

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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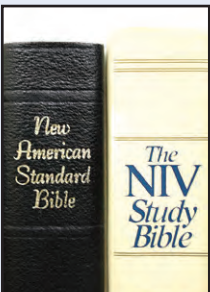
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INSIDE



Alabama's Gulf Coast businesses rebuild, ministries try to regroup

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How many Bible translations is too many?

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Quartet formed in 1960s regularly reunites to sing

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Photo by David Patty

FOCUSED ON THE MISSION — Frankie Stiefel (on tractor) of Corinth Baptist Church, Section, and Mike Atkins of Rosalie Baptist Church help clean up debris following the tornadoes that moved through northeast Alabama in late October.

Rapid response

Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers help after storms

State disaster relief teams from five associations managed to complete their cleanup assignments in the northeast part of the state the last week of October despite dodging storms in the process.

The first set of storms, including an EF2 tornado, blew through early Oct. 25, hitting the areas of Dutton, Pisgah, Rosalie and Ider, said David Patty, director of missions for Sand Mountain Baptist Association and Alabama Baptists' District 2 disaster relief coordinator.

But before the teams working to clean up downed trees and other debris could wrap up their projects, another set of storms came through the area Oct. 26. This set included an EF1 tornado and mainly impacted the Geraldine area, Patty noted.

"There were no serious injuries, but there were a lot of trees down,"

he said. And while many homes and some churches suffered minor damage, there was only one home destroyed, Patty added.

Disaster relief chain saw crews and volunteers assisting with the cleanup effort were from Sand Mountain, DeKalb, Etowah, Tennessee River and Morgan Baptist associations.

Tommy Puckett, state disaster relief adviser; Ronnie Warren, state clean up/recovery/chain saw coordinator; and

the State Board of Missions' (SBOM) Rapid Response Assessment Team also assisted in the effort.

At press time, work was expected to be completed by Oct. 30.

"Our teams responded well for both physical and spiritual needs of those affected," said Mel Johnson, SBOM disaster relief strategist.

Storm damage also was reported Oct. 24-25 in Cullman and Baldwin counties. (TAB)

Staff changes, restructuring ahead for NAMB

Plan to decentralize the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and reduce its staff by 25 percent, or about 70 positions, was part of Kevin Ezell's report at his first board meeting as president of NAMB Oct. 17-20.

Trustees met in Los Angeles and commissioned 62 missionaries and toured area ministry sites.

But it was the somber note about staff reductions that made headlines coming out of the meeting.

"We can absolutely do better," Ezell said.

Even though Ezell said major staffing changes won't come until NAMB's focus and a strategy to implement that focus have been determined, one of the first things he did as president was to offer a retirement incentive to employees during a meeting Sept. 30.



EZELL

As part of the incentive, the retirement age was originally lowered to 55 and then recently lowered again to 54. Initial accounts are that 30 staff members have accepted the retirement offer and others are still considering the incentive.

In addition to making staff changes, Ezell said the agency will "decentralize."

"What I do know is that not all NAMB staff will need to be full time and based in Alpharetta," he said. "We will decentralize but new positions (See 'Ezell,' page 7)

Pray for the upcoming state convention ...

Nov. 16-17
Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover

Theme: "Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So"

For more information, visit
www.alsbom.org/convention
or call 1-800-264-1225.



COMMENT

If Alabama Baptists Reach Their Offering Goals

For a moment, can we assume the Alabama Baptist State Convention will make its Co-operative Program (CP) budget goal for 2011, as well as the goals for approved special offerings?

Given the economy, that is a large assumption. Projections indicate CP receipts may fall short of the 2010 budget by about 5 percent. The 2011 budget to be presented to messengers attending the Nov. 16–17 annual meeting at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, has been reduced by \$3 million so ministry leaders can make realistic plans about potential financial resources.

Still let's assume Alabama Baptists will make their goals. If that happens, then they will give \$64,175,000 for causes in the state, nation and world.

The single largest beneficiary of those funds will be the International Mission Board (IMB), which will receive almost \$21 million from Alabama Baptist churches. That is almost one-third of the total gifts. Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes (including the IMB) will receive almost 60 percent of the total — \$37,889,764.

Alabama Baptists will use about 40 percent for work in the state. The State Board of Missions will be credited with just 19 percent of the total — \$12,434,565. The state's three Baptist colleges will share \$8.5 million, or 13.3 percent. The Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries will claim almost \$2.85 million, or 4.4 percent.

Again this assumes Alabama Baptists reach all their offering goals — the CP and special offerings. The Children's Homes, for example, will get about 90 percent of its funding from the special offering collected by the churches.

Both the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Offering for North American Missions predate the CP. So does the offering for the Children's Homes. When Southern Baptists initiated the CP in 1925, these special offerings were maintained. Everyone understood that most Southern Baptists would continue making designated offerings for causes close to their hearts such as world evangelism or home missions.

In fact, records show that funds received through special offerings were to be counted as part of the hoped for 50–50 percentage division between state and SBC causes when the CP first began.

The CP was never intended to be the sole way



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Southern Baptists supported missions causes. It was to be the primary way, however. In one offering, Southern Baptists were supposed to be able to financially undergird all the ministries they deemed important. Not individual Southern Baptist preferences but the will of the majority. In the annual meeting, Baptists of a state adopt a budget to support the work of that state. Similarly messengers to the SBC's annual meeting adopt a budget for its work.

In Alabama, for example, Baptists determined they wanted to make scholarships available to students preparing for church-related vocations at Baptist colleges. Alabama Baptists decided it was important to have a voice at the state Legislature speaking on behalf of biblical viewpoints about gambling, alcohol and a host of other moral issues. That is why ALCAP (Alabama Citizens Action Program) is in the state convention budget.

Working together

Not every Baptist ministry has the same emotional appeal. But emotional appeal does not always equate with value. Through the CP, those things that Baptists deemed necessary could be funded. All the ministries would work together rather than compete with one another as they had done since the SBC's founding.

Since initiating the CP, Southern Baptists have functioned with two giving patterns — the CP and special offerings. Through the years, changes have been made. For example, Southern Baptists recognized that some ministries sponsored by state conventions directly benefit both the state and national conventions.

This recognition brought about what is frequently referred to as "joint denominational causes." The SBC said money spent by a state convention for CP and stewardship promotion, for example, directly benefited both the state convention and the SBC. That money should be considered a joint denominational cause and the amount equally divided as benefiting both bodies. Money contributed to protection benefits for ministers was placed in this category since ministers frequently serve in more than one state during their ministerial career.

Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), the heart of missions support in most Southern Baptist

churches, was also listed as a joint denominational cause as were state Baptist papers.

Alabama Baptists do not use the joint denominational causes form of budgeting. All the funds spent promoting the CP and stewardship, all the funds invested in protection benefits for ministers and all the funds for WMU and the state Baptist paper are counted as state expenses. That is slightly more than \$2.1 million. And still Alabama Baptists have one of the highest percentages of CP receipts used to support SBC causes. The 2011 budget earmarks 42.5 percent of each dollar for the SBC and 57.5 percent for Alabama Baptist use.

If the 2011 state convention budget were constructed to reflect what the SBC has already approved and what some other state conventions are doing in budget preparation, then the percentage of CP receipts used for SBC causes would rise to 45 percent. On top of that, add the special offerings and the SBC receives almost 60 percent of every dollar Alabama Baptist churches give for work beyond the local church.

These words are not advocating changing the way the state convention prepares its budget. Rather they are intended to clarify the way CP funds are used to support missions and ministries in Alabama, the nation and the world. Sometimes one hears comments that seem to imply that Baptists have to choose between important ministries: international missions vs. Baptist colleges, missions education vs. church planting, strengthening Christian families vs. leadership training, etc. That is false.

The CP was initiated to allow Southern Baptists "both/and," not "either/or." Baptist ministries and missions work together. Each supports the other and all are supported through one offering — the primary channel of missions support.

On the strong foundation made possible by the CP, Southern Baptists give their special offerings. Both the CP and special offerings play a part. They have since 1925. Both are necessary. That is why it is important to recognize and celebrate the total picture of Southern Baptist giving.



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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Photos by Susan Stevens

'Big Apple Adventure'

National LifeWay conference in Birmingham debuts VBS 2011; 2 Alabamians honored

LifeWay Christian Resources held its yearly Kids Ministry Conference in Birmingham Oct. 11-13.

The purpose of the conference is to train, equip and encourage preschool and children's leaders.

There were 495 attendees from across the United States.

The conference premiered LifeWay's Vacation Bible School (VBS) theme for 2011 — "Big Apple Adventure" — with the kids choir of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills (pictured above), debuting some of the music.

During the conference, two Alabamians were honored. Karen Prickett, direc-

tor of children's ministries at Eastaboga Baptist Church (pictured left), was chosen to represent all children's ministers at the conference. She was given this honor during the Oct. 11 evening session, along with free registration to the conference and some LifeWay resources.

James Blakeney, an associate in the office of Sunday School/Bible study ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (pictured right), was recognized for his work championing VBS across Alabama. He was honored during the Oct. 13 evening session and given the new Holman Christian Standard Study Bible. (TAB)



Karen Prickett with Bill Emeott



James Blakeney with Jerry Wooley

Judge rules against State Board in Montgomery property dispute

An Oct. 27 circuit court ruling sends Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) officials back to the drawing board over the Montgomery property they had hoped to sell by now.

Montgomery County Circuit Judge William A. Shashy ruled in favor of the homeowners' association that has refused to sign off on plans proposed by the SBOM and East Alabama Global Development LLC.

"The ruling that was handed down ... is being evaluated by State Board of Missions' leadership, and the appropriate groups will help guide the process moving forward," said Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director. "We have sought to be good neighbors through the process and, at the same time, feel a strong obligation to be good stewards of State Board resources. We are praying that a resolution can happen soon."

The 13.96-acre tract of land sits at the intersection of Taylor Road and Interstate 85 and backs up to Halcyon Forest subdivision. When the SBOM purchased the property in 1986 for potential relocation, it agreed to have development plans approved by the original owners. The Halcyon Forest Architectural Review Board was said to be formed, in part, for that reason, but the

original owners are no longer involved. And since that time, messengers to the 2007 Alabama Baptist State Convention voted to sell the property rather than relocate the Baptist Building there.

Messengers also voted to purchase land along the Interstate 65 corridor near Autauga and Elmore counties for a potential relocation site. But the purchase of that land depends on the sale of the Taylor Road property.

East Alabama Global Development wants to purchase the Taylor Road property. Its plans for the land include a four-story hotel, two upscale restaurants, an office building and two small retail centers.

