



INSIDE



Relocation of Gadsden's 12th Street results in triple-church move, new friends

◆ Page 3



Gambling in Alabama: A look at gambling on Alabama's Indian reservations

◆ Pages 5-7



Baptizing Children: When is a child old enough?

◆ Pages 9-16

Underlining role of faith

Former President Bush headlines UMobile's annual leadership banquet

George W. Bush, the 43rd president of the United States, spoke on themes of faith and leadership before an audience of more than 1,000 at the sixth annual University of Mobile (UMobile) Leadership Banquet on Oct. 7.

Bush discussed "Faith in the Office" during the event, which raised nearly \$400,000 for the UMobile scholarship fund. The gala evening at the Arthur Outlaw Convention Center in downtown Mobile also showcased performances by students in the university's Center for Performing Arts, including the VOICES of Mobile vocal ensemble, a trumpet fanfare by members of RamCorps drum and bugle corps and a stirring performance by Shophar men's vocal group.

"I love what the University of Mobile stands for," Bush said. "I love the concept of educating people with the skills and capacity to influence America. Congratulations on this mission that is important for America. I am proud to be a part of supporting the university as well."

Bush said he was "in the Bible every morning of my presidency." He said the prayers of total strangers "comforted us and strengthened me in ways you'll never know. For those of you who prayed for me, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for that beautiful gift."

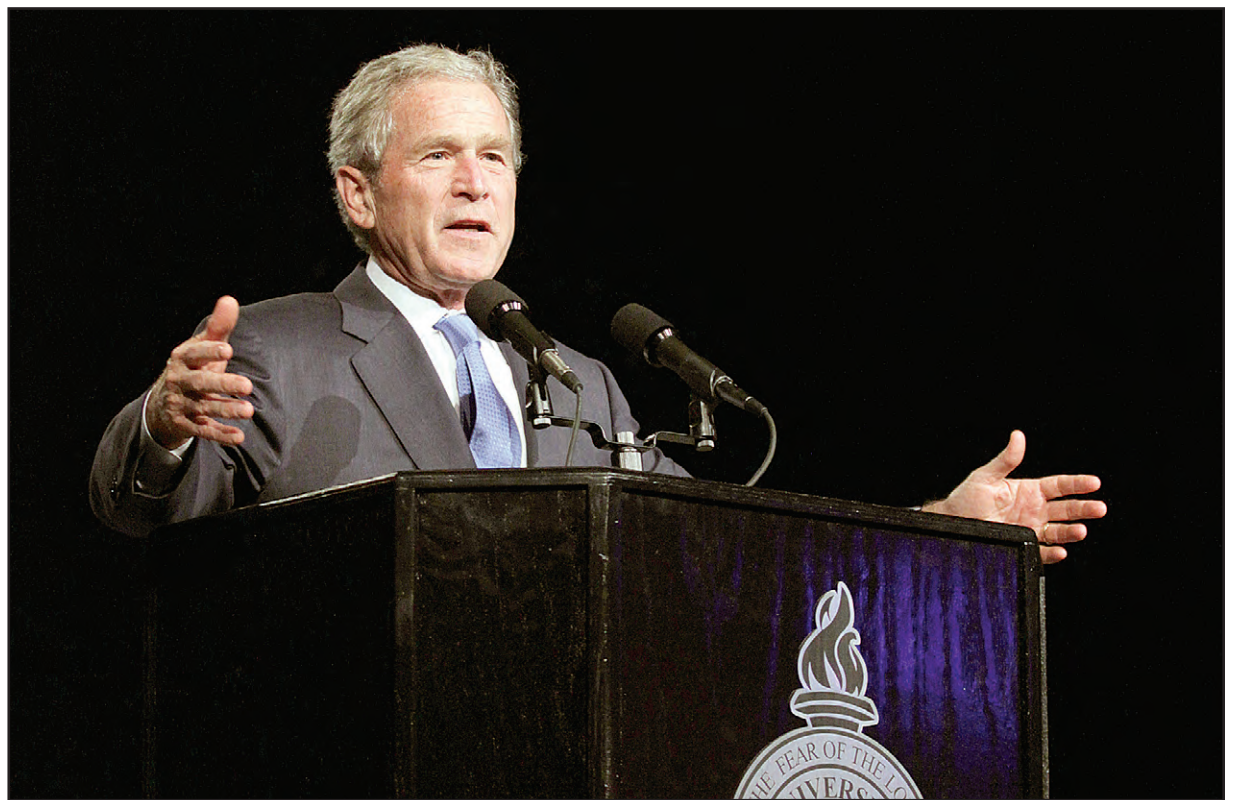
Previewing some of his memoir, "Decision Points," which will be released Nov. 9, Bush described the pressures of the presidency.

In simple terms, he said, "This job requires a lot of decision making. Some you anticipate, some you don't. And you don't have any choice. You get to decide."

He added, "There are some great times as president and some tough times as president. Every moment I was optimistic that this great nation can achieve anything it sets its mind to."

He said presidents will come and go and all will have weaknesses and strengths — but the ship of state will sail on.

"My job isn't just to make decisions



HONORED GUEST — Former President George W. Bush addresses the more than 1,000 people who attended the sixth annual University of Mobile Leadership Banquet on Oct. 7 on faith and leadership. Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

but to strengthen the institution by bringing honor and glory to the office, which I tried to do for eight years as your president," Bush said.

And what mattered most was that when he left office and looked in the mirror, "did I see a guy who refused to compromise his soul in the face of political pressure?"

UMobile President Mark Foley presented Bush with a handcrafted Bowie

knife created by Foley and Mobile physician Dr. Bill Dumas. The work in steel, brass and wood, inspired by Alamo defender James Bowie, is engraved with words President Bush spoke on 9/11: "Freedom will be defended." Foley created the brass and steel blade and Dumas carved the handle from African zebra wood.

The banquet raises financial support for the university's annual aca-

demical scholarship fund while bringing a speaker of national prominence to the Mobile area. Previous speakers have included former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Newt Gingrich, former Georgia Gov. and retired U.S. Sen. Zell Miller, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, and best-selling author and motivational speaker Andy Andrews. (UMobile)

All eyes on 'bingo' corruption indictments

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

A shock wave of sorts spread around the state and across the nation Oct. 4 — lawmakers, gambling bosses, lobbyists and others were arrested in a FBI "bingo" probe and charged with a vote-buying scheme.

There were 11 indictments all together, and on Oct. 15, they will be arraigned in Montgomery. Most, if not all, are expected to plead not guilty.

Several are calling the timing an attempt to influence the upcoming general election and/or a final power play by Gov. Bob Riley, who took a heavy hand to electronic "bingo" this year.

Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling succeeded in shutting down the state's three largest slot machine-style facilities, which have been at the center of a vicious battle over what type of gambling truly is legal in Alabama.

The FBI "bingo" investigation became public after Senate Bill 380, sponsored by Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, passed the Senate when a few senators switched their votes. Just as the bill seemed to be gaining steam to provide a statewide vote to expand gambling, the investigation was announced. Several gambling proponents accused Republicans of undermining the legislation with the FBI investigation because it seeming-

ly killed the bill. The House sponsor of the bill, Rep. Marcel Black, D-Tusculumbia, pulled his bill before a vote could be taken in the House.

And accusations of a Republican conspiracy have only gotten louder and harsher with the indictments coming out less than a month before the general election Nov. 2.

But authorities deny these charges. "In a case like this ... we just had to go with where the facts and law were, and we had to make the decision at the appropriate time," said Lanny A. Breuer, assistant U.S. attorney general. "And that's 100 percent what dictated the timing of this case."

(See 'Bingo,' page 3)

COMMENT

Ava Got on a Plane This Morning

Tears filled the eyes of many of us gathered around Ava's chair. We reached our arms to touch her as we prayed for her and committed her to the Lord's care. Ava was leaving. She was getting on a plane that would take her to her new home, her new assignment in the Lord's service.

There is a lot of pain in such a moment — a kind of finality to the physical separation. But that emotion is tempered by the joy of knowing that one is obediently following the Lord's leadership.

That is the case for Ava. Early in her life she felt her first tug to international missions while serving through the local church during her high school days. State-sponsored youth camps, evangelism training and more were a part of who she was becoming.

In a Baptist college she discovered personal strengths and developed vocational skills that equipped her for vocational service as a missionary. She learned how to be a leader among her peers. More importantly, she grew in her knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Ava anticipated going straight from college to the missions field but that door closed. Instead God led her to a Baptist ministry in Alabama where she invested herself for seven years. It was during that time that those of us gathered around Ava's chair came to know her.

Every week Ava touched missions through her Alabama ministry. Every week she encouraged Christians. Every week she shared what God was doing through Baptists at home and around the world.

And every week Ava demonstrated exceptional skills and abilities. She was soon a resource for others working in similar ministries across the nation. Her personality endeared her to those whose paths she crossed as well as to her co-workers. It was not long before other ministries offered her positions with more responsibility and more rewards.

But Ava stayed with her Alabama ministry and with her ministry friends. That was God's will, she said.

Ava stayed until God again stirred the call to international missions and this time God opened the door for appointment. The process was tedious and demanding. The orientation was arduous. But Ava completed it, and the morning of this writing she boarded a plane headed west, the first step toward her new home, her new ministry.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

One can only imagine the reaction of the ticket agent when she showed up with three oversized and overweight suitcases. Maybe trunks would be a more accurate description.

Given the penalty airlines charge for extra baggage, most travelers do not do that anymore. But the contents inside those containers made up her earthly possessions for the next phase of her life.

The prayer offered by our group pledged continued support for Ava. We promised to pray for her and to stay informed about her ministry through the marvels of digital communications available today. We also promised to support her financially with our offerings through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

Cooperative Program giving

A lot of people argue about the Cooperative Program today. Some complain that churches do not give enough to support Baptist work beyond the local setting. Others complain that state conventions use too large a percentage of what is given for work in their respective states. Others complain about how the Southern Baptist Convention uses the funds it receives. Some want more for international missions. Some want more for North American missions or other causes.

But the fact remains that the Cooperative Program is the primary way Baptists do missions together — not just international missions but all that Baptists do together.

No one knows how God would have worked in Ava's life had there not been state-sponsored youth camps, specialized evangelism programs for young people, training for those who taught her in Sunday School or led her Girls in Action group.

No one knows how God would have worked had there been no Baptist college in her home state where growing in God was equally as important as growing in vocational skills. It is not an accident that her alma mater has a noted history of preparing Baptist leaders.

No one knows how God would have worked if the Baptist ministry where Ava served for just short of a decade were not there to be the primary source of missions information about

work in Alabama, the nation and the world.

But all were there, and God used all of them for preparing Ava for the day she got on a plane headed for an international missions field. And God is using all of them to prepare others like Ava for tomorrow. All are there because through the years Baptists have chosen to make the Cooperative Program their primary source of missions support.

Special offerings make it possible to give directly to particular ministry causes. But only the Cooperative Program makes it possible for Baptists to support all the valuable and necessary things Baptists do together through one regular offering.

Baptists may discuss, even argue, about the Cooperative Program, but standing around Ava's chair this morning all of that seemed unimportant. What was important was that Ava was getting on a plane obediently following God's call. It was a time to give thanks for her and for all of the people and ministries God used to prepare her and make this day possible. That includes the Cooperative Program.

When you read this Ava will be in another part of the world. She will be serving on behalf of Baptists to make God's love and mercy known. Join those of us who gathered around her chair in supporting her and all who serve and will serve with her in prayer and in financial support through gifts to missions through the Cooperative Program. 🙏

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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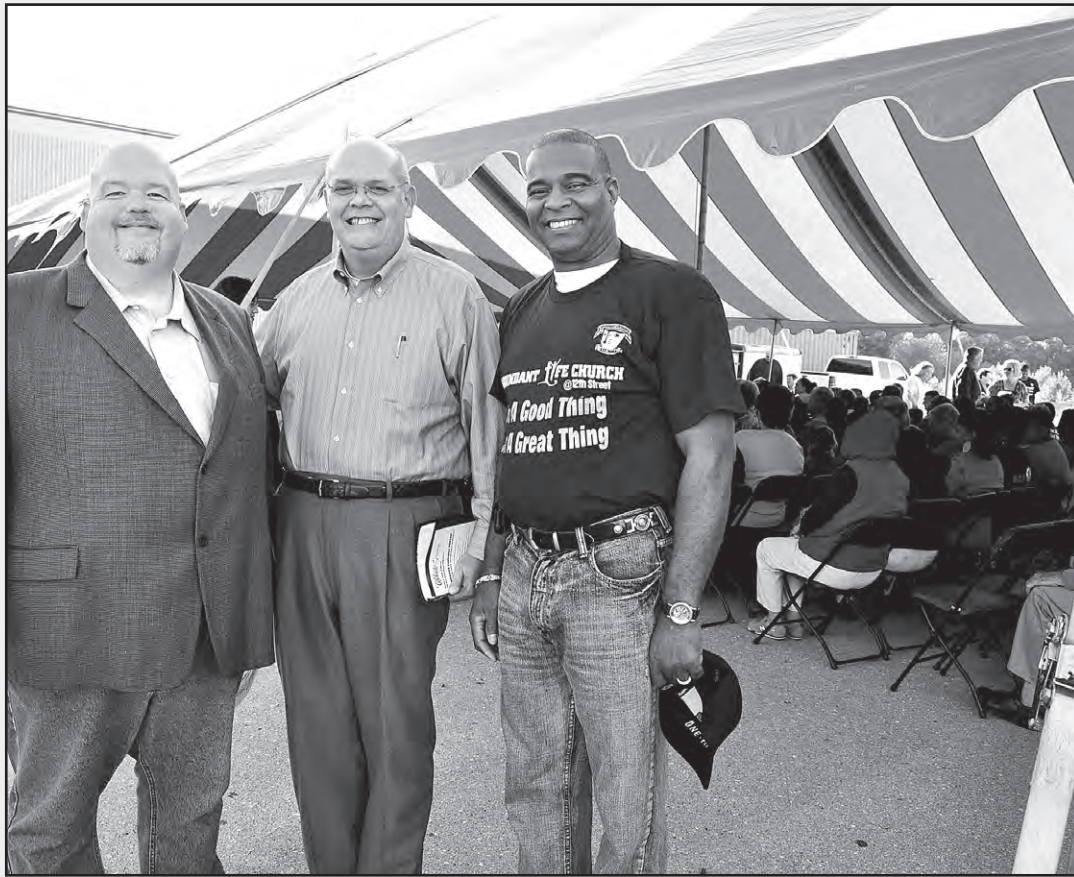


Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

'ONE IN THE BOND OF LOVE' — Pastors (l to r) John Martin, New Faith Community Church; Craig Carlisle, 12th Street Baptist Church; and Terry Jones, Abundant Life Church, prepare to lead an Oct. 3 combined celebration service.

Relocation of Gadsden's 12th Street results in triple-church move, new friends

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When 12th Street Baptist Church decided to move from its century-old location in downtown Gadsden to a former Kmart building in Rainbow City, it had no idea of the relationships that would form as a result. Thanks to the relocation, the Etowah Baptist Association congregation is now closely connected with two other Gadsden congregations: Abundant Life Church and New Faith Community Church.

"It was a domino effect," Craig Carlisle, pastor of 12th Street Baptist, said of the churches' introduction to one another. "We've been able to see God's hand in this, and in this economic climate in a small town like Gadsden, it really is a remarkable story."

It all started with 12th Street Baptist's desire to move closer to Rainbow City, where much of its congregation is located now. So the church began looking for a group to purchase its soon-to-be vacant church building. Abundant Life also wanted

to move closer to the community it serves and was interested in buying the building. But it was unable to get loan approval without first selling its building. That's where New Faith Community came in.

The church, which was formed in December 2009, was looking to move from its temporary location to a permanent spot, and Abundant Life's building turned out to be the perfect spot.

"Even six months ago, when we knew this was the community we needed to be in, we couldn't have imagined that we'd have not only a facility but a beautiful, well-equipped facility that we couldn't have pulled off on our own even if we'd tried," said John Martin, New Faith's pastor. "We knew God wanted us to be in this community, and He's given us a base of operations now."

