

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Oct. 7, 2010
Vol. 175, No. 39

The most widely circulated state Baptist newspaper

Toll free 1-800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

INSIDE



New NAMB president offers retirement incentive to staff

◆ Page 4



Gambling in Alabama: Alabama court cases related to 'electronic gambling'

◆ Pages 5-7

Trussville ministry partners with churches to expand benevolence

◆ Page 15

'To the least of these'

World Hunger Fund offers help, hope

Hlengiwe is but 14 years old, yet she is the head of her household, taking care of her seven younger brothers, sisters and cousins. Her parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are all dead from AIDS.

Weekly food parcels provided by Southern Baptists through their World Hunger Fund help feed Hlengiwe and her family.

Nearby, Sibosial refuses to admit he has AIDS, even though his body is rapidly wasting away. He can barely care for himself and will soon die. Weekly hunger fund food parcels also are helping to keep Sibosial alive.

The devastating effects of HIV/AIDS hit well over 50 percent of the population of Sweetwaters, South Africa, where Hlengiwe and Sibosial live. Sweetwaters is located in Kwa-Zulu-Natal province, which has the country's highest HIV infection rate, according to the South African Department of Health.

The powerful forces of famine, earthquake and flooding leave hundreds of thousands — even millions — of people hungry, said Mark Hatfield, who with his wife Susan directs work in Sub-Saharan Africa for Baptist Global Response (BGR), an international relief and development organization that helps administer the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund throughout the globe.

"Attention is not often focused, however, on small communities like Sweetwaters, where, because of the HIV crisis, hunger is felt just as deeply," Hatfield noted.

As part of Southern Baptists' response to the HIV/AIDS crisis, BGR works alongside Tabitha Ministries, a local Christian organization near Sweetwaters, to provide food to more than 6,000 individuals affected by the disease.

"BGR has been able to partner with organizations like Tabitha Ministries to provide food parcels that supplement the nutrition levels of child-headed households, those on anti-retroviral treatments and those suffering



BP photo

GREENHOUSE EFFECT — Stephen, a Tabitha Ministries worker in Sweetwaters, South Africa, picks spinach grown in greenhouses provided by Southern Baptists through the World Hunger Fund for distribution to 6,000 individuals affected by HIV/AIDS in the community.

with full-blown AIDS," Hatfield said.

"We are able to supply these nutritional food parcels because of the generous and sacrificial donations of Southern Baptists," Hatfield added. "All the food products in the parcels are purchased with funds provided through the World Hunger Fund."

The hunger fund is mainly supported by an annual offering in Southern Baptist churches each October. This year, World Hunger Sunday is Oct. 10.

Hot topic of discussion

People in southern Africa, one of the regions hardest hit by HIV/AIDS, don't talk about the disease, they talk about hunger, said James Morris, former director of the United Nations World Food Programme, in a report on the relationship between hunger and AIDS. Morris said food plays a critical role in providing people with

(See 'Medicine,' page 3)



BP photo

A TASTE OF HOME — Emily Gwala is a 'mobile mom' with Tabitha Ministries in Sweetwaters, South Africa. She makes sure child-headed households receive nutritious meals provided by the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund. The households are headed by children because adult family members have died from AIDS.

State convention set for Nov. 16-17 in Hoover

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Times may be tough for Alabama Baptists, economically speaking, but state Baptist leaders intend to make sure that is not the case with the upcoming state convention annual meeting, spiritually speaking.

Scheduled for Nov. 16-17 at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting will be one of

encouragement and inspiration, state leaders contend.

"It is a tough world out there right now," said ABSC President Jimmy Jackson, senior pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville. "We have to look beyond here ... for a glimpse of sunshine. We are focusing on our hope in the Lord."

Jackson said he is working on an upbeat sermon for his president's address and is excited Rick Lance, executive

director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), will deliver the Tuesday evening message.

"I don't think anyone has a convention heart heavier than Rick Lance," Jackson said. "He always has something fresh."

SBOM Chairman Travis Coleman, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville, agreed.

"He's quite the motivational speaker" (See 'Budget,' page 4)

COMMENT

Worthy of Double Honor

October is Minister Appreciation Month. It is a relatively new emphasis but an important one. The observance provides churches opportunity to honor their pastors as 1 Timothy 5:17 suggests.

True, the verse says, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor." But the word "elder" is a synonym for several other English words, including pastor.

The Greek language uses three words that are translated by at least six English words. The word "episkopos" is translated "overseer" or "bishop" in English Bibles. The word "poimeen" is rendered "shepherd" or "pastor." The word "presbuteros" usually reads "elder" or "presbyter."

In 1 Peter 2:25, Jesus is said to be the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. These are two functions of the same person. A careful reading of Scripture will show all three terms used interchangeably. They are not separate offices or an outline of a hierarchical church structure. They are all functions of what Baptists know as pastors. Of course, the word "pastor" is a Latin word meaning "shepherd."

So the pastor or pastors of a church are worthy of double honor.

The verse raises a question for some because it says the pastors who are worthy of double honor are those "who direct the affairs of the church well." On more than one occasion, this verse has caused members to argue about how well the pastor has directed the church's affairs.

For some, this means counting nickels and noses. If the numbers are up, then the pastor has done well. If the numbers are down, then his performance is lacking.

Others evaluate the pastor on how well he has fulfilled their expectation of the office. Has he been in the right places, said the right things and kept company with the right people?

For a few, "directing the affairs of the church well" means only one thing: The pastor has done what they told him to do. It is amazing how often individual church members equate their personal wills with God's will.

All of these evaluations have one thing in com-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

mon: They all assume the pastor works for the local church. The local church hires him, supervises him and can fire him. Therefore the pastor works for the local church. The logic is impeccable but wrong.

A pastor may work "at" a church, but he does not work "for" a church. A local church may change the location at which a pastor works, but no congregation can sever the relationship between the pastor and the One for whom he works.

Divine calling

Baptists believe a calling to be a pastor is a divine one. It is not a vocational choice picked from an array of many choices. Being a pastor is the result of a calling from God to dedicate one's life to serving Him by serving His people.

That divine calling is affirmed by a local congregation in the licensing and ordination process. A local church must affirm that a candidate for ordination evidences a divine calling in his life and exhibits spiritual gifts appropriate for such a life of service.

The apostle Paul cautioned Timothy, his protégé, at this point. In 1 Timothy 5:22, Paul wrote, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands." Churches would do well to heed these words and allow time for those sensing God's call to demonstrate that reality through their lives and service.

Ordination, however, does not make one a pastor. That happens only when a local church calls an individual to be its pastor. At this point, the in-

dividual has experienced a personal divine calling. A local church has affirmed general gifts for ministry. Finally a congregation affirms the leading of the Holy Spirit for the individual to exercise the gifts as its pastor.

The whole process emphasizes a pastor works "at" a local church but always works "for" God.

First Peter 5:2 instructs a pastor to be the "shepherd of God's flock that is under your care." He is to care for the souls of the congregation and community. He is to provide direction for the church as overseer. The congregation belongs to God, but verse 3 says it has been "entrusted" to the pastor.

Pastors need and deserve financial support. That is part of the double honor referenced in 1 Timothy 5. But pastors do not serve because they are "greedy for money."

Pastors are the leaders of the church — the overseers or bishops. The pastor is to be the catalyst for ministry. But pastors do not serve because they are on a power trip and want to "lord it over" others. Rather pastors are to be examples to their members. Pastors preach and teach but not to build a personal reputation. It is to build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).

Even though Baptists believe in the priesthood of all believers, the pastor represents the presence of God like no other member in the congregation. That is why his presence is often requested in emergency situations.

Pastors are not "hirelings." They are God's undershepherds serving so that when the Great Shepherd appears, they will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away (v. 4).

When either the pastor or the church forgets that the pastor works "at" but not "for" the church, relationships become confused. Trouble often follows.

When both remember God's plan for the pastor and the local church, both can work together in such a way that every month is Minister Appreciation Month. In such situations, offering double honor is easy to do.

Letters to the Editor

GLENN BECK SUPPORT

Thank you for the article "Evangelicals question Beck's message, agenda" in *The Alabama Baptist* on Sept. 16. Thank you, Dr. Richard Land and Bishop Harry Jackson, for your positive response to Mr. Beck's Aug. 28 rally. It was disheartening to read the other professing Christians' references to Mr. Beck's message as "scandalous" and to his views as "the latest political whim." Few God-believing Americans speak out in the secular public arena.

With so much atheism, negativism and anti-Christian values prominently displayed 24/7 in our media, why can we not accept and appreciate, even commend, a man who speaks for restoring honor, human rights, patriotism and godly principles? Is there jealousy, fear or just a need for attention that brings such criticism and lack of respect to a man of character? When have you who are so critical ever rented The Kennedy Center or any other public place with your own funds for a "divine" gathering, praying for divine guidance?

I listen to Glenn Beck daily and have never heard him refer to Mormonism. Even if he did, what do we fear? Are we not strong enough in our own faith to listen and learn?

You who find time to criticize Glenn Beck, why are you not speaking out louder against those who would tear down our nation, corrupt our schools and undercut our religious liberty? Our narrow-mindedness as Southern (See 'Letters,' page 14)



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

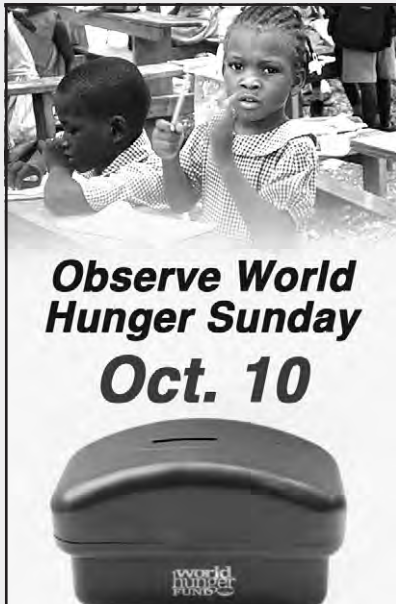
(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

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is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. Web site: www.thealabamabaptist.org. E-mail: news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and other locations.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. **ADDRESS CHANGE:** Send old and new addresses, and name of church to Circulation Department, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Allow two weeks.

WORLD HUNGER



Medicine not enough; 'need proper nutrition'

(continued from page 1)

nutrition that can help them "fight off the infection, regain strength and live productively." Malnutrition breaks down people's immune systems and makes them more prone to disease, including AIDS.

"Ending AIDS is not a battle we will win with medicine alone. We need proper nutrition, education and clean water," Morris said.

"One of the things that you see in areas of poverty is that there is no margin in anyone's life to be able to survive a crisis," Hatfield said. "HIV is a huge crisis that is magnified in areas already dealing with poverty, where it turns into this miserable experience that many times leads to a very painful and horrible death."

In Sweetwaters, the World Hunger Fund provides eight tons of food per month to "desperate people, most of whom need the sustenance merely to survive," Hatfield said. "The food parcels are a supplemental amount of food going into a home. It is not everything that they need — there is no way we could provide all that right now — but it is a supplement and it is a help."

'Biblical ministry'

The parcels contain basic foodstuffs like corn meal, rice, beans, canned fish, salt, sugar and tea. Each household also is given fresh produce grown in greenhouses supplied by BGR. As they distribute food, volunteers with Tabitha Ministries tell members of each household about God's love for them and the full, meaningful life He created them to enjoy.

For those with advanced AIDS who cannot eat solid food, a nutritious soup is made from vegetables grown in the greenhouses. These are combined with a dehydrated soup base and distributed by Tabitha Ministries' caregivers.

"This is truly a biblical ministry, feeding the widows and orphans and assisting the sick and destitute who are in need," Hatfield said. (BP)

Groceries and the Good News

Memphis food pantry offers sustenance, 'new chapter of life'

Sheri Shockey's wide feet fit in nothing but her blue men's slippers.

She walked out the front door of the Brinkley Heights food pantry in Memphis, Tenn., carrying a brown paper sack full of food. A man greeted her as he passed, "You ought to come and join us for church one day."

"Oh, I can't do that — I don't go anywhere without my house shoes." She looked down.

"Well, then, you can come in your house shoes."

That was the beginning of what Sheri refers to as "a new chapter of life," which began three years ago.

Less than a decade ago, Sheri was living the American dream — a nice house in the suburbs, membership at a local church, a family and a successful job as a nurse. She even took the occasional cruise vacation.

At the height of her success, 10 families at Brinkley Heights Baptist Church were holding a prayer meeting on the other side of town. The small congregation was struggling to keep the lights on in their building. But they'd heard God's call to reach out to their neighbors with the gospel, and the idea of a food pantry began to ignite their excitement.

Their pastor met the idea with some skepticism. The church's closest neighbors were several crack houses, where gang violence and drug-related shootings were not uncommon. And they didn't have any money.

But one man stood up and said, "Well, God's got everything. God's got all the money. He's given us the plans and if He plans it, He's going to supply whatever we need. All He wants us to do is be willing."

Each family began bringing a few cans from their own pantry to a closet in the church and inviting their neighbors to come on Monday nights to receive some groceries — and the Good News.

Good news was in short supply on Sheri's side of town. Sheri's husband Ron had owned his own roofing company, and business had been going so well that Sheri quit her full-time position to work with a nursing agency. The job offered better pay but no benefits. When Ron's business partner disappeared with all the profits, his business failed. Soon after, Sheri was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and they were without health insurance.



BP photo

STOCKED UP — A volunteer at Brinkley Heights Baptist Church's food pantry in Memphis packs a bag with a supply of food for a family.

