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Why do people leave a church?

Same energy needed to connect, develop existing members as attract new ones

Many churches and denominations put a lot of effort into attracting new members only to lose many of them through a “back door” — a term used to describe people who regularly attended a church in the past but stopped.

“Churches have gone to great extreme effort to get people in the front door of the church,” Brad Waggoner of LifeWay Christian Resources said in a 2006 podcast. “There’s been some success numerically in that strategy, but very few people are talking about the back door of the church. That is: ‘Where do the people go that slip out of the life of the church?’

“The back door is just as important as the front door in determining the health of a local church.”

LifeWay President Thom Rainer described in an article on ChurchLeaders.com a meeting with more than 200 church leaders in which nearly 90 percent indicated their churches had a problem with closing the back door.

“For years, the primary focus in many churches has been on the ‘front door’ — people coming into the church,” Rainer said. “While such an emphasis remains the Great Commission priority, our research shows that churches and their leaders must not neglect the issue of the back door, commonly called assimilation.”

George Bullard of The Columbia Partnership, a Columbia, S.C.-based organization that helps churches pursue and sustain vital ministry, said churches face an “assimilation challenge” in the first year after new people begin attending to influence whether they become part of a community or slip through the back door.

“Church growth is a pretty simple concept,” Bullard said. “You get more people who have not been regular attendees and members to become regular attendees and members. You get more regular attendees and members to deepen their involvement in their church and its disciple-making activities. You get less-regular attendees and members to become bored, apathetic or offended and leave the church. If the second thing does not happen,



istockphoto.com, sxc.hu, graphic by Lauren Chow

the third thing is likely to happen.”

Mike James, discipleship and assimilation coordinator for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, said in a blog that assimilation is the difference between a church that is like Velcro — where people stick — or Teflon — where people join but stop attending.

Jay Wolf, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, agreed.

“I have discovered that people come to a church because they feel wanted, and they stay in a church family because they feel needed. So it is imperative to help a new believer discover, develop and deploy their spiritual gifts, which links them to some form of fulfilling Kingdom service.

“When we see people assimilate ... then that person’s social roots go down into the soil of our fellowship and they become stable and productive Christ-followers,” he said. “But if the new believer remains a tumbleweed who never connects to fellow believers then there are no roots and no fruits and they generally roll out the back door.”

‘Be warm and friendly’

Every church should have a strategy for getting first-time visitors to return and a follow-up plan to get them back a second time, James said. It begins by placing value on guests. “Scripture tells us to be warm and friendly to the people we meet,” he said.

James recommended treating every person as if he or she is a guest. “Even your own members need a good welcome and a warm greeting,” he said.

The simplest and most effective way to attract guests is to invite them, James said. Polls show that between 75 percent and 90 percent attend church because a friend or relative invited them.

“Churches must be intentional in this process, or we become a revolving door with as many people going out the back door as we have coming through the front door,” James said.

Gary Fenton, senior pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, suggested that greater

(See ‘Assimilation,’ page 14)

American political system ‘uncivil,’ poll shows

Whether they rally behind Fox News’ Glenn Beck to restore honor or Comedy Central’s Jon Stewart to restore sanity, Americans agree on one thing: Our political system has a civility problem.

Four out of five Americans, regardless of party or religious affiliation, think the lack of respectful discourse in our political system is a serious problem, according to a Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI)/Re-

ligion News Service (RNS) Religion News Poll released Nov. 11.

The findings echo sentiments expressed by a range of religious leaders, including Richard J. Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., and author of “Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World,” and Rabbi Steve Gutow, president of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Alarmed by the 2010 campaign

season, which four in 10 Americans consider more negative than past elections, Mouw, Gutow and others are calling for a kinder, gentler tone — even on hot-button topics like Islamophobia, homosexuality or abortion.

“We’ve had heated public debates before, but the level of discourse in this campaign and even following the campaign has been atrocious,” Mouw said, citing as an example Senate

(See ‘Incivility,’ page 3)

COMMENT

Associations Live Out the Great Commission

Anyone who doubts the importance of the local association in Baptist life should have spent the month of October visiting the annual meetings of the 75 associations in Alabama. He or she would have come away with a fresh appreciation for the ministries and missions made possible by churches working together locally.

We did not personally visit all 75 associations, but we did participate in annual meetings of associations in every part of the state and metropolitan areas as well as rural areas. In all, the state Baptist paper was represented in 50 of the annual meetings. From such insights, it is possible to declare without fear of contradiction that Alabama Baptist associations are active partners in fulfilling the call of the Great Commission.

A number of associations sponsor ministries to area jails. Associational reports related witnessing opportunities as well as ministry opportunities. Reports shared about relationships that reached beyond the jail to help inmates and their families once a sentence had been served. This was true for both men and women.

Through the distribution of Bibles, tracts and other helps, volunteers shared Christ's love. At the annual meetings, stories were told about people who accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and lives that are healing because of God's love seen in the actions of His people.

Many associations sponsor benevolence centers, where help is provided in the form of food, clothes, counseling and other resources. Some even operate thrift shops, which generate funds that are channeled back into ministries. When clients come to these places, they are given more than something physical. They are given a witness about God's love. Most volunteers do this verbally as they share Christ. All do it through their respect and care for those they serve.

Some associations partner with national Woman's Missionary Union to sponsor Christian Women's Job Corps and, more recently, Christian Men's Job Corps. Through these programs, people learn job skills and more. Each person is partnered with a Christian mentor who walks with him or her as he or she prepares to enter the job market. More importantly, the support of a Christian mentor helps him or her learn more about himself or herself, which often results in major changes in the way he or she relates to others.

Many of the people who go through these programs accept Christ as Lord and Savior or renew



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

their faith commitment from an earlier time in life. Meeting some of these men and women and hearing their stories was nothing short of inspiring.

Associations are sponsoring medical and dental clinics. Some are done in cooperation with Baptist hospitals or Samford University's school of nursing. Associations are helping people learn to read and write through literacy programs.

It seems ministry opportunities are limited only by vision.

Evangelistic efforts

Many associations sponsor some kind of event evangelism. Association-sponsored block parties are popular, we learned. So are backyard Bible clubs. A few associations use major events such as races at the Talladega Superspeedway to provide an evangelistic witness to spectators.

Some associations coordinate evangelistic visitation for all their churches. Most offer trained volunteers to help smaller membership churches do Vacation Bible Schools.

All of this focuses on one goal — sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Associations help with international missions as well. Time after time, we heard reports of associations organizing or facilitating international missions trips for local Baptists. Sometimes this was helping churches or individuals get in touch with others. Sometimes it was a missions trip sponsored by the association in behalf of its member churches. Whichever the case, participants expressed appreciation and support for the work of their association.

There were reports about disaster relief efforts by teams organized by the associations, efforts to reach various language groups becoming more prominent in Alabama, lives changed through association-sponsored camps and retreat centers.

Training conferences for pastors, church staff members and key volunteers cannot be ignored. Helping church leaders do a better job of sharing Christ and making disciples is an invaluable contribution made by associations.

It should not be surprising that Alabama Baptist associations are practically synonymous with missions and ministries. After all, the most frequently used title for the association's chief officer is direc-

tor of missions, while most consider themselves an associational missionary.


Nor should it be surprising that those who lead associational work are dedicated to missions and ministries. In more than one annual meeting, the association's budget reflected cuts in financial support for associational staff, and more than once, we heard staff had agreed to the cuts in order to keep funding for missions and ministries.

These are difficult economic times, times when the witness and ministries of associations are desperately needed. But it is not right to balance the associational budget on the backs of staff members just as it is not right for a church to balance its budget on the backs of the pastor and other church staff.

But the tight economic conditions cannot detract from the basic truth. Associations in Alabama are a vital part of sharing God's love in their local area. It is not a stretch to say the more vitally committed to missions and ministries an association is, the more vitality is reflected in its corporate life.

The association does not exist for itself. It exists to serve. Associations do more than missions and ministries. They promote fellowship. They encourage member churches. They provide counsel about the Baptist way. They contend for Baptist understandings.

But Alabama Baptist associations are also about missions and ministries. They are about fulfilling the Great Commission of sharing the saving message of Jesus Christ and making disciples beginning in their local area and reaching to the ends of the earth.



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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'Very difficult economic times'

IMB adopts decreased budget for 3rd consecutive year, reduces missions force

For the third consecutive year, International Mission Board (IMB) trustees adopted a decreased budget from the previous year. They also appointed 57 new missionaries during their Nov. 10 meeting in Greensboro, N.C.

Trustees adopted a 2011 budget of \$308.5 million, \$9.1 million less than 2010's budget. Though the IMB pulled \$7.5 million from its reserves to balance the budget last year, the trustee finance committee was committed to not repeating that move.

"We continue to face very difficult economic times as a nation," said Charles Fowler, a Tennessee trustee who chairs the finance committee.

"We're grateful for Southern Baptist support of the Lord's work that's being accomplished around the world," he added. "It truly is an amazing story of the grace of God at work."

Personnel attrition

According to IMB officials, the mission board is sending about 30 percent fewer long-term personnel than would be sent if there were no financial constraints. The IMB still anticipates sending 300 new long-term personnel and 200 to 250 new short-term personnel in 2011.

With the 57 new long-term missionaries, the number of IMB personnel serving around the world now totals 5,189. Attrition through short-term personnel completing their two- and three-year terms, career personnel retirements and the routine resignation by about 5 percent of the force will cause

that number to decline by the year's end, combined with budget restraints that had already been put in place to lower the number of new personnel appointed.

The IMB also recently offered qualifying staff members in Richmond, Va., a voluntary retirement incentive to take effect by the end of 2010.

The overseas missionary force will be reduced to a goal of 5,000 from a high of 5,600, said Clyde Meador, interim president of IMB.

But "we are still sending new personnel, contrary to rumors that we sometimes hear," he said. "We look forward to a day when financial support reaches the point when we can increase the number of new personnel being sent to the field each year."

In other business, trustees heard a report of \$2,063,474.46 released for hunger and general relief projects, including funds used by Baptist Global Response, a relief and development organization that partners with the IMB. The funds were used in many places such as earthquake recovery needs in Haiti and helping peoples in Central and South Asia.



BP photo

GO — Take a short-term missions trip to an unreached area, recommend Jim and Katie Harmon (not shown, names changed), who plan to go to Africa early next year. They were among the new 57 missionaries recently appointed.

Trustees also heard reports of spiritual victories led by Southern Baptist missionaries and Baptist partners on the field.

In 2009, IMB missionaries reported 360,876 baptisms, 29,237 new churches and 96 newly engaged people groups.

These new numbers usher in a more focused approach to reporting the IMB's missionary work, Meador noted.

The organization's annual report

is now separated into two reports, with the numbers cited by Meador reflecting work by IMB missionaries and those with whom they directly relate.

Trustees also received a report from 133 overseas Baptist conventions that listed 136,422 baptisms and 2,151 new churches. This report could show some overlap with the IMB report.

"We are focusing more than ever on the work done specifically

by our personnel and those with whom they work most closely, which will enable us to better understand how God is using us and how we can better serve," he said.

The appointment service for the 57 new missionaries was broken into two separate events.

One was held Nov. 10 at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C. The other was Nov. 16 at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee. (BP)

Incivility in politics 'is nothing new,' Land says

(continued from page 1)

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's pledge to prevent President Obama's reelection, as opposed to advocating for policy shifts.

"There's a real hostility now, and Christians with very strong and more conservative convictions really don't seem to be contributing much to a civil discourse and a calming of the heated discussions in the larger culture," Mouw said.

In fact, white evangelicals and Republicans are less likely than other Americans to say the 2010 election's tone was more negative than past campaigns, which PPRI research director Daniel Cox said may reflect their satisfaction with the outcome.

Mouw has another theory: evangelicals are more accustomed to inflammatory rhetoric from the pulpit, and therefore don't see it as a problem in politics.

Richard Land, president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, agreed with Cox that the outcome of the election more than likely affected evangelicals' view about the civility of the election.

"Winners usually have more pleasant memories than losers," he said. "I would think that [evangelicals] would be less concerned about the negative tone because they won."

However, unlike Mouw, Land does not think that the lack of civility in this campaign is any different than every other past election.

"I certainly deplore the negative level of the political debate but alas this is nothing new. This has been going on our entire history," he said.

'Short memory'

Land cited examples such as the 2008 election in which Bush was called a war criminal, the violence related to the 1968 election and the bitter smear campaigns of 1800.

"I'm all for civility and for serious discourse but the negativity isn't any worse than it is in the past. Anyone who thinks so has a short memory," he said.

Other findings from the poll, conducted by PPRI in partnership with RNS, include:

► One-third of white evangelicals report that the election was more positive than past elections, a figure that's significantly higher than among white mainline Protestants (17 percent), the unaffiliated (17 percent) or Catholics (23 percent).

► Two-thirds of Americans say that people in their local community work well to overcome differences, and more than eight

in 10 Americans who attend religious services say people in their congregation work well to overcome differences.

► Nearly six in 10 Americans think the country is more divided over politics today than in the past; more than four in 10 Americans said the country is more divided over religion than in the past.

► About half of white evangelicals and black Protestants think the country is more divided over religion than it was in the past, compared to less than 40 percent of Catholics and white mainline Protestants.

BHS' Hoover facility one step closer

Baptist Health System (BHS) filed a letter of intent Nov. 10 with the State Health Planning and Development Agency to build a free-standing emergency facility in western Hoover.