While Martin's congregation has moved into the space Abundant Life left behind, the first phase of 12th Street Baptist's renovations to its new property aren't expected to wrap up until March, so it's sharing its building with Abundant Life.

On Oct. 3, the three congregations came together for a special service, held "tent-style" at 12th

Street Baptist's new location. It was a chance for the members of the three groups to meet each other and celebrate how well the moves have worked out for each church.

"The leadership of the three congregations have met and gotten to know each other, and of course, the congregations have heard about what has happened, but we thought it would be great for everyone to come together for a time of celebration and praise to hear not only the perspective of their own leader but of other leaders as well," Martin said.

He said it also was a time to reflect on how God provided and brought each barrier down.

Carlisle agreed. "We've had struggles along the way — mainly with obtaining financing — but God has prevailed and everyone is where they need to be," he noted.

Linked together

Though come next spring each congregation will be settled in its new location, the three pastors are emphatic that their churches will remain linked to one another.

"We really needed each other for this to happen, and God brought it all together," Bishop Terry Jones of Abundant Life said. "So we've avowed to stay together, and we're excited about our relationships."

"We really needed each other for this to happen, and God brought it all together."

Bishop Terry Jones
Abundant Life Church

'Bingo' investigation proves 'gambling breeds corruption'

(continued from page 1)

And while media outlets nationwide covered the probe and newspapers and TV stations statewide provided daily coverage for days after the arrests, most Alabama Baptists were not shocked by the news.

The Alabama Baptist has covered the gambling issue in the state for more than a decade.

Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) has worked for several decades urging legislators to vote against expanding gambling.

"We've suspected the corruption existed all along and have been working to defeat attempts to expand gambling for that reason," said Joe Godfrey, executive director of ALCAP. "I spend countless hours walking the halls of the Statehouse reminding legislators of the evil that comes with this type of business. My predecessor, Dan Ireland, has warned senators and representatives for more than 30 years about the dangers of getting caught in the gambling web."

But Godfrey and Ireland work against scores of high-paid program gambling lobbyists, so their job is not easy. "Those lobbyists make it hard for legislators to resist their offers," Godfrey said. "But we try to stay consistent with our message."

As far as what lies ahead, Godfrey said he could not predict. "I still believe in the justice system and being innocent until proven guilty as far as the individuals who are involved, but what this does prove is that gambling breeds corruption," he said.

"These recent indictments and arrests should cause everyone to ask, 'Do we really want this kind of corrupting influence in our state?'"

"The more gambling we allow in Alabama, the greater the potential for corruption."

Those indicted were:

► **Milton E. McGregor**, 71, of Montgomery — charged with one count of conspiracy, six counts of federal program bribery and 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud;

► **Ronald E. Gilley**, 45, of Enterprise — charged with one count of conspiracy, six counts of federal program bribery, 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud;

est services mail and wire fraud and four counts of money laundering;

► **Jarrod D. Massey**, 39, of Montgomery — charged with one count of conspiracy, five counts of federal program bribery and 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud;

► **Thomas E. Coker**, 70, of Lowndesboro — charged with one count of conspiracy, two counts of federal program bribery and 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud;

► **Robert B. Geddie Jr.**, 60, of Montgomery — charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of federal program bribery, 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud and one count of obstruction of justice;

► **Jarrell W. Walker Jr.**, 36, of Lanett — charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of federal program bribery and 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud;

► **Sen. Harri Anne H. Smith**, 48, of Slocumb — charged with one count of conspiracy, two counts of federal program bribery, one count of extortion, 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud and four counts of money laundering;

► **Sen. Larry P. Means**, 63, of Attalla — charged with one count of conspiracy, two counts of federal program bribery, two counts of attempted extortion and 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud;

► **Sen. James E. Preuitt**, 75, of Talladega — charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of federal program bribery, one count of attempted extortion, 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud and one count of making a false statement;

► **Sen. Quinton T. Ross Jr.**, 41, of Montgomery — charged with one count of conspiracy, two counts of federal program bribery, two counts of attempted extortion and 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud; and

► **Joseph R. Crosby**, 61, of Montgomery — charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of federal program bribery and 11 counts of honest services mail and wire fraud.

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving

Year to Date through September 30, 2010

SEPTEMBER

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,875,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$3,972,829
Over Goal for Month	\$97,829

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$34,875,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$31,500,458
Under Goal for Year	\$3,374,542

'Our Eyes Are Upon You!'

Pastors Conference to be time of revival, refreshment; Junior Hill to be honored

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

While praying about the theme for this year's Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference, President Kevin Hamm kept going back to a sermon he preached at Gardendale First Baptist Church, where he serves as senior pastor. The message of this particular sermon, based on 2 Chronicles 20:12, was to keep one's eyes on God. And as a pastor, Hamm thought this was a message even pastors needed reminding of because ministry can be "a battle."

"Ministry can be one of the most exhilarating, encouraging vocations [in] the world, but at the same time, it can be draining and stressful," he said. "Whether you're on the mountaintop or in the valley, (you have to learn to say), 'My eyes are on you, (Lord).'"

Hamm hopes that pastors will experience a time of revival and refreshment at the Nov. 15 conference at his church so that they can go back to their churches and preach bold messages.

"Our prayer is that those who attend this conference will be empowered and encouraged to put their hope in God and then speak that to their people, the state and the country," he added. "When you put your eyes on God, you don't have to be afraid."

Six men from different areas of Alabama will communicate the theme "Our Eyes Are Upon You!" Hamm said he chose them intentionally so that no matter "where you find yourself ... there is someone who will bless you and you will hear from the Lord."

Speakers are

▶ Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover;

▶ Junior Hill, evangelist from Hartselle;

▶ Ed Litton, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland;

▶ Lawrence Phipps, senior pastor of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery;

▶ Robert Smith Jr., associate professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham; and

▶ Zach Terry, senior pastor of Capshaw Baptist Church.

New to this year's conference is a question and answer (Q&A) session during the morning session. Hamm will facilitate the Q&A session with the four speakers who serve as pastors. Pastors are encouraged to e-mail their questions ahead of time to wendyd@gfbc.org. Questions also will be taken from the floor. "It's wonderful to come together and be encouraged, but with all these pastors together, why don't we learn from each other?" Hamm asked. "Who knows where the Spirit of God will lead?"

Also during this year's conference, Hill will be honored for his longtime work in the state and throughout the world. The special recognition will take place after he preaches.

"I don't know of anybody who has had more of an impact in the local church than Junior Hill," Hamm said. "As Alabama Baptists, we want to step up to the plate and say, 'We love you.' He has encouraged many so we want to encourage him."

For more information about the conference or the state convention Nov. 16-17, visit www.alsbom.org/convention.



PHIPPS



TERRY



LITTON



GRAY



HILL



SMITH



McNIEL



GARDENDALE FBC WORSHIP MINISTRY



GRACEVILLE

2010 PASTORS CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Morning Session 8:30 a.m.–Noon

- 8:30 Continental breakfast
- 8:50 Pre-session music
- 9:00 Welcome: Kevin Hamm
- 9:03 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 9:20 Question and answer
- 10:00 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 10:20 Question and answer
- 11:00 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 11:15 Prayer: John Killian
Special music: Graceville
- 11:20 Message: Lawrence Phipps
- 12:00 Lunch

Afternoon Session 1:20–4:30 p.m.

- 1:20 Pre-session music
- 1:30 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 1:40 Election of officers
- 1:45 Prayer: Daven Watkins
Special music: Brandon Watkins
- 1:55 Message: Zach Terry
- 2:30 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 2:45 Prayer: Jason Dunlap
Special music: Graceville
- 2:55 Message: Ed Litton
- 3:30 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 3:45 Prayer: Daniel Wilson
Special music: Charlotte Guffin

- 3:55 Message: Buddy Gray
- 4:30 Dinner

Evening Session 6:20–9:00 p.m.

- 6:20 Pre-session music
- 6:30 Welcome: Kevin Hamm
- 6:35 Special music: Graceville
- 6:45 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 7:05 Prayer: Sammy Gilbreath
Message: Junior Hill
- 7:40 Special recognition
- 7:55 Special music: Graceville
- 8:05 Praise and worship: Roy McNeil
- 8:25 Prayer: Rick Lance
Message: Robert Smith Jr.
- 9:00 Closing prayer

Meetings related to state convention annual meeting set for Nov. 15–16

MONDAY

Alabama Network of Christian Community Ministers: Nov. 15, Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) building, 9 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Lunch will be hosted by BBA staff and volunteers at 11:45 a.m. At 1:30 p.m., participants will tour the Lovelady Center Thrift Store in Birmingham. For reservations or more information, contact Lisa Rose at lrose@mgmbaptist.org.

Alabama Baptist Hispanic Fellowship: Nov. 15, First Baptist Church, Hoover, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. The meeting includes lunch. Reggie Quimby, director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will speak. For

more information, contact Pablo Moscoso at pnmv29@hotmail.com.

Director of Missions: Nov. 15, Gardendale First Baptist Church, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. The meeting includes lunch and worship. Eric King will speak. For more information, call Barry Cosper at 256-825-4441 or 256-404-9039.

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary: Nov. 15, Jim 'N Nick's Bar-B-Q, Gardendale, 12–1:30. Alumni and friends are invited to attend a lunch. No reservation necessary. For more information, call Gregg Woodard at 256-757-5822.

Education/Music Association: Nov. 15,

First Baptist Church, Birmingham. Registration at 3 p.m. Conferences at 3:30 p.m. with Andrew Westmoreland on basic principles of leadership and 4:30 p.m. with Dale Huff and Teman Knight on building powerful ministry teams. Banquet at 5:45 p.m. with After Class, an instrumental string trip. For program details and banquet information, call Linda Hicks at 334-288-2460, Ext. 263.

Alabama Singing Men and Alabama Singing Women: Nov. 15, First Baptist Church, Birmingham. Rehearsal at 7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY

New Orleans Baptist Theological Semi-

nary: Nov. 16, fellowship hall of First Baptist Church, Hoover, 4:30 p.m. Alumni and friends are invited to attend a dinner and chapter meeting. Ventriloquist Geraldine Ragan, with her puppet Ricky, will be the featured guest. For reservations or more information, call Rusty Thomaston at 706-590-2943.

Missions Fellowship: Nov. 16, Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, 5 p.m. Anyone who has participated in a missions trip with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions or served as a volunteer is invited to attend dinner.

For reservations or more information, call Virginia Gardner at 334-288-2460, Ext. 238.

GAMBLING

IN ALABAMA

6 OF 8
IN A
SERIES

A look at gambling
on Alabama's Indian
reservations (Part 1)

Who are the Poarch Creek Indians?

In 1984, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians became the only federally recognized tribe in Alabama. There are currently almost 3,000 members of the tribe. While the ancestors of the Poarch Creek Indians lived along the Alabama River, the Creek families who received land grants in 1814 and 1836 following the Trail of Tears in 1830 moved inland away from the river into the Poarch area, near Atmore.

In the 1940s, community leaders took action to improve community conditions and educational opportunities. In 1950, a nine-member formal governing body was established. (History provided by Poarch Creek Indians tribal offices)

Clarification on Part 4 of gambling series

In the "Gambling in Alabama, part 4" series in the Sept. 23 issue, a comment about Rep. Tommy Sherer, D-Jasper, in the article about Walker County could mislead readers to think Sherer might support gambling efforts. But that is not the case. Sherer has been a consistent opponent of gambling and has always stood against efforts to expand gambling in Alabama.

Sherer did support a bill limiting bingo in Walker County to paper games and tried to help get it out of the House local legislation committee, but Rep. Ken Guin, D-Carbon Hill, opposed the bill. Because it was considered local legislation, it needed unanimous support from the local delegation to proceed. Without Guin's support, it was a contested local bill and thus did not come out of committee.

All bets not off in Alabama

Gambling continues on federally protected Indian land

By Sondra Washington
The Alabama Baptist

When Macon County's "bingo" casino at VictoryLand shut its doors in August, gambling opponents claimed victory in their fight against Alabama's slot machine-style businesses and said the gambling facilities were "100 percent shut down." But that 100 percent didn't include the Poarch Band of Creek Indians' three casinos.

State legislators, city and county leaders, gambling bosses and members of Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling have fought all year about the future of the state's so-called electronic bingo industry, but gambling at Indian casinos has continued. Billboards, TV commercials and newspaper ads imply a sophisticated casino atmosphere at the tribe's facilities even though they are limited to the same slot machine-style gambling that is currently shut down across Alabama.

Some have accused Riley of turning a blind eye to the casinos to protect Indian gambling and then receive some sort of payout. He has repeatedly denied these claims.

Others say the task force could not move against the casinos since federal laws allow federally recognized Indian tribes to operate gambling in states where certain types of gambling are legal (see story, page 7).

Either way, Indian gambling is alive and well in Alabama, and it may be awhile before that changes — if it ever does.

Currently the Atmore area-based tribe owns and operates Wind Creek Casino & Hotel in Atmore, Creek Casino Montgomery and Creek Casino Wetumpka.

The casinos began opening just three or four years after the tribe was recognized by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1984, said Robert McGhee, governmental relations adviser for the Poarch Creek Indians. This designation allows tribe members access to various government services and to offer gambling.

According to the Indian Gaming Regula-



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

A WORLD OF ITS OWN — Driving south on I-65, the Wind Creek Casino & Hotel seems somewhat out of place as one nears Atmore. Surrounded by farmland and very little else, the property includes 236 hotel rooms, conference rooms, restaurants, a day spa and a cooking school.

tory Act (IGRA) of 1988, "An Indian tribe may engage in, or license and regulate, Class II gaming on Indian lands within such tribe's jurisdiction, if ... such Indian gaming is located within a state that permits such gaming for any purpose by any person, organization or entity." The act defines Class II gaming as "the game of chance commonly known as bingo (whether or not electronic, computer or other technologic aids are used in connection therewith)."

McGhee said the tribe initially offered traditional paper bingo but advanced their casinos as technology advanced. At times, the proposed moves were protested by Alabama officials.

In 2006, a news release from Attorney General Troy King's office stated that he filed a response with the Department of the Interior opposing the tribe's request to "significantly expand the scope of Indian gambling in Alabama" to include "pari-mutuel wagering on horse and dog races, conduct poker tournaments and sweepstakes and add an auto-daub feature to its electronic bingo games."

In his release, King expressed "legal objections on behalf of himself and the governor" and argued that the Poarch Creeks' request included a "mischaracterization of the state of Alabama's gambling law and policy."

"It is my steadfast hope that the Interior (See 'Indian,' page 6)

Poarch Creek Casinos

WIND CREEK CASINO & HOTEL

Located near Atmore
▶ 50,000 sq. ft.
▶ More than 1,600 slot machine-style gambling devices

CREEK CASINO MONTGOMERY

(also known as Tallapoosa Casino)
Located in Montgomery
▶ 21,000 sq. ft.
▶ 500 slot machine-style gambling devices

CREEK CASINO WETUMPKA

(also known as Riverside Casino)
Located in Wetumpka
▶ 39,000 sq. ft.
▶ More than 900 slot machine-style gambling devices

Games offered on the slot machine-style gambling devices:

▶ Wheel of Fortune
▶ Price is Right

▶ Sizzling 7s
▶ Triple Lucky 7s
▶ American Original
▶ Double Diamond
▶ Hot Shots Blazing 7s
▶ Quick Hit Black & White
▶ Draw Poker
▶ Hexbreaker
▶ Texas Tea
▶ Beetle Bailey

Poarch Creeks seek compact with state to expand gambling

By **Sondra Washington**
The Alabama Baptist

In states where full-fledged casino-style gambling is illegal, like Alabama, Indian tribes must negotiate a tribal-state compact to operate those types of establishments. Representatives for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians consider this to be a cut-and-dried issue. But, like many other legal matters, the issue may not be as easy as it seems.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), which governs Indian gambling across the country, explains how a state's government and a sovereign Indian nation should negotiate the agreement.

The law states, "Any Indian tribe having jurisdiction over the Indian lands upon which a Class III gaming activity is being conducted, or is to be conducted, shall request the state in which such lands are located to enter into negotiations for the purpose of entering into a Tribal-State compact governing the conduct of gaming activities. Upon receiving such a request, the state shall negotiate with the Indian tribe in good faith to enter into such a compact."