In the following months, their house was foreclosed and their son was sent to live with other relatives.

Across town, Ron found a job working as a maintenance man in exchange for a small room at a cheap motel while Sheri underwent treatment for cancer. At one point, she was reduced to living on discarded donuts and water from the motel's free continental breakfast. Sheri quit treatment and doctors gave her only 18 months to live.

Rising unemployment

Stories similar to the Shockeys are being played out across North America. On Sept. 16, the U.S. Census Bureau announced a 14.3 percent poverty rate for 2009 — a number expected to grow with rising unemployment. The number of people living below the poverty rate is at its highest since 1959, according to various news sources. Southern Baptist ministries like the one at Brinkley Heights Baptist Church help meet the need.

Weary and hopeless, Sheri showed up at the Brinkley Heights church in her house shoes.

"It was like coming home," Sheri said. "I discovered a whole new family in Brinkley."

Over the years, the Brinkley Heights food pantry and clothes closet have evolved into a full-scale nonprofit organization. They meet the needs of more than 1,500 people each year with assistance from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund and church members willing to give of what little they have.

In 2009, the hunger fund provided 4.6 million meals in North America through churches and Southern Baptist hunger relief ministries. In addition to providing meals, more than 36,000 professions of faith were reported.

This year \$1.2 million is needed for requests already expressed for 2011, and only \$500,000 is on hand for the rest of 2010. World Hunger Sunday is Oct. 10, the time of year when churches often take up a special offering — 100 percent of which goes to providing food for the underserved. (BP)

FBC Ashville youth crush cans for hunger fund

First Baptist Church, Ashville, is thankful for two former members who, by example, led the St. Clair Baptist Association church in giving to the World Hunger Fund.

Ruth Prickett, who is now deceased, walked the streets of Ashville for many years collecting cans, and with the help of her husband, Dudley, she recycled the cans in exchange for money.

The money the Dudleys earned was then given to the World Hunger Fund.

When the couple became ill about five years ago and moved to Texas, the church decided to take up the ministry effort. So the then-Youth on Mission group of First, Ashville, started the Ruth and Dudley Prickett Cans for Hunger project.

Once a quarter, it would collect cans and recycle them for money for the World Hunger Fund. After the Youth on Mission group dissolved, the Children in Action took on the project.

In August, First, Ashville, formed an Acteens group.

The Acteens joined the Children in Action for the first time Sept. 29 for the quarterly cans for hunger project.

Over the past five years, the cans for hunger project has raised about \$2,000 for the fund.

"It's one of the many things we do as a church for missions," said James Sampley, pastor of First, Ashville. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Patricia Chandler

CANS FOR CASH — Acteens of First Baptist Church, Ashville, in St. Clair Baptist Association crush cans Sept. 29 to raise money for the World Hunger Fund.

Budget, resolutions to be considered

(continued from page 1)

er," said Coleman, who will deliver the convention sermon. "His heart beats for the Great Commission and doing it the Baptist way. I think our messengers should want to hear from the one who guides us, who has been given that assignment and has done so well."

Lance being the headliner also serves the convention well during these harsh economic times, Coleman and Jackson pointed out.

"Financially it makes sense," Coleman said. "It makes good stewardship sense using our own resources right now."

Lance noted that the proposed 2011 Cooperative Program (CP) budget of \$43 million to be voted on by messengers will reflect a 7 percent reduction from 2010.

Top in CP giving again

But even with the "down economy ... Alabama Baptists have still been extraordinarily faithful in giving through the CP," Lance said. "This is the second consecutive year in which Alabama Baptists have been first among all state conventions in total dollars given and, especially remarkable, first in per-member giving among all state conventions as well."

"Alabama Baptists are doing a great job in ministries," Cole-

man added. "We need to encourage our folks not to grow weary in their well doing. ... We ought to be proud that we are being salt and light, that we are doing our part to reach our towns, cities, state and world."

Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist, said he anticipates a time of worship, sharing and vision casting during the annual meeting.

"It's a time for all of us to get together and enjoy fellowship and enjoy God," he said. "It is a time to encourage one another in our efforts, challenge each other and move further in what God would have us to do."

Among other convention business items that will take place will be the election of officers and proposal of resolutions.

At press time, *The Alabama Baptist* had confirmed the following who would be nominated for officer positions: president, Mike Shaw, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham; first vice president, John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church; second vice president, Coleman and Barry

Holcomb, pastor of First Baptist Church, Russellville.

Also at press time, eight resolutions had been received by Joe Bob Mizzell, director of the office of Christian Ethics and Chaplaincy Ministries, and Henry Cox, pastor of Durant Chapel Church, Bay Minette, and chairman of the Resolutions Committee.

Topics include unity through the CP, homosexuals in the U.S. military, the tragedy in the Gulf due to the oil spill, gambling in Alabama, the federal employment non-

discrimination act, tobacco use and appreciation for various personalities, churches, etc.

Anyone else planning to submit a resolution is encouraged to do so before the resolutions committee meets Nov. 8.

Proposed resolutions may be e-mailed to Joanne Farmer at jfarmer@alsbom.org, faxed to 334-288-2693, or mailed to Christian Ethics Office, State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.

For more information, visit www.alsbom.org.



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Ezell offers retirement incentive to NAMB staff

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — Telling North American Mission Board (NAMB) staff "considerable change" is coming, President Kevin Ezell shared a retirement incentive with employees during a Sept. 30 meeting that will be the beginning of an overall reduction in force in the months ahead.

"There are a lot of changes and some things coming down the road. I don't know what all of those are," Ezell said. "Knowing that there are changes coming and not knowing who exactly that would involve, we wanted to offer an incentive to those who might already be thinking about retirement."

Ezell described the incentive as "the first phase" in what will be a series of staff changes coming to NAMB.

"Is this it? No," he said. "We don't know the extent as to what will happen, but we do know that this will be the first phase. That's why we want you to at least look and see."

Under the plan, staff who are age 55 and older will be credited additional years of service in order to qualify for health insurance benefits. Additionally, a retirement incentive bonus will be paid, based on years of service. "To be sure, we are being very clear — this is the very best incentive we could come up with," Ezell said. "It's the best option that will be available."

Ezell compared the changes coming to NAMB to a company that had been making washing machines and now will be making cars.

"There is going to be considerable change," Ezell said. "A lot of the changes will not be directed to competency of people because we are going to be doing some things so drastically different. What does that look like specifically, I don't know yet. But we are working on that as fast as we can."

Currently, 258 people serve on NAMB's staff in Alpharetta. An additional 34 direct-paid missionaries who serve throughout North America are among those eligible for the incentive. Those taking advantage of the plan will need to retire by Dec. 31, 2010.

50/50 distribution of CP urged in Fla. GCR report

LEESBURG, Fla. — Four priorities for the Florida Baptist Convention have been proposed by a 30-member task force, which released a report during a Sept. 23-24 state board of missions meeting in Leesburg. Moving Florida's "Cooperative Program income distribution to a 50/50 division between state and national entities within four years" is part of one of the proposed priorities.

In addition to the proposed priorities, the task force report includes two additional recommendations: "Spiritual and Leadership Renewal" and "Reorganization and Restructuring."

Regarding Spiritual and Leadership Renewal, the task force stated it is "convinced that genuine Great Commission resurgence is dependent upon and must begin in each individual believer and each Florida Baptist congregation. The pastor of each congregation must personally lead his congregation toward a new level of commitment to accomplishing the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20)."

Regarding the other, the task force did not propose specific staff changes but asked that messengers to the annual meeting "request the State Board of Missions to present a plan to reorganize and restructure our convention along the stated priorities and to adjust to the changing financial landscape over the next four to seven years."

A final draft of the recommendations will be voted on at the Nov. 8-9 annual meeting in Brandon.

Nevada Baptists consider merging convention, association

RENO, Nev. — Nevada Southern Baptists will vote in mid-October on a proposal to merge their state convention and four associations into one entity and increase their Cooperative Program (CP) missions giving by two-thirds over the next five years.

The chairman of the task force bringing that recommendation said it is a "out of the box" response to "stark choices" facing the state's 179 churches and mission congregations.

The Nevada Baptist Convention's executive board voted unanimously Sept. 21 to send the plan to messengers at the Oct. 19-20 annual meeting in Reno, said Hoyt Savage, pastor of Foothills Baptist Church, Las Vegas, and chairman of the 14-member task force.

The document notes that CP missions receipts in Nevada have dropped by more than 20 percent over the past three years. It also acknowledges that 91 percent of the state convention's financial resources come from the North American Mission Board (NAMB). The Great Commission Resurgence Task Force report, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in June, calls for existing funding agreements between NAMB and state conventions to be phased out and renegotiated.



Someone You Should Know

OLENE CORK

By June Mathews
Correspondent, TAB



Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville
Birmingham Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Proverbs 3:5-6
FAVORITE HYMN: "Without Him"
HOBBIES: Working in the yard

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 40 years of marriage to Bob; one daughter, Anne

Olene Cork started singing in the choir at South Avondale Baptist Church, Birmingham, in 1945. She continued to sing in the choir when she later became a member of 85th Street Baptist Church in the Birmingham area, which merged with Mount Olive Baptist Church and is now Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville. Recently she was recognized at church for her 65-year involvement in choir and 35 years of assisting with Meals on Wheels.

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: I can't remember not going to church. I was always in church. We went to Skirum Baptist Church on top of Sand Mountain, which is where I grew up. I left there after graduating from high school to come to work in Birmingham.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was very young — I think I was about 10 years old. It was during a revival meeting at our church, and I've been a Christian ever since.

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

A: We didn't have many youth activities in the church where I grew up, but I was in something like Sunbeams (now Mission Friends). I taught a Sunday School class of 16-year-old girls at South Avondale at one time, then I taught another class of young girls at 85th Street Baptist. My involvement has mostly been in the choir and with Meals on Wheels, but I'm now involved in Baptist Women (also known as Women on Mission) and I'm a member of the Martha Sunday School Class.

Q: What have you gotten from that involvement?

A: I think it's helped me to mature as a Christian. I think everything you do like that helps you to grow. I know teaching always helped me more than the ones I taught. When you teach, you have to study so hard, and you learn a lot from it.

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

A: I'm still doing and I still go to church on Sunday mornings, Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. So I'll keep trying to participate anytime I can. I'm also on a daytime GROW visitation team, where we go out and visit prospects or people who have visited the church. I think it's a good program, and I plan to keep taking part in that.

Q: What does the Christian life mean to you?

A: It's keeping close to the Lord and trying to do everything you can do to follow His leadership.

GAMBLING

IN ALABAMA

5 OF 8
IN A
SERIES

Alabama court cases
related to 'electronic bingo'

Jefferson Co. 'bingo' not ruled by sheriff

Jefferson County Sheriff Mike Hale learned Sept. 30 that he does not have overall regulatory authority for the on-again, off-again "electronic bingo" halls in the county.

The Alabama Supreme Court struck down his authority in an unanimous opinion. While the court did not deal with the ongoing debate over what constitutes legal bingo, it said the 1980 constitutional amendment allowing bingo in Jefferson County gives regulatory authority to the governing body of the town where the games are located.

Hale had set rules for bingo operations, including limited hours and days of operations. He had the support of District Attorney Brandon Falls, who has consistently stated his opposition to the slot machine-type machines being labeled bingo.

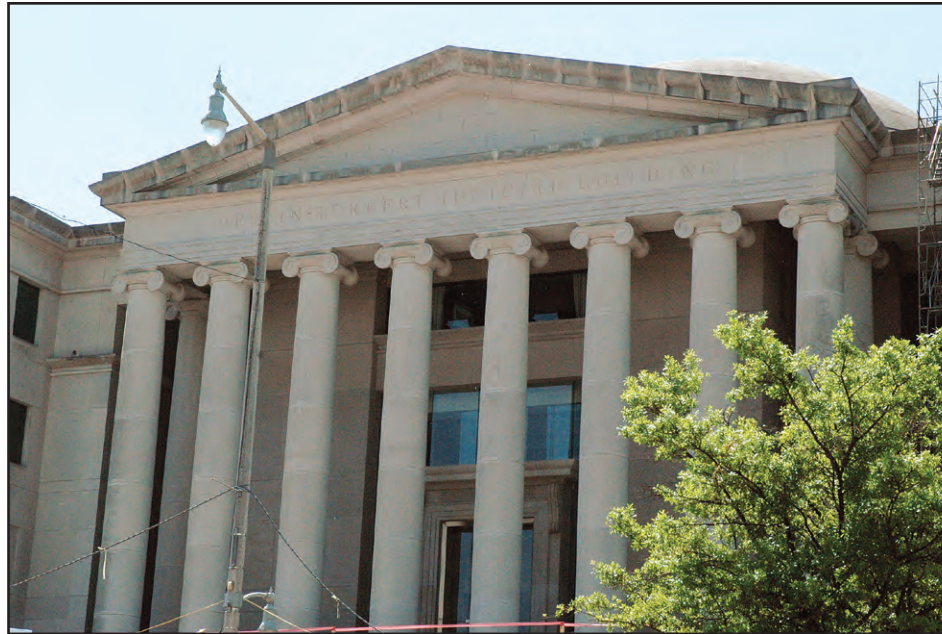
The lawsuit originated with bingo hall operators and supporters who claimed it was unconstitutional for the sheriff to have regulatory power.

Correction on Part 4 of gambling series

In "Gambling in Alabama, part 4" in the Sept. 23 issue, state Supreme Court Justice Thomas A. Woodall was listed as issuing a dissenting opinion on gambling in St. Clair County, but the wrong county was published. It should have been Macon County.

