Christians have emigrated to the West. For example, 60 years ago, we had 25 million Christians in the Middle East. Today, only 12.5 million remain."

Massad urged supporters of Christian Mission to Gaza to pray "for protection of the Christians in Gaza" and for him "to be able to preach the Good News and provide desperately needed relief to our community in Gaza." (ABP)

# National standards could help prevent prison rape

Six months before she was scheduled to be released on drug charges, Marilyn Shirley was raped in 2000 by a guard at the Texas prison where she was serving time.

"I am still haunted by the words he whispered in my ear," Shirley said. "Do you think you're the only one?" her attacker asked her.

Religious leaders and civil rights advocates say Shirley is far from the only one and are pressing the Department of Justice to implement national standards to help prevent an estimated 60,000 cases of prison rape each year.

"What we are witnessing is justice denied," said Tim Goeglein, vice president of external relations at Focus on the Family and one of the signers of a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder.

Other signers included representatives from the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Association of Evangelicals, Sojourners, as well as the United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, American Civil Liberties Union and the National Immigrant Justice Center.

Focus on the Family officials worry that the scars of rape could persist once prisoners

return home. "Millions of young people in America have one or two parents in prison," Goeglein said.

The standards, proposed last year, would subject correctional facilities to audits and establish a protocol for handling rape in their facilities.

According to the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act, they were supposed to be enacted by Holder by June of this year.

The standards have already been adopted by California and Oregon without significant additional costs, according to Pat Nolan, vice president of Prison Fellowship. (RNS)



Photo courtesy of Antioch Baptist Church

## ANTIOCH HONORS PIANIST

Antioch Baptist Church, Bynum, honors church pianist Nancy Skinner on Aug. 24 for 25 years of faithful service. Bart Owens is pastor.

# Fighting human trafficking

## Vestavia Hills teen 'horrified' about millions of victims, desperate to make a difference

By Kristen Padilla  
The Alabama Baptist

I believe that our age as youth is one of our biggest assets," 18-year-old Lily Womble said. "I've had several youth come up to me and say, 'I want to do this or that but I feel too young' ... but that's not true. I believe when youth stand up ... others will follow."

Womble learned that from experience.

When she was in the eighth grade, an older member of her youth group at Vestavia Hills Baptist Church began a chapter of International Justice Mission, a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression, at the church.

"At those chapter meetings, we'd read stories ... pray for [the people involved] and prayerfully study the issue. That's when my interest started," Womble said.

But it wasn't until she was in the 11th grade that her interest became her passion.

While taking Advanced Placement English, Womble and her classmates were assigned a research



*"That isn't a daunting thing to me but an empowering thing for me. I do know that I've been called to live a radical faith, and that has everything to do with what I'm doing."*

Lily Womble  
Vestavia Hills Baptist Church

paper about people they thought were invisible to society. She knew right away that she wanted to write about people trapped in sex trafficking in the United States.

"Horrified" is the word Womble used to describe how she felt as she began learning more about the sex trafficking occurring around her.

The students had to read a book about or memoir of a victim of whatever issue they were researching. Womble read a book about an American girl who was trafficked.

"It was raw. As I read it in class, I started crying," she said. "It's something that's hard to think about and hard to discuss, but this is the reality of millions of kids worldwide. When I read it, I wanted to stand

on my desk and shout, 'Can you believe what is happening?'"

Womble also set up an interview with Sara Jane Camacho to learn more. Camacho is program director of Birmingham-based Freedom to Thrive, a nonprofit organization that seeks to end human trafficking locally.

"That was a really tough meeting," Camacho said, adding, "My first impression was a girl who was totally broken."

Now she describes Womble as "mature and centered."

"[Womble] is probably one of the most incredible teenagers I have ever worked with," Camacho said. "And I think she's going to change the world."

Their meeting helped Womble begin that process.

"It was at this meeting that I realized God wouldn't let me stop at this research paper," she said. "I needed to do more."

So Womble decided to get youth involved in fighting human trafficking — including sex trafficking — by starting an anti-human trafficking youth coalition, JustUs, in December 2009.

"Our mission statement is to expose the issue of ... trafficking and empower youth to stand and fight this injustice," she said of JustUs.

To do this, Womble began by educating youth in her area, speaking to them at churches about what trafficking is and its prevalence in the world and Birmingham and what they could do about it.

By April, JustUs had gained 50 members and was tackling one of its biggest jobs to date — helping to get a state law against human trafficking.

One Saturday night, members gathered and called every Alabama representative and senator to ask them to vote for House Bill 432, which prohibits human trafficking and imposes harsh penalties on those caught in the act.

The bill passed unopposed in both the Senate and House of Representatives, and Gov. Bob Riley signed it into law June 25. The law went into effect July 1.

"When a group of youth in high school care enough about an issue to go out on a limb and take the risk and call them, adults turn their heads and say, 'What is this about and why do you care?'" Womble said.

Though she was invited to go to Montgomery for the signing, Womble doesn't want to take all the credit for getting the bill passed.

"I feel like God was totally in it. I don't feel like JustUs was the linchpin (in getting the law passed), but it was one part of His plan," she said.

Womble called the experience of being there when the bill was first

presented and when it was signed in to law "humbling" and "an honor."

She said JustUs' biggest accomplishment so far was its very first.

JustUs members were encouraged to wear a JustUs T-shirt to school every day April 5–9 to raise awareness of trafficking. The shirts created opportunities to share information about the issue with fellow students who then signed them.

To conclude the weeklong event, JustUs sponsored a benefit concert at Urban Standard in Birmingham. More than 200 people attended, helping JustUs raise \$2,500 for Freedom to Thrive.

Though she has just begun attending Millsaps College in Jackson, Miss., Womble plans to continue serving as the national director of JustUs. Others, serving as regional directors, will take up the work in Birmingham.