The federal law adds, "The United States district courts shall have jurisdiction over any cause of action initiated by an Indian tribe arising from the failure of a state to enter into negotiations with the Indian tribe for the purpose of entering into a Tribal-State compact ... or to conduct such negotiations in good faith."

Daniel McGhee, administrator of the Poarch Creek Tribal Gaming Commission, believes IGRA requires Alabama to negotiate a compact with the tribe. He said his tribe has asked Gov. Bob Riley and previous Alabama governors to enter into such a compact, but they were repeatedly refused.

"It's a matter of principle," he said. "As an Indian tribe, you are supposed to be allowed to make the rules on your reservation. That's what the constitution says. ... It's supposed to be your decision because you have a reservation. ... Alabama doesn't have to negotiate with Mississippi when they want to do something. But, the Poarch Creek has to negotiate with Alabama, and we are supposed to be considered a sovereign nation — a state within a state."

But Todd Stacy, Riley's press secretary, disagreed.

"Gov. Riley has said for years that he will not sign a compact with the Poarch Band because it would expand gambling in the state of Alabama," he said. "In 2004 the National Indian

Gaming Commission (NIGC) said that, under the NIGC interpretation of IGRA, the machines in use at White Hall, VictoryLand and Greentrack were not Class II bingo at all, but Class III slot machines because the machines perform the task that the game of bingo requires of human players."

The NIGC does consider some slot machine-style gambling machines to be Class II gambling or electronic bingo, and the Poarch Creeks must be approved by NIGC to operate their casinos.

Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston said the law is not as simple as McGhee makes it out to be.

"Until there is a new constitutional provision passed that allows Class III-type gambling — which includes card games, roulette wheels, etc. — a governor can not allow a compact with the Indians," said Johnston, who heads the Southeast Law Institute. "Gov. Riley has taken the position that the state does not have Class III gambling, and that he is not going to enter into an agreement that allows the Indians to have Class III gaming."

"As an Indian tribe, you are supposed to be allowed to make the rules on your reservation."

Daniel McGhee
Poarch Creek Tribal
Gaming Commission

In a November 2007 educational update from the Southeast Law Institute, Johnston described a similar standoff between Texas and one of its Indian tribes. In that case, a Texas tribe asked the secretary of the interior to permit them Class III gambling because the state wouldn't allow it. According to Johnston, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that this request violated the terms of

IGRA since "Congress did not mean to give that much authority to the secretary, and he certainly could not infringe on the sovereignty of the state."

The Poarch Creek Indians attempted to get the same type of relief from the Department of the Interior against the state of Alabama in 2006 trying to "force Alabama into the position of not acting 'in good faith' (as IGRA states) and having the secretary make that decision and then permit high stakes forms of gambling." The 5th Circuit court's ruling does not apply in Alabama which falls under the 11th Circuit Court's jurisdiction.

In 2006, the state of Alabama responded asking the Department of the Interior to refer to a prior case where a federal court ruled against this type of action. But, in 2008, their request was dismissed.

Attorney General Troy King then filed a federal lawsuit against the department and responded, "The Department of the Interior's recent actions represent a complete disregard



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

THRIVING ENTERPRISE — The Poarch Band of Creek Indians plans to turn its Wind Creek casino near Atmore into a resort destination.

for fundamental principles of states' rights and an arrogant lack of respect for the people of Alabama. Federal bureaucrats simply lack the authority to override the will of the people of Alabama by allowing casino gambling to invade our state. I will not stand idly by and allow them to do so."

The tribe responded accusing King of running a "game of hypocrisy" and "selectively applied justice."

'Offending our intelligence'

"In football, a great defense may be a great offense, but in the case of Alabama's attorney general, trying to convince Alabama that he is defending the state by offending our intelligence will just not work," the tribe said in a press release. "For some time, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians have asked that it be allowed to operate the same kind of electronic bingo games that wealthy racetrack owners operate in other parts of the state. Unlike those racetrack owners, the Poarch Band actually asked for permission from the appropriate federal entities

to operate the games instead of charging ahead and then expecting to be forgiven or ignored."

Since that time, Johnston said the case has been dismissed "for being premature, and there has been no further action on whether Indian tribes in Alabama wish to have Class III gaming."

Still, McGhee and the tribe are optimistic about signing a compact with the incoming governor.

"From a tribe member's perspective, I'm always hopeful," he said. "No one is out to break any laws. We just want to exercise our sovereign right. ... We deserve the same respect as any other state you negotiate with."

According to the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC), Alabama's three Indian casinos are a part of the Washington region, which includes 25 other gambling operations in Connecticut, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and New York — all but Florida and Alabama have state compacts allowing full casino gambling.

Indian casino plans include restaurant, retail components

(continued from page 5)

Department will base its decision upon principles of law that we have presented and deny this effort to spread a practice that is detrimental to our citizens and contrary to our state's laws and policy," he said.

The tribe issued its own press release, stating that King was protecting "unregulated non-Indian gaming, ... turning a blind eye to other gaming within this state and denying the tribe a level playing field."

The release added, "Pari-mutuel betting, sweepstakes, poker tournaments and one-touch bingo are currently being played at dog tracks and other venues in Alabama. These games, which fall within the IGRA's definition of 'Class III' games, are prominently advertised on billboards, newspapers, radio and television throughout Alabama."

In the end, the tribe purchased a controlling interest in the Mobile Greyhound Park in Theodore and another track in Pensacola, Fla. It also expanded its "electronic bingo" casinos, which now offer about 3,000 slot machine-style games; more than 1,600 machines are at the tribe's newly expanded Wind Creek casino.

Plans for development

McGhee said the tribe is completing plans to turn the casino into a resort destination surrounded by a proposed retail development area. He also said there are plans to expand the Wetumpka casino and add a hotel and restaurants to the site.

According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 11 other American Indian groups (see story, page 7) have either applied or expressed an intent to apply for federal recognition, which, if given, would allow them to offer gambling in Alabama.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

ORIGINAL PLAN — The Creek Casino Wetumpka (Riverside Entertainment Center) was Poarch Creek Indians' first choice for a resort casino destination, but city restrictions changed their minds.

What is IGRA?

It has been within only the past two decades that the United States has attempted to regulate the Indian gambling industry and protect the rights of both Indian tribes and states.

The U.S. Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988 only after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians in a 1987 case between the state of California and the Cabazons.

The case was filed after California and Riverside County sought to apply their laws and ordinances governing the operation of bingo games to the Cabazons, who were operating bingo and poker games on their reservations and opening them to the public. The Supreme Court ruled that states did not have regulatory control over Indian gambling because Congress had not "expressly consented" that "state laws may be applied to tribal Indians on their reservations." As a result, states pushed Congress to pass IGRA to give them some control and rights in regard to gambling on Indian reservations.

Gambling classes

The act divides Indian gambling into three categories. Class I Indian gambling consists of traditional and social games with insignificant prizes. This type of gambling is free of state regulation and limited to tribal jurisdiction.

Class II Indian gambling involves bingo and bingo-type games. Slot machines are excluded from this class. It is allowed only if this type of gambling is permitted in the state for any purpose and the tribal government adopts a gambling ordinance that has been approved by the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC).

Class III Indian gambling encompasses any game that is not allowed in Class I or II and is often referred to as casino-style gambling. This includes slot machines, poker and blackjack. But like Class II gambling, this type of gambling is allowed only if it is legal in the state and is authorized by a resolution approved by the NIGC. In addition, the state and tribe must come to an agreement on how the Class III gambling will be conducted. IGRA specifies that a state must attempt to negotiate in good faith if a tribe approaches it about negotiating conditions for Class III gambling. Otherwise the tribe can sue the state and ask the federal court to mediate. If the state refuses to cooperate, then the U.S. secretary of the interior has the right to establish the Class III gambling operations.

The act also states that the revenue from Indian gambling is restricted to fund tribal government, provide for the tribe's welfare, promote economic development within the tribe, fund charitable organizations and fund operations of local government agencies.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs has the authority to investigate and prosecute violations of IGRA. Since the act's passage, neither party has been completely satisfied. Indian tribes want less state restrictions, and states want more control over Indian gambling. (TAB)

Gambling on Indian lands: State government vs. federal government

By **Sondra Washington**
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama gambling operators have continuously used the Poarch Band of Creek Indians' casinos as an excuse to continue their gambling businesses across the state. Most questioned how Gov. Bob Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling could force slot machine-style gambling facilities around Alabama to shut down without even attempting to approach similar Indian casinos.

But some legal experts say gambling on sovereign Indian lands cannot be controlled or prevented until the state deals with its own gambling problems.

Robert McGhee, Poarch Creek governmental relations adviser, said the National Indian Gaming Commission, which regulates all Indian gambling, allows tribes like his to offer slot machine-style "electronic bingo" gambling in states where bingo is legal.

"If the state has bingo for a form of gaming, then the tribe is allowed to do Class II gaming (which includes electronic bingo)," McGhee said.

"The problem is when it comes to the state government compared to the federal government, the state is saying ... they don't believe electronic bingo is considered Class II bingo machines. ... They look at those machines as illegal because that's not traditional bingo," he continued.

"Now when you look at the federal government — because we are a federally recognized tribe and we fall under federal law — federal law states that if a state is doing bingo, then the federal government will determine what bingo is," McGhee said. "The federal government has determined that the machines we use are actually bingo machines."

McGhee said the state would have to "outlaw paper bingo" to prevent his tribe from offering "electronic bingo gambling." He added, "If the state did not have paper bingo, then we could not do what we're doing."

Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston disagreed.

"They can play the same level of gambling allowed in the state," said Johnston who heads

Poarch Creeks' ordinance concerning gaming

CLASS I GAMING. Social games played solely for prizes of minimal value, or traditional forms of Indian gaming when played by individuals in connection with tribal ceremonies or celebrations.

CLASS II GAMING. Class II gaming shall mean: (a) Bingo or lotto (whether or not electronic, computer, or other technologic aids are used) when players: (1) play for prizes with cards bearing numbers or other designations; (2) cover numbers or designations when object, similarly numbered or designated, are drawn or electronically determined; and (3) win the game by being the first person to cover a designated pattern on such cards; (b) If played in the same location as bingo or lotto, class II gaming shall include pull-tabs, punch boards, tip jars, instant bingo, and other games similar to bingo; and (c) Non-banking card games that (1) state law explicitly authorizes, or does not explicitly prohibit, and are played legally anywhere in the state, and (2) players play in conformity with state laws and regulations concerning hours, periods of

Other American Indian groups in Alabama that have petitioned federal government for recognition

▶ Principal Creek Indian Nation East of the Mississippi in Florala
Status: Declined 06/10/1985

▶ MaChis Lower Alabama Creek Indian Tribe in New Brockton
Status: Declined 08/22/1988

▶ MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians in Mt. Vernon
Status: Declined 11/26/1999

▶ Cherokee Tribe of Northeast Alabama (formerly Cherokees of Jackson County, Alabama) in Pinson
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition 09/23/1981

▶ Cherokees of Southeast Alabama in Dothan
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition 05/27/1988

▶ The Langley Band of the Chickasaw Cherokee Indians of the Southeastern United States in Birmingham
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition

04/20/1994; Postal service certified letter returned 11/5/1997

▶ Cherokee Nation of Alabama in Birmingham
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition 02/16/1999

▶ Cherokee River Indian Community in Moulton
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition 08/03/2000

▶ Phoenician Cherokee II — Eagle Tribe of Sequoyah in Gadsden
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition 9/18/2001

▶ United Cherokee Ani-Yun-Wiya Nation (formerly United Cherokee Intertribal) in Guntersville
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition 11/08/2001

▶ Coweta Creek Tribe in Phenix City
Status: Letter of Intent to Petition 2/12/2003

Source: www.bia.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/text/idc-001215.pdf

the Southeast Law Institute and has fought against legalizing gambling for years. "If Milton McGregor (VictoryLand), Greenetrack, Ronnie Gilley (Country Crossing) and all the other places are permitted to operate slot machine gambling, then the Indians will be able to have it. But, conversely, if they are not allowed to have that level of gambling, then the Indians cannot have it. The Indians are not immune."

Johnston said the kind of machines currently used by the Indians and formerly used in so-called charity electronic bin-

go facilities around the state are illegal. "Electronic bingo and electronic slot machines are two different things," he said referring to the Alabama Supreme Court's six-point test for determining legal gambling.

"Just because no one challenged it for a number of years doesn't make it legal. There's prostitutes walking around in big cities, but that doesn't mean it's OK. That was the law falling down on its job. ... Only when we resolve these issues in Alabama can we then turn to the Indians and tell them to stop the slot machine-type bingo." ❧

operation, and limitations on wagers and pot sizes.

(6) CLASS III GAMING. All forms of gaming that are not class I gaming or class II gaming, including but not limited to: (a) Any house banking game, including but not limited to — (1) card games such as baccarat, chemin de fer, blackjack (21), and pai gow (if played as house banking games); (2) casino

games such as roulette, craps, and keno; (b) Any slot machines as defined in 15 U.S.C. 1171(a)(1) and electronic or electromechanical facsimiles of any game of chance; (c) Any sports betting and pari-mutuel wagering including but not limited to wagering on horse racing, dog racing or jai alia; or (d) Lotteries.

Source: Poarch Band gaming ordinance, Aug. 2, 1993

Coming next week ...

A LOOK AT GAMBLING ON ALABAMA'S INDIAN RESERVATIONS (Part 2)

AND

IMPACT OF THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS



Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

▶ The H.E.A.R.T.S. senior adult group of **First Church, Prattville**, will host Christian humorist Brother Billy Bob Bohannon (Bill King) Oct. 19, 11 a.m. Dave Burns is senior adult minister. Travis Coleman is pastor.

BESSEMER

▶ **Loveless Park Church, Bessemer**, will hold Pumpkin Patch at Shadow Lake in McCalla Oct. 22-30, Mondays-Thursdays, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.; Fridays-Saturdays, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Sundays, 1-5 p.m. There will be inflatables, games and story time, face painting, hay rides, train rides, build a scarecrow and pumpkins. There will be baked goods and concessions on the weekends. A birthday tent is available by calling Pam Montgomery at 205-425-1654. Joel Frederick is pastor. ▶ **Seventh Street Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate its 88th year in the Jonesboro community with homecoming Oct. 31, 10:30 a.m. Former Pastor James L. Parker will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Sam Davidson is pastor.

BETHEL

▶ **Forest Hill Church, Linden**, will host the Crimson City Quartet, of Mobile, Oct. 31, 6 p.m. Steve Trader is pastor. ▶ **Thomaston Church** will celebrate its 70th homecoming Oct. 31, 10:30 a.m. Q.T. Curtis will speak. Mitzi Gates will lead the music. Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service in the Gertrude Harrell Fellowship Hall. For information call 334-627-3288. Randal Mims is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

▶ **Hilldale Church, Center Point**, will hold its annual fall festival and trunk or treat Oct. 31 4:30-6:30 p.m. Trunk or treat will be for children up to sixth grade. Ron Pate is pastor. ▶ **Springdale Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 17, 10

a.m. Former Pastor Don Cunningham will speak. Lunch will follow. Winston McNeil is pastor. ▶ **Westmont Church, Birmingham**, will hold revival Oct. 17-20. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and weeknights at 7. On Monday, Daven Watkins, pastor of First Church, Pleasant Grove, will speak, and Wes Haley, minister of music for First, Pleasant Grove, will lead the music. On Tuesday, John Killian, pastor of Maytown Church, will speak, and Lee Majors, minister of music for Maytown will lead the music. On Wednesday, Dean Pesnell, pastor of Katherwood Church, Birmingham, will speak. For information call 205-788-6811. C.B. Scott is pastor.

