

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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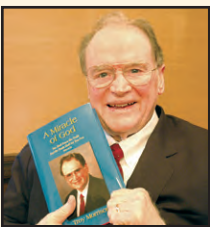
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Agence France-Presse photo

MOURNING — An Iraqi woman (far right) holds a picture of her son who was killed inside Our Lady of Salvation Chaldean Catholic Church by al-Qaida-related gunmen Oct. 31. Fifty-eight people were killed and 75 wounded during the attack.

‘Legitimate targets’ Baghdad Christians fearful after attack on Catholic church

Iraqi Christians residing in Baghdad are living in fear following an Oct. 31 al-Qaida-related attack on a Catholic church that left 58 dead and 75 wounded.

And now with the release of a Nov. 3 message from the Islamic State of Iraq, the group with ties to al-Qaida responsible for the attack, saying Christians in the Middle East are “legitimate targets” for violence, Christians have more reason to fear.

Part of the message, which was circulated via e-mail by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, read, “The Ministry of War of Islamic State of Iraq declares that all the centers, organizations and bodies of Christian leaders and followers have become legitimate targets by the Mujahedeens, wherever our hands will reach them.”

The recent message is even more

troubling as it follows the attack on Catholic Christians in Baghdad.

On Oct. 31, approximately 10 Islamic militants stormed Our Lady of Salvation Chaldean Catholic Church during evening Mass after detonating bombs in the neighborhood, gunning down two policemen at a nearby stock exchange and blowing up their own car.

It was reported that more than 100 worshippers had gathered that evening and were held as hostages in exchange for the release of jailed al-Qaida militants and Muslim women. The militants sprayed the sanctuary with bullets and ordered a priest to call the Vatican to demand the release of Muslim women whom they claimed were held hostage by the Coptic Church in Egypt, according to The Associated Press. They also reportedly demanded the release of al-Qaida prisoners.

In the end, at least 58 people were killed, the majority of them worshippers, including several priests, and 75 were wounded.

Mike Edens, professor of theology and Islamic studies at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary who ministered in the Muslim world for 25 years, said to understand the ac-

cusation against the Coptic Church, one must understand that historically claims have been made against Christian churches in the Middle East that they are comforting and protecting women who are identified as Muslims.

“Frequently these women have come from a Christian background, and they were secured as a wife by a Muslim and were forced to convert or chose to convert, and then they’re seeking to convert back,” Edens said.

“They don’t have the freedom to do that, and they seek the protection of the church, and they may even take vows to be a nun and be in a convent or monastery,” he added. “There is an element of factual basis to the claim, but it’s more complex than the secular news media is capable of helping us understand.”

The claim that al-Qaida in Iraq is making is a red herring because the jihadists make it seem as if they would accept a Christian presence

(See ‘Baptist,’ page 13)

Gay ‘marriage,’ marijuana lose out

The issue of gay “marriage” technically was not on any ballot Nov. 2, but it nevertheless was a big loser again on the state level, as Iowa voters ousted three state Supreme Court justices in an unprecedented vote and several key state legislatures and governor’s offices flipped from liberal to conservative. Attempts at legalizing marijuana’s recreational use also lost out during the recent election.

One year after watching the Iowa Supreme Court legalize gay “marriage” in a 7-0 vote, voters booted all three justices who were on the ballot

for retention. Justices David Baker and Michael Streit lost 54-46 percent, while Justice Marsha Ternus lost 55-45 percent. It was a monumental win for opponents of the ruling, who faced an uphill climb to educate voters — who often bypass the retention portion of the ballot — about the vote. It was the first time since 1962 that an Iowa Supreme Court justice has been rejected.

“When they went outside their constitutional boundaries, and they made law from the bench, and they executed

(See ‘Voters,’ page 5)

COMMENT

A Time for Change

Hate crimes or political corruption. In which one is Alabama below the national average, and in which one is the state near the top in violations?

To the surprise of many, Alabama is near the bottom in the number and ratio of hate crimes. In an Oct. 26 briefing by the FBI's Birmingham division, Special Agent Dana Gillis, who leads the civil rights division, said community leadership has transformed the state to the point that it has one of the lowest rates of hate crimes in the nation. Only two hate crime cases are open currently and one of those is several years old, he reported.

That same evening, the FBI did a presentation on political corruption highlighting the Jefferson County sewer case that resulted in convictions of both elected officials and county employees. Special agents also referenced other recent political corruption cases involving the mayor of Birmingham, the state's two-year colleges and the alleged vote-buying scheme in the Legislature, resulting in the indictments of legislators, lobbyists and others related to the gambling industry.

In response to questions, the agents said Alabama ranks high in political corruption investigations. In both number and ratio of political corruption cases, the state is near the top.

Now Alabama has the opportunity to change its history of political corruption as dramatically as it has changed its history of hate crimes. The Nov. 2 election placed the power of state leadership in the hands of Republicans, who have talked about political reform and campaign transparency for years. Republicans will hold supermajorities in both the state House, with 62 of the 105 seats, and the state Senate, with 22 of the 35 seats, when the new Legislature convenes March 1. That means Republicans can pass whatever legislation they deem important and even override a governor's veto.

But Robert Bentley, the new governor, is also a Republican and has made many of the same promises as the new legislators. That means cooperation should be high and both executive leadership and legislative leadership should be singing out of the same hymnbook, so to speak.

We hope the song they sing will be about the welfare of Alabama and not about the welfare of office holders or political party. After all, elected officials are chosen to care for the general welfare, not their personal welfare.

Caring for the general welfare should begin by reforming the state's political system in several ways.

Why is it that the Alabama Ethics Commission



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

is the only such commission in the nation without subpoena power? The commission cannot do thorough investigations of the many charges of misconduct by public officials because it lacks the power to subpoena related documents.

That is just one example of how the state has given lip service to the importance of ethics in government but acted in ways to protect those who ignore the high demands of ethical conduct.

Transferring funds

Transfer of funds between political action committees (PAC) is another problem. It is almost impossible to trace funds as they are handed off between PACs with high-sounding names that are, in reality, nothing but facades to cover shameful behaviors. PAC-to-PAC transfers need to be banned. This would help bring transparency to the campaign system so that voters could know who is bankrolling which candidates and who is supporting what issues.

The Legislature desperately needs to reform its own rules. One needed improvement is that all final passage votes should be recorded votes. When legislators approved the last pay raise for themselves, they did it by a voice vote. There is no recorded vote to prove which state senator or representative voted for the raise and which one voted against it.

For protecting themselves and hiding behind ambiguities and confusion, voice votes may be helpful to legislators but they do not aid the cause of good government. That is why Alabama stands almost alone in allowing voice votes for the final passage of any legislative proposal.

The new Legislature and governor need to work together to address major problems in the state's infrastructure. A legislative research committee recently reported that the Education Trust Fund will buy about the same amount of services provided in 1950. That means Alabama schools have a serious problem.

The state's General Fund budget is in trouble. Grants from the federal government got Alabama through this year, but those funds will have to be made up in the next fiscal year. That spells trouble for all state services.

Alabama has about a three-year deficit in its in-

surance and retirement programs for state workers and the deficit is growing. Financial issues that put Greece, Portugal and California on the front pages of newspapers worldwide are cropping up here and must be faced.

This is no time for special interest legislation such as expanding legalized gambling, which more than once has brought the state legislative process to a grinding halt.

In years past, legislative leadership assigned gambling, alcohol and other such issues to the House Tourism and Travel Committee and the Senate Tourism and Marketing Committee. The committees were stacked so that bills always sailed through. Now that process should stop and special interest concerns should give way to concern about the general welfare of the state.

None of these issues is new. The need for reform has been documented many times, and barrels of ink have been used campaigning for change. Over the years, many Democrats have supported honest efforts to reform the governing process and bring transparency to political campaigns. Unfortunately the power of leadership — executive and legislative — could never be combined to result in meaningful reform.

The last time the same party had the governor's chair and supermajorities in both houses of the Legislature, leaders used it to try to establish a lottery instead of working on basic problems in the way the state governs itself.

This is a critical moment in Alabama's history. Citizens want to change the history of political corruption. And we can change. We have proven that. Now it is time for the state Legislature to take the first steps in changing our history and leading us toward honest government and transparent campaigns focused on the general welfare of Alabama.

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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Letters to the Editor

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Johnny Hunt recounts recent 'dryness'

Johnny Hunt said he experienced a spiritual, emotional and physical "dryness through duty" a couple of months ago after completing an intense two years as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga., described his recent bout with emptiness during his Timothy + Barnabas Pastors Conference Nov. 2-4 in Branson, Mo.

After advancing an epic set of reforms on the denominational level known as the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR), Hunt found himself experiencing a "meltdown of biblical proportions" like the Old Testament prophet Elijah did in 1 Kings 19.



HUNT

Hunt described how he gradually found himself being separated from his wife of 37 years, Janet, due to all of the busyness that came his way.

The concept of Sabbath rest had become a stranger to him.

"I would start my day at 4:30 or 5 o'clock on Sunday and finish at 10 o'clock that night, go get in bed, and be up early the next morning and head for the airport to get to something with GCR or speaking engagements," Hunt said. "Janet said, 'You've got to be tired,' and I'd say, 'I sleep pretty good on a plane — I'll get a nap on the way there.' Janet would drive me and I'd sleep on the way to the airport, try to slip it in. I was violating time and it bruised me. It bruised me."

In January, he underwent surgery to remove a cancerous prostate. Noting that while it may have been the Lord trying to get his attention, Hunt said he didn't slow down because there were many more important meetings and activities and strategy sessions to attend.

But Hunt did slow down after the SBC annual meeting. He took a sabbatical for the month of July, then a leave of absence in August and early September.

On Sept. 19 at First, Woodstock, Hunt preached a sermon on his experience.

The notes for the sermon, which he titled "Dryness Through Duty," can be accessed through the church's website at www.fbcw.org.

Since then, he said he has been experiencing the grace, love and healing of God as his priorities have been realigned.

His testimony in that message was that he was "leading on empty."

Unable to bounce back, Hunt felt spiritually, emotionally and mentally empty. All of that gripped him physically, leaving him drained. (BP, TAB)

American Character Builders introduces self-contained kits for schools, churches

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

Since the 1970s, American Character Builders (ACB, formerly ALCAP School Program), an arm of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), has had a presence in Alabama schools, teaching students how to make wise decisions and live healthy, productive lives.

Last year, ACB teachers were in 522 schools. But the number of schools has been decreasing each year partly because schools have a difficult time scheduling around standard testing, activities and the ACB teacher's commitments.

In an effort to get in to more schools and reach more young people, ACB is getting ready to launch self-contained educational kits that a school can buy and use on its own at any time. The kits will include a Power-Point presentation with a script, a teacher's guide and visual aids.

ACB Education Director Bill Day said the kits could be especially valuable for substitute teachers.

"If there are no lessons provided ... they have to kill time. If they have one of these kits, then they can use it and it will not be wasted time but something that will be productive for them," he said.

ACB currently offers 15 programs and is making its four most popular ones available in the kits: Alcohol Awareness; Tobacco Awareness; Saying NO to Meth, Marijuana and Cocaine!; and Bully Prevention at School.

Day hopes not only will schools take advantage of the kits but also churches.

