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Stoudenmires named Alabama Baptist Volunteers of the Year

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Photos by Lauren Chow

THANKSGIVING MINISTRY — Birmingham Baptist Association volunteers prepare for the association's traditional Thanksgiving ministry Food for Friends that feeds, clothes and provides hygiene items and medical care to downtown Birmingham's homeless community and others in need.

'Running out of food'

Ministry centers 'overwhelmed' by food needs, lack of resources

By John Evans
The Alabama Baptist

The single mother of three walked several miles to get food for her family. When she arrived at the food bank run by Green Valley Baptist Church, Hoover, the staff worried she would not be able to carry the food home such a great distance. The Haitian woman explained she would make two trips if necessary. One of the church's deacons drove her home with the food instead.

Another woman told the Judson Baptist Association Ministry Center that when she had almost run out of food, she stopped eating so her son could have what little was left. By the time she came to the center and received food, she hadn't eaten for three days.

These stories of desperation illustrate the growing crisis of hunger in Alabama, evidenced by a new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

report that rates the state among the worst in the nation for food insecurity. The report — Household Food Security in the United States, 2009 — was released in late November.

As the economic downturn takes hold, more and more families can't find enough to eat, straining food banks and churches, reports indicate.

Desperate situation

"What we've been hearing from our partners in the faith community is that they are overwhelmed," said Kristina Scott, executive director of the Alabama Poverty Project. "They are running out of food; they are seeing

a greater need for food than they can respond to."

The USDA report indicated 15 percent of Alabama households — above the national average — were food insecure, meaning they had difficulty providing enough food for everyone in the family because of lack of resources. Of that number, Alabama was No. 1 in the nation in very low food security — 6.8 percent. This means some people in the household had to eat less and their normal eating patterns were disrupted because they couldn't afford enough food.

Larry Logan, executive director of the United Way Community Food

Bank in Birmingham, indicated the scope of the problem in the food bank's winter 2010 newsletter.

"This past year (of 2009), the food bank distributed 7.1 million pounds of food," he wrote. "This is a record breaking year for distribution for us. Unfortunately, the only reason we distributed such an amount is because the need was unprecedented. We could have easily distributed 14 million pounds had we been able to. That is simply how much people need help right now."

Scott pegs the state's poverty rate of 16.6 percent as a major reason why (See 'Alabama,' page 3)

Pine Barren Association, church meet hunger needs

By John Evans
The Alabama Baptist

We've got poverty running out our ears," said Charles Autery, pastor of Christian Way Baptist Church, Camden.

The statistics back up Autery's claim. The most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau put the poverty rate in Wilcox County, where his church is located, at more than 30 percent. The Alabama Department of Industrial Relations pegs the county's unemployment rate at more than

20 percent — the highest in the state.

Along with Pine Barren Baptist Association, Christian Way Baptist is trying to help residents of this poverty-stricken area. On Nov. 20, volunteers from around the community prepared boxes of food and distributed them to 300 needy families. "People's needs are met through us doing this joint effort in ministry," Autery said, noting ministries like the food distribution are vital ways for Christians to live out the faith they claim.

Food has been distributed annually

since 2006. This year, about 14,000 pounds of food were purchased at a steeply discounted price from the Montgomery Area Food Bank and supplemented by donations and the U.S. Postal Service's Stamp Out Hunger food drive.

Area families filled out applications and were accepted based on income level. Each family received one box of food per member.

Some of the volunteers were going through hard times themselves.

(See 'Caring,' page 3)

COMMENT

Reaching People in This Generation

Scratch a Southern Baptist and he or she will bleed missions and evangelism. That is part of who we are. Our national convention was born out of a desire for all Baptists to be involved in missions — at home and abroad — and that desire is still there.

The reason for this commitment to missions? Because Baptists understand that the Bible teaches that each person deserves the opportunity to hear and respond to the good news that through faith in Jesus Christ, one's sins can be forgiven and one can become a child of God.

That decision is the difference between an eternity in the presence of God and an eternity cast away from Him.

This season of the year, Southern Baptists evidence their commitment to taking the gospel to the ends of the earth in a remarkable way. In a matter of days, 16 million Southern Baptists will contribute about \$150 million to be used for international missions. Of course, we're talking about the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions. It has been called the largest offering of its type in Christendom.

The offering goal for 2010 is \$175 million. Like all supporting Southern Baptists, we pray it will be received. Last year, Southern Baptists used the same goal but receipts closed at \$148.9 million. That was \$7.6 million more than 2008's receipts for an increase of 5.3 percent. Such growth in the midst of an economic recession was a blessing from God.

In 2009, Alabama Baptists gave \$11,352,272 to international missions through the LMCO. That amounted to 7.6 percent of the total given by all Southern Baptists. It was another demonstration of Alabama Baptists' commitment to international missions since our membership equals only 6.4 percent of Southern Baptist Convention membership. Had Alabama Baptists' average LMCO gift been true of all Southern Baptists, total receipts would have been nearly \$173 million.

Budgeting funds

While praying to receive the \$175 million offering goal, International Mission Board (IMB) leaders are budgeting their funds carefully. Built into the operating budget for 2010–11 is \$146 million through the LMCO. The other \$29 million is marked for capital needs and will not be spent until the amount for the operating budget has been received.

Some may remember when the LMCO went primarily to capital needs on the field. But as the missions ranks swelled to more than 5,000 missionaries, financial resources became strained. To-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

day IMB officials say every penny of the LMCO goes to the overseas budget, which is, primarily, missions support.

The overseas budget totals about \$270 million, or 85.3 percent of the IMB's \$317 million budget. The importance of the offering to missions work around the world is obvious. The LMCO makes up about 55 percent of the IMB's total budget. The other major source of funding — the Cooperative Program — makes up about 32 percent (just more than \$100 million) of the budget.

The cost of keeping a missionary on the field for a year is \$43,845.86, according to IMB sources. That breaks down to a cost of \$843.19 a week or \$120.13 a day or \$5.01 an hour.

These missionaries are making a difference. In November, the IMB released its 2009 report. IMB officials noted the numbers reflected a new approach to reporting results that concentrates more on the work of missionaries and their closest partners. This new approach should help ease tensions with several na-

tional Baptist groups that developed as a result of the IMB's previous practices.

But the results are still impressive — 360,867 baptisms; 29,237 new churches; 96 newly engaged people groups.

God is moving in a wondrous way. Missionaries report indigenous church-planting movements springing up in many parts of the world — North Africa, China, India, Central Europe and South America.

It was especially encouraging to this writer to read reports about a country where we worked in partnership missions in past years. What was a mostly unresponsive country now reports a rapid spread of new indigenous churches and a rush of new believers. Years of planting gospel seeds are now resulting in a great spiritual harvest there.

Sunni and Shiite Muslims are both coming to Christ in several nations. Buddhists and Hindus are coming to Christ. Traditional Christians are

experiencing a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ.

It is no wonder Christians in some parts of the world are suffering new levels of persecution. God is at work and Satan is striking back.

About 25 percent of the world's population lives in areas where less than 2 percent of the people would be considered evangelical Christians. That is 1.7 billion people. Researchers say there are 562 people groups with a population of 100,000 or more that have not been engaged with the gospel. About 3,000 smaller people groups also have not heard the good news that Jesus saves.

For the first time, missions strategists say it is possible to reach all these people groups with the gospel in the current generation. Research tools are available to identify the groups. Methods are available to share the gospel. God is calling people to go. All of the unreached people may not believe, but all can have the opportunity to hear and respond to the claims of Christ.

'Are We There Yet?'

"Are We There Yet?" asks the theme of this year's Week of Prayer for International Missions. The answer is "no" but we are well on the way. Southern Baptists are researching. Southern Baptists are learning. Southern Baptists are praying. Southern Baptists are going. And this week, Southern Baptists are giving to international missions through the LMCO.

Every Alabama Baptist can be a part of this annual expression of missions support. As God leads, each one can help make it possible to share the gospel with all who have not heard with a generous gift to the LMCO. We can be a part of reaching every people group in this generation.

**Week of Prayer for
International Missions
and International
Mission Study
Nov. 28–Dec. 5**



**LOTTIE MOON
CHRISTMAS OFFERING**
National Goal: \$175 million
Alabama's Goal: \$11.5 million



"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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DR. BOBBY S. TERRY, EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash, Managing Editor

Kristen Padilla, News Writer..... Kathleen Penton, Copy Editor
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Photo by John Evans

GIVING — Charles Autrey, pastor of Christian Way Baptist Church, Camden, stands in front of donated food volunteers from his church and Pine Barren Association distributed Nov. 20.

Caring for hungry 'the Christlike thing to do'

(continued from page 1)

As Rita Sadler helped prepare the food boxes in a donated warehouse across the street from Christian Way, she mentioned that her husband, Frank, has been unemployed for four years.

But that didn't stop the couple and their daughter Elizabeth, members of Enon Baptist Church, Camden, from helping those who don't have enough to eat.

"If you're a Christian, you're going to try to help people who are less fortunate and Wilcox County needs help," Rita Sadler said.

Annie Matthews, a volunteer and member of Christian Way, said she wanted to give back to the community and give thanks to God.

"It's the Christlike thing to

do," she said. "During this time of the year, we do a lot of giving, but to me, every day is Thanksgiving. This is our way of giving thanks to the good Lord who has given to us, and we're just trying to do what He would do."

In addition to adult volunteers, 12 youth helped prepare the boxes. Most are part of the youth ministry at Christian Way.

James Finklea, who with his wife, Andrea, directs the church's youth ministry, wants to instill in the youth a desire to help others and be responsible members of the community.

"Right now, kids in this area are not taught to have a love for their community or for one another," he said. "But that's what these children are learning today."

Alabama No. 1 in 'very low food security'; poverty, unemployment contributing factors

(continued from page 1)

food insecurity is so high in Alabama; if people can't make enough money to support themselves, they might not be able to afford enough food. But she indicated it is not the only reason.

"We all need to look at a combination of short-term and long-term factors," Scott said.

In many rural and low-income neighborhoods, grocery stores can be hard to come by. Those that are available are often small stores that charge higher prices than large retailers such as Wal-Mart.

"If you're poor, you might not have reliable transportation to get to a store that has food at a more reasonable price," Scott said.

In addition, Scott says struggling families with children are likely to face even greater burdens as the holiday season approaches and schools close.

"Fifty-four percent of public school children receive free or reduced-price lunches in the state," she said. "Those children get most of their meals in school."

"As we come into the holiday season, we know those children may not have access to reliable nutrition at home," Scott added. "Food banks and food pantries will see even more demand for nutrition during the holiday season."

'Very complicated'

"If you think about it, low income families are much more likely to have parents that do shift work, so it can be hard to be home to make the kids dinner when they get home from school, especially if you don't have reliable transportation," she continued. "It can be very complicated to meet the needs of your family if you're struggling to keep the lights on and pay the rent."

Even the poor in Alabama who receive food stamps (839,921 people as of August 2010) have a challenge

buying enough food. Although the program is meant to supplement other income, the average benefit for a family of four — \$68.88 per week as of 2009, according to an Associated Press article — adds only about \$3 per meal.

The consequences of food insecurity are felt in a very real way, the USDA report indicates.

Some of the households surveyed nationwide said they ran out of food without money to buy more, could not afford balanced meals or their children were not eating enough. A small number (.2 percent) even said their children had gone an entire day without eating.

Rates of food insecurity were twice as high among single parent households compared to those headed by a married couple. Rates were also double among black and Hispanic households compared to white households.