### 'Passion for serving'

"I've always had a passion for serving, and it hasn't been until recently that I realized my call is to be involved with serving people," said Womble, who has felt a call to full-time missions. "It's been a crazy ride, but God has provided for me and has blessed me beyond belief."

She knows to whom much has been given, much is expected.

"That isn't a daunting thing to me but an empowering thing for me," she said. "I do know that I've been called to live a radical faith, and that has everything to do with what I'm doing."

For more information, visit [www.justustoday.org](http://www.justustoday.org).

## Guidance counselors give Judson College high marks

America's high school counselors ranked Judson College in Marion No. 20 in their list of best national liberal arts colleges in *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Colleges 2011 rankings, released Aug. 17.

In the spring, the magazine asked guidance counselors from America's best high schools which national liberal arts colleges offer the best undergraduate education. The counselors rated the colleges on a scale of one to five, five being the best.

Judson was given a 4.2. It was one of seven women's colleges and one of four Alabama colleges to make the list.

Birmingham-Southern College, which received a 4.1, was tied for 36th with 10 other schools, and Huntingdon College in Montgomery received a 3.9, tying it for 64th place with 18 other schools. Talladega College, which received a 3.0, tied with 12 other schools for 231st place.

Judson shared the No. 20 spot

with Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa.; Colby College in Waterville, Maine; Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn.; New College of Florida in Sarasota; Occidental College in Los Angeles; Sewanee: The University of the South in Tennessee; and Trinity College in Hartford, Conn.

"[Judson] is both honored and humbled by the vote of confidence from the guidance counselors as reported through the survey with *U.S. News & World Report*," President David E. Potts said.

"Ranking in the top 20 of all national liberal arts colleges is quite an accomplishment and is rooted in the effectiveness of a faculty and a genuine commitment to quality through Christian higher education," he added.

Another Alabama Baptist school was a top pick of guidance counselors. Samford University in Birmingham was one of 24 schools ranked No. 74 among national universities. It was given a 3.8. (JC, TAB)

## Bibb Association's Lucile Church marks 100 years with triple attendance

Attendance at Lucile Baptist Church nearly tripled Aug. 8, as about 90 people gathered to mark the Bibb Baptist Association church's 100th anniversary.

"Although we know the year the church began, we don't know the exact month," longtime member Robert Ingram explained. "We're celebrating the anniversary along with our annual homecoming this year."

Two former pastors, Ed Thomas (1981–1991) and Bobby Terry (2004–2007), attended the celebration, as did Greg Findley, who became Lucile Baptist's pastor Aug. 22. Thomas delivered the morning message and Terry provided special music.

Afterward those in attendance enjoyed a meal in the fellowship hall, fol-

lowed by more special music.

One hundred years ago, the church was established as a collaborative effort of the two mining communities of Red Eagle and Lucile. Other than that, little is known about how it began because there are no church records from 1910 until 1914.

### Original building

The church's first documented building was completed in 1924. Members continue to meet there today.

Creating that place of worship also was a collaborative effort.

"Somebody donated an old house and had it moved to Lucile," Ingram explained.

"They took out the walls and made it into a sanctuary. Later somebody else donated another part of a building and had it moved to the back part of the church. Later

they added to both of the buildings and made it into what we worship in today."

In 2006, the church bell was removed from the attic, refinished and relocated to its current position above the church sign.

Currently the church has an active Brotherhood and plans to re-establish its Woman's Missionary Union. Though the church is small, congregants give faithfully through the Cooperative Program and to Bibb Association and Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

Findley is planning for the church's future by making reaching the younger generation his top priority. "I'd like to see the church get out into the community and search out the lost and bring them in," he said. (TAB)

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## FBC Oakman celebrates its 125-year history of ministry

Elmer Welch beams with pride as he mulls over the history of his church, First Baptist Church, Oakman. "I love history and I especially love the history of our church," he said. Since 1885, the Walker Baptist Association church has been faithfully doing Kingdom work.

Welch and his wife, Martha, regularly update the church's written history. The Welchs know that the pews were purchased back in 1913 and the church first got electric lights

in 1920. According to Elmer Welch, the first pastorium was built in 1906 and the first budget was created in 1918, an annual budget of \$1,200.

He has a personal connection to his church's history. His wife is a descendant of one of the church's founding families and is the longest tenured member. She has been part of the First, Oakman, family for more than 72 years.

On Aug. 15, the church celebrated its 125-year history. Keri Beth Brewer prepared a historical DVD presentation. Melanie Metz of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque. The anni-

versary service included special music from John Wink and Betty Thomas and a message from former Pastor Randy Johnson. After the service, everyone enjoyed lunch.

First, Oakman, began in 1885 as Bays Gap Baptist Church through the vision of three men and their families: J.R. Sartain, A. Kilgore and J.B. Huckabee. By late 1886, the church had constructed a wooden frame building as its meetinghouse. In 1894, the name changed to First Baptist

Church, Oakman. The current church facility was constructed in 1953.

Deacon Mike Brewer takes delight in the church's decision to purchase a parcel of land and a house in Ukraine in 1995. A church that started in the house still gathers today. "First Baptist is small in numbers, but we keep on doing the Lord's work," he pointed out. Of course, the church's community is home to only 950 people. But Pastor Bill Phillips still sees a bright future for First, Oakman.

"The fields here are white for harvest; we have plenty of space and we have opportunities for growth," Phillips said. (TAB)

**"We have plenty of space and ... opportunities for growth."**

**Pastor Bill Phillips**  
**First Baptist Church, Oakman**

## 'Miracle on 85'

### All passengers survive church van crash

(continued from page 1)

came as a "natural" reaction. "As we were flipping around, I saw Briggs King (Attorney General Troy King's son) fly out, and I saw the front of Jacob's head hit the back of the windshield, and I thought he'd fly out, too, so I grabbed him," he said. "It was sort of natural in that he was there and that he needed someone to bring him back in and no one else was going to do it."

#### No fatalities

Jacob, Briggs and five others were taken to Baptist Medical Center South in Montgomery but none had life-threatening injuries. The other seven walked away from the accident with little to no injuries.

