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INSIDE



Youth from Union Grove's Mountain View survive van wreck

◆ Page 6



Introducing new monthly column: Rashional Thoughts

◆ Page 10



Birmingham's Edmonds helps others embrace dementia as a 'call to love'

◆ Page 11

Ministerial tax guide

What ministers need to know before filing 2010 tax return

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

Tax time is just around the corner, and for ministers, the preparation is a bit more complex than the average layperson. For those who are new ministers, filing taxes especially can be a daunting and confusing task.

Ministers who serve a church, as opposed to an evangelist, have a dual-tax status — an employee for federal purposes and self-employed for Social Security purposes. Practically speaking, a salary received from a church is considered wages for income tax purposes. Money received from members of the congregation to perform a task such as a marriage or funeral is considered self-employment income.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) defines a minister as “individuals who are duly ordained, commissioned or licensed by a religious body constituting a church or church denomination. They are given the authority to conduct religious worship, perform sacerdotal functions and administer ordinances or sacraments according to the prescribed tenets and practices of that church or denomination.”

Ministers should make note of the following:

► Ministers should receive a W-2 form, not a 1099 form, for their church income.

► Know the difference between taxable and nontaxable income.

Taxable income includes bonuses, love offerings, money paid for performing a wedding or funeral.

“When you perform some kind of service or work and you get paid, it’s taxable,” said Lee Wright, coordinator of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) church compensation services. “So a minister who speaks at a revival, a minister who does a funeral or wedding and gets paid, a minister who does some Bible conference and gets paid, that is taxable income.”

The church is responsible to keep up with monies paid to the minister through the church (salary, bonuses, etc.), but it is up to the minister to keep

• **The housing allowance amount should** NOT be included in Box 1 of Form W-2. All compensation from Form W-2 should be reported on line 7 of Form 1040.

• **Ministerial income appearing on** line 12 of Form 1040 should only comprise fees from weddings, funerals, speaking engagements and similar income. Unreimbursed expenses corresponding to the aforementioned income should be deducted on Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ.

• **Line 50 of Form 1040 reports the retirement savings** contributions credit. If contributions were made to a 403(b) or 401(k) plan and adjusted gross income was \$50,000 or less, the minister may be eligible for the retirement savings contribution credit. The credit also is available for contributions to either a traditional or a Roth IRA. The excluded portion of minister’s housing does not reduce the credit.

• **Lines 6, 10, 11 and 12 of Schedule A correspond to the most important** tax break afforded ministers who own their own homes. Notwithstanding that real estate taxes, interest on a mortgage and points are excluded under the housing allowance, subject to certain limits, the same amounts are deductible as itemized deductions.

• **Ministers may be able to take a credit for educational expenses as opposed** to a deduction on line 4 of Form 2106 or Form 2106-EZ. See Form 8863 Educational Credits for details. (Source: Birmingham CPA Don Coxie)

TIPS FOR MINISTERS
when completing W-2 and 1040 forms

Graphic by Lauren Chow

up with the self-employment income. If not properly reported, then under an audit the minister would have to pay back taxes plus a penalty.

Nontaxable income includes those things that are excluded by the IRS. This can include housing allowance, benefits such as health insurance and retirement contributions.

► Know the differences between a package approach and better methods of planning financial support and how that affects taxes.

Wright explains the package ap-

proach as basically a church saying to its minister(s) here are “x” number of dollars and you divide it however you want for business expenses, insurance benefits, salary and housing expenses. As far as business expenses are concerned (car, continuing education, professional books, etc.), an accountable reimbursement plan does not give unspecified money upfront but rather reimburses those expenses to the minister.

The major difference between the (See ‘Filing,’ page 3)

Gilley under house arrest for new bribery charges

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Four months ago, Houston County casino owner Ronnie Gilley dared the Task Force on Illegal Gambling to arrest him if his slot machine-style gambling devices at Country Crossing entertainment complex were illegal. Now, his bluff has been called twice — except the federal government, not the task force, is holding the better hand.

Last October, Gilley, gambling magnate Milton McGregor and several legislators and lobbyists were ar-

rested and indicted on federal charges for a vote-buying scheme at the Alabama Statehouse surrounding last year’s gambling expansion bill.

Recently Gilley was placed on house arrest when his attorney, Doug Jones, asked for a delay on a hearing regarding new bribery allegations. This time, Gilley is accused of bribing Jarrod Massey, his former lobbyist and co-defendant.

On Jan. 6, attorneys for the federal government filed a motion to revoke the order of pre-trial release for Gilley accusing him of trying to bribe

Cities learn hard lessons of going wet

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Several Alabama cities are seeing the results of the past years’ legislative push to expand alcohol sales across the state. As opponents of the legislation feared, several formerly “dry” municipalities have voted to allow alcoholic beverage sales while some “wet” areas are expanding the sales they already offer. Cullman and Tuscaloosa are two of Alabama’s most current examples of these changing times.

Although Cullman is located in a dry county, its residents voted Nov. 2 for the city to become wet.

Jack Collins, director of missions for West Cullman Baptist Association, and Randy Makemson, director of missions for East Cullman Baptist Association, said their churches worked together to keep the city dry; but alcohol opponents were beat by 4 percent of the vote.

Jim O’Dillon, minister of education and outreach for First Baptist Church, Cullman, added there was only “220 votes difference between the votes” with little more than 6,000 total votes cast.

Makemson said, “We went door-to-door, had meetings and held prayer vigils.

“Our theme was ‘keep Cullman special’ and we focused on the positive things about Cullman — its heritage, its beauty, and that industrially and economically Cullman has grown without alcohol sales. ... But the people in the city did not get out and vote. It was not a sweeping amount of voters who wanted to go wet. People ignored it. They didn’t vote wet or dry. ... The people didn’t think it (See ‘Cullman,’ page 5)

Massey who recently reached a plea agreement with the government and became a witness for them.

When the original charges were brought against Gilley and the other defendants, Gilley was released on an “unsecured bond of \$500,000” as long as he did not “commit a federal, state or local crime during the period of release pending trial,” the motion states. Yet prosecutors submitted that Gilley “knowingly” offered “money or a thing of value in order to corruptly persuade” (See ‘Houston,’ page 10)

COMMENT

Not like Any Baptist I Know

It was more than ironic. It was tragic. And thankfully it was avoided.

As the nation debated the role of extremist rhetoric in the Jan. 8 shooting in Tucson, Ariz., that left six dead and 13 wounded, Christina Taylor Green's parents faced burying her while being picketed by one of America's best-known perpetrators of hate speech.

Christina was the 9-year-old girl born Sept. 11 who lost her life in the hail of bullets unleashed at a Tucson supermarket. Her funeral was the first of the six funerals. It took place Jan. 13, the day after the community memorial service at which President Barack Obama challenged Americans to talk to each other "in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds."

That challenge did not resonate with members of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan. Pastor Fred Phelps announced that his group would be at the victims' funerals, celebrating the deaths as God's judgment for America allowing homosexual behavior.

Picketing funerals is nothing new for Phelps and members of his church. The group has gained national attention picketing military funerals with signs reading, "You're going to hell," "God hates you," "Thank God for dead soldiers" and "God hates fags." Desecrating the American flag is common, reports indicate.

The group's message has caused many organizations, including the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, to label the church a "hate group." Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary vice president and associate professor Thomas White recently released an article concluding the group was neither Baptist nor a church but only a purveyor of hate.

But that has not deterred Phelps and his family. Most of the members of Westboro are related to the pastor. The church boasts that it has conducted more than 30,000 pickets in all 50 states. Members have been involved in numerous confrontations and arrests have occurred. Lawsuits by and against Phelps and his family are commonplace.

When news media carried Phelps' announcement that Westboro members would picket Christina's funeral as well as the funerals of other victims, we received telephone calls asking why the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) did not stop the church from acting in such a despicable manner.

First, Westboro is not affiliated with the SBC. The church is not affiliated with any known Baptist convention or association.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Second, even if it were, the national convention would be powerless to act. Article IV of the SBC constitution states, "the convention does not claim and will never attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organization, association or convention." In Southern Baptist life, all bodies serve the local church. No local church is subject to the decisions of an outside body.

Not a trademarked name

One caller asked if Westboro could be forced to abandon the use of the Baptist name. Again, the answer is no. Baptist is not a trademarked name. It is used to describe people who hold certain beliefs about God, the Bible, salvation and the church. The term was used before there was a United States, let alone a SBC.

By one count, there are 62 national bodies that use the term "Baptist" in their official name. And there are thousands of individual churches like Westboro that call themselves Baptist but are affiliated with no body but themselves.

Southern Baptists have not escaped the ire of Phelps and Westboro. They have picketed the SBC's annual meeting. SBC-related seminaries have been picketed. State convention-related colleges have been the focus of their wrath. Well-known churches have been picketed. One release from Westboro indicated members picket up to 15 churches on any given Sunday.

In 1999, messengers to the SBC's annual meeting adopted a resolution that took a swipe at Phelps. While not calling him by name, messengers adopted a resolution that said, in part, "We publicly denounce and deplore all violent attacks upon homosexuals and ... express our abhorrence of the teaching that God hates any person on account of an immoral lifestyle."

Last year, Roger S. Oldham, vice president for convention communications and relations for the SBC Executive Committee, was not as tactful. In an April 7, 2010, Baptist Press story, Oldham said, "We repudiate the tactics used by Fred Phelps and his followers at Westboro and find them offensive."

How one could even consider waving a sign at Christina's parents blaring, "God hates you," is be-

yond understanding. How could one parade such a placard at the funeral of Judge John Roll, who was on his way to church at the time he was gunned down. Dorwin Stoddard threw himself on top of his wife to protect her and, for his bravery, was murdered. How does one spout hatred at such a person?

Most Baptists I know prayed for these and the other victims of the massacre — Phyllis Schneck, Gabriel Zimmerman, Dorothy Morris and the 13 people wounded, including U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona. Most Baptists I know responded with concern and compassion. Most Baptists I know purposefully distance themselves from the hate-filled words and actions of Phelps and his family.

Simply stated, Phelps is not like any Baptist I know. Thankfully he agreed not to picket the funerals in exchange for an opportunity to speak on Mike Gallagher's nationally syndicated radio show.

Whether the rekindled debate about the role of extremist rhetoric will make a lasting difference in the public square of American life remains to be seen. Still the teaching of the Bible is clear. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." That speaks to the goal of public discourse.

In verse 2, the writer added, "The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly." Is one after advancement or advantage?

The writer of Proverbs clearly teaches "the words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them" (Prov. 12:6).

In light of God's Word, President Obama's challenge that Americans learn to talk to each other "in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds" is not bad advice.

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"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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SBOM awaits appeal decision in land dispute

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) officials are only a few weeks away from hearing the result of an appeal to the Oct. 27 circuit court ruling on the Montgomery property they had hoped to sell by now.

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

Following the ruling, East Alabama Global and the SBOM jointly filed a motion to vacate, which asks the judge to reconsider his original ruling.

He has 90 days from when the motion to vacate was filed (late November) to make his decision, which could come any time in the next few weeks.

Shashy can do one of three things — leave his original decision intact, rescind (or vacate) his earlier decision or amend parts of his earlier decision.