Woodall, along with Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb, issued a dissenting opinion in the Tyson v. Macon County (appeal) case that involved Macon County's VictoryLand.

The case involved a jurisdictional issue and did not address the legality of the gambling operation.



ALABAMA'S SUPREME COURT — The Alabama Supreme Court is made up of a chief justice and eight associate justices. Sue Bell Cobb currently serves as chief justice and by nature of her role, is the administrative head of the state's judicial system. The associate justices are Michael F. Bolin, Champ Lyons Jr., Glenn Murdock, Tom Parker, Patricia M. Smith, Greg Shaw, Lyn Stuart and Thomas A. Woodall.



Photos by Jennifer Davis Rash

Awaiting the final decision

Supreme Court rules on 'bingo' cases but still silent on existing machines

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

When the state's gambling battle began, few cases escalated to Alabama's Supreme Court. But as gambling supporters and opponents began taking their differences to local circuit courts, many wanted higher-level opinions to resolve their legal issues. Still the high court remained relatively quiet on matters related to slot machine-style gambling until Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling joined the fight.

In September 2008, Etowah Baptist Association attempted to intervene in a declaratory judgment case to determine which law the Etowah County sheriff should enforce: the constitutional amendment limiting gambling to "that game commonly known as

bingo" played on "a card or paper sheet" or the County Commission's new bingo regulations allowing so-called "electronic bingo machines" passed in July 2008. When a circuit court refused its request, the association appealed to the state's highest court.

'No jurisdiction'

It took a year for the justices to respond to Etowah Association, but in March 2010, they dismissed the appeal because the "circuit court had no jurisdiction over the declaratory judgment action." With this ruling, they were not required to state whether they believed the types of machines being used in Alabama were legal.

Earlier, in December 2008, Riley created the task force and named former Jefferson County District Attorney David Barber com-

mander. It focused its attention on White Hall Entertainment Center in Lowndes County and raided the facility March 19, 2009. A legal battle ensued and eventually found its way to the Supreme Court. In their November 2009 ruling, the justices defined legal bingo but again did not add an opinion specific to the machines in question (see story, page 6).

This year, the Supreme Court has continued to side with the task force in cases from several counties, which many believe proves that Riley's position on gambling aligns with the state's constitution.

The high court ruled in favor of the task force when Houston County commissioners and business owners received an early morning restraining order Jan. 6 from Circuit Judge P.B. McLauchlin (a judge for Dale and Geneva counties) protecting Country Crossing near Dothan from a raid. Riley's office said no task force lawyers were present when McLauchlin's order was issued to the casino's supporters in the "middle of the night." The justices overruled McLauchlin's actions.

In their ruling, they again said, "The trial court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction to interfere with a criminal proceeding (task force raid) by civil action (restraining order)."

Riley's office called the ruling a "major victory for the rule of law in Alabama" and said, "The Supreme Court's order makes clear that gambling bosses around the state will not be able to prevent the state's anti-gambling laws from being enforced."

(See 'High,' page 6)



Judicial review

Some of the major court cases dealing with 'bingo' in the past 2 years

Circuit court cases:

Macon County

► Circuit Judge Tom Young has issued several restraining orders against the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling to protect VictoryLand in Shorter from raids. After task force Commander John Tyson repeatedly went to the Alabama Supreme Court to have the restraining orders overruled, Young issued more orders. On Sept. 3, the Supreme Court refused to rehear the case in which it reversed the most recent restraining order.

Greene County

► Circuit Judge Eddie Hardaway issued several restraining orders against the task force to prevent it from raiding Greentrack in Eutaw in late June. The state Supreme Court overruled each restraining order and eventually removed Hardaway from the case.

Etowah County

► When Etowah Baptist Association attempted to join a case between District Attorney Jimmie Harp and prospective developer CBS Supply, Circuit Judge Allen Millican refused to let it. The association appealed to the state Supreme Court, but the court threw the case out March 15 since circuit courts have no jurisdiction in criminal cases.

Houston County

► In January, Circuit Judge P.B. McLauchlin, a judge for Dale and Geneva counties, issued a late-night restraining order against the task force to protect Houston County's Country Crossing from a raid. The Alabama Supreme Court overruled his order.

► Country Crossing voluntarily

shut down Jan. 29 to avoid a task force raid. Soon Houston Economic Development Association, the charity responsible for the slot machine-style gambling portion of the development, requested the County Commission repay a portion of the \$1.6 million it paid to operate in 2010. A court case ensued and the judge ruled that the county must repay a portion of the money.

Jefferson County

► Seventeen groups known as charities sued the county, District Attorney Brandon Falls, Sheriff Mike Hale and Attorney General Troy King after Falls ordered the charities' "electronic bingo" facilities to close or face law enforcement actions. Circuit Judge Caryl Privett refused to hear arguments on that subject after the Alabama Supreme

Court issued its six-point test for legal bingo Nov. 13. According to *The Birmingham News*, attorney Erskine Mathis, one of the lawyers representing the charities, said none of his clients met the criteria established in the Supreme Court's decision.

► On Nov. 17, Privett ruled that the "electronic bingo" permit issued to Mobile-based charity House of Joshua Christian Center by the city of Birmingham was invalid after the city revoked its "electronic bingo" ordinance. The group, which was represented by Birmingham attorney Kim Davidson, sued the city, Hale and Falls. Joe Basgier, former assistant district attorney who represented Falls in the case, said, "These people are desperate to protect an opportunity to make money." After leaving Falls' office, Basgier began representing a group that planned to open a slot machine-style facility in the Bessemer Cut-Off District.

Walker County

► On Oct. 26, Circuit Judge Robert Vance ruled the county's so-called electronic bingo halls illegal and ordered them to close their doors.

St. Clair County

► Circuit Judge Charles E. Robinson ruled March 30, 2009, that "electronic bingo" machines planned for a gambling facility in Ashville were legal. The Alabama Supreme Court overturned the ruling Jan. 29, 2010.

Bessemer Cut-Off District

► On March 10, 2008, Circuit Judge Eugene Verin ruled electronic machines in Bessemer were illegal because they were "illegal slot machines as defined by the laws of this state."

► In an April 12, 2010, ruling, Verin said his court had subject matter jurisdiction to enjoin Jefferson County Sheriff Mike Hale, Gov. Riley and the task force from "conducting any 'raids' within the Bessemer Division of Jefferson County" until the state Supreme Court decided who should be in charge of the task force. Verin's ruling was handed down after several Supreme Court rulings stated that circuit courts have no jurisdiction in law enforcement efforts. The Supreme Court did rule May 21 that Riley was in control of the task force, not King.

► Represented by Birmingham attorney Kim Davidson, Bessemer City Council members filed a lawsuit against Mayor Ed May and Acting City Clerk Travis Brooks in February 2010 to dispute the timeliness of one of May's vetoes. Four of the seven council members passed several "electronic bingo" ordinances and May vetoed them all. The plaintiffs later said they dropped the case.

► Bessemer resident Thomas Pack filed a lawsuit March 11, 2010, against the City Council bingo committee (council President Earl Co-

chran, Louise Alexander, Dorothy Davidson and Jesse Matthews) for violating Alabama's Open Meetings Act by making gambling plans for the city in private meetings, among other complaints. Judge N. Daniel Rogers is presiding over the active case, but no hearings have been set to resolve it.

Lowndes County

► David Barber, former task force commander, requested that former Supreme Court Justice Mark Kennedy, who was appointed to the case involving White Hall's "electronic bingo" facility in Lowndes County, should recuse himself because of a conflict of interest. Jeff Emerson, Riley's communications director, said in a press release, "The judge has an obvious conflict of interest. He has a business relationship with a casino and should never have issued any kind of ruling in this gambling case. We have asked the Supreme Court to recognize that and we're confident they will." Kennedy was removed by the chief justice and the case was reassigned.

Federal court cases:

Macon and Greene counties

► Thirty-one residents from Macon and Greene counties filed a federal class action lawsuit July 29 against Riley and Tyson, both individually and in their official capacities, citing voting rights violations. The case is ongoing.

Macon County

► Hope for Families and Community Services and other nonprofit organizations planning to open a gambling facility called Lucky Palace in the county filed a lawsuit accusing Sheriff David Warren and VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor of trying to keep Lucky Palace from opening. U.S. District Judge Keith Watkins ruled against the charity June 30. ■■

To read more about these cases, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org and click on Moral & Ethical Issues and then gambling.



High court's 'bingo' caseload heavier than usual in past year

(continued from page 5)

Similar rulings were handed down in cases involving Greene and Macon counties, where state and local officials attempted to protect casino operations at Greentrack in Eutaw and VictoryLand in Shorter.

The high court overruled one restraining order after another issued by circuit judges in both counties and eventually had to remove Greene County Circuit Judge Eddie Hardaway from the Greentrack case. Hardaway continued to issue restraining orders against the task force even after the justices repeatedly ruled that a circuit court has no jurisdiction over the task force's law enforcement activities.

A similar action is expected in Macon County, where Circuit Judge Tom Young has issued similar restraining orders against the task force concerning VictoryLand's slot machine-style casino. Most recently, the Supreme Court has refused to rehear a

case in which it reversed Young's latest injunction. But the task force has not yet attempted another raid of VictoryLand, which has sectioned off the portion of its business housing the electronic gambling machines.

After the high court's ruling, John Tyson, the task force's current commander, said in a press release, "This is the end of the illegal injunction that had prevented law enforcement from taking action in Macon County."

Need to inspect machines

So far, the justices have not issued a ruling addressing the slot machine-style devices at the heart of Alabama's gambling battle. Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston said a case specifically asking about the machines will have to be brought before the Supreme Court for such a ruling to be issued.

"What's going to have to happen is the task force is going to have to confiscate these machines and bring in a case to the circuit court," he said. "The

court is going to have to inspect the machines and say whether [they are] legal."

Johnston added that if one of the parties has a problem with the ruling, then it can appeal to the high court. But the trouble with this scenario is that casino owners are protecting their machines to keep the task force from confiscating them and having them inspected.

"They know they are going to lose when the Supreme Court gets a proper case," he said. "They have been delaying and filing all these lawsuits and claims to try and stop the task force. If the task force wasn't there, they wouldn't be in all these lawsuits. The Supreme Court has been chipping away at this little case and that little case, but the gamblers know that if they (the justices) cannot get the machines before them, they can't rule on them. ... So they (the gamblers) hide them (the machines) away and wait for January (when the task force may be dissolved by the new governor)." ■■

Riley cleared, not the leak

Gov. Bob Riley has been cleared of accusations that he or one of his staff members influenced the state Supreme Court in a case between John Tyson, commander of the Governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling, and E. Paul Jones, district attorney of Macon County, and others representing VictoryLand in Shorter.

This acquittal came in a Sept. 27 report from former Justice J. Gorman Houston Jr., who was asked by the Supreme Court to investigate two accusations regarding this case.

Didn't impose

One of the accusations was that "the executive department imposed its will upon the judicial department" by asking the case be given from one justice to another and for a time when the ruling would be released.

"After more than 100 hours spent investigating this as thoroughly as I could, I found no evidence that this occurred," Houston wrote in his report.

In regard to the second accusation that someone at the high court had leaked information on this particular case while it was still pending, Houston said he was "reasonably convinced that confidential information ... was leaked to the public." But he could not determine the source of the leak and said he most likely would not be able to even if he extended the investigation.

"Justice Houston's conclusion that there is no evidence to support the allegations should put to rest once and for all these baseless claims against the governor and the court," Jeff Emerson, communications director for Riley, said in a press release.

"Justice Houston's conclusion that confidential information was leaked to the public about the case is not a surprise," Emerson said. "After all, one individual not associated in any way with the governor held a press conference on the steps of the Supreme Court the day before the decision was released (July 30) and announced that the case had been reassigned from one justice to another.

"While that information was clearly leaked by someone, it was not leaked by the governor, his staff or anyone associated with the Task Force on Illegal Gambling," Emerson said. (TAB)

Are attorneys for 'big boys' stalling for new governor?

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama casino owners have hunkered down in the court system for a last stand to protect their slot machine-style gambling businesses. But some legal experts believe the barrage of cases and motions is geared toward dragging out the gambling battle until January, when new political leaders are instated.

"They are not trying to find a legitimate legal answer to a legitimate legal question," said Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston, who heads Citizens for a Better Alabama and has fought against gambling for years. "All they are doing is delaying. ... It's a war of delay and attrition, and they've got the money to do it. They don't have the law on their side and they know it. But the legal system will let them carry on the way that they are carrying on."

When increased pressure from gambling lobbyists failed to persuade lawmakers to pass bills legalizing gambling over the past several years and Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling began investigating and acting against casinos in late 2008, gambling supporters began turning to the courts to save the businesses.

Johnston said the courts usually are used to resolve legitimate claims but these cases involve "people with political interests trying to use the political system to advance their private and political positions."

"They (the gambling magnates) were sailing along just fine (before the task force was formed) and nobody was bothering them," he said, referring to Attorney General Troy King and many district attorneys who allowed the casinos to thrive without fear of law enforcement actions.

"They got greedy and tried to pass

S.C. Supreme Court outlawed video poker

Alabama is not the only state that has seen its fair share of infighting over the legality of a type of electronic gambling.

More than a decade ago, the debate over the legality of video poker in South Carolina had escalated to a boiling point after approximately 15 years.

Video poker came in "through the back door" in 1986 after a state senator added an amendment to a budget bill as a favor to a local businessman, according to *Slate*, a daily online magazine. That amendment deleted two words from a state law, which created a loophole for the video poker industry. *Slate* also reported that the amendment passed without any debate, public or pri-

vate, and it wasn't until 1989 that the state realized what had happened.