Senior Pastor Jay Wolf was on his way to perform a funeral when he received word of the accident. After it became clear that there were no fatalities and everyone was going to be all right, Wolf began praising God.

"They are calling it the 'Miracle on 85,'" he said. "It's becoming God's triumph."

"It's an amazing good news story that could be so vastly, darkly different," Wolf continued. "Our



Photo by Doug Rogers

**PRAYER** — Members of First, Montgomery, pray at Baptist Medical Center South in Montgomery.



Photo courtesy of WAKA CBS 8 News

primary goal is to praise God for what did not happen."

During the morning service Aug. 22, Wolf told his congregation, "For all practical rights, we should be meeting here today to mourn because of a great tragedy, but instead we meet here to praise God for an immeasurable victory. I can't explain it all but that it's

God's grace, His glory; He did something extraordinary yesterday."

Nate couldn't agree more. "There's no doubt there is a God in my mind," he said. "Just seeing the van as crushed as it was and many of us not getting hurt at all, God had to have His hand in our lives protecting [us]."

## Ministry opportunity available in North Alabama

In conjunction with Servant Rider Ministries of Hartselle, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) will be giving away items and sharing the gospel at three Alabama stops during the Trail of Tears Remembrance Motorcycle Ride on Sept. 18.

The first stop is in Madison, where water, chapstick and gospel tracts will be handed out.

The second stop is at a gas station in Florence, where gas will be given to those motorcycle ride participants who listen to a gospel presentation.

The third stop is at McFarland Park in Florence, where the ride ends. Food, water, chapstick and gospel tracts will be given out at the park.

Alabama Baptists are invited to help serve at all the stops.

Witness training is required and

will be provided Sept. 17 at 7 p.m. at Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens.

The ride is an annual event that begins in Chattanooga, Tenn., and ends in Florence. Approximately 100,000 bikers participate each year.

For more information, call Sammy Gilbreath, director of the SBOM office of evangelism, at 1-800-264-1225 or visit [www.servantriderministries.com](http://www.servantriderministries.com). (TAB)

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# Be intentional — take time to teach

Melissa was fresh out of college and eager to get started. Throughout her academic studies, she excelled in the classroom and was a recognized leader in civic organizations. She knew how to make decisions. Now she was heading off to her first full-time job.

When Melissa arrived, the office was very busy. There was a great deal going on, and everyone was consumed with accomplishing his or her tasks. Melissa's supervisor met her that day, spent some time introducing her to the staff, sent her to human resources for orientation and took her to lunch. It was a good morning. That afternoon, though, he showed Melissa her desk and handed her a manual. He told her to read the manual and become familiar with her responsibilities. That was the last she saw of him for a couple of days.

Excited and skilled, Melissa read the manual and throughout the next few months, she tried to do a good job. However, she began a project only to discover she had not involved everyone who needed to be involved. So she was reprimanded, her co-workers grew frustrated and she had to begin the project again. Another time, she completed a project well only to discover she had not fully followed internal procedures. So she had to fix the problems caused by the oversight.

The problem was that Melissa did not know who needed to be involved and the internal procedures to follow. In fact, there was quite a bit she did not know because her supervisor never took the time to teach her. Eventually Melissa left the organization. She was frustrated and the organization was frustrated.

## A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson  
jroberson@wmu.org



Because no one in the organization took the time to walk beside and teach her, Melissa was set up to fail. We do the same thing with new Christians. We expect them to succeed without ever teaching them how to succeed and building the disciplines in them necessary to succeed — disciplines such as personal Bible study and participating in a faith community. They are set up to fail.

Whether we are talking about new Christians or new co-workers,

one fact remains: We have to commit ourselves to teaching those around us who are new to any place or task.

We must intentionally schedule time with someone new, make ourselves available for questions, purposefully get involved with initial decisions and show the person how to do things. Otherwise our lack of involvement sets the person up to fail.

## A Takeaway Value . . .

Investing time in teaching a newcomer ensures his or her success and ours.

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

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**BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER:** First Baptist Church, Rogersville, Ala., is currently seeking a bivocational minister of music/worship leader. Please send all resumes to: First Baptist Church, Rogersville, 222 College Street, Rogersville, AL 35652.

**MINISTER TO MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:** Full-time staff position: Parkview Baptist Church,

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**PART-TIME STUDENT MINISTER:** Liberty Hill Baptist seeking part-time student minister. Send resume to: [kent@libertyhillonline.org](mailto:kent@libertyhillonline.org) or mail to: LHBC, 5800 Co. Rd. 37, Clanton, AL 35045.

**BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR:** Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Hamilton, Ala., is currently seeking a bivocational youth director. Please send resume to: [blovett@cisfn.com](mailto:blovett@cisfn.com), or mail to: P.O. Box 354, Hamilton, AL 35570.

**BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR:** Round Island Baptist is seeking a bivocational youth pastor. Please e-mail resume to: [scribc@charter.net](mailto:scribc@charter.net), or mail to: 14790 Brownsferry Road, Athens, AL 35611. 256-233-1230.

### OTHER POSITIONS

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER DIRECTOR:** Full-time Director of Providence Child Development Center. Mail resumes to: Personnel Committee, CDC Director, Providence Baptist Church, 2807 Lee Road 166, Opelika, AL 36804-0107. Applicants must meet

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# Family Matters

ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S  
HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

September 2010

## School a stepping stone to LIFE success

By Michael Smith,  
ABCH Area Director,  
Northern Alabama

"I'm not going to school. It's too hard and I can't do it," cried 11-year-old Kallie. It was the first morning of the new school year and Kallie's fears were overwhelming her. Kallie and her siblings came to the Children's Homes campus during the summer. She had thrived under the love and protection of her house parents, but she desperately feared going to school. She had earned poor grades at her last school and was told she could not do the work.