In what might seem like a contradiction, research is showing a connection between food insecurity and obesity.

Todd Post, senior editor of the Hunger Report with the Bread for the World Institute, said when people can't afford nutritious food, they tend to buy cheaper food that is more filling but less healthy. In places where grocery stores are scarce, people's options are limited to what they can find at convenience stores. This unhealthy diet produces nutritional deficiency and obesity, which can lead to Type 2 diabetes.

"There's a connection between obesity and hunger that people don't realize," he said.

Of the 13.5 percent of Americans

who suffered from food insecurity in 2009, while the South fared worst regionally.

Scott attributes the South's poor performance to a variety of factors that also affect Alabama, including high poverty rates and low levels of educational attainment. If more Alabamians are to rise out of poverty,

they will need to be trained to compete for the high-tech jobs of the future.

"We need to take some time to make education a priority," she said. "We're not competing with Central America for sock factories any more."

Amid the state's challenges, a number of Christian-run ministries in Alabama are working

to provide food to those who need it. Such ministries include national organizations like The Salvation Army and city ministries in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile and Montgomery. Alabama Baptists also have more than 20 well established hunger-related ministries statewide.

"I have seen the very generous heart Baptists and other Alabamians' of faith have, and their deep desire to reach out to those in need," Scott said.

She emphasized that fighting hunger will require more than short-term aid such as handing out food. While such efforts are important, Scott said it is vital to solve the long-term problems that create food insecurity. To do that, she suggested partnering with food-insecure communities to produce solutions that will last.

"I really hope we can come together as a larger community and address these long-term needs."

"I really hope we can come together as a larger community and address these long-term needs."

Kristina Scott
The Alabama Poverty Project

Both parties face tough questions by faith-based voters

President Obama and both the Democratic and Republican parties all face tough questions from faith-based voters going into the 2012 election cycle, a new survey on religion and the 2010 midterm elections suggests.

The Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) released results from their 2010 Post-Election American Values Survey on Nov. 17.

One difficult religious issue for President Obama may be voters' apparent lack of identification with what they perceive his faith to be. Just 40 percent of respondents believed Obama held religious beliefs "very similar" or "somewhat similar" to their own. At the same time, a majority of respondents — 51 percent — said Obama's faith views were somewhat or very different from their own.

Those who perceived Obama to not share their faith views were much more likely to hold negative opinions of him.

Among those who said they viewed the president's faith as "very different" from their own, 78 percent viewed Obama unfavorably — compared to 42 percent of the overall population.

White evangelicals

White evangelicals were the most likely religious group to believe Obama held faith views that differed from their own. Nearly two-thirds — 65 percent — said the president did not share their religious beliefs.

Christians from ethnic minorities were most likely to identify with Obama's faith. Six in 10 said his faith views were similar to their own. That compared to 36 percent of white Christians who believe Obama shares their faith.

Republicans going into 2012, meanwhile, face tensions both between and within two core parts of their base — white evangelicals and Tea Party supporters.

Although the earlier survey found significant overlap between the two groups, post-election results showed some significant differences in priorities among those who identified as Tea Party adherents and white evangelicals.

While a plurality of Tea Party supporters (37 percent) said their vote was primarily a show of opposition to Obama, only one-in-four white evangelicals did. Similarly, nearly three times as many white evangelical respondents as Tea Party supporters said their vote was primarily about local issues (14 percent vs. 5 percent).

On health-care reform, 41 percent of Tea Partiers said repealing the reform law that passed Congress earlier this year should be the GOP's most important legislative priority.

That compared to 32 percent of white evangelicals, the plurality of whom said balancing the federal budget should be

Congress' highest priority. Only 23 percent of Tea Partiers said balancing the budget should be at the top of the GOP agenda.

Tea Party supporters were also more likely than white evangelicals to say discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the country, that blacks and other minorities have received too much attention from the government in recent decades and to say that it is not that big a problem if some have more chances in life than others.

'Real tensions ... in GOP'

"You may see some real tensions here as these two groups in the GOP coalition wrestle it out over priorities," said Robert Jones, founder and CEO of the PRRI.

The survey of 1,494 adults who responded to the earlier poll, was conducted Nov. 3-7. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percent.

(ABP)

Chapmans share talents, pain during A Night With the Chapmans

By Theresa Shadrix
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

At A Night With the Chapmans on Nov. 14 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, Steven Curtis Chapman and his family came together on stage, just as they have off stage — supporting each other, sharing their talents, lifting up the name of Jesus and initiating support for orphans.

Before a packed sanctuary, the band Caleb opened, featuring Chapman's sons, Caleb and Will Franklin, as well as Hunter Lamb and Scott Mills. Then Chapman performed current and past hits. After the music, Chapman's wife, Mary Beth, spoke to the audience in a summary of what she penned in her book, "Choosing to See."

"I told God that I would never home-school, adopt or speak in public," Mary Beth joked.

However, she has home-schooled her children, Emily, Caleb, Will Franklin, Shaohannah, Stevey Joy and Maria Sue, the youngest of whom are adopted from China, and joined her husband on this 34-city tour for the first time to speak to audiences about her journey in faith and with her family.

Chapman has been at the top of the charts and the depths of despair. And through it all, his faith in Christ and his family have been constant.

The contemporary Christian musician has sold more than 10 million records, earned Grammy Awards, American Music Awards and 56 Dove Awards, but nothing could prepare Chapman and his family for the death of his youngest daughter, Maria Sue, on May 21, 2008.

The day was casual and almost mundane. Chapman was in the front

yard on his cell phone; Mary Beth was in the house working on plans for their eldest daughter Emily's upcoming wedding. In the backyard, the three younger daughters, Shaohannah, Stevey Joy and Maria Sue, played on the playground. When Will Franklin came home and drove toward the house, he was neither speeding nor talking on his cell phone.

As he drove around the house to park in the back, he did not know Maria Sue was running toward the car to ask him to lift her onto the monkey bars.

"He was the best big brother," Chapman said of Will Franklin. "He would do anything for her." In a tragic accident, Will's car hit Maria Sue and she did not survive the impact.

As Caleb the band played songs from its new independent album, Caleb the eldest son shared the emotions of dealing with his sister's death.

'A mess'

"As a lot of you know, May 21, 2008, my little sister went to be with Jesus," Caleb said. "There's a moment when tragedy hits and you find yourself a mess."

"Everything done on this canvas is a blur. When we step back on the other side of eternity, we are going to see the full canvas. What the world saw as a huge mess is God's canvas," he continued.

Mary Beth said when she looks back at that time, it is difficult to see anything. "It's like I'm watching myself. Everything I believed up to that moment was true or not."

But she said that as she lived a

parent's worst nightmare, she felt God's presence and could feel that people were praying for her family.

In his latest album, "Beauty Will Rise," Chapman reveals the emotional journey he has been on since 2008. He said his inspirations for songs come from life, and "Beauty Will Rise" is evidence of that fact. In every song he has ever written, he reveals what he is learning about God, he said.

"In all cases it is God revealing Himself."

An essential element of the tour for the Chapmans is not just sharing their sorrow. It is the continued mission to help orphans. A Night With the Chapmans is sponsored by Show Hope, a nonprofit organization created by the Chapmans that offers resources and adoption



CHAPMAN

grants. In July 2009, Show Hope opened Maria's Big House of Hope, a six-story building dedicated to Maria Sue that assists in caring for special needs orphans. Located in the province of Luoyang, China, the program serves children under the age of 5.

One of those children is Oliver, an adopted son of Jason and Kelly Blackburn. Oliver underwent lip surgery last summer at Maria's Big House of Hope. Jason, minister of children and media at Hillcrest Baptist Church, New Albany, Miss., traveled with his wife to Shades Mountain Baptist for the event.

"I never expected our lives to intersect with [the Chapmans]," Kelly said. "I never expected Maria's life to impact ours."

The Blackburns plan to travel to China in December to bring Oliver, their third adopted child from China, home.

Jason said he is grateful for the Chapmans, Maria's Big House of Hope and the vulnerability of the Chapman family. "I wish more people understood the need of adoption. The church is the answer and God can work through the church."

The Chapman family will continue their mission for orphans and sharing their experiences. Chapman shared his advice to Christian songwriters, and it seems to be his advice for life. "God puts us in very unique places. So bloom wherever God plants you."

CLARIFICATION

In the Baptist News Brief article "Former FBC Jacksonville member reaches settlement" in the Nov. 18 issue, the statement about "prohibiting the establishment of religion" refers to the First Amendment right prohibiting Congress from establishing religion.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Case against Texas convention, paper settled

DALLAS — A libel case brought against the *Baptist Standard*, the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) and other parties by church-starter Otto Arango has been settled.

Judge Bobby Flores of the 139th Judicial District Court in Hidalgo County dismissed the suit after mediation.

Arango claimed defamation based on a 2006 independent investigation by the BGCT and articles reporting on it. The investigation concluded 98 percent of the 258 churches Arango and his colleagues started in south Texas — for which they received more than \$1.3 million in BGCT funds — no longer existed, and some were "phantom" churches that never existed.

In his suit, Arango claimed more than \$3 million in damages. The *Baptist Standard's* portion of the settlement totaled \$9,500. Settlement amounts involving other parties were confidential.

"We have said all along the *Baptist Standard's* coverage of the BGCT investigation into church-starting practices in the Valley was accurate, thorough and fair," Editor Marv Knox said.

"We stand behind all our stories about this investigation. We have denied and continue to deny any liability to Dr. Arango."

The *Standard* filed a motion for summary judgment that included deposition testimony by Arango confirming that the *Standard* accurately reported on the BGCT investigation and its aftermath. Arango opposed the motion, contending that readers were left with a misleading impression that he was under investigation for criminal activity. The court denied the motion by the *Standard* and ordered the case to mediation. In the final settlement, Arango and his attorneys released all claims against the *Standard* and agreed to dismiss the suit. "While the *Standard* would have preferred not to spend any more of our insurance company's funds, we concur with our attorney and insurance representative that this settlement is a sound business decision," Knox said. The settlement costs were less than anticipated expenses from the next round of legal expenses, which would have been an appeal to have the case dismissed on summary judgment.

Georgia convention trims budget, reduces staff

DULUTH, Ga. — The recession may be officially over but a continuing slumping economy is forcing the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC) to trim its 2011 budget by \$1,025,000 and once again reduce staffing levels. The downsizing at the GBC Missions and Ministry Center continues the reductions first set in place nearly two years ago when the effects of the recession began to be felt.

The first round of staff cuts occurred in February 2009, when 13 positions were eliminated, followed by another 14 last November. Reductions in October 2010 resulted in 12 positions being eliminated as the state convention works to bring expenses in line with income levels. Staff positions eliminated during the nearly two-year period now stand at 39, placing the headcount at the GBC headquarters building in Duluth at a record low 103. That is down from a high of 163 employees in 2008 before the recession hit, said Mike Williams, assistant executive director and vice president of operations.

Some parts of the state are harder hit than others. Northwest Georgia, for example, is reporting that unemployment increased to 10.7 percent in August while the metro Dalton area is trending at 12 percent. September's state figures are the 35th consecutive month that Georgia has reported a higher unemployment rate than the nation as a whole. In addition to the 12 positions removed from the GBC headcount this fall, another 10 staff may take early retirement before the end of the year as the convention reduces post-retirement medical benefits and GuideStone Financial Resources cuts annuity funding rates nearly in half to 3.75 percent.