Because the state never intended to legalize video poker, it did not have a gambling tax or any rules governing gambling such as children not being allowed to play.

1999 ruling

However, South Carolina did ban big jackpots in 1993 and limited payouts to no more than \$125 per day. In 1994, a referendum was held to allow counties to decide whether they wanted video poker, but the vote was overturned by the state Supreme Court because it said criminal laws can't vary from county to county.

By 1999, video poker had grown to an estimated \$3 billion industry

with 34,000 machines at 7,000 venues.

But in October 1999, the Supreme Court spoke once and for all and banned the video poker industry, marking the first time in 50 years that a state had outlawed gambling and uprooted an entire industry.

The ruling came in response to an action made earlier in the year by state legislators, who wanted to let voters decide whether they wanted video poker. They had scheduled a statewide referendum for Nov. 2, 1999, but worded the law to say unless voters chose to keep video poker, it would be banned. The Supreme Court said the referendum was unconstitutional. (TAB)

legislation that would give them the monopoly on it and would exempt them from the law altogether because they knew what they were doing was unlawful. These are the bills we've seen for the past few years. ... They knew they were operating outside the law, and ... that's why they were seeking these constitutional amendments."

Questionable ethics?

Some gambling opponents have questioned the ethics of the high-paid attorneys representing Alabama casinos, but the line separating good legal practices and ethics violations is unclear.

Tony McLain, general counsel for the Alabama State Bar, said his office receives about 1,500 complaints each year against some of the state's nearly 17,000 licensed lawyers. But

according to him, "less than 8 percent" of those have any merit. Still he said the bar investigates the appropriate complaints and handles them as a grand jury would in a criminal case.

McLain would not say whether any casino lawyers had been brought up on ethics charges, but he did say none had been found guilty of ethics violations.

Initially small cases were brought before Alabama judges by casino owners trying to protect their businesses. But now a group of casino magnates whom Johnston calls the "big boys" — VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor, Greenetrack CEO Luther "Nat" Winn and Country Crossing owner Ronnie Gilley — are inundating the legal system for their purposes.

"It's the big boys hiring legions

of lawyers and going to court on everything they can dream up to make a case out of — the latest being the federal court case (involving McGregor and Winn's gambling locations) saying their civil rights were violated under the Voting Rights Act," Johnston said.

"Normally, if you've got a case and you want to resolve a question of law, you hire lawyers from one firm to represent you," he said. "Occasionally you may have several lawyers in a case depending on the number of parties in the lawsuit. They've got different lawyers in different jurisdictions in different cases, and they are doing different things. ... Every time you turn around, it's different lawyers making a comment."

Brady Rigdon, deputy to Jefferson County District Attorney Brandon Falls, said these types of legal strate-

gies have not been used by smaller casinos and illegal gambling establishments.

"It's not really the same situation," Rigdon said.

"When you've got 10 to 15 machines or less, they don't necessarily seem to care about them. They tend to write those machines off when they get caught."

Johnston said this is not the case with the "big boys."

"They are grasping at straws trying to do anything they can to delay Bob Riley's task force until after January, when the new governor is sworn in," he said.

Gubernatorial candidates Dr. Robert Bentley and Ron Sparks have both said they will disband the task force after taking office.

Bentley said he is opposed to gambling but will handle illegal gambling through other channels rather than the task force.

Sparks plans to work to legalize "electronic bingo" gambling — at least in some areas — as well as a lottery, if he is elected.

Either way, the thought of no more task force has given hope to some facility operators.

Johnston likened the large casino bosses' actions to those of a mad man.

"They don't want to get bound down," he said. "It's like a mad man you are trying to hold down, and he's twisting and turning and trying to do damage trying to get away."

"They are trying to keep the law from catching up with them," Johnston explained. "They've failed in the Legislature. They've failed in the court system. They can see the promised land. January is not that far away."

"But if they can stop the Supreme Court from ruling until after January, that takes the pressure off." ■

Supreme Court's 6-point 'bingo' test changed everything

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

The closest Alabama Supreme Court justices have come to determining the legality of the slot machine-style gambling devices housed in several casinos across the state is issuing a six-point description of legal bingo. The explanation was delivered in a November 2009 ruling addressing gambling operations at Lowndes County's sole casino in White Hall. The justices said the "game commonly or traditionally known as bingo" must include these characteristics:

1. Each player uses one or more cards with spaces arranged in five columns and five rows, with an alphanumeric or similar designation assigned to each space.

2. Alphanumeric or similar designations are randomly drawn and announced one by one.

3. In order to play, each player must pay attention to the values an-

nounced; if one of the values matches a value on one or more of the player's cards, then he or she must physically act by marking his or her card accordingly.

4. A player can fail to pay proper attention or properly mark his or her card and thereby miss an opportunity to be declared a winner.

5. A player must recognize that his or her card has a "bingo," i.e., a predetermined pattern of matching values, and, in turn, announce to the other players and the announcer that this is the case before any other player does so.

6. The game of bingo contemplates a group activity in which multiple players compete against each other to be the first to properly mark a card with the predetermined win-

ning pattern and announce that fact.

Shortly after this ruling was issued, many gambling machine owners and officials planning to bring slot machine-style gambling to their areas announced they had new machines that met the Supreme Court's requirements. But none ever brought the machines in for an official determination by any companies other than those hand-picked and paid by the casino owners.

On Dec. 3, 2009, Fairfield leaders displayed machines in City Hall and said they complied with the high court's test. The mayor and council members already supported the city's gambling operations. But Bessemer Mayor Ed May, who has continuously fought

"The fact that casino bosses are trying to ... use the [court] rules to justify illegal machines is ridiculous."

Todd Stacy
Gov. Riley's press secretary

this council's gambling expansion plans, told *The Alabama Baptist* that nobody on Fairfield's City Council was qualified to determine if the machines were legal.

Soon casino owners in Houston, Lowndes and Macon counties also said their machines satisfied the Supreme Court's requirements. Yet none of them allowed Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling to inspect the machines to prove their validity. In the end, the facilities either closed voluntarily or experienced task force raids.

Todd Stacy, Riley's press secretary, said the court's ruling is clear.

"The Supreme Court didn't lay down six guidelines for converting a slot machine to a bingo machine," he said. "They said, 'This is what constitutes bingo and if it doesn't meet these guidelines, it's not bingo.' ... The fact that casino bosses are trying to take this test and use the Supreme Court's rules to justify illegal machines is ridiculous." ■

Coming
next week ...

**A LOOK AT
GAMBLING ON
ALABAMA'S
INDIAN
RESERVATIONS**



Across Alabama's Associations

BALDWIN

► **Randy Johnson** is the new pastor of **Friendship Church, Bon Secour**. He and his wife, Janie, were houseparents for the Alabama



JOHNSON

Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries Mobile campus. Johnson is an adjunct professor in the Center for Adult Programs at the University of Mobile. He also has served churches in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama for 40 years. He is a graduate of Athens State University, New Orleans Seminary and Covington Theological Seminary in Rossville, Ga. Johnson and his wife have four children and six grandchildren.

BETHLEHEM

► **Ramah Church, Evergreen**, will celebrate its 138th homecoming Oct. 10, 11 a.m. Herbert Brown, pastor of Southside Church, Greenville, will speak. Ken Smith, interim minister of music for Eastwood Church, Monroeville, will lead the music. Lunch will follow. William Bodiford is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Andy Wilbanks** is the new minister of children for **Hunter Street Church, Hoover**. He comes from North-Park Church, Trussville, where he served as minister to children. A native of Tallahassee, Fla., Wilbanks is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham



WILBANKS

and is currently pursuing a master of divinity at New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Lindsay, have two children. Buddy Gray is pastor. ► **Birmingham Association** will hold Senior Adult Fun Day Oct. 14 at Valleydale Church, Birmingham. Lunch will be at 11:30 a.m. Squire Parsons will sing at 12:15 p.m. There will be Medicare flu shots and blood pressure screenings from 10 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. For lunch reservations call 205-599-3245 or visit www.bbaonline.org/ reservations by Oct. 11. Mike McLemore is executive director of Birmingham Association. Calvin Kelly is pastor of Valleydale.

CENTRAL

► **Weogufka Second Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 10, 10 a.m. Former Pastor John Gordy will speak. Lunch will follow. Brandon Baird is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Whitewater Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 10, 10:30 a.m. Former Pastor Michael Murphree will speak. Lunch will follow. For information call 334-897-2452. Donald Ash is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Brooklyn Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 10, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. Jack Williamson is pastor.

ELMORE

► **Mount Hebron East Church, Eclectic**, will celebrate its 114th homecoming Oct. 10, 10:30 a.m. The Back Porch Pickers will provide music. Lunch will follow in the new fellowship building.

FAYETTE

► **Sand Springs Church, Fayette**, celebrated its 134th anniversary Sept. 12. There was a display of memorabilia from times past and a PowerPoint presentation. Cleburn Whitley, 91, the oldest member present, was recognized. Regan Rye is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **Mountain View Church, Phil Campbell**, will hold a ladies conference called Fragrance of Fall Oct. 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Registration will begin at 5:30 p.m. Dinner will be included. Sammy Taylor is pastor.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold a luncheon meeting Oct. 12, 11 a.m., with Dan Raley, pastor of First Church, Slocomb. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by Oct. 7. Mike Shirah is pastor.

HALE

► **Hale Association** held its Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) annual meeting Sept. 14 at Greensboro Church. The Alabama WMU Day of Prayer was observed and donations to the Kathleen Malory Mission Offering were given to WorldSong. Paige Shaw, of Pleasant Hill, Moundville, sang and gave a testimony. Gary Swafford of the State Board of Missions spoke. The new WMU elected officers are Debbie Thomas Holley (Pleasant Hill), associational WMU director; Eloise George (Concord Church, Moundville), secretary-treasurer; JoAnn Thomas (Antioch Church, Greensboro), churchwide missions consultant; Regina Washburn (Greensboro), GA consultant; Kim Cooley (Moundville Church), Mission Friends consultant; Lynette Simmons (Pleasant Hill), missions involvement consultant; Sharon Arrington (Akron Church, Moundville), prayer consultant; Louise Wilson (New Haven Church, Greensboro), Women on Missions consultant; and Ruth Lafoy (Com-

munity Church, Moundville), Youth on Missions consultant. Bill Wallace is director of missions.

MOBILE

► **West Chickasaw Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 10, 10:45 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Billy Henson is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► Members of the former **Mount Moriah Fellowship Church**, located on Mount Moriah Drive on the Butler-Wilcox county line, will celebrate homecoming called Second Sunday Oct. 10, 11 a.m. George B. Shamblin will speak. Lunch will follow (bring a covered dish and serving pieces marked with your name). The steering committee will meet in the sanctuary following lunch. For information contact J. Donald Carmichael at 205-879-7849 or maryalice@carmichael1.com.

RANDOLPH

► **Herren's Grove Church, Woodland**, will hold Friend & Family Day Oct. 10, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. Stephen Dedman is pastor.

WALKER

► **Rick Stone** is the new interim minister of music for **First Church, Jasper**. He comes from First Church, Jonesboro, Ga. He is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham and Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Stone is married to Rosemary. Dennis Culbreth is pastor.



STONE

ried to Rosemary. Dennis Culbreth is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Missionary Grove Church, Cullman**, will hold revival Oct. 10-13 with Randall Edmondson. Services will be Sunday at 6:30 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Jimmy McClendon is pastor.

OTHER

► **First Church, Mobile**, is offering divinity school classes on Wednesdays from 5:45 to 6:30 p.m. for six weeks for anyone interested. Classes being offered are: the Bible and environmental ethics, world religion, artist expressions, the book of Philippians: Christian commitment and God's grace in difficult times and kids music class — a joyful sound: music fun-damentals. A preschool nursery is provided and an optional dinner will be served at 5 p.m. prior to class. For information visit www.fbcmobile.com or call 251-432-6513. Chris George is pastor.



Cherokee's Harris Chapel Church celebrates 75 years

September 12 was a special day for Harris Chapel Baptist Church, Cherokee, as it celebrated its 75th anniversary with a crowd of more than 250. Unique parts of the anniversary celebration were the opening of a 50-year-old time capsule and the sharing of testimonies as members spoke about what the Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association church has meant to them.

The time capsule had been locked away within the walls of the church since September 1960. Members were able to admire the treasures from the past and add to them with a history book, pictures, testimonies and brochures created for the celebration.

"It was a very personal and special part of the anniversary celebration," said Donna Wallace, who organized the event.

The celebration also included a sermon preached by former Pastor Henry Trull and a plaque presented by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

The day brought back so many memories for charter member Charles Thompson, but it also created hope for the future.

"My hope is that we stay together and keep praying so that this wonderful ministry will still be thriving for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren," Thompson said.

Madison Association church marks 125th anniversary

Harvest Baptist Church's sanctuary was filled to capacity for its homecoming celebration Sept. 12. The service was special, as it marked the 125th anniversary of the Madison Baptist Association church.

Former Pastor Arris Cavender presented the message, and former church members were invited to lead the congregation in worship.

Marie Woodfin of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission was on hand to present the church with a plaque of recognition for its many years of work.

Following the service and presentation, the congregation enjoyed a luncheon in the fellowship hall.

Of course, Senior Pastor Eric Fuller does not want the congregation to simply be content with the work that has already taken place.

"While it is important to take time to remember and celebrate the rich history of our church, it is more important to stay focused on our task as a church and to constantly look toward the future and do what we can to be Kingdom builders," Fuller said.