The proposed facility would be built on property BHS bought in 2006 at Interstate 459 and Highway 150. The facility, which would be an extension of Princeton Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham, would provide 24-hour emergency services.

Ross Mitchell, vice president of communications and government relations for BHS,

said this type of service is very much needed. "We made a commitment to the Hoover market in 2006 when we purchased real estate and established several physician practices," he said. "Clearly we think that the market is under-served and that a hospital is truly needed. A free-standing emergency department is a logical next step to bringing services to the Hoover market."

BHS estimates to spend \$10 million on construction and \$4 million on equipment. BHS will file a Certificate of Need application in six months. (TAB)

(RNS, TAB)

Study: TV profanity increased nearly 70 percent in 5 years

Four months after an appeals court struck down the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) broadcast standards, a new study shows that profanity on broadcast television has risen nearly 70 percent in the past five years.

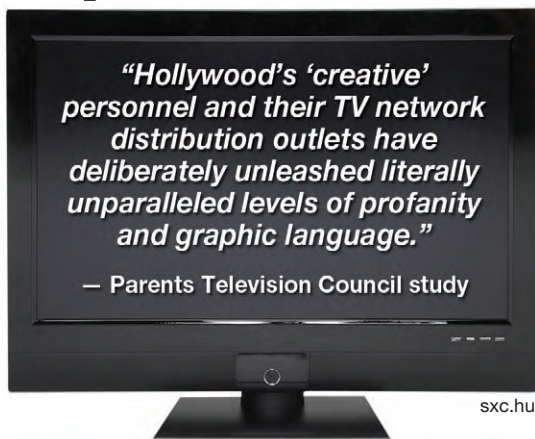
The study by the Parents Television Council (PTC), which compared the first two weeks of the networks' 2010 fall lineup with the first two weeks of the 2005 fall lineup, found that profanity increased 69 percent. Movies, news programs and sporting events were not included in the study.

The study also reported that harsher profanities are now being used, and it added that the "greatest increase in the use of the harshest profanities" took place during the 8 p.m. Eastern period — often known as the "family hour" — and at 9 p.m. Eastern.

In July, the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the indecency policy the FCC uses to monitor offensive language is "unconstitutionally vague." The decision is being appealed. At the time, conservative groups expressed concern that the ruling would lead to an increase in foul language on TV.

'Deliberately unleashed'

"The statistics and examples in this study demonstrate that, freed of regulation in the wake of the 2nd Circuit Court's [striking down] of the FCC's powers of enforcement, Hollywood's 'creative' personnel and their TV network distribution outlets have deliberately unleashed literally unparalleled levels of pro-



sxc.hu

fanity and graphic language upon the public — the most egregious of it in a timeslot in which children are most likely to be in the audience," the study said.

The PTC noted that the lawsuit that led to the 2nd Circuit's decision involved several instances of "fleeting expletives" on live TV by celebrities. The study, though, found that scripted programming was the big problem.

"A 69 percent increase in scripted profanity on preplanned, filmed entertainment is not equivalent to a couple slips of the tongue during live events," the study said. "The statistics ... demonstrate that use of such language by the networks is both deliberate and pervasive."

Among the other findings:

- ▶ "use of the bleeped or muted f-word increased from 11 instances total in 2005 to 276 instances in 2010," an increase of 2,409 percent.

- ▶ "use of the bleeped s-word in the family hour increased from 11 uses in 2005 to 42 uses in 2010," an increase of 281 percent.

- ▶ "use of the bleeped or muted s-word increased from 11 instances

in 2005 to 95 instances in 2010," an increase of 763 percent.

- ▶ use of "anatomical and sexual references" also saw significant increases.

- ▶ the "Fox broadcast network showed the greatest per-hour increase in use of profanity from 2005 to 2010," with an increase of 269 percent.

The PTC listed several recommendations. The FCC must "vigorously" pursue its appeal in the case and "call on the networks

to consider the public's interest before that of their so-called 'creative' employees." Advertisers, too, must hold the networks accountable, the PTC said.

What's the limit?

"If the Supreme Court ultimately should eliminate the FCC's power to regulate program content, will profanity, depictions of explicit sex and scenes of graphic violence increase without limit?" the study asked. "What guarantees do the networks offer ... that ... they will use the airwaves responsibly? The broadcast networks can ... maintain standards of common decency."

The rise in TV profanity has resulted in some companies creating products to assist parents. One company, TVGuardian, sells a device that mutes foul language on television. Another company, ClearPlay, sells a DVD player that mutes bad language and also skips objectionable scenes in movies.

Read the study at www.parentstv.org/PTC/publications/reports/2010ProfanityStudy/study.pdf. (BP)

Focus on 'unreached' making difference

Seeing some of the faces and names of 6,426 people groups unreached by the gospel — like the Warnang of Sudan — gave college student Kaci Dills a sense of urgency to do something.

While attending a collegiate ministry event at LifeWay's Glorieta Conference Center in New Mexico, Dills and other students stopped at the International Mission Board's (IMB) display booth. There they found a large wall covered with tan stickers bearing the names of people groups that are fewer than 2 percent evangelical Christian. Those who visited the IMB booth were challenged to pick a sticker and start a journal via imb.org/gettingthere to pray for the unreached people group. "God has burdened my heart," said Dill, a junior at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, who plucked the Warnang people group sticker from the display wall.

Many of the people groups represented at the IMB booth do not

have access to Bibles. They have no churches. There are no missionaries working among them.

The display helps students put their hands on something tangible to help them relate to the prayer need, said Suzanne Lillard, associate director of collegiate ministries for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. "This generation needs to feel like 'I'm doing something that's going to impact the world,'" Lillard said. "The more individually connected a student can get, the better it is for them."

'Faith in action'

Clark Carter, campus minister at Charleston Southern, grabbed 700 stickers to distribute to students from the IMB display at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in June in Orlando, Fla.

"We're giving them real, practical ways to put their faith into action," Carter said. "Every week I have students stopping by saying they want

to go [visit their people group]."

Since the IMB display made its debut at the SBC annual meeting, all 6,426 unreached people group stickers have been selected.

But the challenge has just begun, said Ed Cox, the IMB's director of global prayer strategy.

"There are people where no one is working, and they're on no one's radar," Cox said. "Their only hope is that people are praying for them."

More people are needed to register that they have already selected a people group or to still commit to pray for one of the unreached people groups. More than one person or group can register to pray for a people group. To register a people group that has been selected or to learn about how to pray for an unreached people group, go to imb.org/gettingthere. To learn more about how to involve students in the prayer initiative, call toll-free 1-800-789-4693, option 9, or e-mail studentteam@imb.org. (BP)

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Former FBC Jacksonville member reaches settlement

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The sheriff's office in Jacksonville has agreed to study its conflict-of-interest code for detectives and develop a training program on First Amendment considerations as part of a settlement with an anonymous blogger who was unmasked — by the office's power of subpoena — for criticizing his former pastor.

The city and state must also pay \$50,000 to Tom Rich, a former member of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville. Rich operated FBC Jax Watchdog, a blog often critical of the church's pastor, Mac Brunson. First, Jacksonville, has long been one of the largest churches in the country and one of the most prominent congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Rich filed the federal lawsuit in 2009 claiming violation of his First Amendment rights guaranteeing free speech and prohibiting the establishment of religion when Detective Robert Hinson, a member of First, Jacksonville, who served on the pastor's security detail, got a subpoena ordering Rich's Internet service provider to reveal his identity.

Rich claimed he chose to blog anonymously to draw attention to issues in the church rather than himself and thought it would encourage more open discussion. In allowing the case to move forward in April, U.S. District Judge Marcia Morales Howard noted that the Supreme Court has ruled that the First Amendment protects anonymous speech.

After he was exposed, Rich said the church obtained trespass warnings against him and began proceedings to revoke his church membership. Eventually he and his wife left their church of more than 20 years to join another congregation.

First, Jacksonville, told local media it had no comment. A separate lawsuit against the church continues to move forward in state court.

Southwestern Seminary marks 100 years in Fort Worth

FORT WORTH, Texas — Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) celebrated a milestone of 100 years at its current location with a chapel service Oct. 19 focusing on its founder, B.H. Carroll, and his successor, L.R. Scarborough, who led the seminary from 1915 to 1942.

"The institution that does not revisit the principles of its founder and the commitments of its founder has made the most absurd mistake of any that you can find anywhere," SWBTS President Paige Patterson said in a chapel address specifically targeted to the seminary's board of trustees and faculty.

SWBTS began as an outgrowth of Baylor University in 1905. It separated from Baylor and was re-chartered in 1908 as Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a separate board of trustees. The seminary operated two years on Baylor's Waco, Texas, campus before moving to a section of Fort Worth today known as "Seminary Hill."

In 1925, the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) turned control of the seminary over to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). During the inerrancy controversy within the SBC during the 1980s and 1990s, the seminary moved toward a perspective to the right of the moderate-leaning BGCT, prompting Baylor to open its own George W. Truett Theological Seminary in 1994.


Missouri's Hannibal-LaGrange becomes university

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — The Missouri Baptist Convention renamed Hannibal-LaGrange College on Oct. 26 to Hannibal-LaGrange University after alumni campaigned to retain the "LaGrange" part of the moniker.

Messengers to the convention's annual meeting, gathering in Springfield, voted 593-360 to amend a motion presented on behalf of the school's trustees. The trustees had proposed changing the name of the four-year liberal-arts college with about 1,150 students to the University of Hannibal. The amendment re-inserted the historic "LaGrange" reference into the name of the school, currently based in Hannibal.

After the ballot the school's president and trustee chairman stepped forward to tell messengers they also would accept the amendment. A second public vote passed nearly unanimously.

Founded in 1858 in the Mississippi River town of LaGrange, Mo., the La Grange Male and Female College flourished until the Civil War but afterward struggled to recover from debt. In 1928 the institution merged with Hannibal College and moved 30 miles downriver to Hannibal, where it became known as Hannibal-LaGrange College.

Hannibal-LaGrange is one of four colleges historically affiliated with the convention. 

THAILAND at a glance

- ▶ It was established in the 14th century and bore the name Siam until 1939.
- ▶ The country's proper name is the Kingdom of Thailand. The capital is Bangkok.
- ▶ A coup in September 2006 ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The People's Power Party, which formerly had supported Thaksin, gained victory in elections 15 months later.
- ▶ The People's Alliance for Democracy staged demonstrations against the ruling party from May to December 2008.
- ▶ Abhisit Vejjajiva was installed as prime minister following the formation of a new coalition government.
- ▶ After a corruption conviction, Thaksin went into voluntary exile in October 2008 to keep from being imprisoned. Thaksin's supporters reorganized under the name United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship and, in April 2009, incited riots.
- ▶ The country's population is just more than 67 million people, the majority of whom — 70.5 percent — are between the ages of 15 and 64.
- ▶ Three-fourths of the populace are Thai, 14 percent are Chinese and 11 percent are of different nationalities.
- ▶ Almost 95 percent of the people are Buddhist. More than 4 percent are Muslim. Christians make up less than 1 percent of the population.
- ▶ The most prominent language is Thai. There are also regional and ethnic dialects. English is an unofficial second language.
- ▶ Less than 10 percent of the people live below the poverty level. The country has an unemployment rate of less than 2 percent.
- ▶ Agriculture is the main industry.

Source: CIA World Factbook



IMB photo

By Martine Bates Sharp and Neisha Fuson
Correspondents, The Alabama Baptist

Looking across the pristine beaches of Phuket and Krabi, Thailand, it is difficult to tell that the Indian Ocean tsunami ever touched the Southeast Asian country's southern coast. The tidal wave hit the day after Christmas 2004, leaving more than 8,000 people either dead or missing and presumed dead and another 8,000 injured.

There is no tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean as there is for the Pacific Ocean. And that day, many local people and tourists were curious about the receding water line and actually walked out onto the dry coast only to be shocked by the waves that followed.

"I [had] never seen anything like this in my whole life," said Thum Kumchai, a resident of the northern city of Chiang Mai who went south to provide assistance after the disaster.

In the nearly six years since the tsunami, Thailand has largely rebuilt villages and resorts and worked to re-establish a strong economy.

According to the U.S. Department of State, the country's economy, strengthened by export growth in automobiles and its lead in the export rice market, has been strong for the last several years. Of course, its economy, along with most of the rest of the world's, contracted in the global economic crisis of 2008 and 2009.

However, by 2010, Thailand was once again experiencing economic growth with the first quarter yielding the highest per-quarter growth in 15 years. Tourist season gained power this year, as Bangkok and Chiang Mai were ranked No. 1 and 2 in *Travel + Leisure* magazine's list of the top 10 cities to visit in the world.

In keeping with a nation with a growing economy, people in Thailand tend to be relatively well-educated, with a 92.6 percent literacy rate and an expected education level of 12 years. By contrast, the literacy rate in the United States is 99 percent with

an expected 16 years of education. Schools are well-funded, with Thailand ranking just below Canada in per-student expenditures.

Most of the country's 67 million people still live in rural areas, and half still make their living from farming, primarily from raising rice. Unlike Thailand's strong overall economic climate, Thum said the rural economy is still struggling as it has for years.

Thirty-three percent of the population now lives in teeming modern cities like the capital city of Bangkok. Its population is more than 9 million.

The country's official language is Thai, but English

is so prevalent that it is referred to as an unofficial second language. The Thai school system teaches English grammar, reading, writing and speaking at all grade levels.