Kallie's story is all too common for children entering our care. Many come to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries after being moved from home to home over the course of just a few months. The turmoil and upheaval associated with multiple home placements often causes academic difficulties. Every time a child changes schools, they must learn a whole new system of education. They must develop a whole new group of friends. They must learn to interact with new authority figures. It is no mystery that children arriving at the Children's Homes have been viewed as academic failures and had the grades to indicate so.

At the Children's Homes, though, we believe every child can reach his or her full potential and even excel in school. That's why afternoons at the Children's Homes are so busy during the school year. Walking into one of our group homes on a weekday afternoon, you would see children crowded around tutors, thirsty for someone to praise their learning efforts. These tutors, some of whom are certified teachers, visit several days per week. They work patiently to help our children catch up to their peers.

Tutoring is not the only keystone to academic improvement. You would also see the learning labs where the children can access reference books, learning tools, and computer programs. Most importantly, our house parents work to create safe learning environments for the children. It is heartwarming to step into a cottage and witness a child working on sight words with the mother while the father uses multiplication flash cards with another child. Some children need extra motivation to achieve, and often small rewards are used to encourage children to put forth their best effort. A well-deserved ice cream cone might be the reward for a small improvement in math. These rewards help the children eventually transition into self-motivation.

Why does the Children's Homes put so much into helping children succeed academically? These children are at risk for lifelong poverty if they leave us without the skills to absorb and apply knowledge. It has been estimated by the U. S. Government that high school graduates earn about \$10,000 more per year than those without a high school diploma. That amounts to nearly \$500,000 of income over a working lifetime. Research also shows us that poverty is linked closely with all forms of child abuse, as well as drug and alcohol abuse. The Children's Homes desperately wants to end this cycle for each child entering our care.

And God used these efforts to change Kallie's life. One morning late in the school year, Kallie's house parents sat in the school gymnasium snapping pictures as Kallie accepted the award for student of the year. Kallie's smile was reflective of the Children's Homes family that had supported her. Holding up her medal for her house parents Kallie whispered, "I'm smart now." Through barely noticeable tears her house mother answered, "You always have been."

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries is seeking foster parents willing to open their hearts and homes to children in need in the Northeast Alabama region.

We need individuals and couples who:

- Are Christians, active in their local church.
- Live in the state of Alabama within one-hour's drive of our Oxford Ministry Center.
- Are at least 23 years old.
- If married, have been married more than one year.

If you are willing to help a child in need, contact Debbie Buffaloe or Robbie Ball at 256-831-4081 or by email at [dbuffaloe@abchome.org](mailto:dbuffaloe@abchome.org) or [rball@abchome.org](mailto:rball@abchome.org).

We also offer foster care in the Birmingham, Decatur, Dothan and Mobile regions. If you're interested in serving as a foster parent in one of these areas, please call 1-888-720-8805 or visit [www.alabamachild.org](http://www.alabamachild.org).

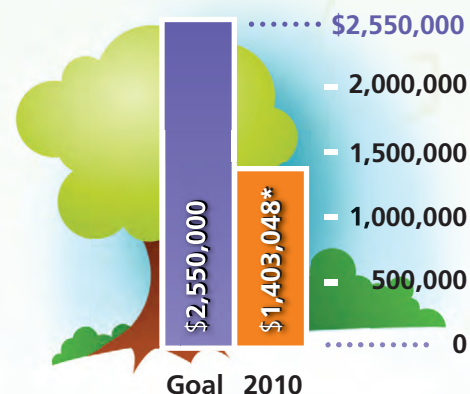


"I plan to graduate college so that other kids in the Children's Homes can see that it can happen for them, too. I want to be the one kid that shows up saying, 'Hey I made it. You can too, don't give up.'" -Alicia Smith

For information on ways you can partner with us to encourage the academic success of students like Alicia and Kallie, visit [www.alabamachild.org](http://www.alabamachild.org).



## 2010 ANNUAL OFFERING



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

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

\* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 5

Explore the Bible

By Dale Younce

Professor, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

**GOD’S PLAN IS ETERNAL**  
**Ephesians 1:1–14**

Although Christians believe God wants to save people, they may not understand why He designed a plan of salvation. Some may say it is because people are bad, sinners desperately needing salvation. Others may say God saves people because of who He is. He is love and will not turn His back on people in need of salvation. While these statements contain a measure of truth, they call attention to the human benefits while ignoring God’s eternal plan of salvation. God always intended to provide salvation through Jesus Christ. When God saves people, He reveals His nature. Thus, by saving people from their sin, God brings praise to Himself. Christians who understand this respond with additional praise to God. This week’s lesson identifies for us four facets of God’s eternal plan of redemption.

**We Are in Christ (1–2)**

The apostle Paul had invested a valuable portion of his ministry in the city of Ephesus. He made a brief stop there on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18–19), and on his third journey, he stayed there for about three years as the gospel spread throughout Asia Minor (Acts 19:10). Later from Rome, where he was under house arrest, Paul wrote this letter we call “Ephesians.” The fact that there are several early manuscripts of this letter omitting the phrase “at Ephesus” tends to support the possibility that this was a circular letter, meaning it was originally sent to one church where copies were made and distributed to other churches in the region. Paul opened his letter with greetings to his readers, identifying them as being “in Christ.” He used “in Christ” or a similar phrase in his New Testament letters more than 160 times — more than 30 times in this letter. Here, as he most often did, Paul stressed with these words the close spiritual relationship of believers and the Lord Jesus, a dynamic and vital union that defines our identity. Christ provides the context in which we live and motivation for how we live.

**We Are Blessed (3–6)**

As part of His eternal plan, God has

blessed Christians spiritually by choosing and adopting them as His children. The apostle said in the realm of spiritual reality, Christians have been thoroughly blessed by God in their relationship to Christ. Believers receive, at the moment of faith in Christ, every spiritual blessing God intends for them to have. By our association with the risen Christ, we have all the spiritual possessions we need for godly living. This means that God included us in His eternal plan of redemption for the purpose of holy living. He lovingly determined beforehand that those who trust Christ would ultimately be conformed to the character of His Son (Rom. 8:29). All this is reason to praise God for His lovingkindness granted to us in our spiritual union with Christ.