SWBTS adds to its Dead Sea Scrolls collection

FORT WORTH, Texas — Less than a year after acquiring three fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas, has added three more biblical fragments, making it the largest collection at an institution of higher education in the United States. The new fragments were obtained from a private collector in Europe through a gift from an anonymous donor and friend of the seminary. "The acquisition constitutes another significant milestone in the development of our programs in biblical studies and archaeology," said SWBTS President Paige Patterson. "We are especially grateful for the friends of Southwestern who have made these acquisitions, as well as three other fragments, possible." The set of six fragments is one more than those owned by Azusa Pacific University near Los Angeles, which acquired five pieces in 2009. The Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago also owns a fragment.



Photo courtesy of First Baptist Church, Hoover

FBC HOOVER HONORS MINISTER OF MUSIC HILBURN

First Baptist Church, Hoover, in Birmingham Baptist Association honored Ron Hilburn (left) for 10 years of service as the church's minister of music. He and his wife, Lillian, were presented with roses, a book of letters and a monetary gift. Randy G. Atkinson is pastor.

'A beautiful path'

Survivor of hemorrhagic stroke finds grace in suffering, shares story with Samford students

By John Evans
The Alabama Baptist

Jay Wolf III hears his wife, Katherine, yell the words that will change their lives forever. "Come in here," she urges from across their Malibu, Calif., apartment. "I don't feel right."

Jay, the son of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Senior Pastor Jay Wolf, finds her suffering from a strange illness. In a few minutes, it brings Katherine to her knees before knocking her flat on the floor.

As their 6-month-old son, James, sleeps in another room, Jay calls an ambulance. By the time it arrives, Katherine is vomiting and can't feel her legs. The paramedics check her vital signs, which show nothing wrong. She is rushed to UCLA Medical Center, where on that day — April 21, 2008 — tests deliver a medical death sentence. "I remember the doctor came out and said, 'It's not good,'" Jay recalled.

Katherine had suffered a massive hemorrhagic stroke. A tangle of abnormally formed blood vessels in her brain had ruptured, bleeding into the inside of her skull. The pressure was pushing her brain down into her spinal cord.

Katherine's condition was the worst her neurosurgeon had ever seen. The prognosis was abysmal: She probably would not survive surgery, and even if she did, she likely would remain in a coma or vegetative state. Given the slim chance of survival and the fear of lawsuits should she die, it was possible the doctor might not even operate.

This wasn't what the Wolfs, both only 26, had planned. After graduating from Samford University in Birmingham, they moved to California to chase their dreams. Jay was finishing law school at Pepperdine University in Malibu, while Katherine worked as a model and had joined the Screen Actors Guild. Now the future seemed to be falling apart.

"It could be me losing my wife at 26 to a stroke," Jay recalled thinking. "That didn't make any sense."

But the neurosurgeon decided to operate. During the 16-hour surgery, the deformed blood vessels were removed, along with half the cerebellum area of Katherine's brain — the body's coordinating center for muscular movement. Seven cranial nerves, vital to motor and sensory functions, were damaged in the process. Her entire blood volume was replaced five times.

The couple had the support of their church family. More than 100 people prayed for Katherine in the hospital waiting room on the night of her surgery. "My heart stopped every time the waiting room phone



Photo by Caroline Summers

JOURNEY OF FAITH — Jay and Katherine Wolf share their personal story of suffering with Samford University students during a convocation at Reid Chapel on Nov. 18. Both are Samford graduates.

rang," Jay said. "I felt like I really didn't know what God had for us."

Katherine lived. Following the surgery, she was placed in a medically induced coma to heal. Less than 24 hours after the operation, she could move her toes and fingers on command — an unheard of recovery for someone in her condition.

"That early sign that she wasn't paralyzed or brain dead was truly a gift from God, and it provided me a supernatural peace that in time, Katherine would be well again," Jay said.

Katherine regained consciousness after a month and a half, awakening to a bizarre reality. "I woke up in the hospital wearing a medical diaper, with a feeding tube coming out of my stomach, hooked up to IVs," she recalled. "I thought, 'Are you kidding me? What's happening?'"

The life-saving surgery caused significant damage to her motor controls. She couldn't swallow or walk. She had severe double vision and was deaf in one ear. Her right side was weakened and her right hand nearly useless. The right side of her face was paralyzed, marring her physical beauty and leaving her speech slurred.

Contentment from God

But Katherine didn't panic.

"I could have ripped out things and started screaming and crying," she said. "It could have been really bad. But none of that happened."

"God gave me a supernatural contentment to deal with this."

Forty days after her surgery, Katherine was moved out of the

intensive care unit to begin almost four months of rehabilitation.

Jay credits God for giving her and him the ability to endure.

"God gave us all the strength we needed to deal with something that, on the surface, would be almost impossible to deal with," he said.

Katherine agreed. She recalled clinging to John 16:33, in which Jesus said, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (NIV).

'God was in control'

"I knew God was in control," Katherine said.

Jay was constantly by her side. He made such efforts to ensure she got the best possible care that hospital staff called him "Dr. Jay." Katherine said her husband demonstrated his devotion to her in the most trying of circumstances. "Early on, I told him, 'Just get away. Go on vacation,'" she recalled. "He said, 'I'm not going to leave. You're not going on vacation so how can I?'"

After more than five months in the hospital, Katherine moved to Casa Colina Centers for Rehabilitation in Pomona, Calif., where she continued therapy for more than a year, facing the restrictions of her broken body.

Some days were more painful than others.

On her blog, Katherine recounts when she heard James wake up from a nap and say the word "mama" for the first time ever.

"He wanted his mama to get him out of his crib but his mama can't walk," Katherine wrote. "I fought back sobs and said as chipper as I could sound, 'James, Mama can't come get you right now. Mama loves you so much though.' I dissolved into sobs."

But through her suffering, she re-

solved to face her challenges head-on with a positive attitude.

"I thought to myself, 'You can do this,'" said Katherine, who believes the Lord made her an optimist. "It's not easy, it's not fun and it's hard but God will give you what you need to survive it." As an example, the admitted food lover cites the torment of being unable to swallow. She even began to salivate over the baby food she fed James. A speech therapist at the hospital had told Jay that Katherine would never eat again. But he never informed her of the prognosis, and she doggedly performed exercises to help her swallow. On March 25, 2009, she passed a swallowing test and began to eat once more.

"I think there's something exceptionally powerful about what you think," Katherine said.

Once considered as good as dead, she has made remarkable progress in a recovery doctors call miraculous. She has learned to walk with a cane and recently had surgery that will, over time, reanimate the right side of her face.

She still faces enormous impairments. She can't dress herself. Her speech is still slurred. She has very little stamina. She still suffers from double vision and deafness in one ear, and her right hand is still essentially useless. Yet Katherine betrays not a hint of bitterness or self-pity. Cracking jokes about her condition, she shows that her optimism and bubbly personality have not faltered. Neither has her trust in God.

"This is not at all what I had planned, but that's when God says, 'My plans are better than your plans. It may be a different path, but it can still be a beautiful path,'" Katherine said.

She sees in her stroke not a curse to be resented but an opportunity to tell others that Jesus is truly enough, no matter what happens.

"Before my stroke, people would not necessarily have listened to what Katherine Wolf had to say about that," she said. "Now they will."

As for Katherine's outward beauty that was marred by the stroke, she has found something much more valuable. "Instead of relying on your outward appearance, you have to go to a deeper place for beauty, rather than saying, 'How I look is all that matters,'" Katherine said.

Real beauty

Citing 1 Samuel 16:7, which says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (NIV), she said, "Perhaps the response to suffering is what real beauty is all about anyway."

Jay, who said he has learned much about the fragility of life, shows no resentment or anger over the trials he and his wife have endured. Instead he speaks of them as a chance to know Jesus more.

"When we do experience suffering, that is an opportunity to know Christ in a new way, not only to trust Him but to experience Him."

"Suffering is probably one of the most valuable ways in which we know Christ so it's not wasted," Jay said. "Nothing is ever wasted for a Christian." His father admires the way he and Katherine are pointing to Jesus through their trials.

"They have been given the difficult assignment of embracing suffering, and they've done it with beauty and grace," he said. "God has used them to be a platform for Him."

Jay and Katherine are trusting Christ to sustain them in an uncertain future. "I don't know much but I know He is good even when things are bad," Katherine wrote on her blog. "And somehow, that's enough."

To read the blog, visit www.katherinewolf.info.



Photo courtesy of Autauga Baptist Association

LIBERTY CHURCH COMMISSIONS PASTOR AS CHAPLAIN
Capt. Clay Carroll (left) is sworn in and commissioned by Liberty Baptist Church, Deatsville, in Autauga Baptist Association as an Alabama Air Force National Guard chaplain Nov. 7. Carroll is pastor of Liberty.

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Maytown Church** will host The Blackwood Brothers Quartet as they close out their 75th anniversary tour Dec. 6, 7 p.m. The Grammy and Dove Award-winning group has been inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. For information call 205-786-5359. John Killian is pastor.

BETHEL

► **Bethel Association** will host a pastors' and wives' banquet Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m., at Forest Hill Church, Linden, with Brother Billy Bob Bohannon. Steve Trader is pastor of Forest Hill. Bobby Hopper is director of mission for Bethel Association.

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Pleasant Grove**, will present "Journey Through Bethlehem" Dec. 8-12. It will feature an interactive walk through the streets of Bethlehem. For reservations call 205-744-2806. Wes Haley is worship pastor. Daven Watkins is pastor.

CLEBURNE

► **Andrew Newsome** is the new student minister for **Heflin Church**. A native of Southside, he is currently a student at Jacksonville State University. Philip R. Morris is pastor.

ELMORE

► The children of **Mount He-**

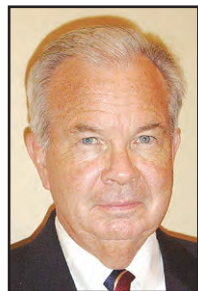
bron East Church, Eclectic, will present a Christmas nativity pageant Dec. 19, 5:30 p.m. A finger-food fellowship will follow. The church also will provide five families with groceries and toys for its church Christmas mission project. David Scarborough is supply pastor of the church.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will host NewSong's Very Merry Christmas Tour with NewSong, Newsboys and Kerrie Roberts Dec. 16, 7 p.m. Doors will open at 6:15 p.m. Children 8 years old and under who can sit in your lap do not need a ticket. For tickets call 256-729-1328 or visit www.clements baptist.org or www.itickets.com. Tim Anderson is pastor of the church.

MUD CREEK

► **Darrell Cook** is the new pastor of **Dogwood Grove Church, Adger**. He and his wife, Elaine, served as missionaries with the International Mission Board in South Africa for five years. He is currently pursuing a master of divinity at Beeson Divinity School at Sam-



COOK

ford University in Birmingham.

MORGAN

► **West Hartselle Church** will present the dramatic musical "The Christmas Shoes" Dec. 10-12, 7 p.m. Guests should be seated by 6:45 p.m. For tickets call 256-773-6086. Child care will be provided for children 2 and under. Jack M. Redfearn Jr. is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Concord Church, Calera**, will present the musical drama "The Christmas Shoes" Dec. 11, 7 p.m., and Dec. 12, 10:30 a.m. Kyle Ziglar is associate pastor of music and education. Daryle Nichols is pastor.

SULPHUR SPRINGS

► **Justin Alexander Oden** is the new youth pastor/pastoral assistant for **Bethel Church, Dora**. He has served other churches in Alabama. Oden holds a bachelor of arts in Bible and theology with a minor in youth ministry from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham. He and his wife, Kristen, have one child. John Foles is pastor.