As Thailand modernizes, Western influences are increasingly common. Karaoke studios, a frequent hangout for young people, provide an outlet for all major recording artists to release versions of their recordings specially formatted for karaoke. Soccer, mostly the Premier League, now rivals the traditional sport of Thai boxing in popularity. Fashion, media and restaurants also reflect a Western flair. Phone service is widespread

and reliable, both cell and land lines. Internet service is also widely available, and Internet cafés like Wawee Coffee and Black Canyon exist in most urban areas. Iced coffee and sweet teas are among the favorite choices for a refreshing cold drink in the tropical temperatures that the country has year-round.

Not all aspects of life in Thailand have shown signs of Western influence, however. Religion is one that has changed little. Nearly 95 percent of the population claims to be Buddhist. In this country, Buddhism is practiced with a mix of animism and ancestor worship. Muslims make up the second largest religious group at 4.6 percent, while only 0.7 percent of the population is recorded as Christian.

The government says it is tolerant of religious diversity. This means that while it does not register new religious groups, it does not interfere with their function.

Similarly the number of religious workers in the nation is limited, but large numbers of unregistered religious workers are allowed to live and work with no interference from the government. This, in part, is because of the general openness and tolerance of the Thai culture.

"To be Buddhist is to allow all things that are 'good' as long as they do not interfere with anyone else," Thum said. "Buddhists think Christians are just good people; they do not yet understand Christ and the salvation He brings."

Thailand recovers from tsunami, rebuilds

SAYING PRAYERS — Thais visit a Buddhist temple at the top of Doi Suthep, a famous mountain in Chiang Mai, Thailand.



Photo by Neisha Fuson



Gospel makes inroads into Thailand, thanks to Alabama couple

By John Evans
The Alabama Baptist

Maybe, in my next life, I'll become a Christian." The Thai man was serious. A Buddhist, he believed in reincarnation but also claimed to believe what Southern Baptist representative Jack Kinnison told him about Jesus.

"The gospel is such a different concept to Thais," Kinnison said.

For more than 30 years, he and his wife, Lynn, labored in the Southeast Asian country of Thailand to share Jesus with a people steeped in Buddhism.

Ministering in Laos

The Kinnisons were appointed as representatives with the International Mission Board (IMB) in 1972, after which they began working in Laos, a country bordering Thailand. But the Communist takeover of Laos in 1975 caused problems for their ministry; the Communists despised Americans, making it dangerous for Laotian Christians associated with them.

So the couple moved to Thailand later that year. After two years of language study, they began work as church planters in rural areas, sharing the gospel in places Thai Christians had friends and relatives.

"The Thai people are very relationship-oriented," Jack Kinnison said. "If you go into an area or a home and you don't know anybody

there, they're much less likely to take seriously what you're saying."

The Kinnisons shared the gospel through a variety of methods, including small group discussions, handing out Christian literature and sharing chronological Bible stories.

He said Thais don't respond quickly to the gospel and there is significant resistance from the deep roots Buddhism has grown in the country. More than 90 percent of Thais are Buddhist, and the religion has become a source of cultural identity.

"In Thailand, to be Thai is to be Buddhist," Jack Kinnison said.

In addition, Thais face family pressure to remain Buddhist. Thais greatly respect their parents and grandparents, who are often fiercely opposed to their children and grandchildren embracing Christianity and, as they see it, abandoning their culture.

"They do anything to avoid offending their parents or grandparents," Jack Kinnison said. "If they go home and say, 'I've found the one true God and I'm becoming a Christian,' that would be a great affront to people they dearly love."

He said such concerns have caused Thais on the brink of accepting Christ to reconsider and many who do make that decision suffer from being cut off from their families.

"Their families say, 'Why have you decided to become a traitor to your family and nation, to turn your back on these traditions we've had for 700 years?'" he said.



Photo courtesy of Jack Kinnison

'WE CARE FOR YOU' — Thai church members in Nan province help Southern Baptist representative Jack Kinnison distribute evangelical materials to about 500,000 homes. The project was called We Care for You.

It is a difficult reality for the Kinnisons that many Thais they spoke with will never accept Christ, but they accepted that all they could do was present the gospel as clearly as possible. The rest was up to the Holy Spirit, they said.

But the couple did see the gospel make great inroads into areas of Thailand. He said one particularly effective area of ministry was Bangkla Baptist Hospital (now Bangkla Baptist Clinic) in rural Thailand.

He said when he and his wife first arrived in the country, public hospitals were widely loathed for their poor quality of care; Thais called them "butcher houses." But Bangkla Baptist developed a reputation for caring about its patients and providing good medical care, which helped its efforts to share Jesus with the community where the Kinnisons served.

"There were a good number of churches in eastern Thailand that got started through the ministry of the hospital," Jack Kinnison said.

Lynn Kinnison, who has a heart for ministering to women, directed a ministry called Thai Country Trim from 1996 to 2008. It started as a way for Thai pastors' wives to gain an income by making Christmas ornaments; many churches in rural Thailand cannot afford to support their pastors financially, so the pastors' wives help make ends meet.

"Often the pastors spent a good deal of time

visiting and helping church members, so they didn't have as much time to spend making a living," Lynn Kinnison said.

Over time, Thai Country Trim has branched into an outreach that helps poor Thai women — Christian and non-Christian — support their families by handcrafting items for the nonprofit organization. Not only do they make ornaments that are sold as far away as England but they also hear about the saving grace of Jesus.

Outreach

"Every week, they have a Bible study and evangelism program, and we pray with them and for them," Lynn Kinnison said.

During their more than three decades in Thailand, the Kinnisons worked in different areas of the country, including the capital city of Bangkok.

They returned to the United States in 2008, formally retiring from the IMB in December 2009. They now live in the Birmingham metro area and are members of First Baptist Church, Springville. The couple carry with them a love for the Thai people, whom they labored to show the way from darkness to light.

Jack Kinnison knows that no matter where life takes him and his wife, their service to Jesus will go on.

"You never retire from being God's child." ❧



Photo courtesy of Jack Kinnison

MINISTERING THROUGH DISHWASHING — Southern Baptist representative Lynn Kinnison helps Thai women wash dishes after a Christmas program in a village in Nan province where some of the Thai Country Trim ministries take place.

Thais find Christ in halfway house

It's Sunday morning and Arti, 29, smiles as he teaches Bible verses to a class full of children at the Church of Blessing in Bangkok, Thailand. Slight in build and neatly dressed, he doesn't look like a man who spent five years in prison for a drug conviction.

But Arti shares a past with many of the individuals attending this church today. Like him, most here are former prisoners who served time for drug offenses or worse. They also are now followers of Jesus Christ. Arti found his way to Christ through the House of Blessing, a halfway house that shares the same grounds with the Church of Blessing. But it was a journey that began within prison walls when a Christian aunt brought him a Bible and devotional materials.

"The reason that I came and stayed here was that I had no place to live [after my release]," Arti recalled. "And my auntie said that this is a good place for me to start.

"My first time here I never believed that this place could help me and give me the hope."

Meeting needs

The halfway house and church are part of the Christian Prison Ministry Foundation of Thailand. Soonthorn Soonthornarawong, director of the foundation, started both to meet the needs of former prisoners. Because of their past, former prisoners often become outcasts in Thai society and are rejected even by their families.

Both the halfway house and church grew out of a prison ministry begun in 1971 by International Mission Board representative Jack Martin. In the early 1980s, Soonthorn joined Martin in the work and eventually assumed leadership of the ministry when Martin and his wife, Gladys, retired in 1999.

Like others who live at the halfway house, Arti's spiritual life took root and flourished in the Christian environment.

"While I was here, I was learning many, many Scriptures and many people shared God with me," Arti said. "I studied the Bible with the group here until I was sure and believed that God loved me and Jesus died for me. That made me decide to walk with Christ and give glory to Him in my life."

After he accepted Christ, Arti was baptized and then married Siriporn, another former prisoner at the halfway house. He has begun seminary classes, and the couple have a young daughter.

Looking back on his former life, Arti said he can see the steps along which God guided him to his new faith and life. He insisted that all good things that have come to him have come through God's grace, not through his own abilities.

"Since I learned about God and feel His grace in my heart, I believe that without His grace, I [would] have no today. I want to walk with Christ and give glory to Him in my life."

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

Learning about missions

Study focuses on Thailand, educates others on what God is doing there

By John Evans
The Alabama Baptist

He got more than he bargained for. A Southern Baptist worker in a village in Thailand decided to rent an elephant for a day to promote the annual Christmas pageant held in his yard. But he soon discovered he was in over his head.

After feasting on trees it uprooted from the worker's yard, the elephant needed a drink of water. So he turned on the hose, but it wasn't enough for the elephant, which wrapped its trunk around the hose and gave it a tug — ripping the faucet, pump and water tank out of the ground.

"This didn't help the water come any faster so he gave another tug," the worker said.

"With a groan, the pipes that ran up the side of our house came off, pulling retaining brackets, spackle and bricks with them."

The story of the Christmas elephant — and its God-glorifying ending — is only a small part of the 2010 International Mission Study (IMS) and its focus on the country of Thailand.

The IMS, which is produced by national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), is an annual study designed to give churches greater exposure to a certain area of international missions work.

"We hope to better educate people on the lostness of an area coupled with what God is doing there through His people," said Janet Erwin, editor of the WMU magazine *Missions Mosaic*.

Erwin said this year's study reports on how gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Cooperative Program support missions in Thailand, where less than 1 percent of the population is Christian. But the IMS is not a book of statistics; it is a collection of interactive resources designed to familiarize Southern Baptists of all ages with not only the country's lostness but also its culture, people and traditions.

"You can't know a people without knowing their culture," Erwin said. "It is all wrapped up together."

The study includes things like news articles about Southern Baptist work in Thailand, prayer letters and stories from Southern Baptist workers, games, recipes and facts about Thai culture. For example, no movie theater will show a film until everyone stands for the playing of the Thai royal anthem in honor of the country's revered king.

Basic information

Also included is basic information about Buddhism, the dominant religion of Thailand professed by more than 90 percent of its people.

"We as people want to know about a country — the things that are unique to it," Erwin said. "Then we can picture the people and [Southern Baptist workers] in that setting."

Jack and Lynn Kinnison were Southern Baptist representatives to Thailand for more than 30 years (see story, page 6).

Jack Kinnison is excited that the IMS is focusing on the country and hopes the increased prayer it will generate will bring a spiritual harvest.



around the corner so they will see the Light."

Erwin said the study is an excellent opportunity for churches to involve everyone in their congregations in learning about missions; people who may never leave American soil can learn a great deal about Thailand and the ways Southern Baptist representatives are working there.

"It can be the next best thing to actually being there," she said.

For churches that want to use the IMS this year, Erwin has some tips to make the experience even better:

- ▶ Invite other churches to join in.
- ▶ Schedule the study on a Sunday or Wednesday night; the IMS has materials for all ages so everyone can be involved.
- ▶ Conduct the study in the fellowship hall or another open place where the included activities can be done.
- ▶ If a church member has traveled to Thailand or lived there, then allow him or her to make a brief presentation followed by a question-answer time.
- ▶ Most importantly, get the participants involved in the study; it is not intended to be a lecture.

Erwin believes that through learning about Thailand and its culture, Southern Baptists will come away from the IMS with a fresh desire to aid the progress of the gospel there.

"It gives us a heart for the Thai people to know the Truth that will set them free."

For more information, visit www.wmu.com/thailand.

"The people of Thailand, as wonderful as they are, are deep in the darkness and empty way of life handed down from their forefathers for 700 years," he said.

"Only the moving of God's Spirit amongst those precious people is going to bring them



IMB photos

Up and Running

Shelby Baptist begins high tech outreach program for peripheral arterial disease

By Cary Estes

We have to crawl before we walk. But once we start walking, watch out. We're down the stairs and out the door and off to do whatever we want.

That initial step for infants is so celebrated because, in many ways, it marks the beginning of our independence. We no longer must rely entirely on others to do things for us. We can move. We have freedom.

Hope for people with PAD

The loss of such mobility through peripheral arterial disease (PAD) can have a devastating effect on a person, both physically and mentally. The man who once took long walks through the woods but can now barely make it to the kitchen. The woman who used to love to dance but now rarely leaves her chair.

"These people can have their life restored to them," said Dr. Dale Elliott, a cardiologist at Shelby Baptist Medical Center. And, that's the goal of the Shelby Baptist Medical Center's PAD program.

What is peripheral arterial disease (PAD)?

PAD is similar to coronary disease, but the hardening of the arteries occurs in the limbs (periphery) of the body instead of around the heart and chest.

The problem often develops in the legs, and people who have been active all their life suddenly find they can't move around without pain. If left untreated, in severe cases amputation might be necessary.

"A big concern is, at first, some people just think the symptoms they are experiencing are just part of the aging process. They don't realize they have a disease," Dr. Elliott said. "We have treated people who are virtually incapacitated, people who can't do anything, and suddenly they're able to go out and lead a normal life."

Education & detection is the key

The PAD program at Shelby Baptist is seeking

to educate people about the disease and help them realize they can once again have an active lifestyle. This is being done through direct community outreach and the creation of a new Internet-based PAD network.

The hospital's Alabama Limb Salvage Center is creating a broad network of PAD screening sites, thanks to a \$200,000 donation from local construction company Robins & Morton.

IN SEPTEMBER, WHICH WAS PAD AWARENESS MONTH, SHELBY BAPTIST WAS ONE OF SIX CENTERS IN THE U.S. TO BE CHOSEN BY THE PAD COALITION TO OFFER A COALITION-BACKED SCREENING.