**We Are Redeemed (7–12)**

Redemption denotes deliverance or release of a person from slavery into freedom by means of the payment of a ransom. Here it refers to the believer being released from the bondage of sin into the freedom of God’s grace by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Redemption is always and only through Christ’s death (Col. 1:13–14). Not only does redemption provide the limitless grace of God and removal of sin but it also brings to the believer divinely bestowed spiritual understanding. Consequently believers are enabled to grasp something of God’s purpose in the unfolding of the ages and see the relevance of His purpose to the present.

**We Are Sealed (13–14)**

God has guaranteed that He will complete His eternal plan by sealing believers with the Holy Spirit. A seal indicates ownership, security, authenticity and authority. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell the believer and thus secures and preserves him or her in God’s eternal salvation. The Holy Spirit, who is Himself the seal, is God’s pledge to the believer of his or her future inheritance in glory. God is to be praised for the work of the Father in salvation (3–6), the work of the Son in salvation (7–12) and the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation (13–14).

Bible Studies for Life

By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

**MAKING YOUR CASE**  
**Acts 21:40–22:10; 1 Peter 3:15–17**

In the early days of the Christian church, a group of Christian leaders became known as the “Apologists.” These leaders were not apologizing for their faith in the sense of being diffident about what they believed. Instead, they developed strong intellectual, moral and spiritual arguments to seek to convince their contemporaries of the truth of the Christian gospel and help people come to faith in Jesus. In the 21st century, the need for Christians to articulate in word and action the reality of the Christian faith is no less important. As Western society is under attack from secular forces that deny the very existence of God and the importance of the Christian message, believers need to be equipped to share the good news of God’s love with people in need.

**Be Prepared (1 Pet. 3:15–17)**

Peter reminded believers that they should always be ready to share their faith with people who ask them. He was writing in the context of a threat of persecution, and when he spoke about being “ready to make your defense,” there may be a hint of an official charge being brought against Christians from secular authorities. In our context, there are many opportunities that arise in a culture in which Christianity is respectable for believers to present a vibrant witness to faith in Jesus Christ. Peter encouraged us to be careful how we do this. Our goal is not to win arguments but to gently, yet firmly, speak of our faith in God. Peter knew, however, that if our witness is to be effective, then it must be backed up with a life of “good conduct.” Nothing will put people off the message of Christianity more than Christians who talk the talk but do not walk the walk.

**Establish a Connection**  
**(Acts 21:40–22:3)**

In Acts 21, Paul returned from a missionary journey to Jerusalem and was arrested by the Roman authorities after a group of Jews accosted him in the temple. He was given permission to speak to the people, many of whom were antagonistic to his message and others

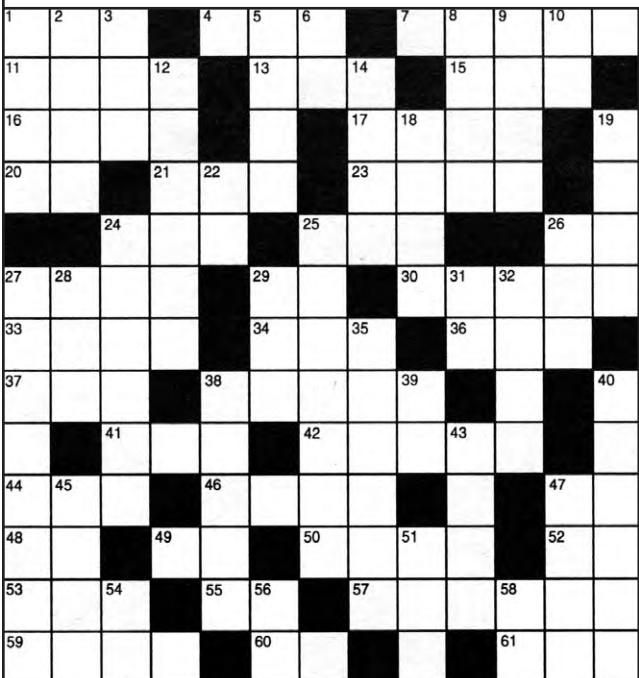
who were wondering what all the commotion was about. Paul’s first action in speaking to the people was to establish a connection with them. A little earlier, he had used the Greek language to gain the attention of the Roman tribune who had taken him into custody but now he spoke to the Jewish people in Hebrew. He continued to make a connection with them by speaking of his Jewish background and gratitude to God for their shared religious heritage. In Acts 17, speaking to a group of Greek philosophers, he quoted poetry and philosophy. Here, however, he used the Hebrew Scriptures to communicate his faith in Christ as the fulfillment of all the promises contained within the Old Testament. In a similar way, we need to make connections with people, treating them with respect, knowing who they are and what they know and believe and seeking to communicate our faith in a way that makes sense. As Paul made his “defense” in verse 1 (the same word that is used in 1 Peter 3:15), his main purpose was not to save himself but to share God’s love with people who are lost.

**Share Your Experience (Acts 22:4–10)**

The focus of Paul’s defense was not merely an intellectual presentation of the Christian faith, but he shared his personal testimony of encountering Jesus Christ. This does not imply that it is unimportant to have knowledge of the Christian faith, a deep acquaintance with the truth of Scripture and Christian theology. However, beyond an intellectual awareness of truth, there is the power of personal experience, especially if it is backed up with a life of holiness. I was brought to faith in Christ when I was 9 years of age. The person who made the difference on a Monday evening in January 1961 was a man who offered his life, along with others, to teach children the message of the Christian faith. He wasn’t a preacher. He was simply a Sunday School teacher in Prestwick, Scotland, but his life of kindness, simple words of testimony and prayer at the end of our evening together made me think. Later that evening, I gave my life to Jesus, my Savior. We may not be a Peter or a Paul, but we can all share our experience of God’s love that has touched our lives.