Roswell Creek Church commemorates 125 years

Roswell Creek Baptist Church, Blountsville, celebrated its 125th anniversary Sept. 19 with a day of remembrance.

Church clerk O.C. Townson read a brief history of the Blount Baptist Association church and longtime members shared stories. Pastor George Knott presented the message.

Following the service, the congregation enjoyed a meal in the fellowship hall.

As for the church's future, Townson said, "We hope to grow in grace and membership [while] doing the will of the Lord in our hearts and lives and being obedient."

Roswell Creek Baptist was established Sept. 16, 1885, by trustees from Old Warrior Missionary Baptist Church to eliminate traveling long distances to attend worship services.

Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

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



Family Matters

7 tips for banishing holiday tensions

By Melanie Howard, Pathways Professional Counselor, ABCH

Holiday gatherings provide chances to reconnect with family, share old memories and make new ones. Major holidays, such as Christmas and Thanksgiving, are often accompanied by major expectations. But with major expectations can come major disappointments, major tensions, and major stress!

The following may help lead to fond family memories instead of frantic family meltdowns.

1. PLAN AHEAD

If your extended family is like most, you will not be the only ones hosting or going to holiday celebrations! It is essential, therefore, that families are willing to “share” their family members and share the dates and times of celebrations. If it is important to you that everyone (or almost everyone) be able to attend your extended family celebration, advanced planning is necessary. This is especially important if part of the family lives in another state, or you have step-families where the number of extended family gatherings can be doubled or tripled.

2. COMMUNICATE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

You are more likely to get what you want if you ask for what you want. Don’t expect your family to read your mind or “just know” how you would prefer to celebrate. Communicate your desires, being careful to not present them as demands.

3. BE FLEXIBLE

As families grow and change, family traditions need to grow and change with them. Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 says, “There is a time for everything...” I would paraphrase this verse and say that there is a time for building family traditions and a time for changing or even letting go of those traditions. Life situations such as job changes, marriages and even new babies call for flexibility and the willingness to begin some new family traditions and celebration times.

4. BE CREATIVE

Be creative in planning your family holiday gatherings. “Family Christmas” can be celebrated whenever the family can get together – it doesn’t have to be done on Christmas Day or even in December. Some families exchange Christmas gifts the Friday after Thanksgiving. Other families celebrate Christmas in July at the beach.

5. BE PEACEFUL

Holiday gatherings are not the time for discussing controversial topics or dispensing advice. Romans 2:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Before you speak, ask yourself if what you are about to say will build up and encourage the other person, or tear him or her down. Use caution in asking questions that may subtly suggest disapproval – such as “When are you going to get married, have a baby, or get a job?” For those who desire these things, such questions may trigger grief or make them feel stigmatized or isolated.

6. BE PRAYERFUL

Pray for each member of your immediate and extended family and pray for your time together. If you, your children or parents are part of a blended or step-family, pray for all the people who are part of that family – including the ex-spouses and their families. As we do so, we will be more sensitive to their needs, more forgiving of their flaws and freer in sharing our love. Prayer also causes us to look for God’s guidance and wisdom in relating to our family.

7. BE LOVING

We are called to love each other just as Christ has loved us. First Corinthians 13:4-7 says, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” During these holidays, seek to demonstrate this love to your family in honor of the Savior who was born as love incarnate.

Editor’s Note: Melanie Howard is a professional counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes.

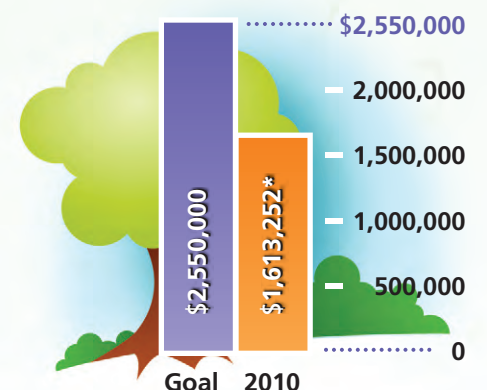
Ask Anne

Have you heard about sexting? Are you wondering what it is and how to protect your children and teens? If so, visit our Ask Anne Blog, hosted by our Pathways Professional Counseling. This week’s column addresses that topic and the ramifications if your teen is involved. It also includes resources to help you have a healthy discussion with your children about this topic. To read it, visit www.pathwaysprofessional.org/AskAnneColumn.en.html.

For more information or to set up an appointment with a Pathways Professional Counselor, call 1-866-991-6864, email pathways@abchome.org or visit www.pathwaysprofessional.org for more information. Have a question for Anne? Email askanne@abchome.org, or mail “Ask Anne” c/o Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries, 2681 Rocky Ridge Lane, Birmingham, AL 35216.

**This column is not intended to substitute for an actual session with a licensed counselor.*

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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Mammogram Screenings at Baptist Health System Hospitals

Early detection of breast cancer saves many lives. And the hospitals of Baptist Health System are helping spread the word and encourage women to be more aware of the risks of this disease, the warning signs and ways to help detect breast cancer at its earliest — and usually most treatable — stages. To help, the following mammogram screening activities will be held:

Princeton Baptist Medical Center (Birmingham)

Over the next year, beginning this month, Princeton Baptist will donate 100 free screening mammograms to women who are uninsured and do not qualify for any assistance, such as the Alabama Breast & Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. For more information, call 205-783-7458. In addition, every woman who has a mammogram at Princeton Baptist during October will receive a pink wristband.

Shelby Baptist Medical Center (Alabaster)

On October 15, Shelby Baptist will provide screening mammograms at a discounted rate in recognition of National Mammography Day. To schedule an appointment or for more information, call 205-620-8008.

Citizens Baptist Medical Center (Talladega)

Mammo Mondays (Oct. 11, 18 & 25)
Every Monday in October, Citizens Baptist is offering discounted screening mammograms by appointment. For more information or to make an appointment, call 256-761-4618.

Walker Baptist Medical Center (Jasper)

Mammo Mondays (Oct. 11, 18 & 25)
Walker Baptist is offering discounted screening mammograms by appointment every Monday in October. To make an appointment or for more information, call 205-387-4750.

In addition, several cancer support groups are available at Baptist Health System hospitals throughout the year to help cancer patients and their families. For information, call toll-free 1-877-222-7847 or visit the BHS Calendar of Events at www.bhsala.com.



Photo by Robert Farley

Providing leadership for Princeton Baptist's Breast Care Center are co-directors Dr. Greg Bearden (left), Dr. Jim Walker (center) and the Center's coordinator Julia Jones.

A Continuous Journey Charity Clays Event Supports Princeton Baptist's Breast Care Center

By Jennifer Jackson

When a woman receives a breast cancer diagnosis, her life is changed forever. But for a woman at Princeton Baptist Medical Center's Breast Care Center, her journey through this new world is met with quality care, compassion and a comprehensive approach. According to Julia Jones, coordinator of the Center, "breast cancer is a disease of early detection." Having the tools and system in place to detect and diagnose it as early as possible is critical to the fight.

With the help of funds raised through Baptist Health Foundation's Alabama Charity Clays Shoot over the past two years,

Princeton Baptist continues to enhance the lifesaving, comprehensive breast care patients receive.

The American Cancer Society Recommends:

- Yearly mammograms starting at age 40 and continuing for as long as a woman is in good health
- Clinical breast exams about every three years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women 40 and over
- Women should know how their breasts normally look and feel and report any breast change promptly to their health care provider. Breast self-exam (BSE) is an option for women starting in their 20s.

Money from last year's event funded software upgrades used for breast MRI. According to Jones, "this is the next step in the progression of diagnosis. MRI is another modality that helps us evaluate lesions we may not be able to see with other diagnostic procedures. Ultimately, the technology offers better detection as we guide women on their journey."

Proceeds from this year's event will be used to help purchase a new mobile digital radiography system, called

a Faxitron, which provides on-the-spot images for surgeons removing tumors in breast cancer patients. This new system will allow physicians to ensure the entire tumor has been removed and can reduce the amount of time a patient is under anesthesia. “The system will allow the radiology-surgery team to work more efficiently together,” said Dr. Jim Walker, diagnostic radiologist and co-director of the Center.

Dr. Katisha Vance, a medical oncologist at Princeton Baptist, echoes the appreciation of new technology. “Equipment is critical to helping our patients. But, through our comprehensive approach to breast care, we go a step further. We understand the importance of maintaining vital treatment basics, as well as advancing our technology. Comprehensive treatment also means community involvement, community education, meeting people where they live and work.” Health fairs, free mammograms and volunteers in the hospital’s adjacent neighborhoods are supported by the Baptist Health Foundation. This support allows Dr. Vance to reach out to the community, initiating conversations and dispelling myths about breast health and breast cancer. “Fear often prevents people from coming in the door; I want to provide good information and erase those fears.”

The comprehensive approach at Princeton Baptist is no coincidence. It’s a well-crafted plan that provides women the spectrum of care — from diagnosis to treatment — in one convenient location. According to Princeton surgeon and co-director of the Center Dr. Greg Bearden, innovation in patient care is equally important as technological upgrades. “A great example of this is our weekly, multidisciplinary breast cancer conference where doctors, technicians and support personnel gather to discuss diagnosis of every new cancer patient the Center has seen that week.



Photo by Robert Farley

Princeton physicians like medical oncologist Dr. Katisha Vance (above, left) appreciate the importance of personal communication and concern for their patients as well as the sophisticated equipment at the hospital.

Together, the team talks about the treatment protocol and patient options. This results in faster, more efficient and better coordinated care, while also giving us a chance to learn from one another.”

With committed physicians and staff, along with support and funding of Baptist Health Foundation donors, the continuum of care will

remain at the forefront of Princeton Baptist’s Breast Care Center. Fortunately, for the women on the receiving end of that care — that means a bright future.

For more information about the Breast Care Center at Princeton Baptist, call toll-free 1-877-222-7847. And, your gift to the Baptist Health Foundation can help continue Baptist Health System hospitals’ efforts to raise awareness of breast cancer, provide care and, literally, save lives. Contact the Foundation at 1-877-474-4243 or visit www.bhsala.com/Foundation.



Photo by Robert Farley

Providing information and answering questions and concerns about breast cancer, not only to their patients, but also in the community are important components of the Princeton Baptist Breast Care Center’s comprehensive program.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Want to know God?

By Robby Hyche
Minister to singles
First Baptist Church, Trussville

A few years ago, someone asked me to visit a young woman whom she referred to as “unchurched.” “Cold calls” are not my specialty but I agreed.

Taking two friends with me, I knocked on the door and awkwardly explained who sent us. The college student invited us in and politely introduced us to her boyfriend. He looked perturbed. He offered a sideways comment that we interrupted their “study time” (I didn’t see any books open but I digress).

I launched into my gospel presentation honed by hours of practice. The girl was alert, asked questions and gave answers that you would expect an “unchurched” person to give. The guy sat there like a slug, staring me down as I went through my superslick spiel. The girl thoughtfully admitted that she was not a Christian. Smiling, she added, “We don’t believe that stuff.” Great. I was reeling them in tonight. I finished the outline. The girl remained polite but when I asked, “Would you like to ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior tonight?” She perkily replied, “No, thank you. Not tonight.”

Summarily dismissed, I almost got up to leave but something stopped me. I turned to the guy and asked him, “What about you? Would you like to get saved tonight?” Something changed in him. He humbly said, “Yeah, I need to do that.” I almost said, “You’ve been rude. You didn’t answer any questions. You weren’t nice to us. You can’t get saved!” The girl’s head jerked around so fast I thought she would snap her spine. Glaring, she looked at me as if I had put a weird alien in his body. She whispered something to him, and he simply said, “I’m a sinner. I need to get saved.”

Here’s the deal: I don’t save anybody. The girl was pretty. She was polite. She’s the one I wanted to get saved. The guy was a slug. Who wanted him in our group? God. God is the One who saves. Not me.

There are more people who need to get saved. It may be you or one of your friends. First Timothy 2:5-6a says, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all” (HCSB). Tell the story. Someone needs to hear it.

Atheists, agnostics know most about religion

Who can best answer questions about religion in America?

Based on a new survey released Sept. 28 by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, it’s your atheist or agnostic neighbor, followed by the Jew or Mormon down the street.

A significant percentage — four in 10 — of Roman Catholics did know that their church teaches that the bread and wine used at Communion become the body and blood of Jesus during Mass.

The survey also found that graduates of private schools did better than students in public schools, but religious school graduates didn’t fare any better in their ability to answer questions about the Bible, world religions or the role of religion in public life.

“Our survey certainly shows that there are lots of things that Americans do know about religion — most Americans have a certain familiarity with the Bible for instance,” said Greg Smith, a senior researcher at the Pew Forum. “But, at the same time, there are important things that people don’t know as well.”

Overall, agnostics and atheists, Jews and Mormons scored the best on a quiz of 32 questions — from citing the first book of the Bible (Genesis) to naming a preacher from the First Great Awakening (Jonathan Edwards).

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ANSWERED CORRECTLY BY DIFFERENT GROUPS (OUT OF 32 TOTAL) WAS

Atheist/agnostic: 20.9
Jewish: 20.5
Mormon: 20.3
White evangelical Protestant: 17.6
White Catholic: 16.0
White mainline Protestant: 15.8
“Nothing in particular”: 15.2
Black Protestant: 13.4
Hispanic Catholic: 11.6



Source: RNS

“I think probably as with Mormons, Jews have learned that in order to operate ... effectively within a larger dominant culture, one has to be bilingual ... in their own and the host culture,” said Terryl Givens, a professor of literature and religion at the University of Richmond and author of several books about Mormons.