ODEN

Second 'Awakening' more about discipleship

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

When Brett Burnett, athletic director and head football coach for Pelham High School, told Donnie Sisk, student pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, that God told him there needed to be a revival and it needed to happen in 12 days, Sisk said it took faith.

That was in September and The Awakening 2010 did take place in 12 days, just as Burnett said, Oct. 5-7 at the Verizon Wireless Music Center in Pelham.

But when Burnett approached Sisk a second time saying God had told him there needed to be a follow-up Awakening, Sisk said he had more doubts than the first time.

"This one probably took more faith than the first one," he said. "There was a great 'what if' — what if we do this and no one comes — and the whole issue of faith, faith to say, ['I believe you,'] when coach Burnett said, 'God told me to do this.'"

Sisk was not alone in his skepticism at first. The first Awakening had been such "a God thing" with more than 11,000 attendees and more than 350 faith decisions. Everything had fallen into place perfectly from the venue being donated

to securing speakers Rick Burgess, Scott Dawson and David Nasser on short notice to area church members volunteering. So some wondered if it was too good of a thing to try to repeat, not to mention just a month later.

"You don't do things this way," Sisk said. "You don't try to follow [The Awakening] two or three weeks later. But through the whole process, God intervened, and He took care of things we weren't sure if we could take care of."

And sure enough, The Awakening Continues took place at the Verizon Wireless Music Center Nov. 9-12, with four speakers on the program.

Ministry callings

Although the center could not be donated like last time, it proved to be Sisk's only expense. Everything else was donated and once again, many church members turned out to help.

Even though the numbers were

not as large as those for the first revival, there were still 7,200 who attended — more people than First, Pelham, has in its three Sunday services combined, Sisk noted.

But one of the most exciting things about the second revival was the number of decisions for full-time ministry. Eighteen students surrendered to the ministry in one night.

"This [Awakening] was completely different as far as the feel," Sisk said. "This one seemed more discipleship-oriented."

Nasser's son surrendered to the ministry during the first Awakening, and Dawson's son did the same during The Awakening Continues.

"On the calendar, [The Awakening] is over, but [revival] is still happening," said Sisk, noting a Bessemer City Schools chaplain held The Awakening Bessemer Nov. 15-16 at the Bessemer Civic Center. "We hear about people wanting to do Awakenings in [other cities]. I don't think God is finished with this move."



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FBC Holly Pond marks 125 years with faith decision

Many exciting things happened Oct. 24 as First Baptist Church, Holly Pond, celebrated its 125th anniversary, but the highlight of the day was one woman's profession of faith.

"The success of the event was a result of letting God take charge of the planning, a process that had been ongoing for a year," said Robin Henderson, anniversary coordinator and master of ceremonies.

There were many in the crowd of more than 300 at the East Cullman Baptist Association church who helped make the day special.

Ann Watts, former president of the Woman's Missionary Union of the Georgia Baptist Convention, served as guest organist, and Eddie Card, former minister of music and youth director for First, Holly Pond, returned to serve as guest music director.

Dan Scott, president of the Holly Pond Historical Society; Melanie Metz of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission; Randy Makemson, director of missions for East Cullman Association; and Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, presented the church with plaques. Pastor Benjamin Smothers gave the morning message.

The church also did its own presentations, giving certificates of appreciation to former pastors and the families of former pastors who were in attendance and giving a donation to the disaster relief team of Limestone Baptist Association.

Members of Limestone Association's disaster relief team prepared and served lunch for the church following the service.

"God is pleased with us today because the event was focused on God receiving all the glory and praise for what has happened in the church for the past 125 years," Henderson said.

Pell City's Heritage commemorates 25 years of ministry

October 17 was a day of remembrance and appreciation for Heritage Baptist Church, Pell City, as members, former pastors and visitors celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The celebration was filled with choir performances and musical guests, including Simply Blessed and His Way. There was also a slideshow featuring commentary on the St. Clair Baptist Association church's early years.

Perhaps the most memorable part of the program was the video of the church's history, provided by Dave Disspain. The video was produced 25 years ago and showed the conception of the church building through prayers and congregational meetings, which all took place in a small shop.

Keith Moore, the first pastor of Heritage Baptist, closed out the morning service with a sermon. A portion of the afternoon service was dedicated to recognizing all former pastors.

Gerald Glenn, a representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, was on hand to present a plaque during the celebration. Director of Missions Ben Chandler also honored the church by presenting a certificate of appreciation from St. Clair Association.

While it was a day to acknowledge Heritage's legacy, Pastor Joey Rich also was looking at where his congregation is going.

"As I look towards the future of Heritage Baptist, I am confident that we will continue to grow as we keep our hearts focused on our purpose: to love God, love people and make disciples," Rich said.

Forest Baptist Church celebrates 175th anniversary

Forest Baptist Church, Gordo, in Pickens Baptist Association celebrated its 175th anniversary Oct. 17 with more than three times its normal attendance of 20.

The celebration concluded with a community lunch and a slideshow as the church reflected on its history. Special music was provided by Doug Sellers and pianist Elinor Ruth Blankney.

To wrap up the service, Director of Missions Gary Farley of Pickens Association spoke from Joshua 4 on "What Mean These Stones?"

During the service, a representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission was on hand to present a plaque, honoring the years of ministry. Gene Abston, Forest Baptist's oldest member, accepted the plaque. Church clerk Doug Sanders Jr. has a long-standing connection to the church, too — he grew up there.

"My hope is that Forest Baptist will continue to worship God, serve this community and help those in need," Sanders said of the future. "We have always been a community-centered church with our doors open wide."

Vernon Blackburn has been pastor since 1982.

Mobile's Government Street ministers to homeless women

By Kathy Dean
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As an adjunct professor of voice at the University of Mobile and professional musician, Melba Brown has sung in some of the most awe-inspiring places in the world, including Carnegie Hall in New York and the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. But none of those performances was as gratifying as the one in the gym of Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile, where she sang "Amazing Grace," led by church member Melissa Barnes and accompanied by 73 homeless women and her church family.

That moment was one of the highlights of Strong Enough, a friendship luncheon in October that involved more than 300 members of the Mobile Baptist Association church reaching out to the homeless community.

Church's vision

The idea for the luncheon was born this summer at the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Fla., when Brown and husband Charles, the church's pastor, sat at a table with a staff member from First Baptist Church, Orlando, and heard about that congregation's ministry to the homeless. It was the stories of loss, heartache and brokenness that touched her. She knew there were similar stories in her community, and she wanted to hear them. More than that, Brown wanted to bring God's healing power to broken lives. It was a vision her church family embraced.

The women of Government Street Baptist decided to turn their annual luncheon retreat into a friendship luncheon that would share God's love with homeless women. For four months, they worked passionately on the project, contacting

area homeless agencies, gathering names of women in shelters and seeking donations of items ranging from toiletries to Bibles.

The women arranged for volunteers from beauty schools and hair salons to cut and style hair, students at a career college to give massages, nursing students to take blood pressure and do health screenings and cosmetologists and church volunteers to give facials. They gathered donated clothes, arranged for six restaurants to provide meals and took monetary donations to help with expenses. Then the women sent out the invitations.

Of the 150 women they invited from shelters in the heart of the city, 73 were transported to the church in west Mobile. About 250 Government Street Baptist women welcomed them with hugs.

Church members directed them to massage chairs, helped them select clothes from the clothes closet and gave manicures. Showers were available in the gym, with new towels, which the youth then took to the day care next door to launder and return to the women as a gift. Associate Pastor/Minister to Students Adam Pate coordinated a backyard Bible club for 10 homeless children and cared for nine preschoolers as their mothers enjoyed the spa day. Minister of Music Mark Barnes, who has a photography business, took portraits to be sent to the women at their shelters later.

Meal service

When it was time for lunch, the guests were treated to a meal served by men of the church. They sat at tables decorated by the women's group and set with fine china and silver.

"We wanted these women to feel just as special as our women do when they come and sit down at a



Photo by Mark Barnes

REACHING OUT — Seventy-three homeless women gather with about 250 women from Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile, for Strong Enough, a luncheon held in their honor.

beautiful table and a beautiful meal," Brown said. Church members who were concerned about how to connect with the women had a set of questions they could ask around the table to get a conversation started. Inspire, the church's interpretive movement group, performed.

Keynote speaker Mardwena Hall shared how a childhood of abuse made her susceptible to drug abuse, which led to homelessness; how the love of God and the support of people who love Him helped her regain control of her life; and how He was "strong enough."

"The main thing I wanted them to know was that no matter what you have gone through or are going through, nothing is too hard for God," said Hall, who is employed and no longer homeless. "I know what it's like to want to do better so badly and then to believe it just will not happen for you, that there's

something so inherently wrong with you that you can't be helped."

But God can change that, she said.

Foundation on the Word

"One of the things that a lot of (drug treatment) centers do is base your recovery on the Word of God," Hall told the women. "I got enough Word in me while I was there and it took root. It made me want to do better. Then I found a church home where I could apply the Word in my life."

At the end of the luncheon, two women gave their hearts to the Lord. But all of the women left loaded with gifts and the knowledge that the congregation would pray for their specific needs.

But the outreach wasn't over.

The next Sunday, Brown drove to a downtown shelter and brought a couple to Sunday School. The

following Sunday, the church sent a van to pick up more. Now the women of the church are looking for a room downtown where they can bring sack lunches and have a weekly Bible study for homeless women. Brown hopes other churches are inspired to start their own luncheons that illustrate how God is "strong enough."

The luncheon already has inspired at least one person to get involved in ministering to the homeless. Hall said she has joined the evangelism team at her church and is going to the downtown square to share God's love with homeless men and women. "When I was in recovery centers, people came to speak to us and brought us little gifts. This event was on a greater level than that," Hall said. "To me, this event felt like somebody putting their arms around us. It felt like love."

Alabama pastors prep for Graham event



Photo by Chris Mills

PREPARING TO SHARE JESUS — NAMB representative Jim Coldiron shares with Alabama pastors and directors of missions about the upcoming gospel crusade.

Will Graham, grandson of famed evangelist Billy Graham, is coming to Gardendale First Baptist Church for a gospel crusade March 1 as part of the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference, and Alabama Baptists are getting ready.

Jim Coldiron, North American Mission Board representative, spoke to an audience of about 120 pastors and directors of missions during the Tuesday lunch hour of the Alabama Baptist State Convention's annual meeting Nov. 16-17 at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover. During the training session held at Regions Park and hosted by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office of evangelism, Coldiron told the audience about the purpose of the crusade, its planning process and its blessings and benefits. He weaved in stories of people who accepted Christ during previous crusade events, encouraging the pastors and directors of missions to help maximize the effectiveness of next year's crusade.

Coldiron invited the audience to pray for the event, bring people who don't know Jesus and recruit believers to be trained as counselors.