But the review board rejected the hotel and restaurants that sell alcohol.

Benny Nolen, treasurer of the Halcyon Forest Homeowners Association, told Montgomery television station WSFA, "You can imagine backing up to the property and having a four-story hotel looking into your backyard and having a restaurant backing up that would serve liquor and so forth all hours of the night."

However, in 2009 DuBois reported that a list of costly concessions had been proposed by the development company and the SBOM to deal with the review board's concerns. But

the two sides could never agree, thus the decision to go to court.

Attorneys for the SBOM and development company argue that the original agreement is no longer binding so any development should be subject only to city zoning restrictions.

But Shashy disagreed, stating, "This court finds that the Halcyon Forest Architectural Review Board is the appropriate authority to whom a developer of the Baptist property must seek approval for development plans and architectural design." (TAB)

Alabama Baptist youth choirs to sing with Kyle Matthews in concert for M-POWER

Christian artist and songwriter Kyle Matthews will give a benefit concert for Birmingham's M-POWER Ministries at Samford University's Reid Chapel in Birmingham on Nov. 21 at 6 p.m.

M-POWER is a nonprofit organization that ministers to adults through its education, health and literacy centers. M-POWER stands for Mission to Provide Opportunities With Empowering Results.

Sponsored by the WMU (Woman's Missionary Union) Foundation, the concert will raise funds for the M-POWER Education Center, a certified Christian Women's Job Corps (CWJC) and Christian Men's

Job Corps (CMJC) site, through a special offering. CWJC/CMJC is a ministry of national WMU.

The job-readiness programs will be highlighted during the concert, which also will feature the testimony of a CWJC graduate.

The youth choirs of Shades Crest Baptist Church, the Baptist Church of the Covenant, Meadow Brook Baptist Church and Mountain Brook Baptist Church, all in the Birmingham area, will accompany Matthews.

For more information, visit www.mpowerministries.org or call Bethany Rushing at 205-595-5959. (TAB)



Photo by Lyle Ratliff

Alabama's Gulf Coast businesses rebuild after oil spill, slow summer

By Martine Bates Sharp
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's more than a month into the fall — normally time for business at the beach to slow down. But this year has been anything but normal, and fall looks like the busiest time of the year for Alabama's Gulf Coast.

An explosion on an oil drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20 killed 11 workers and short-circuited the tourist season that usually kicks off on Memorial Day and ends on Labor Day, with spurts of activity before and after the holiday weekends. The damaged well beneath the platform was not capped until July 15, after 206 million gallons of oil spilled into the Gulf.

Although the oil didn't make landfall in the area until early June, fears of a ruined vacation prompted multitudes of people to cancel or simply not make plans to visit Alabama beaches.

'Our worst ever'

Sammie Warwick, manager of Island Retreat RV Park in Gulf Shores, described the 2010 season as "our worst ever" in the seven years the park has been open.

"This year, even our regulars who leave their campers parked here all summer and travel back and forth decided not to come," Warwick said. "The news media made it sound terrible when it really wasn't."

Reports published by the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau show tax-

able lodging rentals during the summer of 2010 down 46.5 percent over the previous summer and retail sales down by 27.8 percent.

While Island Retreat managed to survive the dismal summer, other businesses did not. A sign on the Wheelhouse Restaurant on Highway 59, the main road into Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, reads "It's been fun. Closed." A sign in front of the Captain's Galley, a restaurant on county Road 10 along the Bon Secour River, reads "Closed due to BP oil spill."

Labor Day brought more tourists than summer but not the usual number.

"We're normally completely full for Labor Day and the shrimp festival (held the second weekend in October on the beaches of Gulf Shores)," Warwick said. "This year, Labor Day was slow. We had some vacancies. We were almost 85 percent full for the shrimp festival."

Tourists continued to come the weekend after the festival for free concerts featuring Bon Jovi and Brad Paisley. The concerts, which were part of the Concerts for the Coast series that began in July with Jimmy Buffett, were designed to lure tourists to the area. The plan worked, drawing large crowds — an estimated 60,000 total for the two latest concerts — and filling hotels, condos and campgrounds up to 90 percent occupancy.

A press release issued in early October by the Unified Area Command, a group with representatives from BP — which holds the drilling permit for the well — and a number of federal

CHRISTIAN CONCERTS

Dec. 10-12: Squire and Sam Parsons and The Glorymen

Jan. 7: Danny Funderburk, Heart to Heart and The Revelators

Jan. 8: Danny Funderburk, The Pathfinders and Mountain Joy

Jan. 9: Danny Funderburk, Heart to Heart, The Revelators, The Pathfinders and Mountain Joy

Jan. 21: Appointed By Grace and The Copenhavers

Jan. 22-23: Appointed by Grace, The Copenhavers and Heaven Bound

Feb. 4: The LeFevres

Feb. 5: The LeFevres, Majestic Sounds and Harper Trio

Feb. 6: Local churches

Feb. 12: Gold City

Feb. 19-20: Mystery Men

March 4: The Pfiefers

March 5: Buddy Lyles and The Journeymen

March 6: Local churches

March 11: The Pfeifers

March 19: The Drummonds, Marla Rattiff and Ernie and Missy Fultz

March 20: Local churches

April 9: New Ground, Emmaus Road and Second Coming

April 10: Local churches

Concerts will be held at The Wharf, Romar Beach Baptist Church and other locations. Concerts are subject to change. For more information about concerts or an updated schedule, contact Paul Smith at 251-981-8966 or paul@romarbeach.org.

agencies, noted that more than 90 percent of previously closed fishing waters had reopened and that all seafood samples had passed "sensory and chemical testing for oil and dispersant contamination."

But the news is not all good for the Gulf Coast. Although no oil is detectable on the beaches or in the water, it lurks just below the surface in the sand.

In an Oct. 13 press briefing, Coast Guard Rear Adm. Paul Zukunft reported, "Some of our more challenging areas continue to be what we call amenity or recreational beaches along the Florida panhandle and in Orange Beach (and) Gulf Shores, where some of that oil had actually aggregated into that sand column. And so we're doing a rather deep clean of that

sand to restore those to original conditions."

The "deep clean" involves two pieces of machinery dubbed "sand sharks" that can go down more than 3 feet to sift sand and remove tar. Zukunft said the deep cleaning has begun in less-populated areas and may continue into the winter. But even with the continued cleanup, Gulf-area tourism officials encourage Alabamians to take advantage of winter events such as the 26th annual Frank Brown International Songwriters' Festival set for Nov. 11-21, the extended red snapper season (Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays only) until Nov. 22 and the many lodging specials available for the fall and winter seasons.

For more information, visit www.gulfshores.com.



Photo by Brian Sharp



Photo by Lyle Ratliff



Photo by Brian Sharp



Photo by Lyle Ratliff



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FEELING THE EFFECTS — Churches along the Gulf Coast have experienced a drop in attendance and giving. Three-fourths of Romar Beach Baptist Church's congregation in the summer is typically made up of tourists.

Gulf Coast ministry looks different post-oil spill

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Our difficulty is we have folks to volunteer but don't have much for them to do," said Rick Barnhart, director of missions for Baldwin Baptist Association. "It's not like a hurricane or tornado or anything like that. Volunteer teams find themselves scratching their heads, saying, 'We don't know what to do.'"

The association has had to start from square one to figure out the best way to reach out to Gulf Coast residents following the recent oil spill.

For Nathan Diehl, who has been doing resort ministry with Baldwin Association since 2007, that first meant reaching out to oil spill workers, but now that the summer is gone, so are the workers.

"We held a special service for the spill workers one Sunday over the summer, and that was a big success, and we thought that would be a more consistent outreach," Diehl said. "But then they ended up moving to a different part of the beach, and we don't really see workers at all anymore."

Reaching out to locals has proven to be a challenge as well. Barnhart said one especially big hurdle has been assessing the needs and deciding how to best invest time, money and resources rather than just having a "knee-jerk" reaction. That desire to really pinpoint needs led to the development of Love in Action on Wheels, a trailer-turned-food bank that traveled to churches for four weeks in September and October. Not only did it deliver much-needed supplies to congregations and communities but it also allowed workers to talk with locals about problems they face.

Now that the trailer has finished making the rounds, "I'm hoping to be able to take the information we gleaned from those families to see what needs are left," Barnhart said. "One important thing we've already found is that the main issue isn't unemployment — it's underemployment."

After all, Gulf Coast establishments have seen an extreme decrease in business in recent months.

"Basically there was no tourism this summer, and that meant so many businesses were hurt," said Paul Smith, pastor of Romar Beach Baptist Church, Orange Beach. "And it's not just been condos and restaurants; businesses like dry cleaners and walk-in medical clinics have also taken a hit, and right now, we don't see an end to it."

Pews and offering plates have felt the effects of the oil spill, too. Typically tourists make up three-fourths of Romar Beach Baptist's congregation in the summer.

So Smith is looking for ways to bring people back to the region. He attended the National Quartet Convention in September and began recruiting gospel groups to perform in the Orange Beach area. His goal was to get a handful of groups to agree to come south, but ultimately 100 artists signed

on to help the Gulf (see schedule, page 4).

The first concert — featuring Squire Parsons and friends — is set for December at the convention center at The Wharf in Orange Beach, and Smith said the plan is to host about two such concerts a month through spring. In fact, he hopes that soon Orange Beach will become known as "the Gospel-singing Capital of the Gulf."

Gifts for children

Smith plans to encourage those attending the concert to donate a Christmas gift for local children, who might not have presents otherwise. The concert series is supported by the church's Gulf Coast Disaster Relief Fund, and donations are accepted at Regions bank locations statewide.

"If we look back, every time we've experienced a disaster, God has made something good come of it," Smith said. "I'm excited about how God is going to turn this spill into a wonderful positive."

For more information, visit www.romar-beach.org or call 251-981-8966.

"IF WE LOOK BACK, EVERY TIME WE'VE EXPERIENCED A DISASTER, GOD HAS MADE SOMETHING GOOD COME OF IT."

Pastor Paul Smith
Romar Beach Baptist Church

Oyster Bay sees decrease in giving, trusts God is in control

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

Oyster Bay Baptist Church, Gulf Shores, on Splash Island, has had its building blown away twice by hurricanes. But nothing has impacted the Baldwin Baptist Association church more than the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

"This [disaster] has taken us aback because no one knows how to deal with it and we don't know when it's going to end," Pastor Jerry Peebles said.