Most Americans are somewhat familiar with the Bible, Smith said, but responses to the poll’s non-biblical questions reveal a lack of knowledge on certain traditional

beliefs. For example, just 16 percent correctly said that Protestants — not Catholics — have taught that salvation comes through faith alone.

Poll results

The poll results were based on telephone interviews with 3,412 adults nationwide between May 19 and June 6, with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

That total includes an oversample of Mormons, Jews and nonbeliev-

ers. Smith said the high number of correct responses from those groups was not due to the oversample. Those additional interviews helped ensure a reliable analysis of groups that account for a small share of the overall population.

Stephen Prothero, author of “Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know — And Doesn’t,” said the findings reflect Americans’ tenuous grasp on the world’s religions, preventing them from having significant interfaith conversations.

“Yes, there is a kind of ‘Jeopardy’ quality to this,” said Prothero, a religion professor at Boston University who consulted on the survey.

“But I think these kinds of simple questions indicate the deficit that we have as a country in understanding the religions of the world and our own religions.”

Although the average respondent answered just half of the answers correctly, researchers opted not to give anyone an “F” or an “A.”

“It’s not as if the American public has taken a semester-long religion course and are now being tested on topics with which they should be familiar,” Smith said.

“That’s why we don’t assign grades.”

To take the quiz, visit <http://features.pewforum.org/quiz/us-religious-knowledge>. (RNS)

European Baptist leaders approve Prague seminary move

The elegant complex of 19th-century buildings that houses International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Prague, Czech Republic, will likely be sold now that European Baptist Federation (EBF) leaders have greenlighted a plan to move the seminary as a cost-saving measure.

There is a chance, however, that the campus — to which the seminary moved from Rüschlikon, Switzerland, in 1995 and for which many teams of Baptists from the United States and elsewhere contributed thousands of volunteer hours and dollars in renovations — could be saved.

Officials of the federation — which owns the seminary and represents 51 national and regional Baptist bodies in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East — voted to sell the campus at their Sept. 22-25 council meeting in Rome. The sale and move, following the recommendations of a special strategy group, will take place over a three-year timetable, including a last-ditch effort over the next year to retain the current campus by boosting income from renting parts of the campus or finding strategic partners to share the site.

“There was a very good debate, and the decision, while not unani-

mous, was certainly overwhelming,” said Tony Peck, the EBF’s general secretary. “People definitely want the work of IBTS to continue, but the seminary has made cuts, and we feel we’ve cut as far as we can. There is definitely sadness, because people feel the site is wonderful and that it is in an excellent position for EBF in Europe. But there are financial difficulties in managing such a large site.”

‘Significant shortfalls’

The strategy group has been studying the 162-student school’s future for the past year, after severe financial difficulties put its continued existence in doubt. Hits to its donations and investment funds because of the global financial crisis, a weak dollar diminishing the value of U.S. gifts, skyrocketing energy costs and a significant amount of deferred maintenance combined to

create significant shortfalls in the IBTS budget.

If the current campus — located in a picturesque park about three miles northwest of Prague’s historic city center — can’t be saved, then options are to either seek a more affordable site in the Czech Republic or relocate to another EBF partner union.

The council determined that such relocation could involve a strategic partnership with another Baptist seminary or “compatible theological community.”

The council set up an implementation group to carry out the sale and relocation. Its membership will comprise three people chosen by EBF leaders, three members of the seminary’s board of trustees and up to three others chosen by the implementation group itself for their expertise in the subject areas needed. (ABP)

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It's the most frustrating experience. We all have it. You get asked for your input but when you give your opinion, it is ignored. Then when someone else says the same thing days later, the advice is taken as if it has never been heard before. You sit there and wonder why your input was not accepted in the first place.

Why is it that you can offer an idea repeatedly to a person but he or she doesn't seem to hear it until someone else says it? Is it because he or she doesn't value your input or respect you as a person? It is far too easy to take these situations and walk away feeling devalued and unappreciated.

But before doing that, think. Have you ever been burdened and taken an issue to God? When God spoke to you, were you ready to listen? Did you find yourself making excuses for why you could not follow through with God's direction?

Situations in which people don't seem to hear us have very little to do with how someone feels about us. They usually have everything to do with the timing. Just be-

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



cause someone asks for your input doesn't necessarily mean he or she is ready to hear what you are saying and act on it. Sometimes that person asks for help as a way of expressing frustration, not readiness to act. This is similar to what we do when God speaks to us. God speaks but we are not really ready to hear or act on what is said.

While God's timing is perfect, ours is not. When faced with a problem in our relationships, we work hard to be sure we understand the issues and the people involved. We stand back and work toward a positive solution. However, we don't always stop and evaluate the timing of what we are saying. People don't always respond to the

best solutions and ideas until they are personally able to hear and appreciate what is being offered. Timing is everything.

In your conversations, committee meetings and personal attempts to be helpful, weigh what you have to offer in light of the person's ability to really hear and appreciate what you have to say. Is he or she under a lot of stress at the moment? Is he or she hurried? Is he or she focusing on another issue right now? Perhaps the best course of action is to wait and talk about your idea when he or she is not under so much pressure, has a few minutes to really listen and is focused on the issue you are talking about.

A Takeaway Value . . .

It's not enough to be right. We have to be right at the right time.

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.

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Baptists is leading people away from our faith and message. God forgive us.

Mary Nell Carr
Madison, Ala.

NAMB PRESIDENCY

The "COMMENT" carried in the Sept. 23 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* promotes some interesting issues. It brings to mind the technique of drafting as practiced in NASCAR. Drafting allows one to save gas by following the leader.

What has happened to the long-standing protocol presented to church members to tithe to your local church and tend to your personal missions commitments over and above? This also applies to the church institution. We are racing toward a North American Mission Board (NAMB) presidency that believes in doing your own thing.

Is it to become the future policy of NAMB, by following the "leader," for local churches now to go their own way? Or is this a message only to the megachurches? The Cooperative Program (CP) has been a blessing to smaller churches that do not have the wherewithal to sponsor significant self-chosen missions efforts. The CP has always provided smaller churches an opportunity to be an active participant in the worldwide missions program. In fact, your article raises the question as to the commitment of the institutional church to the ultimate authority of God. Yes, it is correct that one cannot question the enormity of God's work being done outside of the

structure of the CP. But what is the message we are proclaiming with the current NAMB presidency?

Dave Rogers
Cedar Bluff, Ala.

LACK OF CP SUPPORT

You are correct in saying that Kevin Ezell's election as president of the North American Mission Board is one more step in the direction of a new model of missions support (*The Alabama Baptist*, Sept. 23).

As this new model plays out on foreign fields, those who contribute through the Cooperative Program will support the career missionaries who are necessary for the "missions trips" of those who don't contribute through the Cooperative Program. It is the career missionary who must arrange for lodging, transportation,

translators, medical care in emergencies and a place of ministry and follow-up on the decisions and a thousand other details that are necessary to make a "missions trip" a success. We don't hear about missions trips going to places where career missionaries, supported by the Cooperative Program, haven't prepared the way.

As the number of career missionaries dwindles due to lack of support through the Cooperative Program, I predict that another step in the new model of missions support will take place. Large churches will contribute to the support of a few missionaries directly, and their missions trips will be limited to the place where "their" missionaries work.

Ben E. Hope
Gadsden, Ala.

Baptist historians affirm individual conscience

A group of Baptist historians who meets annually to read and discuss early Baptist writings endorsed a statement Sept. 27 affirming the role of individual conscience in Baptist life.

Fourteen members of the Baptist Classics Seminar group cited "broad and recurring themes" found in original Baptist sources written between 1610 and today.

Those affirmations include, according to a document released by the group, "believer's baptism, personal 'heart' experience of God, the priesthood of all believers, personal and communal devotion to God, a commitment to the church as the body of Christ, the autonomy of each local church, congregational polity, the regular practice of ordinances (baptism/Lord's Supper), voluntary cooperation among churches and strong voices for religious liberty and the separation of church and state."

"We believe these themes are still relevant and should continue to inform our Baptist heritage and witness," the statement said.

Bruce Gourley, executive director of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, said in a background statement compiled in consultation with three other members that the group frequently shares its findings with the larger Baptist community through classrooms, preaching and teaching in local churches, publications and other venues.

The statement said this year's study of selections from 17th-century English Baptist writings particularly affirmed "the role of individual conscience, especially when voluntary faith was threatened with coercion or compulsion."

Sole authority

The scholars said the foundation for all the Baptist principles they enumerated was "the belief that the Bible alone, neither creeds nor tradition, is the authority for religious faith and practice."

"In our tradition, we find both the personal and communal elements of biblical faith; we find a believer's church that preserves a place for unfettered individual conscience," the scholars said.

The historians renewed their commitment to "the vibrant Baptist witness of freedom that is responsive to the authoritative Scriptures and under the lordship of Christ" and to "the relevance of Baptist identity for the 21st century."

To read the full statement, visit www.baptisthistory.com/affirmation_common_baptist_themes.htm. (ABP)

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Trussville ministry partners with churches to expand benevolence

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Geri Forsythe prayed for a ministry in which she could serve the Lord and give back to people during a time of difficult transitions in her own life. She had recently retired after 29 years as a kindergarten teacher. Then Forsythe's mother, who had lived with her for 35 years, died. Forsythe found her opportunity in Serving You Ministries, a benevolence ministry in Trussville.

"When people come in, you can feel their pain," said Forsythe, who volunteers as a receptionist for Serving You. "Their needs touch my heart. Except for God's grace, I might be facing the same needs."

The ministry serves seven zip codes within Jefferson and St. Clair counties. Thus far, in 2010, Serving You has helped more than 150 families and provided almost \$50,000 in assistance.

According to Executive Director Rus Goodwin, the ministry helps with customary food and clothing needs and financial assistance but also helps with counseling, support groups and English as a Second Language classes. "In addition, we

present the gospel to every person who comes through our doors and every person is prayed with even if we can't help them financially," he said.

What makes Serving You unique is that churches can partner with it and direct their volunteers and benevolence dollars to it.

"We are stepping outside the church doors and offering hope."

Sylvia Gorbach
Serving You Ministries

Originally Serving You was a ministry of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, in Birmingham Baptist Association. And for many years, NorthPark, like many churches, attempted to do its benevolence ministry solo. The church dealt with typical benevolence ministry obstacles: budget constraints, time limitations and no system to track those who are helped and those who work the system by going from church to church.

So a year and a half ago, NorthPark birthed the unique nonprofit benevolence ministry and is now technically a separate ministry from the church, even though it uses space on the church campus.

Nearby Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay, and Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point, also chose to combine their benevolence efforts with

Serving You rather than go it alone.

"Before we partnered with Serving You, our benevolence ministry team attempted to provide assistance for all the benevolence requests that came to us," said Ron Pate, pastor of Hilldale Baptist. "We found it next to impossible to contact the ministry team, gather information, determine if the need was legitimate and stretch our budget dollars. We weren't able to provide assistance with perishable goods either. Regrettably some people scammed our church."

Today the church provides food items and financial assistance for Serving You. "Serving You has a smoother system and a better physical setup for doing benevolence," Pate said. "When we did our own benevolence ministry, we took as

much as a day or two getting clearance for monetary help. With Serving You, a person leaves with immediate help or at least some direction."

That's something a single church can't do, said Ray Walker, board chairman for the ministry.

"Serving You can do more than a single church can do," he said. "A single church can't put safeguards in place for being taken advantage of and typically does not have the budget to meet all benevolence requests that are directed to the church."

Forsythe explained the Serving You system: "We are located in a facility behind — and separate from — NorthPark. When people come in seeking help, we greet them, fill out paperwork and conduct an initial interview to find out their specific

needs. The people are then directed to a volunteer chaplain who shares the gospel and prays with them."

Sylvia Gorbach, a volunteer interviewer for Serving You, feels she is joining God where He is at work.

"Through Serving You, we are stepping outside the church doors and offering hope. We are reaching our applicants with the gospel even if, in some cases, we can't take care of their physical needs. We provide a helping hand and a human touch," Gorbach said.

Goodwin wants to extend the ministry's reach by expanding into other zip codes, enlisting more partner churches and even setting up satellite locations across the state and nation. For more information, visit www.servingyou.org or call Goodwin at 205-228-0030.

Georgia church 'fastest growing' in U.S.

A megachurch in Lawrenceville, Ga., was named the fastest-growing Protestant church in America in *Outreach* magazine's annual ranking, while Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston remains the nation's largest.

In the past year, 12Stone Church in suburban Atlanta increased its attendance by 30 percent and gained 2,226 attendees, boosting total attendance to 9,636.

The magazine's list of the fastest-growing churches was determined using both percentage growth and numerical gain.

12Stone changed its name from Crossroads Church in 2007 and is known for its unusual community outreach, especially at Christmas-time. Last year, 12Stone donated

gifts to single mothers for their children, along with \$50 to give to another single mom. In 2007, the church gave a car to a college student and a minivan to a family with a special needs child.

Outreach partnered with Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated LifeWay Research and contacted more than 8,000 churches to compile its lists of largest and fastest-growing churches. Both lists are based on self-reported data of February and March average weekend attendance.

The top five fastest-growing churches are

1. 12Stone Church, Lawrenceville, Ga.
2. Experience Life Church, Lubbock, Texas

3. The Rock Church and World Outreach Center, San Bernardino, Calif.

4. People's Church, Oklahoma City

5. Faith Church of St. Louis, Fenton, Mo.

The top five largest churches are

1. Lakewood Church, Houston (43,500)
2. North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Ga. (24,325)
3. Second Baptist Church, Houston (24,041)
4. Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Ill. (24,000)
5. Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Ky. (19,230)

(RNS)

Ala. Baptist schools among the 'best'

All three Alabama Baptist colleges have been named to the "America's Best Christian Colleges" list.