For more information, call 1-800-264-1225. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Coffee Baptist Association

COFFEE ASSOCIATION DOM GRANGER MARKS 10 YEARS

Coffee Baptist Association honored Director of Missions John Granger (right) for 10 years of service Nov. 14. Pictured with Granger is Gary Swafford, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS AND HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

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Name	Birthplace	Parents	Spouse	Children	Notes
Adam	Eden	None	Eve	None	First man created by God.
Abel	Eden	Adam and Eve	None	None	First son of Adam and Eve.
Seth	Eden	Adam and Eve	None	None	Second son of Adam and Eve.
Enoch	Eden	Adam and Eve	None	None	Third son of Adam and Eve.
Methuselah	Eden	Adam and Eve	None	None	Fourth son of Adam and Eve.
Lamech	Eden	Adam and Eve	None	None	Fifth son of Adam and Eve.
Noah	Shinar	Lamech and his wife	None	None	Ark built by Noah.
Shem	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	First son of Noah.
Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Second son of Noah.
Japheth	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Tenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eleventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twelfth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirteenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fourteenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifteenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixteenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventeenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighteenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Nineteenth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twentieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Twenty-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirtieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Thirty-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fortieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Forty-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fiftieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Fifty-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixtieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Sixty-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Seventy-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eightieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Eighty-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninetieth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-first son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-second son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-third son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-fourth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-fifth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-sixth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-seventh son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-eighth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Ninety-ninth son of Noah.
Son of Ham	Shinar	Noah and his wife	None	None	Hundredth son of Noah.

of Luke's Gospel (see 4:4, 10:1, 2:10). As a result of the...
 1:1-3:22 The birth of Jesus...
 3:23-4:13 The baptism of Jesus...
 4:14-9:50 The ministry of Jesus...
 9:51-19:28 The journey to Jerusalem...
 19:29-21:38 The Olivet Discourse...
 22:1-23:56 The Passion...
 24:1-28:8 The Resurrection...
 28:9-35:39 The Ascension and Pentecost...

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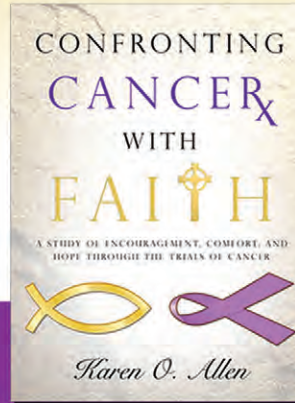
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Relief work in Haiti now includes cholera treatment

In the wake of massive rainfall and flooding caused by Hurricane Tomas as it skirted western Haiti early November, disaster-weary Haitians are now coping with an increased spread of cholera worsened by bacteria-filled standing water.

The heightened cholera outbreak has led Florida Baptist officials to focus on the potential epidemic, said Dennis Wilbanks of the state convention's partnership missions department, who traveled to the country Nov. 10-17, just days after Tomas' onslaught.

"It is a potential catastrophic event," Wilbanks said, even as the government and nongovernmental organizations' efforts in water, health and sanitation have slowed the outbreak.

Alabama's partnership

Alabama's partnership with Jacmel, Haiti, has not been impacted by the cholera outbreak and so it is business as usual for state ministry efforts, said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for Alabama Baptists.

In fact, he and three pastors from the state are headed to Haiti Dec. 7 to lead a pastors conference. And a team of five from across Alabama returned from an evangelistic trip Nov. 20, where 156 decisions for Christ were made.

"We are using normal third-world travel practices, such as drinking bottled water and making sure food is fully cooked," he said. "We are also encouraging volunteers to get vaccinated for Typhoid, Hepatitis A and B and Tetanus."

But while Jacmel remains relatively safe, other areas of the country are not.

Haiti's Ministry of Health (MSPP) reports 1,186 deaths and 19,646 cases due to cholera as of Nov. 16, the last day that analyzed figures are available. Overall, the MSPP reports that 49,418 people have sought medical attention since the epidemic was declared.

Included in the cholera deaths are two pastors of the Confraternite Missionnaire Baptiste d'Haiti (CMBH), Florida Baptists' partner convention in Haiti: Marc Edrouard Theodore of Eglise Baptiste Par la Foi K-Soleil in Gonaives, located in the Artibonite Association; and Alphonse Joseph of Eglise Baptiste Coupe-a-David in the North Association.

"It seems that the cholera actually started in the Artibonite Valley where the water flow decreases and becomes stagnant in the rice fields," Wilbanks said.

The Florida convention is working in partnership with CMBH churches to help prevent and curb the spread of the disease in the churches and their communities.

The convention has allocated

\$30,000 to purchase water, water purification tablets and IV bags for churches in five CMBH associations, with the largest funding given to the Artibonite Association.

Additionally volunteers at the convention-owned mission house in Port-au-Prince will begin assembling zip-lock bags with sugar, salt and water purification tablets to distribute through the churches to needy families.

The convention staff has printed 50,000 brochures in both French Creole and English on prevention and treatment of the disease which will be distributed through the churches, drawing on resources prepared by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

"Education is a key ingredient in the prevention and treatment of cholera," Wilbanks said. "Prevention is most critical."

Additionally, Wilbanks said hydration is necessary to help those who have the disease to overcome it.

With bags of water supplies, church members with cholera can be treated by remaining hydrated to lessen the need or treatment at overcrowded hospitals.

Flooding devastation

While in Haiti, Wilbanks heard reports and assessed damage from Hurricane Tomas. While there were "limited deaths due to the flooding, every association experienced some devastation mostly from flooding and rushing water," he said. Many new churches lost their tarp roofs.

The convention has been caring for the hunger needs in the hardest hit areas, Wilbanks reported.

"Our response to meet the needs of the Haitian people has been proactive," Wilbanks said. "Our food distribution is at least a week ahead of where we would have been because we had rice located throughout the country and Buckets of Hope scheduled for distribution." (BP)

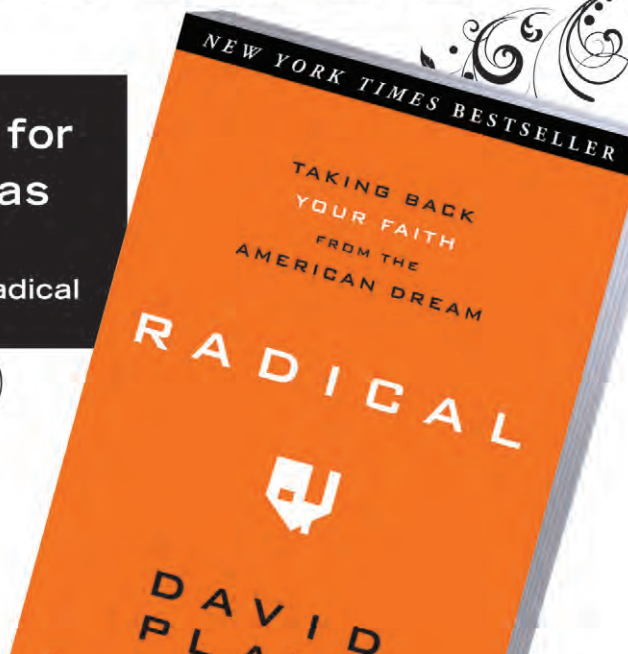
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U.S. releases religious freedom report, opposes U.N. ban

The United States continues to oppose a proposed ban on defamation of religion currently before the United Nations, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Nov. 17.

"Now, some people propose that to protect religious freedom, we must ban speech that is critical or offensive about religion," Clinton said while announcing release of an annual State Department report monitoring the state of religious freedom around the world. "We do not agree."

The secretary's comment came as the U.N. General Assembly prepared to consider a "Defamation of Religions Resolution" adopted by the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Backed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an association of 56 Islamic states that promotes Muslim solidarity, the proposed resolution targets systematic defamation of Islam and discrimination against Muslims, including ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Groups that advocate on behalf of persecuted Christian minorities around the globe contend the resolution is in essence an "international blasphemy law" that could be used to criminalize the practice of any religion besides Islam in countries that are predominantly Muslim.

A study by Freedom House, a nongovernmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights, found that domestic

blasphemy laws are responsible for broad violations of human rights, particularly when applied in weak democracies and authoritarian systems.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (IRF), an independent federal body created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, takes the position that defamation laws do not solve problems of religious persecution and discrimination but do more harm than good.

Pakistan first introduced a U.N. resolution on the "Defamation of Islam" in 1999. Opponents cite Pakistan as an example of what can go wrong with blasphemy laws. A court there recently sentenced a 45-year-old Christian mother of five to death for allegedly defaming the Prophet Muhammad in an argument with fellow farm workers who were Muslims.

The U.N. has adopted a nonbinding resolution on defamation of religion every year since 2005, but the last two years it passed by a plurality of votes rather than a majority. Opponents note that the resolution focuses on only one religion and suggest a broader perspective would win wider support. U.S. officials have argued that prohibiting speech is not the way to promote tolerance.

"The United States joins in all nations coming together to condemn hateful speech, but we do not support the banning of that speech," Clinton said. "Indeed, freedom of speech and freedom of religion em-

anate from the same fundamental belief that communities and individuals are enriched and strengthened by a diversity of ideas, and attempts to stifle them or drive them underground, even when it is in the name and with the intention of protecting society, have the opposite effect.

"Societies in which freedom of religion and speech flourish are more resilient, more stable, more peaceful and more productive," she said. "We have seen this throughout history. And as this report reflects, we see it in the world today."

The State Department report monitors 198 countries on matters concerning religious freedom. It gives special attention to "Countries of Particular Concern" (CPCs) that have "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom" during the reporting period. Burma, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, People's Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan are CPCs. IRF recommends the addition of Iraq, Nigeria, Paki-

stan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam.

Michael Posner, assistant secretary with the department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said designating CPCs is a separate exercise from the report, and that those decisions would be made soon.

The report does not include a listing for the United States, because the Department of Justice monitors threats to religious freedom inside the country and issues reports throughout the year, Clinton said.

"With this report, we do not intend to act as a judge of other countries or hold ourselves out as a perfect example, but the United States cares about religious freedom," Clinton said. "We have worked hard to enforce religious freedom. We want to see religious freedom available universally. And we want to advocate for the brave men and women who, around the world, persist in practicing their beliefs in the face of hostility and violence." (ABP)

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.

"Societies in which freedom of religion and speech flourish are more resilient, more stable, more peaceful and more productive."

Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State

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PASTOR: Slackland Baptist Church of Leesburg, Ala., is currently seeking a pastor. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, Slackland Baptist Church, 75 County Road 20, Leesburg, AL 35983.

STUDENT MINISTER: Circlewood Baptist Church is currently seeking a full-time student minister. Please send resumes to: Circlewood Baptist Church, 2201 Loop Road, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS/CHILDREN: Fayette First Baptist is currently accepting resumes for a full-time minister of students/children. Mail to: FFBC Search Committee, P.O. Box 39, Fayette, AL 35555.

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Seeking bivocational youth pastor. Please send resume to: Youth Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 437, Fulton, AL 36446.

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Circlewood Baptist Church is currently seeking a full-time children's minister. Please send resumes to: Circlewood Baptist Church, 2201 Loop Road, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405.

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Spring Valley Baptist Church seeks part-time children's ministry director. E-mail resume and references to: churchoffice@springvalleybaptistchurch.org, or mail to: P.O. Box 978, Springville, AL 35146.

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Stoudenmires named Alabama Baptist Volunteers of the Year

By John Evans
The Alabama Baptist

Laurelle Stoudenmire was afraid. Only a few weeks into her service as an International Mission Board (IMB) representative to Guatemala, Stoudenmire found herself sitting in a hospital, surrounded by an unfamiliar language, as her husband, Allen, was treated for heart problems.

She opened her Bible, began reading and was strengthened by verses urging her not to fear.

"God just spoke to me clearly through those verses that I was not to fear being in Guatemala and serving Him," Stoudenmire said.

Dedicated to missions

On Nov. 16 at the Alabama Baptist State Convention's annual meeting, she and her husband were honored for their decades of service to the Lord in Alabama, the United States and the world. They were named the Alabama Baptist Volunteers of the Year by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of global missions.

Reggie Quimby, director of the office of global missions, said the Stoudenmires are dedicated to all areas of missions and lead others to do the same.

They both felt called to missions as teenagers, and after they married,

they volunteered for local and state missions trips over the years. Laurelle Stoudenmire, inspired by her mother's involvement with Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), began serving as director of WMU for Thomasville Baptist Church and Clarke Baptist Association in 1988.

It wasn't until 1999, when their daughter and her husband were appointed as Southern Baptist representatives to the Philippines, that the Stoudenmires became more personally involved in international missions. "We would visit them as often as possible, and seeing their work in the Philippines encouraged us," Allen Stoudenmire said.

Concerned with the difficulties they saw the parents of those serving the Lord overseas facing, the couple helped found the Alabama chapter of the Missionary Parents Fellowship, a support group in which to share concerns and minister to each other. Allen Stoudenmire was president of the chapter from 2000 to 2004.

"We found that it was difficult for some parents to accept their child's calling to foreign missions," he said. "It was a problem but meeting together, sharing concerns and just discussing the work of our children on the missions field was a big help." But the Stoudenmires knew the call to missions was not just for their daughter and son-in-law. Lau-



Photo by Lauren Chow

DECADES OF SERVICE — Reggie Quimby (right), director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, presents Allen and Laurelle Stoudenmire with the Volunteers of the Year award during the Alabama Baptist State Convention's annual meeting Nov. 16.

relle Stoudenmire began serving as a trustee with the IMB in 1999, retiring in 2006 so that she and her husband could begin serving the Lord overseas.

That same year, the couple were appointed as representatives to Guatemala under the IMB's Masters Program, a two-to-three-year term of overseas service for qualified candidates over 50 years of age.

"We served with a project called Operation Gospel Outreach," Allen Stoudenmire said. "Our job was to lead volunteer teams that came from the States on a weekly basis;

we would lead those teams out into various parts of Guatemala, doing door-to-door evangelism, distributing gospel material, prayer walking and encouraging home Bible studies."

Heart for Guatemala

The Stoudenmires' term ended in 2008, but their heart for Guatemala remained. In particular, they were burdened for a small mountainside village called Conevisa, where they had taken a volunteer team.

"God burdened our hearts for it," he said. "It had a reputation for prostitution and drug activity."

So the couple went back to Conevisa in 2009 with members of their home church; First Baptist Church, Moody; and First Baptist Church, Ashville.

They have since led six volunteer teams from the churches. Partnering with Shalom Baptist Mission in Guatemala, the teams have done everything from door-to-door evangelism to Vacation Bible School to a medical clinic. Currently a church building is being constructed. The last volunteer trip in October, which focused on construction, involved 11 churches from the United States.

"God has had His hand on [our work there] in so many ways," Allen Stoudenmire said.

The Stoudenmires also continue to be involved in missions on the state and local levels, working with Thomasville Baptist and Clarke Association. Projects include a church plant in Arizona, a local elementary school that Thomasville Baptist adopted and possible opportunities to start a church plant in Alabama.

She is thankful God continues to provide opportunities to serve locally and in Guatemala.

"It's a wonderful experience just to know God is continuing to use us," she said. "Sometimes it's easy to feel like in retirement years, there's not anything left to do, but we find there is quite a bit from the Lord that we are able to do."

She said it's important for all believers in Christ to lay down their lives and follow Him, whether locally, in their state, in America or around the world. It's a principle by which she and her husband strive to live, and she doesn't show any sign of regret. "I think the blessings that come from being obedient to what Jesus commanded us to do are just innumerable."

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Housing reservations available for 2011 SBC annual meeting

Housing reservations have opened for the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) June 14–15, 2011, annual meeting in Phoenix. Hotel reservations can be made in several ways:

▶ via the Internet at www.sbcanannualmeeting.net; select the "Hotel Online Reservations" link.

▶ clicking the "SBC Housing Form" link at www.sbcanannualmeeting.net; mail completed form to SBC Housing Bureau, c/o Experient, 568 Atrium Dr., Vernon

Hills, IL, or fax it to 847-996-5401.
▶ calling toll free 1-800-974-3084.

The official housing deadline is May 23, 2011, in order to guarantee convention rates.

▶ Reservation requests for 25 or more rooms should be made by e-mailing Irishmond@sbc.net.

▶ Disabled persons or those with special needs in reserving a room may contact the SBC housing coordinator at 615-782-8612 or Irishmond@sbc.net. (BP)

It's all about relationships

I read the other day that our society is changing. As a whole, we are becoming more informal. You can see this in how people dress for church. "Business casual" is becoming the appropriate dress of the workplace. As we embrace community through Facebook and Twitter, our interactions become more informal and our personal and business lives begin to intermingle.

With this growing informality is a move toward a more relational society. Everything now is about having relationships. Even in marketing classes and webinars, we learn the key to bringing a service to people is having a relationship with them. Gone are the days when we could distance ourselves from people we serve through the workplace. Gone are the days when people would come to church or community groups simply because of the purpose of the organization or the programs offered. Personal relationships bring people into those groups, and a lack of personal relationships will cause them to leave.

It really should not surprise us though nor should it scare us. In Genesis, we read how God desired

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



to be in relationship with humankind. It was because of sin that we became distant from God and each other. Similarly it is through a relationship with Jesus Christ that we are saved. God has always been about personal relationships.

The difficulty is that relationships take time and energy. When we are rushed and focused on getting so many things done and caring for so many people, taking time for relationships can be difficult. However, taking a few minutes to listen and talk to a person can help prevent misunderstandings and future crises.

For example, if you take a few minutes once a week to speak with the key people you work with, then you may discover what problems they are dealing with or the projects

they have to address that week. It provides you with an opportunity to understand what they are facing, problem-solve key issues for the week and learn how you can be supportive of those people. This is also true for people you serve with on a committee, in your faith community and even your children and spouse.

Having a personal relationship with the key people in our lives enables us to be more effective in managing the workplace, our church responsibilities and our households. It takes more time and energy. That is true. At the same time, we were made to be in relationship with God and each other.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Having relationships with people is as important as accomplishing tasks. It even can help you be more effective.

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

Calvinism movement steady, except for SBC

The Barna Group released findings Nov. 15 that said despite what "observers and journalists have described as ... a significant trend" in terms of a Calvinism movement, numbers of Calvinists among Protestant pastors are not greater today (31 percent) than a decade ago (32 percent).

The research includes four studies conducted from 2000 through 2010, each involving a minimum of 600 phone interviews with random, representative samples of clergy.

Barna's results about the broader Christian community seemingly stand in stark contrast to reports released by Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entities showing a surge in identity with five-point Calvinism in Southern Baptist life.

In 2007, the North American Mission Board's Center for Mission Research released findings that nearly 30 percent of recent seminary graduates (1998-2004) serving as church pastors identified themselves as Calvinists. Details

about the sample methodology and size were not released and this study is not available for public review.

This compared to 10 percent of all pastors in the SBC who affirm the five points of Calvinism, according to a 2006 LifeWay Research study of a cross-section of 413 randomly selected SBC pastors. At the release of the research, Ed Stetzer who directs LifeWay Research, said the findings show "a growing influence" of Calvinism in SBC life and "certainly a growing influence in the graduates of our seminaries."

Also, *Christianity Today* has described what it termed as a "comeback in Calvinism" in articles pointing to the SBC as "ground zero" for this resurgence and as having a "bulwark of reformed theology."

The Barna study appears to show that despite what has been reported as a spike in the numbers of Calvinism adherents among recent SBC seminary graduates, there hasn't been a groundswell in the broader Christian community over the last

decade. The numbers of those identifying themselves with Calvinism or Reformed Theology have held fairly steady around 31 percent.

Other findings include:

► On average, weekly adult attendance in Reformed or Calvinist churches increased about 13 percent between 2000 and 2010. During that same period, weekly adult attendance in Wesleyan or Arminian churches increased 18 percent.

► Reformed churches were most common in the Northeast and least common in the Midwest. Wesleyan congregations were equally likely to be all four U.S. regions.

► A greater number of Reformed/Calvinist pastors identified themselves as theologically liberal (17 percent) than did Wesleyan/Arminian pastors (13 percent).

► Of the pastors who took part in the study, 65 percent of Wesleyans/Arminians reported having completed seminary, and a statistically equivalent 62 percent of Reformed/Calvinists said they had. (BP)

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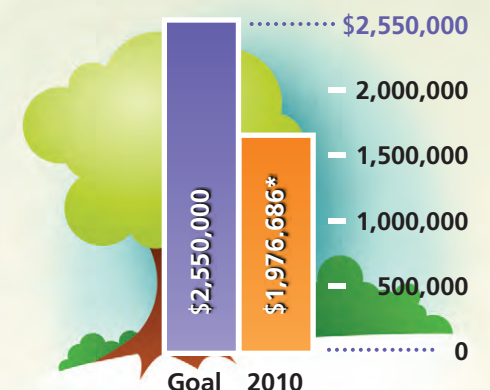
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If your church has not yet participated in the work of your Alabama Baptist Children's Homes through the Annual Children's Homes Offering, there is still time to do so. As you can see by the graphic below, we are still behind our goal. Your direct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

Also, it's not too early to order your materials to participate in the 2011 Annual Children's Homes Offering. Place your pre-order today by contacting Kay Taylor at the information above.

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* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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Christmas MEMORIES

By Jessika Walker
Former ABCH resident

It's December. The smells of pine, cinnamon and apple pie fill the air. You see ornaments up in yards and Christmas trees on top of cars to be taken home and decorated. And then there are the Christmas parades. Christmas is supposed to be the best time of the year, but as a former foster child, I personally know that this can be the worst holiday ever. Thankfully, for at least six years of my life, I was able to enjoy Christmas thanks to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Christmastime at the group home in Gardendale was my favorite time of year. Each of my winter holidays was spent looking at Christmas lights, and sharing special moments with strangers who went out of their way to buy us presents to make us feel special. We would have special gifts from "Santa" and we would each have a

Wal-Mart gift card that we could use to personally buy things for our friends and family back wherever we called "home."

I liked to call Gardendale my home. I never went on weekend visits to either of my parents' houses since they were not together and I simply did not care to. I enjoyed spending my time with my house parents, Paula and Randall Warren. Mrs. Warren is a very special woman to me. She is probably the godliest woman I know, and really made an impact on me throughout my ABCH experience. Mrs. Warren loved the holidays and went out with a bang on them all when it came to decorating and cooking. Christmas was no exception.

When it came time to decorate, she would go around singing a little tune and having a jolly spirit in her step. She would try to make putting up the Christmas tree a family thing. Although some girls would help and then find other things to do, I enjoyed helping the entire time. We would talk about special little ornaments as we put them up, and memories of her own family, whom I grew to love through the years. I remember that one year, we had a tree that had a CD player on the inside so that it would play holiday music. Mr. Warren enjoyed playing his Elvis Christmas songs on there, even though I secretly did attempt to change it as I am not a big fan of Elvis.

Each year, the girls would get together and spend some of our money to buy a present or two for the Warrens. Half the time they were more for Mrs. Warren than Mr. Warren. There was one particular year that we girls decided we would buy gifts for Mr. Warren even though he insisted he never wanted anything from us. When it came time for us to do our Christmas, we gave Mrs. Warren a few presents and pretended to be done. Then we got all of Mr. Warren's presents. He just sat there in his rocking chair, and tears filled his eyes as we presented him with his presents that year. We left him speechless, and I know it really touched his heart.