"Attorneys felt there were a number of legal factors and precedents that were overlooked in the original decision and the motion is a request for the judge to reconsider his ruling," said Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director. "In the meantime, the properties subcommittee is considering its future options related to the current developer and/or other developers."

The members of the properties committee, executive committee and the State Board of Missions trustees are engaged in this process with the properties subcommittee giving primary leadership.

Praying for resolution

"We have sought to be good neighbors through the process and, at the same time, feel a strong obligation to be good stewards of State Board resources," DuBois said after the Oct. 27 ruling. "We are praying that a resolution can happen soon."

The 13.96-acre tract of land sits at the intersection of Taylor Road and Interstate 85 and

backs up to Halcyon Forest subdivision.

When the SBOM purchased the property in 1986 for potential relocation, it agreed to have development plans approved by the original owners.

The Halcyon Forest Architectural Review Board was said to be formed, in part, for that reason, but the original owners are no longer involved.

And since that time, messengers to the 2007 Alabama Baptist State Convention voted to sell the property rather than relocate the Baptist Building there.

Messengers also voted to purchase land along the Interstate 65 corridor near Autauga and Elmore counties for a potential relocation site.

But the purchase of that land depends on the sale of the

Taylor Road property.

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

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

Brought to court

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

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

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

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

To read more about the Taylor Road property and/or its history, visit www.thealabama-baptist.org and search for "Taylor Road" or "East Alabama Global."

"We have sought to be good neighbors through the process and, at the same time, feel a strong obligation to be good stewards."

Bobby DuBois
SBOM

Filing correctly

Ministers encouraged to 'report properly,' be 'good stewards'

(continued from page 1)

two is that everything in the package approach is taxable and therefore "causes ministers to pay more in taxes," Wright said.

As opposed to the package approach, if a church provides benefits like health, disability and term-life insurance, then those benefits can be provided tax-free. If a minister, under the package approach, is paying for his own insurances then he "is paying for it with money that is taxed," Wright said. "The basic rule is if he controls the money, it is taxable."

If the church does not approve a housing allowance, then the money spent on housing is taxable. However, if a church designates part of his or her salary as housing allowance, then it is excluded up to certain limits.

"Let's say a minister has a \$50,000 salary and asks \$15,000 to be housing, then the church would report \$35,000 as salary and not report the \$15,000 housing allowance," Wright explained. "The minister will pay federal and state taxes on the \$35,000 of his salary, but is paying Social Security tax on \$50,000."

In addition to some basics for filing taxes as a minister, there are some new things ministers need to be made aware of for both 2010 and 2011.

► Last year, Congress removed cell phones from being counted as listed property. The law, which is retroactive back to Jan. 1, 2010, makes cell phones for business use a nontaxable item.

"Employers who provide a cell phone for their employees may do so without the complicated record keeping that was required in the past," Wright said.

No more logging minutes

"In the past, the IRS wanted you to keep a log of every call ... and figure out how many minutes are business related and how many are personal."

"In the past some of the churches didn't fool with the detailed log and made it all taxable," he added.

There are some exceptions to this, so ministers need to make certain that his or her situation falls under this new law.

► As part of the Bush tax cuts that were extended for 2011, the government will reduce the Social Security tax by 2 percent for everyone. Because ministers have to pay out of their pockets 15.3 percent in self-employed taxes, which covers

Minister tax conferences set

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) will host three minister tax conferences around the state to provide the latest updates on tax changes affecting ministers, staff and churches.

Conferences will be held Feb. 8 at Gardendale First Baptist Church; Feb. 15 at First Baptist Church, Decatur; and Feb. 22 at First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland. They will begin at 10 a.m. and end at 3 p.m.

Lee Wright, coordinator of the SBOM's church compensation services, will conduct the conferences. He will discuss topics such as minister's housing allowance, accountable reimbursements, tax savings techniques for ministers and the new health care law (see story, page 1).

For more information or to register for one of the conferences, visit www.alsbom.org/ccs or call 1-800-264-1225. (TAB)

Social Security and Medicare, this means they only will have to pay 13.3 percent.

► This year all taxpayers will have until April 18, instead of April 15, to file federal income taxes since a holiday in the District of Columbia falls on April 15.

In addition, while most taxpayers can presently file their taxes, the IRS is asking some taxpayers affected by the recent tax law changes to wait until mid-to-late February to file their taxes. Those who would need to wait include those who itemize deductions on Form 1040 Schedule A.

"The legislation passed by Congress just before their recess for the holidays has left the IRS with work overload at getting the tax aspects of the legislation incorporated into IRS systems," said Birmingham CPA Don Cox. "[The IRS] also hinted that the

issuance of income tax refunds may be late in recognition of the financial turmoil the federal government has been experiencing relative to funding legislation and the threat of a government shutdown."

To see if you fall under those who need to wait to file their taxes, visit www.irs.gov.

Like other taxpayers, ministers can choose to have a CPA do their tax return or to do it themselves. But ministers should be aware that

not every CPA is familiar with filing taxes for ministers, Wright said. That is why he advises ministers to ask for references from other ministers and research before going to just any CPA.

One program that works well for ministers who want to file themselves is TurboTax, which has the option for filing electronically that ensures a faster refund.

"No one is going to get this stuff on first hearing," Wright said.

"It's going to take numerous times. And yet ministers can learn to do their own taxes. Even a minister who doesn't want to do their own taxes should learn some basics so that they can understand and speak intelligently with their tax preparer."

Additional resources

Good resources for ministers are "Minister's Tax and Financial Guide: For 2010 Tax Returns published" by Zondervan and the Minister's Tax Guide for 2010 booklet that can be found by visiting www.guidestone.org or by calling SBOM office at 1-800-264-1225. The booklet will be available after Feb. 1.

SBOM also is offering three minister tax conferences around the state during the month of February (see story, this page) in order to provide the latest updates on tax changes affecting ministers, staff and churches.

"We have an obligation to report properly ... (but also) be better stewards and pay less in taxes because many ministers pay too much," Wright said.

"Even a minister who doesn't want to do their own taxes should learn some basics so that they can understand and speak intelligently with their tax preparer."

Lee Wright
SBOM

UPDATE ON LAST WEEK'S ISSUE

Due to inclement weather conditions Jan. 9–12, the mailing of the Jan. 13 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* was delayed.



Empower your minister

Words, acts of appreciation can help spiritual leaders thrive, not just survive

By Victor M. Parachin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

So this is the pastorate? Is this the ministry?

To be misunderstood, unappreciated, alone and misquoted with no hope of correction?

This is a painful, lonely business.

That lament was a journal entry made by Pastor David Fisher shortly after he began ministry. Fortunately Fisher, author of "The 21st Century Pastor," weathered that difficult time. But other clergy are not as fortunate. Recent polls reveal high level dissatisfaction and discouragement among the clergy, so much so that

► 1,700 pastors leave ministry every month, an annual exodus of more than 20,000 clergy;

► 50 percent of starting clergy quit within five years;

► 90 percent of clergy say the actual ministry is far different from what they thought it would be prior to entering it; and

► 50 percent feel so discouraged they would leave ministry if they could but they have no other way of making a living.

Yet there is an antidote that can empower pastors to thrive rather than merely survive ministry, and that antidote is simply the positive power of encouragement. This is, in fact, what the Bible teaches: "And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you. ... Overwhelm them with appreciation and love" (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Here are 10 ways you can encourage your minister:

1. Cut the criticism. Clergy are very easy targets because they are the public face of the church. And for the clergy, the criticism is like an endless army marching relentlessly attacking him. Clergy are criticized for sermons that are too long, too short or too boring or strike too close to home. They are faulted for lack of growth, for failure to meet budgets, for inability to be all things to all people. Do your part by dropping all criticism. Consider this lesson via Fred Rogers, known to children worldwide for his television program, "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood." Rogers, an ordained minister, told of the time when he was a seminary student and attended a different church each Sunday in order to hear a variety of preachers. One Sunday, he listened to what he thought was "the most poorly crafted sermon" he had ever heard in his life.

However, when he turned to a friend who accompanied him, he found her in tears. "It was exactly what I needed to hear," she told Rogers. "That's when I realized that the space between someone doing the best he or she can and someone in

10 WAYS

you can encourage your minister

1. Cut the criticism
2. Speak well of your pastor
3. Show your appreciation
4. Speak your appreciation
5. Put your appreciating in writing
6. Respect office hours

7. Recognize signs of ministry burnout
8. Respond to signs of ministry burnout
9. Bless your minister with material gifts
10. Pray for your minister



sxc.hu/graphic by Lauren Chow

need is holy ground," Rogers said. "The Holy Spirit had transformed that feeble sermon for her — and as it turned out, for me, too."

2. Speak well of your pastor. When talking about your minister, speak only in positives. If something in the sermon inspired you, then share that with another church member. When you learn the pastor has been helpful to others in the community, make it a point to commend him publicly at a board or committee meeting. And when you hear negativity expressed about a pastor, come to his defense. Often simple responses like these can shut down criticisms: "I don't see it that way," "I appreciate what the pastor is trying to do," "I am supportive of our pastor's ideas." Take seriously (and remind others of) the words of the Bible: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up" (Eph. 4:29).

3. Show your appreciation. One woman has a unique way of doing this and says there are two "really easy" ways of showing a pastor your appreciation. "One, sit up front with your family. If you invite friends, have them sit with you in front as well. This will show him both your support and interest. Secondly, take notes when he speaks. Again, this will let him see how much you value his wisdom."

4. Speak your appreciation. Remember Mark Twain's comment: "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Tell your pastor how much you appreciate him. Your words have the power to dispel discouragement.

Author Joyce Rupp tells of a minister who had been experiencing long bouts of depression because of seeming lack of success in his ministry. One day, he visited a woman who was very ill. As the

visit concluded and he was preparing to leave the room, she spoke to him, saying, "You have been such an important person in my life. I want you to know that I have great love for you." Those kind, complimentary words penetrated his depression. The minister told Rupp by the time he reached his office, he could sense that a new spirit was emerging from within. During the next several weeks, his depression lifted and he experienced rejuvenation in his life and ministry.

5. Put your appreciating in writing.

One of the most fascinating exhibits in the Library of Congress is a display of the personal effects found on Abraham Lincoln the night he was shot. Those include a small handkerchief embroidered with A. Lincoln, a country boy's pocketknife, a spectacle case repaired with cotton string, a Confeder-

ate \$5 bill and a nearly worn-out newspaper clipping praising his accomplishments as president. The newspaper story begins with this sentence: "Abe Lincoln is one of the greatest statesmen of all time."

Clearly that clipping was an important source of affirmation for President Lincoln. Put your encouragement into writing, and mail it or e-mail it to your pastor. That way, he, like Lincoln, can put in his pocket and pull out from time to time and re-read, drawing new strength for the day.

6. Respect office hours. Of course, the clergy understand they are on call 24/7. However, that applies to emergency situations. As much as possible, follow normal office hours when seeking to speak with the minister. One pastor's wife laments trivial late night phone calls that come to her pastor husband. "Just this week — and this happens all too often — we were both home in the evening enjoying a rare eve-

ning together. Then at 9:45 p.m. the phone rang. Of course my husband answered it, after all, it could be an emergency," she explains. "However, it was just a chatty church member with a lot of time on his hands who wanted to pass on a 'thought' to my husband. Could that not have waited until he was in his office at 8:30 the next morning? There are too many calls like that for us."