BLOUNT

▶ **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 17, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. The Kellys, of Lawrenceburg, Tenn., will sing. There will be no evening service. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CAHABA

▶ **Pine Flat Church, Suttle**, will celebrate its 175th birthday and homecoming Oct. 17, 10:30 a.m. Rick Lance, executive director for the State Board of Missions, will speak. Melissa Thompson and Judy Lurwig will sing. Lunch will follow. Michael J. Brooks is pastor. ▶ **Pisgah Church, Selma**, will celebrate its 175th anniversary Oct. 24, 2 p.m. A reception will follow. Harold Arnold is pastor.

CHILTON

▶ **Maplesville Church** will celebrate its 103rd homecoming Oct. 24, 10:30 a.m. Former Pastor Tyrone Parten will speak. Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Ben Bowden is pastor.

COLUMBIA

▶ **South Lena Church, Do-**

than, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 17, 11 a.m. George Bryan will speak. Walter Wilson will sing. A covered-dish lunch will follow at noon. Don Falgout is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

▶ **Josh Taylor** is the new youth



TAYLOR

pastor for **Blue Eye Church, Lincoln**. He was a member of Eastaboga Church. He also has served several other Alabama churches. Taylor is a graduate of Jacksonville State University. He is married to Brandi. Jacky Morgan is pastor.

DEKALB

▶ **Stacy Pope** is the new children's minister for **First Church, Geraldine**. She is a teacher at Geraldine High School. A graduate of Jacksonville State University, Pope and her husband, Kerry, have two children. Kirk Griggs is pastor.

HALE

▶ **Macedonia Church, Greensboro**, will hold revival Oct. 24-27 with Chris Kynard, pastor of Bassett Creek Church, Grove Hill. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Robert Ferguson is pastor.

MARION

▶ **First Church, Winfield**, will hold The Final Judgment Oct. 31-Nov. 4, 7-10 p.m. No children under the age of 6 will be admitted. Children ages 6 to 10 will only be admitted with an adult. For group reservations call 205-487-2676. There will be no reservations after 9:30 p.m. Charles Ballew is pastor.

MOBILE

▶ **Union Church, Grand Bay**, will celebrate its 142nd anniversary

with homecoming Oct. 17, 10 a.m. Former Pastor Ronnie Maxie will speak. Lunch will follow. For information call 251-865-6284. David Walley is pastor.

MORGAN

▶ **Shiloh Church, Somerville**, will present "The Judgment Seat" Oct. 26-29, 6-10 p.m. The eight-scene, walk-through drama is recommended for ages 10 and up. Reservations for groups of 10 or more are recommended by calling 256-286-0509. For information contact Michael Walters at 256-286-0509 or walters963@me.com or visit www.thejudgmentseat.net. Charles Owens is pastor.

SALEM-TROY

▶ **Richland Church, Brundidge**, will hold harvest day Oct. 17, 11 a.m. The church also will honor Dollie Ross as she steps down after serving 56 years as church clerk. Bobby Parnell is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

▶ **Chandler Mountain Church, Steele**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary Oct. 24, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. Phillip Ellen is pastor.

SULPHUR SPRINGS

▶ **Mount High Church, Warrior**, will hold a fall festival Oct. 30, 5-8 p.m. There will be food, games and treats. Festive photos will be taken. For information call 205-647-8548. Chad Montoya is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

▶ **Loachapoka Church** will celebrate its 170th birthday with homecoming Oct. 24, 11 a.m. Steve Saxton will speak. He and his family will provide special music. Lunch will follow. For information contact Pastor Phillip Nelson at 334-707-6454 or pnelson1@aum.edu. ▶ **Pleasant Springs Church, Tuskegee**, will hold a fall festival Oct. 31. Christian humorist Brother Billy Bob Bohannon will provide a program at 11 a.m. Lunch and children's activities will follow. Ronald Sumners is pastor.

OTHER

▶ **Randy Davis** is the new minister of music for **First Church, Mobile**, effective Oct. 17. He is an assistant professor of music at the University of Mobile. Chris George is pastor of First, Mobile.



DAVIS

Want to know God?

By Evangelism office
State Board of Missions

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

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

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

As is stated, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

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

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

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

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

Hartford's Shiloh dedicates, celebrates new sanctuary

Shiloh Baptist Church, Hartford, in Geneva Baptist Association will worship in its new sanctuary with a celebration and dedication service Oct. 17 at 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service. The Master's Men Quartet will be in concert during the evening worship service at 7 p.m. For more information, call 334-588-3540. Bryan Wagner is pastor. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Shiloh Baptist Church

FRAMING THE ISSUE

By **Paige Patterson**
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The New Testament, by both precedent and direct counsel, endorses “faith-witness” baptism. Someone following Jesus Christ in baptism needs to confess to an experience of regeneration. He must repent of his sin and knowingly place his faith in Jesus to save him from his sin. He then makes an open profession of his faith in Christ by depicting through baptism his confidence that the old man has died to the life of self and sin and a new creation has emerged through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. He thus confesses that he intends to work out all the implications of regeneration in the covenant of faith, which he then witnesses to in baptism (Rom. 6:1–8). What appears obvious from the New Testament is that in the early church, no one was baptized until the church had some level of confidence in the reality of his conversion to Christ and his comprehension of the purpose and commitment of baptism.

Increase in child baptisms

So can a child understand the full meaning of baptism? Southern Baptist statistics seem to say yes.

Over the lifetime of the Southern Baptist Convention, the average age of baptism candidates has dropped significantly with thousands of children being baptized before their 10th birthdays. For example, in 1966, Southern Baptist churches reported 1,146 baptisms of children under age 6. A steady rise in this number peaked in 1999 with 4,574 baptisms before age 6 and has dropped little since. Of children ages 6–8, 34,026 were baptized in 1966, and the number peaked at 52,788 in 1999. Meanwhile baptisms of young adults (ages 18–29) have tobogganed downward from 100,260 in 1980 to 55,929 in 2007.

Are Southern Baptists practicing child baptism rather than adult baptism?

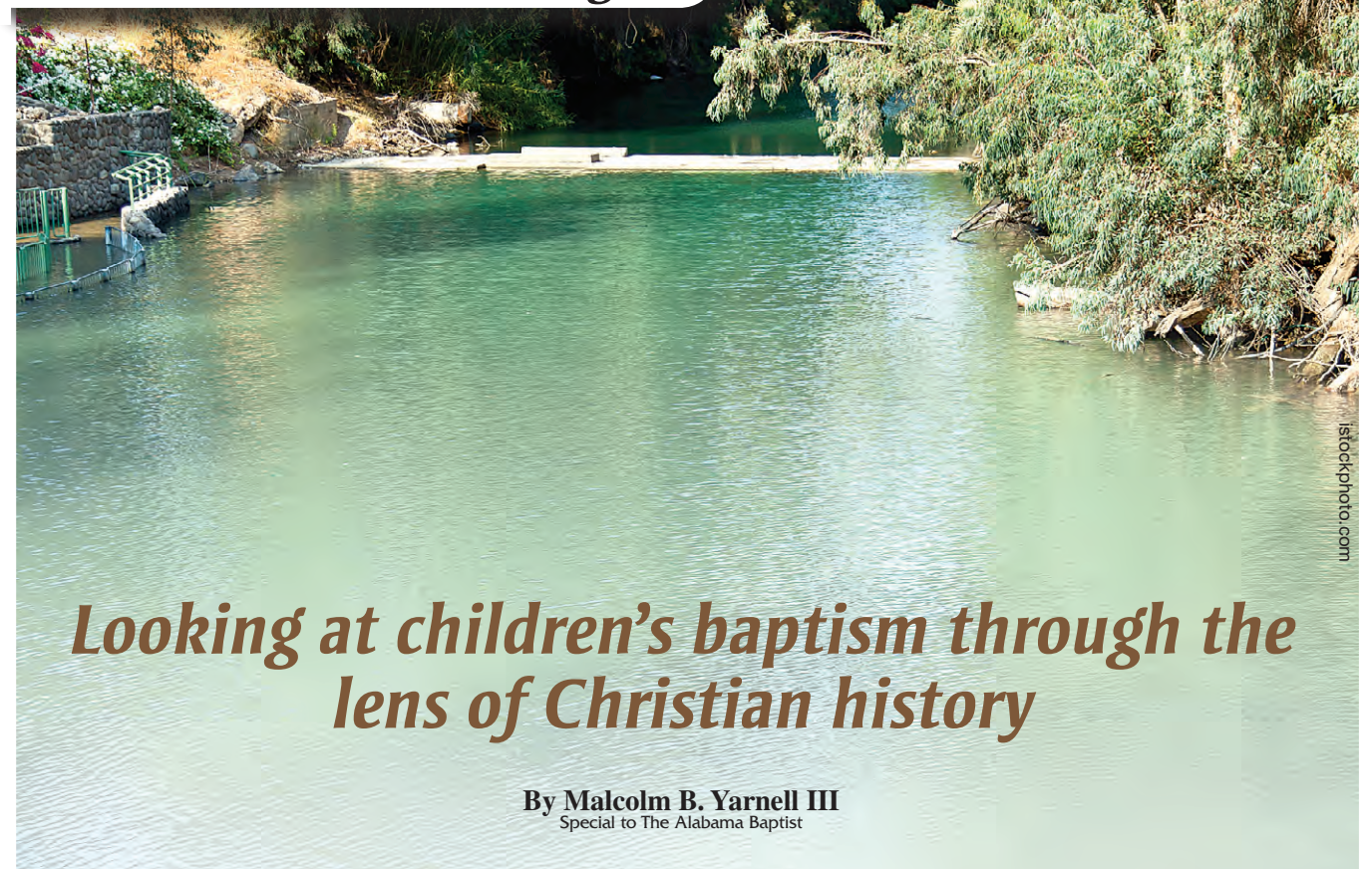
This question is especially germane given the fact that the practice of baptizing children is seldom found among Baptists in other countries, and in the articles that follow, five Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professors address the issue. Malcolm B. Yarnell III, associate professor of systematic theology, discusses the necessity for churches to recover a biblical understanding and practice of believer’s baptism. Waylan Owens, associate professor of pastoral ministry, focuses on the appropriate measures and approaches for the evangelization of children. Finally three of Southwestern Seminary’s finest professors, Joy Cullen, Karen Kennemur and Kelly King, delineate an approach to train children to be disciples of Jesus for a lifetime.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Paige Patterson is the president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

BAPTIZING

CHILDREN

When is a child old enough?



Looking at children’s baptism through the lens of Christian history

By **Malcolm B. Yarnell III**
Special to The Alabama Baptist

A

lthough history and tradition must submit to the authority of Scripture, seeing how our Christian forefathers interpreted Scripture is often helpful.

Through hearing the voices of those who have come before us, we may be able to learn to hear the Word of God more clearly for ourselves. This is especially true of reading Scripture with those who paid a great price, sometimes yielding up their very lives in order to hold to a biblical truth not understood by others. From the 16th century through the 18th century, the continental Anabaptists (whose descendants include the Amish and Mennonites), English Baptists and American

Baptists struggled with the issue of childhood and faith. Indeed the struggle was so difficult and the breakthrough in rediscovering the biblical truth so profound that these earnest Christians came to their convictions trembling, yet with certainty. They understood that perceiving and practicing the scriptural truth might cost them everything. After considering the historical evidence, we hope to draw some relevant contemporary applications.

In 1527, the Anabaptist rediscovery of believer’s-only baptism was only two years old, but already people were being imprisoned, even tortured, for their faith. On Feb. 24, 1527, Michael Sattler and a group of other Anabaptists met at Schleitheim, Switzerland, to declare their faith. They declared both

(See ‘Violating,’ page 10)



Inside

Historical look
page 10

Process
page 12

Preschool
page 14

Grades 1–4
pages 14–15

Preteen
page 15

Conclusion
page 16

Violating the human conscience

Baptist forefathers reject infant baptism as ‘greatest abomination,’

(continued from page 9)

their peaceful intent toward the world and their unrelenting desire to follow the Lord no matter what. The first of the seven articles in the Schleithem Confession declared the Anabaptists’ belief about what they considered to be the most critical issue facing early modern Christians: infant baptism. A few months later, Sattler’s pleasant demeanor was horribly marred by the cruel death penalty imposed upon him by those who defended infant baptism, which the Anabaptists believed was “the greatest and first abomination.”

Why were these believers so set against infant baptism? Why did they believe it was so evil? Because baptizing a baby contradicted God’s Word. Alongside the great reformers, Sattler and these early Anabaptists believed that true faith must be personal and cognizant. As the Schleithem Confession put it, every person must be “taught repentance and the amendment of life and believe truly that their sins are taken away through Christ.” In order to re-emphasize the personal appropriation of faith, it added that baptism is only for those who “themselves desire and request it.” At its root, this conviction arose from their study of Scripture: “For this you have the reasons and the testimony of the writings and the practice of the apostles (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:38, 8:36, 16:31–33, 19:4).” Notice that the Great Commission was where they began.

For most of the Anabaptists’ compatriots, when a baby was “baptized,” he or she was considered to have entered into the church and was thereby assured of salvation through a priest-imposed regeneration. Following fifth-century theologian St. Augustine, medieval Christians believed that the sacerdotal act of “baptizing” a child washed away his or her original sin, thus cementing his or her salvation in case of immediate death, which was all too common for these pre-modern people. Parents truly desired the best for their children. Unfortunately this particular expression of a most laudable love of parents for their children depended upon a nonbiblical theology and was accomplished through a most nonbiblical practice.

Moreover, through baptism, a person was considered to have declared an oath to the state, so baptism and state citizen-



LONG TRADITION — Rogier van der Weyden depicted infant baptism in his 15th-century painting titled ‘Seven Sacraments Altarpiece.’

ship were coterminous. In this way, the practice of infant baptism was necessary for the existence of the state churches.

The practice’s negative impact went beyond its unscriptural foundation into

a second area. Our forefathers understood that a person who is baptized as a baby is baptized against his or her own will. There is no way a baby can express his or her knowledge of or agreement with the great spiritual truths of the gospel. As a result, as the early English and American Baptists pointed

out, infant baptism is part and parcel of the magisterial churches’ practice of violating the human conscience.

According to Baptist minister John Leland of Virginia, every person must give an account before God for his or

her own beliefs and actions. The government simply cannot answer for a person before the divine courtroom. Because of this personal dimension of faith and responsibility, “the rights of conscience” are “inalienable.” Through rediscovering the biblical truth of believer’s-only baptism and its underlying doctrine of the freedom of conscience, our Anabaptist and Baptist forefathers laid the ideological groundwork that resulted in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The religious liberty we enjoy today is a Baptist contribution, which, moreover, undergirds all other human rights.

Gospel immunity

The third detriment from continuing the medieval practice of infant baptism is that as the child grows, he or she may be immune to the witness of the gospel. Although Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer and other great reformers advocated personal faith, their decision to retain the medieval practice worked against their profession. At first, Luther tried to defend the position that

infants have faith but eventually dropped that argument. Calvin utilized Swiss Protestant reformer Ulrich Zwingli’s attack against the Anabaptists, confusing the church with Israel and baptism with Old Testament circumcision. Cranmer asserted infant baptism was “most agreeable with the institution of Christ” but without any sustained defense. Today objective theologians agree that infant baptism cannot be found in the New Testament. And Christian evangelists have discovered that infant baptism often serves as an impediment to gospel presentation. Unregenerate people sometimes appeal to their parents’ choice to baptize them as their assurance of salvation. The call to personal faith in Christ as Lord and Savior is thus undermined by the practice.

Positive advances

By removing the biblically unfounded, conscience-violating and gospel-inhibiting medieval practice of infant baptism, our Anabaptist and Baptist forefathers opened a proper way to salvation for children: presenting the gospel to them early and often through sustained Bible teaching. In the 16th and 17th centuries and well into the 18th and 19th centuries, the congregations of the baptizing tradition were careful to use much Scripture in their worship services and to explain the teaching of Scripture. Instead of separating children into age-specific worship services as we do today, earlier families simply came together into the church services to worship. The children would hear the Bible read and explained with fervor. As Peter Riedemann explained, after much thanksgiving and prayer, the churches proceeded “to proclaim the Lord’s Word faithfully, according to the grace given by God, encouraging the heart to fear the Lord and to remain in His fear.” The scriptural focus in early Baptist worship was so strong that in the late 17th century, when Benjamin Keach introduced hymns into worship, some considered it scandalous because the words were not entirely from Scripture.