One thing the church does know: The spill, which began after an April 20 explosion sank a drilling rig and allowed more than 200 million gallons of oil to flow into the Gulf, is draining dollars from the offering plate.

'It's been a challenge'

Oyster Bay Baptist, which runs between 200 and 250 in Sunday morning worship, saw giving drop approximately 25 percent this summer.

But it's not because church members are not being faithful. Giving is down because some do not have jobs or have taken drastic pay cuts, Peebles said. Take his wife for example. Her pay and hours were cut by 40 percent this summer.

"One works; one doesn't. You wonder how you're going to help them walk through this," Peebles said of his congregation. "It's been a challenge the likes that I've never had as a pastor."

For Oyster Bay Baptist members Bob and Jeanne Donald, it's all too familiar. The Donalds were living in Valdez, Alaska, in 1989 when the Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred. Twenty-one years later and 4,400 miles away, they are experiencing their second oil spill and all its effects.

"It was more of a slow-motion disaster than the Exxon Valdez," Bob Donald said. "After [the Exxon Valdez] spilled, that was it and they knew what to do. Here I remember not thinking too much about [the spill] because I assumed it wouldn't take them long to stop it and to go on. As time went on, apprehension [grew]."

In May, the couple, who own Hope's Cheesecake, started to see a decline in sales. By June, sales were down 54 percent from June 2009.

"We were building a strong business until (Hurricane) Ivan hit us (in 2004), and we've been trying to get back to that position gradually," he said. "Last year was a good year; every year since Ivan, we've been doing a little bit better. This year, we were hoping it'd be even better. But we [didn't have] much of a summer at all. Now we're holding our breath."

That's true for fellow church member Linda Center and her husband, Bill, too. They own a wedding service business called Weddings by the Bay.

In their fourth year, the Centers average 40 weddings a year but had about 10 cancellations this summer.

"We could tell (business was down) because prior to the oil spill, we were getting 25 hits (on our website) and 25 calls

a day with people interested in booking their weddings," Linda Center said. "And then when the oil spill hit, [Bill] could see people weren't viewing our website and the calls stopped. It was devastating because it was going to be our best year."

Even though the couple never had oil show up on their property, which sits on the Gulf on Splash Island and is the site for their weddings, the booms placed to keep the oil from coming ashore were almost as much of a deterrent.

"When people came to view our property for 2011, they saw the oil booms and were turned away," she said. "It's awful when you have a boom out there and customers [ask] how long it [is] going to be there."

And while the Centers and Donalds are finding ways to survive, so is Oyster Bay Baptist.

"As far as our church is concerned, we are OK when it comes to the daily operations. We're blessed because we're debt-free," Peebles said, adding the one thing the church does need is money to help its community.

Churches like Fairview Baptist, Apex, N.C., and Damascus Baptist, Brewton, are meeting that need and others by sending money, gifts for the community, encouragement cards and prayers. Peebles said this is "the body of Christ being the body of Christ."

"People who are sending us money and support we're taking that and putting that back into the community," he said. "We're helping the needs of the community that are sometimes overwhelming."

'We have a peace'

Through it all, Oyster Bay Baptist members have not forgotten that God is in control and will carry them through this difficult time.

"For my wife and I, we've been blessed so much; we know this is just a bump in the road and our God will get us through it," Bob Donald said. "Even though we are struggling and our business is suffering ... we have a peace about it."



Photo by Lyle Ratliff

MEETING NEEDS — Jerry Peebles, pastor of Oyster Bay Baptist Church, Gulf Shores, says the church continues to put money back into the community even though giving has dropped and finances are tight.

Across Alabama's Associations

CAHABA

► **Faith Chapel Church, Marion**, will celebrate homecoming Nov. 7, 11 a.m., with missionaries Matt and Wendy Blaylock. Lunch will follow. Lloyd Stockman is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Bruce Calhoun** is the new pastor of **The Church on the Circle, Enterprise**. He comes from Hollonville Church, Williamson, Ga., where he served as pastor. He also has served several other Alabama churches. Calhoun holds a bachelor's degree from Mercer University in Macon, Ga., and master of divinity and doctor of ministry from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Glenda, have two children. ► **Lanny Shepard** is the new pastor of **New Hope Church, Brundidge**.



CALHOUN



SHEPARD

He comes from Life Community Cell Church, Enterprise. He also has served several other Alabama churches. Shepard is a graduate of Troy University. He and his wife, Sheila, have two children and one grandchild. ► **New Ebenezer Church, Elba**, in the Curtis community, will celebrate homecoming Nov. 7. There will be no Sunday School. The Johnson Trio will sing at 10:30 a.m. The worship service will be at 11:30 a.m. Travis Johnson will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow at noon.

COLUMBIA

► **Smyrna Church, Dothan**, will celebrate homecoming Nov. 7 10:45 a.m. with Bobby Richardson. Steve Lewis will lead the music. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. Lunch will follow the service at noon. Clayton Bath is interim pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Southside Church, Opp**, will hold Church Awakening with Dwight Singleton Nov. 8-10, nightly at 7. Brad Ingram will sing. For information call 334-493-6340. Greg Hart is interim pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Kyuka Church, Attalla**, in the Duck Springs community, will hold a weight management seminar with Body 4 Believers Nov. 9, 11, 16 and 18, 6:30 p.m. David Bankson is pastor.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold a luncheon meeting Nov. 9, 11 a.m., with Bruce Spivey, minister of music and senior adults for Hartford Church. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by Nov. 4. Mike Shirah is pastor.

MADISON

► **Oak Park Church, Huntsville**, will celebrate its 45th anniversary homecoming Nov. 14, 10:30 a.m. Harold Sellers, director of missions for Madison Association, will speak. Alverson Boyd will provide special music. Lunch will follow. Alan Crawford is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Glennwood Church, Morris**, honored Interim Pastor Tim Thompson and his family with a reception Oct. 24 for Pastor Appreciation Day.

RANDOLPH

► **Otis Bentley** resigned as di-

rector of missions of **Randolph Association**.

SELMA

► **Northside Church, Selma**, will hold a gospel singing Nov. 13, 7 p.m., with The Nelons. For information call 334-874-8276. Kenny Hatcher is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Concord Church, Calera**, will hold a singing Nov. 7, 5 p.m. There will be quartets, trios, duets and solos by church members, praise bands and drama teams. Benefits will go to the purchase of a church bus. Kyle Ziglar is worship minister. Daryle Nichols is pastor. ► **North Shelby Church, Birmingham**, will hold an arts and crafts fair Nov. 19, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., and Nov. 20, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. For information call 205-995-9056, e-mail artsyfartsycas@gmail.com or visit the church's Facebook page or www.northshelbybaptist.org. Allan Murphy is pastor. ► **First Church, Pelham**, will host decorated Vietnam veteran Tim Lee Nov. 14, 8, 9:15 and 10:45 a.m. All veterans will be recognized with a special emphasis on those who served in Vietnam. Clean and gently used coats, sweaters, toboggans and gloves will be collected for Three Hots and a Cot, a nonprofit organization for homeless veterans. Mike Shaw is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Liberty Church, Duncannon**, will hold a harvest festival Nov. 20, 2 p.m. For information call 205-242-2091. Kenny Overstreet is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Ridge Road Church, Opelika**, will host Christian humorist/musician Brother Billy Bob Bohannon (Bill King) Nov. 7, 11 a.m. King also will preach in the evening service at 6 p.m. Harvey Miller is pastor.



Portersville Church celebrates 100th anniversary

"There is something special when you walk through those doors," Nancy Laws said of the church she has been a member of since 1956.

And Sept. 12, 104 members, former pastors and visitors experienced the thrill of walking into Portersville Baptist Church to celebrate its 100th anniversary.

Pastor Jimmy Clanton said this day of celebration was a "dream come true" for members who have been rebuilding the body over the past few years.

When Clanton came to the DeKalb Baptist Association church in July 2005, there were only 11 members in the congregation. Today the church averages between 55 and 70 attendees each Sunday.

"God has truly blessed our church with growth both numerically and spiritually. It was exciting to celebrate [our anniversary] together because we got to rejoice for the magnitude of God's grace and mercy," Clanton said.

The congregation gathered to celebrate during the morning worship service, which included a program put on by the youth and a message by Clanton, and a luncheon. A representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a plaque, honoring its century of service.

Hampton Heights rings bell to celebrate 50 years

What better way to mark a major milestone than ringing a church bell for God's glory?

Hampton Heights Baptist Church, Tusculumbia, celebrated its 50th anniversary Oct. 17 by doing just that.

In fact, the church bell, which had been in storage for several years, was refurbished and mounted on a new frame for the occasion.

The anniversary celebration was a unique time of fellowship for all in attendance, including several former members and staff members and charter members. Former Pastor Ted Vafeas brought the message. The service was followed by lunch and a special concert by local artist Martha Riddle.

A representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque in honor of the church's service, while Eddy Garner, director of missions for Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association, presented a letter of encouragement.

"It is a wonderful thing to look back at all that God has done and how He has provided for us," Pastor Richard Edmonds said. "It's an even greater thing to know that He is still working and still leading. We look forward with great anticipation to what God will do through us over the next 50 years."

Pine Flat marks 175 years with triple attendance

Pine Flat Baptist Church, Suttle, boasted nearly three times its normal attendance of 40 Oct. 17 as it celebrated homecoming and its 175th anniversary. Current and former members gathered to recognize the Cahaba Baptist Association church's milestone.

"It's always good to see former members and hear their stories about how it used to be," Pastor Michael Brooks said, adding many of them "contributed greatly to the Lord's work through our church."

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was the featured speaker. Bill Wallace, director of missions for Cahaba Association, also addressed the congregation.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, was on hand to present a framed proclamation recognizing the church's years of service.

Lunch followed the service.

Looking to Pine Flat Baptist's future, Brooks said, "[I hope] we continue to try to be salt and light in our community and to minister to the people of Perry County."

Richter crowned Miss Samford University



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Kelsey Richter, a junior nursing major from Albany, Ga., was crowned Miss Samford University 2011 on Oct. 16.

Richter, age 20, daughter of Pam and Greg Richter, will represent Samford in the Miss Alabama scholarship pageant in June.

Her pageant platform is "Hospice — A Giving Spirit Makes All Things Bearable." For her talent presentation, Richter performed a pop vocal, "I've Got the Music in Me."

She attends Birmingham's The Church at Brook Hills.

Pageant finalists were Sarah

Kathryn Sharp, a sophomore nursing major from Vestavia Hills, first runner-up; and Ashla Taylor, a senior education major from McCalla, second runner-up.