In addition to respecting church office hours, add to that respect for your pastor's day off. Unless it's a true emergency, never call him on a day off. Postpone the call for a workday.

7. Recognize signs of ministry burnout. In his book, "The Effective Minister," Michael Cavanagh cites the following as some signs of ministry burnout:

- decreasing interest in daily work and overall ministry;
- decreasing energy to perform tasks that were once relatively easy to perform;
- increasing cynicism and pessimism;
- increasing behavioral symptoms of anxiety: tuning out people, trouble listening to people, cutting appointment short;
- increasing physical symptoms of anxiety: tension headaches, high blood pressure, insomnia, chronic fatigue, undiagnosable complaints;
- decreasing feelings of renewal after experiences that were once revitalizing such as enjoying a day off.

Be on the alert for these as they are signs that the pastor's health and ministry is in danger.

8. Respond to signs of ministry burnout. There are two effective ways of doing this: First, if you have a strong, friendly bond with your pastor, ask him how he is feeling personally and professionally. Then, permit him to share his feelings. Allow him to speak frankly openly and honestly. Assure him of both your friendship and confidentiality. Don't judge anything you hear but do listen with compassion and kindness. Secondly, if you sense your pastor is suffering from ministry burnout, sensitively work with

other church members to ease the burden by providing some extended time off.

9. Bless your minister with material gifts. This was something the apostle Paul found greatly encouraging. He wrote these words of thanks: "It was good of you to share in my troubles ... you sent me aid again and again when I was in need" (Phil. 4:14, 16). Material gifts don't need to be lavish: a subscription to a magazine, a gift card to a restaurant or coffee shop, tickets for a concert or sporting event. One pastor was surprised and delighted upon learning that a parishioner paid his health club membership for a new year.

10. Pray for your minister. These are some specific areas for your prayers:

- For insight into sacred texts and application to daily living;
- For a balanced vision, one that focuses not only upon external church growth but internal spiritual growth of individual people;
- For perseverance through times of discouragement;
- For trust and confidence in God;
- For patience with parishioners who have unrealistic expectations;
- For the minister's family, that each member would have a positive impression of ministry.

As you pray, be guided and inspired by this wisdom from 19th century minister and author Gardiner Spring:

"Let the thought sink deep into the heart of every church, that their minister will be such a minister as their prayers make him ... How perilous is the condition of that minister ... whose heart is not encouraged, whose hands are not strengthened, and who is not upheld by the prayers of his people." ■

Check out

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World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Pakistani churches frustrated with blasphemy law

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistani churches say they're frustrated by the government's refusal to amend a controversial blasphemy law that makes it a capital crime to insult Islam or the Prophet Muhammad. Human rights groups have urged for the law to be repealed or amended to protect the rights of minority faiths in a nation that is overwhelmingly Muslim and increasingly volatile.

A Pakistani governor who advocated for reforming the "black law" was killed by his security guard Jan. 4, prompting large-scale demonstrations on behalf of the accused killer by Muslims who want the law preserved.

Pakistani officials have brushed off calls from outsiders for the law's repeal. On Jan. 11, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani told reporters that "it is our law and we will work according to our law."

"We are disappointed by the stand taken by the Prime Minister," said Joseph Francis, director of the Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement, which has defended dozens of Christians and Muslims charged under the law.

"With the protests growing from both sides, we were expecting the government to take a strong stand on this," Francis said. "Unfortunately, the government response has been negative."

The National Council of Churches in Pakistan also expressed displeasure with Gilani, though general secretary Victor Azariah said he was not surprised by the reaction. The governing Pakistan People's Party has just 125 seats in the 342-member National Assembly, and must rely on independents and Islamic parties that support the blasphemy law to keep its fragile governing coalition intact.

"When the government survival itself is dependent on (political) parties that support the blasphemy law, what can we expect from the government?" Azariah said.

Egypt's ambassador recalled, angry at pope's remarks

VATICAN CITY — The government of Egypt recalled its ambassador to the Vatican on Jan. 11 to protest a demand by Pope Benedict XVI that it better protect the country's embattled Christian minority.

The Egyptian foreign ministry said in a statement that its ambassador, Lamia Aly Hamada Mekhemar, had been recalled because the pope's demands represented an "unacceptable interference in its internal affairs." In an address to foreign ambassadors at the Vatican on Jan. 10, the pope noted recent violence against Christians in the Middle East, including a car bomb outside a Christian Coptic church in Alexandria, Egypt, that killed at least 21 people on New Year's Day. Benedict then called on "governments of the region to adopt ... effective measures for the protection of religious minorities."

He quoted a recent statement by Catholic bishops that Christians in the Middle East "should enjoy all the rights of citizenship, freedom of conscience, freedom of worship and freedom in education, teaching and the use of the mass media." According to a Vatican statement issued late Jan. 11, Mekhemar met at the Vatican with Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, who is effectively the Holy See's foreign minister. The Egyptian ambassador "made clear her government's concerns in the difficult present moment," the Vatican statement said, and she was given information to convey to Cairo "on the recent interventions by the Holy Father, particularly about religious liberty and the protection of Christians in the Middle East."

British branch of YWCA drops 'Christian' from name

LONDON — The British branch of the YWCA has dropped "Christian" from its official name because it "no longer stood for what we are or what we do," the women's charity has announced.

After 155 years, the Young Women's Christian Association will now be known as Platform 51, the charity says on its website. The organization said its new name "more accurately represents what we are or what we do — 51 percent of people are female, and girls and women use us as a platform to have their say." There was no immediate indication that the YWCA's male counterpart, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), was considering a similar name switch in the area. Last summer, the U.S. branch of the YMCA decided to rebrand itself as simply the "Y," although officially it still identifies itself as the YMCA. According to the *Daily Mail* newspaper in London, the name change underscores a growing rift between the charity's members in England and Wales and the global YWCA. The newspaper quoted YWCA spokesman Sylvie Jacquat at the organization's headquarters in Geneva as saying none of the YWCA's other 124 branches around the world are contemplating a similar change.

"It was the Christian character of the YMCA that made it great," the spokesman said in a statement. "It is a shame that it is turning its back on those values."

Cullman approves alcohol ordinance; Tuscaloosa pushes for Sundays

(continued from page 1)

would happen, but it did." Collins agreed. He said the entire county decided to go dry about 70 years ago when residents believed certain areas selling alcohol had become too dangerous for women to travel in. He added that many residents — city leaders included — did not believe Cullman would ever go wet again.

"There were several times we had elections, and we were always able to defeat it," Collins said noting that the last referendum when residents voted dry was held in 2004.

This time, pro-alcohol supporters used the down economy and additional tax revenues to change residents' minds.

"Their strategy was that they had a developer who came in and looked at Cullman prior to getting the signatures necessary to call for the referendum," Makemson said. "The *Cullman Times* ran a full-page story in the Sunday edition about this developer who wanted to come in and develop a mall with major restaurants and retailers if the city was wet. We (people against becoming wet) felt like the local newspaper was proactive for the wet side."

Collins added, "The people pushing alcohol sales had tractor trailers sitting at every exit with signs on it that said '900 jobs coming soon.' They were really pushing keeping jobs and taxes at home. ... It changed a lot of people's minds about it."

On Jan. 11, the mayor and city council passed a 49-page ordinance to govern the cities' alcohol sales prohibiting them on Sundays and less than 250 feet from churches, schools and child development facilities. Although it may take another month before businesses will be approved to sell alcohol, Makemson and Collins said grocery and convenience stores are already changing their floor plans and moving their products around to accommodate the alcohol they will sell.

"I think for the first few years, we are not going to see many changes," Makemson said.

"Cullman is a close-knit community, and a lot of people are going to be self-conscious about going out and getting alcohol. ... I think it's going to be a slow process."

Although Collins looks forward to an opportunity to vote Cullman back dry, he expects there also may be a push to expand the city's alcohol laws in the future.

"The big liquor business is never

satisfied," he said. "Sooner or later they are going to want to come back and sell on Sundays."

That is exactly what is happening in Tuscaloosa. The city is already wet, but its city leaders are trying to expand alcohol sales to include Sundays. After state lawmakers

passed House Bill 565 — sponsored by Rep. Chris England, D-Tuscaloosa — last year to allow a vote on the matter, a special election was set in the city for Feb. 22. City Council President Harrison Taylor reportedly told the *Tuscaloosa News* that city leaders have been working to get this issue before the

people for "16 or 17 years."

Ed Steelman, spokesperson for the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association Christian Life Committee, which is fighting against the expanded sales, agreed. He believes city leaders will continue petitioning for Sunday alcohol sales until the vote passes.

Only benefits a few

"The general public has not been pushing for this," Steelman said. "It's the mayor, city council, restaurants and bars — the people who will benefit from it. We think

it benefits a few at the expense of the many — the general public."

Stelman said alcohol-related issues are a problem in Tuscaloosa especially for teens and college students, and he doesn't want those issues to become worse.

"The general public knows we are against it morally and biblically, but what we are trying to tell our general public is that we are trying to maintain the quality of life in our community," he said. "We would like to have one day — a safer day — where people don't have to worry about people coming out of bars and restaurants and drinking and driving drunk ... a day for the family. ... [Drinking] is a problem here in our city, yet they continue to push it for tax purposes. They want more tax revenue. But the statistics show that it does not significantly increase tax revenue."

Billy Gray, associate director of missions for Tuscaloosa Association, hopes the churches will be successful in stopping the legalization of Sunday alcohol sales.

"We are discussing a strategy to help inform our churches to do what we can do as an association," he said.

"It's in the hands of the churches and the people on whether or not we have a good turnout. ... Anything we can do to decrease the availability of alcohol is a good move."

"It's in the hands of the churches and the people on whether or not we have a good turnout."

Billy Gray
Tuscaloosa Association



Photo courtesy of Earl Thompson

JACKSON WAY MEMBER HAS PERFECT ATTENDANCE

Earl Thompson (right), a member of Jackson Way Baptist Church, Huntsville, in Madison Baptist Association is presented with a pin from Sunday School teacher David Golden for 65 years of perfect attendance.

Forever changed

Youth from Union Grove's Mountain View survive van wreck

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When 18 members of the youth group of Mountain View Baptist Church, Union Grove, signed up for the Xtreme Winter Conference in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., in late December, they had no idea that they'd experience God's protection firsthand.

While on the way to the conference on the morning of Dec. 30, one of the church vans hit black ice, causing a wreck that, amazingly, left all the passengers virtually unhurt.

"The whole thing was a true faith-building experience, and the youth are different people now," said Bryan Pearl, the Marshall Baptist Association church's youth minister and interim pastor. "They have a new appreciation for driving now and for each other. It was a true bonding moment."

The accident occurred when the first van, filled with the younger youth group members, hit a patch of black ice while going downhill. The van, which was being driven by Pearl, slid into a tree on the side of the road, bounced back into the road and then hit the second van. Luckily the impact caused the second van's fender to pop its front tire, which meant the metal from the tire dug through the ice and brought the van to a stop at the bottom of the hill.

'Reality of God'

"I've always believed in angels, but realizing that this whole situation was the reality of God was amazing," said Jackie Davis, an adult leader on the trip.