Teaching the Bible during private worship in the home was especially critical for our forefathers. Two of the earliest Anabaptists, Balthasar Hubmaier and Leonhard Schiemer, wrote catechisms, handbooks of questions and answers for teaching a religion’s principles, intended for use in the home. Both of these men suffered horrible deaths through being burned at the stake for advocating such beliefs. Despite all the obstacles laid before them, Menno Simons, the great leader of the Anabaptists in the 16th century, wrote a book encouraging parents to be diligent about teaching their

Brüderliche vereyn-
gung enlicher Kinder Gottes/
siben Artickel betreffend.
Item/ Eyn sendebriefff Michel sat-
terß an eyn gemeyn Gottes sampt Kurg-
ern/ doch warhafftigen anseyg/ wie
es seine leerß in Rottenburg am
Tector/ mit seinem blut
bezeuget hat.

Title page of the 1527 Schleithem Confession, which rejected infant baptism.

insist on believer's-only baptism as true to Scripture

children God's ways. His understanding of the priority of evangelizing children is seen in this important statement: "This is the chief and most important care of the godly, that their children may fear God, do good and be saved."

Early child evangelism

The early English Baptists agreed. Keach was imprisoned for two weeks and then pilloried (a public form of humiliation) because he published a catechism for children and refused to renounce it. Keach willingly suffered for this act because he believed children should be taught the truth in order to be saved. The first time he was pilloried, he used the opportunity to preach the gospel to all the onlookers. The second time, he was forced to be quiet and all of his catechisms, "The Child's Instructor," were burnt before his eyes; none has survived to this day. However, Keach continued to publish child evangelism books. He later exhorted young people through a poem in "The Child's Delight" to understand God's law, recognize their own sin and personally turn to Christ for forgiveness:

*And learn with care to understand
God's will, and what He does com-
mand.*

*Learn thou dear Child, a virtuous
Mind,*

Unto good ways be thou inclin'd.

*Learn thou to know what Adam's Fall
Hath brought on thee, yea, and on all.*

The woeful state that thou art in,

By original and actual sin.

*Learn thou to know, and
then with grief,*

*Seek unto Jesus for re-
lief.*

*O cry for Faith; on Him
depend,*

*And thou'lt be happy in
the end.*

*O learn by Prayer on
God to call;*

*Get Grace, dear Child,
and thou hast all.*

Another book affiliated with Keach, a formal teaching document for use with new Christians, has had a long life. Many other Baptists, including Thomas Grantham, John Bunyan and Henry Jessey, also wrote catechisms for children, but Keach's publication rose above them all and became known as "The Baptist Catechism." It was used for centuries in England and the United States. Richard Furman, the famous pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston, S.C., from 1787 to 1825, often called the children before him during worship. One woman remembered how he asked her questions from the catechism and waited gently but gravely

for her response. It was a great spiritual marker in her young life for her elderly pastor to show such concern for her personal spiritual welfare. The parents in the church were doubtless careful to make sure they taught their children well at home in preparation for that important event.

Southern Baptists also joined in this effort. John A. Broadus, professor of New Testament interpretation and homiletics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote a catechism that was widely published both in the northern and southern United States. James P. Boyce, founder of Southern Seminary, wrote a shortened version, because he believed Keach's catechism was too difficult for children. Unfortunately catechisms seemed to fall out of use in the 20th century, perhaps mirroring the decline in the practice of family devotionals. Although catechisms are not necessary for use in the Christian home, they certainly may provide an aid for parents wishing to teach their children the Christian faith's basic truths.

Contemporary applications

What can we as Baptists today learn from the witness of our forefathers about winning children to faith in Jesus Christ? First, parents must conduct regular times of family worship. In our family worship, I read the Bible and then talk about its meaning with the children. This time of Bible study is followed by a common prayer and my wife leading us in a song. Every family has a different method — some may use catechisms; others may not — but Bible teaching and prayer to God are absolutely indispensable for proper family worship. (In this article, we have focused upon the evangelism of children in the home because that was the primary place children were located in earlier centuries. Only recently have activities outside

the home come to dominate the average family's day.)

Second, from our forefathers' testimony, which reflects their careful reading of Scripture, we should never get ahead of God's way of reaching children. It is all too easy for well-meaning parents to try to rush children into the kingdom of God. If we act hastily, then we may not only contradict the teaching of Scripture that baptism always follows personal conversion but we may also inoculate our children against

hearing the gospel in the future. Infant baptism is indeed a great abomination, and so is a hasty rushing of older children into the baptistry. We must be careful to speak the gospel clearly to our children and then wait for God to work His Word into their hearts by His Spirit. In His time, respecting their consciences, we should hope to see them respond on their own to the gospel. Only then should they be baptized as their outward public witness to an inward genuine personal conversion.

Third, we must embrace the task of winning our children to faith in the Lord as "the chief and most important care of the godly." Winning our young people to the Lord is not an option; it is a command. For every Christian, the Great Commission begins at home. That the earliest disciples of our Lord were told to begin preaching the gospel in Jerusalem and only then to proceed to the ends of the earth is not without consequence (Acts 1:8). The stories of modern-day evangelists who forsook their children in order to pursue a ministry entirely apart from the home are too painful to repeat here, but the lesson should not be lost. Please begin winning the world by winning your family, including your children. You can start today just by sitting down with your loved ones and your Bible, sharing from your heart what God has done and is doing for you. They know you are not perfect, but they can hear that there is a perfect God who loves imperfect beings.

Finally, as Keach's poem demonstrates, when we do present the gospel to our children, we also should be careful to present the whole Word of God. The gospel of God's free grace in

Christ's death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection from the dead for our lives must be accompanied by a clear presentation of God's law, human sin and the real and eternal consequences of our personal sin. A person must recognize his or her own sin before God and make his or her own confession of faith in Christ from his or her heart (Rom. 10:9–10). God has chosen the means of proclamation to deliver His Word to the human heart (Rom. 10:4–17). As much as we love other people, we will never see them saved through our silence about God's Word. The greatest demonstration of love for humanity was made when Jesus

Christ died upon the cross for our sins. The greatest love we can demonstrate for our children, or any child, is to tell them about Christ, His cross and His resurrection.

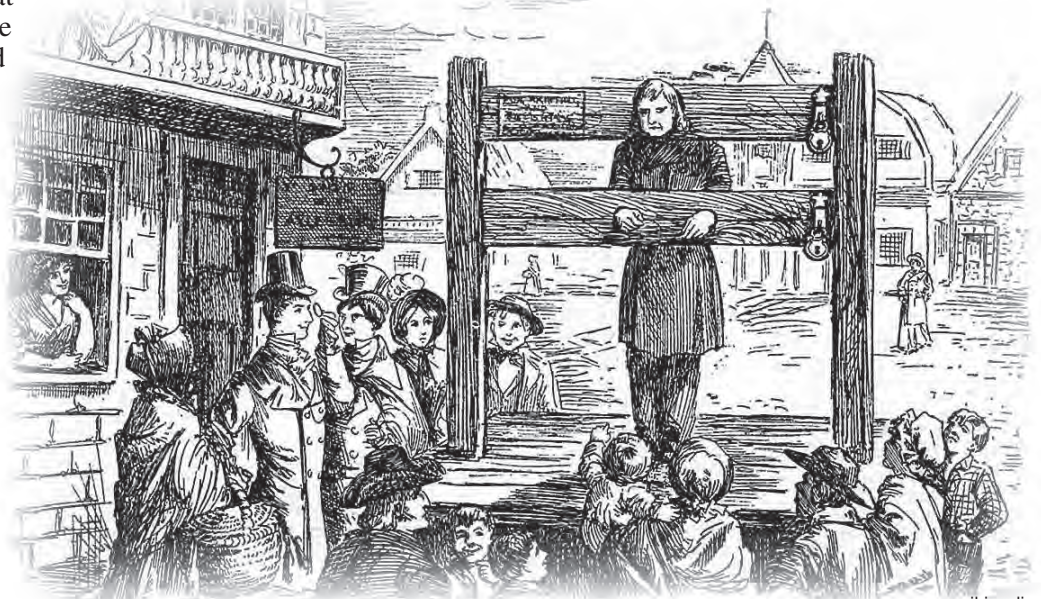
Scripture has so much more to say about evangelizing children. Hear God's Word as it has been spoken to us by our forefathers in the baptizing churches. We have so much to learn; we have so much to do; we have so many people to speak to; we have so little time left in which to do it.

Let us obey our Lord's Great Commission by speaking the gospel to everyone everywhere, starting at home with our children.

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Benjamin Keach was pilloried for writing a catechism.

Preparing a child's heart to respond to Christ

By Waylan Owens
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Tears began to stream down her cheeks. Could a simple question cause such a response? For more than a decade, Angie had been a member of the church I recently came to serve as pastor. She had asked me to perform her wedding, and in her first pre-wedding counseling session, I asked her to tell me about her salvation and what Jesus meant to her life.

As I handed her the tissue box, Angie said she was not saved. I marveled as she told me her story. During a revival service, a preteen Angie, with her friends on the back pew, passed notes and ignored the preacher right up to the invitation hymn, when the lost were called to step forward to be saved. As the congregation stood to sing, one of her friends grabbed her arm, dragged her halfway into the aisle and said, "Come on. Let's go down front. It will be fun."

False experience

Angie could not resist the tide of her friends and rolled with the crowd to the front of the sanctuary unsure of what she might say or how to explain why she was there. She was met by the pastor who rejoiced in her presence, saying, "Angie, we won-
dered

when you would finally come forward. We are so proud of you." The pastor linked her with a godly woman, one of her Bible teachers, who treated her in the same joyful manner. Baptized the next Sunday, no one asked Angie about her salvation that night or apparently ever until the fateful evening I followed my normal pattern of inquiring into a bride-to-be's spiritual life. What a blessing it was to lead Angie to the Lord there in my office and officiate at her wedding when as a born-again believer, she committed her heart and life to a man who would follow the Lord and later attend seminary. I wish her story was isolated and unusual, but my years in the ministry suggest that it is not.

The pastor and leaders in Angie's church were godly people. They had prayed diligently for her. They had taught her the gospel. They had loved her with the love of the Lord. They let their excitement at what appeared to be a marvelous answer to their prayers exceed their diligence to be certain just what was happening in her life.

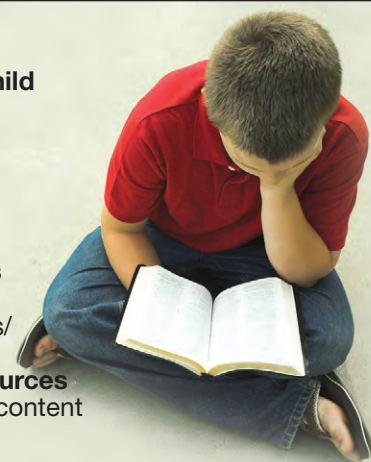
So how are we to approach child evangelization in ways that will reap great

WEBSITES

- ▶ **LifeWay Christian Resources' Leading a Child to Christ Resources**
www.lifeway.com/article/167847/
- ▶ **LifeWay's Webcourse: Children & Salvation**
www.lifeway.com/product/005035454/
- ▶ **North American Mission Board's Children's Evangelism Resources**
www.studentz.com/childrens-evangelism-resources/
- ▶ **Child Evangelism Fellowship's church resources**
www.cefonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=119&Itemid=100184

BOOKS

- ▶ **"Shepherding a Child's Heart,"** by Tedd Tripp
- ▶ **"The Family: Unchanging Principles for Changing Times,"** by Dorothy Kelley Patterson



istockphoto.com/graphic by Lauren Chow

dividends? Let us consider the question in three parts: pre-evangelism, evangelism and post-evangelism.

The preparation of a child's heart to respond appropriately to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the gospel is a matter of planning. Two keys are setting a goal and employing a hearty confidence in God's Word. Christian parents often set academic and eco-

nomie goals for their children, and they also must be intentional about setting a spiritual goal. From birth, you should seek spiritual maturity in a life lived under the Holy Spirit's control. Churches should envision mature disciples of Christ as the goal of their programs for students and children. When you ask your child, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" would you be surprised to hear him or her respond, "I want to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ!" Parents and the church together must cling to the goal that every child God gives them will grow to become a faithful man or woman following Christ. We



BAPTIZING CHILDREN

have little time to invest toward that goal. We must make every day count.

Pre-evangelism requires a strong affirmation of God's Word. By demonstrating a hearty confidence in the Bible, we teach our children that they can trust our Lord and His Word. God's Word was written for children, too. "But Jesus said, 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt. 19:14). The unabridged Bible does not belong in an adult-only bookstore. We can be confident that God's Word will produce good fruit in our children's lives. We should not fear lest children hear or read the actual words and events in the Bible. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). We must read and teach God's Word to our children. Our Bible thoughts and abridged Bible stories should not be substitutes for God's Word. That does not mean that these things are wrong. It only means that we have no promise that sending out these substitutes will not return void.

The Bible is the primary preparation tool used by the Holy Spirit for salvation. "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14-15). A hearty confidence in God's Word will lead us to teach pre-evangelistically. For example, we often teach our children behavioral ideals from Bible stories. Joseph was a helper. Moses stood up for the people. David was faithful to watch the

The key understanding a child must have of the gospel is the same as an adult — his or her need for salvation.

sheep. Jesus obeyed His parents. Behavioral ideals are good things, but they pale in comparison to understanding pre-evangelistic truths about these men. These truths include the fact that God sent Joseph to suffer and be glorified in authority so that he could save his people just as Jesus would suffer and be glorified in authority to save us. Moses followed God's command to cover the doorposts with the blood of a lamb in order that the firstborn would be saved from death just as we must be covered by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to be saved from God's judgment of our sin. God chose David to be a powerful king who walked with God and turned the hearts of many people toward Him just like Jesus, the King of all kings, who will return to rule over us forever. Even more important is the pre-evangelistic teaching that all these great men — Joseph, Moses and David, along with all the others in the Bible — needed Jesus and must be saved by Him.

And when we do teach behavioral ideals, how do we teach them? "How can a

young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:9-11). We give God's Word as recorded in the Bible; the Holy Spirit produces the results.

Child evangelism

Minding Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child," we confess that child evangelism is different from adult evangelism, at least in this one respect: We must accommodate to a child's language, understanding and thinking as we transmit this message.

First what is the key for a child to understand and articulate to demonstrate a true profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Second how can we minimize the baptizing of children who have not actually professed faith?

The key understanding a child must have of the gospel is the same as an adult — his or her need for salvation. The child must understand sin as disobeying God, and particularly he or she must be able to articulate his or her own personal sin and that this sin separates

him or her from God and deserves judgment. Such an idea is not foreign to most children, who have been corrected and judged from a very young age. They understand that disobedience causes a break in relationships with parents or a teacher, and therefore the fact that disobedience to the God who created them would bring condemnation and separation is not a surprise.

What might surprise some children is that God loves them and has given Himself in the person of Jesus Christ through His death on the cross to reconcile them to Himself eternally. In my experience, children have little difficulty with the cross, the blood, reconciliation and heaven or hell. However, each child must cross a divide to understand and embrace his or her own personal responsibility before God for his or her sin.

True baptism

While only God can know the heart and discern genuine belief, we seek assurance of genuine understanding and reception of the gospel message from the baptismal candidate for at least two reasons. First the Bible teaches that baptism is for the saved. Second Christian kindness dictates that we try not to give the nonbeliever false confidence in salvation he or she has never understood or received.

A child's language development and his or her understanding of words and meaning provide added impetus to our

desire to know whether he or she understands the gospel, but no magical age exists at which all children fully understand the gospel. Therefore we seek to treat the believing child as a genuine believer. No biblical warrant exists to wait and check the life of the one who is professing Christ before we accept his or her commitment to salvation and baptize him or her, but we do have biblical warrant to hear his or her profession and evaluate his or her understanding of it.

One method, among many, to accomplish this evaluation is to let children express their testimonies verbally to more than one person. Generally I have used three people who have experience with children in evangelism, explaining to parents our method beforehand. If all three confirm the child's understanding and profession, then he or she is baptized. If one or more has doubts, then we explain to the parents and rejoice with the child in his or her growing understanding and faith. In my ministry, this method has been received well both by parents — lost or saved — and by children. Parents always should be involved early in any child's baptism decision.