"What are churches doing with bullying, suicide prevention and gang awareness?" he asked. "A lot of churches have after-school programs, and these kits would be a great after-school activity."

And churches could present the gospel with the material in the kits, Day noted.

While churches could use the kits at a



Photo by Kristen Padilla

BRAND-NEW — American Character Builders, an arm of Alabama Citizens Action Program, plans to launch self-contained educational kits (pictured above) about alcohol, drugs, tobacco and bullying that schools and churches can use.

church function, they also could use them in their students' schools, suggested Joe Godfrey, ALCAP executive director.

"[Youth ministers] can go in and teach it in their schools, and then they can have follow-up programs in their churches, where they can invite parents and kids and then use it as an evangelistic (opportunity)," Godfrey said.

Of course, the goal of reaching students isn't confined to ALCAP and Alabama. Similar organizations in other states — as well as individuals in other

countries — have expressed interest in using ACB's material, which was developed by Day.

"That's why we chose the name American

Character Builders because we see the potential of using this nationwide," Godfrey said.

"We're now even talking about ACB International, translating these materials into other languages," he continued.

But ACB isn't just talking about alcohol and drugs. It recently introduced a program called Pornography Awareness to help adults, especially church ministry staffs, deal with the issue.

"Pornography is a big issue and a multi-billion dollar industry in America," Day said. "With ... computers, we often have a problem with church staff."

He and Godfrey are available to speak to church staffs on this issue at no cost.

For more information about pre-ordering a kit or the programs ACB offers, visit www.americancharacterbuilders.org or call 205-985-9529. To schedule a speaker, call Day at 205-985-9062.

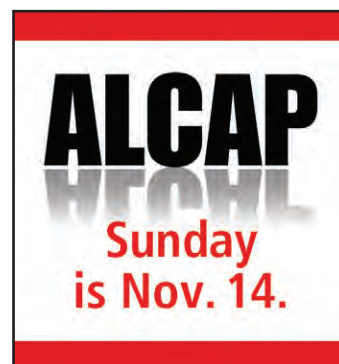


Photo by Carlos Lemus

HISPANIC BAPTISTS CELEBRATE 10TH HISPANIC MUSIC CELEBRATION DAY

The 10th annual Hispanic Music Celebration Day was held at First Hispanic Baptist Church, Enterprise, on Oct. 17. Fourteen Hispanic Baptist churches participated with 975 people in attendance. Sponsored by the Hispanic Baptist Fellowship, the purpose of the event was to celebrate Hispanic heritage and fellowship with other Hispanic Baptists from across the state.

'We are looking for partners'

Latvian Baptists focused on more than doubling number of churches, seek help from Alabama Baptists

By John Evans
The Alabama Baptist

They were persecuted so severely that they couldn't even gather in their homes to worship God. So they met in the forests, kneeling to pray in the snow of the Latvian winter. By the time they had finished praying, the snow had melted under their knees. They rowed boats 125 miles to the nearest church to be baptized, for which they were beaten and imprisoned and had their houses confiscated.

Peteris Sprogis, president of the Latvian Baptist Union, is proud of this heritage of faith handed down from the earliest Latvian Baptists 150 years ago.

"It really was a movement of the Holy Spirit among some people who were starting to read their Bibles, pray and experience Christianity and Christ in a new way," he said.

Sprogis and other Latvian Baptists are praying to continue that legacy in the former Soviet republic and inviting Alabama Baptists to join in the work.

Baptists are a tiny minority in Latvia today, perhaps 7,000 out of a total population of more than 2 million. Many of the 88 Baptist churches are very small and sit in seaside fishing villages, which were the birthplace of the Latvian Baptist movement but now are being deserted by people moving to the cities.

Despite this, Sprogis sees God working to change things in the country.

"What we see happening is that God is starting to orchestrate a church-planting movement," he said.

Latvian Baptists have set a goal to plant 100 churches, especially in

Latvia's cities and towns. Sprogis said some towns with as many as 50,000 people currently have only one small Baptist church.

"I think in some cases, there is this idea that the church is like an embassy, where you have one and that's enough," he said. "We need to think of churches more like hospitals, where we need as many as possible because we know the world is not well."

Central to the church-planting movement is the Baltic Pastoral Institute (BPI), which is the Baptist union's school for training pastors and church planters. Since its founding in 2007, the institute has trained a number of pastors who now are leading existing churches and planting new ones.

But Sprogis knows the task is enormous, so for the past four years, he has been visiting the United States to develop partnerships with churches to help support church planting. He came to Alabama in mid-September.

Sprogis said churches can partner with Latvian Baptists in many ways, including sending short-term missions teams and long-term church planters.

Getting involved

"I am looking for churches that would want to adapt and work alongside of our existing and future church-planting teams," he said.

Sprogis also hopes to find professors and pastors who will teach for a period of time at the BPI.

In addition, money is needed for scholarships to help students attend, he said. Although 70 percent of all funds needed for the institute have come from Latvians, the global financial crisis has hit their country especially hard, Sprogis noted.



SPROGIS



Photo by Andris Sprogis

CELEBRATION GATHERING — About 2,500 people gather in September for the 150th anniversary of the Baptist Movement in Latvia at the Uzava River where the first baptism by immersion took place in 1861.

"We are looking for partners who will come alongside us, help this movement to develop and see what God has in store for us," he said.

Sprogis wants Latvian Baptist churches to move out of survival mode — maintaining buildings and trying to keep enough people in church to pay the bills — and catch a vision to reach the entire country for Jesus.

"If it's not our desire to reach out and become a movement, it's tragic," he said. "I think sometimes people settle for too [little]. If the church starts to believe that it finds its value in itself and starts to protect itself, that's when the church becomes our idol and we stop reaching out."

Monte Erwin, who was a South-

ern Baptist representative to Latvia with the International Mission Board from 1996 to 2002 and still visits every year, said the time is ripe for a church-planting movement to catch fire in the country. Many Latvians have lost everything in the sluggish economy, and he thinks they may be realizing they cannot put their trust in riches.

'Emerging need'

"There seems to be an emerging need for the spiritual again, and some are discovering that their hopes are fulfilled in Christ," said Erwin, a member of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Erwin also detects a new sense of enthusiasm and spiritual sensitivity among Latvian Baptists that he de-

scribes as "striking." He sees this community of believers much like its country, small in size but tenacious — and never to be underestimated.

"This little country led the way in becoming one of the first Soviet states to declare its independence and move away from the Soviet Union at its own risk and peril," Erwin said.

"Many were willing to give their lives for this cause as they barricaded themselves in the city of Riga and awaited the Soviet army to arrive. In my heart and mind, I wonder what God might do through these people."

To find out more about the work in Latvia, e-mail admin@lbs.lv.

(Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)



Photo by Andris Sprogis

COVERED IN PRAYER — Board members of the Latvian Baptist Union pray for Peteris Sprogis, newly re-elected president of the Latvian Baptist Union.



Photo by Andris Sprogis

THE WALK TO BAPTISM — About 90 people were baptized in the Uzava River during the 150th anniversary of the Baptist Movement in Latvia.

3 plead guilty in 2008 church fire

Nearly two years after the fellowship hall, church office and education space of Providence Baptist Church, Montevallo, was set on fire Jan. 12, 2008, three men have been arrested and have entered guilty pleas for theft, burglary and arson.

"I'm glad they went ahead and pleaded guilty because that's the right thing to do," said Allen Foster, pastor of the Chilton Baptist Association church. "It's a big relief. The church is relieved that they went ahead and turned themselves in."

Guilty pleas

Billy Ray and Bryan Henry were arrested not long after the 2008 incident but were later released, while Marcus Brasher was arrested in Shelby County in 2008 and later transferred to the Chilton County jail, according to Foster.

Brasher pleaded guilty to burglary, Ray pleaded guilty to burglary and theft and Henry pleaded guilty to second-degree arson in the Chilton County Circuit Court on Nov. 1.

A sentencing date for the three men has been set for Dec. 9. (TAB)

Voters nationwide voice opinions on moral issues in recent election, 'give Republicans one more chance'

(continued from page 1)

[the law] from the bench ... every one of our freedoms came up for grabs," said Bob Vander Plaats, an Iowa businessman who led the effort to oust the justices. "Iowa stood up with a very common sense and a very measured voice."

Meanwhile, the Iowa Legislature saw Republicans retake the state House and significantly narrow their margins in the Senate. The legislature is key to the gay "marriage" issue because Democratic leaders have blocked all efforts to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would reverse the gay "marriage" ruling.

In New Hampshire, gay "marriage" supporter John Lynch, a Democrat, won re-election, but Republicans regained the House and Senate with such big margins that they may be able to reverse the "same-sex marriage" law, which Lynch signed, even if he objects.

In Maine, Republican Paul LePage, who opposes gay "marriage," won an open seat to succeed outgoing Democratic Gov. John Baldacci, who signed a gay "marriage" law in 2009, only to see voters reverse it.

But despite a series of big victories for traditionalists, there were some major disappointments.

In Rhode Island, independent and gay "marriage" supporter Lincoln Chafee won the governor's race.

In Maryland, Democratic Gov. Martin O'Malley, who has said he would sign a gay "marriage" bill, won re-election.

4 Alabama towns go wet, 4 remain dry

Nine Alabama towns faced wet/dry referendums Nov. 2. Four went wet, four remained dry and one had not been determined by press time.

Citizens of Hartselle, Rogersville, Vernon and Boaz voted against legalizing alcohol, while citizens of Sulligent, Russellville, Cullman and Centre voted to legalize the sale of alcohol.

But for Priceville voters, the results could not be determined until 17 provisional ballots could be verified by the Morgan County board of registrars. At press time, the vote was 476 to 475 in favor of legalizing alcohol. The

final results are expected to be released Nov. 9.

While most of the other results were determined by a 200-vote margin or more, Rogersville and Centre's results were very close. Centre went wet by less than 100 votes, while Rogersville stayed dry by a margin of only one vote.

"Certainly we rejoice with those who managed to keep their communities dry and we stand ready to provide resource material to those communities that voted to go wet," said Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program. "We'd also encourage [citizens of towns that went wet] to bring it back for a vote in two years." (TAB)

In Hawaii, Democrat Neil Abercrombie, a supporter of same-sex civil unions, was elected governor.

In the area of drug legalization, opponents had a landmark night as California's Proposition 19 went down in defeat. This initiative, which would have made California the first state to legalize the growth, sale and use of recreational marijuana, lost 54-46 percent.

While the California race was the most closely watched ballot initiative nationwide, other states dealt with the marijuana issue.

South Dakota Initiated Measure 13, which would have legalized medicinal marijuana, lost 63-37 percent. Arizona Proposition 203, which also would have legalized medicinal pot, was behind at press time. And in Oregon, Measure 74, which would have expanded the

current medicinal law to allow farmers to grow marijuana and operate dispensaries to sell it, lost, 57-43 percent.

Other moral issues included:

▶ Abortion — Abortion issues showed up in concerns about health care as well as one straight-up, pro-life initiative.

Voters in three states — Arizona, Colorado and Oklahoma — voted on initiatives that would prevent individuals from being forced to participate in any health-care insurance plan, a key provision of the federal law widely called Obamacare.