"The icy conditions meant we were going slowly to begin with, and then hitting the tree kept us



"'You can live in faith, or you can live in fear,' and this was an example of a time when we had to live in faith and let God take care of us.▶▶"

— Bryan Pearl, youth minister and interim pastor
Mountain View Baptist Church, Union Grove

Photo courtesy of Mountain View Baptist Church/TAB graphic

from going off the mountain."

Remarkably Davis was the only one who was injured. She received six stitches to close a leg wound and was treated for some facial cuts and bruising.

After the vans came to a halt and the passengers on Pearl's van took a minute to comprehend what had just happened, the older youth rushed over to help their younger friends safely exit the van. Meanwhile one youth ran to the top of the hill to prevent other vehicles from coming down. Eventually — once everyone had safely evacuated — the first van caught fire.

"The older youth were wonderful," Davis said. "They really kept their heads and we were so impressed."

While awaiting help, the group of 22 was welcomed into the home of a woman who lives at the foot of the hill. Group members kept warm by her wood-burning fire-

place, and her friendly dog was a great comfort to them all, Davis said. They also made a group decision: They'd go ahead and attend the conference.

'God was with them'

"Bryan shared how God was with them every step of the way," said Randall Stoner, director of missions for Marshall Association. "God just took care of them, and they got so much more out of the conference than they would have otherwise."

According to Pearl, the youth were forever impacted by the accident and know they're incredibly fortunate to be alive and unhurt.

"We lost a van and that's all we lost," he said.

"I always say, 'You can live in faith, or you can live in fear,' and this was an example of a time when we had to live in faith and let God take care of us." ❧

Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

▶ **Boone's Chapel Church, Prattville**, will hold a women's Bible study called Anointed, Transformed, Redeemed Jan. 23, 4:30 p.m. Brandy Wohlers and Brenda Blankenship will be facilitators. Mike Johnson is pastor.

BESSEMER

▶ **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing Feb. 5, 7 p.m., with The Waylighters. Dinner will be at 6 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

▶ **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will hold its fifth Sunday service Jan. 30, 5:30 p.m., with Christian humorist/musician

Brother Billy Bob Bohannon. A men's chili cookoff will follow. Mike Stephens is pastor.

MORGAN

▶ **Shiloh Church, Somerville**, will host a symposium on spiritual and physical self-defense for women called Defending Body and Belief Feb. 12, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., with Pastor Charles Owens. Lunch will be provided. To register call 256-560-0819 by Feb. 4.

NORTH JEFFERSON

▶ **Glenn's Chapel Church, Gardendale**, will hold a special day to honor Pastor Thomas Perkins for 60 years in the gospel ministry Jan. 30. The worship service will be at 10:45 a.m. with guest singers The Unity Quartet.

Lunch will follow at noon. The Unity Quartet also will sing from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

ST. CLAIR

▶ **Mount Pisgah Church, Cropwell**, will hold a gospel concert Jan. 30, 6 p.m., with Pure Heart. James Blair is pastor of the church.

WINSTON

▶ **Meek Church, Arley**, will open The Clothes Closet the second Thursday of each month, 6-8 p.m. There will be clothing and accessories for winter and summer for everyone from babies to adults. For information call 205-387-7731 between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. ❧

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Calif. war memorial cross ruled unconstitutional

SAN DIEGO — A federal appeals court ruled Jan. 4 a veterans' memorial featuring a 43-foot cross on California's Mount Soledad is unconstitutional.

"The use of such a distinctively Christian symbol to honor all veterans sends a strong message of endorsement and exclusion," wrote Judge M. Margaret McKeown for the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. "It suggests that the government is so connected to a particular religion that it treats that religion's symbolism as its own, as universal."

The decision that the memorial in La Jolla, Calif., violates the Establishment Clause reverses a lower court decision but does not determine what will happen to the cross that has been the dominant feature of the monument since it was erected in 1913.

"This result does not mean that the memorial could not be modified to pass constitutional muster nor does it mean that no cross can be part of this veterans' memorial," McKeown concluded.

The case has wound through the courts for two decades.

Legal groups that supported the memorial, including Liberty Institute and the American Center for Law and Justice, called the decision a "slap in the face" to military veterans.

A second case involving a controversial monument in Southern California also remains in the courts.

Last April, the U.S. Supreme Court permitted a war memorial cross to remain at the Mojave National Preserve and told a lower court to further consider a congressionally approved transfer of the cross to private land.

Civility Project ends after low interest in Congress

WASHINGTON — The Civility Project, a two-year bipartisan attempt to get politicians and others to respect one another, is closing down after just three members of Congress agreed to the project's pledge.

"You three were alone in pledging to be civil," Christian publicist Mark DeMoss wrote in a Jan. 3 letter announcing an end to the two-year project.

"I must admit to scratching my head as to why only three members of Congress, and no governors, would agree to what I believe is a rather low bar."

The three who had agreed were Sen. Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn.; Rep. Sue Myrick, R-N.C.; and Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va.

The announcement comes at a time when politicians, clergy and commentators have stressed the need for civility following deadly shootings Jan. 8 in Tucson, Ariz., which left six people dead and 14 wounded, including Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in the head.

DeMoss, a Republican who represents prominent evangelical leaders through his Atlanta-based public relations firm, teamed with Democratic consultant Lanny Davis when he launched the project prior to President Obama's inauguration.

They asked people to agree to three pledges on the project's website — to be civil in public discourse, respect those with whom you disagree and stand against incivility.

State Dept. to leave 'mother,' 'father' on records

WASHINGTON — Facing a backlash from conservative groups, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has ordered changes to a proposal to remove the terms "mother" and "father" from records of overseas births.

"With Secretary Clinton's input, we will be revising the form to retain the existing designation of mother and father, in addition to the designation of parent," said Rosemary Macray, a spokeswoman for the department's Bureau of Consular Affairs.

The department had announced plans Dec. 22 to change the Consular Report of Birth Abroad to "use the title of 'parent' as opposed to 'mother' and 'father.'"

"These improvements are being made to provide a gender-neutral description of a child's parents and in recognition of different types of families," it said at the time.

But after conservative Christian groups criticized the proposed change Jan. 7, Clinton issued new directives Jan. 8. ❧

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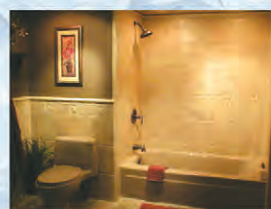
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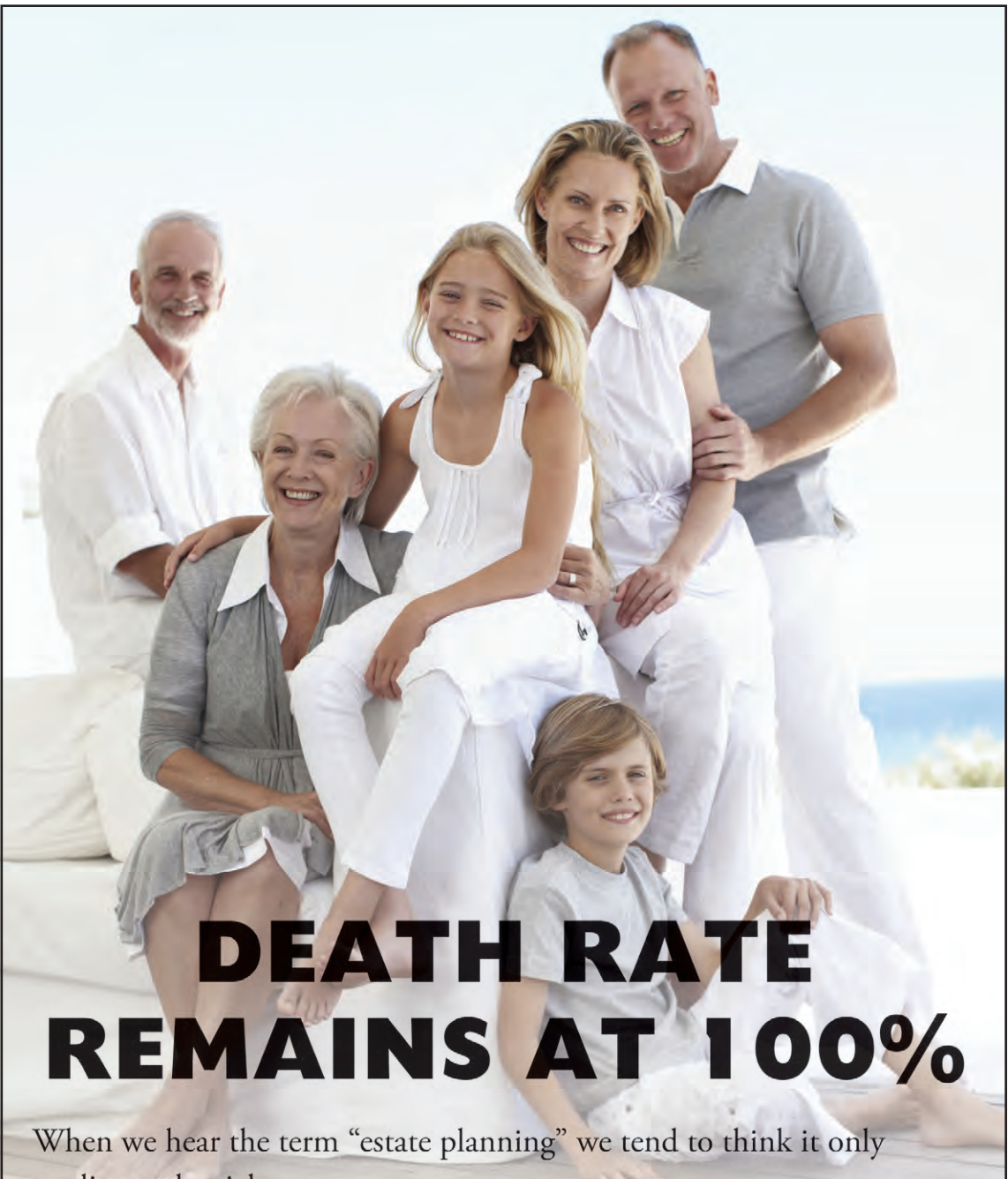
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Photo courtesy of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

GOV. BENTLEY'S CHURCH HOLDS SPECIAL PRAYER SERVICE

First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, in Tuscaloosa Baptist Association holds a special time of prayer led by Pastor Gil McKee for then Governor-elect Robert Bentley and his wife, Dianne, during its morning worship services Jan. 9. The Bentleys are long-time members of the church.

Abortions surpass 53 million in U.S.

At some point in 2010 — 37 years removed from the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision — a doctor in the United States performed the nation's 53 millionth legal abortion, a sobering stat that ethicists say should drive the public to speak up for the unborn.

The statistic is based on data compiled by the Guttmacher Institute, whose studies are acknowledged by most major pro-choice organizations.

The nation's abortion rate reached a peak of 1.6 million in 1990 and has steadily fallen in most years ever since, although Guttmacher's latest data, from 2008, showed the abortion rate had risen slightly to 1,212,000 million from 1,206,000 in 2005, the most recent data point.

Because Guttmacher no longer releases abortion data every year, the 53 million figure is based on assumptions that the abortion rate remained relatively unchanged in 2009 and 2010.

The 1973 *Roe* decision, coupled

with the companion *Doe v. Bolton* ruling, legalized abortion nationwide for effectively any reason during all nine months of pregnancy.