Christian Crossword

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- Across**

  - God shall \_\_\_\_ them off. (Ps. 94:23)
  - If \_\_\_\_ man serve me. (John 12:26)
  - \_\_\_\_ the Lord. (Ex. 12:31)
  - Large monkeys.
  - Slippery fish.
  - Very Important Person. (abbr.)
  - There is \_\_\_\_ beside me. (Isa. 45:6)
  - That thine eyes may be \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Chron. 6:20)
  - Printer’s measures.
  - Chew the \_\_\_\_\_. (Deut. 14:7)
  - The \_\_\_\_ of perfectness. (Col. 3:14)
  - While the \_\_\_\_ was a preparing. (1 Pet. 3:20)
  - New, recent.
  - Attorney General. (abbr.)
  - A \_\_\_\_ to be born. (Eccles. 3:2)
  - Bushel. (abbr.)
  - In the seventh year of his \_\_\_\_\_. (Esther 2:16)
  - Form of the word *root*.
  - Short form of “umpire.”
  - An expert.
- Down**

  - The sweet \_\_\_\_ from a far country. (Jer. 6:20)
  - Laid him on the altar \_\_\_\_
  - Ensign. (abbr.)
  - A canopy of plant material.
  - From beginning to \_\_\_\_.
  - Northern sea duck.
  - He was \_\_\_\_ at that saying. (Mark 10:22)
  - Paddles used to row a boat.
  - Actual weight. (abbr.)
  - Pronoun meaning “we.”
  - Horsepower. (abbr.)
  - The sower \_\_\_\_ the grain.
  - New England state. (abbr.)
  - From the man’s \_\_\_\_ God made a woman. (Gen. 2:22)
  - Seventh note of musical scale.
  - Below.
  - Go, return \_\_\_\_ to her mother’s house. (Ruth 1:8)
  - Square. (abbr.)
  - Adam \_\_\_\_ Eve.
  - the wood. (Gen. 22:9)
  - Lord, thy pound hath gained \_\_\_\_ pounds. (Luke 19:16)
  - My God shall supply all your \_\_\_\_\_. (Phil. 4:19)
  - Go \_\_\_\_ into all the world. (Mark 16:15)
  - Lord \_\_\_\_ of the sabbath. (Matt. 12:8)
  - Outside layer of an orange.
  - Vice president. (abbr.)
  - His \_\_\_\_ is with the righteous. (Prov. 3:32)
  - Lower part of the ear.
  - The \_\_\_\_ always with you. (Matt. 26:11)
  - Shew me a \_\_\_\_\_. (Judg. 6:17)
  - United Kingdom. (abbr.)
  - Entertained.
  - Book of Israelites’ wilderness wanderings.
  - He is of \_\_\_\_\_. (John 9:21)
  - Have \_\_\_\_ in heaven. (Mark 10:21)
  - Suffix which means “act” or “condition of.”
  - Prickly seed case.
  - Each. (abbr.)
  - Puts frosting on cake.
  - Full of deadly \_\_\_\_\_. (James 3:8)
  - Take as one’s own child.
  - Rural delivery. (abbr.)
  - Worthy of his \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Tim. 5:18)
  - Direction of sunrise.
  - Largest continent.
  - Let all the people say, \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 106:48)
  - Marry.
  - Before Christ. (abbr.)
  - Surely the Lord \_\_\_\_ in this place. (Gen. 28:16)
  - Interjection expressing triumph.
-

# Campus News



## University of Mobile

### ► UMobile Students Study the Arts Abroad:

Thirteen University of Mobile (UMobile) theater students made an expedition to Kiefersfelden, Germany, July 5–27 to do an intensive study of musical theater and opera at the International Performing Arts Institute (IPAI).

This was the first learning experience of its kind for UMobile musical theater students. Each IPAI student participated in two private voice, acting and repertoire coaching lessons each week as well as daily German and dance classes. It included a musical theater intensive held in Hamburg and an opera intensive held in Munich with industry leaders currently active in their field. Joining UMobile students at IPAI this summer were students from the University of Central Florida in Orlando, the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, the University of New Hampshire in Durham and The Boston Conservatory, among others.



## Samford University

### ► Goldilocks (Revisited) at Samford: Samford University art department

presents Jane Timberlake Cooper in Goldilocks (Revisited) at the

Samford Art Gallery, Aug. 23–Sept. 28, weekdays 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Reception and artist's talk Sept. 7, 4–6 p.m. For more information contact the art department at 205-726-2840.

► **Samford Faculty Gala:** On Sept. 7, Samford will host the Samford University School of the Arts Faculty Gala with performances and works of faculty members. Gala will take place in Brock Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m. For more information call 205-726-2851.

► **Holley-Hull Lectures:** New Testament scholar and educator Gail R. O'Day will present Samford University's 2010 Holley-Hull Lectures Sept. 8–9.

► **Samford Hosts String Quartet:** Samford University School of the Arts' Davis Guest Artist Series presents Tokyo String Quartet on Sept. 14 in Brock Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m. For tickets visit: [www.samford.edu/arts/tickets](http://www.samford.edu/arts/tickets). For more information call 205-726-2853.

► **Samford Faculty Piano Recital:** Samford University's school of the arts will host a faculty piano recital featuring Kathryn Fouse on Sept. 21 at 7:30 p.m. in Brock Recital Hall. For more information, call 205-726-2851.

O'Day, dean and professor of New Testament and Preaching at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, is a specialist in the Gospel of John, the Bible and preaching and the history of biblical interpretation. She will speak at Birmingham's Baptist Church of the

Covenant at 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 8.

O'Day will present two lectures at Samford on Sept. 9. She will speak at 10 a.m. in Reid Chapel and at 3 p.m. in Brooks Auditorium. A reception will follow the afternoon lecture. The public is invited.