Arizona voters approved its initiative by a 55-45 percent margin, while Oklahoma voters adopted its proposal by a two-to-one vote. Colorado voters appeared headed to rejecting its measure at press time.

These ballot measures along with

the large wins in the Republican Party indicate the current health-care reform is growing more unpopular, said Richard Land, president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "This was clearly a rejection at a basic level of the president's economic policies and Obamacare," he said. "However, it was not an affirmation of the Republican Party. It was a decision by a majority of the American people to give the Republicans one more chance to cut the size of government, cut government spending, and repeal and start over with health-care reform."

In Colorado, Amendment 62, which would have added the term "person" to the state constitution's Bill of Rights for "every human being from the beginning of biological development," failed.

▶ Smoking — South Dakota voters voted to broaden the state-wide smoking ban to include restaurants, bars, liquor stores, casinos and video lottery establishments.

▶ Gambling — A proposal to bring a resort casino to the southern Maine city of Oxford was unresolved at press time. (BP, TAB)

FBC Montgomery helps in Ukraine

Volunteers from First Baptist Church, Montgomery, hold a medical clinic at a Baptist church in Boguslav, Ukraine.

The 16-member team of physicians, registered nurses, pharmacists and other volunteers traveled to East-Central Ukraine in mid-October. Working with Southern Baptist representatives Mike and Linda Ray and partnering with local Ukrainian Baptist churches, the group held nine medical clinics over five days.

At each clinic, a Ukrainian believer or an Alabama volunteer shared the plan of salvation with each patient. A nurse took the patient's blood pressure, and a physician met with them to discuss health problems and prescribe medication if needed. Some patients chose to visit the eye clinic where they could obtain reading glasses. By the end of the week, 860 people had visited the clinics and 304 professions of faith were recorded. (TAB)



Photo by Doug Rogers



Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

Romans 15:7

Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

► **Glynwood Church, Prattville**, will hold revival Nov. 21–23 with Evangelist David Ring. Services will be Sunday at 10:15 a.m. and nightly at 7. Bruce Hose is pastor of the church.

BESSEMER

► **Concord Highland Church, Hueytown**, will host a community Thanksgiving service Nov. 23, 6:30 p.m. The Concord Highland choir will sing. Pastor Richard W. Larson will speak. A fellowship will follow. ► **Raimund Heights Church, Bessemer**, will host guest speaker James Watkins, pastor of First Church, Leroy, Nov. 14, 6 p.m. Tommy Chesser is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Ron Ethridge Jr.** is the new pastor of **Huffman Church**. He comes from Moulton Church where he served as interim pastor. He has also served several churches in Alabama and Mississippi. Ethridge holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary and doctor of ministry from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University. He



ETHRIDGE

Argo, will speak. A reception will follow. ► **Al B. Sutton Jr.** resigned as pastor of **Sixth Avenue Church, Birmingham**, to plant a new church, Living Stones Temple.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its monthly third Sunday night singing Nov. 21, 6 p.m., with Tradition, of Fort Payne. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Sage Avenue Church, Mobile**, will host Mark Harris, singer and composer for the contemporary Christian group 4Him, in

and his wife, Pamela, have three children. The church will hold an installation service for Ethridge Nov. 14, 6 p.m. Ryan Whitley, pastor of CrossPoint Church, concert Nov. 14, 6 p.m. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. For information visit www.sageavebc.org. Phil Boyles is pastor.

LAMAR

► **Scott Stokes** is the new director of missions of **Lamar Association**. He comes from First Church, Guin, in Marion Association, where he served as pastor. He has also served Mulberry Springs Church, Suligent, and First Church, Moody, in St. Clair Association. Stokes is married to Sharon.



STOKES

"Across Alabama's Associations" will not run Nov. 25. Please submit announcements for Dec. 2 by Nov. 24.

Retired Alabama pastor Gring dies at 78

Retired Alabama pastor Glenn M. Gring Jr. died Oct. 25. He was 78.

A graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Gring served in the ministry for 56 years. He served as pastor of churches in Texas while in seminary, Calera Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, Anniston, and campus minister at the Univer-

sity of South Alabama (USA) in Mobile. He also served as part-time campus minister at Mobile College, Spring Hill College and Faulkner State Community College, all in the Gulf Coast area, and helped found Hillcrest Baptist Church, Mobile, in 1983.

After retiring as chaplain of the USA Medical Center in Mobile in 1994, Gring accepted the part-time pastorate of Josephine Baptist

Church, Elberta, where he served until 1999.

An Indiana native, Gring served in the U.S. Air Force from 1949 to 1952 before going into the ministry.

At the time of his death, he was a member of Hillcrest Baptist.

Gring was preceded in death by his wife of nearly 47 years, Mary Frances.

He is survived by two children. (TAB)



Atmore's Unity Church celebrates 25th anniversary

Unity Baptist Church, Atmore, hosted more than 250 attendees for its 25th anniversary celebration Oct. 3.

Former members and visitors gathered in the auditorium for a special music performance led by Sealed Covenant. They also enjoyed a video presentation reflecting on the history of the Escambia Baptist Association church.

"It's always been known as a welcoming place with freedom to worship, a place where everyone is loved and accepted," charter member and Music Minister Kenny Shivers said of the church.

A representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the congregation with a plaque honoring its years of service. Director of Missions Pat Andrews was also present for the celebration. Lunch was served following the service.

Former Pastor Gene Pickern brought the message and expressed his hope for Unity Baptist's future.

"[I hope they] continue to cling to the vision of the gospel, that the congregation will always be willing to pay the price to reach out to the world and the community around them," he said.

Samson's Friendship Church marks 100 years

Friendship Baptist Church, Samson, celebrated 100 years of ministry Sept. 25.

More than 100 people attended the service that included special music by a gospel quartet and congregational singing. They also enjoyed a slide show illustrating how the Sardis Baptist Association church has grown throughout the years.

A representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission was on hand to present a plaque honoring the church's service.

Pastor Bobbie Hataway said he hopes Friendship Baptist continues to grow and gets to rejoice in celebrating another 100 years. (TAB)

Americans more generous to charities than churches

Americans are being more generous to religious charities, but why are they skimping on their giving to churches?

A new report from Empty Tomb Inc., an Illinois-based Christian research organization, contains an analysis that found from 2007 to 2008, Protestant churches saw a decrease of \$20.02 in per-member annual charitable gifts. Meanwhile, Empty Tomb's analysis of federal data found that annual average contributions to the category of "church, religious organizations," which includes charities like World Vision and Salvation Army, increased by \$41.59.

Sylvia Ronsvalle, executive vice president of Empty Tomb, said the good news/bad news difference is stark: giving to religious charities is up, while giving to churches is down.

One reason? Churches spend more money on congregational finances and less on missions beyond the church walls, which is unappealing to people who want to support specific causes with a tangible, visible benefit.

"People overall give to vision, and this is just what we've ob-

served, that you see that kind of outpouring when there is a specific need," said Ronsvalle, who co-wrote the 20th edition of the "State of Church Giving through 2008" with her husband, John.

According to the Empty Tomb report, U.S. churches devote more than 85 percent of their spending on "congregational finances" such as salaries, utility bills and brick-and-mortar maintenance.

Holding back

Christian Smith, the director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame, said the main reasons Christians hold back on their generosity are bad personal financial habits, distrust of where the money is going and a lack of teaching from the pulpit.

"Obviously, churches are more than financial," he said. "They are more than about just money, but it takes resources to hire people and put programs into action and to serve the community." A U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics survey found that 92 percent of charitable giving from people under the age of 25 went to church or religious charities. (RNS)



Photo courtesy of Tallapoosa Baptist Association

TALAPOOSA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION OFFICE RELOCATES TO JACKSON'S GAP

Tallapoosa Baptist Association recently relocated its Alexander City office to Jackson's Gap. Barry F. Cosper is director of missions.

God-ordained moment in time

Chinese man waits 20 years for someone to tell him about God; SBC representative gets to be the one

Ray Aker couldn't believe his ears. The Oklahoma native had spent the past two years sharing Jesus in a rural area of China without seeing a single salvation — until now.

God had brought Aker and a small team of Southern Baptist volunteers to a man named Solomon who lived with his family in a dirt-floored shack in an isolated mountain village. Aker told the gospel story and Solomon immediately believed. But it was what he said afterward that Aker can't forget.

"Twenty years ago, I understood in my heart that there was one God above all," Solomon told Aker. "But I didn't know anything about Him. So I prayed every day that He would send somebody to tell me who He was."

"God answered my prayer today when He sent you to me."

"That was probably the single

most powerful experience that I've ever been a part of in ministry here," Aker said. "I didn't do anything special. ... God ordained that moment in time."

Immediately Solomon began telling others about the one, true God and quickly led six villagers to faith, including his wife and two daughters. The local witchdoctor took notice.

If Solomon didn't stop sharing, the witchdoctor threatened publicly, he would be cursed and die in three days. Solomon refused to be silent, and on day four when villagers saw that he was still alive, they wanted to know why.

Aker said Solomon told the whole village about Jesus. In one day 80 people gave their lives to Him.

"These people live in daily fear of evil spirits," Aker explained. "Everything they do — which direction their house faces, when they



IMB photo

TRADITION — Women prepare a traditional headdress for a portrait session at a local studio. 'Among the minority people, women are very uneducated,' Southern Baptist representative Ray Aker says. 'Traditionally their role is to work out in the fields, to give birth, to raise children.'

get married, what they eat — it's all based on trying to appease these evil spirits.

"The fact that Solomon didn't die rocked their worldview."

Four years later, God has used

Solomon's influence to bring more than 400 people to faith across three neighboring villages. Three house churches have been planted. Aker said the good news is now spreading to a fourth village.

"We went from zero (believers) ... to 147 in about five months," Aker said. "I will never make it to every single village of our people group — it's impossible. ... That's why we have to train and raise-up believers ... to reach the rest."

But the villagers aren't the only ones whose faith has grown as a result of Solomon's work.

"If you had asked me back then ... did I think God could do these things? I'd say 'Yeah, I think He could. But I haven't seen it.' I believe in my head God can do it. Did I believe in my heart that He would do it? Back then, if I was being honest, I'd have to say no," Aker said.

"God had been preparing Solomon for 20 years ... I'm just thankful God allowed me to be a small part of it."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names were changed for security reasons. (BP)



Someone You Should Know

By June Mathews
Correspondent, TAB

HAZEL GREGORY

First Baptist Church, Rutledge
Alabama Crenshaw Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Philippians 4:13

FAVORITE HYMN: "He Keeps Me Singing"

HOBBIES: Stamp collecting

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 43 years

of marriage to Bill; two children,
Flinn and Fran; three grandchildren;
and 13 great-grandchildren

Hazel Gregory is known in her community as "the grass-mowing grandma." At nearly 89 years old, Gregory mows her yard as well as a couple of neighboring yards. Her secret joy? Belting out hymns as she mows.

Q: What was your early life like?

A: I was raised on a farm and went through the Depression. I've worked with figures since I was 14 because my daddy had a country store, and I would work on the books. After we got married, my husband and I were postal employees for 35 years, one of the last husband and wife postal teams in the nation. We always worked toward having a home for our children. That was inbred in us, that God gave us a family and that we

should look after them as much as possible.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: A preacher had preached at our church when I was about 10 years old and nearly scared me to death talking about hell. But my mother asked (our pastor), Frank Flynn, to come and talk to me. I thought he looked like Jesus. We sat on the front porch, and he led me to the Lord. I felt loved so completely, a love I had never experienced before.