All my Christmases have been memorable at the Children's Homes. Now that I have my own family and two little ones, I know just how special it is to make memories with the ones you love. I think that the best gifts you can ever give to someone are true love and friendship, and those were given to me each and every Christmas from the Children's Homes. That is something that will never fade or be forgotten now that I am on my own. So THANKYOU, ABCH, for giving me my best Christmas memories anyone can ever give.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 5

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson

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

WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY
1 Kings 3:3-15

Christmas is often a very stressful time as we try to think of the perfect gift for the people on our gift lists. It's also stressful as we think of spending money on all those gifts we think we have to purchase. Let's be honest. Even Christ followers get caught up in the materialistic aspect of Christmas, chasing after more and more stuff. Material prosperity is so deeply imbedded as a value in our culture that Christians are hardly immune from letting their bottom lines dictate their top priorities. In God's economy, loving Him and living by His wisdom for the sake of the nations that do not know Him are two commodities money can't buy.

Where Do You Go for Help? (3-5)

Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking in the statutes of David, his father. In the context of 1 Kings, loving the Lord meant giving Him exclusive loyalty, heartfelt devotion and practical obedience.

Solomon's defining moment came in the context of worship. Gibeon, a town about seven miles north of Jerusalem, was the most important high place because it was the site where the ancient tabernacle constructed under Moses' leadership was located. Solomon's public and prominent worship of the Lord at Gibeon demonstrated his devotion to Him. In response to his worship, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream with a stunning offer: "Ask what I shall give you." This was not an ordinary dream, since the Lord and Solomon carried on a conversation. It was a divine revelation. God challenged him to decide his deepest values. What did he want his life and reign to be about?

What Is Your Biggest Challenge? (6-9)

Solomon responded with a mixture of gratitude, humility and boldness. He began by grounding himself in God's person and purpose. His praise centered on God's great kindness, His steadfast love revealed in the covenant He had made with David. Solomon's presence on the throne was living evidence that God's great covenant love continued.

From praise, Solomon turned to his problem. Succeeding a powerful figure like David was a challenging task. He was probably about 20 years old at the time, but he felt like a little child, immature and inexperienced with respect to his new responsibility to lead the nation. He felt incompetent, overwhelmed.

Whatever challenge you might be facing, you can learn about prayer from Solomon's model. First he filled his mind with a sense of God's greatness and grace, humbled himself in dependence, then asked God for an understanding mind so he could govern His people. Solomon asked God for a "hearing heart." He felt a need to hear God, to have His guidance as he sought to lead the people.

Whom Do You Seek to Please? (10-14)

Solomon's request pleased the Lord. God promised Solomon that he would be given a wise and discerning mind. Discernment is the ability to distinguish between options, seeing whether something is right or wrong, wise or foolish. Wisdom is not about intellectual genius as much as it is about the ability to live in accordance with life as God has ordered it.

Three times in His response, the Lord told Solomon, "I give you." God gave Solomon wisdom but He also gave him riches and honor to the extent that he was supreme during his lifetime. God also extended a conditional promise to Solomon: "If you will walk in my ways ... I will lengthen your days." The earlier promises had been unconditional, but this promise was conditioned on obedience. The outcome of this part of the promise is indicated by the fact that Solomon died at about the age of 60, while David had lived 70 years.

How Do You Show Commitment? (15)

Solomon woke up and realized God had blessed him in order to be a blessing to others. He led the people back to Jerusalem. There, before another part of the ancient tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, he completed his spiritual celebration. The burnt offerings and peace offerings, as well as the royal feast, served as public acknowledgement of God's grace to him and the people of Israel.

Bible Studies for Life

By Dennis Sansom

Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy, Samford University

VALUE WHAT GOD VALUES
Isaiah 61:1-11

Throughout Isaiah, we read of the Lord's judgment against Israel for its impiety toward Him and injustices toward its people. We also read of God's severe judgment against the surrounding nations' idolatry, cruelty and greed. At times, the prospects for peace and righteousness seem hopeless.

However, the Lord never gives up on restoring Israel and humanity to their rightful place within His covenant. Yet, because of their rebellious tendencies, they are unable to restore themselves. Only the Lord can save them, and Isaiah presents some of the most powerful and evocative descriptions in Scripture of how He does this.

The Reign of the Spirit (1-7)

God's answer to humanity's intractable problems of pride, blasphemy and injustice is the recreation of a righteous society through the work of the Messiah. The Messiah is not an ordinary person. God's Spirit working through the Messiah does for humanity what people cannot do for themselves.

In vivid language, the prophet described the reversal of fortunes. On one hand, there was the city made by sinful humanity — poor, brokenhearted, despairing, populated by captives and mourners full of shame and its buildings in ruins. What brings people to such ruin? Rejection of God and injustice toward each other.

On the other hand, there was the city made by the Messiah — healed, set free, comforted, hopeful, its people given provisions and turbans and wearing garments of praise and its buildings rebuilt. What does this for a ruined people? The Lord's Spirit working through the Messiah.

We see parallels between this description of the reign of the Messiah and the Year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25:8-55. On the Sabbath of sabbatical years, a horn would blow and liberty was proclaimed throughout the land. In that year, all economic and social debts were forgiven and all land returned to the Lord. Though there is no record of this occurring in

Israel, the Year of Jubilee became a symbol of the future time of peace. The prophet saw the Messiah fulfilling this expectation.

We can understand why Jesus chose these opening verses to announce His ministry in Luke 4:18-19. His work would not be the ordinary efforts of rulers and kings who try to make the world right by their own designs. Such actions lead to ruin in the end. But Jesus' work starts the transformation of the world in which the poor in spirit will receive the kingdom of God, the meek will inherit the earth, the mourners will be comforted and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled (from Matthew 5:3-6).

The Role of the Community (8-11)

Isaiah's vision was not about a timeless, eternal society. He described a tangible community. The Messiah would create a truly just society. Future generations would look upon this society, and "all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed."

A world filled with moral collapse, societal ruins, enticing idols and endless conflict needs a model. The city made by the Messiah models for the nations how people ought to live with faith and obedience to the Lord and justice and compassion toward one another.

One of the titles for the church in the New Testament is the people of God. The church should be the kind of people Isaiah describes in verses 8-11. It knows the Messiah and experiences His spiritual work. One of the church's responsibilities is to model true faith to God and just and compassionate dealings with others so that society has a paradigm of how people ought to live.

Verse 10 is in the first person. The text does not say who it is, but it is most likely the chapter's author. Upon realizing how unprecedented and amazing the Spirit's work would be through the Messiah, Isaiah broke out in a doxology of praise. In Luke, we find a parallel story. Mary broke out in a similar doxology after hearing from the angel that she would give birth to God's Son (Luke 1:35) and exclaimed, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (46-47).

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. But ye shall receive _____. (Acts 1:8)

5. A son of Midian. (Gen. 25:4)

10. _____ the voice of the Lord. (Deut. 27:10)

11. We shall not all _____. (1 Cor. 15:51)

12. The Word was _____ flesh. (John 1:14)

13. My sins are not _____ from thee. (Ps. 69:5)

14. Son of Enoch. (Gen. 4:18)

16. Plural (abbr.).

17. Adina was his son. (1 Chron. 11:42)

19. Whosoever shall _____ the will of God. (Mark 3:35)

21. Imitation.

22. Great-grandson of Asher. (1 Chron. 7:32)

24. Ruth's husband.

25. To gather.

28. Capital of Italy.

29. Father of Salathiel. (Luke 3:27)

32. An adversary.

34. Under the _____ they were gathered. (Job 30:7)

36. Type of palm.

37. He is faithful and just _____ forgive us. (1 John 1:9)

39. He _____ him, and said to him. (2 Kings 10:15)

40. He saith among the trumpets, _____. (Job 39:25)

41. Shechem's father. (Gen. 34:2)

43. Bartimaeus ... _____ by the highway. (Mark 10:46)

44. Ephraim's grandson. (Num 26:35-36)

45. Bring thee a _____ heifer. (Num. 19:2)

46. _____ on this side, and _____ on that side. (Josh 8:22; one word)

Down

1. The _____ of her strength shall cease. (Ezek. 30:18)

2. A son of Joktan. (Gen. 10:28)

3. With this ring, I thee _____. (Luke 22:35)

4. Blessed are the _____ which see. (Luke 10:23)

5. Name of Shedeur's son. (Num. 7:30)

6. A lever operated by the foot.

7. _____ shall save his people. (Matt. 1:21)

8. Ye are our _____. (2 Cor. 3:2)

9. Son of Hillel. (Judg. 12:13)

11. Son of Harim. (Ezra 10:31)

15. Women _____ themselves in modest apparel. (1 Tim. 2:9)

18. She touched the _____ of his garment (Matt. 9:20)

20. Son of Mahli. (1 Chron. 6:46)

22. For it is _____ cut off. (Ps. 90:10)

23. David's older brother. (1 Chron.2:15)

24. Neither left they any to _____. (Josh. 11:14)

25. And all her _____ men were bound. (Nahum 3:10)

26. A covered coach.

27. Who gave himself a ransom for _____. (1 Tim. 2:6)

30. His seed shall _____ for ever. (Ps. 89:36)

31. In his _____ shall stand up a vile person. (Dan. 11:21)

33. Two days, or a month, or a _____. (Num. 9:22)

35. Short for Theodore.

38. A paddle.

39. Thou art my beloved _____. (Luke 3:22)

40. Noah's son. (Gen. 5:32)

42. Another name for mother.

43. His sickness was _____ sore. (1 Kings 17:17)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

Pakistani Christian killed after being released on bail

GODHPUR, Pakistan — Police suspect two Muslim extremists shot a Christian to death Nov. 18 in Punjab province shortly after the victim was granted bail in a “blasphemy” case — and less than a week after Islamist militants killed four members of a Christian family for their faith. In Godhpur village in Narowal district, 69 miles northeast of Lahore, 22-year-old Latif Masih died after two men with pistols shot him to death near his home.

Inspector Rafique Ahmed said that Masih’s murder was likely linked to the case against him for allegedly desecrating the Quran. Masih was released on bail Nov. 3 after his accuser, Ijaz Ahmed, said he was not sure Masih was guilty, police said. Inspector Ibrahim Shah said Ahmed demanded he help him take over Masih’s shop. When Shah arrested Masih, “Ahmed kept saying that he will ensure that no Christian can live or buy a shop in Godhpur village,” Shah said.

In Mehmoodabad near Multan in southern Punjab province, police believe six militants belonging to the Islamist terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Taiba killed four Christian family members, including a 5-year-old boy, on Nov. 12. Dead on the scene were two grown children of 42-year-old schoolteacher Shahista Iqbal Gill — 23-year-old Atif Iqbal Gill and 21-year-old Tehreem Iqbal Gill — as well as her sister-in-law, identified only as Gulshan, 25. Another of Shahista Iqbal Gill’s children, 5-year-old Imran Iqbal Gill, later succumbed to his wounds in the hospital. A fourth child, Arsalan Iqbal Gill, 18, was in serious condition. Both he and his 5-year-old brother bore strangulation marks on their necks.

Multan District Coordination Officer Taimoor Shahid Jadoon instructed Multan police to register a First Information Report against six as yet unnamed members of Lashkar-e-Taiba. “The numbers taken from Shahista’s phone records belong to the members of Lashkar-e-Taiba,” he said. “They had been threatening Shahista and her family.”

Islamic groups demonstrate against Indonesian church

KARASAK, Indonesia — More than 50 people from Islamic groups demonstrated against a church in West Java on Nov. 7, chanting for it to stop worshipping during its Sunday service, according to Muslim online news site Arrahmah.com.