As noted in 1 Corinthians 13:11, a child's language, understanding and thinking is different from an adult's. No grandmother is surprised by this, but we must apply the reality of human development to child evangelism. A child's articulation, understanding and thinking of salvation at age 5 will be different from that at age 7 and even more change will happen by age 10 and 12, not to mention 16 and beyond.

As the child grows, the parents and the church help him or her remember, reinforce and reapply the gospel to his or her current developmental situation. We hunger to see the child grow spiritu-

ally just as we are eager to measure his or her physical growth in height and weight. At least annually, both the parents at home and the child's teachers at church intentionally ask him or her to verbalize

Each child must cross a divide to understand and embrace his or her own personal responsibility before God for his or her sin.

▶ his or her salvation experience and what happened when he or she was saved,

▶ his or her current walk with the Lord and how he or she has grown spiritually during the previous year and

▶ the gospel and the plan of salvation, using Scriptures to explain how and why the gospel applies to his or her assurance of

eternal life.

Along the way of these conversations, we zero in on weaknesses and help the child reinterpret his or her salvation according to new skills. While this is not difficult, it is best when accompanied by ongoing Bible teaching, corporate worship and loving mentorship.

Along the way, churches should train children and youth in evangelism and place them in the path of witnessing opportunities.

First they should go with adults to observe witnessing. Then they could go in groups, the younger and less experienced with the older and more experienced. Witnessing best happens both away from home on mission and in the local church's neighborhood.

A hearty confidence in God's Word, a healthy focus on the child's understanding and a lifetime hunger for the child's spiritual growth provide a path for child evangelism from preparation to spiritual maturity.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Waylan Owens is the dean of the school of church and family ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Preschoolers can learn about God

By Joy Cullen
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Babies are born with approximately 100 billion brain cells. These cells communicate with each other. As a baby starts to experience life, connections are made between cells — the more connections there are, the more the brain can do. A baby's brain develops so fast that by the age of 2, typically developing children have the same number of brain cell connections as an adult. At age 3, children have twice as many connections as an adult. Therefore spiritual development can and should begin in infancy.

But what should a child know about God by the time he or she is 2 years old? By age 3? Before entering school? We call this knowledge the spiritual foundations for the preschool years. How does a parent or Sunday School teacher enable a preschooler to make spiritual connections during brain development?

Preschoolers learn by hearing

Have you ever observed parents trying to teach their baby to say “mama,” “dada” and “bye-bye?” The words are repeated over and over until one day, the baby begins to mimic the sounds. A baby is equally able to learn and eventually identify the sounds of these words: God, Jesus, pray, Bible and church. Just as one picks up a ball and says “ball” over and over until a baby makes the connection between the sound and the object, the same thing can be done with the Bible. A 6-month-old may even babble a prayer long before the words are recognizable. “Aaaaaa-men” may be the first prayer word a mother hears from her infant. If the foundations have been laid, then one can ask a child even before he or she is 2, “Who loves you?,” and the response can easily be Mommy, Daddy and God.

Preschoolers learn through music

Turn on the television every morning for a year, and a child soon will be mimicking the advertisement songs and slogans. How can music be used to build spiritual foundations for a child? Taking him or her to Sunday School once a week will introduce him or her to songs about God, Jesus, the Bible, the church and prayer. If parents learn the songs their children are singing at church and sing them at home, then these concepts will quickly be incorporated in their spiritual foundations.

Preschoolers learn by touching

A Hebrew child could touch the mezuzah on his or her doorpost and the frontlets on his or her father's forearm. He or she memorized the Scriptures written inside the little leather boxes. What can a child touch at home or church that will strengthen the foundation of faith in his or her heart and mind? Put on the

Preschoolers are children from birth to elementary school.

Children are identified in two groups according to school ages: in grades 1–2 or 3–4.

Preteens are in grades 5–6.

Resources

LifeWay Christian Resources' Levels of Biblical Learning Collection

www.lifeway.com/article/169085/

“Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions”

by George Barna



istockphoto.com/graphic by Lauren Chow

breakfast table a little box of Bible verses that he or she can touch while you read one. Put an open Read to Me Bible for Kids with pictures on a low shelf. When a child shows interest, choose a picture and “tell” its story. Put a small model of praying hands on a child's bedside table. Use it as a reminder to him or her to say his or her prayers before he or she goes to sleep each night.

Preschoolers learn through rituals

Hebrew children enjoyed helping their parents put up the booths where they would live for seven days during the special Feast of Tabernacles (or Feast of Booths; see Leviticus 23:33–44). They watched their moms bake the bread and light the oil lamp before the Sabbath. They helped prepare the meals for festivals and feasts.

The Passover ritual included them, especially the youngest child who got to ask the question, “What is the meaning of this?” What rituals can today's children observe to learn more about spiritual matters? Do children see the trays containing the Lord's Supper during the church service, or are they in “children's church”? Do they ask questions such as “Why is he going under the water?” during baptism? When the offering plate is passed, do children get to put in an offering, laying the foundation of giving to God on the “first day of the week?”

Other rituals may include holding hands as the family prays before meals, going to church every week, attending Sunday School and hearing a Bible story and praying before bedtime.

Laying spiritual foundations is the acting out of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 (NKJV): “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. And these words, which I command you today, shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Although we do not write Scripture on our doorposts or wear frontlets, this commandment reminds us that children need to see and experience God's love in church and at home. During the first five years of their child's life, parents can lay a foundation of love for God that no one can ever take from them.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Joy Cullen is an adjunct faculty member for women's programs at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Family activities help lay the foundation for a child's understanding of God's love

- ▶ Establish a consistent family worship time.
- ▶ Model a growing and personal faith.
- ▶ Include faith in normal conversations.
- ▶ Take time to answer questions.
- ▶ Be consistent in every area of life.
- ▶ Be authentic (walk the talk).
- ▶ Serve with your children.
- ▶ Witness with your children.
- ▶ Pray for and with your children.
- ▶ Learn to communicate love in ways that are meaningful to each child.
- ▶ Decorate children's rooms with Bible verses or Bible story pictures.
- ▶ Place Scripture cards on the kitchen table.
- ▶ Display your child's Sunday School lesson.
- ▶ Take short walks in God's creation.
- ▶ Develop family rituals/traditions.

Source: Kelly King



istockphoto.com

Elementary children: Growing in understanding of God

By Kelly King
Special to The Alabama Baptist

As children enter their early elementary years, they are growing in their independence in learning and socializing.

Many churches present first-graders with a Bible at some point during the fall. Children are excited to have their own Bibles, so encourage either the children you teach or the children in your family to spend time reading them. When selecting a Bible for a young child, if possible, then try to find a good translation that is easy to read. The ESV Children's Bible and large-print editions are good for younger children. The HCSB Illustrated Study Bible for Kids contains Bible study helps, the plan of salvation and a Bible dictionary in the front matter of the Bible. Children need guidance in understanding that the Bible is true, so try to avoid Bibles with cartoonlike illustrations that may be confusing to young children. You will need to help them along, but a great way to start is with family Bible reading and prayer, allowing children to participate at whatever level they are able.

Additionally attending worship services as a family is helpful not only in exposing children to their church family but also possibly in increasing the comfort level for both parent and child to discuss the Scripture or music that they heard in the service. An excellent help for parents in this regard is the book "Parenting in the Pew" by Robbie Castleman.

Age-appropriate 'lingo'

Two resources that may be especially helpful for young children are the "Big Thoughts for Little Thinkers" series by Joey Allen and "When Can I?" by Thomas Sanders. Both of these resources are written in a way that first- and second-graders can read the books with the help of a parent or Sunday School teacher. A great byproduct of reading these books with children is that adults will gain an understanding of what language is appropriate and understandable for young children. Although there are

no "junior rules" for salvation, explaining salvation to a child requires that you put the concepts into terms that he or she will understand. A good exercise is to write out your testimony, including what your life was like before making a commitment to follow Jesus, how you came to know Him personally and how your life is different now. Be brief and avoid using Christian "lingo" that a child may not understand.

Sharing Christ

Two other good resources for helping a child understand how to become a Christian are the North American Mission Board booklet "Sharing God's Special Plan" and LifeWay Christian Resources' "I'm a Christian Now!" There are leader guides and usage instructions for both of these resources, and all are available at LifeWay Christian stores as well as online at www.lifewaystores.com. Both of these resources provide specific conversational helps for talking to a child about his or her personal relationship with Christ.

Because of school and a host of extracurricular activities, first- through fourth-graders are increasingly around those outside of their church and family groups.

These are good venues for adults to guide children in the skill of making friends and inviting them to church and/or sharing their own stories about their relationship with Christ. Parents and teachers may also choose to consult LifeWay's Levels of Biblical Learning Collection and Levels of Biblical Skills to use as guidelines for age-appropriate language to use when helping children grow in their understanding of what it means to follow Christ.

Whatever resources you choose to use, be purposeful and provide an opportunity for children to respond to Christ individually.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Kelly King is an adjunct faculty member for women's programs at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Spiritual guidance vital during preteen years

By Karen Kennemur
Special to The Alabama Baptist

During the preteen years, parents should continue mentoring their child spiritually while the church supports the family. At this stage, children are growing and becoming more independent. The preteen years have been referred to as transitional years. These are the pre-adolescent years; children are leaving childhood and entering adolescence. They are spending more time with friends, becoming interested in the opposite sex and seeking autonomy from their parents. Spiritual guidance is vital during these years of exploration.

People interested in guiding preteens spiritually are continually looking for ways to connect with them. Understanding generalities of this age group is helpful. The following is a list of general spiritual characteristics of the average preteen:

- ▶ He or she is more open than ever to a personal relationship with God.
- ▶ His or her faith in God is shifting from a parent-given faith to a personalized faith.
- ▶ He or she can make significant spiritual decisions.
- ▶ He or she is beginning to fine-tune their consciences and understand right from wrong more clearly.
- ▶ He or she is very conscious of the fairness and honesty exhibited by adults around him or her.

As teachers gather on Sundays, Wednesdays or other times, they are meeting with preteens of various spiritual maturity levels and family backgrounds. Thus teachers are either assisting parents in building upon a preteen's spiritual foundation, "pouring the concrete" by sharing the gospel with preteens who may or may not have parental support or guiding preteens with little or no spiritual reinforcement. No matter the role one plays in a preteen's life, remember the importance of spiritual guidance. It is not the church's job to entertain preteens on Sunday morning, ensuring that they have a fun time. It is the church family's job to assist in enriching a preteen's personal walk with God. At some point, this enrichment or building on a spiritual foundation involves discipleship. The parent, teacher and church's responsibility to a child does not end at the point of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It continues through discipleship. How does discipleship look in the world of preteens? The following are ideas for discipling preteens:

- ▶ Leaders in Training (LIT) is a discipleship program that was designed by Clint May, children's minister at Wedgwood Baptist Church, Fort

Worth, Texas, for fifth- and sixth-graders. The program supports May's belief that "parents [play an] important part in the discipleship of their children. Youth surveyed nationwide say their No. 1 source of spiritual truth is mom and dad, not the pastor, youth pastor or Sunday School teacher." The LIT writers "believe in the family and provide materials that help families grow together and learn a Christian worldview."

Leaders in Training

- ▶ lead lost preteens to a saving knowledge of Christ,
- ▶ preteens discover their identity in Christ,
- ▶ disciple preteens in spiritual disciplines,
- ▶ equip preteens to share the gospel and
- ▶ help them find places of service in the church and community and on the missions field.

For more information, visit preteen-min.com.

▶ Preteens can participate in or begin a prayer ministry. Viva, a worldwide organization that helps children, sponsors the National Children's Prayer Congress. Children gather in Washington to pray for our government while visiting Capitol Hill. Viva believes "teaching children to hear the voice of God is an important part of discipling this generation."

For more information, visit www.viva.org.

Other prayer resources are published by NavPress:

- ▶ Growing Up Prayerful
www.praymag.com
- ▶ PrayKids!
www.navpress.com/landing/praykids.aspx

▶ Preteens and their families should consider going on missions trips together. Many churches are now sponsoring family missions trips. They may travel to other cities, states or countries working as family units to help people in need. Some plan their own family missions adventure. Other families serve at soup kitchens, work in shelters or help at food pantries. Working side by side as a family unit enables preteens to see their parents' words in action. They are teaching discipleship to their preteens through not only words but also actions.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Karen Kennemur is assistant professor of children's ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

During the early elementary years, a child

- ▶ begins developing a conscience,
- ▶ can retell Bible stories,
- ▶ may know that Jesus loves him or her,
- ▶ may express love for God and Jesus,
- ▶ begins to ask questions about God and
- ▶ feels guilt for sinful acts and thoughts.

Photo by Margaret Smith



‘Was I baptized too early?’ ponders Southwestern Seminary President Paige Patterson

By Paige Patterson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

There is never a time too early to begin presenting the gospel at home or church. Both amusing and disturbing is the opinion often voiced in recent years that a child’s mind and perspective could be warped by some Bible stories or by telling him or her about hell.

By the time I was 5 or 6 years old, I knew precisely the nature of the gospel, and most, if not all, of the stories in the Bible had been read at family worship and discussed by my father. He did not provide a biological exposé on the cranial impact of Jael’s nail to Sisera’s noggin or describe in detail how David went about his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. He read the stories straight when we came to them and ducked no questions from his children. He neither amplified, dramatized nor sugarcoated. Sin became real, even terrible, to his redheaded progeny.

By 6, I knew sin’s consequences — a ruined life and eternity in hell. I also did not think of sin so much as Adam’s as I conceived it to be mine. I also got the message clearly that only God’s love working itself out in Jesus’ death on the cross could overcome my sin. I knew by 6 that I needed to call on Jesus to forgive me and if I did, then He would save me.

Why didn’t I call on Christ until three years later? I do not remember much about those years, but most of what I do remember is spiritual in nature. I

remember thinking how badly sin must have damaged me. Yet, knowing this information, I felt little compulsion to cry out to God even though literally miserable in my condition. Then over several days, I became conscious of a growing desire in my heart to call upon the Savior. I knew from my dad’s sermons at church and sermonettes at the breakfast table that the Holy Spirit was communicating to a hopelessly bad boy.

Finding Jesus

The issue was not so much the practice of a plethora of evil deeds as much as it was the obvious rebellion of my sinful heart. More vividly than anything that happened to me yesterday, I remember that Friday night when, during the call to salvation issued by

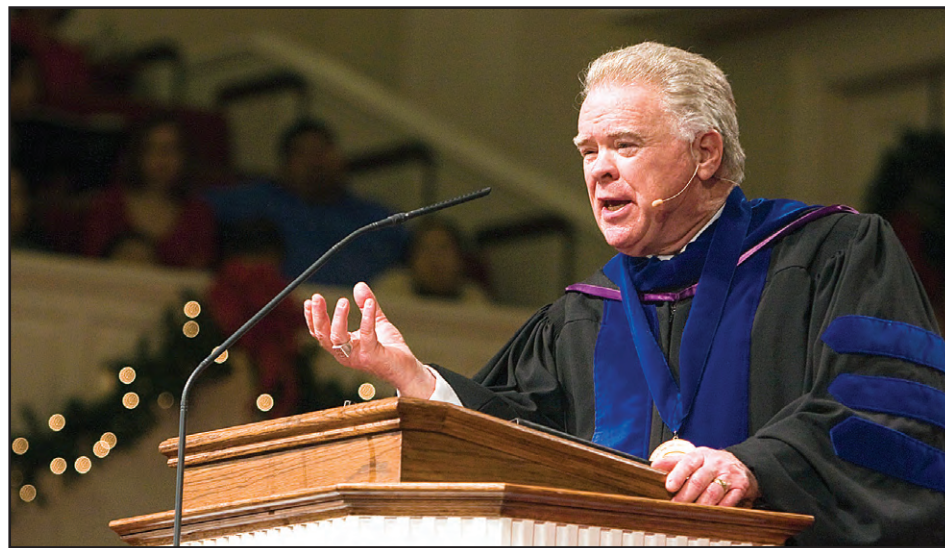
Evangelist Fred Brown, my heart sang out to Jesus “pass me not, O gentle Savior.” What happened next defies description because there are no words to paint the picture of a soul’s first intimacy with the Savior. All of this makes clear the fact that children must hear the gospel from birth until rebirth and they can develop early in life a remarkable capacity to understand the

Bible’s truths. Soteriology (the study of salvation) is complex in nature but simple enough for all in its access.