Kaleigh Warwick, a sophomore fine arts major from Atlanta, won the talent competition for her on-stage painting of a portrait of the late Samford benefactor Ralph W. Beeson.

Other awards went to Victoria Underwood, lifestyle and fitness; Sharp, spirit of Samford; and Mariam Yousif, Miss Congeniality.

(Samford)



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- Be as concise as possible

Ezell discusses vision, keys to NAMB's future

(continued from page 1)
will not necessarily be full-time staff.

"We will use pastors and others who are doing a wonderful job where they are but can advise us in our efforts," Ezell continued. "We are now living in 2010; [because of technology] you do not have to have everyone [living] in Alpharetta in order to work together."

A few weeks prior to the board meeting, he sat down with J. Gerald Harris, editor of Georgia's Baptist newspaper, *The Christian Index*, for an interview.

Ezell told Harris the reason for downsizing is to be better stewards of the monies coming from Southern Baptists.

"I can't go and look state directors in the face and talk about being better stewards of our money if I don't start at home first," he said. "We have not done that in years, and in any organization, there has to be some course correction from time to time."

But it's not just the employees at NAMB's headquarters who may be affected; missionaries on the field will be examined as well.

"We owe it to Southern Baptists to put missionaries on the field that are qualified, doing the work and serving the churches and the people," Ezell said. "If people are serving in the area of evangelism, we will want to know how many people are coming to faith in Christ."

"It will take awhile to change the NAMB DNA, but we will do it through attrition, retirement incentives and infusing some



BP photo

ALL ONBOARD — Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, speaks to the board of trustees about his vision and plans for the agency. The board met in Los Angeles Oct. 17-20.

of the right DNA," he added.

In addition to talking about NAMB's future as far as structure and staffing, Ezell addressed questions about the criticism surrounding his nomination as president and his former church's giving to the Cooperative Program.

Moving forward

"I understand why some have come out against my election," Ezell said. "I don't blame them at all, and I hope to be friends

with them. But now that it has happened, the best thing for the Kingdom's sake is that we move forward together and get this done, because that is why I am here — to try to make [NAMB] work better.

"I want to connect with as many state leaders as possible, and I hope those state executives will give our relationship a chance," he added. "I realize I am starting behind the eight ball because some of these relationships have been strained in the past, but I want us to do it together."

Ezell said what hurt him the most was the suggestion that Highview Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., where he served as pastor for 14 years, is "not a giving church."

"At Highview, we gave [directly] to church planters in order to be effective stewards, because we realized that through traditional giving channels, not enough of the money was getting to where it really needed to go," he said.

But that shouldn't be the case any longer, Ezell said. "That is why I want to be here (at NAMB) ... to provide such a compelling vision and such an effective strategy that [churches] are going to want to give."

"I didn't come here to go out and beg churches to just give," he said. "They are giving and we are competing for dollars, but we want to do something that people can believe in."

"Take Annie Armstrong. We receive more than \$50 million in the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering," Ezell said. "There is no reason why that can't be \$100 million if we provide a compelling vision and effective strategy. I know I keep saying that, but that is the missing part [of the NAMB formula]."

What already is in existence at NAMB that Ezell does not want to change is its national evangelism strategy, God's Plan for Sharing (GPS).

"Evangelism and church planting is a dual track, and when I think of church planting, I think of evangelism," Ezell said.

"GPS is the tool we are going to use for evangelism," he continued. "I think our GPS is a very effective way of doing that, and we are only one year into a 10-year emphasis; I have no intention of backing up on that."

In light of all the changes and restructuring Ezell has proposed in his short time as president, he is asking Southern Baptists "to give us a chance."

"Anytime there is change, there is fear and uncertainty," he said. "I would ask for people to just give us a chance, to give me some time."

"I would ask that they draw their conclusions when we have had a chance to make some kind of impact," Ezell continued. "You can't turn this around overnight; this is a big entity."

"Southern Baptists need some wins; we need some banners in our rafters," he said. "My intention is to give them some early wins so they can say, 'NAMB gets it! They are starting to change.'"

"We are going to work hard to be the missions agency that Southern Baptists desire and deserve," Ezell concluded.

(Compiled from wire services)

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New Salem Baptist Church, Owens Cross Roads, in Madison Baptist Association will dedicate its new Christian Life Center on Nov. 7 at 6 p.m. The Shoals Praise and Worship Choir will provide special music with Fred Hendon directing. For more information, call 256-518-9165 or visit www.newsalemchurch.com. Richard Anderson is pastor.

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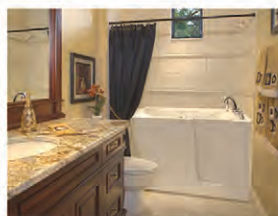


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Staying out of the middle

Have you ever had two friends who just could not get along?

Or maybe it was a spouse and a child. Or maybe it was two co-workers. It always seemed as if the two of them could not find peace in their relationship.

If that relationship was like most relationships, then one person or both of them probably came to you eventually to share about the frustration. You may have listened, tried to understand and be empathetic and perhaps even tried to explain the other person's perspective. You tried to create peace.

Then it happened. One person asked you to either speak to the other person or do something about the problem.

This happened to me in a job years ago. I was supervising a group of social workers. Two of them could not get along, and during supervision, they would both share their frustrations. Then they asked me to do something about the situation.

Since we were a team, it was important to me to keep peace among the members. I was also the super-

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



visor, so I thought it was my role.

I did intervene and the result was typical of anytime we insert ourselves in the middle of someone else's strained relationship.

First, because I did not side with either one, neither was happy with my solution. Then they both were frustrated because I had become involved in something they no longer saw as my business.

Next I had to deal with estrangement from both of them. So not only did their relationship continue to suffer but my relationships with the two of them also suffered. I got in the middle.

The funny thing is that we repeat this cycle over and over again. We so desperately want peace and understanding between the people

we care about that we, too often, get in the middle. The result of this inevitably becomes strained relationships with us and continued tension in the relationship between the people we are trying to help.

The best way we can help is to listen and be empathetic but refuse to get involved.

Encourage those involved to talk to each other. Remember God made us to be in relationship with each other.

It is never our place to stand in the middle of two people so they can have a relationship. That is their responsibility and it will never occur unless they make it occur.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Peace in a relationship can be established only by the two people in the relationship.

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

N.C. Baptist paper editor Jameson resigns

The editor of North Carolina Baptists' newspaper has agreed to resign his post to prevent a threatened motion to defund the publication from being made at the Nov. 8-10 Baptist State Convention of North Carolina annual meeting.

Norman Jameson offered to resign his post at the *Biblical Recorder* prior to a regularly scheduled board meeting in Charlotte on Oct. 21.

Jameson, editor of the *Recorder*

for just over three years, called his resignation "not required, but necessary."

"Nobody asked me to resign," he said. "Nobody threatened to fire me."

Sandy Beck, director of missions in the Carolina Baptist Association, recently wrote convention leaders warning that if Jameson were not removed as editor, there would be a motion from the floor of the convention to amend the Cooperative Program (CP) unified

budget to defund the *Recorder*. CP funding accounts for about 45 percent of the *Biblical Recorder's* current budget of \$726,500.

Jameson, a Baptist journalist since 1977, said he was confident until just hours before his board meeting that the *Recorder* would survive such a challenge if it were to materialize.

But with no such confidence expressed by the board, he offered to resign.

(ABP)

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PASTOR: Fairmount Baptist Church is currently seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: Fairmount Baptist Church, Pulpit Committee, P.O. Box 66, Red Level, AL 36474.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER: Central Baptist Church in Gardendale, Ala., is accepting resumés for a bivocational youth minister. Send resumés to: Central Baptist Church, 4650 Newfound Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117, or e-mail them to: lawanna@gcbaptist.org.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: First Baptist Church, Dothan, Ala., is seeking a full-time children's minister. The target group for this position is 1st-5th graders. Interested candidates please e-mail to: jfain@fbcdothan.org.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER: East Highland Baptist Church in Hart-

selle is currently accepting resumés for a part-time children's minister. Mail to: EHBC, Children's Minister Search Committee, P.O. Box 888, Hartselle, AL 35640.

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DIRECTOR OF WEEKDAY EDUCATION MINISTRY: Camellia Baptist Church, Prattville, Ala., is currently seeking a director for their established weekday education ministry. Must have two years minimum teaching experience in a weekday preschool classroom along with a bachelor's degree in education and/or extensive training in the area of preschoolers and administration/financial matters. Send resumés to: Camellia Baptist Church, ATTN: Letitia Henson, 201 Woodvale Road, Prattville, AL 36067, or by e-mail to: hensfour@bellsouth.net.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Tony Barber
Bluff Park Baptist Church

Perhaps you have been wrestling with the idea of being “saved,” of Jesus dying for your sins.

What did His death on the cross accomplish? How does it work?

Peter stated very explicitly that Jesus died on the cross so that we could be made righteous: “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24, NIV).

Is that too much for the human mind to understand?

Not at all.

Let me take you back to your last shower. When you turn off the water, you are standing there soaking wet. Your desire is to be dry. You reach for a towel and in a few minutes, you are, indeed, dry.

How does that work? The towel does not give you its dryness; it leaves you dry by taking your wetness. At the beginning of the procedure, you were wet and the towel was dry. At the end, the towel is wet and you are dry.

Pretty simple, huh?

In the same way, when you realize that you are “wet” with sin and want desperately to be “dry” and righteous, you reach for Jesus. He is perfectly righteous.

But when the procedure is completed, you are dry, having been made righteous by Jesus, who has absorbed your sin. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23, NIV).

I invite you to stand at the foot of the cross, completely dry, and look up at an amazing Savior who is soaking wet with your sin.

Yes, it is that simple.

‘Completely submitted’

UMobile student shares Christ through horse whisperer-style events

By Amy Wright
Special to The Alabama Baptist

For Chance Hill, saddle-training horses is more than just a hobby. It’s a mission.

The University of Mobile sophomore business management student from Satsuma demonstrates the practice of training a young horse before a live audience and relates it to the biblical process of discipleship.

Hill, a young man with a contagious smile and dusty cowboy boots, described the ministry with enthusiasm. Working with host churches, he draws a crowd with only a young untrained horse and a round pen.

“During a period of about two hours, I’ll work the horse, trying to train it. I relate that to how we work with Christ” to learn to obey Him, Hill said.

As he demonstrates the 10-step training process, Hill explains to the audience how teaching a horse to submit to a rider can be symbolic of a person learning to submit to God.