"Fifty-three million is the population of a medium-size country. Imagine the outcry if the people of Spain (46.1 million people) were destroyed by another nation," C. Ben Mitchell, professor of moral philosophy at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., said.

'Most of world is silent'

"Yet most of the world is silent about the destruction of the unborn. Christian love demands that we weep compassionately for the unborn, pray fervently that the killing would stop, work urgently for alternatives to abortion, and become the voice of the unborn in the public square."

The United States has one of the highest abortion rates for the developed world and also some of the world's most liberal abortion laws.

The Guttmacher 2008 data, released this year, also showed that 17 percent of all nonhospital abor-

tions were chemical abortions — that is, abortions performed using the abortion drug RU-486. RU 486, also known as mifepristone, is used as the first part in a two-step process in the first seven weeks of pregnancy.

Mifepristone causes the lining of the uterus to release the embryonic child, resulting in his or her death.

A different drug, misoprostol, is taken two days after mifepristone and causes a woman's uterus to contract, expelling her baby.

"Too many of us fail to realize the magnitude of abortion's impact on society," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

"If Christ-followers are not staggered by the number of babies that have been aborted since the 1973 Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, it suggests we have bought into the notion that it is permissible to take the life of a child if its birth will inconvenience others."

(BP)

Houston County's Gilley asks for prayer

(continued from page 1)

Massey "with the intent to influence, delay or prevent the testimony of Jarrod Massey in an official proceeding and to cause or induce Jarrod Massey to withhold testimony from an official proceeding."

The motion added that Gilley also violated his bond by failing "to avoid all contact, directly or indirectly, with any person who is or may become a potential witness in the investigation or prosecution" by attempting to bribe Massey on numerous occasions — once during court proceedings for the case.

According to the *Dothan Eagle*,

Gilley originally responded to the allegations on his Facebook page stating, "What's going on here is not right and it's as unjust as it gets. But I do continue to have faith that God is working behind the scenes on our behalf so that goodness shall prevail."

The paper reported that Gilley had asked his friends and Country Crossing supporters for prayer at that time.

'Faith in ... God'

"As you all know, I have faith in my friends, my family, my employees, my partners, prayer, and most of all God," he reportedly wrote. "I

am asking each and every one of you to pray for me and my family as we need it right now."

But until his Jan. 31 court appearance, Gilley reportedly cannot travel outside his home except for medial or religious reasons, and his phone calls are limited.

The *Dothan Eagle* also reports that U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson, who is in charge of the corruption trial has ordered that selected jurors be partially sequestered and "in the custody of the U.S. Marshals during the hours the trial is in session."

The trial date is set for April 4. ☞

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

by Jennifer Davis Rash • managing editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Seeking freshness, balance in life

OK so we are almost three weeks into 2011 and right on target to start slacking on those New Year's resolutions — or maybe this is the year we prevail, and those resolutions are so going to be met.

Either way, I always love the start of a new year. We are forced to clean up after all the Christmas festivities, allowing for an opportunity to do some deep cleaning and reorganizing as we rearrange our household settings minus the Christmas tree and various other decorations. The lights, garland, bows and ornaments all come down and are stored away for their 11-month slumber.

Renewed commitment

Closets are cleaned out and organized, making room for all those new clothes and accessories. Cabinets and pantries are scoured and purged of those naughty sugary foods in preparation for a renewed emphasis on healthy eating.

A fresh area is arranged and a renewed commitment is made for devotions and Bible study. A cute new workout outfit is purchased because that in itself is motivation enough to get us moving — at least the first two days of our new exercise routine.

Our bodies feel rested because we've had more sleep in a week than we got most months before Christmas. And for a few days

leading up to the new year, life in general slowed down. Then there's



the countdown, "Auld Lang Syne" and cheers for the new day that marks the new year. We eat black-eyed peas and greens, hug our loved ones tightly and jot down a list of goals we want to achieve in the year ahead.

We are refreshed, resolved and ready. I love it — new energy, determination and reason. But I've not yet figured out how to make it last. Before long, the stresses of life creep back in, fatigue attacks and motivation decreases.

Sure there are moments of renewal here and there, and various points throughout the year allow for adrenaline-induced energy. But how can we keep this fresh feeling — spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally and relationally — longer? Is it possible to truly manage life in such a way that most days can be characterized this way, and do I dare say this is my New Year's resolution for 2011?

I'm not sure where this will lead, but I do want to attempt to live a healthy life in all areas with freshness and balance. I also want you to come along with me on this journey because one thing I do know is that I can't do it alone.

Future topics

Once a month for the next 12 months, I will address the various areas of life that tend to be targets of New Year's resolutions and introduce features we will publish on those topics. I will do this in my new column, *Rashional Thoughts* (I couldn't resist the name).

I also want to learn from you and hear what suggested topics you have (e-mail me at jrash@thealabamabaptist.org). *The Alabama Baptist* also is launching a new blog — www.thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com — for this column, so be sure to follow us there.

Watch out, 2011. We are going to be ready this time. ☞

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'Opportunity to love the Lord'

Through personal experience, Edmonds tells others to see dementia as 'a call to love'

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

Ellen Marie Edmonds watched as her husband of 13 years, Frank, slipped back into infancy.

In the eyes of the world, Frank, a retired CEO of AT&T and Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, was "a strong and capable man," but for the last three years of his life, he became totally dependent on Ellen for everything.

"In the spring (of 1990), I married my big man, and in the winter (of 2005), I buried my baby boy," Ellen said.

At first, one may think this sounds a lot like "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button." In the short story, which was turned into a 2008 film, the main character is born as an old man and dies as a baby. Though there are a few similarities between the two men's stories, there is one major difference: Benjamin's story is fictional, whereas Frank's story is real.

'Reality for millions'

And it is reality for millions with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia.

After an October 2002 car accident not far from his home in Birmingham, Frank began experiencing a rapid onset of advanced vascular dementia. Ellen, who became his caregiver, said the journey was hard and painful.

"It was like playing a long game of tennis at the net," she said.

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"About the time I'd think that I was understanding some change and some new requirement on my part or I was understanding something new in his personality, then something would change again. There was uncertainty all the time about what was next and his growing incapacity."

Along with taking care of her husband and grieving the gradual loss of her soul mate, Ellen had to deal with all the aspects of running a household, such as managing bills and house maintenance, alone.

She also was taking care of her first grandchild four days a week while the girl's parents worked.

"She was a little baby growing bigger and bigger, and my husband, who was 6 foot 4, was a big man becoming smaller and smaller. I saw the parallels in their needs — both of them being little and needing security and care. My little alpha (granddaughter) passed him up, and he went to where she came from."

As Ellen, a member of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in Birmingham, began to see the parallels between the two, God began to reveal to her that He is the Alpha and the Omega (the Beginning and the End). She nicknamed her granddaughter "alpha" and her husband "omega" since the former was at the beginning stages of her life and the latter was at the end of his life.

"It was so profound to me because I was seeing Him through both (people)," Ellen said. "As I was going through these terrible pangs of grief, I woke up to this new little one of hope."

About a year after Frank died, Ellen was contacted by the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) about sharing her story. But it took her about three years before she felt ready to tell her story on television. She said she needed to spend time reflecting.

"Knowing that in order to tell the story I was going to have to let myself go back through a very painful journey, I wrote 'Embracing Dementia, A Call to Love: Finding Hope, Loving Someone With Al-



Photo courtesy of Ellen Marie Edmonds

'FAITH-BASED' BOOK — Ellen Marie Edmonds signs a book at her first book signing for 'Embracing Dementia, A Call to Love: Finding Hope, Loving Someone With Alzheimer's or Other Dementias' at Little Professor Book Center in Homewood.

zheimer's or Other Dementias,'" Ellen said. "The book is a faith-based, love-driven account of confronting the disease and embracing it and seeing it as a cross and a call to love. Not just to love the person with dementia but to see the 'little' person they are becoming and the Christ in them."

Even though the book is biographical, she uses it to admonish those with loved ones with Alzheimer's or other dementias not to fear.

'See their heart'

"Physically they're still big but you must see their heart so we don't fear them and put them away," Ellen said. "In the book, I make a comparison between the little one in the womb and the little one in Alzheimer's. They are hidden but

they are real and they are in there."

She also talks about how Matthew 25:31-36 became key for her while caring for her husband.

"Whatever we do for the least, we are doing for Christ Himself," Ellen said of the Scripture passage. "This was a huge transformation that took place for me. In realizing that this whole journey was about loving my husband, (I realized) it was really about loving the Lord."

"Knowing has to do with the heart, it's an eternal thing, and the heart doesn't get dementia. Even as the brain dies, we can continue to communicate with them through the heart," she said.

"It was an opportunity to get to love the Lord all the way through to the finish line. Christ was born (and) came into humanity so that we may

ultimately be born into eternity. My husband died at Christmastime, and it was a beautiful coming together that Christ was born into humanity and my husband was born into eternity."

After publishing her book, Ellen, who is retired from AT&T, found herself with a new mission: to help others who are on a journey similar to hers. She finally appeared on EWTN twice in 2009 on two shows and twice in 2010 on another show. She now hosts a radio show called "Embracing Alzheimer's in Mind and Heart" Sundays at 4 p.m. on Birmingham's WXJC and live on Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m. on WQOH. Both are streamed live on her website, embracingdementia.com.

"It's an amazing message that is just reaching and helping people in every socioeconomic stage of life," Ellen said. "There's a tremendous amount of faith, and our Lord said, 'Do not be afraid.' He wants me to help (others) transform that fear into faith and practical knowledge. I think people want to do the right thing, but we're terrified when a thing like Alzheimer's comes on the scene."

Sharing the message

She will be taking her message to Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, Feb. 4-5 for the Embracing Alzheimer's & Other Dementias conference, sponsored by Birmingham Baptist Association and United for Life Foundation (see story, this page).

"[The conference] is well-balanced of resources to help clergy and families and professionals better understand what the patient is going through and what the family is going through so that everyone is equipped to respond more effectively," Ellen said. "My hope is ... that they'll experience the love of God." ❧

Conference on Alzheimer's, dementias set

Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) and United for Life Foundation in Birmingham are sponsoring Embracing Al-

zheimer's & Other Dementias, a resource conference for families, caregivers, clergy and professionals, at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, Feb. 4-5.

Keynote speaker Ellen Marie Edmonds (see story, this page) hopes the conference will reach families and churches that are ministering to Alzheimer's patients.

"The conference will offer a lot of practical tools from the faith-based nature of the journey as well as from health, wellness, nutrition, organizational, relational and neurological issues," she said.

Mike McLemore, executive director of BBA, believes this is the first time a conference on this issue has been offered to in the Birmingham area.

"[BBA]'s purpose is to help and

provide resources to our churches, and to me, this is a wonderful way we can provide support and resource material to our churches and senior adult ministries that are facing [this issue]," he said.

The conference will host many exhibitors related to the care of a loved one with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

There also will be other speakers, including Debbie Moss, minister of health and wellness at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham. For the past two years, the church has had a worship service called Connection for people with mild to moderate dementia.