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

A: I've been part of teaching Sunday School as a helper or a teacher since I was 16 years old,

and I've taught every age group. I'm now teaching young adults and middle adults, and so far, they don't mind a bit (that I'm a senior adult). I'm also the church pianist and the church clerk and treasurer.

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

A: I'll go as long as I can, and I'll be glad of any part I can have.

Q: What does the Christian life mean to you?

A: It's all there is and I cannot imagine any other way to live. Wouldn't it be awful to know you didn't have the Lord? He has greatly blessed me, and I've had a wonderful life. It hasn't always been easy but it's been wonderful and if He calls me today, I know where I'm going.



Photo courtesy of First Baptist Church, Hoover

FBC HOOVER HONORS PIANIST MOBARAK

First Baptist Church, Hoover, in Birmingham Baptist Association honored pianist George Mobarak (left) for more than 10 years of service. The church presented him and his wife, Janet (right), with a book of letters, a certificate of appreciation and a gift. Randy G. Atkinson is pastor.

'A Miracle of God'

Retired State Board of Missions executive Morrison writes memoirs

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

We can't always change the things that happen to us. We can trust God for the strength to get through these things." Troy Morrison spoke these words about the personal adversity he has faced since his 1999 retirement from the role of executive secretary-treasurer (now called executive director) of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Less than a year after he retired, Morrison suffered a stroke, which led to several years of rehabilitation and therapies. In 2007, he and his wife lost their only daughter, Marsha, to brain cancer. This past year, he had a heart attack and underwent bypass surgery.

But Morrison said he found that writing his memoirs was the best therapy he could have had. Because of physical challenges resulting from his stroke, it took him more than four years to write about his time in the ministry, including 26 years as a pastor — 17 at 12th Street Baptist Church, Gadsden — and 14 years of denominational service.

Morrison's memoirs are featured in a new book, "A Miracle of God: You Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Set You Free," produced by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC) and published by Fields Publishing.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the ABHC, said the book offers lessons for everyone about the importance of dedication, integrity and conviction.

"I think this project is important because it tells the story of a great Alabama Baptist leader who served as executive secretary-treasurer of our ... State Board of Missions for nine years and was totally committed to serving God and Alabama Baptists," Berg said. "This memoir shows how God prepared Dr. Morrison through his various educational, life and vocational experiences to lead Alabama Baptists during both challenging and exciting times."

In his memoirs, Morrison detailed both the good and bad about his years of denominational service and revealed some of his early life.

Morrison's statewide ministry to Alabama Baptists started in 1985 as director of church-minister relations for the SBOM. On Sept. 1, 1990, he took office as executive secretary-treasurer. "I knew the job wasn't going to be an easy one," he said. "Troubles were brewing."

God blessed him with a time of



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

HOT OFF THE PRESS — Lonette Berg (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presents Troy Morrison with the first copy of his newly printed book Nov. 4.

quiet before the storms. Morrison cited partnerships with Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii, South Korea and Spain during his tenure as a source of joy for him personally.

He developed the idea of double budgeting, recommending a base budget and a larger challenge budget to Alabama Baptist State Convention messengers each year. "In all the things I did as treasurer, this was probably the most significant," Morrison said proudly. "For several years, we exceeded the base budget, and some years, we even exceeded the challenge budget."

He led the way in expanding and remodeling the Baptist Building in Montgomery. In addition, Morrison supported Reaching People, Developing Believers, Strengthening Missions, an emphasis designed to strengthen the ministries of Alabama Baptist churches initiated by his predecessor, Earl Potts.

Morrison's period of quiet got cut short by tensions with the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, Samford University in Birmingham and the University of Mobile. He dealt with these challenges almost on a daily basis from 1992 until 1998.

But his conflict-management skills helped spare Alabama Baptists from division. "I must truthfully say it was all a miracle of God," Morrison said.

While reflecting on his work, he also examined his call to service. Born in northern Cherokee County in 1931, Morrison and his two brothers and two sisters lived in a log cabin on a farm sharecropped by their dad. He remembered his parents as strict but quickly added, "They instilled in me honesty, integrity and truthfulness."

As a 12-year-old boy, Morrison accepted Christ as his Savior during a service at Friendship Baptist

Church, Broomtown, which his family attended.

After graduating from Gaylesville School, he enrolled at Jacksonville State University. Morrison described his college years as "a coming-out time for me." Through a variety of part-time jobs and the generosity of others, God provided his college expenses.

During his sophomore year, he met Frances Gunter, of Piedmont. They married in 1952.

After college graduation, Morrison served as assistant principal and teacher at Alexandria High School.

From 1955 to 1957, he served in the U.S. Army, achieving the rank of first lieutenant. After his military service ended, Morrison worked alongside his father-in-law at Gunter-Morrison Building Supply in Piedmont.

While attending First Baptist Church, Piedmont, God was doing a work in Morrison's heart. A call to ministry led him to enroll at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. There he earned his bachelor of divinity and master of divinity degrees and later, a doctor of ministry degree.

Morrison said over the years, he "learned to appreciate the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) more."

"When you consider that all SBC churches, associations and state conventions are autonomous and that every convention agency has its own trustees, the fact that it all functions under one umbrella is a miracle of God."

Book signings

Morrison will do two book signings in November. The first book signing will be at the ABHC booth during the state convention annual meeting at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, Nov. 16-17. The second will be Nov. 21 at 2 p.m. at 12th Street Baptist.

After the convention, books will be available from the ABHC. For more information, e-mail Berg at llberg@samford.edu or call 1-800-325-9863.

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.

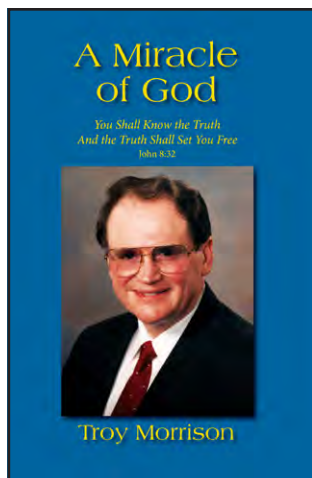
Pretty simple, huh?

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. ☩



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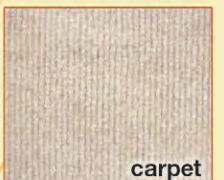
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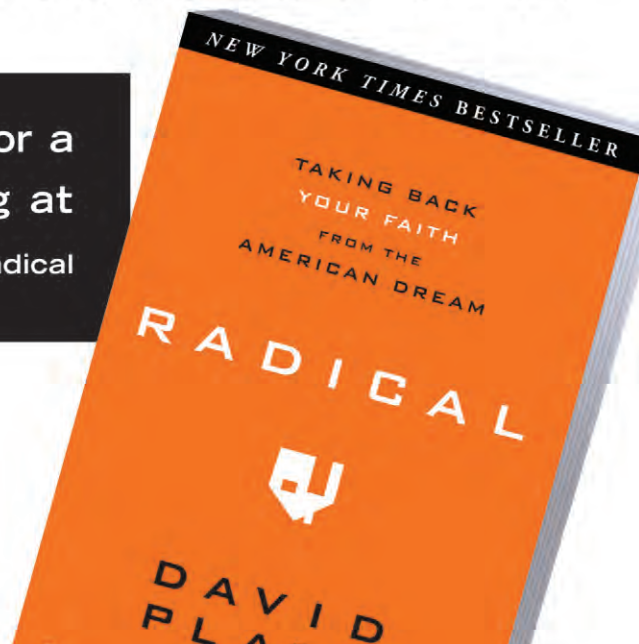
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— Tim Childers, senior pastor



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Compiled from Wire Services

Korean Convention marks 60 years of Baptist work

SEOUL, South Korea — Celebrating 60 years of Southern Baptist work in South Korea, the Korean Baptist Convention recognized 15 former and emeritus Southern Baptist representatives during its annual meeting in Seoul. David Hahn, 74, emeritus pastor of Seoul Memorial Church, organized the trip for the returning representatives. Hahn said he feels a deep sense of gratitude to Southern Baptist representatives for the support they provided following the devastation of World War II and the Korean War.

“Korea was in darkness,” Hahn said. “Missionaries brought us the living gospel. They brought us Jesus Christ.” Representatives also provided practical help as they shared the gospel, Hahn noted, citing free medical care that representative Daniel Ray provided in the late 1950s as he traveled from town to town with a portable X-ray machine. Ray and his wife, Francis, were appointed to Korea in 1954.

As Koreans like Hahn recounted kindnesses shown and lives touched, returning representatives like Lucy Wagner, who retired in 1994 after 39 years of service in South Korea, appreciated the opportunity to reconnect with old friends during the Sept. 27–29 sessions at Central Baptist Church in Seoul.

The Korean Baptist Convention and its affiliates grew rapidly from the 40 churches that appealed in 1950 to Southern Baptists’ then-Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) to send missionaries to the war-ravaged country.

Today South Korea has more than 2,800 Baptist churches with nearly 800,000 members. “American missionaries came in love to help churches, start churches and train pastors,” said Chul Ky Pek, 73, retired director of the Korean Home Mission Board.

Serbian seminary reopens after 3 years of silence

NOVI SAD, Serbia — The Bible institute in Novi Sad, Serbia, is opening its doors again after three years of silence. Union of Baptist Churches in Serbia (UBC) director Ondrej Franka is excited about this new chapter in the seminary’s 55-year history.

“It is one of the few, if any, schools of this type in Serbia and will serve not only the UBC but an even wider evangelical community,” Franka said. Local pastors began the school in Zagreb, Croatia, in 1955. Though it thrived for a time, enrollment and effectiveness declined in the ’90s due to many issues. Eventually the school closed its doors. International Mission Board (IMB) representatives in Serbia currently work with church planters with whom Franka also is engaged. Franka has been a valuable ministry partner with IMB over the years, said Kyle Kirkpatrick, an IMB strategy leader in South Europe. Kirkpatrick said the Bible institute’s reopening Oct. 22 “[was] symbolic of both our past contributions to Baptist work in Serbia and our current investment in the future of Serbian churches.”

Franka has been working for the last two years to prepare the institute’s facilities for the reopening. Last summer alone, five teams of volunteers from the United States helped renovate the existing campus. The school has a four-story building in Novi Sad with space for dormitories and extra land. It is well situated and Franka thinks at least 20 students will be enrolled this fall.

Franka said he is looking to the IMB to help with organization, faculty and content. Preston Pearce, IMB theological education consultant for Europe, was the visiting professor in October.

Georgia’s Baptist Heritage group closes doors

ATHENS, Ga. — A group formed 10 years ago to oppose fundamentalism in the Georgia Baptist Convention has decided to close up shop. The Baptist Heritage Council of Georgia’s board of directors voted in September to close the organization at the end of 2010. Executive Director Becky Matheny reported in the group’s final newsletter dated November 2010.

Matheny said the economic downturn and changing denominational landscape led the board to decide “that the organization had done its job for this time and place.”

“Certainly we are not saying that the task of educating Baptists in Georgia has ended,” Matheny said. “All of us need to keep telling the story of Baptist history and the principles that have been the building blocks of our denomination in America.”

Formed in April 2000, the Baptist Heritage Council is one of a number of statewide groups forming the Mainstream Baptist Network. The network comprised moderate Baptist groups that worked on the state level to prevent the “conservative resurgence” that captured the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in the 1980s from trickling down to SBC-affiliated Baptist state conventions. ■

Who are evangelicals?

Southern Baptists struggle with evangelical identity

Some theological and cultural observers wonder if the term “evangelical” has lost its meaning when Evangelist Billy Graham, social activist Jim Wallis, Pastor Rick Warren, theologian Al Mohler and author Brian McLaren all can fit under the umbrella.

And at the same time, some Baptists who either continue to identify themselves as Southern Baptist or grew up in that tradition question whether the label fits them.

On the right, some Southern Baptists have embraced engagement with evangelicals in conservative Christian political concerns, but they question how long their denomination can maintain fellowship with a movement with such broad parameters.

“Southern Baptists and other evangelical groups may be ships passing in the night,” wrote Steve Lemke, provost of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, in a paper on “The Future of Southern Baptists as Evangelicals,” delivered in 2005 at a Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary conference. “Many evangelical institutions seem to be shifting to the left, while Southern Baptists have made a sharp course correction to the right.”

On the other hand, some Baptists who hold to strict separation of church and state have shied away from the term “evangelical” because they believe it has been co-opted by the Religious Right. That tendency could be seen early in a 1976 *Newsweek* cover story, “Born Again! The Year of the Evangelicals.” In it, a noted Southern Baptist ethicist and agency head emphatically sought to distance himself and his denomination from the growing movement.

“We are not evangelicals. That’s a Yankee word,” Foy Valentine, then executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) Christian Life Commission, told religion reporter Kenneth Woodward. “They want to claim us because we are big and successful and growing every year.”

“But we have our own traditions, our own hymns and more students in our seminaries than they have in all of theirs put together. We don’t share their politics or their fussy fundamentalism, and we don’t want to get involved in their theological witch hunts.”

Changing tide

But things changed in the intervening 34 years. Decades of bitter denominational controversy transformed the landscape.

▶ A survey conducted by LifeWay Research for *Outreach* magazine recently named the largest and fastest-growing churches in the nation. While some of the top five in each category have Baptist roots, only one — Second Baptist Church, Houston, the country’s third-largest



Graphic by Lauren Chow

congregation — has the word “Baptist” in its name.

▶ Many Baptist churches sing the same praise-and-worship choruses as independent evangelical congregations.

▶ Denominational gatherings generally pale in attendance compared to conferences sponsored by networks of evangelical megachurches.

▶ And the six SBC seminaries no longer have a virtual monopoly on educating the next generation of Southern Baptist ministers.

Theological education

“Looking at theological education, when I began teaching, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) was dominated by the Ivy League schools and by the mainline denominational seminaries. Today ATS is dominated by the evangelical schools. Nearly all the largest seminaries are evangelical. It’s a different ballgame,” said James Leo Garrett, distinguished professor emeritus at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of “Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study.”

A 1983 book Garrett co-wrote sought to answer the question, Are Southern Baptists evangelicals?

He classified them as “denominational evangelicals.” He noted they shared with evangelicals in general a commitment to the authority of Scripture, Christ-centered doctrine, gospel proclamation, the experience of grace and the imperative of evangelistic and missions endeavors.

Garrett believes events in the years since the book was published have validated his position.

“Fewer Baptists today would utterly deny that Southern Baptists are evangelical,” he said.

As far as his designation of Southern Baptists as “denominational” evangelicals, Garrett said if many Southern Baptists today look more generically evangelical than distinctively Baptist, then it is because of the failure to teach distinctive Baptist principles and fallout from denominational in-fighting.

“One of the greatest causes of

dropping Baptist identity has been 30 years of controversy,” he said.

But while some Baptists have discarded their own denominational label, others have shied away from the term “evangelical” because of the political baggage it carries.

Theologian William Brackney regrets that tendency. In an article for *EthicsDaily.com*, he emphasized his belief that the evangelical label is among those “terms above being hijacked for special purposes.”

“I use it in a particular way — to denote any professing Christian who defines faith in the context of Scripture, who understands Jesus Christ as a unique union of God and humanity and who holds to the necessity of conversion and vital Christian experience and witness,” wrote Brackney, professor of Christian theology and ethics at Acadia University and Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia.

“I happen to believe that ‘evangelical’ legitimately applies to groups or persons in Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox categories, regardless of race, gender, lifestyle or socioeconomic status.”

Descriptions

Although Brackney says he uses the term to describe “gospel-friendly people of many different stripes,” he acknowledges some use it to describe a particular social, political and cultural viewpoint rather than a doctrinal commitment.

“A whole new phenomenon has arisen in political evangelicalism that is identified with anti-abortion, opposition to same-sex unions, anti-big government, anti-socialism, anti-Islam ... as well as pro-individualism, pro-capitalism and various degrees of neo-nationalism,” he wrote.

But Brackney and Garrett agreed, whatever its shortcomings, the evangelical label finds its grounding in Scripture. For a people who emphasize the authority of the Bible, it’s difficult to argue with that.

“It’s rooted in the good news of the gospel,” Garrett said. “It’s hard to make an argument for a better term.” (ABP)

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About Alabama

Why Doesn't the State Report Monthly on Its Budgets?

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

On Sept. 16, the governor reduced the state's education budget by \$113 million to keep it in balance. His "proration" order, which cut payments to public schools, colleges and universities, came only two weeks before the fiscal year end. School administrators had little time to react to this large, sudden loss of funding from their budget plans.

While I understand the governor's duty to maintain budget balance, it seems to me that Alabama should do everything it can to make sure those who manage public services have as much time as possible to prepare for midyear budget cuts.

There is a simple tool for keeping everyone informed about the status of the state's General Fund and Education Trust Fund budgets: It's called a monthly report. Many states report every month on the condition of their budgets and we could, too. Putting such a report on the state's website would ensure broad access to the information. The ingredients that would have to be in such a report include the beginning balance for the fiscal year, the revenue forecast, spending authorized and the expected ending balance. During

the year, changes in revenue and expenditure estimates would be factored into the reports, along with their impact on the ending balance. This wouldn't change the need to take action when conditions turn sour, but it would give notice of it changing as the year progresses and improve the ability to adjust to them.

Reports of this type are presented at the start of each legislative session by the governor's budget staffs and Legislature to guide the development of state budgets. They aren't maintained in a public way thereafter. In addition, an Open Alabama website already exists, with hundreds of pages of monthly tables on state revenues and expenditures. Unfortunately these undigested tables give no sense of state budgets condition. The transparency is commendable but the state should produce clear monthly reports on the budgets' bottom lines. I think the state Finance Department should be required by law to do so.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Jim may be contacted at jwillia@samford.edu.



Photo courtesy of Paul Mason

JASPER'S PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OPENS NEW SANCTUARY
Friends and family of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Jasper, celebrated the opening of their new worship center Oct. 17. The previous worship center was destroyed by fire after being struck by lightning March 3. Paul Mason is pastor.

'House that God built'

Heflin church builds home for member's family

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Every Sunday morning at Pine Grove Baptist Church, Heflin, Rodney Morgan arrives early so he can make coffee for his Sunday School class.

"Don't make him late to church," fellow class member David Howle said. "He wants to be there first."

Pastor Steve Dempsey said Morgan is one of the Cleburne Baptist Association church's most faithful members, seldom missing a service, despite the fact that life can be pretty challenging for him and his mother, Margie. Both of Morgan's brothers live in mental health institutions, and he and his mother do their best to take care of each other.

Last fall, however, things looked pretty bleak for the Morgans. The Cleburne County Health Department condemned their home because of ongoing concerns about water, sewage and the overall safety of the house. The first deadline to correct the problems passed, then a second and then a third.

Bob Young and Jerry Brown, deacons at Pine Grove Baptist who had worked with the Morgans for years, were at a loss as to what to do in what seemed a hopeless situation.

Then an idea was born in Morgan's Sunday School class of young adults. Howle, an agriscience teacher at Cleburne County High School in Heflin, suggested building a new house. There was enough land on their property, and Howle estimated that with donated labor, church members could build a house for \$12,000 to \$15,000.

"We were thinking of buying a mobile home, but I knew we could build a house of the same size or larger for the same money or less, and it would be a home that could last a lifetime for Rodney," he said.

Howle's proposal was for his shop students to frame the walls at school and then other volunteers would erect them on site and finish the house from there. He presented the idea to the deacons and came away with individual commitments



Photo by Carrie Brown McWhorter

HUMBLE ABODE — Margie Morgan (far left) and her son, Rodney (center), are enjoying their new home built by Pine Grove Baptist Church, Heflin, where Steve Dempsey (far right) serves as pastor.

of \$5,000 toward the project. The church then set up a "bucket fund," giving members the opportunity to contribute to the project each week. Monetary donations began to come in, and as word spread about the project, donations of supplies and labor began to come in as well.

Team of volunteers

As students in the Heflin chapter of FFA framed wall sections and built trusses for the roof, a local concrete contractor did the preparation work for the foundation and a local building supply company donated concrete.

When the wall sections were completed, volunteers brought them to the site and set the walls and most

of the trusses on a Saturday. They continued to work on Saturdays, with volunteers donating labor and supplies for the roof, walls, wiring, plumbing, painting, flooring and trim work. In the project's final stages, cabinets, a washer and dryer and furnishings were donated, too.

On Oct. 10, Pine Grove held an open house for church and community members to see what Dempsey calls "the house that God built."

For Margie Morgan, a new stove has been one of the highlights of the new house. For Rodney Morgan, it's been the hot showers, which he had not had in more than two years.

Dempsey expects the Morgans to move in as soon as the last few touches are added to the house.

Howle said he hopes the excitement of the project will lead to more missions projects in the future, and Brown called the whole experience "the most remarkable missions story I've seen in my lifetime."

"Everybody who heard about the project wanted to be part of it, and it has just grown and grown," he said.

And one of the project's biggest blessings was seeing the younger generation step up and serve, Brown said.

"These younger folks got excited and that motivated everybody else," he said.

"We started out to build just the most basic house that could be built, but we're going to have a house that is not large but is as nice as anyone's and totally paid for. It's just been an amazing experience."

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'Living in fear'

Haitians fear worst with Hurricane Tomas

Hurricane Tomas hit western Haiti on Nov. 5, battering earthquake-ravaged cities with 85 mph winds and torrential rains.

In the 10 months since the Jan. 12 earthquake, Haitians have lived in fear of hurricanes, with 1.3 million homeless in unsanitary and unstable tent cities.

After a possible nationwide outbreak of cholera was contained to the city of St. Marc in October, now the hurricane is making the situation even more perilous.

Those living in tent cities are most at risk. What the strong winds do not destroy, the floodwaters will, as thousands of tents line riverbanks and low-lying areas.

Florida and Southern Baptist disaster relief teams on the ground in Port-au-Prince made preparations prior to Tomas's arrival, securing supplies and equipment from the flooding that had already swept through the city's streets.

Although media reports suggested that the government was moving people out of the tent cities, Eddie Blackmon, Haiti Rebuild coordinator for Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, said he had driven through the tent cities in Port-au-Prince several days prior to Tomas' landfall and had seen no evidence of such a move.

"There is really no place for them to go," Blackmon said. "If there were, the government would have moved them before now."

Fritz Wilson, incident commander of the Haiti earthquake response and Florida Baptist disaster relief director, reported that the convention has 17 tons of rice positioned in warehouses across Haiti, with



Reuters photo

FEARS OF FLOODING — A Haitian walks under the rain in the early morning while Hurricane Tomas passes in Port-au-Prince Nov. 5. Hurricane Tomas soaked crowded Haitian earthquake survivors' camps with overnight rain as the re-strengthened storm headed north between Cuba and Haiti amid fears of flooding and landslides.

pastors trained for making distributions if needed. "We have our supplies and resources on the ground," Wilson said.

Buckets of Hope

"In God's timing," he said, "next week we are scheduled to take more than 4,000 Buckets of Hopes to Jeremie and Les Cayes," towns in southwestern Haiti that were hammered by the hurricane Nov. 5. Each bucket, packed by Southern Baptist hands including Alabama Baptists, contains enough food to feed a Haitian family for more than a week.

Florida Baptists, working in partnership with the 1,000 churches

of the Confraternite Missionaries Baptiste d'Haiti, have responded to eight disasters in the past 15 years. Florida Baptists shipped bottled water and water purification filters to St. Marc in late October to help stem the cholera outbreak in that city, located about 60 miles northwest of Port-au-Prince.

The supplies were sent after Fritz Albert, director of missions of Haiti's Artibonne Baptist Association, issued a plea of help.

"Pastor Albert asked if there was anything we could do to help provide pure water for churches in the St. Marc area," said Blackmon, who is stationed at the Florida Baptist Mission House in Port-au-Prince.

"The outbreak has scared everyone in the area, making them afraid to drink any water."

Cholera, a bacterial infection of the small intestines, can cause vomiting and diarrhea so severe it can kill victims from dehydration within days.

The disease is spread through contaminated water, food and poor sanitation.

Clean water

Volunteers from First Baptist and Hillcrest churches in Pensacola traveled to Haiti on Oct. 30, with 30 water purification drip-type filters that can be installed on five-gallon buckets to help stem

the lack of pure drinking water.

Additionally \$30,000 was earmarked to purchase water in Port-au-Prince to be shipped to St. Marc.

Albert dispensed the water and purification filters to the churches for distribution to families in their communities.

Despite the outbreak, Florida Baptist Convention officials released a statement to their churches encouraging mission volunteers to continue with scheduled plans.

Blackmon reported that the Pensacola medical teams treated 800 patients during the week of Oct. 24-30 and another 600 patients before being sent home. (BP, AP, NWS)

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BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Fultondale First Baptist Church is seeking a spirited bivocational pastor. Please send resumes to: 409 Main Street, Fultondale, AL 35068, or e-mail: beckyhiggins@fbconline.org.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER: Oak Grove Baptist is seeking a bivocational youth minister. Send resumes to: Oak Grove Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 2800 Reads Mill Road, Glencoe, AL 35905.

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@fbccdothan.org.

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Baptist believers in Baghdad consider changing day of worship

(continued from page 1)

among them if the women were not being held by the Coptic Church, Edens said.

"That is not true," he said. "Unlike the general Islamic population, members of jihadist Islamic groups, members of al-Qaida in particular in this case, have committed to an ideology that is opposed to all Christians in their midst. Not only

that, they are opposed to all other religious expressions including expressions of Islam that are different from their own."

Al-Qaida has killed more Muslims than Christians and it is antagonistic and belligerent against anyone who holds a different worldview than the jihadist ideal, which is the establishment of a global Islamic republic that is ruled by

nothing but the Quran, Edens said.

"It was clearly an attack against vulnerable Christians to try to encourage them to emigrate out of Iraq, to reduce their voice in Iraq, to intimidate them," he said.

And it seems that the Oct. 31 attack is doing just that.

Tony Peck, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) regional secretary for Europe and general secretary for

the European Baptist Federation, reported that the pastor of the Baptist church in Baghdad informed him that the "Christian community is now very fearful for its safety" and that "some of the Baptist believers are talking about moving away from Baghdad to north Iraq, others to Jordan and Syria."

Peck said he fears that "this very understandable response would leave the Christian church in Iraq even weaker than before."

It has been estimated that since the invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies in 2003, approximately half the Christian population has fled the Middle Eastern country, leaving an estimated 550,000 believers. Many of those who remain are increasingly harassed and often experience violence.

In the wake of the attack, Baptists in Baghdad are considering changing the day of worship from Sunday to Friday, the traditional day of worship for Muslims and a practice already adopted by Christians in several Muslim-majority countries, according to BWA.

The jihadists are trying to eliminate voices of peace, moderation and cooperation, and the Christian

church is "a large voice in that choir" of making a better society, Edens said.

"We as Christians who are in freedom need to pray for our brothers and sisters not just in Islamic countries but in much of the rest of the world who are suffering for their identification with the gospel of Jesus Christ," he said. "We have freedom to pray for them and to intercede for them and to learn of their plight and to send missionaries to walk alongside of them, and we need to be faithful in that."

Raimundo Barreto, the director of freedom and justice for BWA, said, "We deeply regret the unjustifiable murder of Roman Catholic Christians during worship [Oct. 31] in Baghdad.

"We affirm our profound solidarity with the Christian community in Iraq of the prayerful support from the larger Christian family around the world," he added. "As followers of Jesus Christ, we advocate for true and lasting peace in that region. We call on Christians all over the world to diligently work to prevent any escalation of violence by not repaying evil with evil but by overcoming evil with good."

(Compiled from wire services)

Fall ushers preparation for Dashing Through the Springs



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With cooler temperatures finally prevailing, it is a sign that Dashing Through the Springs is just around the corner at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center.

Shocco staff are gearing up for the second running of the 5K race set for Dec. 11. Dashing Through the Springs is quickly becoming a favorite among regional runners. The 3.09-mile course weaves its way through our wooded hillsides, offering a formidable challenge to seasoned runners and novices alike.

There also will be a 1-mile fun run/walk for the less adventurous and children who want to be part of the activities of the morning, making Dashing Through the Springs an event for the entire family.

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space and sponsorships are available for the run, and applications also are online.

All proceeds raised from the event go to support Shocco mission work, which has taken staff as far away as Guatemala twice this year and to points closer to home, like the Gulf Coast and right here in Talladega, to lend a helping hand and spread the message of Christianity.

Our dedicated staff continue to make its presence felt near and far through mission work, and we encourage support of its efforts through our Shocco Mission Fund.

It is through events like these and the generous support of sponsors and donors that our mission continues. We thank you all, and we invite you for a morning of fun and fellowship at Dashing Through the Springs Dec. 11.

You can register on our website at www.shocco.org/5krun or www.active.com. If you would like to be a sponsor or have a booth, please contact Skye McKleroy at smckleroy@shocco.org or 256-761-1100, Ext. 2001.



Letters to the Editor

HONORING VETERANS

Each year on Nov. 11, we declare Veterans Day to honor our veterans. Yet the vast majority of our young people — and many adults as well — seem oblivious to our veterans

and the meaning of the day. This year, join me in making Veterans Day mean more than just another day off from school and work.

As we approach Nov. 11, please consider these statistics:

- ▶ Currently we have 23 million veterans (about 7 percent of the total population of the U.S.)

- ▶ 1.8 percent of veterans are women, with 245,000 having served in Iraq and Afghanistan

- ▶ 3.1 million veterans receive some type of disability benefit. (Currently 280,300 receive 100 percent Veterans Affairs disability)

- ▶ 960 veterans are amputees from the Iraqi and Afghan wars alone

- ▶ 306,000 veterans currently suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder

War casualties in our generation:

- ▶ Iraq War deaths: 4,426

- ▶ Afghan War deaths: 2,095

- ▶ Vietnam War deaths: 58,000 (Source: Department of Veterans Affairs)

We can never repay the debt owed to America's veterans for their service and for the sacrifices made by these young Americans. On Nov. 11, seek out a veteran — regardless of whether you know them or not — and consider treating them to lunch, a hug or handshake and a heartfelt "Thank you." This would be a good start.

James W. Anderson
United States Air Force
(Southeast Asia, 1967–1968)
Talladega, Ala.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 14

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce Professor of Christian Studies, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

BEING MARRIED Ephesians 5:22-33

Some people live in a marriage relationship on the selfish basis of what they can get out of it. These adults see marriage as a way to meet certain needs, such as love and companionship, or fulfill certain desires, such as having a family. Others live in a marriage relationship on the basis of what they can do for their spouse. These people may see marriage as a way to provide something their spouse would not otherwise have, such as financial security. Or these people may be so afraid of losing their spouse that they see marriage and preserving it as their sole responsibility. From a Christian perspective, however, the best way to live in a marriage relationship is on the basis of one's relationship with Jesus Christ. Then both spouses will have their needs met.

Wives: Submit As Service (22-24)

The key word found in this instruction to wives is "submit." Much debate has obscured the apostle Paul's teaching and intent in this passage. Several considerations may assist in recovering his intent. (1) The immediately preceding verse (Eph. 5:21) calls for mutual submission among believers. That thought is continued in verse 22. A proper personal relationship in a Christian family includes submission that is mutual and rooted in reverence for God. (2) These instructions are given to marriages in which both spouses are believers. This is not instruction for society in general. (3) Although the wife is the first to be instructed to be submissive, the husband is to show his submission to the Lord by his care and concern for his wife. (4) Submission has to do with the order of authority, not the exercise of authority. (5) Paul did not give the husband the right to force his wife to submit; she is to do that as a voluntary act, her service rendered to the Lord. (6) Submission does not mean inferiority. It means the wife recognizes her husband's role and responds to him accordingly, without grasping his authority for herself. The reason for this marriage arrangement is that the husband's role in the marriage reflects Christ's role with the Church. Paul

called for the wife to submit to her own husband (not men in general) on the basis of her relationship with Christ.

Husbands: Love As Christ Does (25-30)

Husbands are instructed to love their wives; this is their supreme responsibility. This means seeking the highest good for the person loved. For the husband, this means that he is to love his wife with the same unreserved and selfless love seen in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, when He gave Himself up for us. For the husband, sacrificial love provides a nonthreatening basis for his wife's voluntary submission. Christ's love for the Church is the model for a husband's love. Christ's love for the Church was designed to make it holy so that it may be presented to Him as a gloriously beautiful bride. Whereas human brides prepare themselves for their grooms, Jesus prepares His bride for Himself. A Christian husband should care for his wife with the same devotion he naturally displays in his care for himself. This includes spiritual nurture and emotional cherishing, as well as physical well-being. The husband who loves his wife in these ways of tender affection brings great joy and blessing to himself from her and the Lord. The husband's life is so intimately united with his wife that they are one (Gen. 2:24).

Both: Express a Complete Unity (31-33)

Paul quoted Genesis 2:24 to stress the significance of the bond between husband and wife. The divine plan for marriage, which God established at creation, is a unity that goes far beyond sexual union to involve every area of a couple's life and relationship. It is a permanent union that is intimate and unbreakable. Marriage is a great mystery as is the magnificent bond between Christ and the Church. Marriage is a holy reflection of the beautiful union of Christ and the Church. Consequently the husband is urged to love his wife as he loves himself and the wife is urged to respect her husband. Each is personally responsible to Christ for fulfilling his or her responsibilities.

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

LIFE IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY

Luke 12:13-21; Philippians 1:21-26

In his book "The Way of the Modern World," Craig Gay commented that worldliness is to "go about our daily business in the world without giving God much thought." Our contemporary culture, which is dominated by the importance of the immediate, with little thought for the future, brings Jesus' challenge in this parable to make sure that we do not merely "store up treasures for ourselves and are not rich towards God."

What Life Is Not (Luke 12:13-15)

This particular parable comes between sayings of Jesus that warn against compromising our faith in the face of persecution and worrying unnecessarily about the future. Although there is nothing wrong in taking due care and being cautious about living in this world, the opposite danger is to be so obsessed with the things of this world that we forget that our "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20).

Jesus teaches us that life does not consist of the abundance of possessions. If this is the be-all and end-all of living, then we have missed out on what life is all about. In the context of a dispute over a family inheritance that Jesus was asked to comment on, He ignored the specifics of the case and reminded His hearers that "all kinds of greed" can consume their attention to the detriment of their spiritual lives. The term "greed" really refers to any insatiable desire, although the context here is that of seeking to acquire more and more possessions. The danger of such an attitude is that it assumes that this will truly enrich a person's life. This insatiable desire for a higher standard of living is widespread in the modern world and for many people, is the equivalent of the American Dream. Such a dream will inevitably be frustrated because no one is ever satisfied if they continue to be consumed with "things" rather than God.

A Lose-lose Situation (Luke 12:16-21)

The parable Jesus told illustrates the case of someone who is taken up with a consumerist mentality toward life. The fact that this

man was rich is not wrong in and of itself. He was also productive in his business, and his land was economically viable, probably supporting many families in employment opportunities. The suggestion in the parable is that becoming richer began to consume the man's whole life. There was no recognition in his achievements of the way in which God had blessed him. Indeed God was given no consideration at all. His only concern was to grow his business, which he spoke about as "my crops ... my barns ... my grain and my goods ... (even) my soul."

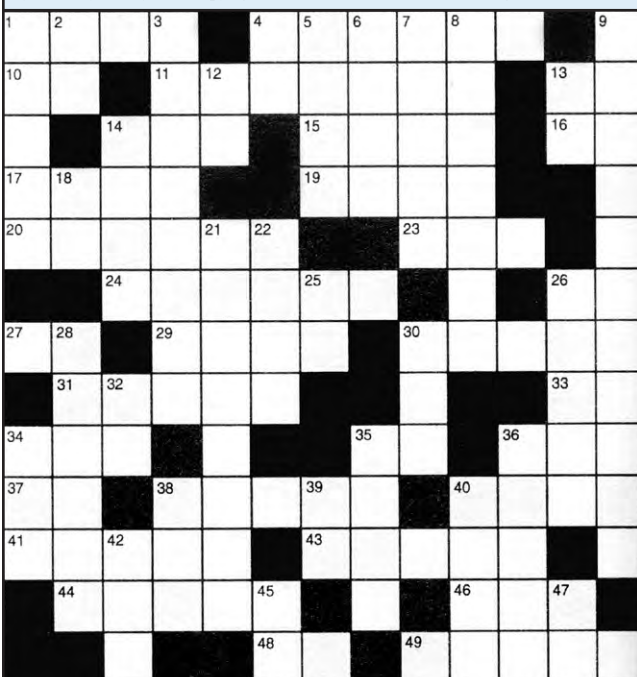
Ecclesiastes 5:10 warns that "he who loves money will not be satisfied with money; nor he who loves wealth with gain; this also is vanity." One further indication of this man's self-absorbed attitude is that he was pictured in the parable as "thinking to himself." He didn't take anybody else into consideration. There was no mention of his family, friends, religious community or God. Jesus' conclusion was that he was a fool. He thought that life was all about people "enjoying themselves." The word that Luke used is a colorful word that has links to the term "euphoria." Into a situation that would appear to be filled with fun and fulfillment, God's voice thundered, "This night, your soul will be required of you. ... The things that you have prepared, whose will they be?" In the words of the proverb, "there are no pockets in a shroud." This man, who had lived to himself alone, would die alone, without the God he neglected throughout his life.

A Win-win Situation (Phil. 1:21-26)

The opposite attitude to this "rich fool" is that of Paul. Paul was in prison, wondering what the future held for him. He wasn't worried. He had learned to be content in his circumstances. The motto of his life was so different from the previous parable — "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." Paul didn't hate his life, but he was not consumed by earthly living. His whole life was lived in the conviction that God was in control and that He could be relied upon that whatever happened, it would be part and parcel of His will for his life.

Christian Crossword

By Bethany Keeny Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- The ___ our God will we serve. (Josh. 24:24)
- The Lord smelled a sweet ___. (Gen. 8:21)
- ___ they can save thee. (Jer. 2:28)
- Any ___ thing shall not be eaten. (Lev. 7:19)
- Tennessee. (abbr.)
- This ___ that.
- Miscellaneous. (abbr.)
- ___ if he shall ask an egg. (Luke 11:12)
- And shall ___ thee on a tree. (Gen. 40:19)
- To cut.
- I give ___ of all that I possess. (Luke 18:12)
- ___ thou at my right hand. (Ps. 110:1)
- "___ Night, Holy Night."
- ___ that men would praise the Lord. (Ps. 107:31)
- Charity suffereth long, and ___ kind. (1 Cor. 13:4)
- Jacob married ___ after the first seven years of work. (Gen. 29:23)
- Very slow to move.
- Smote him with the ___ of

Down

- Neither do men ___ a candle. (Matt. 5:15)
- Ye are the light ___ the world. (Matt. 5:14)
- For the land, nor yet for the ___. (Luke 14:35)
- South Carolina. (abbr.)
- Do not your ___ before men. (Matt. 6:1)
- The ___ of the temple was rent. (Luke 23:45)
- A body of water in the desert.
- But ye have an ___ from the Holy One. (1 John 2:20)
- Is God ___ who taketh vengeance? (Rom. 3:5)
- North Dakota. (abbr.)
- Paul was told ___ go ___ Macedonia. (one word)
- Go to the ___s, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6)
- Joshua sent men from Jericho to ___. (Josh. 7:2)
- The ___ shall melt with fervent heat. (2 Pet. 3:10)
- The waters called he ___. (Gen. 1:10)
- New Hampshire. (abbr.)
- And laid the wood in ___. (Gen. 22:9)
- I will pour out my ___ unto you. (Prov. 1:23).
- There was no room in the ___.
- Did eat ___ thine own

- table. (2 Sam. 19:28)
- I am like a green ___ tree. (Hosea 14:8)
- John was exiled to the ___ of Patmos. (Rev. 1:9)
- Jesus healed 10, but only one ___ thanked him. (Luke 17:12-17)
- Of their shame that say ___, aha. (Ps. 70:3)
- ___ the hart panteth. (Ps. 42:1)
- Mexican money.
- Precious jewel.
- A suffix used to show comparison.
- ___ her feet he bowed. (Judg. 5:27)



Campus News

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian family attacked, falsely charged with crime

JOYSEN, Bangladesh — Muslim neighbors of a Christian family scheduled to be baptized in September beat them and filed a false charge of attempted murder against them and other Christians, the head of the family said. Foyez Uddin, 62, said his neighbor Nazrul Islam and Islam's relatives told him, his wife and his two adult children that as Christians they were "polluting" society and beat them Sept. 17 in Joysen village in Rangpur district, some 186 miles north of Dhaka. Islam is a policeman. Islam's uncle, Abdul Mannan Miah, then filed false charges against Uddin, his family and three others, accusing them of trying to kill Islam's sister (Miah's niece), Uddin said by telephone after his release on bail Oct. 8.

Uddin said his family was fishing at his pond Sept. 17 when eight to 10 Muslim neighbors led by Islam appeared and began speaking abusively about their Christian faith. When he declined their proposal to return to Islam, they beat the Christian family and later vandalized their home, where their Faith Bible Church of God meets. The pastor of the church, Lavlu Sadik Lebjo, said he complained to police of the attack, but officers did not respond.

Uddin was arrested for attempted murder the next day, with police filing a report stating that he collaborated with Christians and made defamatory remarks about Islam, he said. Uddin said the charge was fabricated, and that the accused have witnesses that can testify they were not present at the site of the alleged attempted murder. The accused include two recent converts who live 310 miles away, driven from the area because Muslims refused to give them work, he said.

Christians acquitted of 'insulting Turkishness'

ISTANBUL, Turkey — After four years of legal battle in a Turkish court, a judge acquitted two Christians of insulting Turkey and its people by spreading Christianity, but not without slapping them with a hefty fine for a spurious charge.

Four years ago, gendarmerie officers produced false witnesses to accuse Turan Topal, 50, and Hakan Tasthan, 41, of spreading their faith and allegedly "insulting Turkishness, the military and Islam." At the Silivri court an hour west of Istanbul, Judge Hayrettin Sevim acquitted the defendants Oct. 14 of two charges that they had insulted the Turkish state (Article 301) and that they had insulted its people (Article 216) by spreading Christianity.

Sevim cited lack of evidence but found them guilty of collecting information on citizens without permission (Article 135). They were sentenced to seven months of imprisonment each, but the court ruled that the two men instead could each pay a \$3,170 fine instead of serving time, said their lawyer Haydar Polat. Tasthan expressed mixed feelings about the verdicts.

The charge was based on the fact that people interested in Christianity voluntarily provided contact information about themselves to a research center where the two men had worked as volunteers. Their lawyer said they will appeal the unjust conviction.

Judge refuses to overturn fines against five Baptists

SAMARKAND, Uzbekistan — A judge in Uzbekistan refused Oct. 14 to overturn fines against five Baptists convicted of illegal worship, according to Oct. 26 reports.

Fines totaling roughly 10 times Uzbekistan's minimum monthly salary stemmed from what police termed an "anti-terror" raid on an unregistered congregation worshipping in a home Aug. 15 in Samarkand, the nation's second-largest city.

Worshippers said officers roughed up members of the congregation, a charge police denied. On Sept. 21 a judge in Samarkand Criminal Court found five Baptists guilty of violating the state's ban on teaching religious beliefs without permission of a registered religious organization. The church is part of the Baptist Council of Churches, which opposes being required to register with the state in all the former Soviet republics where it operates.

Appealing the ruling Oct. 14, the Baptists argued they committed no offense by meeting "for joint prayer and worship of God" without state registration, as they did each Sunday. They referred to articles in the Uzbek Constitution and religion law guaranteeing freedom of conscience.

The court rejected the appeal, ordering that religious literature confiscated during the raid be turned over to the state's Religious Affairs Committee.



Judson College

► **Judson Honors Employees on Service Anniversaries:** Judson College

held its annual Employee Recognition Convocation on Nov. 2. President David Potts presided and presented gifts to honorees.

Harold Arnold was a five-year honoree, and Becky Shipman was a 10-year honoree. Fifteen-year honorees were Ricky Clements, Anthony Miree, George Washburn and Leah Washburn. Judy Blanton and Michelle Hughey were 20-year honorees. Ray Price was honored for 25 years of service, and 30-year honorees were Hosea Rutledge, Alleana Smith and Iona Williams.