“At the end, when I saddle the horse, I’ll ride the horse for a few minutes, and then — it gets me every time — I lay the horse down. Usually there’s not a dry eye in the crowd,” he said. “When a horse lays down for you, he’s completely submitted to you. I’ll relate that to how we should fully submit to God and let Him take over.”

Though Hill has been around horses almost his entire life, he credits his ministry involvement to answered prayer.

When Paul Daily, co-founder of



Photo courtesy of UMobile

EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH — Chance Hill, a sophomore at the University of Mobile, does a horse training demonstration at Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, in May. He uses this as a means to share the gospel.

Wild Horse Ministries, and Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, approached Hill about doing his own demonstration, the young rider was unsure how to respond.

“I’ve loved horses and whatever I do, I want to do it for the Lord,” he said.

So Hill agreed to do his own dem-

onstration, but while he was preparing for his first one in the spring, a horse reared up and landed on top of him.

“People that saw it said I was dead,” Hill recounted.

Miraculously he escaped with only minor injuries. And in June, Hill completed his first demonstration in Bessemer.

Through the support of his father, Roy Hill, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Satsuma, and his church family, the first demonstration was a success.

“My dad can sense when I’m struggling with what to say and he helps a lot,” he said.

Even through the excitement, Hill doesn’t forget the most important part of the presentation.

“At the end, after the horse is laid

down, it leads into a time of invitation. We open up the round pen, and I take the saddle off the horse and lay it down to serve as an altar.”

Explaining that the saddle serves as the central symbol of submission and service to God, he then invites members of the audience to come forward and submit their lives to Jesus Christ.

These are the moments that prove that an ordinary love for horses can become an extraordinary mission. That mission “is to see people come to know the Lord,” Hill said.

For more information or to book a demonstration, contact Cindy Johnson of First, Satsuma, at 251-675-1280. For information about these and other types of evangelistic ministries, contact Gilbreath at 1-800-264-1225.

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ERLC’s Land supports building of Tennessee Islamic center

After opposing the building of a mosque near Ground Zero in New York City, Richard Land has come out in support of Muslims seeking to build a new Islamic center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Land, president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, recently signed on as a charter member of the Interfaith Coalition on Mosques, an initiative sponsored by the Jewish Anti-Defamation League.

The coalition of religious leaders from Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith traditions filed a friend-of-the-court brief opposing a lawsuit filed by citizens seeking to halt construction of the new center. The

suit alleges that local officials acted improperly in granting building permits to an existing Muslim congregation that has outgrown its facilities, but the brief says that argument amounts to “unlawful viewpoint discrimination” against a “disfavored” religion.

Land, who has said publicly that he believes a proposed Islamic cultural center and mosque near the former World Trade Center site in lower Manhattan should be moved out of respect for survivors of those who lost lives in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, said in general Muslims have the same right as Christians and everyone else to worship as they please. (ABP)

How many Bible translations is too many?

If you stacked all the Bibles sitting in American homes, the tower would rise 29 million feet, nearly 1,000 times the height of Mount Everest.

More than 90 percent of American households own a Bible, and the average family owns three, according to pollsters at the Barna Group.

The American Bible Society hands out 5 million copies of the Good Book each year; 1.5 billion Gideon Bibles wait in hotel rooms worldwide.

Scripture outsells the latest diet fads, murder mysteries and celebrity bios year after year. Evangelical publishers alone sold an estimated 20 million Bibles in recession-battered 2009, raking in about \$500 million in sales, according to Michael Covington, information and education director of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

Experts say it's nearly impossible to calculate exactly how many Bibles are sold each year. But one thing is clear: The Good Book is great for business.

'A cash cow'

"Bibles are in many ways a cash cow," said Phyllis Tickle, a former longtime religion editor at *Publishers Weekly*. "The Bible is the mainstay of many a publishing program."

However, some Christian scholars wonder whether too much Good News can sometimes be a bad thing, as a major new translation and waves of books marking the 400th anniversary of the venerable King James Bible inundate the market this fall.

The assortment of translations and "niche Bibles" (think, "The Holy Bible: Stock Car Racing Edition") sow confusion and division among Christians, invite ridicule from relativists and risk reducing God's word into just another personal-shopping preference, the scholars say.

"I think we are drifting more and more to a diverse Babel of translations," said David Lyle Jeffrey, former provost of Baylor University and an expert on biblical translations. Jeffrey believes Americans need a "common Bible" — a role the King James Version played for centuries — to communicate the grandeur of Scripture without reducing it to "shopping-center-level" discourse.

"When we have so much diversity we lose our common voice," he said. "It is in effect



TAB photo

moving away from a common membership in the body of Christ into disparate, confusing misrepresentations of the rich wisdom of Scripture, which ought to unify us."

Leland Ryken, an English professor at Wheaton College, a leading evangelical school in Illinois, was more blunt.

Too much divergence

"When there is wide divergence among Bible translations, readers have no way of knowing what the original text really says," Ryken said. "It's like being given four different scores for the same football game, or three contradictory directions for getting to a town in the middle of the state."

Christian publishers, meanwhile, say they have an obligation — even a divine calling — to make Scripture ready and readable to as many people as possible.

Despite the Bible's ubiquity, Americans are not necessarily reading or absorbing

Scripture, said Paul Franklyn, associate publisher of the Common English Bible, a new translation sponsored by five mainline Protestant publishers.

For example, half of Christians cannot name the four Gospels; a third cannot identify Genesis as the Bible's first book, according to a recent study conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.

The new Common English Bible aims to present an easy-to-read translation from the "theological center," Franklyn said. Its New Testament debuts this fall; the entire Bible is due next year.

Despite the profitability of Bible publishing, penetrating the crowded and competitive market is a "big risk," requiring equal parts scholarship and salesmanship, Franklyn said. The Common English Bible publishers spent \$1 million on the translation and will dole out another \$3 million to get people to "pay attention" to it, he said.

Majority of high schoolers are virgins, study says

They may live in a sexually charged culture that essentially encourages them to have sex, but nearly 70 percent of high school-age teens are virgins, according to a new study of the nation's sexual habits.

Published in the October issue of the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, the study surveyed 820 adolescents nationwide via the Internet, a confidential method the researchers say is more likely to produce honest answers compared to a face-to-face or phone interview. Parents had to give consent.

The study found that 69.7 percent of boys and 68.4 percent of girls ages 16-17 have never had intercourse. Among 14- to 15-year-olds, the percentage is even higher — 90.1 percent for boys and 87.6 percent for girls.

Richard Ross, cofounder of the True Love Waits abstinence movement, told Baptist Press (BP) the study proves that abstinence messages can and do work.

"Less than a third of high schoolers have ever had sex. And that includes large numbers who only have had sex once," said Ross, assistant professor of student ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "Also, consider that more than 60 percent of sexually experienced teenagers regret what they have done [according to data from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy]. Combining those figures reveals that only a small segment of American teenagers are committed to a sexual lifestyle."

'Waiting on sex'

"The vast majority are entirely open to waiting on sex," Ross said. "Whether they do or not depends on which voices and influences around them are the strongest."

Among 16- to 17-year-olds, 16.1 percent of boys and 20.8 percent of girls had had intercourse in the previous month.

The study also asked teens about oral sex.

Depending on the question asked, between 66 and 71 percent of 16- to 17-year-old boys and girls had never participated. For 14- to 15-year-olds, it was around 87 percent for both sexes who had never participated.

Jimmy Hester, co-founder of the True Love Waits movement and the coordinator of True Love Waits for LifeWay Church Resources, said the study confirms what he has seen.

"Our experiences with True Love Waits over the past 17 years have shown a willingness on the part of students to consider and adopt God's plan for sexual behavior outside the marriage relationship," Hester told BP. "Once they understand the reasons behind sexual abstinence until marriage, and recognize the severe consequences when not practiced, most are willing to commit to it. The results of these types of reliable studies indicate trends toward better sexual behavior among students." (BP)

Scholars estimate that at least 200 English translations have been published since 1900 — many of them revisions of earlier texts. Sorting out the differences between the New American Bible and New American Standard Bible, for example, can be daunting for even experienced readers.

The market can be so confusing and crowded that half of customers who visit Christian stores to buy a Bible leave without one, according to a study presented to Christian retailers in 2006.

'Bibliolatry'

"Heck, I'm overwhelmed and I'm supposed to know what the hee-haw I'm doing," said Tickle, author of "The Great Emergence," a well-regarded book on the future of Christianity. "Bibliolatry is not a word I use very often, but we are probably veering very close to it."

To counter consumer confusion, publishers began marketing Bibles based on "felt needs," or secular interests, said Andy Butcher, an editor at the journal *Christian Retailing*.

Christian publisher Zondervan's 2010 catalog of Bibles ("The Book of Good Books") runs 223 pages and includes Bibles tailored toward black children, students, spiritual seekers, women with cancer, busy dads, new moms, recovering addicts, surfers, grandmothers and camouflage enthusiasts.

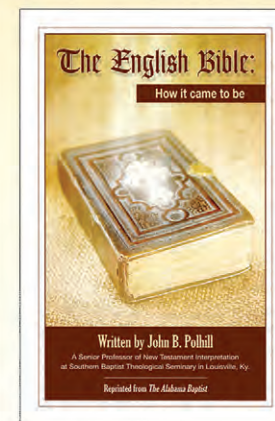
"The next thing will be a Bible for men in midlife crises with ads for Harley Davidson motorcycles inside," Jeffrey said.

Tim Jordan, a marketing manager at B&H Publishing Group, a leading Christian publisher that sells niche Bibles, compared them to conversation starters. "It's just being smart about where people are at and trying to meet them there," he said. "We need to engage people into the Bible."

Ryken, however, suspects publishers' motives may be more economic than spiritual. (RNS)

Which Bible is right for you?

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World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Catholic-Jewish tensions high after Vatican meeting

VATICAN CITY — A special Vatican meeting on the Middle East ended Oct. 23 with a flare-up in Catholic-Jewish tensions, after an American bishop declared the Bible does not give Jews privileged rights to the land of Israel. “We Christians cannot speak of the ‘promised land’ as an exclusive right for a privileged Jewish people,” said Archbishop Cyril Bustros, a native of Lebanon who is currently a Melkite Greek Catholic bishop in Newton, Mass. “This promise was nullified by Christ,” Bustros said at a Vatican news conference marking the end of a two-week session of the Synod of Bishops.