"We want to be able to identify the disease earlier," said Dr. Elliott. "As part of that effort, we partnered with a company called BioMedix. They have an automated device, PADnet, that can be used in doctors' offices to look at arteries in

the lower extremities and detect PAD at an early stage.

"Some of the highest incidents of PAD are found just south of Shelby Baptist – between here and Selma – which is the very market we serve," Dr. Elliott added.

"Our goal is to set up 12 sites throughout the area, so physicians in those offices can do PAD screening. It's all automated and the data goes over the Internet to the PADnet web site. Once a day, we log in and read the information collected through the physicians' offices. Anyone identified with a problem is provided with our phone number, so they can contact us for information, follow-up and further treatment as needed."

A web site for the Alabama Limb Salvage Center will also soon be available on the Shelby Baptist section of Baptist Health System's web site (www.bhsala.com). In addition to offering information about PAD, the site will have an interactive component aimed at helping diagnose the disease before it becomes severe.

Advancements in PAD treatment

Dr. Elliott said the actual treatment of PAD has become much simpler in recent years.

There was a time when the only way to treat clogged arteries in any part of the body was through bypass surgery. Now, minimally invasive technology used at Shelby Baptist is capable of treating a wide range of plaque types in peripheral arteries, usually performed through an outpatient process.

Dr. Elliott has seen the end result of such procedures, and the dramatic changes that come over people when they suddenly are able to regain the simple joy of walking pain free.

"We had one gentleman who couldn't walk more than about 20 feet, and now he goes out hunting," Dr. Elliott said. "He came in with a huge smile on his face last winter and said, 'I went hunting and I walked a couple of miles, and it's the first time I've been able to do that in years.' And I remember a woman who couldn't do anything, she could barely move, and (after the procedure) she went out dancing and was just overjoyed."

"I have been doing this work for nearly 15 years, and I have found it to be extremely gratifying."

Gifts that change lives

Now that Shelby Baptist's Alabama Limb Salvage Center is up and running, it shouldn't take long for people with PAD to be doing the same. According to Dr. Elliott, donations made to the program – such as the generous gift by Robins & Morton – will undoubtedly help many people who currently suffer from the disease.

"With today's challenging economy, this is the kind of thing that the hospital might not be able to provide without the compassion and support of donors," Dr. Elliott said. "This is a contribution that will literally save limbs and dramatically improve lives."

"Compare the life of someone who is able to walk and do the activities they want to do with the life of somebody who has undergone an amputation. If ever there was a donation that's going to do a tremendous amount of good, it's this one. And, the more support we can gain for the PAD program, the more people we can help and the more lives we can change."

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Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

► **Boone's Chapel Church, Prattville**, will hold a Thanksgiving service and meal Nov. 21, 5 p.m. The church also will hold a VIP senior adult Christmas dinner Nov. 30, 6 p.m. Phil Winningham is interim pastor.

BESSEMER

► **The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will hold its Hanging of the Green service Nov. 28. Bessemer-native and nationally renowned saxophonist Vann Burchfield will provide a Christmas concert at 6 p.m. For information call 205-477-8265. Bill McCall is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Ridgecrest Church, Trussville**, will present Ridgecrest Dinner Theatre Dec. 8-10. Doors will open at 6 p.m. There will be singing waiters, pre-dinner entertainment and an after-dinner show. For tickets call 205-661-3722. Johnny Kilgore is associate pastor for music and senior adults. Brian Bramam is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Stave Creek Church, Jack-**

son, recently completed renovating its playground. Jamie Lay is pastor of the church.

COVINGTON

► **Harmony Church, Andalusia**, will hold revival Nov. 28-Dec. 1 with Evangelist Scott Smith. Services will be Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. For information call 334-222-8117. Greg Cotter is pastor.

DEKALB

► **First Church, Geraldine**, ordained Craig Andrews, Terry Brothers, Ronnie Hall, Roy Heath and Randall Johnson as deacons Oct. 3. Kirk Griggs is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will present the guided outdoor drama "Bethlehem Walk 2010" Dec. 3-5 and Dec. 10-12, 6:30-9 p.m. Experience the sights, sounds and smells of ancient Bethlehem and be a part of the activity on the first Christmas when Jesus was born. Group reservations are recommended by calling 256-420-8172 or e-mailing mhbc@ardmore.net. For information visit www.mablehillbaptist.org. Mike Clark is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► The JOY Singers senior adult choir of **First Church, Montgomery**, will present "The Chrismon Tree" Nov. 28, 6:15 p.m. The annual program by the 50-voice choir will feature hymns and carols that relate to time-honored symbols

pointing to Christ. Jim Young will narrate. Theresa Gordon is director, and Julie McDougal and Sara Jo Bagley are accompanists. For information call 334-834-6310. Kenny Hoomes is minister to senior adults. Jay Wolf is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Dr. James Howard Gentry Sr.**, a member of **First Church, Aliceville**, died Nov. 2. He was 85. Gentry, who practiced medicine for 56 years, was an honorary life trustee of Judson College in Marion. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Margaret; six children; 18 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Charlie Wilson is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Wilton Church** will present its fourth edition of "A Night in Bethlehem" Dec. 9-11, 6:30-8:30 p.m. The journey will begin in Jerusalem with the evil king followed by a walk to Bethlehem where you will encounter a census taker and a busy marketplace with shops and townspeople who are all hearing news of a baby being born. You will stop at the tax collector and the inn and will also meet shepherds, an angel, Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus. This family-oriented hands-on experience will be indoors and outdoors and take approximately one to one-half hours. For information call 205-665-1406, e-mail lmurdochburns@yahoo.com or visit www.wiltonbaptist.com. Greg Sellers is pastor of the church.

"Across Alabama's Associations" will not run Nov. 25. Please submit announcements for Dec. 2 by Nov. 23.

Someone You Should Know

By June Mathews
Correspondent, TAB

KURT WALLACE

*Ebenezer Baptist Church, Stanton
Chilton Baptist Association*



WALLACE

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES: Ecclesiastes 2:13-14

FAVORITE HYMNS: "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" and "Sanctuary"

HOBBIES: Golf

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Connie for 35 years; three children, Jennifer, Terri and Jeremy; and four grandchildren

Q: What have you gotten from that involvement?

A: Just a huge sense of family. There is no substitute for my church family. I love them and I know they love me. When you're struggling, they lift you up in prayer. And when people lift you up in prayer, it's an awesome thing.

Q: What does the Christian life mean to you?

A: It's all about service and I've seen firsthand that God has blessed me in anything I've used in serving Him and my church.

Kurt Wallace — the new state representative for House District 42, covering Chilton County and part of southern Shelby County — joined Ebenezer Baptist Church right after he and his wife were married there in 1975. He has taught Sunday School for more than 20 years and was ordained a deacon in 1999.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: Daddy is a Baptist pastor (Aubrey Wallace), so I grew up in a Christian home. But we were living in Redlands, Calif., at the time

I was saved. ... It was on a Sunday night in July 1969 when the Lord got me, and when He got me, He got me hard. I had a grip on the back of the pew, and I didn't think I could let loose of it. But once I let loose, I couldn't get down the aisle quick enough.

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

A: I've been a Training Union director and a Sunday School director. I'm currently a Sunday School teacher, chairman of the deacons, a member of the choir and a Gideon speaker.



Melrose triples attendance with 125th anniversary

There was a full house for Melrose Baptist Church's 125th anniversary celebration Oct. 17, with triple the normal attendance.

Several former members returned to the Cherokee Baptist Association church located in Centre for this special day, and Firm Foundation Quartet was the featured musical guest for the service.

"This congregation is like family; we're a very loving church, and I look forward to several more years of physical and spiritual growth to be harvested from Melrose," said Ann Armstrong, who has been a member of the church for more than 30 years.

Cherokee Association Director of Missions Wendell Dutton presented Melrose Baptist with plaques from the association and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission in honor of the anniversary.

Pastor Ed Rogers brought the message, focusing on remembrance.

"Melrose has helped me grow in so many ways, ways I could never [have expected], and I only hope to learn more as we look to the future of this church," he said.

Bayou Sara marks 50 years of 'walking in faith'

For 50 years, members of Bayou Sara Baptist Church, Saraland, have been "walking in faith." So it only seemed fitting for "Walking in Faith" to be the message Pastor Dennis Dunn brought to the more than 300 people gathered at the Mobile Baptist Association church to celebrate its 50th anniversary Oct. 3.

With testimonies, special recognition of charter members and a video showing the faces of the church over the years, "it was a great day," Dunn said.

Pat Smith, a member of Bayou Sara Baptist for about 40 years, served on the anniversary committee and helped plan the day.

"It was such a pleasant atmosphere," Smith said. "Everybody had a great time."

As members and former members celebrated this milestone, they also looked ahead to what the Lord has planned next.

"(My hope is) that we would catch a vision of what the Lord would want to do in our midst in our church and (that we would) do it," Dunn said.

Dozier's Mount Gilead celebrates 125th anniversary

"We are a church that has really grown over the last four or five years," Pastor Phillip Morgan said of Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dozier. "Our main focus is that the Lord has laid on my heart since I started pastoring [here is] that we'd grow spiritually. We've seen that happen."

That growth was just one of the things the Covington Baptist Association church celebrated as it looked back on 125 years Oct. 10.

Melanie Metz of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque, and Larry Cummings, director of missions for Covington Association, presented certificates on behalf of the association and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Mount Gilead Baptist also recognized its oldest members present that day.

For Morgan, the day was upbeat and exciting.

"It was just a culmination of all the years that the church has been in service for the Lord, and [the day] brought it to light, and it was a really humbling experience," he said.

Brookwood's Midway marks 50 years of 'faithful ministry'

Midway Baptist Church, Brookwood, in Pleasant Grove Baptist Association celebrated its 50th anniversary Oct. 10. With more than 100 attendees, Midway Baptist almost doubled its average attendance.

The group Forgiven led worship during the celebration service, and a representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a plaque honoring its years of service.

"It was a very special part of the ceremony, and our members were thrilled to receive an award that represents the work God has done in and through this church," said Debbie Willingham, church secretary for Midway.

Pastor Robert Green said he "looks forward to watching the youth take up more leadership in the church and hopes Midway will get to celebrate another 50 years of faithful ministry."

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Mark Smith
Eastside Baptist Church, Birmingham

For months, I resisted entering the world of Facebook. My wife was on Facebook; both of my sons were on Facebook; my daughter-in-law was on Facebook; many of my friends were on Facebook. But I was not sure that I wanted to be a part of it.

I finally gave in and am glad that I did. I have reconnected with people from high school, college and seminary and many others whose paths have crossed mine throughout the years. I have found it to be a wonderful tool for staying connected to family and friends.

Looking back, I am not sure why I was so hesitant to become a part of Facebook. I had some interest and would sometimes look at other people's accounts to see pictures or read messages from someone I knew.

I believe there are many who can relate to my experience in the area of a personal relationship with God. They have family members and friends who know God, and they have some interest themselves but are hesitant to enter into a relationship with Him. Perhaps you are one of those individuals. Let me encourage you to quit resisting. God loves you more than anyone else ever has or will and wants to have a personal relationship with you.

The Bible tells us that there is something in each of our lives hindering a relationship with God. That something is sin. In spite of the sin in our lives, God still loves us and provided a way for us to come to Him. That way is His Son, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins on Calvary's cross.

Knowing God is not complicated, but there are some steps you must take.

First you must acknowledge that you are a sinner. Second you must believe that God loves you and Jesus died for your sins. Third you must confess your sins to God and ask Him to forgive you and bring you into a right relationship with Him.

Can one summer make a difference?

At first, Rakesh Tandon simply had no interest in hearing about God. He'd just come to play basketball.

Although his family is Hindu, Tandon does not believe in any god.

But every day for six weeks, Sheldon Catling, a volunteer from Francis Marion University in Florence, S.C., played basketball with Tandon and other Indian college students, sharing his faith each time. And right before Catling returned to the United States, God began to soften Tandon's heart.

Catling shared with Tandon how sin separates man from God and there's no way for man to bridge the gap. God's remedy came when He sent Jesus to take away our sin, he told Tandon.

Catling ventured to one of India's major cities for a six-week missions trip by eight South Carolina collegians sponsored by East Cooper Baptist Church, Mount Pleasant, S.C. The team included

students from Coastal Carolina University in Conway, Charleston Southern University, the College of Charleston and Francis Marion.

During the trip, the team disciplined seven Indian college students who are new Christians, teaching them how to study the Bible, share their faith and walk as believers.

'Make disciples'

"The need for older believers to come along beside them and teach them how to study God's Word, share their faith and how to walk as a new believer in this ever-changing culture is great," said Clint Braddy, the team's leader.

"The Great Commission has never been clearer to me," Braddy said. "Jesus said go make disciples, not churches or converts. He knew that these things would be the result of discipleship."

Braddy's team adopted the vision of Viktor Raimund, a Southern Baptist representative, to spread the gospel in the city and

embolden Indian believers to share their faith. Raimund's fiancée is a member of East Cooper Baptist.

The team had its work cut out for it.

Many Indian college students "are envisioning American college students sleeping around, boozing [and doing] everything they see in Hollywood movies," Raimund said.

From blue jeans to designer sunglasses, Western culture is taking the city of 5 million by storm and shaping young adults' worldview and their views on Hinduism and the caste system, which continues to give a hierarchical social status for every person.