While I am fortunate enough to recall my baptism with memories almost as colorful as those of my conversation two days earlier, I have often wondered through the years whether, in fact, I

“As far as whether Southern Baptists should baptize children, I would say no.”

Paige Patterson
Southwestern Seminary



PAIGE PATTERSON

was baptized too early. The quandary perhaps can be stated this way: The witness of the New Testament seems to be that the early church had confidence in Christ’s grace in its converts and baptized them almost immediately (Acts 2:41; 8:13; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 19:5), but there is little evidence, if any, for child baptism. Further, looking back over 53 years of active ministry, I have come to question seriously the advisability of baptizing children, especially when so many repeat these early baptisms later. We all know people who were baptized as children but later made a profession of faith and were baptized again or fell away from church entirely. But what can we do about this?


W.A. Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, had a policy of encouraging children to take “a step toward God” but not baptizing them until they completed a class and an indi-

vidual conference with the pastor in the ninth year can be criticized, but much also can be said in its defense.

As far as whether Southern Baptists should baptize children, I would say no. The likelihood that someone baptized as an 8-year-old child significantly remembers his baptism, let alone the covenant he was supposed to be making, is slim at best. But given the alacrity of the young mind and the greater sensitivity of the young spirit to the things of God (Matt. 18:3-4), long-term exposure to the stories and theology of God’s Word constitutes the key to guiding children to salvation in Jesus, making their baptisms meaningful and securing their long-term devotion to the Lord’s church.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Paige Patterson is the president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

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About Alabama

What Will Happen to State Budgets When the Federal Subsidies End?

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Alabama's state government operates out of two big budgets: one for education (the Education Trust Fund budget) and another for the remaining services (the General Fund budget). Both have been in trouble since 2008. The temporary federal subsidies that have propped them up will disappear soon. The governor and Legislature we elect in November will have to decide how to balance these budgets.

Deteriorating economy

In part, the problem stems from the deterioration of the economy, which has been deep and prolonged. The taxes and other continuing revenue sources that support the two budgets fell by about 12 percent from 2008 to 2009, and they have remained relatively flat since.

But the state also failed to control its spending in the years before the downturn. Alabama's economy is cyclical: It is normal to have a string of growth years followed by a slowdown. The governor and Legislature did not foresee the end of the 2004-2008 growth period, which produced large surpluses. Expenditures increased. In fiscal 2008, the peak year just before the recession, education spending was 12 percent higher than continuing revenues would support and general

fund spending was 15 percent above its revenue base.

After the surpluses were used, the state turned to "rainy day" funds that voters in prior years had approved for each of the budgets. To date, \$598 million has been borrowed from these two funds and must be repaid in future years. State budgets also have been reduced, in part by more than \$1.8 billion of mid-year "proration" cutbacks, yet large gaps remain.

In 2009, the federal government began to provide "stimulus" funds to offset the impact of the recession on state budgets and boost economic activity. Alabama's allocations from 2009 through 2011, when the payments will end, total more than \$3 billion. Some of this money is for short-term projects, including more than \$500 million for highways. Some is for temporary grants to local school systems and others. But well over half of it is one-time support for continuing state programs such as Medicaid and education.

When the temporary money goes away, how will the state cover budget gaps that appear to total from \$800 million to \$1 billion?

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

Former Baylor basketball coach David Bliss recounts redemption

"I cheated," David Bliss told students at Hardin-Simmons University (HSU) on Sept. 28.

"I allowed the competitive world of college athletics to compromise my moral compass," said Bliss, former Baylor University men's basketball coach who was fired in 2002 because of NCAA violations from what he called his dream job.

"But my story is one of encouragement," Bliss said. "It gives reason to believe."

In a chapel service at the Baptist university in Abilene, Texas, Bliss said, "I am the headlights flashing on the country road, warning you of something ahead. ... I never thought I would do something to humiliate my family and the people I love. But it did happen to me, and I am here to warn you that it happens."

A student of legendary coach Bobby Knight, Bliss recounted that his violations were exposed after one of his basketball players was murdered.

"I cheated on something I didn't need to cheat on," Bliss said. "I was afraid of not having enough basketball players, so I paid for two of my players to continue going to school after their scholarship money ran out."

Bliss said his "darkest moment [was] broadcast on ESPN. I embar-

rassed my family and the people whom I loved around me." At the time, "I didn't think I would smile again."

It was then that Bliss said he asked God, "Can I have a do over?" and realized he had to put Jesus on a pedestal.

"I learned the difference between being saved and surrendering," he said. "God can repair anything if you give Him all the pieces."

Bliss acknowledged that it was hard to forgive himself but said he is comforted that he can always accept God's forgiveness.

The former coach closed by telling Hardin-Simmons students that "Jesus Christ is our safety net. Ev-

ery day we have opportunities to increase Christ in us."

Bliss has been asked to share his journey with men's groups, university students, churches, high school organizations and numerous teams throughout the country, via his outreach, Game Plan Ministries. He addressed coaches at the 2008 San Antonio Final Four and the 2009 Texas High School Coaches Association.

In May, Bliss was hired as the academic dean of students at Allen Academy in Bryan, Texas, the oldest college prep school in the state.

Bliss is a friend of HSU's former basketball coach, Dennis Harp, who now works in the university advancement office. (BP)

Retired pastor, director of missions William Goodson dies at 96

William Goodson, a retired Alabama Baptist pastor and director of missions, died Sept. 29. He was 96.

A Covington County native, Goodson began serving as pastor of churches in south Alabama in 1947. He served as pastor of eight churches in Covington Baptist Association, two churches in Alabama Crenshaw Baptist Association, two churches in Coffee Baptist Association, two churches in Sardis Baptist Association and one church in Butler Baptist Association and one church in Salem-Troy Baptist Association.

Goodson was also interim pastor of two churches in Covington Association. He retired from Sardis Association in 2003 after 15 years as director of missions.

Goodson received a diploma from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. At the time of his death, he was a member of Harmony Baptist Church, Andalusia.

Goodson was preceded in death by his first wife, Nell.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Hilda; three children; five grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Obituary

Talmage Perrin

The deacons of Pleasant Mount Baptist Church, a member of the Friendship Baptist Association would like to express their appreciation publicly for the service of Talmage Perrin. Known affectionately as Mr. Talmage, he served our church and community with dignity and honor. He was a deacon in our church for over fifty-five years, as well as over fifty years of service as a Sunday School teacher. Alongside his graceful and energetic wife Ms. Roberta they partnered together as a true portrait of Godly marriage, commitment and church service. Mr. Talmage passed away on July 24, 2010 at the age of 90. He truly represented Christ in his daily approach, actions and attitude. His calm, loving and encouraging demeanor bore a Christ-like testimony witnessed by those who came in contact with him. Family, friends and colleagues were all deeply impacted by his steadfastness in his faith.

Mr. Talmage lived out a portrayal of Christ. To God be the glory.

— Paid Advertising —



Photo courtesy of Southside Baptist Church

SOUTHSIDE CHURCH ORGANIST HONORED FOR 50 YEARS
Southside Baptist Church, near Gadsden, recently honored Gloria Dunn Johnson for 50 years of service as organist. The Etowah Association church presented her with a plaque and held a reception in her honor. Scott Harris is pastor.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 17

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce

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

BEING IN STEP

Ephesians 4:1-16

When church members cooperate with one another and their leaders and both leaders and members use the gifts God has provided, then the church is strengthened to become what He wants.

Live Up to Your Calling (1-6)

The apostle Paul urges his readers to walk worthily of their calling. He uses the term "walk" to speak of Christian behavior. We do not become Christians by living a Christian life. Rather we live the Christian life because we have become Christians. Our lives are to measure up to our position in Christ. A worthy walk includes the following virtues produced in us by the Holy Spirit: humility (putting Christ first, others second and self last, accepting and being ourselves to the glory of God), gentleness (power under control), patience (preserving an even temper in the face of adversity) and tolerance (love that accepts another). Turning from the virtues for individual believers, the apostle lists particular truths forming the basis of Christian unity. While not all Christians agree on some minor matters of doctrine, there are certain matters on which all do agree. (1) First is the body of Christ into which each believer becomes a member at salvation (1 Cor. 12). (2) The same Holy Spirit indwells each believer so that we belong to each other in Christ. (3) The "one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4) refers to the return of Christ. (4) The one Lord is Jesus Christ, who died for us and will come for us one day. (5) There is one settled body of truth revealed in the New Testament; it is called "the faith" (Jude 3). (6) The "one baptism" mentioned here is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places the believer into the body of Christ. Water baptism is a reflection of Spirit baptism. (7) "One God and Father" expresses the basic doctrine of God revealed in Scripture. We are children in the same family, loving and serving the same Father.

Appreciate Spiritual Gifts (7-12)

Paul moves from what Christians have

in common to how they differ. The various spiritual gifts are the means by which Christians minister in the body of Christ. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve Him and minister to other Christians in a way that glorifies Him and builds up believers. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift. All spiritual gifts are important and needed by the church. They have been given by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, following Christ's ascension into heaven. Next Paul lists the gifted leaders God has placed in the church. The apostles were a close group of men appointed by Christ as His representatives. They had three basic responsibilities: to lay the foundation of the church in history (Eph. 2:20); to receive, declare and write God's Word (Eph. 3:5); and to confirm God's Word through signs, wonders and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12). When these men died, there were no more apostles and no more revelation from God to be written. The prophets were men especially qualified by the Lord for ministry exclusively within a local congregation. The Lord gifted them with the ability to receive, before the completion of the New Testament, practical revelation from Him as well as the ability to explain revelation already given. The evangelists were given the special ability to present the gospel so that people trusted Christ. The apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the church in time/space history, while the evangelists built on it by leading people to trust Christ. "Pastors and teachers" is best understood as one church office with two ministries. "Pastor" means "shepherd" so that this office means shepherding God's people by means of teaching.

Work Together (13-16)

Paul desires the church to grow spiritually. As the members grow in God's Word and minister to one another, they become more like Christ. The church also becomes more spiritually and emotionally stable. The members learn to speak the truth lovingly and work with each other cooperatively. The result is that they grow spiritually and help build the church.

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

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

WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT JESUS?

John 6:66-69; 9:17, 24-25, 31-33, 35-38; 20:27-29

Why bother about Jesus? What relevance does the life and death of a fairly "nice man" who lived 2,000 years ago have for life in the 21st century with all its advances in medicine, technology and science? In an age of religious pluralism, surely the message of Christianity is just one of many means by which we can come to know the true meaning of life and the way to God. What's so different about Jesus?

Consider Jesus' Teachings (6:66-69)

The early disciples came to the conclusion that they couldn't live without Jesus. They understood from their own experience that they needed Him to be their Savior. Similarly we are only too well aware of our inner struggles with sinful desires, which lead us to manifest attitudes, and even engage in actions, of which we are utterly ashamed. That's why the message of Jesus is one of good news because it declares to us that God is willing to accept us just as we are; completely forgive us of all that we have thought, said and done; and make us feel clean once again. It was that message that came to James and John, those "sons of thunder" who had such great difficulty in controlling their tempers. The love of Christ met them in their need and changed them into men who were filled with love and understanding for others. Jesus is able to take our lives, spoiled by sin, and transform them so that they begin to shine with a light that comes from His own character. He changes lives because He is alive and active. He is somebody who is interested in us, even though we feel that we have failed so often. He enjoys our company and is always available to hear our prayers for help.

Consider Jesus' Miracles (9:17, 24-25, 31-33, 35-38)

The miracles in and of themselves did not always lead to faith when Jesus lived in Palestine. This story shows how the religious leaders of the day refused to accept that the man who claimed to have been healed of blindness had actually been blind in the first place. We may not have ever witnessed a miracle of this

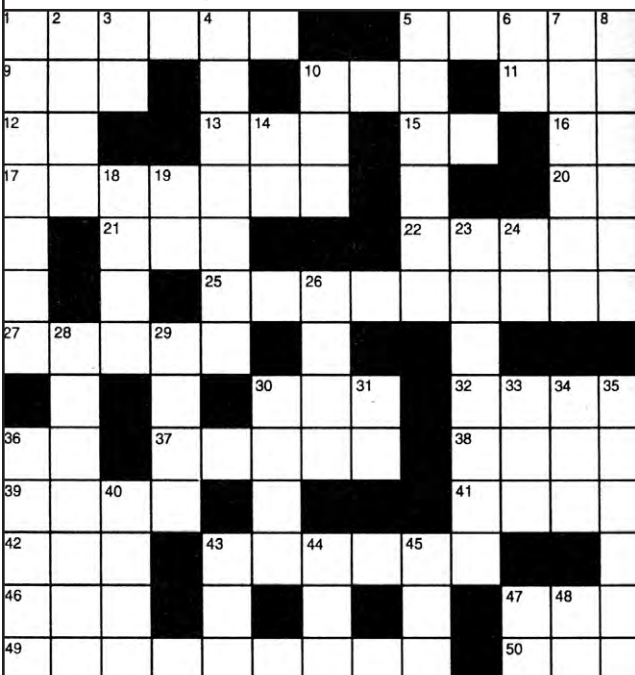
scale within our own lives. This man, however, had an experience that we can all identify with — an encounter with Jesus that transforms our way of thinking and attitude toward life. In one way or another, all Christians can declare, "I was blind ... but now I see."

Consider Jesus' Resurrection (20:27-29)

Thomas was confused about the events of that first Easter. His Lord was dead. His dreams had come to an abrupt end, and then his friends were telling him that Jesus was alive. In the context of death and dying, he needed a firm foundation for his faith. Many religions offer religious experiences, moments of peace in the midst of the turmoil of life. However, the uniqueness of the claims of Christianity is not only that it works but also that it is true. The One who proclaimed the message of God's love at Calvary is alive. There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who takes historical evidence seriously that Jesus actually lived and died in Palestine under the governorship of Pontius Pilate, which ended in A.D. 36. As well as the internal evidence of the four Gospels, we have plenty of external, unbiased historical witnesses from Roman and Jewish sources. Not only is the evidence for His life and death reliable but there is also plenty of evidence that He rose from the grave — His grave was empty and no one was able to produce the body to disprove the message that was sweeping through Jerusalem. His disciples, who had been full of fear following His death, suddenly became willing to die for something they knew to be true because literally thousands of them had been eyewitnesses to His resurrection. The weight of the evidence adds up to a very powerful reason why we should bother about Jesus. If He lived a perfect life, died a special death and rose again, then He is who He claimed to be — the Son of God, who created us and will one day judge us as we give an account to Him as to how we have lived on this earth. Yet, like Thomas, we need to encounter Him for ourselves and come to that point where, in worship, we confess Him as our "Lord and our God."

Christian Crossword

By Cheryl Keiser Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- To glorify or honor.
- Form by heating and hammering.
- Her. (opposite)
- "Much ___ About Nothing."
- Body part for hearing.
- Anno Domini. (abbr.)
- Republican party. (abbr.)
- X-ray person. (abbr.)
- Railroad.
- O Lord, ... ___ me. (Jer. 15:15)
- ___ unto others ...
- A Gadite. (1 Chron. 5:15)
- Submit yourselves unto the ___. (1 Pet. 5:5)
- Springs.
- Sweet fluid made by bees.
- Knock.
- Come ___ with me. (1 Kings 13:7)
- Do, re, mi, ___.
- Nimble.