“There is no longer a chosen people — all men and women of all countries have become the chosen people.” Bustros’ remark drew swift and strong rebukes from Israeli spokesmen. “The comments of Archbishop Bustros reflect either shocking ignorance or insubordination in relation to the Catholic Church’s teaching on Jews and Judaism,” said Rabbi David Rosen, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee and an adviser to Israel’s Chief Rabbinate. Rosen, who addressed the synod in its first week, said the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s affirmed “the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish People, which is inextricably bound up with the land of Israel.” The synod’s closing document deplored both Palestinian suffering as a consequence of the “Israeli occupation” and the “suffering and insecurity in which Israelis live.” It also reiterated a frequent theme of synod participants by calling for “religious freedom and freedom of conscience” in Muslim lands.

Baptist attorney fights for human rights in Congo

LONDON — A Congolese-British Baptist who escaped death by firing squad in her home country three years ago is once again confronting the authorities to speak out against horrific human-rights abuses. Marie-Therese Nlandu, an attorney who specializes in international human rights, has requested the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague to look into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by President Joseph Kabila and other senior figures of the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s government.

Nlandu, a member of All Nations Baptist Church in London, submitted the request following the assassination of fellow human-rights activist Floribert Chebeya in June. She cites the widespread practice of rape and mutilation of young women in the Grand Kivu area of her country. Rape has frequently been employed as a weapon of war in Congo’s recent conflicts over the country’s mineral riches. Attacks against Kabila political rival Jean-Pierre Bemba and the murder of thousands in the Kongo Central province are also mentioned in Nlandu’s charges. In 2006 and 2007, Nlandu spent 160 days on death row, charged with treason after defending people in various court cases. After receiving treatment to recover from the injuries suffered as a result of the incarceration, Nlandu has traveled the world to speak to Congolese expatriate communities and raise awareness of the human-rights abuses.



Photo by Kristen Padilla

GOSPEL CHORUS — (L to r) Bill Benson, Roger Isbell, Wayne Linderman and Ted Stephens, known to many as the Howard College Quartet, reunite to sing at First Baptist Church, Roebuck Plaza, on Oct. 10.

‘More than just singing’ Quartet formed in 1960s regularly reunites to sing

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

Singing southern gospel music wasn’t popular for a music major at Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham in the 1960s. But that didn’t stop four church music majors — Bill Benson, Roger Isbell, Wayne Linderman and Ted Stephens — from locking themselves in a practice room to sing it.

“[The music department] thought the melodic lines of southern gospel music weren’t suitable for church. Gospel music was frowned on by many music professors,” said Isbell, music minister of First Baptist Church, Roebuck Plaza.

But he, Benson, Linderman and Stephens loved it.

“When we’d go to practice rooms where we were supposed to work on solos, we would find ourselves ... singing southern gospel, and after awhile, we discovered we could make up a quartet,” Stephens said.

And in Alabama Baptist churches, where these students served in some kind of music director role while in college, “they loved [southern gospel],” Isbell said.

Name game

The students soon began singing at one another’s churches and revivals, but it was a revival in Center Point in the mid-1960s that gave the quartet its name.

“Center Point was having this revival,” Isbell said. “They invited us to sing, but what happened is that they put it in the newspaper and it said, ‘Howard College Quartet to sing for revival.’”

When the dean of music and other music faculty members saw the announcement, they did not react well.

“They weren’t happy with that.

They took it as ‘the’ Howard College Quartet,” Isbell said. “I don’t think we ever told the church a name, but they knew we were students at Howard College. We got called to the dean’s office about that (announcement), because they said we were not allowed to use Howard College’s name.”

The students tried to assure the dean and the school that they did not give the church the name Howard College Quartet and would do their best to make sure the mistake didn’t get made again.

“We were not the Howard College Quartet,” Linderman said. “We really didn’t have a name. We were just a group of guys that enjoyed singing together.”

But thanks to the Center Point revival, people kept referring to them as the Howard College Quartet.

After the men graduated and went into their own music ministries, the quartet fell silent for a time.

“We still got together (to see each other), but we didn’t get all together,” Isbell said. “Everybody was just involved in their careers and raising their families.”

But about 15 years ago, one of the quartet members invited the other three to sing with him at his church’s revival. Since then, the quartet has

sung together at least once or twice a year even though two of the members live in Alabama, one in Georgia and one in Oklahoma.

“It has become more precious in the latter years,” Stephens said, adding, what he really appreciates is the fellowship time they have — “listening to what the guys have been through, (like) physical problems, and how the Lord has brought us through to now.”

And these men have been through a lot. In November 2009, Benson’s father passed away and this past July, Isbell’s wife, Sara, died shortly after he celebrated his 25th anniversary at First, Roebuck Plaza. At the funerals stood the other members of the quartet to mourn and sing with them.

“It’s more than just singing together; I feel like they are my family and my brothers,” Stephens said. “Our trails have crossed and our lives were not the same for it.”

Isbell added, “If you have one person who you know really loves you, then you are really blessed, but to have three guys and their wives (who love you), I think that’s very special.”

For more information about the quartet, call Isbell at 205-335-8989.

“It’s more than just singing together; I feel like they are my family and my brothers.”

Ted Stephens
Howard College Quartet



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 7

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce

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

BEING CAREFUL Ephesians 5:15-21

Sometimes adults devalue a sermon possessing a heavily negative tone that emphasizes what not to do. Those adults either do not find it appealing or automatically reject it. As a result, they may give very little attention to how they should live. Although a negative approach can have a certain limited value (see the Ten Commandments), the positive approach to Christian living holds a superior place. Such an approach is attractive to most believers, and it is especially encouraging to those who usually hear only the negative approach. This week's lesson, taking a positive approach, demonstrates how Christians are careful about their behavior.

Be Wise With Your Time (15-16)

In some versions of the Bible, the metaphor of walking is used five times (Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15) by the apostle Paul to describe the Christian life; it pictures our daily behavior. Walking is a process consisting of two steps repeated over and over again, one leg forward and then the other. The first "walk" Paul mentioned is to walk carefully. The most important thing is not where you walk but how you walk, living accurately and with great care. The opposite is walking carelessly and without proper guidance and forethought. Wise individuals plan and avoid behaving like fools. "Redeeming the time" means that we "buy up the opportunities," making the best use of our time. Since our lifetimes are limited, we need to make the most of our time by fulfilling God's purposes, utilizing every opportunity to worship and serve Him.

Be Aware of God's Will (17)

Knowing and understanding God's will through His Word is spiritual wisdom. "Understanding" points to using our minds to discover and do God's will. We find God's will as He transforms our thinking (Rom. 12:1-2) through His Word, prayer, meditation and worship. God wants us to know, understand and do His will. Through the Word, He reveals His plan (Col. 1:9-10), as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and minds (Col. 3:15) and we rely

upon His governing our circumstances (Rom. 8:28).

Be Filled With the Spirit (18-20)

The key to a God-honoring life is found here: "Be filled with the Spirit." Paul was not writing about the Holy Spirit's permanent indwelling (Rom. 8:9), which makes the believer's body the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). Nor was he speaking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places the believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Every believer is indwelt and baptized by the Spirit at the moment of salvation. Paul was giving a command to live continuously under the Holy Spirit's power. The command is plural, meaning it applies to all believers. It is in the present tense, indicating that we should continuously be filled, not just on special occasions. The verb is passive, pointing out that we do not fill ourselves but permit the Holy Spirit to fill us. The term "filled" has nothing to do with contents or quantity as if empty bottles needed some liquid poured into them. Here "filled" means to provide power for accomplishing a task, as when a sailboat's sails are filled with the wind, giving the boat the ability to sail through the sea. To be filled with the Spirit means to be constantly enabled by the Spirit to live a life dominated by Christ and His Word. There are three immediate personal consequences of being filled with the Spirit. First is joy, a deep-seated sense of adequacy and confidence regardless of the circumstances that expresses itself in singing, both public and private. Spirit-filled Christians enjoy being together and experiencing a sense of joyfulness in Christ. Second Spirit-filled Christians are thankful for who God is and what He has done and is doing through His Son.

Be Subject to One Another (21)

The third consequence of being filled with the Spirit is submission to one another. Every Spirit-filled Christian is to be a humble, submissive Christian, willing to serve others rather than dominating them and exalting oneself over them. This is the foundational attitude for the Christian's relationships and is rooted in his or her continuous reverence for God.

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

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

WHY THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS BETTER John 14:15-18, 27-31a; 15:11-16

Sir James Young Simpson, the great discoverer of chloroform's anesthetic qualities, was once asked, "What is the greatest discovery you ever made?" His answer must have astounded many of his hearers, as he replied, "The greatest discovery that I made was that although I was a great sinner, Jesus Christ is a great Savior!"

At the heart of the Christian faith, rather than a creed or an ethical code, there is a person who meets us and speaks to us, whose friendship is always open to us and who gives us comfort in our deepest inward needs. He offers us not only gifts of His grace but also Himself, as the Gift of all gifts, and in knowing Him, we discover everything that is worth experiencing, not only now but also throughout all eternity.

The Presence of God With Us (14:15-18)

One of the greatest promises to be found anywhere in Scripture is the promise of God's presence. In the context of telling His disciples that He would be leaving them, Jesus promised that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who would enable them to experience God's presence within their lives. The particular word that Jesus used to speak about the Holy Spirit is *paraclete*, which can be translated in various ways but basically means "the one called alongside so as to help." His presence with us means that we are not left as orphans but as people who sense God's presence with them in the midst of all of life's struggles and stresses. The Spirit's presence reminds us that He is the Spirit of truth. His presence with us is nurtured as we give our minds over to seeking His will, discovering more and more of who God is and what His purpose for our lives involves. He leads and invites us to a journey of discovery, listening to God's voice speaking to us in the Scriptures and following Him in lives of joyful obedience.

The Peace of God Within Us (14:27-31a)

In a world where trouble seems to be around every corner, Jesus' promise to give us the gift of peace brings a sense of assurance to an uncertain future. The peace He offers is not that of removing difficulties from our lives or taking us away from our problems but rather installing within our minds and hearts a sense of His comfort to support us so that we will be able to persevere. The peace Christ offers is not the same as the peace the world promises — temporary respite as a result of entertainment, fleeting pleasures or the distractions of various activities. Rather it is the assurance that God is in control of our circumstances and by committing all that we are to Him, we receive the gift of peace.

Paul spoke about God's peace in Philippians 4 as a peace that "passes all understanding." It is beyond our best endeavors to produce. It is a peace that is better than any human gift or promise. It is God's peace that enables us to be content in our circumstances and rejoice in His provision for our lives.

The Purpose of God for Us (15:11-16)

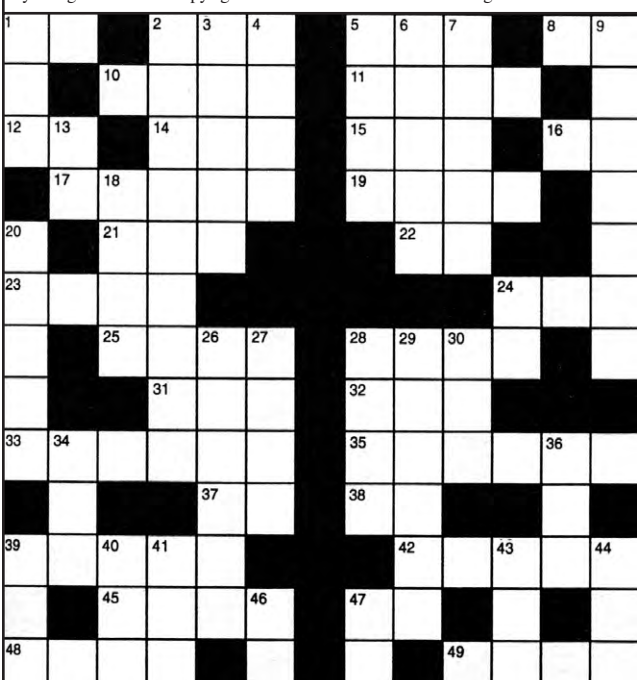
God's presence with us and His peace within us are able to help us to realize His purpose for us — that "our joy might be complete." Once again, Jesus was not speaking about temporary release from life's sufferings but rather that in the midst of all that we encounter in our daily discipleship, the Lord's joy can fill our hearts.

Paradoxically this joy is not self-centered. Indeed true joy, as my Sunday School teacher used to tell me, is Jesus first, Others next and Yourself last of all. This is what Jesus indicated in these verses. Joy only develops within the life of the person who listens to Jesus' voice commanding him or her to "love one another" as He has loved him or her.

The Christian life is meant to be a fruitful life. The fruit of the Spirit is love manifested in a variety of ways — patience when provoked, kindness in our attitudes, goodness in our actions, faithfulness in relationships, gentleness toward others and self-control in our lives. In this way, God's love is manifested and joy and peace fills our hearts.

Christian Crossword

By Marge Lifto Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Thou shalt not muzzle the _____. (1 Tim. 5:18)
2. To put on a garment.
5. _____ of me, and I shall give thee. (Ps. 2:8)
8. Washington, _____.
10. Set the city on _____ (Josh. 8:19)
11. The wicked _____ their bow. (Ps. 11:2)
12. _____, the winter is past. (Song of Sol. 2:11)
14. Why _____ we here? (2 Kgs. 7:3)
15. A time to be born, and a time to _____. (Ec. 3:2)
16. 40 (Roman numeral).
17. Mexican fare.
19. _____ with her suburbs. (1 Chron. 6:70)
21. A place to store coal.
22. An elevated track.
23. From whence cometh my _____. (Ps. 121:1)
24. I will break also the _____ of Damascus. (Amos 1:5)
25. Time in nothing _____.

- (Acts 17:21)
28. Biblical word for "wash."
31. The 7th Greek letter.
32. _____, lama sabachthani. (Matt. 27:46)
33. Subject for an essay.
35. Delivers a blow.
37. New Testament. (abbr.)
38. I go _____ prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)
39. To begin.
42. Eliemelech's wife. (Ruth 1:2)
45. _____ up and walk. (Luke 5:23)
47. In the year of our Lord. (abbr.)
48. Where Christ was placed after His Crucifixion.
49. A heavenly garden.
- _____ and Pleiades. (Job 9:9)
4. They forsook their _____. (Mark 1:18)
5. Son of Shammua. (Neh. 11:17)
6. To fish a certain way.
7. Let us _____ before the Lord. (Ps. 95:6)
9. When they were come to the place, which is called _____. (Luke 23:33)
13. Old Testament. (abbr.)
18. Having the ability.
20. _____, O Israel. (Zeph. 3:14)
24. To exist.
26. Limits to a certain amount.
27. As far as the _____ is from the west. (Ps. 103:12)
28. _____ some evil take me. (Gen. 19:19)
29. The _____ tree shall flourish. (Ec. 12:5)
30. Seven. (Roman numeral)
34. The sun waxed _____. (Ex. 16:21)
36. A shade tree.
39. _____ on the right hand of God. (Mark 16:19)
40. Put on strength, O _____ of the Lord. (Isa. 51:9)
41. Adam lost one for Eve.
43. Not young.
44. Hotel.
46. For example. (abbr.)
47. I _____ the bread of life. (John 6:35)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Burmese Christians fear future after election

YANGON, Myanmar — With Burma's (now Myanmar) first election in more than 20 years nearing, Christians in ethnic minority states fear that afterward the military regime will try to "cleanse" the areas of Christianity, sources said. The Burmese junta is showing restraint to woo voters in favor of its proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, but it is expected to launch a military offensive on insurgents in ethnic minority states after the Nov. 7 election, Burma watchers warned. When Burma Army personnel attack, they do not discriminate between insurgents and unarmed residents, said a representative of the pro-democracy Free Burma Rangers (FBR) relief aid group in Chiang Mai, close to the Thai-Burma border.

The military seems to be preparing its air force for an offensive, said Aung Zaw, editor of the Chiang Mai-based magazine *Irrawaddy*, which covers Burma. The FBR source said there are many unarmed Christian residents in zones where Burmese military personnel attack and kill anyone in sight. At least four years ago, a secret memo circulated in Karen state, "Program to Destroy the Christian Religion in Burma," that carried "point-by-point instructions on how to drive Christians out of the state," reported the British *Daily Telegraph* in 2007. The junta perceives all Christians in ethnic minority states as insurgents, according to the FBR. Three months ago, Burma Army's Light Infantry Battalions 370 and 361 attacked a Christian village in Karen state, the FBR source said. On July 23, in Tha Dah Der village, army personnel burned all houses, one of the state's biggest churches — which was also a school — and all livestock and cattle, FBR reported. More than 900 people fled to save their lives.

Christian in Bhutan imprisoned for showing films

GELEPHU, Bhutan — A court in predominantly Buddhist Bhutan has sentenced a Christian to three years in prison for "attempting to promote civil unrest" by screening films on Christianity. A local court in Gelephu convicted Prem Singh Gurung, a 40-year-old ethnic Nepalese citizen from Sarpang district in south Bhutan, on Oct. 6, according to the government-run daily *Kuensel*.

Gurung was arrested in May after local residents complained that he was showing Christian films in Gonggaon and Simkharkha villages in Jigmecholing block. Gurung invited villagers to watch Nepali movies, and between each feature he showed films on Christianity. Government attorneys could not prove "beyond reasonable doubt" that Gurung promoted civil unrest, and, therefore, "he was charged with an attempt to promote civil unrest," the daily reported. Gurung was also charged with violation of a Bhutanese law requiring authorities to examine all films before public screening.

Buddhism is the state religion in Bhutan, and the government is mandated to preserve its culture and religion according to the 2008 constitution. As in other parts of South Asia, people in Bhutan mistakenly believe that Christianity is a Western faith and that missionaries give monetary benefits to convert people from other religions. A Christian from Bhutan's capital, Thimphu, said the conviction of Gurung disturbed area villagers.

Journalist rearrested for role in murdering Christians

MALATYA, Turkey — A court in southeast Turkey on Oct. 15 ordered the arrest of a suspected "middleman" linking the murder of three Christian men to alleged high-level masterminds. The arrest order came after the testimonies of a former prison inmate and an incarcerated ex-intelligence worker at the Oct. 15 hearing. Journalist Varol Bulent Aral — one of the suspected "middlemen" who allegedly incited five young men to stab to death Turkish Christians Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel and German Christian Tilmann Geske at the Zirve Publishing Co. in Malatya — was re-arrested at the hearing. A key witness, Orhan Kartal, said while in prison with Aral, Aral detailed how he had planned the attack on the Zirve publishing house by psychologically preparing five young men for the gruesome act.

In Kartal's account, Aral also claimed that there was a higher figure behind him, retired Gen. Veli Kucuk. A second witness, Erhan Ozen, worked for the clandestine Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization (GIO). He said as early as 2004, GIO personnel were planning the Malatya murders and the assassination of Armenian editor Hrnt Dink. Ozen said after a meeting, some co-workers talked about how they were organizing an operation against the three Christians in Malatya in an effort to portray the state as ineffectual.

Farming God's Way

Baptist workers teach Malians new farming techniques

It was spring in Western Africa, and the previous year's meager harvest had been eaten. The crops for that year had not even been planted. For Malians dealing with years of drought, poor crop production and resulting hunger, timing is everything.

International Mission Board (IMB) representative Steve Roach is working to break this cycle. Roach, as the IMB's strategy coordinator for the Bambara people of Mali, is teaching them a different way of farming, one that will produce enough crops to eliminate starvation.

Roach, an Oklahoma native, first heard about Farming God's Way, a strategic, no-till farming program developed in Zimbabwe, during a visit to South Africa. Started 28 years ago, the program attempts to teach improved farming techniques through church networks. It combines biblical teaching with training in technology and management.

Each year for generations Malians have plowed the rough ground with cattle, tossed seeds unsystematically and burned off fields at the end of harvest. These are the practices Roach has been working to change.

Putting hands and feet to Roach's plan are Sam Jones, an IMB journeyman from Crystal Springs, Miss.; International Service Corps representative Slim Lanier, of Live Oak, Fla.; and Jeremy Toombs, a volunteer from Lawton, Okla. Previous helpers were Ryan Schelb, of Tampa, Fla., a volunteer who stayed for six months at his own expense, and Andy Motley, of Columbia, S.C., another volunteer who helped for three months. Despite long hours of back-breaking labor, primitive farming tools and brutal weather conditions, the men planted crops of corn, millet, peanuts and beans.

The idea behind the no-till farming plan is to keep the soil fertilized and in place, even with torrential rains and, in the process, share Bible stories teaching Malians the God-given potential of their land.

Because it is tradition to just toss seeds, many are washed away by rain, eaten by birds or just never grow because of crowding. With the no-till farming model, the farmer digs holes approximately 24 inches apart and 6 inches deep. Each row is about 30 inches apart.

Manure then is placed at the bottom of the hole and covered by a layer of dirt, leaving about 3 inches. Three seeds are placed into the hole and covered with the remaining dirt.