"This new, upcoming generation wants to be free philosophically, economically, sexually and spiritually from the old traditional India," Braddy said.

Over a cup of coffee, an Indian college student told Braddy that in his opinion, only the older, uneducated generation believes in the caste system. It's silly to believe in all those gods, the student said.

The living God

When Braddy and the volunteers talked about the living God, the Indian students with whom they shared the gospel answered in the same manner most college students in Europe and America

would: I have my beliefs, you have yours and they are equal. I believe in all religions.

Idolatry has always been pervasive in India, but now there's also the idolatry of the West — prosperity and success, to which they don't physically bow down, but they bow down in their hearts.

"The Great Commission has never been clearer to me. Jesus said go make disciples, not churches or converts."

Clint Braddy
East Cooper Baptist Church

Indian students no longer believe in idols — they only bow down to them to please their parents, Raimund said.

He said this is truly a generational shift that he's seen during the last two years he's serving in the city.

Raimund's prayer is that the testimony and witness the American

students left behind during their summer venture to India will live on in collegians like Tandon. Although he hasn't made a decision to follow Christ, Catling planted the seed. He also connected Tandon with Christians in the city who are continuing to share the good news with him.

"One thing I feel that God taught me was His true desire and heart and love for the lost and how He truly desires to draw lost people to Himself and that He loves using us to do that," Catling said.

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

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'Take my cross up'

Rangers all-star Josh Hamilton tells story of ups, downs

Texas Rangers outfielder Josh Hamilton told a Texas Baptist congregation Nov. 7 that he would not have overcome the alcohol and drug addiction that nearly cost him his baseball career without God's help.

Coming off a season in which he won the American League batting title and led the Rangers to their first World Series, Hamilton, 29, told worshipers at First Baptist Church, Dallas, that the best part of his MVP-caliber year was the platform it gave him to talk about his faith in Jesus Christ.

"That's what I enjoyed most about the entire year," Hamilton said. "Not the awards, not going to the playoffs, going to the World Series ... but it was about sharing Christ with as many newspeople as I could, preferably live so they can't cut out Jesus' name."

Hamilton, who recounts his faith story in a 2008 book titled "Beyond Belief," told the congregation he went to church on and off while growing up but most of his interests revolved around sports. He accepted Christ after his rookie season but did not become grounded in his faith.

After injuries suffered in an automobile accident forced him out of baseball, Hamilton started hanging around tattoo parlors, where his friends introduced him to alcohol and drugs.

'Biggest mistake of my life'

"It was the biggest mistake of my life," Hamilton told worshipers.

After that, he said, he was on and off of drugs for the next three years but got suspended from baseball after failing a couple of drug tests.

He stayed clean for several months, got married and started a family before a relapse forced



en.wikipedia.org photo

HOME RUN — Josh Hamilton, outfielder for the Texas Rangers in Arlington, comes to bat. This year he won the American League batting title and led the Rangers to their first World Series. Hamilton credits his success to Jesus Christ.

a separation in his marriage and a restraining order against him to keep him out of his home.

He hit bottom when his grandmother confronted him for using drugs in her house and, for the first time, made him understand how he was hurting people who loved him. He pulled a Bible from a closet and recommitted his life to Christ.

Hamilton said the experience brought about a complete reordering of his priorities, which before then had been exclusively about baseball.

"When I recommitted my life to Christ, the priorities made a drastic change," he said. "It went God first, humility, family, sobriety and then baseball, if it ever happened again."

But all that didn't prevent another well-documented relapse when

he went to Arizona to prepare for the 2009 season.

"For three weeks, I stopped reading my Bible," he said. "I stopped doing my devotions. I stopped praying. I stopped fellowshiping with my accountability partner for three weeks. And I thought I could take one drink. And that one drink led to about 20."

Hamilton said he has to take safeguards to keep from falling off the wagon. For one thing, he doesn't carry cash or credit cards. If he needs to buy gas for his truck, even though it is inconvenient, he calls his wife to meet him at the gas station and then returns the credit card to her after filling up his tank.

He also consciously surrounds himself with people who care about him and want the best for him.

"It's an everyday battle," he admitted. "I've got to get up every morning and take my cross up. I've got to just wake up in the morning and tell myself with God's help and Christ's help, I'm going to be a responsible man, husband, father today."

His support system extended to his Ranger teammates, who rallied around him after winning the American League Division Series by dousing his head with ginger ale instead of the traditional champagne. (ABP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Pro-life day reportedly saves about 30 unborn children

WASHINGTON — About 30 unborn children reportedly were saved from abortion through this year's Pro-life Day of Silent Solidarity. Students on more than 3,800 campuses in 29 countries participated in the annual pro-life event Oct. 19, said Bryan Kemper, president of Stand True Ministries, the sponsoring organization.

The event, held for the seventh consecutive year, gives young people the opportunity to identify with the victims of abortion by fulfilling a vow of silence for a day. Students wear red duct tape on their mouths and/or red armbands. They have informational handouts available to give those who ask about the observance.

A student wrote Kemper with the following report on the day of silence (the message is printed here as received):

"Today was a true blessing; I signed up my school yesterday and today me and my brother both had the duct tape on our mouths. Well this girl came up to me and said I was wasting my time that [no] one would listen to me and all I did was nod and give her the paper, then she threw it at me when I walked away I saw her pick it up and put it in her pocket later that day I saw her but her eyes were puffy then she hugged me and said I was making a huge difference to a lot of girls and that she was scheduled for an abortion later this week and that she will cancel it. I feel happy to know that not even saying something made such a difference."

Most religious have highest rates of well-being, survey says

WASHINGTON — The most religious Americans also have the highest rates of well-being, according to a new Gallup survey.

The finding is based on a survey of more than 550,000 people about their physical and emotional health and their work environment.

Overall, the very religious received a score on Gallup's well-being index of 68.7 percent, while both the moderately religious and the nonreligious received a score of 64.2 percent. The very religious were defined as those who said religion is an important part of their daily lives and they attend worship services at least every week or almost every week. Researchers have several theories as to why the very religious had higher levels of health and happiness, but say they will continue to investigate the relationship between the two.

The survey, a result of a partnership between Gallup and Healthways, a Tennessee company focused on health, surveyed U.S. adults between Jan. 2 and July 28 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 0.5 percentage points.

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Faith a constant theme in George W. Bush's life, book 'Decision Points'

Former President George W. Bush made no secret that his politics were tinged by his religious faith but now says he never would have made it to the White House without a fateful — and faith-filled — decision to quit drinking in 1986.

"I could not have quit drinking without faith," Bush wrote in his memoir, "Decision Points," released Nov. 9. "I also don't think my faith would be as strong if I hadn't quit drinking."

Across 497 pages, Bush recounted the ways religious faith shaped his life and his politics. While religion is not a central thrust of the book, it's nonetheless a constant theme. Attending Presbyterian and Methodist churches in Midland, Texas, Bush wrote that religion had always been a part of his life but he really wasn't a believer.

That changed with his decision to quit drinking a year after Evangelist Billy Graham visited the Bush vacation home in Maine in 1985.

At that time, Bush said, he was an occasional reader of the Bible, which he viewed as "a kind of self-improvement course." During that well-known walk with Graham, the evangelist said the point of the Scriptures was to follow Christ, not just to improve one's self.

"Billy had planted a seed," Bush wrote. Months after returning to Texas, Bush joined a weekly Bible study. He soon started reading the

Bible every morning, a practice he continued throughout his time at the White House.

While Graham helped Bush overcome alcohol, it was a Texas pastor who inspired him to pursue the presidency. At a service to mark his second inauguration as Texas governor, Bush heard Mark Craig, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Austin, recount the biblical story of a once-hesitant Moses leading the Israelites into the promised land.

"We have the opportunity, each and every one of us, to do the right thing and for the right reason," Bush recalled Craig preaching. At the other end of the pew, Barbara Bush mouthed to her son, "He is talking to you."

Once in the White House, Bush's faith played a role in both presidential and personal decisions. His push for global AIDS relief was fueled by his visit to a Ugandan clinic, where he left feeling challenged by the biblical admonition: "To whom much is given, much is required." When he knelt at the casket of Pope John Paul II in 2005, he prayed for ailing ABC anchorman Peter Jennings. His moral views also contributed to his decision to

ban federal funding of embryonic stem cell research. Bush revealed that as a teenager, he drove his mother to the hospital after a miscarriage as she held the fetus in a jar. "I remember thinking: 'There was a human life, a little brother or sister,'" he wrote.

In a meeting with John Paul, he told the pontiff that his church's "steadfast support of life provided a firm moral foundation" on which pro-life politicians like him could take a stand.

When he decided in 2001 to ban the use of federal funds "to support the destruction of life for medical gain," Bush said he was struck by the personal nature of the criticism.

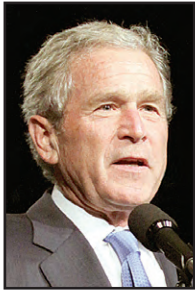
"They mocked my appearance, my accent and my religious beliefs," he wrote. "I was labeled a Nazi, a war criminal and Satan himself."

But Bush said the "shrill debate" never prompted him to second-guess his decision.

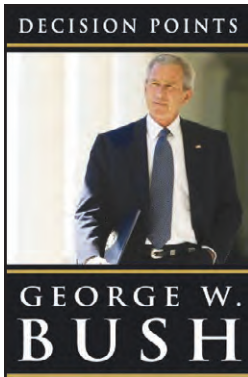
Bush also defended his Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, which he said helped more than 5,000 charities receive federal grants. As president, his reliance on faith continued through his last day in

the White House.

"I began Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2009, the same way I had started every day for the past eight years: I read the Bible," he wrote in his epilogue. (RNS)



BUSH



Teen, collegiate girls to gather for Blume

Several thousand teen girls and collegiate young women will gather for Blume, a four-day focus on missions, next July at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in Orlando, Fla.

Blume, a national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) event held every four or five years, will include hands-on ministry projects; interaction with missionaries; worship, Bible studies and breakout sessions; and an interactive cultural activity in Epcot customized for Blume through Disney's Youth Education Series (Y.E.S.) program.

Chandra Peele, a Christian speaker and author from Cypress, Texas, will be the keynote speaker for Blume. "Chandra has a real heart for students and is someone the girls will immediately connect with," said Suzanne Reece, a Blume coordinator and ministry consultant with WMU. "She is a strong woman of God and a very effective motivator, encourager and communicator of biblical truths."

Blume 2011's biblical emphasis will be based on 2 Timothy 1:3-14, with verse seven as the focus: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

"We pray that girls will leave Blume with the realization that God has a plan and purpose for their lives," Reece said. "The

girls who come to Blume are each uniquely gifted, and God has empowered them even now to make a difference in the world and to accomplish His mission. They have the power to change their world for Christ through the spirit of God's love living and working through them."

Since Blume began in 1972 as the National Acteens Convention (NAC), thousands of young women have gathered together from all across the country to respond to God's call on their lives to a greater understanding, awareness and support of the worldwide mission in the cause of Christ. NAC was re-envisioned as Blume in 2007.

Grateful for partners

"We are grateful for our Great Commission partners, IMB (International Mission Board) and NAMB (North American Mission Board), for their support in making Blume a reality," said Carol Causey, director of national WMU's missions resource center.

Girls do not have to be involved in Acteens to attend Blume. The event is open to all girls ages 12-17 and young women who are in college or are college age.

Registration is now open for the July 13-16 gathering. For more information on Blume, visit www.blumeforgirls.com.

(BP)

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HEART OF MISSIONS...

A team of 11 from **Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham**, traveled to Kharkov, Ukraine, this summer.

The trip was arranged through Lifesong for Orphans, an organization that strives to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education and Christian training to orphans around the world. The group was led by Chris Hunsberger, minister of recreation at the Birmingham Baptist Association church. The team worked with the residents of two state-run orphanages. Team members also conducted a sports camp at a site Lifesong recently purchased as a retreat for the children in the orphanages it supports.

A team of men from **First Baptist Church, Montgomery**, traveled to the Mississippi Delta region to do construction work for Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, a church they have partnered with over the past several years.

Led by Allen Luckie, the team of about 12 men spent Oct. 6-9 pouring a 30 by 40 slab of concrete that will serve as the foundation of a new sanctuary for Pleasant Grove Baptist. A church from Arkansas will be building on top of the foundation.

"The biggest thing I took from this trip is just how important it is to pray about things while you are doing it and before you're doing it to make sure you are walking in God's will," Luckie said. "To the equipment, people, money and resources that we needed, everything we asked for God gave more than we needed."

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Assimilation key for keeping people in church

(continued from page 1)

than people coming in the front door and then getting lost in the hallway.

“Local churches are smaller communities within the larger community of Christian faith. It is not necessarily an indication of a failure when folks leave one church to unite with another,” he said. “Often there are legitimate reasons. ... If people are leaving through the back door of one congregation to go into the front door of another congregation, good can result, although it is not always good.”

“Staying on the membership roll without engaging in ministry and service seems to me to be more of a problem for Baptist churches,” Fenton noted. “We need to help our folks see that joining a church is not about getting your name on the roll but about accepting a role in ministry and service.”

“We may need to start keeping records differently at church, as we often assume that if people just show up, that is a sign of spiritual health,” he said. “Rather than just counting how many are in the seats on Sunday, we need to start counting how many are serving in the church and ministries on Sunday and during the week.”

Bullard pointed out four specific

things that need to happen within the first year for people to assimilate into a new church.