For more information or to register for the conference, visit unitedforlifefoundation.org or call 205-599-3245. (TAB)

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving

Year to Date through December 31, 2010

DECEMBER

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$ 3,875,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$ 4,054,515
Over Goal for Month	\$179,515

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$46,500,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$42,032,612
Under Goal for Year	\$4,467,388

Baptists join to help Australia, Brazil flood victims

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is encouraging Baptists in Australia and Brazil as they grapple with the after-effects of severe flooding that devastated parts of their countries.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam said, "We are heartened that our Baptist brothers and sisters in these countries are rising to the challenge to offer prayer and material support to those who have suffered."

A series of floods caused from record rainfalls and a compromised dam have affected the Australian state of Queensland since December 2010. The deluge resulted in severe damage in about 70 towns, including the capital, Brisbane, the deaths of at least 30 citizens, and the evacuation of thousands.

Baptist Union of Queensland General Superintendent David Loder indicated that maintaining contact in the affected areas proved difficult because of "phone outages and phone congestion."

At press time, there was news from only 15 percent of the Baptist churches, or about 35 congregations, that are in the disaster zone in Queensland. Loder said this "nowhere near represents the story of the tragic events that have been experienced by people in these communities."

The Baptist Union of Australia, Queensland Baptists, and the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, one of six regional fellowships of the BWA, have appealed to their constituencies for donations and funds to assist victims of the flooding.

In Brazil, flooding in the mountainous regions of the state of Rio de Janeiro beginning Jan. 11 led to



Reuters photo

DEVASTATED AREAS — The Brisbane River breaks its banks to flood residential areas west of Australia's third-biggest city Brisbane, Queensland, on Jan. 13.

massive mudslides and the deaths of more than 500 persons, mainly in the cities of Teresópolis, Nova Friburgo, Petrópolis and Sumidouro.

"We need a massive mobilization of Brazilian Baptists who are close to places affected to welcome our

brothers in Christ," a release from the Brazilian Baptist Convention said. The Central Baptist Church in Teresópolis, one of the cities that suffered heavily, is housing 37 persons who were displaced by the flooding. Rio de Janeiro has been badly

affected by a series of devastating floods in recent times. At least 85 people died in floods and mudslides in January 2010, and a further 212 deaths occurred in another flooding episode four months later, in April.

(BWA)

Auburn's Lakeview to host disciple-making conference

Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, will host Eternal Impact: A conference on disciple-making Jan. 29, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Robert E. Coleman, author of "Master Plan of Evangelism," will be leading the conference. Coleman is distinguished professor of discipleship and evangelism at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's South Hamilton, Mass., location.

He previously directed the

School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield for 18 years, led the Institute of Evangelism in the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., and served as the dean of the Billy Graham International Schools of Evangelism.

"This conference is vital to the church in these days as our mandate is to make disciples," said Al

Jackson, pastor of Lakeview Baptist.

"As our challenges are ever more daunting in seeking to extend the Kingdom, to have Robert Coleman teach us 'The Master Plan of Evangelism' in person is a once in a lifetime opportunity."

For more information or to register for the conference, visit www.lakeviewbaptist.org or call 334-887-7094.

(TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Following God's leadership and the prayers of the members of First Baptist Church, Union Grove, we are seeking God's person to become our full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175.

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Music director needed for Ray Baptist Church, Ray Community, Coosa County. Please e-mail resumé to: wbrown9081@charter.net or mail to: Rita Brown: 7 Coosa County Road 135, Alexander City, AL 35010. For questions, call 256-596-2326.

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

YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Brent Baptist Church currently accepting resúmes for youth/children's minister with secondary Bible education. Resúmes accepted until March 31. BBC Search Committee, 470 Mychael Lane, Centreville, AL 35042.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Circlewood Baptist Church is currently seeking

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

OTHER POSITIONS

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ange Beach. Rent direct-Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Spring special: 4 nights efficiency unit (2 adults and kids) \$444 includes everything (1, 2, 3 bedroom units also available). Even lower prices for those in the ministry. 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231, www.gulfshores.com.

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By Evangelism office
State Board of Missions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

African-American Baptists increase Haiti aid to \$1 million

WASHINGTON — Five historically African-American Baptist denominations that collaborated last year for Haiti relief made a second grant of \$500,000 Jan. 12 to build homes through Habitat for Humanity International. Announced on the one-year anniversary of the Haiti quake, the grant increased to \$1 million the amount of money raised by the African-American Baptist Mission Collaboration. Presidents of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention; National Baptist Convention, USA; National Baptist Convention of America; National Missionary Baptist Convention of America; and Progressive National Baptist Convention decided shortly after the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake to pool resources of more than 10 million Baptists in the United States.

In June the presidents presented a first \$500,000 check to Habitat, the largest faith-based donation Habitat had received for Haiti relief. Raised within the first year, the combined \$1 million in gifts represents the first step toward a five year-goal of raising \$50 million to rebuild lives of those devastated by the earthquake.

The initial funding supported the construction of transitional shelters to help meet basic needs of more than 1,600 Haitians in Cabaret. Julius Scruggs, pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church, Huntsville, and current president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, said the second installment will be used in Leogane to fund more than 80 housing solutions, which includes materials, construction, site preparation, water, sanitation, training, community engagement and access to basic infrastructure such as roads, schools and churches.

BWA leader urges Nigerian president to ensure safety

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria — The head of the Baptist World Alliance called on Nigeria's president to take action to prevent further violence like an attack that killed the pastor and several members of a Baptist church on Christmas Eve. Neville Callam, general secretary of the global Baptist network based in Falls Church, Va., wrote Nigerian President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan urging him to "take all necessary measures to eliminate the conflict and violence with their accompanying human-rights violations." A wave of violence has rocked Africa's most populous nation in recent weeks in anticipation of upcoming elections. Boko Haram, an outlawed radical Islamic sect, is presumed to be linked to the terror, including a Christmas Eve attack on Victory Baptist Church, Maiduguri, the capital and the largest city of Borno State in northeastern Nigeria.

Campus News



Samford University

► **School of Business Ranked Among Best:** Samford University's

Brock School of Business has been ranked in the top tier of "best business schools" by *U.S. News & World Report's* annual rankings for 2011.

Samford was ranked 215th of the 596 business programs accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB).

This is the first time for Samford's business school to be ranked in the top tier.

The school was fully accredited by AACSB International in 1999 and reaccredited in 2010, a recognition earned by less than 5 percent of business schools worldwide. Of the more than 12,000 institutions worldwide that grant business degrees, only about 1,200 are accredited by an organization that awards accreditation on an international scale, such as AACSB.

To determine the rankings, *U.S. News* surveyed deans and faculty at AACSB-accredited institutions this past spring.

Survey participants were asked to rate the quality of programs with which they were familiar; the rankings were based on those peer assessments.

► **Samford Presents Visiting Visual Artist Series:** Samford University Visiting Visual Artist series presents Mary Ann Sampson, Bookmaking and Printmaking at the Samford art gallery Jan. 24–Feb. 23 weekdays from 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Sampson specializes in minia-

tures and broadsheets and explores the book as a means of visual expression. Reception and artist's talk will be Feb. 3 from 5–7 p.m. For more information, call 205-726-2840.



University of Mobile

► **Upper Room Theatre to Present 'Barefoot in the Park':** The University of

Mobile (UMobile) Upper Room Theatre will present "Barefoot in the Park" Feb. 11–13 and 18–20 in Martin Hall's black box thrust theatre. The curtain goes up at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 11, 12, 18 and 19. The Sunday matinees begin at 2:30 p.m. Feb. 13 and 20.

A reception will be held in Martin Hall's Donald Gallery one hour prior to each show.

"Barefoot in the Park" is a romantic comedy by Neil Simon about a straight-laced attorney and his free-spirited bride who live in a tiny sixth floor walk-up apartment with no heat, a hole in the skylight and oddball neighbors.

Bruce Earnest, chair and director of musical theatre, will serve as artistic director of the show. UMobile alumna Alison Wilks will direct the production, and Constance Smith is designing the set.

The box office opens Jan. 28 and hours are 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Monday through Friday. For tickets, call 251-442-2383.

► **Symphonic Winds Presents Concert:** The University of Mobile's Symphonic Winds ensemble will present a concert Feb. 24 at 6:30 p.m. in Ram Hall on the university's campus.

The concert will open the three-day Honor Band event, during which outstanding high school musicians will gather for musical instruction and presentation. The community is invited.

Wes Dykes, adjunct director of symphonic winds, will conduct the ensemble.

For more information, contact the Center for Performing Arts at 251-442-2420.



Judson College

► **Judson's Artist-in-Residence to Be Included in Black History Calendar:**

Judson College artist-in-residence and alumna Billie Jean Young was recently chosen to be featured in the inaugural edition of AT&T's Alabama African American History Calendar for 2011.

She will be July's featured personality.

Those chosen to be featured in the calendar either were born in Alabama or have made contributions to the state through their life and work.

Young joins other notables in the calendar including Martin Luther King Jr., baseball legend Hank Aaron and U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin.

Young graduated from Judson in 1974 as part of the class that included two black graduates for the first time in the college's history and was the second black woman to earn a law degree from Samford University's Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham.

For more information, visit www.alafrikanamerican.com.

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Retired Alabama pastor Brown dies at 97

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor Samuel M. Brown died Jan. 2. He was 97.

A Cullman native, Brown was a graduate of Samford University in

Birmingham and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

During his 50 years of full-time ministry, he served Dalraida Bap-

tist Church, Montgomery; Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster; Trinity Memorial Baptist Church, Montgomery; Tallaweka Baptist Church, Tallassee; First Baptist Church, Townley; and First Baptist Church, Bruce, Miss.

Brown served both Alabama and Mississippi as a volunteer consultant in missions and stewardship, working with each state convention's State Board of Missions.

He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Jean; three children; three grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. (TAB)



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 23

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson

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

SICK OF GREED?
2 Kings 5:14-16, 20-22, 24-27

Grace Not for Sale (14-16)

Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, had leprosy. Although the term was used for a variety of illnesses and does not correspond to a modern clinical term, leprosy was an extremely serious condition. The disease was progressive and Naaman was clearly in the early stages since he could still move about in public. It was, however, terminal with no known cure. By God's gracious providence, Naaman learned of a prophet in Israel who could cure his disease. The king of Syria sent him to Israel with a letter telling the king to cure Naaman of his leprosy. In the presence of such a demand, the unnamed king of Israel came unglued. He interpreted this letter as a pretense for war. He did not think about calling on the name of the Lord or his prophet, Elisha. He was totally out of touch with what was happening and blind to the hand of God. Elisha, however, knew God and His purposes. What the king could not do, God could. Elisha instructed the king to have Naaman come to him. Happily, the king sent Naaman to God's prophet. When Naaman arrived at Elisha's house, Elisha sent a messenger to him to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman exploded with anger and stomped away. His servants came to his rescue and attacked his pride with common sense. He would do something difficult to be healed, they reasoned, so why not try this possible cure? Naaman followed their advice and was healed. Naaman did not return directly to Syria to report his healing but to Elisha to confess his faith. He declared, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel." He then offered Elisha a present. Elisha rejected the gift. He would not accept payment or take credit for something that was God's act of grace.