Judson College in Marion, Samford University in Birmingham and the University of Mobile are three of only 119 colleges and universities nationwide receiving the designation for the 2010-11 academic year.

Institutional Research & Evaluation (IRE) Inc. selected the highlighted schools from a pool of 332 Christian higher education institutions based on which provide the highest educational quality in a Christian environment, according to Lewis T. Lindsey Jr., president of IRE Inc.

The independent research and consulting organization, which specializes in the recruiting and retention of students for institutions of higher education, compiled the annual listing based on analysis and review of its 20th Annual National College Survey.

(TAB/UM)

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Senior Living Resource Guide

an advertising supplement • October 7, 2010

Fair Haven Retirement Community begins Culture Change journey while enriching lives, providing true home for seniors

By Mary Bess Price
Fair Haven Retirement
Community
Paid Advertising

Fair Haven Retirement Community, the flagship of the Methodist Homes Corporation, is a well-known landmark on Montclair Road and in the Eastwood Mall area in Birmingham, having been here since the 1960s.

While the building is not new, what is happening inside Fair Haven is innovative and has

people talking. Not only have the large studio, one- and two-bedroom apartment homes been renovated and updated, so has Fair Haven's philosophy for caring for older adults. Bill Thomas, MD, a noted author, writes that there are three plagues to old age ... "loneliness, helplessness and boredom."

Fair Haven has begun a journey called Culture Change in an effort to end these plagues in retirement living. This journey is not short or easy, but Fair Haven is committed to providing a true home for older adults. Culture Change seeks to transform the medical model of care to one of person directed care.

As part of the Culture Change journey, Fair Haven's corporate office and its board of directors updated our mission statement to the following: "The mission of Methodist Homes is to enrich the lives of older adults and all those who serve them in faith-based communities, where life is celebrated, relationships are valued, teamwork is embraced, service excellence is expected and the touch of God's love



is ever-present and ageless."

As a continual care retirement community, Fair Haven has five levels of care.

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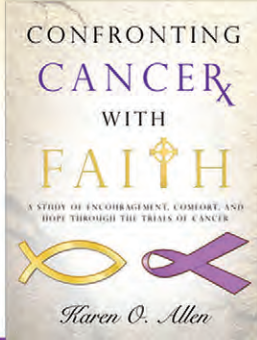
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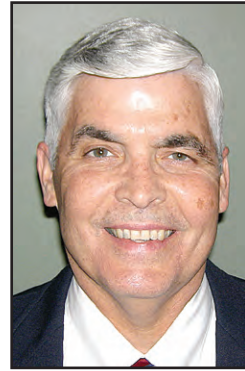
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Jimmy Dixon

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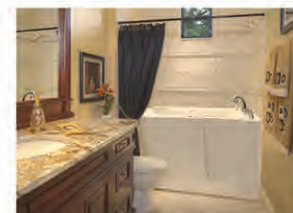


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Creamy vegetable soup, garden salad, pot roast with baby carrots and seasoned boneless chicken breast, corn, green beans, mashed potatoes, roll, homemade cobbler with ice cream, soda, coffee, and ice tea. Vegetarian meals are available.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 10

Explore the Bible

By Dale Younce

Professor of Christian Studies, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

GOD'S POWER STRENGTHENS
Ephesians 3:14-21

Most Christians are not bowled over when they hear that God can use His power to give them greater spiritual strength. Neither are most of them shocked to hear that such strength results in better understanding and experience of God's love. However, many Christians are less familiar with and likely even less comfortable with the idea of experiencing "all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19). This biblical truth may be so new or strange that they reject it without giving it further consideration. Or they may ask questions such as what does it mean, what does it describe, is it real and life related? Whichever way they respond, Christians need to find clear answers to these and other related questions in order to experience this area of spiritual growth and have greater spiritual strength.

What We Need (14-16)

This week's lesson passage is the second of two prayers recorded in Ephesians. The first (1:15-23) stressed enlightenment (1:18); the second (3:14-21) stressed enablement (3:16). Both are prayers we should pray for ourselves and others. This second prayer is packed with spiritual truth. Paul prayed for spiritual strength for his readers. Notice Paul's posture in prayer, "I bow my knees." The Bible nowhere commands any one bodily posture for prayer, but bowing the knees suggests an attitude of submission, reverence and humility. Regardless of physical posture, such should be our spiritual posture in prayer. When Paul wrote "the Father from whom the whole family on earth and in heaven is named," he was not teaching the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. There is a sense in which as Creator, God is the Father of each person, but as Savior, He is the Father of only those who have trusted Christ. In Scripture, there is no such thing as the fatherhood of God that saves all people. Paul was referring here to believers from throughout history, those who are dead and are in heaven and those who are alive on earth. Paul's primary petition was that his readers will be

strengthened inwardly by the Holy Spirit, that the power of the Holy Spirit may enable his readers to live the Christian life with power. The Christian faith is not some religious package tacked on to one's life, nor is it merely religious exercise. It is an inner transformation produced by the Word of God and the Spirit of God as we trust Jesus. Spiritual power is a mark of every believer who submits to God's Word and God's Spirit. As the Scripture is studied and obeyed, the inner person will grow stronger through the Holy Spirit's empowering ministry. Furthermore the power of the Holy Spirit is given to us "according to the riches of His glory." His enablement is not limited to some special class of Christians but is limitless and abundantly available to every believer.

What We Receive (17-19)

The result of being empowered by the Holy Spirit in this way means that Christ settles down and is at home in our lives. Every believer is indwelt by Christ at the moment of salvation, but He is "at home" when the believer's life is cleansed of sin and surrendered to the Holy Spirit. The Christian will begin to grasp a profound knowledge of God's love — it goes beyond our full intellectual capacity to understand, yet we can still know it by experience. No Christian ever has to worry about having enough spiritual resources to meet the demands of life. Believers can experience the greatness of God, the super abundance of grace to us in the Lord Jesus. To be filled with the fullness of God does not mean that believers become the Deity. It does mean that all God's spiritual resources are available to us.

Whom We Ask (20-21)

As Paul prayed and thought of such a marvelous spiritual experience as the fullness of God, he broke out in a doxology, a suitable benediction for such a powerful prayer. God's Spirit working in us is able to accomplish things beyond our fondest dreams. Greater still is the amazing truth that God's glory will be manifested in the body of His redeemed. We need not hesitate to ask God for more spiritual strength because He always has the resources to meet our needs.

Bible Studies for Life

By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

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

WHY 'GOOD' ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH
Isaiah 5:20-23, 6:1-5; Romans 3:21-26

Evil Rationalized (Isa. 5:20-23)

In one of the most devastating criticisms of the people of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah told them that they had "forgotten how to blush" (Jer. 6:15). In a similar way, although bringing God's message to Israel a century earlier, Isaiah tackled the problem of religious people who reversed the moral order and justified their sinful attitudes and actions. Life requires a framework, a particular perspective for making decisions, distinguishing between good and evil. Isaiah, like many other prophets in the Old Testament, confronted and criticized this tendency as he drew a sharp line between right and wrong. The prophets brought a contemporary application of God's law to bear upon new circumstances, holding the people accountable to earlier theological traditions associated with Moses and reminding them of God's justice that called them to be obedient to His holy laws. The issues that Isaiah faced were not merely those of personal piety in terms of "drinking wine" to excess but also of social justice — people in positions of authority who would "acquit the guilty with a bribe and deprive the innocent of their rights!" Holiness affects our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with one another. Sin is both personal and social in its manifestation and consequences.

Holiness Recognized (Isa. 6:1-5)

Isaiah's call to prophetic ministry does not occur at the beginning of the book, as in many other prophetic narratives, but is located in the midst of a story about a society that has turned its back on God. In that context, when it might have been possible for Isaiah to become overwhelmed with sin and judgment, he was apprehended by a vision of God's holiness. In the context of entering into the temple, Isaiah became overwhelmed with a sense of the glory and majesty of God, who is holy, holy, holy. The root meaning of the word is not that of purity but of being separate, exalted, different, a "cut above the rest."

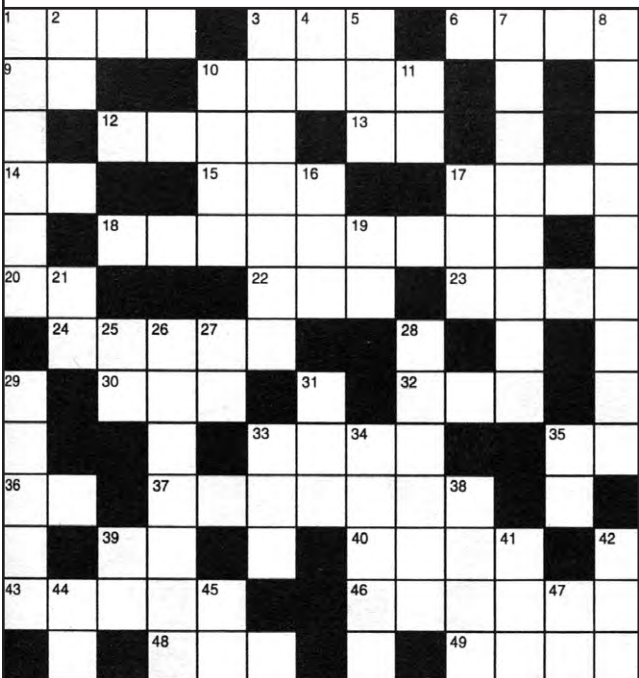
In the presence of the One who is beyond our comprehension, who is perfectly righteous, pure and loving, Isaiah became aware of his own sinfulness and cried out, "Woe is me! ... I am a man of unclean lips." One suggestion of why he specified this sin is because Isaiah lived in Jerusalem, perhaps as a member of the ruling class, of the aristocracy, and he was aware of the spiritual declension and direction of his people and he had been silent up to this moment in time. God called him to repent of the sin of silence and speak for truth and righteousness. Sin is not an abstract notion but a personal experience, a breakdown in the nature of relationship, a moral breach that always has consequences, however small they may appear to be, and damages the way things are meant to be among ourselves and with God. Prayers of confession enable that relationship to be straightened out, restoring the relationship, repairing the breach, receiving forgiveness. From the altar of sacrifice, prefiguring the sacrificial death of Jesus, a "live coal" was taken and touched Isaiah's sinful lips and he was forgiven.

Righteousness Realized (Rom. 3:21-26)

At the heart of Paul's message of good news was the gift of justification, and so in verse 24, he rejoiced that despite our human sinfulness, believers "are now justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The miracle of God's mercy toward a sinful world is that He forgives and accepts us as if we had never sinned — that is the wonder of justification. In the parable of the prodigal son, although the Old Testament declared that such an obstinate and rebellious son should be stoned to death, Jesus teaches us that when God sees His recalcitrant offspring walking up the garden path, He runs to meet him, embraces him and throws a party to remind people that the angels in heaven rejoice over a sinner who repents. If we ever wonder if God is willing to express such generosity of grace toward us, then Paul reminds us that He has demonstrated this grace in the "sacrifice of atonement by His blood" that He offered on our account.

Christian Crossword

By Joan M. Jarzebinski Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**
- Sister of Lazarus. (John 11:2)
 - ___ seek ye first the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:33)
 - But ___ ye first the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:33)
 - I ___. (John 8:58)
 - ___ said, except a man be born again. (John 3:3)
 - Actual.
 - I ___ to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)
 - In ___.
 - Charged particle.
 - Let both ___ together until the harvest. (Matt. 13:30)
 - Through faith unto ___. (1 Pet. 1:5)
 - Help for the alcoholic. (abbr.)
 - ___ hath not seen, nor ear heard. (1 Cor. 2:9)
 - Eat.
 - He killed Goliath.

- Whatsoever is not of faith is ___. (Rom. 14:23)
 - Precedes "one," "body," and "way."
 - They have beaten me, and I ___ it not. (Prov. 23:35)
 - ___ ye holy. (Lev. 20:7)
 - Not down but ___.
 - Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
 - ___, now speakest thou plainly. (John 16:29)
 - Joy.
 - Let not your ___ be troubled. (John 14:1)
 - "Highway to ___," Michael Landon's show.
 - I love ___.
 - Landlord's income.
 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of ___. (Prov. 1:7)
 - Prison.
 - God ___ loved the world. (John 3:16)
 - No.
 - ___ is love. (1 John 4:8)
 - He invented the light bulb. (initials)
 - Classified ___.
 - For we shall see Him ___ He is. (1 John 3:2)
 - He will swallow up death in ___. (Isa. 25:8)
 - Not out.
 - "___ Hymn of the Republic."
 - I am the way, the ___, and the life. (John 14:6)
 - ___ of lions. (Dan. 6:16)
 - Parable of the ___ tree. (Matt. 24:32)
 - I am the ___ of the world. (John 8:12)
 - Not ___ might. (Zech. 4:6)
 - 365 days.
 - Do, re, mi, fa, so, ___.
- Down**
- See 1 across.
 - Morning.
 - My ___ Son. (Matt. 3:17)
 - We.
 - ___ boat Annie.
 - Time without end.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

Moroccan convert's long prison sentence questioned

KENITRA, Morocco — Nearly five years into the prison sentence of the only Christian in Morocco serving time for his faith, Moroccan Christians and — advocates question the harsh measures toward a man who dared to speak openly about Jesus. Jamaa Ait Bakrim, 46, is in Morocco's largest prison, Prison Centrale in Kenitra.