1. Make attendance a habit

They must have established a pattern of regular attendance, he said. By today’s standards, “in a culture that no longer sits around on Sundays,” Bullard said, regular attendance is between 39 and 42 Sundays a year.

Research indicates that American churches, by and large, went through a period of more than 10 years when they significantly lowered their expectations of members and attendees, Rainer said. The result was an exodus of people from the church.

“Staying on the membership roll without engaging in ministry ... seems to me to be more of a problem for Baptist churches.”

Senior Pastor Gary Fenton
Dawson Memorial Church

“Why would I want to be a part of something that expects nothing of me?” Rainer quoted a former active church member saying to the research team. Many churches now are attempting to remedy the problem with new member classes, in which expectations of service, stewardship and attendance are clearly established.

Common names for such classes are Connections, Membership 101 or Discovery, James noted.

“Give it any name you desire, but by all means, start one,” he said.

Fenton agreed.

“New member and church mem-

bership orientation classes seems to me to be the best place to announce that service and ministry are expectations,” he said. “While we (Dawson Memorial Baptist) have by no means solved the issue, we state in our new member classes that we are not a good spectator church and if you plan only to observe rather than serve, you probably are not going to enjoy the church.”

2. Get connected

Bullard said they must have connected with some kind of teaching/learning experience such as a small group or Sunday School class.

“Churches that close the back door seek to get as many of their members as possible into small groups,” Waggoner said. “In some churches, these groups meet in homes. In other churches, the small group is a Sunday School class that meets at the church. The key issue, according to our research, is that the small group is an open group, meaning it has no predetermined termination date and anyone can enter the group at any point.”

3. Develop deep relationships

They need to have developed friends “they call at 3 a.m.,” Bullard said. This is a reference to Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign national security ad featuring a ringing phone in the White House at 3 a.m. and posing a question to voters about whom

they want answering the phone.

Win Arn, a pioneer in church growth, showed years ago that if somebody can make five friends at a church, then he or she is much less likely to drop out, Waggoner noted. “We need to create opportunities for people to build friendships and to get to know folks,” Waggoner said. “Just sitting in the pew is never God’s intention for any Christian.”

The more new members connect with longer-term members, the greater the opportunity for assimilation, Rainer said. One twist the research found, he said, is that most such relationships develop before the new member ever comes to church. In other words, members first developed relationships with people outside the walls of the church and then invited them after the relationship was established.

4. Go to work

Bullard said they need to get “some kind of job,” whether elected, appointed or as an ongoing volunteer.

“There’s no doubt about it that

when you involve people in the ministries of the church, they are much more likely to give and much more likely to stay,” Waggoner agreed. “If they’re just pew sitters, they are more vulnerable to [becoming] disillusioned, and we’ll lose some of the people”

“Churches that close the back door have a clear plan to get people involved and doing ministry as quickly as possible.”

Brad Waggoner
LifeWay Christian Resources

The earlier a new member or attendee can get involved in a church’s ministries, the higher the likelihood of effective assimilation, Waggoner said. “Churches that close the back door have a clear plan to get people involved and doing ministry as quickly as possible.”

“If people don’t do those four things, at the end of their first year, they are going to re-evaluate whether they want to stay in this church,” Bullard said.

While not a primary motivation for assimilating new people, Bullard added, an “unintended consequence” is that people who buy into the church with their time give five times more money than those who do not invest their time and energy.

(ABP, TAB)



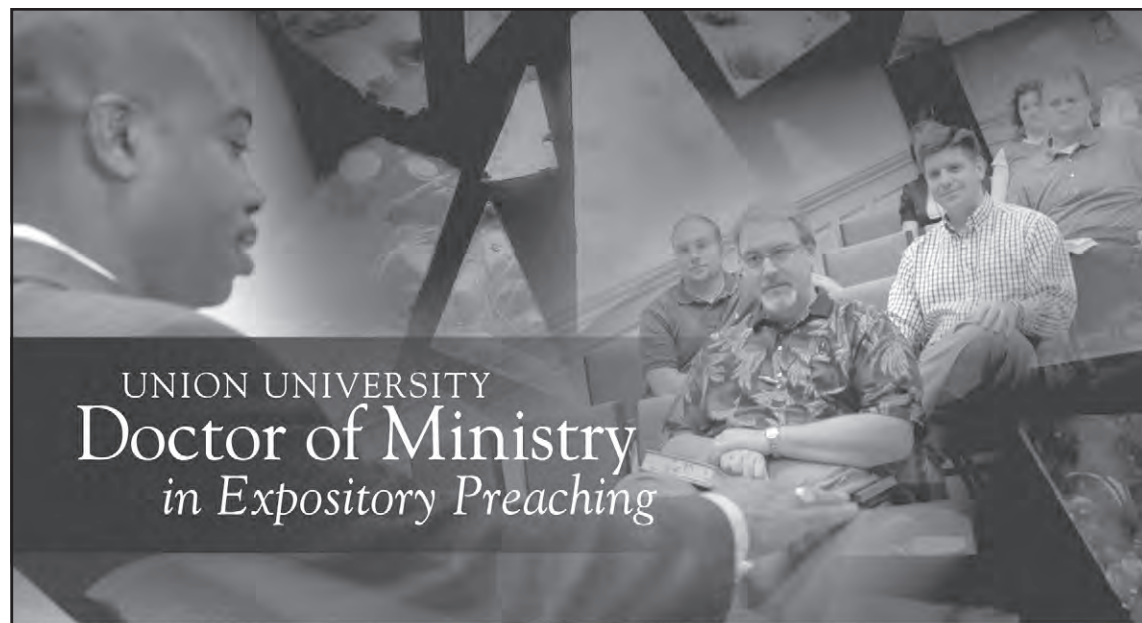
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'Sweet Home Samford'

Samford University celebrates homecoming, 'spirit of Samford'

Samford University alumni from eight decades converged on the campus to celebrate homecoming Nov. 5-7.

Participants included Ellen Barton, of Locust Fork, a 1936 graduate who was applauded as the member of the earliest class at a Friday brunch for alumni who graduated 50 or more years ago. The event, attended by 100 at Samford President Andrew Westmoreland's home, hailed the start of the three-day celebration that was themed "Sweet Home Samford."

Lee Cochran, a 2010 graduate, broke away from graduate classes at the University of Louisville to attend his first homecoming as an alumnus. The former member of the Samford Student Ministries Choir said the draw was to hear the choir sing during the Sunday morning worship service that concluded homecoming weekend.

Overall an estimated 3,500 alumni, students and others enjoyed a full schedule of reunions and special events. Thousands more gathered in Seibert Stadium to see the Bulldogs take on Wofford College in a football game that Samford lost 10-3.

A banquet recognized Alumni of the Year Ann Thornton Field, a Philadelphia attorney and civic leader, and William Stevens, chief executive officer of Motion Industries, an international parts replacement and service company that has its headquarters in Birmingham. Field is a member of Samford class of 1977. Stevens, a former chair of the Samford board of trustees, is a 1970 graduate.

Ted Alling, Barry Large and Allan Davis, members of the class of 2000, were recognized as Young Alumni of the Year. They are the owners of Access America Transport, a Chattanooga, Tenn., trucking company.

At a meeting of the Samford Alumni Association, Nashville banker Keith Herron was elected president. Herron is a 1986 graduate and president of the Midsouth region of Regions Bank.

Activities included recognition of the late Pulitzer Prize-winner Harold E. Martin, a 1954 alumnus, and award-winning Samford faculty member Dennis R. Jones as the 2010 inductees into the department of journalism and mass communication's Wall of Fame.

Terra Garmon, a senior communication studies major from Gadsden, was crowned homecoming queen during the football game's halftime. Her home church is Twelfth Street Baptist, Gadsden.

David Saunders, a senior education major from Norcross, Ga., was named homecoming king.

The court also included freshmen Rachel Gregory, of Brentwood, Tenn., and Ben McGlamery, of Grayson, Ga.; sophomores Abby Sander, of Jacksonville, Fla., and



Photo courtesy of Samford University

HONOREES — Terra Garmon (left), a member of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, and David Saunders, of Georgia, were crowned homecoming queen and king, respectively, Nov. 6.

Holmes Hill, of Memphis, Tenn.; juniors Lizzy Bryan, of Ooltewah, Tenn., and Jeremy Towns, of Dolomite; and seniors Olivia Bosshardt, of Leesburg, Fla.; Sarah Cottingham, of Marietta, Ga.; Dan Hall, of Madison, Miss.; and Jake McPherson, of Fayetteville, Ga. The queen and king were chosen by vote of the

student body. Class representatives were chosen by their classmates.

Other activities included a cabaret performance by eight current and former students of the Samford opera program. The event paid tribute to longtime professor and voice teacher G. William Bugg, who will retire at the end of this academic year. (SU)



Photo courtesy South Luverne Baptist Church

SOUTH LUVERNE CHURCH WMU COLLECTS SCHOOL SUPPLIES
The Woman's Missionary Union of South Luverne Baptist Church in Alabama-Crenshaw Baptist Association collected school supplies for Luverne High School and Luverne Elementary School for the new school year.

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Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

50 Years Ago November 1960

Harmonious Convention: Much of the harmony experienced at the state meeting in Birmingham was because of the excellent presiding of President B. Locke Davis and Vice Presidents George W. Riddle and Ralph E. Ables. Late in the convention, it was reported that nearly 1,200 messengers had registered. With the many visitors who attended, there were surely more than 2,000 people in attendance. There were no controversial issues, but many important decisions were made and a record budget of \$4,189,000 was adopted.

40 Years Ago November 1970

Splendid Program: With the theme "Living the Spirit of Christ in Openness and Freedom," a splendid program was presented at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. Conventioneers heard an unusual variety of speakers, including John Bob Riddle, pastor of Central Park Baptist Church, Birmingham; John Higdon, pastor of Lineville Baptist Church; David Matthews, president of the University of Alabama; William Hull, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; and Dr. Robert Hingson, founder of the Brother's Brother Foundation. For the first time in 28 years, a layman was elected convention president — Lambert Mims, commissioner of public works for the city of Mobile.

30 Years Ago November 1980

Denomination's Future: "The future of our denomination is in the hands of our educational institu-

tions," Dotson Nelson, chairman of the Education Commission, said to messengers at the state Baptist convention in Birmingham as he introduced a pageant that revealed how Alabama Baptist colleges are preparing students to "Grow, Go and Give." The pageant, directed by Wallace Henley, pastor of McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham, was a forum for representatives from Samford University, Judson College, Mobile College, the Board of Aid to Students in Church Vocations and the Endowment Fund.

20 Years Ago November 1990

Convention '90: Rick Lance, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, was elected president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention during its annual meeting at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. Dewey Corder, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, was elected first vice president, and Fred Lackey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Athens, was elected second vice president. Other features of the convention were the launch of Missions 2000, the strategic plan for missions through the end of the century; the presidential address by Charles Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills; and

sermons by David Dykes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Gardendale, and Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church.

10 Years Ago November 2000

Turn of the Century: Mike Mc-Lemore, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, was elected president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) during its annual meeting in Montgomery. Joe Godfrey, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, was elected first vice president, and Henry Cox, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bay Minette, was elected second vice president.

In the convention sermon, Tom Whatley, pastor of Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, encouraged Alabama Baptists to fly high the banner of God's Word. Pointing to the need for unity in lifting the banner, he urged Alabama Baptists to stand together.

Outgoing ABSC President Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, said Alabama Baptists "have real unity."

"Sometimes when people move into our state, they come with their sleeves rolled up and, many times, are disappointed because there is no fight," he said.

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving

Year to Date through October 31, 2010

OCTOBER

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| CP Challenge Budget Goal | \$3,875,000 |
| CP Challenge Budget Gifts | \$2,912,245 |
| Under Goal for Month | \$962,755 |

YEAR TO DATE

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| CP Challenge Budget Goal | \$38,750,000 |
| CP Challenge Budget Gifts | \$34,412,703 |
| Under Goal for Year | \$4,337,297 |

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CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Ashby Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for bivocational Southern Baptist pastor. Send resumés to: Ashby Baptist Church, P.O. Box 22, Brierfield, AL 35035.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Dora First Baptist Church is accepting resumés for this position. Please send resumés to: The Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 357, Dora, AL 35062, or e-mail to: lataylor@students.lru.edu.

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

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR:

Union Hill Baptist Church is seeking a part-time children's director to plan, coordinate and oversee the children's ministry (birth through fifth grade). We are located near Bessemer. Contact information: www.unionhillbc.com.

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MINISTRY ASSISTANT/RECEPTION-IST: Canaan Baptist Church in Bessemer is searching for a full-time ministry assistant to assist with general reception duties. This person will also assist the worship pastor with various projects. For more information, contact 205-425-4381, or e-mail resumés to: family@canaanbaptist.net.

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Family Matters



November 2010

Dear Fellow Alabama Baptists:

During these difficult economic times, I wanted to take a moment of your time and thank you for your support of missions by leading your church to give through the Cooperative Program. The family of faith called Alabama Baptists has been faithful in the past, and I feel certain we will remain so in these days to come.

Paul Miller, President and CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, is offering excellent leadership in this vital ministry and so are many others. As the year comes to a close, I trust that you will consider the special offering Alabama Baptists have for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. This Annual Children's Homes Offering, along with Cooperative Program giving, represents a significant percentage of their ministry budget.

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries is the only entity of our state convention which is afforded the opportunity to appeal to local churches for support. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to make this gesture at this opportune time of need. Let me encourage you to remember this strategic ministry through your gifts, over and above your regular tithes and offerings, so that the shortfall in giving can become a temporary issue.