O'Day's Birmingham talks are part of the Samford religion department's annual Howard L. and Martha H. Holley Lectures: New Testament Voices for a Contemporary World, in honor of university professor and retired Samford provost William E. Hull.

► **Samford Theatre Presentation:** Sept. 30–Oct. 3, Samford University Theatre presents Tom Stoppard's modern dramatic masterpiece, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead," in Harrison Theatre. Performances 7:30 p.m. Sept. 30–Oct. 2, and 2:30 p.m. Oct. 3. For tickets visit [www.samford.edu/arts/tickets](http://www.samford.edu/arts/tickets). For more information call 205-726-2853.



## Judson College

### ► Judson Hosts Soccer Event:

The Judson College soccer team and coach Emmanuel Stephens held a "Bringing the Neighborhood Together" event Aug. 28. People from Judson and the Marion community watched a soccer game and enjoyed free ice cream at the Dunkin Athletic Park on the Judson campus.



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## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Students denied right to worship; evangelist arrested

PAJE, Tanzania — Christian university students on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar, a predominantly Muslim area off the coast of East Africa, have been denied the right to worship, while on another part of the isle a Christian leader has been jailed. Sources said Peter Masanja, an evangelist in Zanzibar's southeastern town of Paje, was arrested by security agents sometime in early August.

Earlier this year Masanja, a member of the Pentecostal Church in Zanzibar, invited Christians to his house, as he had made part of his land available for church activities. Angry Muslims vowed to prohibit any Christian activities there, sources said. Pastors from Zanzibar sought to meet with prison authorities about Masanja's arrest, but officials informed them that the person in charge of the prison was away on official business, said Bishop Obeid Fabian, chairman of an association of congregations known as the Fraternal Churches.

At Zanzibar University, a private school in Tunguu 12 miles from Zanzibar Town, Islamic administrators have denied Christian students freedom of worship while retaining that constitutional right for Muslims, said Samson Zuberi, Christian Union students coordinator. Three student Christian Union leaders have protested to school officials and threatened to go to court over the discrimination, he said.

In an April 12 circular, university Dean of Students Mavua H. Mussa warned those defying worship regulations to seek other learning institutions, saying that the ban on religious activities in lecture theaters, halls of residence or anywhere else on campus was absolute. Students said the ban violates the Zanzibar constitution's provisions for freedom of association.

### 'Blasphemy' threats send Pakistanis into hiding

BAHAWALNAGAR, Pakistan — Threats of "blasphemy" charges in two provinces in Pakistan have sent a Christian cleaning worker and a young interfaith couple into hiding. In Chishtian, Bahawalnagar district in Punjab province, Muslim extremists accused cleaning worker Tanvir Masih of New Christian Colony with blasphemy after they found him using a broom whose handle was covered with a pharmaceutical firm's advertisement cards bearing a verse from the Quran that read, "God is the best healer!"

Masih's employer, a physician identified only as Dr. Arshad of the privately owned Bajwa Clinic, and the district health officer decided that Masih had committed no blasphemy against Muhammad, the Quran or Islam, and the extremists initially said they accepted their decision, a local pastor said. However, as Masih came out of the clinic he found irate Muslims had thronged the road, and he made a sprint for his life; since then no one has seen him or his family there.

In Karachi, Sindh province, the Muslim in-laws of a 33-year-old Christian man threatened to charge him with blasphemy — and kill his wife for suspected "apostasy," or leaving Islam — after he refused to divorce her, the Christian man said. Shahbaz Javed said that since he secretly wed Mehwish Naz in a civil court in October 2008, his Muslim employer fired him from his factory job and his wife's relatives found out where they lived and began to threaten them unless she divorced him.

"Her parents warned her again that if she did not give up all this, they would file a case of apostasy against her and implicate Shahbaz Javed in a blasphemy case or kill him," said Pastor Khadim Bhutto, a Christian rights worker for Gawahi Mission Trust.

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## Palestinian next LWF president

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has chosen Palestinian Bishop Munib A. Younan as its next president, the first Arab to lead the Geneva-based umbrella group for 70 million Lutherans.

Younan, 59, was elected July 24 at the LWF's 11th assembly in Stuttgart. He succeeds Pastor Mark Hanson, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, who held the post for seven years.

Younan told delegates he was introduced to the LWF as a refugee when he drank chocolate milk at the Martin Luther School in Jerusalem, an event that inspired him to enter the church ministry.

With just 3,000 members, Younan's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is one of the smallest of the LWF churches. "Palestinian Christianity has survived 2,000 years," he said. "We have never ruled the country, nor were we ever in the majority. We do not have much property, power, money or influence. Yet we have survived." (RNS)



BP photo

**INNOVATIVE** — International Mission Board representative Mark Patenaude trains Thailand farmers in a method that uses a deep organic bedding to eliminate the smell associated with raising pigs in captivity.

# Stink-free pigs

## Man uses farming method in Thailand to share gospel

They needed pigs that don't stink.

At a meeting in rural Thailand, International Mission Board representative Mark Patenaude heard the pig farmers' dilemma. They were being forced to move their smelly livestock a mile outside their village. But some farmers were too poor or too old to do so.

"I know of a method to raise pigs that don't produce any smell," Patenaude announced. "Is anybody interested in that?"

Hands shot up all over the room. He hoped this enthusiasm would later lead to openness to the gospel.

He was wrong.

Patenaude and his wife, Lisa, came to this unreached village in 2003 with a plan. Having worked previously on agricultural development projects in Thailand, they planned to use that knowledge to help improve the community. In turn, they hoped that would give them an opening to talk about Jesus in a place with no known believers.

"We wanted to go into new territory, be pioneer evangelists and serve the community," Patenaude said. "God would provide new believers, we would be able to disciple them, and we would work with them to come up with a model of church that would thrive in a rural setting."

Things went well at first.

The Patenaudes were welcomed by the villagers, who invited them to a government-sponsored development committee in the district.

"That was good for me, because I got to hear all the issues that were going on in different villages," Patenaude said.