An outspoken Christian convert, Bakrim was sentenced to 15 years in prison for "proselytizing" and destroying "the goods of others" in 2005 after burning two defunct utility poles located in front of his private business in a small town in south Morocco. Advocates and Moroccan Christians said the severity of his sentence in relation to his misdemeanor shows that authorities were determined to put him behind bars because he persistently spoke about his faith. "He became a Christian and didn't keep it to himself," said Rachid, a Moroccan Christian and host for Al Hayat Television. Authorities in Agadir tried Bakrim for "destruction of the goods of others," which is punishable with up to 20 years in prison, and for proselytism under Article 220, which is punishable with six months to three years in prison. During his defense at the Agadir court in southern Morocco, Bakrim did not deny his Christian faith and refuted accusations that he had approached his neighbors in an attempt to "undermine their Muslim faith." Though there have been other cases of Christians imprisoned for their faith, none of their sentences has been as long as Bakrim's. "They will just leave him in the prison so he dies spiritually and psychologically," Rachid said.

Christian worker found dead near Indian mosque

GARHWA, India — Family members of a Christian worker who was found dead in a Muslim area in Jharkhand state a day after the Islamic Eid festival said they suspect he may have been murdered by local residents. The body of Shrawan Kumar, who had worked with the Gospel Echoing Missionary Society, was found lying in a well near the Idgah Mosque in Garhwa town in the wee hours of Sept. 13, a close relative of the deceased said. Kumar, 31, lived in Pratapgarh district in neighboring Uttar Pradesh state. He left for Garhwa, 40 miles away, saying he wanted to see a colleague there Sept. 10 but he never arrived. Local youths who pulled Kumar's body from the well the morning of Sept. 13 informed the family member that they noticed injuries on his face and around his neck.

Police were immediately informed but they did not arrive until 10 p.m. "Kumar had lived in a rented house in Garhwa a few years ago, and on the morning of Sept. 12, he visited his old landlord and mentioned that he planned to preach in the Idgah Mosque area," said the relative, adding that Kumar's family suspected "that he preached to the Muslims on the Eid festival, and as a result, he was killed and thrown in the well." But police, asserting that there was no injury mark on the body, said Kumar was not murdered. The religious atmosphere was tense at the time of Kumar's death; on Sept. 13, Muslim mobs burned a Christian school and a church in the Muslim-majority Kashmir region in Jammu and Kashmir.

Muslim mob attacks Christians in Pakistan

GUJRAT, Pakistan — Muslim extremists shot at and beat dozens of Christians Sept. 23, including one cleared of "blasphemy" charges, in Punjab province's Gujrat district, Christian leaders said.

The attack on Tariq Gill, exonerated of charges of blaspheming the Quran on Sept. 3, 2009; his father, Murad Gill; his mother; and the other Christian residents was the latest of more than 10 such assaults on the Christian colony of Mohalla Kalupura, Gujrat city, since Sept. 8, said Pastor Suleman Nasri Khan and Bishop Shamas Pervaiz. About 40 Islamists — some shooting Kalashnikovs and pistols at homes and individuals on the street, others brandishing axes and clubs — beat some of the Christians so badly that they left them for dead, Khan said. So far, 10 families have been targeted for the attacks. Pervaiz, central vice chairman of the Pakistan Interfaith Peace Council, said the mob was led by two members of the National Assembly, Meer Anjum and Farasat Dar, at the behest of a powerful member of the Punjab Assembly named Sheik Islam.

The three Muslim politicians were not available for comment, but the Gujrat superintendent of police investigations, identified only as Hafeez, told Christian leaders they were respectable legislators who were innocent. Pervaiz said the attackers have threatened to kill him, Khan and Bishop Yashua John and continue to roam the streets looking for Christian residents to kill.

Campus News



Judson College

► **Judson to Present Fall Concert:** The Judson College music department will present its Fall Concert in the Alumnae Auditorium on Oct. 12 at 7 p.m.

Three college ensembles will be featured, including the Judson Singers, FAITH and the hand-bell group, the Judson Ringers.

Angelika Jenkins, student conductor and Judson senior, will conduct Mozart's "Praise the Lord Our God Forever" and the first Vivaldi movement.

Judy L. Ransom will direct the concert.

For more information call 334-683-5142.



Samford University

► **Samford Offers Partial Journalism Scholarships:** Samford University's department of journalism and mass communication (JMC) will offer seven partial scholarships to incoming freshmen for fall 2011.

The scholarships, worth \$2,000 per year, will be awarded based on ACT scores, high school grades, participation in media-related clubs and volunteer work. The scholarships can be renewed every year that the student maintains

a 3.5 grade point average out of a possible 4.0.

For a scholarship application, call JMC Chair Bernie Ankney at 205-726-2948 or e-mail him at man-kney@samford.edu. Applications are also available on the website, <http://howard.samford.edu/jmc/content.aspx?id=2147490241>. Submission deadline is Feb. 1, 2011.

► **Samford Presents A cappella Choir Evensong:** Samford University will present an a cappella choir evensong Nov. 5 at 5 p.m. in A. Gerow Hodges Chapel. This event is part of Samford's Homecoming Weekend activities. For more information, call 205-726-2851.

► **UMobile Professor to Present Sacred Music Concert Downtown:** The Center for Performing Arts of the University of Mobile will present a sacred music concert, titled L'Amore Spirituale, Oct. 10 at 2 p.m. in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Mobile.



University of Mobile

► **UMobile Exhibit Turns Science Into Art:** Steven Carey, associate professor

of biology at the University of Mobile (UMobile), transforms the energy and raw beauty of dangerous storms into art.

Millennials clean up environment

Nearly nine in 10 American Millennials — those born between 1980 and 1991 — say it's up to their generation to clean up the environment, but a majority also believe that many Millennials go overboard when it comes to environmental issues.

These are the findings from a

LifeWay Research study for an upcoming book by Thom Rainer and his son Jess Rainer titled "The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation." The research is based on a wide-ranging August 2009 survey of 1,200 Millennials in the United States.

Eighty-seven percent of Millennials agree, 41 percent strongly, with the statement, "It is up to my generation to clean up the environment."

Asians, Hispanics and people in the West have particularly strong convictions about their environmental responsibility. Most Millennials feel "previous generations did great harm to the environment," but just 25 percent agree strongly with this assessment.

"Millennials show an acute awareness of the issues surrounding the environment," said Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. "Any outright dismissal of environmental issues will be seen as crass ignorance regarding both the people and the planet."

(BP)



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BP photo

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS — Hands On representative Colby Sledge (far left) and IMB journeyman Chris Black (far right) hang out with graphic arts students at Senac University in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

‘Whatever it takes’

Sao Paulo students reaching campuses for Christ

Scriptures, prayers and random thoughts — scrawled in white ink — cover the prayer room’s black walls.

“For nothing is impossible with God.”

“Whatever it takes.”

“Show us your glory.”

“Give us the nations.”

“Use me.”

The words reflect something big God is doing in Sao Paulo, Brazil — population 23 million. The Christian students who wrote them share a vision for reaching Sao Paulo’s 1 million university students for Christ.

Nearly three years ago, in the Sao Paulo neighborhood of Marajoara, International Mission Board (IMB) representatives Chris and Melody Julian started “Igreja Zoe Marajoara” (Zoe Marajoara Church). Its members simply call it “Zoe,” Greek for “abundant life.”

“I never saw myself as a church planter, but God did,” said Chris, whose background is in student and youth ministry. “We just took a leap of faith and said, ‘Let’s start this thing.’”

No spiritual fruit

The Julians had tried to reach students through Bible studies on several Sao Paulo campuses. “But we never really saw any fruit,” Melody said.

But at a conference in Moscow, God showed Chris how to reach people where they are. Afterward, the Julians and three Brazilian students began studying the Book of Acts. As they prayed about how to reach Sao Paulo’s students, “God put it on our hearts to start a church in our home,” Melody said. “So, with much fear and trembling —

because we didn’t have a clue what we were doing — we began Zoe. God has blessed beyond our wildest dreams.”

As the team’s work got under way, they invited Southern Baptist young adults to help them build relationships with Brazilian students.

“The Lord never said, ‘Invite [lost people] to come and then make disciples of all nations.’ He told us to go,” said Chris Black, who recently completed his service in Brazil through the IMB’s Journeyman program, a two-year overseas missions opportunity for single college graduates, 21 to 26 years old.

On any given day, you’ll find Black and Zoe colleagues “hanging out” with Brazilian students on university campuses, in coffee shops, cafés and bakeries, on buses or in the subway.

“Wherever students are, that’s where we’re going to go. And we’re just ourselves. We’re just real,” Chris Julian said.

“Sao Paulo is a very large city, but it can also be a very lonely city,” added Colby Sledge, IMB Hands On volunteer whose term ended in 2009. “I think a lot of students look for some sort of relationship wherever they can find it, because it’s hard to ... maintain relationships in this city.” Hands On is an intensive short-term missions program for college students and young adults.

“They work, they go to school, they sleep, they study — that’s their life,” Chris Julian said. “And so they are searching. They’re empty. They’re lonely. They want purpose. They’re searching for purpose in their studies but after that ... what’s after that?”

Students who have answered that

question — and others still searching — gather for worship in the Julians’ backyard for Zoe’s monthly theme night. Recently the theme was a Hawaiian luau. On this particular night seven students were baptized.

Among the baptismal candidates was Roberto Campos, a 21-year-old information technology student.

“I considered myself an agnostic. ... I felt that my life was kind of empty, without purpose, like I was just living,” he recalled.

A ‘touch of God’

But three months after Campos began attending Zoe fellowships, he became a Christian. “I started to cry,” he said. “I had a real touch of God on my life. ... Now I can honestly say that God exists. I’m being baptized tonight to show He’s a part of my life.”

Orlando Soares Jr., a founding member of Zoe, reflected on the baptisms.

“The baptisms [12 in all since the church began] are a gift from God, showing us that we are doing His work, according to His will,” he said.

Another sign: Church members are giving 100 percent of their offerings to missions. New Zoe leaders are receiving in-depth discipleship training. And in other parts of the city, Zoe members have started three new groups at student hangouts.

“It all goes back to what Zoe is all about,” Black said. “It’s just going out ... showing Christ, loving people wherever you are. If we’re believers, our lives aren’t our own. We’re commanded to go and make disciples. And this redemption story is too incredible of a story for us not to go out and tell.” (BP)

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Global poverty, hunger fight has more to do

NEW YORK — Prominent religious, humanitarian and ethical leaders gave mixed grades in late September to progress on meeting the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the global yardsticks on fighting poverty.

The ambitious goals, established in 2000 with a target date of 2015, include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

World leaders meeting at the United Nations summit Sept. 20–22 acknowledged that several of the global aims — including those around maternal health and child mortality — are not likely to be met by 2015, one reason U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced a \$40 billion global health initiative aimed at mothers and children.

“More could have happened, more could be done,” David Beckmann, a Lutheran minister who serves as president of the Washington-based advocacy group Bread for the World, said Sept. 22 at a forum assessing progress on the MDG and the overall global fight against poverty.

Beckmann, a 2010 World Food Prize laureate, called the progress made against poverty “the great exodus of our time” and “an extraordinary liberation,” making him “profoundly hopeful, because hundreds of millions of people have escaped from extreme poverty in the last 20 years.”

“When I look at what’s happened, and I believe in God, this is God moving in our history,” Beckmann said at a forum sponsored by Yale Divinity School at the Church Center for the United Nations. “This is our loving God answering the prayers of hundreds of millions of people.”

European court limits church’s ability to fire workers

STRASBOURG, France — The European Court of Human Rights ruled Sept. 23 that a church organist’s employment rights were ignored when he was fired by a Catholic church for remarrying outside the church.

The court said German churches have some latitude in firing staff who violate the faith’s moral tenets but said it must be weighed against the prominence of the job and the worker’s own rights.

The case involved Bernhard Schuth, the longtime organist at St. Lambert parish in Essen, who separated from his wife in 1994 and started a relationship with another woman in 1995.

The new relationship might have gone unnoticed until Schuth’s child mentioned a new sibling at school in 1997. Schuth was fired in 1998 because, the church said, an extramarital relationship violated basic Catholic teaching.

Beside adultery, the church also accused Schuth of bigamy since his first marriage was never annulled.

The case worked its way through Germany’s courts before heading to the European court in Strasbourg, France, where judges ruled that German courts had weighed the church’s interests more heavily than Schuth’s.

Specifically the court noted that Schuth’s signature on a labor contract did not give the church control over his private life and that “his signature on the (employment) contract could not be interpreted as an unequivocal undertaking to live a life of abstinence in the event of separation or divorce.”

Belgian court says raids on church offices illegal

VATICAN CITY — A Belgian court ruled Sept. 9 that recent raids by police investigators on Roman Catholic Church offices were illegal, rendering the documents obtained inadmissible in judicial proceedings.

Among the disqualified evidence is testimony that sexual abuse by clergy may have led to at least 13 suicides.

On June 24, police seized documents, computers and cell phones from the home of Archbishop Andre-Joseph Leonard outside Brussels. Bishops attending a conference were detained for nine hours, and the tomb of a deceased archbishop was opened and searched.

More sensitive files were impounded at a second target, the headquarters of a panel set up in 1998 to investigate pedophilia within the church.

According to The Associated Press, those files included a report that abuse may have led to at least 13 victims to kill themselves.

Pope Benedict XVI called the raids “surprising and deplorable,” and Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone described them as unprecedented “even under Communist regimes.” The church-backed investigating panel resigned en masse in protest. ☐