The King of Glory church of the Christian Congregation of Indonesia denomination (Jemaat Kristen Indonesia or JKI) was worshipping in the Graha Mulia (Planet of Glory) multipurpose building in Karasak village, Astanaanyar district of Bandung City, when the protestors gathered. Chanting “Allahu akbar [God is greater],” the crowd claimed the building was not approved for worship purposes, according to another Islamic Web site, Hidayatullah.com.

Protesting members of the Karasak Muslim Citizens Communication Forum, the Islamic Congregation Front and West Java Islamic Reformation Movement said the church did not have permission from area residents, although church leaders said an area official had given permission since 2005.

Agus Nugroho, a leader of the JKI church and an administrator of the Graha Mulia building, said the church had permission from the local area official known as a ward captain. The church submitted an application for a permit at a higher governmental level in 2005, he said.

Church permit applications are often stalled in Indonesian government offices, opening the way for Muslim groups to accuse them of worshipping without official permission.

Baptists jailed for holding harvest celebration

KUSAR, Azerbaijan — Four Baptists in Azerbaijan were given five-day jail terms Oct. 31 after a police raid the same day on a harvest festival celebration in a private home. Around 80 Baptists were present when police raided.

Police first turned off the gas and electricity to prevent church members from preparing a festive meal; they then recorded the names of all those present and photographed and filmed them. After a late-night closed-court hearing, homeowner Ilgar Mamedov and three others — Zalib Ibrahimov, Rauf Gurbanov and Akif Babaev — were given five-day prison terms. Police insisted that there was nothing unusual about a late Sunday evening court hearing, claiming that “it happens.”

Campus News



Samford University

► **Samford Band Presents Christmas Concert:** Samford University school

of the arts will present the Samford Band Christmas Concert on Dec. 9 at 7:30 p.m. in Brock Recital Hall. For more information, call 205-726-2851.

► **Samford Department of Theatre and Dance to Present Plays:** Samford University department of theatre and dance will present Ten Minute Plays, a collection of student productions.

Presentation will take place Dec. 10, in Harrison Theatre, 6 p.m. For more information, call 205-726-2851.

► **Samford to Host Art Show:** Samford University will host an art show for graduating seniors, Dec. 13–18, in the Samford Art Gallery, open weekdays 9 a.m.–4 p.m. The show features senior projects by fine art, graphic design and interior design students.

There will be a reception following fall commencement Dec. 18. For more information, call 205-726-2840.

► **Samford’s Beeson Divinity School Research Professor to Lead Seminar:** Beeson Divinity School research professor Gerald Bray will lead a weekday seminar on the topic, “King James at 400: How We Got Our Bible,” 2–4 p.m., Jan. 24–28.

Bray will revisit the history, ori-

gins and development of the King James Bible, which celebrates its 400th anniversary in 2011.

For registration information, call 205-726-2731 or visit www.beesondivinity.com.



University of Mobile

► **UMobile Students Get Tips for Success:** Jeff Jones, Dove Award-winning

drummer with the contemporary Christian band Big Daddy Weave and an entrepreneur with a custom drumstick business, discussed the realities of life after graduation Nov. 10 at the University of Mobile (UMobile).

Jones, a 1996 graduate of UMobile, talked to university juniors and seniors at the Life After Graduation event sponsored by the school’s Student Success Center. The students who attended received a copy of his new book, “Drumming Up Business to the Beat of My Own Drum.”

He described “the illusion that many students have about getting a job with a pension and 401(k),

staying there for 30 years, taking retirement and getting a gold watch.”

“Those days are few and far between,” Jones said. “I stress the need to find a niche idea that will set you apart from the pack and make you extremely valuable as an employee.”

For more information, visit www.jeffdrummer.com.



Judson College

► **Judson Students Enjoy Old-Fashioned Hymn Singing:** The seventh annual hymn

sing took place at Judson College’s chapel service Oct. 12.

George T. Washburn, Judson’s director of library services and music minister at Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion, and wife Leah, office manager in Judson’s admissions department who also serves as pianist at Hopewell Baptist, provide the musical program each year.

Among the hymns students requested this year were “The Old Rugged Cross,” “It Is Well With My Soul,” “Victory in Jesus,” “When We All Get to Heaven” and several Christmas carols.

Former British Baptist exec dies

David Russell, who served as general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, has died. He was 94.

As British Baptists’ top executive from 1967 to 1982, Russell aided

Baptists in Eastern Europe during the height of the Cold War.

Russell served as pastor of churches in the English towns of Berwick and Oxford as well as Acton, in metropolitan London. He also was principal — or president — of Rawdon College, a Baptist school that merged with a Baptist school in Manchester in 1963 to become Northern Baptist College. Russell then served as co-principal of the new school.

“As a local minister, college principal and general secretary David made a huge contribution to the life of our Baptist Union,” said Tony Peck, a Briton who serves as general secretary of the European Baptist Federation. “As general secretary he became a much-loved and greatly respected statesman, whose counsel was welcomed not only within our union but far beyond, both ecumenically and internationally. We will remember his family in our prayers at this time.” (ABP)

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IMB photo

COMMUNITY — Kabylian women of North Africa gather in a courtyard to talk after church. Accepting Christ is often hardest on women, who frequently endure abuse at the hands of their Muslim husbands. SBC representatives Sam and Rachel Houston have worked among the Kabyles for more than 20 years.

'Harsh sacrifices'

Kabylian Christians experience spiritual growth amid persecution

They broke in at night to finish the job they'd begun weeks earlier. A group of Muslim radicals poured gasoline over everything inside the Kabylian church — chairs, Bibles, equipment — and then set it ablaze.

The church's pastor, Karim, could see the glow of the flames from his rooftop. Five years earlier, he'd started the church in his home with just three people. It had grown to more than 400 members. The congregation had worshiped in the new building for two months.

Attacks like this are a frightening reality for many Kabylian Christians. The Kabyles — more than 10 million of them — are one of North Africa's indigenous people groups. Most practice folk Islam, a mixture of Islam and traditional pagan beliefs.

Sam and Rachel Houston have spent more than 20 years working among them. These Southern Baptist representatives understand

the harsh sacrifices many Kabyles make when they choose to follow Jesus.

Common punishments range from verbal and physical abuse to ostracism by one's family. The latter is particularly hard on Kabylian women, many of whom depend on male family members for basic needs. Houston said an unbelieving husband or father may choose to lock a Kabylian Christian woman in her room until she reaffirms her faith in Islam, or withhold food, money or access to friends or schooling. Martyrdom is also a possibility.

Facing penalties

But persecution doesn't come only from Islamic zealots. In one North African country, it is illegal to do anything that could "shake the faith" of a Muslim. Penalties include a \$1,200 fine and a three-year prison sentence. Ironically, the law has actually increased interest in the gospel.

"Anytime the government tells you something is bad, everybody wants to go find out about it," Houston said. "It's given the Christians a far higher level of visibility than they ever had before. ... Every week there are people knocking on the doors of the churches ... saying, 'What is this about Jesus?'"

Despite such obstacles, Christian growth among the Kabyles is strong. From almost no believers or churches 50 years ago, today more than 21,000 Kabylian Christians and 120 Kabylian churches exist. Houston credits the growth to the movement of the Holy Spirit and decades of faithful prayer. He adds that Southern Baptists have played a small but important role, including translation and widespread distribution of the Kabylian New Testament, partnership with Kabylian radio ministries and training for Kabylian pastors.

Despite the loss of his church building and threats against his life, Karim said he's not afraid. He quotes Scripture about believers expecting persecution on Christ's behalf and said no harm can come to him unless God allows it.

"He asks us to follow, and to be persecuted, and to preach the gospel, so I will," Karim said. "Jesus was persecuted; we will be persecuted also. We are disciples just the same."

Expecting confrontations with the Muslims radicals to continue, he plans to make the most of it.

"We have decided to love them and preach the gospel to them," he said.

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



IMB photo

DISCIPLESHIP — New Christians gather for Bible teaching at a Kabylian church. Southern Baptist representative Sam Houston says discipleship is crucial for equipping young believers to endure persecution.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Most Americans say they need forgiveness in their lives

WASHINGTON — Most Americans have a desire for more forgiveness in their lives, but they are more critical when choosing who to forgive, according to a new survey.

Sixty-two percent of American adults said they need more forgiveness in their personal lives, and 94 percent wanted to see more forgiveness in the country, according to a study by the Michigan-based Fetzer Institute.

"Americans express a near-universal desire for a more loving and unified world," said the "Survey of Love and Forgiveness in American Society," released Oct. 28. Researchers found that even though the U.S. is composed of people who are usually forgiving, more than half of Americans said there are situations where people should never be forgiven, including abuse, sexual crimes, murder and other intentionally committed crimes.

The survey found that a majority of Americans also believe forgiveness is conditional: 60 percent said "forgiving someone would first depend on the offender apologizing and making changes." Most people said they sought the advice of friends and family rather than religious leaders when grappling with issues of forgiveness, while one in four said they did not know where to go for help with spiritual needs, and a third of them struggle with spirituality.

While most Americans are not running to churches and religious leaders for guidance with forgiveness and other personal issues, 60 percent said they are more spiritual now than they were five years ago.

These findings were based on an online survey conducted by StrategyOne, which was taken Aug. 4–15 by 1,000 U.S. adults, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Court sides with firemen forced to ride in 'gay pride' parade

SAN DIEGO — An appellate court in California sided with four firefighters who sued the city of San Diego after they were forced to participate in a "gay pride" parade that left them traumatized.

In 2007, the firemen asked to be excused from participating in the parade but instead were required by their superiors to ride in uniform on a city fire engine along the three-hour parade route. The men were subjected to sexual taunts and lewd behavior that caused several stress-related symptoms in the days that followed.

An Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) allied attorney filed a lawsuit on their behalf, and a jury affirmed their right to forgo the parade. The city of San Diego appealed, and the appellate court confirmed the verdict. If the city appeals again, ADF said it is prepared to take the matter to the California Supreme Court.

"This has been a concerted effort to say, 'If you have some kind of traditional moral faith, you have the wrong answer. We're either going to silence you or we're going to compel you to take part in an activity and approve it,'" Joseph Infranco, ADF senior counsel, said.

In its Oct. 14 ruling, the court concluded that "the record contains substantial evidence to support a finding that the sexual harassment experienced by the firefighters during the Pride Parade was severe and pervasive, thus altering the conditions of employment and creating a hostile or abusive work environment."

By 2008, the San Diego Fire Department changed its policy to say parades should be staffed only by volunteers, according to *The San Diego Union-Tribune*.

American loses job due to burning Quran pages on 9/11

TRENTON, N.J. — On the ninth anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks, Derek Fenton stole headlines by burning pages from the Quran in lower Manhattan to protest a planned Islamic community center there. Two days later, he lost his job at New Jersey Transit for breaching the agency's code of ethics.

The American Civil Liberties Union says Fenton should get his job back. The group filed suit Nov. 5 in U.S. District Court, saying Fenton was unconstitutionally fired for exercising his free speech rights.

"If you allow governments to censor one kind of speech, you open the door to censorship of all kinds of speech," said Deborah Jacobs, executive director of the ACLU of New Jersey. "Our individual right to free speech depends on everybody having it."

A spokeswoman for NJ Transit declined to comment. When Fenton was fired, the agency released a statement saying it had "concluded that Mr. Fenton violated his trust as a state employee and therefore was dismissed."