Placing manure in the hole first helps the soil remain fertilized even if the ground is flooded during the rainy season. "Whatever fertilizer you put in ... stays there and has enriched the soil that amount for next year," Roach said.

"Any kind of bean adds nitrogen

to the soil. Corn or millet, which are the staples here, need nitrogen," he said. "What the beans add to the soil, the corn takes out. It's kind of a symbiotic relationship."

Last year's lack of rain yielded few results with the new farming method. Unfortunately, the Malians' method produced even less. By February, the villagers were out of food — their harvest is not until November.

"[The villagers] greatly resisted the farming method and told us, 'We are farmers and we know how to farm better than you,'" Jones said. "They told us that we were crazy. This was hard to believe because they never produce enough food to eat for a whole year. ...

However, the traditions are so strong that they just couldn't admit that there might be a better way to do things than the way their fathers did them."

Beulah Baptist Church, Hopkins, S.C., has worked with Roach to come up with alternative methods to help the Malians feed themselves.

Something different

The church, which sends missions teams to Mali every couple of months, initially gave food to the people. But this year, they decided to try something different.

"I talked to [the villagers] about teaching them to fish instead of giving them a fish," said Brad Bessent, the church's senior pastor. "So we started a farming project with a well-watered garden."

With funds from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund and grant money from South Carolina churches and the state convention, there is now a fenced garden area that produces food year-round.

In addition, Bessent buys the villagers a bag of grain for every

compost hole they dig — but they must be to his specifications. As of June, Malians had dug 289 holes, although not all met the pastor's requirements.

Roach and the no-till farming group decided to try a new approach as well. The group found a new village in November 2009

"This year, our focus has been on ... church planting. The Lord has blessed that as we work with these three new believers."

Sam Jones
Southern Baptist representative

and explained they wanted to demonstrate a different way of farming and a better way to compost. The villagers agreed — and the group has had great success. "Because this village is not so gripped by the desperation of hunger, they are more open to new methods," Jones said.

And there have been even greater dividends.

"In February, three men accepted Christ. Since then, we've been meeting together weekly with these three men teaching them new stories from God's Word," Jones said.

Lanier, who is leading the men in this latest effort, and Jones have learned that some of the no-till method will just not work in Mali's soil, which is different from Zimbabwe's. However, the villagers are curious about the results.

"We will hopefully have a good crop of peanuts and beans," Jones said. "The villagers are taking note of how we planted both of these crops and are seemingly impressed at how they are doing."

"This year, our focus has been on the 'main' thing — church planting," Jones added. "The Lord has blessed that as we work with these three new believers. Planting a field in this village has given us a lot of credibility."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Some names have been changed for security reasons. (BP)

LifeWay's True Love Waits introduces new initiative

LifeWay Christian Resource's True Love Waits ministry has launched True Love Waits 3.0: A Path of Purity.

The new initiative, introduced during the National Youth Worker's Conference in September, follows a study of how the 17-year-old ministry can be more effective for future generations.

Jimmy Hester, co-founder of True Love Waits, noted that

feedback from student ministry leaders indicated a need for more emphasis on parental participation, specifically to support parents in their role as the primary spiritual developers of their children.

In response, True Love Waits 3.0: A Path of Purity builds on the ministry's message of sexual-abstinence-until-marriage to include a variety of markers students experience from childhood. (BP)

'Living on the edge'

Sandi Patty opens up about her life in new book, album

By Theresa Shadrix
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Looking over the edge of a cliff is sure to make even the most adventurous person nervous. But for Sandi Patty, it's a chance to see the divine.

"Living on the edge isn't always the most comfortable existence, but it's a place where we tend to do more looking around for help, which, for Christians, means looking for God," Patty said.

In her new book, "The Edge of the Divine," Patty reveals how she looked for and found help in dealing with both internal and external struggles through her relationship with Christ. Her first original album in seven years bears the same name, and both projects are very personal in nature, offering an insight into why the Dove and Grammy Award winner took the bold step of having lap-band surgery Aug. 26, 2008.

One of the most difficult challenges in the post-surgery process was changing her focus on food. Breaking up is hard to do, Patty admitted, so she wrote a breakup letter to food, which she shares in her book.

"I'd seen that overeating is more about what's happening in my head than in my stomach," she said.

The surgery didn't come without risks either. A year after the lap-band surgery, Patty had an anxiety attack. With the help of her doctors, she realized she had to take special care when on tour.

Having the surgery was not easy, Patty admitted. She has lost between 75 and 80 pounds and said she would like to lose 10 more pounds. But to tackle the external issue of being overweight, she had to face serious internal issues.

"I kept coming back to that point of realizing weight loss is an inside job," Patty said.

"Jesus didn't go through (His) ordeal so that we could merely survive. He said He did it so we could have life and that we might have it more abundantly."

So the surgery was only part of Patty's journey, as she had to come to terms with a dark secret and the reality of forgiveness. When she was 6 years old, she was sexually abused by a female friend of her family.

"She did not hurt me, but she touched me in ways that traumatized me," Patty said.

The daughter of a minister of music, Patty's family often went on tour singing at various churches around the nation. The abuse happened when she was left in the care of a trusted family friend, as her parents were on tour. When they



Photo by Kyle Weller Photography

returned, she kept silent about the abuse and buried the memories until adulthood.

Patty wasn't hindered by the abuse in regard to her music. Her life was fairly normal, and she joined her family on tour and crafted her singing ability. Then, when she was 18 years old, she discovered the "perfect" role and auditioned for The Kids of the Kingdom singing and dance team at the Disneyland Resort in her home state of California. Confident from her audition, she called the office a few weeks later after not hearing anything. She was devastated to learn that they loved her voice but felt she

was too heavy. But Patty was not about to let the rejection stop her. She enrolled at Anderson University in Indiana and eventually joined Bill and Gloria Gaither on tour. Her voice and name would become one of the most recognizable in Christian music with songs like "We Shall Behold Him."

Patty also married, had four children and continued to focus on her music. Everything seemed to be perfect. But her marriage to John Helvering was literally falling apart. Crisis would follow when she admitted an adulterous relationship during her marriage, and the backlash from Christian radio stations and fans was harsh.

In the turmoil, Patty fell in love. "Before the court finalized the

divorce (from Helvering), I fell in love with Don Pelsis, a handsome, talented singer who performed with my backup group during national concert tours," she said.

They married in August 1995.

In the book, her music and her conversations, Patty is open and frank about her struggles with weight and relationships. She said her current projects and journey have helped her to see the first step in change is forgiveness, the second step is preparation for change and the importance of truth shouldn't be ignored.

Patty said forgiveness was the key to healing in all aspects of her life.

"I think that in order to really make a change you have to really forgive yourself and (others)," she said. "You have to unearth some not-so-pretty chapters in your life story and come to peace with some very difficult ones. I really do believe in my favorite verse, John 8:31-32, "and the truth will set you free."

Continuing to sing

Looking back is not something Patty does. She continues to do the one thing that honors God and brings Him glory — sing.

"For so many years, I really didn't know how to be verbal," Patty said. "I would find that I would be drawn to those songs that would say what I wish I could say. For so long, the songs were my heart. They still very much are, but I'm learning to use my words."

For more information, visit www.sandipatty.com.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Study shows more link Christianity to being American

WASHINGTON — As the United States has grown more diverse, more Americans believe that being a Christian is a key aspect of being "truly American," researchers say.

Purdue University scholars found that between 1996 and 2004, Americans who saw Christian identity as a "very important" attribute of being American increased from 38 percent to 50 percent.

Scholars said the findings, published in the fall issue of the journal *Sociology of Religion*, couldn't be definitively tied to a particular event but they suspect the Sept. 11 attacks and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could have played a role.

"We suspect that these events accentuated the connection between Christianity and American identity by reinforcing boundaries against non-Christians and people of foreign origin," said Jeremy Brooke Straughn, co-author of the study.

Researchers found that non-Christians and those with no religious affiliation overwhelmingly rejected a link between being Christian and being "truly American."

The findings are based on an analysis of data from the General Social Survey, collected by the National Opinion Research Center, in which more than 1,000 respondents were queried in 1996 and 2004.

In a separate survey, Public Religion Research Institute found that 42 percent believe "America has always been and is currently a Christian nation." The survey, taken Sept. 1-14, was based on a random sample of 3,013 adults.

Nebraska law restricting abortion takes effect

LINCOLN, Neb. — A new law in Nebraska could prove to be historic in the battle against legal abortion in the United States, some pro-lifers are predicting.

The Nebraska law — the Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act prohibiting abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, with narrow exceptions — took effect Oct. 15.

The law establishes a new standard in abortion bans: Rather than setting the benchmark at fetal viability, which can be 22 to 24 weeks, Nebraska's law utilizes evidence that an unborn child experiences pain at 20 weeks for its guideline.

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, described the new law's enforcement as "a historic and celebratory moment for those who work to protect mothers and unborn children."

"This is the first time in history that a law recognizing fetal pain has been enacted. This new law represents the next wave of momentum for the pro-life movement and is a major step toward a post-Roe future," he said.

The law permits exemptions only for serious physical, not mental, threats. According to the law, it must be determined that "the pregnant woman had a condition which so complicated her medical condition as to necessitate the abortion of her pregnancy to avert her death or to avert serious risk of substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function, or the basis of the determination that it was necessary to preserve the life of an unborn child."

U.S. attorney says Islam should be protected

NASHVILLE — Islam is a valid religion that is entitled to constitutional protection, said a U.S. attorney who stepped into a debate about a proposed mosque and Islamic center in Tennessee.

"To suggest that Islam is not a religion is quite simply ridiculous," said U.S. Attorney Jerry Martin, of Nashville, in a statement Oct. 18. "Each branch of the federal government has independently recognized Islam as one of the major religions of the world."

Martin's statement comes after a group of landowners in Murfreesboro filed suit to stop construction of a 52,000-square-foot mosque and Muslim community center in Rutherford County.

Opponents questioned Islam's validity as a religion that's entitled to First Amendment protection. They also claimed county officials did not inform the public in advance of the county commission meeting where the plans for the center were approved.

The U.S. Department of Justice filed a brief in the lawsuit warning Rutherford County officials that refusing to recognize Islam as a religion and denying Muslims religious land use rights would violate civil rights laws.

"A mosque is quite plainly a place of worship, and the county rightly recognized that it had an obligation to treat mosques the same as churches, synagogues or any other religious assemblies," said Thomas Perez, assistant attorney general for civil rights, in a statement from the Department of Justice.