Thoughts of a Profit (20-22)

It is possible to be close to God's work and people but to be far from God's heart. As Elisha's servant Gehazi watched Naaman depart, all he could see was a lost opportunity

for personal enrichment. His greed stood in stark contrast to Elisha's generosity and Naaman's gratitude. Gehazi was determined to spell prophet "p-r-o-f-i-t." His plan was simple and shrewd. Hurrying after Naaman, he caught him and spun a story, in Elisha's name, of unexpected visitors and a sudden need for provisions. Gehazi's shrewdness was evident in that his story was believable and his request was limited. Naaman graciously responded to this "need" and gave Gehazi two talents of silver and two sets of clothes for the needy guests. This sinful demonstration by a God-called man shocks us. Gehazi was driven by greed to such a degree that he could boldly lie in order to get what he wanted. We all must examine our motives, even when we attempt to help others. There are times when we help others while inwardly hoping to get something in return. How can we overcome these sinful temptations? We must look to the Spirit of Christ to transform our selfish desires into Christ-exalting desires. As we read and study Scripture, the Holy Spirit produces Christ's character within us, which, in turn, causes us to think with Christ's conscience and act with Christ's conduct.

No Good From Greed (24-27)

Gehazi hid the two talents of silver and the clothes in his house before he reported back to Elisha. He thought he had committed the perfect crime, but he had underestimated God's prophet. It was futile to try to deceive a man who was getting his information directly from God. By divine revelation, Elisha knew all that had taken place, and he made it clear to Gehazi that his disrespect for God and His word had been found out. His disobedience tarnished God's glory. To enrich oneself by cashing in on an act of God was reprehensible. And Gehazi would pay the price. Naaman's leprosy would cling to Gehazi and his descendants forever. As the story comes to an end, Naaman and Gehazi have traded places. The pagan soldier who humbled himself to submit to God's word through the prophet was healed. The prophet's servant who had disobeyed God's word tasted the bitterness of judgment.

Bible Studies for Life

By Scott McGinnis

Associate Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

A LIFESTYLE OF SACRIFICE
Luke 9:23-24, 57-62; 21:1-4;
Romans 12:1-2

Looking Through a Cross-shaped Lens (Luke 9:23-24)

Last week, we saw the paradoxical nature of what it means to follow Jesus: Those who desire to be first must become slaves of all (Mark 10:43-44). Similarly, in this week's passage, Jesus claims if we would save our lives, then we must lose them for His sake. It is tempting to read these admonitions as careful strategies for gaining our heart's desire: greatness, power, life. Greatness, traditionally understood, does not lie just around the bend after we complete a lifetime of sacrifice. Rather life in the Kingdom calls us to re-imagine greatness and, indeed, all human measures of success through a cross-shaped lens.

Followers of Jesus Are Strong (Luke 9:57-62)

What does it mean to follow Jesus? In a telling phrase that immediately precedes this passage, Luke tells us that Jesus "set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51), knowing where that journey would end. Of all the Gospels, Luke is the most explicit in depicting Jesus' agony as He approached the cross (Luke 22:39-46), and in this passage, discipleship is outlined in no uncertain terms. In modern society, Christian faith and "family values" are often spoken of in the same breath. So Jesus' advice to His would-be follower that he ignore his traditional family responsibility and "let the dead bury their own dead" falls hard on our ears, as does Jesus' teaching elsewhere that anyone who would follow Him must hate his or her family (Luke 14:26). Given Jesus' ethic of love on display throughout the Gospels, however, such admonitions are best seen as hyperbolic statements intended to put a sharp edge on true discipleship and highlight the difficult choices sometimes forced upon His followers. Christianity is woven into the fabric of today's society, but in the early church, choosing faith often meant challenging basic social institutions. Jesus Himself led an itinerant ministry in which His followers

often left their families behind (Luke 18:28). The story of the early Christian martyr Perpetua (d. 203) movingly portrays her determination to maintain her faith in the face of death, even when renunciation would have meant staying alive to raise her newborn daughter. Following Jesus was, and is, not for the faint of heart.

Followers of Jesus Are Determined (Luke 21:1-4)

Luke's Gospel is the gospel of the marginalized. Gentiles, women, sinners, the sick and the poor all come to the fore throughout as models of faith. The sinful woman who bathed Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:36-50), the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8) and tax collector-turned-benefactor Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) all showcase the single-minded determination that marks Jesus' followers. Here a poor widow, otherwise powerless in society, provides a most powerful example of sacrificial giving. The widow gave two lepta, the smallest coin in circulation, one of which equaled 1/128 of a denarius, a day's wage for a common laborer. Suffice it to say that no building would be constructed with her contribution and no memorial erected in her honor. Her gift's value as observed by Jesus lay in the context of her life. She gave what she had. Her sacrifice calls to mind the widow at Zarephath who ministered to the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:8-16).

Followers of Jesus Are Obedient (Rom. 12:1-2)

The apostle Paul was no stranger to the gospel's harsh demands. In this passage, however, he invited the Roman Christians to grow into the light of what God has accomplished for them. God has acted decisively in Christ to save (Rom. 3:21-26), and those in Christ now live in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8). Coming to know this reality requires that we be "transformed by the renewing of our minds." Like the grayest dawn that gives way to the most brilliant noon, God's grace breaks over us to save our minds, and ourselves, from the poverty of the world's notions of greatness.

Christian Crossword

By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

- Separate those who _____ the water ... like a dog. (Judg. 7:5 NIV)
- _____ fast that which is good. (1 Thes. 5:21)
- Kaffir warrior.
- People group living near Africa's lower Niger.
- Away from the wind.
- Woman's name.
- So can no _____ both yield salt water and fresh. (Jam. 3:12)
- A family name.
- But is under _____s and governors. (Gal. 4:2)
- _____, I have somewhat to say unto thee. (Luke 7:40)
- In the morning the _____ lay round about the host. (Ex. 16:13)
- Then the _____ of the house shall be brought unto the judges. (Ex. 22:8)
- And _____ begat Kish. (1 Chron. 8:33)
- Cast into the _____ of lions. (Dan. 6:7)
- O _____, where is thy sting? (1 Cor. 15:55)
- Hereafter ye shall see

- heaven _____. (John 1:51)
- Noise.
- A certain Pharisee besought him to _____ with him. (Luke 11:37)
- The _____ threw him to the ground. (Luke 9:42 NIV)
- Mazel.
- No. (Scottish)
- Thou shalt not _____ a kid in his mother's milk. (Ex. 23:19)
- Securities and Exchange Commission. (abbr.)
- Shopping meccas.
- They were counted worthy to suffer _____ for his name. (Acts 5:41)
- Virginia Senator.
- I beseech thee for my son _____. (Philemon 10)
- By faith _____ offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice. (Heb. 11:4)
- Glacial snow field.
- Oven.
- Thy feet are sunk in the _____. (Jer. 38:22)
- _____ not the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Rev. 22:10)
- We shall _____ him as he

is. (1 John 3:2)

Down

- Wherefore _____ up the hands which hang down. (Heb. 12:12)
- Father. (Arabic)
- Sulk.
- Hostility.
- Woman's name.
- Hawaiian gifts of greeting.
- Jeans fabric.
- Carnal ordinances, _____ on them. (Heb. 9:10)
- Say unto this _____, Remove hence. (Matt. 17:20)
- Persona non grata. (abbr.)
- Biblical name ending.
- And Cain went ... and dwelt in the land of _____. (Gen. 4:16)
- I am not _____, most noble Festus. (Acts 26:25)
- Marry.
- Sicilian volcano.
- Korean president.
- Dozes.
- Fencing sword.
- _____ now thy Creator. (Eccles. 12.1)
- Insect.

- Having a reputation.
- National Hockey League. (abbr.)
- I am like a broken _____. (Ps. 31:12)
- Belonging to the father of Bashemath. (Gen. 26:34)
- Greek letter.
- Dagger.
- The words of _____, who was among the herdmen. (Amos 1:1)
- I _____ on the work of Thy hands. (Ps. 143:5)
- This. (Spanish)
- Abraham went and took the _____, and offered him up. (Gen. 22:13)
- Japanese sash.
- Form of "Eve."



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By David Bruce Murray and Les Butler

BOOTH BROTHERS/ GREATER VISION/ LEGACY FIVE

Jubilee 2

Daywind

Greater Vision, the Booth Brothers and Legacy Five combine to create a male choir for "Jubilee 2," the second release in a series of recordings honoring the style of music popularized on "The Gospel Singing Jubilee" TV program.



The liner notes indicate specific combinations of voices for each song. The three tenors are listed on "Sing Me a Song About Jesus" for their featured verse, but Glenn Dustin isn't credited for his featured lines on the choruses. Similarly the three baritones are featured on the second verse of "I'm Free Again," but again Dustin is not credited. I suppose the logic may be that Dustin is technically part of the ensemble, even though he's the only one singing those lines. "When I Wake Up to Sleep No More" also has a mix of singers on the second verse with the full choir singing the rest of the song.

Five of the remaining songs feature specific groups. Another pairs the Booth Brothers with Legacy Five, and two songs showcase the full choir. Legacy Five sing "I Never Shall Forget the Day" and Henry Slaughter's classy "Every Day." Greater Vision deliver "My House Is Full" and "When They Ring the Bells of Heaven." The Booth Brothers sing an a cappella arrangement that combines "Crown Him King" with "He's My King." All three groups unite for "Jesus Is Coming Soon" and for the only recently written song on the CD, Rodney Griffin's "Undeserving." The Booth Brothers join with Legacy Five for smooth harmony on "Don't Hang Your Head and Cry," the CD's best vocal moment. (Murray)

ERNIE HAASE & SIGNATURE SOUND

A Tribute to The Cathedral Quartet
Gaither Music Group

What do you get when you take songs that have stood the test of time and add great production and vocals by one of the best quartets of today? The answer is Ernie Haase & Signature Sound's new CD, "A Tribute to The Cathedral Quartet."

This CD is both a classic and new recording all rolled into one.

It's classic in that the songs were originally recorded by The Cathedrals. It's new because Ernie Haase & Signature Sound firmly place their stamp on each song.

Each song contains many elements of the original Cathedrals recordings, while adding little twists and turns that make them uniquely Ernie Haase & Signature Sound.

I almost jumped out of my chair when I heard how George Younce's live introduction was incorporated into "Champion of Love." It was both clever and respectful.

Further I sure hope they single "God Delivers Again" to radio. The bluesy, 6/8 southern gospel beat is fabulous.

Throughout their career, The Cathedrals recorded many great songs penned by Bill and Gloria Gaither. Thus "The Gaither Medley" was a nice touch to this recording. Rounding out this project are two live cuts of "Oh, What a Savior" and "He Made a Change."

The CD and the DVD are "must buys" for every Cathedrals and Ernie Haase & Signature Sound fan. (Butler)



Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

One Year Alone With God: 366 Devotions on the Names of God

Ava Pennington. *Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2010. 382 pp. (Hardback).*

There has been a renewed emphasis the last few years on the names of God. We have learned to recognize Him as El Shaddai, Elohim, Jehovah Nissi and Jehovah Jireh, as well as other names that address different facets of God's nature.

In this book, Ava Pennington has taken 122 names and attributes of God and written three devotions on each. The devotions have a distinct pattern: for each name, the first devotion leads the reader to look up and discover why God describes Himself with this term; the second, to look inward to see how this attribute applies to us and the third, to look outward to learn how we should relate to others. Each devotion is based on a Scripture and includes a question to ponder.

Although this is Pennington's first book, she has been a contributor for

many books, including the "Chicken Soup" and "A Cup of Comfort" series, and has written for a number of magazines.