Again, thanks for your faithfulness in serving the Lord in these tangible ways. You are a part of a difference-making family of faith and I am proud to be a member of that family!

Blessings,

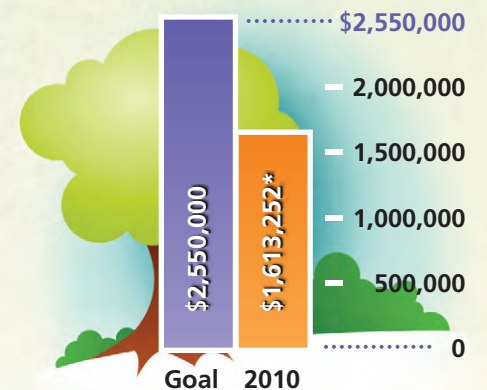


Rick Lance
Executive Director, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions
Zechariah 4:6b

> Still Time to Give

If your church has not yet participated in the work of your Alabama Baptist Children's Homes through the Annual Children's Homes Offering, there is still time to do so. As you can see by the graphic below, we are still behind our goal. Your direct gifts to the Children's Homes account for one-third of our annual operating budget. To order materials to promote the offering, please come by our booth at the Annual Meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention or contact Kay Taylor, 1-888-720-8805, and ktaylor@abchome.org.

2010 ANNUAL OFFERING



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

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

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.

Open Houses Coming Up!

Several of our locations will be hosting Open House the first weekend in December. We'd love to see you there!


for December

Dec. 3: Open House at our Dothan location
Hours: 6-8 p.m., Dothan Group Home, 368 County Line Road
Visit our website, www.alabamachild.org/events for more information and links to directions.

Dec. 5: Open House at our Decatur, Mobile and Oxford Locations
Decatur Hours: 2-5 p.m., Decatur Campus, 1404 16th Avenue SE
Mobile Hours: 2-5 p.m., Mobile Campus, 6512 Grelot Road
Oxford Hours: 1-3 p.m., Friendship House, 1931 Donna Drive
Visit our website, www.alabamachild.org/events for more information and links to directions.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 21

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce

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

BEING RESPECTFUL Ephesians 6:1-9

Our relationships with others are an extension of our relationship with Jesus. When a person is out of harmony with God, he or she is usually out of harmony with those around him or her. Our faith in Christ is most authentic in our daily relationships: What we live is our real standard, no matter what we may say. Consequently we who are followers of Christ are to treat people with respect. They all deserve respect because they are created in God's image. Some also deserve respect by virtue of their position or because of the relationship we have with them. Yet many people disregard the biblical standard. Children and teens who sass or disobey their parents do not respect them. The same is true of some adult children who abuse or neglect their elderly parents. Parents fail to respect their children if they do not train them well or abuse them. Workers who do not give their best effort are not respecting their employers. Employers have no respect for workers if they abuse them. This week's lesson calls for children, parents, employers and employees — as Christians — to respect others. The Spirit-filled life has responsibilities in all these relationships.

Respect for Parents (1-3)

God's standard for children is that they respect their parents by obeying and honoring them. The tense of the command "obey" indicates that this is to be a consistent attitude and action. The apostle Paul was saying, "Because of your relationship with Christ, let it be the consistent habit of your life to obey your parents." Of course, this command is directed to children old enough to understand it. The reason for this command is this: "If you do not learn to recognize God in this divinely arranged authority, it will not be well with you and you may die an early death, perhaps at the hands of the authorities."

Respect for Children (4)

Parents must live as examples for their children; both mother and father are addressed with the term "fathers." In the pagan world of Paul's day, most fathers ruled their fami-

lies with rigid and domineering authority. A Christian's authority over his or her children does not allow for unreasoning demands or harsh discipline that evokes resentment and encourages disobedience. Christian parents are to avoid enraging their children and provide them with the guidance they need to grow in the Lord.

Respect for Employers (5-8)

Paul focused attention on a third set of relationships, this one having to do with our daily work. Slaves in the Roman Empire constituted the workforce, which did most all of the "blue collar and white collar" work. Slaves had no legal rights and were treated as merchandise. The master/slave relationship was filled with abuse. Today's employer/employee relationship only dimly resembles that of the first century. But what Paul asked of those first-century slaves, he asked of Christians today. He called for Christian slaves to obey their masters, do quality work regardless of whether they were being watched and serve as though they were working for Christ. Today these same requirements fit well with respect for one's employer (whether a supervisor, those above him or her or a company owner). We who are followers of Jesus show respect for those who employ us by getting along with them, doing good quality work all the time and keeping in mind our relationship with Him.

Respect for Employees (9)

Paul instructed the Christian slave owners to please the Lord in the way they treated their slaves. There was to be mutual respect between employees and employers. Both employees and employers are to relate to one another in the Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit-filled boss uses his or her authority with justice and grace, never threatening people or being abusive or inconsiderate. We have respect for those whom we employ by being fair and compassionate. A personal relationship with Jesus and the influential power of the filling of the Holy Spirit transform every relationship we possess. Behaving according to one's beliefs is not earning our way to God; it is rather the extension of belief into conduct.

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

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

LIFE TOGETHER

Acts 2:41-47; Hebrews 10:23-25

The story of the church in Jerusalem is filled with a vibrancy that often seems remote from the 21st century. The one theme that occurs over and over again in these verses is that of commitment and community. We discover that the members believed, were baptized and devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. Their lives found refreshment in their encounter with the life of the Spirit. This is what Christianity is all about. The living, risen Jesus still changes lives when people "believe" and commit their lives to Him in and through the life of the local church.

Commitment to Christ (Acts 2:41)

Over the years, one of the greatest privileges I have had is baptizing a whole variety of people who have come to living faith in Jesus Christ. Many of those people have been young. Michael, the very first person I baptized, was 13. But others have not been so young. Mrs. Biggar and her friend were in their 80s. Then there was Margaret, a young mother who had such a fear of water that she had never been able to even go to the salon to have her hair washed, but she was determined to be baptized. They had all experienced God's love filling their lives and longed to express their faith by committing themselves to their Lord and living out their faith in the community of His family.

Commitment to the Community (Acts 2:42-47)

The church members' commitment to Christ was linked to their commitment to the life of the Christian community, and they therefore "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers." Baptists are people who love to study the Bible, seek to understand it and live their lives according to its teachings. When the early Anabaptists met in Zurich, Switzerland, Conrad Grebel wrote, "After we took Scripture in hand, too, and consulted it on many points, we have been instructed somewhat."

Churches live and grow by God's Word;

they wilt without it. Baptists have followed the old Reformation principle of "freedom of access to the Scriptures and freedom of interpretation of the Scriptures," believing in the priesthood of the believers seeking to understand more and more of the Bible.

Linked to the study and preaching of Scripture is a strong focus on fellowship, even to the extent of sharing our possessions with one another, according to perceived need. As Christians and churches, we are called by Christ to have hearts set on fire by the spiritual needs of those who are lost (without Him) and filled with love for the physical and emotional needs of a world that is hungry, poor and homeless.

These church members also gave themselves to the "breaking of bread," a phrase that relates to sharing Communion, taking bread and wine in the context of worship, being spiritually nurtured through a remembrance of all that God has done in and through Christ's death and resurrection. Rather than this being an event that was infrequently celebrated, the New Testament suggests that the early church celebrated Communion on a regular basis, rejoicing in each opportunity to be moved by the wonder of the cross.

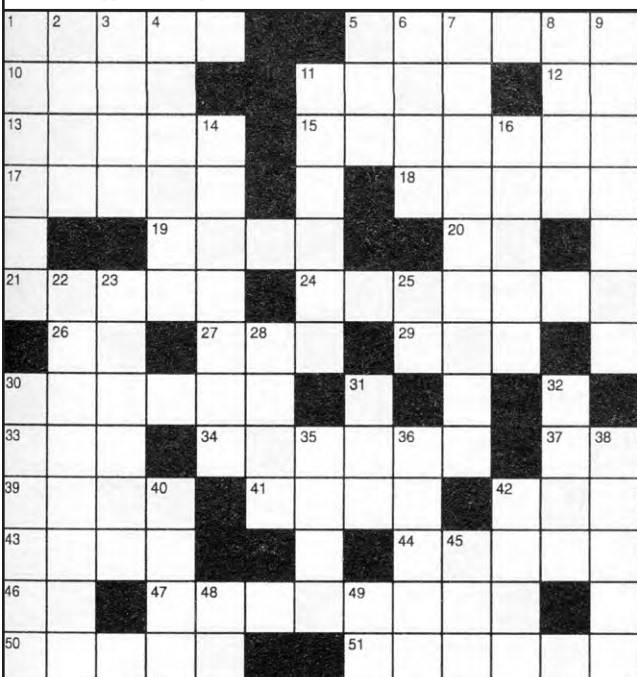
The members also were sustained by prayer. Prayer was the church's lifeblood, and over and over again, we find the church in the place of prayer, crying to God to pour out His Spirit upon its evangelistic activities and bring men and women into an experience of His love. No wonder a church so focused on Scripture, fellowship, worship and prayer discovered that "day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

Considering Others (Heb. 10:23-25)

One of the great dangers of being a Christian is that we become so consumed with our own spiritual development that we forget what the Christian life is all about — thinking of and serving others. Every time we neglect the life of the Church, we neglect the needs of our sisters and brothers in Christ. In meeting together for worship and fellowship, we are given the opportunity to "provoke one another to love and good deeds."

Christian Crossword

By Janet Hopper Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Slayer of Goliath. (1 Sam. 17:49)
- Moses' successor. (Deut. 34:9)
- Prayer ending.
- Ark builder. (Gen. 6)
- Zirconium. (abbr.)
- Joab heard this in the city. (1 Kings 1:41-45)
- Husband of Sarah. (Gen. 17:15)
- Muslim faith.
- Isaac caught the ___ of his clothes. (Gen. 27:27)
- Pharaoh of Egypt. (2 Kings 23:29)
- God.
- Organ mentioned in preparing offerings. (Lev. 3:4)
- Saul's height compared with others. (1 Sam. 9:2)
- Spanish affirmative.
- The Lord lifts the needy from the ___ heap. (1 Sam. 2:8)
- The priest's robe had bells and pomegranates around its ___. (Ex. 39:26)
- The ___ of the prophet Isaiah was handed to

- Jesus. (Luke 4:17)
- Favorite children's game.
- King of Persia. (Ezra 4:5)
- God to Moses: I ___. (Ex. 3:14)
- The evil spirit goes through ___ places seeking rest. (Matt. 12:43)
- In the ___ that King Uzziah died. (Isa. 6:1)
- Spanish for "river."
- Number who did not give Jesus thanks. (Luke 17:17)
- Those who cling to worthless ___ forfeit ... grace. (Jon. 2:8)
- Whatever you ___, work at it with all your heart. (Col. 3:23)
- He who works his land will have ___ food. (Prov. 12:11)
- Ezra had devoted himself to the ___ of the Law. (Ezra 7:10)
- He who ___ fantasies lacks judgment. (Prov. 12:11)
- One of the shepherds of Tekoa. (Amos 1:1)
- Moses put this over his face. (2 Cor. 3:13)
- David feigned to be this. (1 Sam. 21:13)
- Old Testament man known for his patience.
- The disciples were straining at these. (Mark 6:48)
- Israel had participated in ___ prostitution. (Jer. 13:27)
- Son of Joktan. (Gen. 10:27)
- Gold jewelry offered to the Lord. (Num. 31:50)
- Owned vineyard King Ahab coveted. (1 Kings 21:2)
- The fourth jewel decorating the foundation of heaven's wall. (Rev. 21:19)
- Brother of Shomer. (1 Chron. 7:35)
- Judas ___, betrayer of Jesus. (Matt. 26:14)
- The ___ will be with child. (Matt. 1:23)
- Left hand. (abbr.)
- Abraham took the knife to ___ his son. (Gen. 22:10)
- The house of the righteous ___ firm. (Prov. 12:7)
- Central Intelligence Agency. (abbr.)
- The rich will ___ at the misery coming them. (James 5:1)
- One must keep a tight ___ on the tongue. (James 1:26)
- Husband of Bathsheba. (2 Sam. 11:3)
- Raised by the daughter of Pharaoh. (Ex. 2:10)
- Herod thought John the Baptist had returned from being this. (Matt. 14:2)
- Envy ___ the bones. (Prov. 14:30)
- Genetic material.
- Beside.
- Washington, ___.



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By Jeremy Henderson and David Bruce Murray

GO FISH

Kickin' It Old School
gfk Records

Go Fish — now a group of dads — has returned from a two-year break and has somehow taken the group's "great music for kids that won't drive parents bonkers" to another level.

Just so we're clear: The Minnesota trio have recycled and remixed church hymns meant for adults into pop songs meant for children so well that adults want to listen to them. "Kickin' It Old School" is 10 tracks of cross-genre fun that will stick in your head (in a good way). (Henderson)



when folks are expecting a classic. The Centricity Music artists on "Bethlehem Skyline Vol. 2," however, make it look easy. The compilation returns only one artist — Coldplay-ish alterna-rockers Downhere (who turn in a great "Silent Night") — from Centricity's 2007 installment, but is even better. Featuring Andrew Peterson, Me in Motion (who nail a pop-punk version of Brenda Lee's "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"), Jason Gray, High Valley, Matt Papa, Lanae' Hale and Sixteen Cities, it should stand out in the annual flood of Christmas albums. (Henderson)

THE INSPIRATIONS

On the Sunrise Side
Horizon/Crossroads

The songs and arrangements for "On the Sunrise Side" are just what you'd expect from The Inspirations. Clearly written lyrics spell out the gospel story so even a child can understand. Simple instrumentation and basic chord changes hold few surprises.

Something is definitely different, though. "On the Sunrise Side" is tenor singer Jodi Hosterman's first studio recording since joining The Inspirations. He takes over the melody after a key change near the end of "I'm Saved." Hosterman is also featured on the title cut and "I've Never Known a Day." Although most of these songs were selected before he joined The Inspirations, you'd never know it just by listening.

Of course, no Inspirations CD

would be complete without at least a couple of songs featuring Mike Holcomb's gravel chewing bass voice. You'll get a good dose of Holcomb on "Heaven By and By," "I've Never Known a Day" and "When God Dips His Love in My Heart." Lead singer David Ragan and baritone Melton Campbell have several effective solos as well. One that particularly stands out is a new Joseph Habedank lyric called "That's Why I Call It Home."

It may be unpopular to write this where longtime fans are bound to be reading, but to my ears, this lineup is the group's best one ever. David Ragan's commanding lead vocals and Hosterman's input have transformed The Inspirations to a group that's more pleasing and exciting to hear. Of course, what's most important is that they've made these shifts while maintaining their core values in song selection and simple mountain music style. (Murray)



GAITHER VOCAL BAND

Greatly Blessed
Gaither Music

Listening to "Greatly Blessed" by the Gaither Vocal Band (GVB) is a lot like scrolling through the stations on your radio. The opening track, "Better Day," isn't a capella, but it has a "Don't Worry, Be Happy" flavor. There's a classical

diversion when Pachelbel's "Canon in D" is blended with "You Are My All in All" for a David Phelps feature. If you think the title track sounds like a Gatlin Brothers song, that's because Larry Gatlin co-wrote "Greatly Blessed, Highly Favored" with Bill Gaither. They also joined forces for a breathy acoustic pop song titled "Clean."

"When He Blest My Soul" catches your attention right away with a kicking piano intro. The GVB exploits their five-man vocal configuration by adding a seventh to the tonic chords to create a rich vocal texture. Michael English is in excellent form when he solos the second verse, taking the last phrase up, up and away. "Muddy Water" (sung "m-m-m-muh-dy water") is a



fun track that's sure to get stuck in your brain.

"Greatly Blessed" includes several remakes of slow songs popularized previously by other artists. English empathizes with Gerald Crabb's "Please Forgive Me," Phelps is fluent on Don Francisco's "He's Alive," and Wes Hampton closes the CD with a protracted presentation of Kirk Talley's "He Is Here." An orchestrated version of Aaron Wilburn and Eddie Crook's "That Sounds Like Home to Me" steals the show in this category with English, Mark Lowry and Phelps dividing the solos.

What makes the GVB so appealing is the way they excel with arrangements ranging from subtle to complex in a variety of styles.

"Greatly Blessed" delivers everything fans might expect in the form of towering solos, creative arrangements, complicated harmonies and excellent songwriting. (Murray)

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Bethlehem Skyline Vol. 2
Centricity Music

It's hard to wrap Christmas carols with the ribbons of other genres. Not only do the various Centricity Music artists who make up this collection have to stay true to the originals they cover, they also have to make those covers sound like original covers. And it's even harder to open a listener's ears to a Christmas collection that kicks off with a pop-rock original



Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp

Facelift: A Novel

Leanna Ellis. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2010. 320 pp. (Paperback).

When Marla, Kaye Redmond's hypercritical ex-mother-in-law, experiences a botched facelift, she has nowhere to go while she recuperates except Kaye's house. In return for her reluctant hospitality, Kaye is forced to deal not only with the constant barbs from Marla, but also an angry teenage daughter, Marla's suitors and a client who is much too appealing for a woman who is trying hard to win back her ex-husband.

"Facelift" is a light and fluffy "chick lit" book with serious undertones. Through Kate's misadventures come some soul-searching and grasping for answers to difficult questions as the main

character seeks to follow God's will for her life — if she can only figure out what it is.

A relative newcomer to Christian writing, Leanna Ellis has an established career in secular romance writing behind her, with more than a million books sold under the name of Leanna Wilson.

Outlive Your Life: You Were Made to Make a Difference

Max Lucado. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010. 240 pp. (Hardback).

In a shot directly to the heart, Max Lucado challenges his readers by pointing out a few facts about the state of our world: 1.75 billion desperately poor, 1 billion hungry, 10 million dying each year in Africa of preventable diseases. Lost and lonely people everywhere.

Lucado's easy, conversational

style does not mask the seriousness of his message: Modern-day Christians — Joe Pot Roast, he calls us — have both the responsibility and the ability to make a difference in the world through giving, through caring for others, through prayer. A chapter in the book addresses how and why we should show hospitality, while another encourages the reader to really see people instead of writing them off. Others deal with persecution and keeping ourselves free of pride as we help others.

The book draws heavily from the Book of Acts, mixing biblical illustrations with modern-day anecdotes to prod the reader into action, ending with, "None of us can help everyone. But all of us can help someone. And when we help them, we serve Jesus. Who would want to miss a chance to do that?"

Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Unlocked**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **Her Daughter's Dream**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
3. **The Thorn**, Beverly Lewis (Bethany House)
4. **The Twelfth Imam**, Joel C. Rosenberg (Tyndale House)
5. **Immanuel's Veins**, Ted Dekker (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Her Mother's Hope**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
7. **Seek Me With All Your Heart**, Beth Wiseman (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Embers of Love**, Tracie Peterson (Bethany House)
9. **The Shack**, William P. Young (Windblown Media)
10. **Take Four**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)

Nonfiction

1. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C. Cook)
3. **The Me I Want to Be**, John Ortberg (Zondervan)
4. **The Coming Economic Armageddon**, David Jeremiah (FaithWords)
5. **Outlive Your Life**, Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Choosing to SEE**, Mary Beth Chapman and Ellen Vaughn (Revell/Baker)
7. **Power Thoughts**, Joyce Meyer (FaithWords)
8. **Life's Healing Choices**, John Baker (Simon & Schuster)
9. **The Power of a Whisper**, Bill Hybels (Zondervan)
10. **Radical**, David Platt (Waterbrook/Multnomah)



Graphic by Lauren Chow

'Houses of peace'

SBC giving allows homes, lives to be rebuilt in India

Christians in the Kandhamal district of India's Orissa state will not soon forget the atrocities of August 2008, when angry Hindu mobs made a bloodbath of their people and destroyed their homes, but today, thanks to Southern Baptist giving, these Christians are looking toward their future with hope.

Hindu extremists blamed Christians for the assassination of a Hindu leader Aug. 23, 2008, in Orissa. Although Maoist rebels, an extreme Marxist political group, claimed responsibility for the assassination, Hindu extremists killed about 70 Christians and destroyed 4,640 houses, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions, according to news stories published by Baptist Press, Compass Direct News and local sources.

Christians fled from their villages, seeking refuge first in the jungle and then in displaced-person camps that the government opened for them. For a long time, Christians would not return to their homes because they feared further backlash from Hindu extremists.

Finding courage

"Some of the Kandhamal victims of the religious violence have enough courage that they are returning home," Southern Baptist humanitarian worker Cole Elbridge said. "But their ravaged homes cannot be lived in and the money they received in compensation from the government has been used up over the two years they were in relief camps, so they are back in their villages but still without permanent shelter."

Soon, however, Christians in Kandhamal will have new homes — after two years of staying in

camps and then living in makeshift tents, mud huts or on the verandas of relatives' homes. The government camps are now closed.

Southern Baptist humanitarian workers, national partners and the Kandhamal Baptist Convention are partnering with Kandhamal Christians to rebuild the community. They plan to build homes for 180 families in the area using \$170,696 from Southern Baptist relief funds, channeled through Baptist Global Response (BGR), an international relief and development organization.

"Field personnel are able to rebuild homes because of Southern Baptists' faithful giving to the General Relief Fund over the years," said Francis Horton, who with his wife Angie directs work in Central and South Asia for BGR.

The general relief funds are providing bricks, tin, cement, doors and windows for the Christians to rebuild their homes on their original foundations, Elbridge said. The average household size ranges from six to eight people, so as many as 1,440 people will benefit.

"We hope to achieve the building of 'houses of peace,' which will offer peace and hope to communities divided by religious strife," Elbridge said.

"Our goal is to also encourage these refugees to reach out with the hope of the gospel to the Hindu communities who attacked them, destroyed their homes and even

killed many of them two years earlier," he added.

Building began Oct. 1 and will take about one year to complete, Elbridge said. Southern Baptist humanitarian worker Adrien Telford and Indian partners recently surveyed the land, and together they are supervising the building project.

Last year, \$120,000 from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund provided relief to 8,000 families in the Kandhamal area.

Christian worker Dwight Mabury said he and a team of Indian partners distributed cooking utensils, rice, lentils, blankets and clothing.

"They have only burned our houses, but they could not touch us," one of the persecuted Christians in Orissa said. "Today, God has given us everything, and praise God for that."

International and Indian Christians ask for prayer for those living in the Kandhamal area:

- ▶ that families trying to return to their village homes will be accepted by the Hindu community around them.

- ▶ that no further organized religious persecution takes place.

- ▶ that those who are persecuted will boldly share their hope and peace in Christ with the neighbors who attacked them.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed to protect the individuals. (BP)

"Our goal is to ... encourage these refugees to reach out with the hope of the gospel to the Hindu communities."
Cole Elbridge
SBC humanitarian worker

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Pakistani Christian tortured for refusing slavery

SANGLA HILL, Pakistan — A Muslim land owner in Pakistan subjected a 25-year-old Christian to burns and a series of humiliations in October, including falsely charging him with having sex with his own niece, because he refused to work for him without pay.

Fayaz Masih is in jail with burns on his body after No. 115 Chitraan Wala village head Zafar Iqbal Ghuman and other villagers beat him, set fire to him and shaved off some of his facial hair Oct. 3, said Pastor Yaqub Masih.

Ghuman, who is accustomed to forcing Christians into slavery, and 11 of his men abducted Masih from his home at gunpoint and brought him to Ghuman's farmhouse, according to Yaqub Masih and former politician Yousaf Gill, both of nearby No. 118 Chour Muslim village. After the armed men had beaten Masih and rubbed charcoal on his face when he declined a final request to work in Ghuman's fields, Ghuman announced that Masih had had relations with Masih's 18-year-old niece, Sumeera.

Some threw kerosene on Masih and alternately set him on fire and extinguished the flames, Gill said. Masih's sister, Seema Bibi, said the accusation that Masih had had sex with her daughter was false. She said Ghuman told her daughter at gunpoint to testify against Masih in court Oct. 4, but Sumeera said under oath that Masih was innocent and that Ghuman had tried to force her to testify against her uncle. A judge ruled that Sumeera had not had illicit relations with Masih, and that therefore she was free to go home.

In spite of the court ruling, police were coerced into registering a false charge of adultery against him under Article 376 of the Islamic statutes of the Pakistan Penal Code, First Information Report No. 361/10, at the Sangla Hill police station.

Muslims in Bangladesh beat, rob Christians

SADHU HATI PANTA PARA, Bangladesh — Aynal Haque, 63, a volunteer for Christian organization Way of Life Trust, said his brothers and relatives, along with Muslim villagers, beat him and his son, 22-year-old Lal Miah, on Oct. 9 when they refused to recant Christianity.

The family lives at Sadhu Hati Panta Para village in Jhenaidah district, some 155 miles southwest of Dhaka in Bangladesh. At a meeting to which Haque was summoned Oct. 9, about 500 men and women from several villages gathered.

"They tried to force us to be apologetic for our blunder of accepting Christianity and also tried to compel us to go back to Islam. I told them, 'While there is breath left in our bodies, we will not reject Christianity.' When we denied their allegation and demand, they beat us severely," Haque said.

Hearing of the incident, the next day Muslims in Kola village about three miles away beat a Christian friend of Haque's and robbed his seed shop. Tokkel Ali, 40, said around 20 people arrived at his shop at about 11 a.m. "A huge crowd overran me and started beating me, throwing my seeds here and there," he said. Ali said he lost consciousness, and the mob scattered his seeds and robbed him of 24,580 taka, along with his bicycle. He said he has not dared file any charges. "If I file any case or complain against them, they will kill me."

Arsonist sets fire to Jerusalem church; 10 people escape

JERUSALEM — An unidentified arsonist in Israel set fire to a Jerusalem church building that has long been a focal point for anti-Christian sentiment in a Jewish ultra-Orthodox-leaning neighborhood, church officials said.

On Oct. 29 shortly before 1 a.m., someone broke the basement windows of the Jerusalem Alliance Church Ministry Center and set fire to its bottom floors. Smoke and the noise of the blaze had awakened 10 volunteer workers who were sleeping at the church's overnight facilities. The volunteers, who were visiting Israel from the United States and Denmark, went to a nearby hospital and were treated for smoke inhalation; they were released several hours later, church leaders said.

The church building sustained approximately \$85,000 of smoke and fire damage. The fire largely gutted the basement and destroyed recent renovations. Senior Pastor Jack Sara said he had difficulty understanding how the arsonist could have carried so much hate; whoever set the fire had to know people were inside the church, he said. "He not only intended to burn a room but to kill people," he said. ☩