Following the convocation, Potts hosted a luncheon for honorees and their families.

► **Judson to Host First Student Art Exhibition:** The Judson College art department will exhibit student work until Nov. 29.

The artwork is on display in the Marian Acre Tucker Gallery in Tucker Hall.

The exhibition features work from the new graphic design concentration, as well as paintings, drawings, prints and sequential art.

The exhibition features works by current art majors and minors and art club members, including Cat Popp, Dakota Callicott, Corey Finlay, Heaven Thomas, Christy

Bain, Kaylee Crenshaw, Jenny Newcomb, Courtney Hatcher, Jana Propst, Katlin Bailey, Haley Hester, Ashleigh Hagan and Amanda Noland.

Works in the exhibition are for sale.

For more information about the works or the artists, contact Jamie Adams at 334-683-5251.

University of Mobile

► **Twelve23 Rally Draws Christians Together in Prayer for Nation:**

Christians gathered at Bienville Square in downtown Mobile on Election Day to honor God and celebrate their freedom as Americans to pray and vote in a rally sponsored by the twelve23 movement, an outgrowth of the University of Mobile (UMobile) Center for Leadership.

Patriotic music and the notes from the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" resounded through the city's public square as the university's RamCorps drum and bugle ensemble played. Worship leader Nikeland Nichols led the crowd in songs of praise.

Leading the gathering in prayer were UMobile President Mark Foley, Moffett Road Assembly of God Senior Pastor Jerry Jenkins and Mount Hebron Church Ministries Senior Pastor Joe Johnson.

As those gathered locked arms with one another and prayed, Jen-

kins, Johnson and Foley stood on the bandstand of the square and asked God to continue to bless the nation.

"Bless this country this day, not because we are anything but because you are everything," Foley prayed.

► **UMobile Center for Performing Arts to present 'Amahl and the Night Visitors':** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Center for Performing Arts will present Gian-Carlo Menotti's masterpiece "Amahl and the Night Visitors" on Dec. 3, 7:30 p.m., and Dec. 5, 2:30 p.m. in the Chickasaw Civic Theater.

Mihaela Buhaiuciu, assistant professor of music at UMobile, will direct the University of Mobile Chamber Singers in opening the evening with a program of sacred Christmas classics.

For more information, call 251-442-2420.



Samford University

► **Samford Hosts Festival of Christmas Music:** Samford University school

of the arts will present Festival of Christmas Music with Samford OperaWorks performance of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" on Dec. 3 at 7:30 p.m. in the Wright Center Concert Hall.

To buy tickets, visit www.samford.edu/arts/tickets. For more information, call 205-726-2853.

'Don't ask, don't tell' still in effect

The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals extended Nov. 1 its postponement of a federal judge's suspension of the ban on open homosexuals serving in the military, meaning the "don't ask, don't tell" policy will remain in effect while the case is under appeal.

The panel of 9th Circuit judges voted 2-1 to continue indefinitely its Oct. 20 temporary stay of judge Virginia Phillips' Oct. 12 ruling that invalidated the 1993 federal law and ordered its enforcement to cease worldwide.

The appellate court's extension of the stay means homosexuals still may not enlist in the armed forces and may be discharged if they already are in the military. "Don't ask, don't tell," as the 17-year-old law is known, prevents homosexuals from serving openly but also prohibits military commanders from asking service members if they are homosexual or about their "sexual orientation."

Members of Congress are considering legislation to rescind "don't ask, don't tell." (BP)



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Parents: Be aware

Predators using Facebook for child pornography

Facebook houses a subculture dedicated to trafficking child pornography and interacting with potential victims, according to an investigative report by FoxNews.com.

The social network site says it is doing all it can to keep pedophile materials from being displayed, but the news organization found plenty of suggestive and potentially illegal photographs of children on the website.

"Where kids play, predators prey. Predators and pedophiles are taking advantage of this site to target children, swap child pornography and share their exploits," Donna Rice Hughes, president of Enough Is Enough, said in response to the report.

"It is entirely unacceptable that Facebook has allowed this content to surface on its site, and I fear this is only the tip of the iceberg."

After uncovering the subculture of child pornography on Facebook, FoxNews.com spent 90 minutes on the phone with two Facebook executives, including the company's chief security officer, leading them click-by-click through what they found.

The executives were "dumbfounded, unaware of and unable to explain the extremely graphic content on the site," FoxNews.com reported Oct. 21. They were shocked that their filters had failed, and later some of the material was blocked but much of it remained available to the public.

"We're constantly looking to improve our filter system," Joe Sullivan, Facebook's chief security officer, said. "As we get more information and tactics, we'll use that to inform our system to make it even better."

Displaying child pornography is against Facebook's terms of use, and Facebook's filter system utilizes a list of keywords from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

One challenge in blocking all illicit material, the company said, is that some keywords that child pornographers use have double meaning and are harmless in some cases.

"Some terms on these lists, including code words and acronyms, have multiple meanings, which makes it difficult to block them upfront without also preventing legitimate uses," Facebook spokesman Simon Axten said.

"We do a careful evaluation of each term and consider both the potential for abuse and the frequency with which the term is

Tips for Internet Safety

- **ESTABLISH** an ongoing dialogue and keep lines of communication open.
- **SUPERVISE** use of all Internet-enabled devices.
- **KNOW** your child's online activities and friends.
- Regularly **CHECK** the online communities your children use, such as social networking and gaming sites, to see what information they are posting.
- **SUPERVISE** the photos and videos your kids post and send online.
- **DISCOURAGE** the use of webcams and mobile video devices.
- **TEACH** your children how to protect personal information posted online and to follow the same rules with respect to the personal information of others.

Source: internetsafety101.org

Graphic by Lauren Chow

used in other contexts when making decisions on whether to block or flag," Axten said.

But Hemanshu Nigam, co-chairman of President Obama's Online Safety Technology Working Group, told FoxNews.com that the mass of pedophile content on Facebook would have been rooted out if the company was doing its job properly.

"The fact that Facebook missed the most basic terms in the terminology of child predators suggests that they've taken a checkbox approach instead of implementing real solutions to help real problems facing children online," Nigam said.

Hughes, of Enough Is Enough, said the investigation underscores the fact that parents must be involved when their children use Facebook.

A world of dangerous, exploitative content is just a few clicks away from any unsuspecting or curious teenager, she said.

'Perfect storm scenario'

"Over the past 10 years, we have seen a sort of perfect storm scenario emerge for Internet-initiated sexual crime against children," Hughes said.

"Never before have predators and pedophiles been able to hold

a town hall together to share their exploits and encourage this type of horrific behavior, but now, through sites like Facebook, they can do just that.

"We find that these individuals are often at the cutting edge of technology, they have easy access to child pornography and to children, and law enforcement, the technology industry and parents are often left in the dust, which is why we focus on reaching those parents and educating about prevention," Hughes said.

Enough Is Enough provides guidance for parents called Internet Safety Rules 'N Tools, online at internetsafety101.org, including such tips as:

- ▶ Establish an ongoing dialogue and keep lines of communication open.
 - ▶ Supervise use of all Internet-enabled devices.
 - ▶ Know your child's online activities and friends.
 - ▶ Regularly check the online communities your children use, such as social networking and gaming sites, to see what information they are posting.
 - ▶ Supervise the photos and videos your kids post and send online.
 - ▶ Discourage the use of webcams and mobile video devices.
 - ▶ Teach your children how to protect personal information posted online and to follow the same rules with respect to the personal information of others.
- "Parents have to remain alert," Hughes said. (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Majority of Protestant pastors do not share political views

NASHVILLE — Protestant pastors may hold strong political views, but most don't use their pulpits to tell church members how to vote, according to new data by LifeWay Research.

The research arm of the Southern Baptist Convention's publishing house, LifeWay Christian Resources, found that 84 percent disagreed with the survey statement, "I believe pastors should endorse candidates for public office from the pulpit."

"We know that pastors have strong feelings when it comes to political candidates and their job performance," said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research. "But each week when they step into public pulpits in front of sometimes thousands of congregants, the vast majority of those pulpits remain silent on advising others how to vote. They may not approve but they do not plan to tell."

LifeWay Research conducted phone interviews with senior pastors of 1,000 randomly selected churches between Oct. 7 and Oct. 14. The sample was calculated with a margin error of plus or minus 3.2 percent. A separate survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, meanwhile, found that 5 percent of regular church attendees reported being urged by clergy or other religious groups to vote in a certain way.

Americans say Christianity makes negative contributions

VENTURA, Calif. — When asked about Christianity's recent contributions to society, Americans cited more negatives than benefits, according to a new survey.

The negative contribution cited most was hatred or violence in the name of Jesus, according to the Barna Group survey. Other frequently cited examples included opposition to gay "marriage" and the Roman Catholic Church's sex abuse scandal.

The positive contribution mentioned most was Christians' helping the poor, as well as evangelism and influencing the country's values. "Overall, there was a more extensive and diverse list of complaints about Christians and their churches than there was of examples of the benefits they have provided to society," said the Barna Group, a Christian firm that researches U.S. faith and culture, in a report released Oct. 25. Researchers, who asked open-ended questions, found that one in four respondents could not name a single positive contribution made by Christians in recent years to American society. Just 12 percent could not think of a single negative contribution.

The findings were based on telephone interviews Aug. 16–22 with a random sample of 1,000 U.S. adults and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Female priests now ordained in all Episcopal dioceses

PEORIA, Ill. — Women have been ordained as priests in all 110 dioceses of the Episcopal Church after the last holdout, in Quincy, Ill., ordained its first woman Oct. 16.

Pastor Margaret Lee, a grandmother of five and former chemist, is the first woman ordained a priest in the Peoria-based Diocese of Quincy's 133-year history, according to Episcopal News Service.

She had been a deacon since 1996. A spokeswoman for the Episcopal Church said all 110 dioceses in the 2.1 million-member church have now ordained at least one female priest. The Episcopal Church voted to open the priesthood to women in 1976. Quincy, which has about 1,800 members in 24 parishes, was one of three dioceses that had refused to ordain women, but its former bishop, a staunch conservative, retired in 2008. The other dioceses — San Joaquin, Calif., and Fort Worth, Texas — had also refused to ordain women, but conservatives in those dioceses, and the bishops who led them, have seceded from the Episcopal Church in the last three years. Remaining Episcopalians in those dioceses have since ordained women.

Disgruntled investor files suit against Bible.com

DOVER, Del. — A disgruntled investor has sued Bible.com, saying the website's name alone should make it a "goldmine" — or at least more profitable than it is.

James Solakian filed suit against Bible.com Inc. in Delaware Chancery Court. He says the website should be worth at least as much as Dictionary.com, Reference.com and Thesaurus.com, which together sold for \$100 million in 2007. Arizona pastor R.S. "Bud" Miller registered the domain name in 1996 for \$50. Solakian acquired 28 percent of the company's equity in 2001.

Bible.com did not return requests for comment. According to the website, it draws more than 2 million visitors each month and is part of a nonprofit ministry that offers daily devotionals, Scripture verses and biblical answers for topics such as voting and masturbation. ☞