One of those issues was the

forced relocation of pig farms.

Repelled by the stench, some villagers believed the animals were unsanitary and wanted them out. Patenaude seized the opportunity with an inventive, yet little known, solution: make the pigs not stink.

Developed in South Korea, the method — Korean Natural Farming — involves raising pigs on deep organic bedding filled with local microorganisms that rapidly break down the pigs' droppings.

"It just eliminates the smell associated with raising animals in captivity," Patenaude said. "That was amazing to me, because it worked. Who would have ever thought that pigs don't stink?"

The Thai government provided money for 10 people from the community to go with Patenaude to a training facility where they learned to implement the method.

### Earned respect

"I was very well received, and everybody came to know me as the stink-free pig guy," he said.

Patenaude's work earned him great respect among members of the community, who saw he truly cared for their needs. Energized by the acceptance he gained, he sprang into sharing the gospel — and slammed into a wall.

"Every time I told my testimony, I could see their eyes start to glaze over," he recalled. "I could just see them turn off."

"They were so open and receptive to us on [development projects], but when it came to spiritual matters, it was just an absolute brick wall every time," he said.

After repeated efforts failed, doubts flooded Patenaude's mind.

Was his language deficient? Was his approach wrong?

"I just couldn't get it," Patenaude said. "Why was what God did in my life and the transformation He offers everybody not being accepted or even seen as desirable by the people I was talking to?"

For five years, he and Lisa labored to break through with the gospel, constantly re-evaluating their methods. They partnered with Thai Christians, who themselves were shocked by the difficulty of evangelizing the community.

The Patenaudes wrestled with the uncertainty and self-questioning that came with not seeing a single adult accept Christ.

"[We asked], 'God, are we still supposed to be here?'" Patenaude recalled. "... Every time, the answer came back [from God], 'Look, you may not see it, but this is where you're supposed to be right now.'"

He and Lisa accepted that answer each time it came, striving to be obedient despite their frustration.

After knocking on so many doors that wouldn't open, the Patenaudes finally felt God leading them to a new strategic role that required close work with Thai churches in a nearby city. The Patenaudes still visit the village, and they have seen some adults move toward a greater understanding of God. The couple trust the seeds planted in the hard spiritual soil will someday grow.

"We have to trust God in His leadership, no matter what task He gives us, and we have to be faithful to that, even when it is frustrating and we can't see the results," Patenaude said.

"I think we knew that, but He let us experience it." (BP)

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### New English translation of Roman Missal approved

WASHINGTON — The most sweeping changes to the Catholic Mass in 40 years will be rolled out in 2011, the U.S. bishops announced Aug. 20 after receiving formal approval from the Vatican.

The new English-language translation of the Roman Missal, the official text of prayers and responses used in Mass, will be implemented Nov. 27, 2011, the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of a new liturgical year. Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said Vatican approval was granted June 23, with additional changes approved July 24. Over the next year, priests and parishioners will work through the changes to the text, such as the prayer "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you," which will change to "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof." Other familiar passages, such as "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again" will no longer be used. Changes to the wording of the Nicene and Apostles' creeds have also been made. Pope John Paul II ordered the new translations to encourage greater fidelity to the original Latin. Translations into local languages after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s were too hastily and sloppily produced, according to the pope.

Some U.S. bishops have objected to the changes as difficult to understand and pronounce, but the Vatican showed no willingness to keep the current Mass that's familiar to millions of Catholics.

### Atheist group changes name of its blasphemy day

AMHERST, N.Y. — The Amherst, N.Y.-based Center for Inquiry (CFI) has changed the name of its International Blasphemy Day to International Blasphemy Rights Day in a bid to show that organizers are not interested in "mocking religion" for its own sake. CFI representatives said the name change better describes the purpose of the event amid criticism received after last year's inaugural events. "The name change is meant to emphasize the important connection that we think there is between blasphemy and the right to free speech," said Ronald Lindsay, president and CEO of CFI.

Lindsay said some critics "interpreted blasphemy in its crudest form" but "blasphemy is a wider concept than that." Although many people scoffed at last year's campaign, he said, the center believes religion is not, and should not be, immune from criticism. "Religious beliefs should be on the same level of political beliefs," Lindsay said. This year's events are scheduled for Sept. 30, the fifth anniversary of the publication of 12 cartoons of Islam's Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper.

### Court rules Utah highway crosses unconstitutional

WASHINGTON — An appeals court ruling that said highway crosses erected to honor fallen Utah state troopers are unconstitutional could prompt additional challenges in other states, legal experts said. The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Aug. 18 that the 12-foot crosses violate the Constitution's Establishment Clause, which prohibits government endorsement of religion. "We hold that these memorials have the impermissible effect of conveying to the reasonable observer the message that the state prefers or otherwise endorses a certain religion," the court ruled, overturning a lower court decision. The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which argued in favor of the crosses on behalf of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico and Oklahoma, said the case could have repercussions beyond Utah. "In the wake of this decision, any privately-erected religious memorials on government property in those states could be vulnerable to a court challenge," the organization said in a statement. The Becket Fund said the case is likely to be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

### World Vision can fire employees who disagree with beliefs

WASHINGTON — World Vision, the Christian humanitarian organization, can fire employees who disagree with its theological tenets, a federal appeals court ruled Aug. 23. In a 2-1 decision, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said that World Vision is a "religious corporation" and therefore exempt from a federal law that bars faith-based discrimination. "I am satisfied that World Vision has met its burden of showing that the 'general picture' of the organization is 'primarily religious,'" wrote Judge Diarmuid O'Scannlain. "World Vision is a nonprofit organization whose humanitarian relief efforts flow from a profound sense of religious mission." Three employees, two of whom had worked at World Vision for 10 years, were fired in 2006 because they did not believe in the divinity of Jesus or the doctrine of the Trinity, O'Scannlain wrote. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 bars religious discrimination but carves out an exemption for companies engaged in a religious purpose, the court ruled.