Down

- Egyptian ruler.
- To travel on.
- I ___. (John 8:58)
- In them did ___. (1 Pet. 1:11)
- I will not ___ thy word. (Ps. 119:16)
- With reference to. (abbr.)
- ___ of Eden.
- For the ___ of the people. (Heb. 9:7)
- Name given to Esau. (Gen. 32:3)
- He that goeth forth, ... bearing precious ___. (Ps. 126:6)
- To be unwell.
- There came a ___ over ... Egypt. (Acts 7:11)
- Small amount.
- Royal city of the Canaanites. (Josh. 17:11)
- Unleavened bread in the tabernacle.
- Single unit.
- Large monkey.
- Amorite king. (Josh. 13:12)
- This man's religion is ___. (James 1:26)
- What did you say?
- City south of Jerusalem. (Josh. 10:3)
- Princess ___.
- Mountain range in Soviet Union.
- Minor prophet.
- Test.
- In thy majesty ___. (Ps. 45:4)
- Physical education. (abbr.)
- Metal-bearing rock.
- Girl's name.
- His name shall ___ forever. (Ps. 72:17)
- Extraordinary acts.
- Ye ___ Country Inn.
- Tap gently.
- Now ___ we the sons of God. (1 John 3:2)
- Theodore. (nickname)

- Blessed are they that ___ his commandments. (Rev. 22:14)
- Off. (opposite)



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

SBC finishes fiscal year 6.18 percent below budget

NASHVILLE — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) finished its Oct. 1–Sept. 30 fiscal year 6.18 percent below budget, while Cooperative Program (CP) receipts for the year were down 4.03 percent and combined CP and designated giving for the year was down 2.52 percent, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank S. Page.

A total of \$191,763,152.87 in CP gifts was received by the SBC during the fiscal year from Oct. 1, 2009, through Sept. 30, 2010 — down by \$8,058,937.31 (4.03 percent) from the previous fiscal year's \$199,822,090.18. (During the 2008–09 fiscal year, CP gifts were 2.23 percent, or \$4,563,502.45, below the 2007–08 fiscal year.) During the 2009–10 fiscal year, an additional \$191,324,526.08 in designated gifts brought the fiscal year's overall giving for national and international missions and ministry to spread the gospel to \$383,087,678.95, or 2.52 percent below the previous year's \$392,998,040.82 combined figure.

For the month of September, CP receipts totaled \$13,544,738.87. Designated year-end giving of \$191,324,526.08 was \$1,851,424.56, or 0.96 percent, below gifts of \$193,175,950.64 for the previous fiscal year. A total of \$4,016,137.08 in designated gifts was received in September. For the SBC CP Allocation Budget, the year-end total of \$191,763,152.87 was \$12,622,439.76 (or 6.18 percent) below the \$204,385,592.63 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America.

The CP is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state conventions and the SBC.

Okla. church targeted by church-state watchdog

WASHINGTON — A church-state watchdog group has called on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to investigate a church in Oklahoma for violating a law that prohibits tax-exempt charities from endorsing political candidates. The church is one of the latest in an organized effort by a Christian conservative group that aims to change federal tax laws to allow political endorsements from the pulpit while churches retain tax-exempt status.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, filed an IRS complaint against Pastor Paul Blair of Fairview Baptist Church, Edmond, Okla., on Sept. 28. That was two days after Blair, who is also founder of a conservative political action group called Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ, used his Sunday-morning message to endorse Mary Fallin, a Republican congresswoman from the state, for governor.

Blair was one of 97 pastors across the country who preached political messages Sept. 26 in an organized effort to defy a 1954 amendment to federal tax law. The provision prohibits all nonprofit entities organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code from intervening in elections by endorsing or opposing candidates for public office. Virtually all houses of worship are 501(c)(3) organizations.

The Alliance Defense Fund, a conservative group behind the third annual Pulpit Freedom Sunday, believes that if challenged in court the prohibition on preaching about candidates would be found unconstitutional.

Peace accord signed by 3 groups in Nagaland state

DIMAPUR, India — The Baptist World Alliance congratulated the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) on the signing of a peace accord between three nationalist groups in the northeast Indian state of Nagaland on Sept. 18.

For decades, the three groups have been in conflict with each other and with the Indian government over issues of autonomy and sovereignty for Nagaland state and the Naga people. Between 1992 and 2009, more than 2,330 insurgency-related fatalities were recorded in Nagaland. As a result of the longstanding disputes, which date back more than 50 years, exceptionally tight security has been imposed on the state by the Indian government, with multiple checkpoints scattered throughout the state. International visitors require special permits to enter and move around Nagaland.

A release from the FNR claimed that the leaders pledged to “end all violence and bloodshed amongst the Nagas.” The meetings and the resulting covenant, the release said, were in response to “the deep yearning of the Naga people” and that Sept. 18 “will go down as another ‘historic landmark’ in the struggle for Naga rights.”

There are about 600,000 Baptists in Nagaland, representing approximately 90 percent of ethnic Nagas in the state. The FNR comprises several organizations, including Baptist groups, all of which pledged to work to end the conflicts. ☞

Book Reviews

by Matthew Stephens

Worship Not the Creature: Animal Rights and the Bible

J.Y. Jones. Ventura, Calif.: Nordskog, 2009. 176 pp. (Hardback).

J.Y. Jones is a real outdoorsman; you can tell by the way he views certain things. In this book, he brings his love for the outdoors and animals together. He gives a vivid presentation of the biblical view as well as some scientific views of the creatures in our surroundings. Jones describes the life of animals and their rights.

Is shooting a dog because it gets into your turnip patch a violation of the dog's rights? Read this book to find out. This book is a must-read for anyone who truly has a love for God's creation and has a desire to be able to defend it.

No Chance in Hell!!

Judy Ballentine. Frederick, Md.: PublishAmerica, 2009. 93 pp. (Paperback).

Judy Ballentine gives us a comedic approach to what it feels like to be in the pit of hell with none other than Satan himself. It makes this summer's 98 degrees with the heat index over 100 feel really nice.

This book is so jaw dropping, it will make the hairs on the back of your neck stand straight up. This book would be an interesting read for someone who does not have a relationship with Christ.

It's More Than Shootouts and Car Chases: Memoirs of a Montgomery Police Officer

Stephen Z. Smith. Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2010. 484 pp. (Paperback).

In this work of nonfiction, Smith takes you on a journey through his

years in the Montgomery Police Department. From his days as a high-school graduate to the day he retired after 20 years of service, this book provides vivid accounts of intense moments of law enforcement life.

Throughout the book, Smith shares experiences that will have you praising the Lord you are not a police officer to other moments when you wish you were. Smith also shares how his faith got him through many days. Reading this book reminded me to appreciate what police officers do to protect us as citizens.

The Death Penalty on Trial: Taking a Life for a Life Taken

Ron Gleason. Ventura, Calif.: Nordskog Publishing, 2009. 156 pp. (Paperback).

Ron Gleason gives an in-depth look at the death penalty and provides some rather argumentative objections to the controversy behind it. He pulls from philosophical ide-

als and biblical passages to make his point. He also argues both sides of the issue. This book is a powerful message that will leave you looking at capital punishment in a whole new light by asking the question: Why shouldn't the courts take a life for a life taken?

One Touch From the Maker

Pat W. Kirk. Lawrence, Kan.: PuckettBrowne Publishing, 2010. 192 pp. (Paperback).

Pat Kirk knows just how to put a smile on a person's face when talking about our Lord Jesus Christ. In her book, “One Touch From the Maker,” she compiles stories that will make your day just a little bit brighter. It is truly an inspirational read. The book contains a variety of stories, from an almost tragedy to an unlikely hero.

This book makes you think of Jesus Christ in a whole new light. It will remind you that nothing is impossible “through Christ who strengthens me.” ☞

Hispanic Ala. Baptists look to partner with Mich. Hispanics

There is a possible partnership on the horizon for Alabama Baptists — Hispanic Alabama Baptists that is.

Reggie Quimby, director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, along with two Hispanic state Baptist pastors — Pablo Moscoso and Edwin Velez, traveled to Michigan to scope out possible future partnerships with Hispanic Michigan Baptist congregations Sept. 15–18.

The three men traveled around the state meeting with pastors and

leaders of nine Hispanic congregations. Michigan only has about 10 Hispanic Baptist congregations, whereas Alabama has about 36.

Quimby believes the first step in partnering with these churches is through prayer and then secondly through going and working alongside them. He will be speaking at the Alabama Baptist Hispanic Fellowship's (ABHF) annual meeting Nov. 15 and hopes to have several projects in the works by then.

Moscoso serves as president and Velez vice president of the ABHF. (TAB)



Five members of **First Baptist Church, Pell City**, and two members of **Cropwell Baptist Church**, both in St. Clair Baptist Association, traveled to Peru in September. The trip was coordinated by e3 Partners missions network organization and led by David Chism and Diane Harrington.

The missions team partnered with local churches to evangelize in the streets of Urubamba and neighboring areas. With the help of interpreters, team members presented the gospel in picture form.

They made 494 gospel presenta-

tions, resulting in 178 professions of faith. Those who accepted Christ were invited to small group meetings to reinforce and strengthen their faith and commitment.

“I think seeing the receptivity of people to listen to the gospel was the most special part of the trip for me,” said Tim Gold, minister of education/administration for First, Pell City. “People were willing to listen. [They] thanked us for our time even if they didn't receive Christ.”

Director of Missions Barry Cosper led a team of five from

Tallapoosa Baptist Association to Newcastle, Australia, July 9–16. Team members led Vacation Bible School during the day and revival at night. The team witnessed 12 professions of faith.

Tallapoosa Association also partnered with Genesee Baptist Association in Michigan in May and September.

In May, a revival was held at North Prospect Baptist Church, Ypsilanti, Mich. A revival, a church health review and a solemn assembly prayer service were held in September. ☞



Photo by Chris Mills

SOUL MUSIC — Jimmy Needham performs a solo concert to about 250 people at First Baptist Church, Prattville, in Autauga Baptist Association, Sept. 26. Needham's music can be found at www.jimmyneedham.com.

'God is good'

Needham shares music, personal story with Prattville church

By Chris Mills
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Soul music. That's how Jimmy Needham, of Katy, Texas, described his music for a crowd at First Baptist Church, Prattville, in Autauga Baptist Association, recently.

Needham's style is influenced by artists like Lauren Hill, Jason Mraz and Keith Green. Not only would one find his style a little different, but also his lyrics different from mainstream contemporary Christian music (CCM).

"What I do musically and lyrically is very different from a lot of popular CCM," Needham told a crowd of about 250. "I believe, though, that there is a place in the body (of Christ) for all sorts of different genres."

"A lot of worship music is vertical — focused on worshipping God and meant to be congregational," he continued. "However, my stuff is more horizontal. It's talking to people about the things of God, things that I've learned."

Needham grew up in a non-Christian home and became addicted to pornography at age nine. It was his sophomore year of high school that he opened up to a friend about his addiction and his friend led him to a relationship with Christ.

Recently Needham and his wife, Kelly, found out they were pregnant again after three miscarriages.

Educational journey

"Had she not had three miscarriages, we wouldn't have been alarmed," he said. "Many first-time mothers have a miscarriage. God used those babies to alarm us enough to see if there was a medical issue, and, there was. God is good sometimes to pull back the curtain to show us some of His storyboards."

Through all of this, Needham has learned a lot.

"I went to college to be a teacher, now I feel like I'm a teacher through song," he said, noting he places a great emphasis on his lyrics being theologically sound.

"I'm learning more and more

that music is the most persuasive language in the world," he said. "People don't memorize sermons, they memorize song lyrics. That's so dangerous. I can't have them singing something heretical. Singing true things and making the gospel memorable in song is effecting change in the listeners."

His latest album, "Nightlights," addresses pride that eats at the Christian culture. Lyrics from two tracks on the album refer to Christians as nightlights when compared to Christ.

"God is the one who ought to be worshipped, not me. Most artists, most people struggle with that," Needham said.

"The question that I've pondered lately is, 'What does it look like to be about the promotion of Jesus even at the expense of my own notoriety?'" he asked. "God is big and glorious and wonderfully more attractive than we are, so why do we spend so much time thinking about how we can make our names great?"

School ban on religious holiday songs remains

Silent Night" and other religious songs will remain off the program at holiday concerts in one New Jersey school district after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of a school ban on religious holiday music.

By deciding Oct. 4 not to hear the case, the high court ended a six-year legal battle that started when parent Michael Stratechuk sued the School District of South Orange and Maplewood over a policy that barred religious songs at public concerts.

The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Ap-

peals upheld the ban last year, and Stratechuk attempted to take the case to the higher court.

"There's nothing more, short of the school district changing its policy," Stratechuk's attorney Robert J. Muise said.

While the circuit ruling technically only applies to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Muise worries the high court's rejection of the case could lead to a chilling effect on school districts across the country.

"Religion has not been banned totally in schools but we're headed in

that direction," he said. "The South Orange-Maplewood Schools are in the forefront of taking that step."

In a statement, school Superintendent Brian Osborne said the policy "was adopted to promote an inclusive environment for all students in our school community. We have always felt our policy was constitutional and are pleased with the outcome."

In the 1990s, South Orange-Maplewood adopted a policy banning the use of religious songs in school performances. (RNS)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Federal court allows stem cell funding to continue

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court ruled Sept. 26 that government funding of embryonic stem cell research (ESCR) may continue while a legal challenge to the Obama administration's policy on the lethal experimentation goes forward.

A three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals granted a new suspension of a federal judge's Aug. 23 ruling that had halted funding of ESCR under guidelines published last year by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). President Obama had issued an executive order earlier in 2009 overturning a more restrictive funding policy and ordering NIH to devise guidelines consistent with his decree.

The ability of stem cells to convert to other cells and tissues has provided great hope for developing cures for various diseases, but extracting stem cells from an embryo results in the destruction of the days-old human being. ESCR has not proven as effective as other forms of stem cell experimentation that do not harm the donor. It has yet to provide any treatments for human beings and has been plagued by tumors in lab animals.

Southern Baptist pro-life leader Richard Land called it "a sad day for America and an excruciating day for American taxpayers."

The White House applauded the decision.

"President Obama made expansion of stem cell research and the pursuit of groundbreaking treatments and cures a top priority when he took office," said White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs. "We're heartened that the court will allow NIH and their grantees to continue moving forward while the appeal is resolved."

Justice Department supports 'don't ask, don't tell'

LOS ANGELES — The Obama Justice Department is asking a federal judge to keep the military's "don't ask, don't tell" (DADT) policy on homosexuals in place, arguing that rulings in other circuits upholding the ban prevent the judge from issuing a nationwide injunction against the 17-year-old policy.

The brief was filed two weeks after U.S. District Judge Virginia Phillips, who is based in California, issued a ruling overturning the policy, which prevents homosexuals from serving openly in the military.

Supporters of DADT warn that reversing it would have a negative impact on military readiness, cohesion, recruitment, retention and religious freedom.

"If this court were to enjoin all discharges under DADT throughout the world, it would not only effectively overrule the decisions of numerous other circuits that have upheld DADT, but also preclude consideration of similar challenges by courts in other circuits that have not addressed the issue (not to mention other district judges in the Central District of California) prior to any decision by the 9th Circuit," the Justice Department's brief states. "This court 'would in effect be imposing [its] view of the law on all the other circuits.' ... Such a result would ... unjustifiably elevate this court, and ultimately the 9th Circuit, to a status of first among equals."

The brief was filed Sept. 23, one day before another judge in the 9th Circuit dealt another blow to the policy. On Sept. 24, U.S. District Judge Ronald B. Leighton ordered the Air Force Reserves to reinstate Maj. Margaret Witt, a lesbian who had been discharged.

Federal judge dismisses suit against 'In God We trust'

WASHINGTON — A federal judge has dismissed a suit arguing that engravings of "In God We Trust" and the Pledge of Allegiance at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center are unconstitutional.

The suit by the Freedom From Religion Foundation was dismissed Sept. 29 by U.S. District Court Judge William Conley of Madison, Wis., due to lack of standing. He said the Wisconsin-based organization did not make a sufficient link between their taxpayer status and the money spent on the engravings that included the national motto and the words "under God" in the pledge.

"Any funds used by the government will necessarily result in the use of taxpayer money," Conley wrote.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a conservative Christian law firm that filed a brief on behalf of dozens of members of Congress seeking a rejection of the suit, hailed the decision.

"This challenge was another misguided attempt to alter history and purge America of religious references," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the ACLJ, in a statement.