Leaving Gee's Bend

Irene Latham. *New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2010. 240 pp. (Hardback).*

Although she lived just more than a hundred miles from Gee's Bend, Ala., Irene Latham had never been there and had certainly never viewed the famous quilts produced by the residents of the tiny town. She loved textiles, however, and decided to attend an exhibit of Gee's Bend quilts in New York. Fascinated, she could not get the quilts and stories of Gee's Bend out of her mind; "Leaving Gee's Bend" is the result.

The story is told through the voice of Ludelphia Bennett, a black child growing up during the Great Depression. It was a difficult time for most Alabamians, but even more difficult for sharecroppers who lived from one crop to the next, with little buffer between them and

disaster. Ludelphia weaves the story through and around a quilt she is making for her ailing mother. The framework for the story is based on a true incident, while the characters are fictional.

To Feel His Heartbeat

Lisa McGalliard. *Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, 2010. 102 pp. (Paperback).*

When Lisa McGalliard's family was going through a trying time, a friend suggested that Lisa start keeping a journal. "To Feel His Heartbeat" is the result — a series of intimate, heartfelt reflections on how God was working in her life. The journal begins on the day before the family filed for bankruptcy and chronicles a three-month period in the author's life. The entries describe McGalliard's struggle to come to terms with the family's financial problems as she simultaneously seeks to draw closer to God — so close she can feel His heartbeat.

McGalliard is a member of Marble City Baptist Church, Sylacauga, in Coosa River Association.

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Unlocked**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **The Twelfth Imam**, Joel C. Rosenberg (Tyndale House)
3. **Her Mother's Hope**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
4. **Her Daughter's Dream**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
5. **Redeeming Love**, Francine Rivers (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
6. **The Thorn**, Beverly Lewis (Bethany House/Baker)
7. **The Shack**, William P. Young (Windblown)
8. **In the Company of Others**, Jan Karon (Penguin)
9. **Immanuel's Veins**, Ted Dekker (Thomas Nelson)
10. **Sarah's Choice**, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)

Nonfiction

1. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C. Cook)
3. **Jesus Calling — Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. **Streams in the Desert**, L.B. Cowman and Jim Reimann (Zondervan)
5. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Outlive Your Life**, Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)
7. **Choosing to SEE**, Mary Beth Chapman and Ellen Vaughn (Revell/Baker)
8. **Bonhoeffer**, Eric Metaxas (Thomas Nelson)
9. **Radical**, David Platt (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
10. **Coming Economic Armageddon**, David Jeremiah (FaithWords)

Bible

1. **Text Bible NKJV** (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Outreach New Testament ESV** (Crossway)
3. **One Year Bible NIV paperback** (Tyndale House)
4. **NIV Thinline Bible burgundy bonded leather** (Zondervan)
5. **NIV Adventure Bible hardback** (Zondervan)
6. **NIV True Images Italian duo-tone chocolate/bubble gum** (Zondervan)
7. **ESV Share the Good News Outreach New Testament** (Crossway)
8. **God Sightings: The One Year Bible NLT paperback** (Tyndale House)
9. **NIV Revolution Italian duo-tone mediterranean blue/black** (Zondervan)
10. **NIV Adventure Bible hardback** (Zondervan)

Bring the rain

Selah member and wife choose to carry baby despite diagnosis

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When the contemporary Christian group Selah recorded “It Is Well With My Soul” and “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” for their 1999 debut album, “Be Still My Soul,” one of its members, Todd Smith, had no idea how those hymns would help him and his family through a season of grief nearly a decade later.

When Smith’s wife, Angie, was 18-weeks pregnant with their fourth daughter, Audrey Caroline, she went in for what she thought would be a routine ultrasound.

She recalls the medical technician asking several cryptic questions before her doctor came in and confirmed her worst possible fears: “Your child has many conditions. Her kidneys aren’t functioning and her heart is much too large. Each of these are a lethal condition. There is no amniotic fluid, and her lungs are not developing. You will have some choices to make.”

The doctor and his staff encouraged her to terminate the pregnancy. Overwhelmed, the Smiths sought the opinions of other doctors and specialists. The general consensus was their baby would die in the womb and if she did survive birth, then she probably would gasp for breath and live only a minute at the most. The couple left each doctor’s visit confused and shaken, but they adamantly refused to have an abortion.

During their time of uncertainty and heartache, the Smiths had little left to do but cry out to God and trust in Him — no matter what the outcome would be for their baby. In order to provide updates to friends and family, Angie Smith began writing a blog called Bring the Rain.

During Selah’s concerts, Todd Smith asked audiences for prayer and shared about his wife’s blog. Within a few months, Bring the Rain was receiving 500,000 hits per month and Angie Smith became one of America’s top-ranked “mommy bloggers.”

While anticipating their baby’s birth, the couple concluded a C-section would give her the greatest possibility to live.

“Angie was just so brave. She was in so much pain because there was no amniotic fluid. She just sacrificed her body,” Todd Smith said.

On April 7, 2008, Audrey entered the world and exited it a few hours later. The Smiths consider the few precious hours they spent with her a miracle and precious gift from God.

“When Audrey came out, we got to hear her cry, which we thought we would never get to do, and I got to see her move just a little bit,” Todd



Photo courtesy of Todd and Angie Smith

I WILL CARRY YOU — Todd Smith, member of contemporary Christian group Selah, and his wife, Angie, open up about the grief of losing their daughter Audrey just two hours after her birth.

Smith said. “I brought her over to Angie and we just wept. Everything that we could think of to tell her right there, we did. She just had this beautiful little face.

“She lived for about two and a half hours and never gasped for breath. There was no screaming. It was just so peaceful. In fact, it was the most peaceful day that I’ve ever experienced in my life. I would have never thought that was possible, but there was so much joy. We were with our girl, and we wanted to show her off to everybody. God just really turned a horrible experience into something amazing.”

Shortly after learning that Audrey’s condition would be terminal, Angie Smith wanted to create a song to convey her feelings about Audrey. She and her husband met with songwriter Christa Wells and wrote the song, “I Will Carry You.” Although the song originally was intended only for Audrey’s memorial service, the other members of Selah were so moved by it they requested it be released to the public.

though the song originally was intended only for Audrey’s memorial service, the other members of Selah were so moved by it they requested it be released to the public.

Waves of grief

Between waves of grief in the weeks following Audrey’s death, the Smith family experienced another devastating loss. Todd Smith’s sister Nicol Sponberg, a Christian recording artist and former member of Selah, lost her 2-month-old son, Luke, to sudden infant death syndrome. In their grief, the Smiths had a foundational choice to make.

“We had to look at what we were going to choose to believe,” Todd Smith said. “We had to decide if the God that we chose to worship in the good times was the same and just as faithful in this horrific time. It hasn’t been easy. There have been, and still are, major ups and downs, but we choose to trust Him because we know that He is good and faithful.

“You need to be honest about your desperation and honest about how awful it is. Yes, it is horrible. You deal with these different times where you have disbelief, incredible pain, anger, frustration and unanswered questions. But at the same time, there’s this incredible peace and this hope. ...

“Every time we hear that a person’s life has been changed through what happened to us, it gives weight to Audrey’s life. My little girl, who was in the womb for 32 weeks, has made more of an impact on people than I probably will my whole life.”

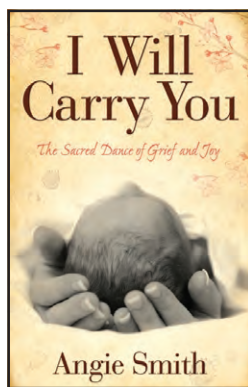
Angie Smith has written a book, “I Will Carry You,” as a way to minister to others who have suffered the loss of a child while sharing that the source of her hope and peace comes from a relationship with Christ.

“I think one of the main themes that I learned through this is that God is not intimidated by my frustrations, questions and sadness,” she said. “I definitely developed a different understanding of Christ as a comforter. Just knowing that no matter what I was feeling or how alone I felt, I had to bring all of that to Him, instead of shying away. We are all going to go through times where we feel like everything is falling apart, but what God wants is for us to remain faithful and turn to Him during those times for comfort and just cry out to Him. ...

“I think we’d be lying if we said that there weren’t moments where we just felt abandoned and confused. But to come through this experience and feel like our faith is stronger is an amazing testimony of who God is to us when we’re in those dark places.

“I think it’s different when you’ve walked through a season like this to be able to say, ‘We’re just barely on the other side of this, but we do have hope and a strong faith because we know that Jesus will not fail those who trust in Him.’”

To purchase the book, visit thealabamabaptist.org and click on the LifeWay Christian Stores button.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Muslims block church services, seize property in Indonesia

BOGOR, Indonesia — Government officials in West Java province blocked one church from worshipping, and Islamic groups pressured authorities to seize the property of another during the Christmas season.

The Bogor Regency Administrative Leadership Council tried unsuccessfully to forbid the Indonesian Christian Church (ICC) in Bogor’s Taman Yasmin area from holding a Dec. 25 Christmas service, but authorities did block it from its regular Sunday service Dec. 26.

In Rancaekek, Bandung, Islamic demonstrators got police to remove items from a Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) church building Dec. 19 that had already been sealed.

In Bogor, ICC Yasmin spokesperson Bona Sigalingging said police telephoned church leaders to forbid Christmas services that were to begin at 7 p.m. The church held services anyway, with nearby demonstrators screaming, “Allahu akbar (God is greater)!” and “Break it up!” Authorities blocked them from worshipping the next morning, however, at their regular Sunday service.

In Rancaekek, Bandung, Islamic protestors occupying the front part of the HKBP church premises clamored for police to remove property from the building; eventually authorities removed the pews and other items. The local government had already sealed the building, but demonstrators from the hard-line Muslim Intellectuals Gathering Forum of Rancaekek arrived Dec. 19 at 4 a.m. calling for its belongings to be removed, sources said.

Local officials ultimately brought three cars to take property out of the place of worship, and at 10:30 a.m. the pews and other items were seized.

Pakistani church leaders accused of misusing loudspeakers

MARTINPUR, Pakistan — Christian leaders in Punjab province’s Nankana Sahib district said they were apprehensive after a police inspector’s warning Jan. 7 that “they would be responsible for anything that went wrong in the villages” if they continued preaching over a public address system. Eight pastors leading a delegation of more than 100 Christians from Martinpur and Youngsenabad villages had persuaded police to drop the charge of preaching over the church loudspeakers — a practice routinely allowed by Muslims in mosques.

They complained of inspector Muhammad Rana Ishaq’s veiled threat to the police chief, but they fear Ishaq will file other false cases against them in retaliation for the withdrawal of the charge. The Christian delegation registered a strong protest with the Nankana police chief for restricting their worship. After two hours of talks, the police chief conceded that his staff had discriminated against the Christians and ordered withdrawal of the case. Police had filed a case against the eight pastors for “misusing loudspeakers” Dec. 25, 2010. Pastor Mubarak Victor of Cavalry Gospel Church, Martinpur village said the charge was ridiculous, as they have been preaching and worshipping on public address systems for decades.

“Our villages are inhabited by Christians, and we have been worshipping freely for years,” Victor said. “A ban on using loudspeakers was imposed on Muslim clerics because they often indulge in fanning sectarianism. This action of the administration is nothing but religious bigotry.”

VOICE YOUR OPINION

SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible