

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

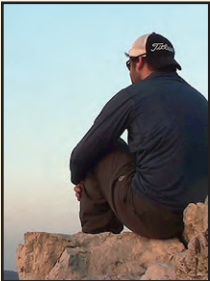


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'Great day for Sudan'

Southern Sudanese hope for victory in vote to secede from north

Many in southern Sudan and neighboring countries are trying to refrain from a premature celebration after early reports from a weeklong referendum on independence that began Jan. 9 indicated an overwhelming majority voted to separate from the north.

"I am so happy I have now voted; you can see the ink on my finger," said Thomas Maingi, a Sudanese Christian. "I want to go back to my country. I believe God will bless our new country."

In addition to those living in southern Sudan, thousands of Sudanese refugees — like Maingi — who have found shelter in neighboring countries, were given the opportunity to vote in the referendum. There were eight voting locations in Kenya alone.

Although the official results will not be announced until sometime in February, if passed, then the referendum will officially designate southern Sudan as a new nation. Sudan has been ravaged by years of civil war between the heavily Islamic, Arab-dominated north and the predominantly Christian and animist south. The conflict has driven many southern Sudanese to flee to neighboring countries.

The referendum, however, brings hope to refugees for a return to an independent homeland.

"This is a great day for Sudan and for Africa," Sudanese voter Michael Muzusa said. "I have been in Kenya for 16 years."

He said he was going back to his country when the voting was over.

Muzusa's sentiments were shared by many of the Sudanese voters in Nairobi. Some, like Jane Wanjiku, believe their move to Kenya was orchestrated by God.

"From the very beginning of the struggle, I feel that God has had a plan for us," Wanjiku said. "I think He sent me to Kenya so I could prepare myself for going back to Sudan."

Even though there are reports that some were killed in clashes along the northern and southern border of



BP photo

'I BELIEVE GOD WILL BLESS OUR NEW COUNTRY' — Sudanese women living in Nairobi, Kenya, excitedly line up to cast their vote for Sudan's independence referendum Jan. 9. Voting was held through Jan. 15 in Sudan and neighboring countries where Sudanese refugees live.

Sudan during the week of the referendum, many, including members of the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council and the African Union, are calling the election, which surpassed the 60 percent threshold needed to validate the vote, an overall success.

"We are praying that we may celebrate without violence; whether we separate or unite, we shall give it to God," Sudanese Christian David Wambui said.

"Of course, I am afraid of violence, because enough is enough. We have lost too many lives and souls to violence."

Raymond Lyrene, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, along with wife Allyson, has been going to a village in southern Sudan with a team from his church since 2003.

"We are really excited about a separate nation possibly coming about," Lyrene said. "If it doesn't come about, it is very likely that the two parts will go back into civil war. ... So we are anxiously awaiting the results of the election."

Northern and southern Sudan have been at odds since 1955, when civil

war erupted as the region gained independence from the United Kingdom and Egypt. It is estimated that during the civil war, more than 2 million southerners died and more than 4 million were displaced.

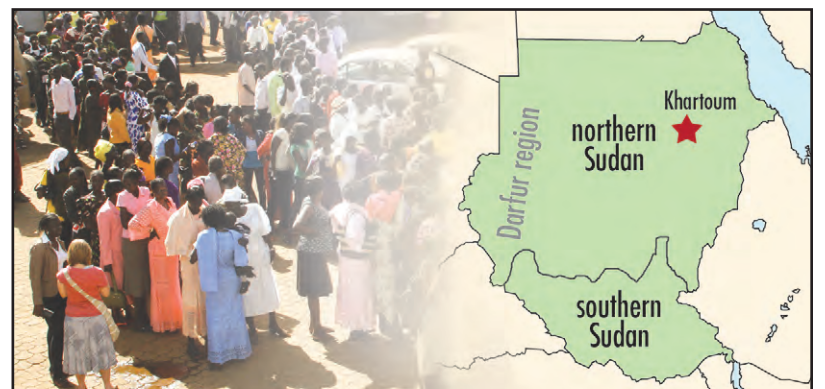
Displaced people

According to the U.S. Department of State, this created "the world's largest population of internally displaced people." But since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 that ended the Sudanese civil war, the U.N. estimates

that nearly 2 million of the 4 million displaced have returned home.

Although the civil war ended, violence did not. In 2003, violence broke out against non-Arab tribes in the Darfur region of Sudan. As a result, two groups representing those who had been attacked — farmers and non-Arabs — rebelled. The Sudanese government responded by providing funds to rival tribes that left hundreds of thousands dead and millions displaced. Even though the amount of the violence has ceased in Sudan,

(See 'Give,' page 3)



Graphic by Lauren Chow

COMMENT

When We Speak About the Bible

When Baptists speak of the Bible, we use words and phrases like “divinely inspired,” “God’s revelation,” “true” and “trustworthy.” As first written in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith in 1833 and repeated in every version of the Baptist Faith and Message, we believe the Bible “has God for its author, salvation for its end and truth without any mixture of error for its matter.”

This belief places Baptists squarely in the middle of the confessional stream of the Christian church, which has held from earliest days that the Bible is “God-breathed.”

One reason for this position is the role of divine authority that Jesus and the apostles gave to the Old Testament. For our Lord and His earliest followers, the Old Testament, the Scripture of that day, was God’s Word. It was the final authority and it was unchanging.

In the famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared that everything in Scripture must be accomplished. “Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished,” Jesus said (Matt. 5:18).

Such confidence in the authority of Scripture is not an isolated statement recorded by Matthew. Luke quotes Jesus on two occasions, saying what Scripture teaches must come to pass. In Luke 21:22, Jesus talked about destruction coming to Jerusalem and declared the punishment to be “in fulfillment of all that has been written,” a reference to the sacred Jewish writing.

In Luke 24:44, Jesus told His followers that “everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

In John 10:35, Jesus responded to the mob that wanted to stone Him by declaring, “The Scripture cannot be broken.”

There is no doubt how Jesus viewed the books of the Old Testament. They were authoritative and divinely inspired. While arguing with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Jesus asked, “Have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?’” (Matt. 22:31–32).

Here Jesus equated the words written by Moses in Exodus 4:5 with the very words of God. What God said, Moses wrote — that was Jesus’ position.

Perhaps that is why studying the Law (the first five books of the Bible), the Prophets (Joshua,



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 minor prophets) and the Writings (all the other books) was so important to our Lord.

In the argument with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Jesus condemned these Jewish leaders for not knowing the Scripture (Matt. 22:29). In John 5:39, Jesus accepted the position that the Jews “diligently studied the Scripture” because of the writings’ divine authority.

Divinely inspired

There can be no doubt that Jesus viewed the Old Testament as divinely inspired, true and trustworthy. And that He believed the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms all pointed toward Him (Luke 24:44).

Both the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul believed the Scripture was divinely inspired. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:21 that “prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Near the end of his life, Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy. First he recalled that Timothy had been reared with knowledge of Holy Scripture from his infancy (2 Tim. 3:15). The primary reference of the verse is the Scripture we know as the Old Testament since most of the New Testament was not written at the time Timothy was an infant.

Paul followed that reference with a declaration of his understanding of Scripture. He said, “All Scripture is God-breathed.” That is emphatic and unmistakable. Like Jesus, Peter and Paul believed the source of Scripture was God.

Neither of the apostles spent a great deal of time describing the process of inspiration, but both believed the result of inspiration. Scripture was the result of writers being “carried along by the Holy Spirit,” Peter said (2 Pet. 1:21). Scripture is “God-breathed,” Paul echoed (2 Tim. 3:16).

When Peter preached the sermon at Pentecost following the anointing by the Holy Spirit, he quoted Psalm 16. Then he equated the words of the Psalm with the promise of God (Acts 2:30).

Similarly Paul quoted from Psalms and Isaiah in Acts 13 and described these words as “God’s promise” (Acts 13:32). In Acts 28:25, Paul said,

“The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when He said through Isaiah the prophet ...”

It is obvious that both Peter and Paul understood the writings of the Old Testament to be divinely inspired with God as their source.

Bible students are aware that Paul taught that his preaching and teaching were the result of divine inspiration. For example, in 1 Corinthians 2:4, he wrote, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom but on God’s power.”

Yet Paul never placed his words above the words of the Old Testament. In Berea and other places, for example, Paul encouraged the Jews to examine the Scripture (the Old Testament writings) to see if what he said was true.

Obviously the apostles believed what Jesus taught — that the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms and all the rest of Scripture pointed to Him.

This is not an exhaustive look at the inspiration of the Old Testament to be sure. But from these verses, it seems clear that Jesus and the apostles believed in the divine inspiration and the authoritative rule of Scripture. So should we.

Next week, we will continue this topic, looking at reasons Baptists believe in the inspiration of the New Testament.



“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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Someone You Should Know

By June Mathews, Correspondent, TAB

Jeff Smith

Hughes Memorial Baptist Church, Pinson
Birmingham Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Psalm 118:24
FAVORITE HYMN: "The Unclouded Day"
HOBBIES: Hunting, fishing, making unique walking sticks and canes and spending time outdoors

FAMILY STATUS: Married to LuAnn for 31 years; two sons, Matthew and Brett; and three grandchildren with a fourth due this summer



SMITH

Jeff Smith's willingness to serve at church, whatever the job may be, has kept him busy over the years. To him, even tasks like stacking chairs and mopping floors can be blessings when done for the Lord.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I came to know the Lord from the influence of several key people: my parents, first and foremost; some very dear friends of the family; and a couple of Sunday School teachers. I gave my life over to my Lord and Savior on Aug. 6, 1972, during a James Robinson crusade at my home church, Huffman Baptist.

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

A: I have been privileged to serve as a deacon for the past 27 years, as well as a Discipleship Training teacher with children ages 6–12. Serving on the youth committee has always been a joy.

Q: What have you gotten from that involvement?

A: I know that I have received much, much more than I have given. I can't imagine life without a church family such as mine.

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

A: I see myself serving in the future much the same as I serve now. I personally do not think that the Lord intends for us to retire from service. I think He would be pleased for us to serve until we are called home or until He returns.

Q: What does the Christian life mean to you?

A: It means that I should live my life in a manner that others may be able to see Christ through me. ... With each and every day and the help of my Savior, I strive to be more like Him.

'Give back our land'

Christians pray for a country where they can worship freely

(continued from page 1)

there are still small outbreaks of violence throughout the country between Arab and non-Arab peoples.

The civil war also resulted in widespread malnutrition and starvation, especially in the southern part of the country because of a lack of investment in the area. As a result, there is an ongoing humanitarian problem in this area.

For those who have remained in southern Sudan, life has focused on survival. Rather than attending school, boys are sent to cattle camps, where they defend their livelihood with spears and AK-47s in clashes with northern-supported militias.

Christians hope a new country will provide religious freedom and equality.

"We are praying to God for the secession of southern Sudan so that we can be black Africans in an independent land," said Eric Karanja, another Sudanese believer living in Kenya. "We don't want to be in the womb of Arabs. It is time for us to pray to God hard so that He can give back our land."

Crude oil exports from Sudan generate millions of dollars for the country. Many observers cite oil as a factor in the referendum. Sudanese Christians, however, say they are more concerned with freedom to practice their faith — and freedom from the north's harsh enforcement of Islamic law. According to BBC News Africa, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has announced he will implement a stricter version of Islam's sacred law, Shariah, in the north if the south secedes.



BP photo

HOPING FOR INDEPENDENCE — Sudanese refugees proudly wave the southern Sudan flag Jan. 9 in Nairobi, Kenya. The city, where many Sudanese refugees live, was one of the voting centers for the Sudan referendum.

If the referendum passes, then a new Southern Sudan is expected to be established by July. But much work lies ahead to overcome the effects civil war has had on the region, including poverty and poor infrastructure.

"When we are beginning our new country, the first thing we need to do is build schools and put up churches," said David Mwolo,

another Sudanese Christian. "People should have freedom and this is how we want to begin our new country."

The referendum is the final benchmark of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

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

Alabama Baptist CP giving falls short in 2010

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For the second consecutive year, Cooperative Program (CP) giving has fallen short of Alabama Baptists' base goal. Now the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) is trying to make every dollar count while continuing to help churches spread the gospel throughout the state.

In 2010, overall giving totaled \$41,727,510 — more than \$4.2 million below the \$46 million goal, almost \$1.3 million less than the 2011 base budget and nearly \$2 million under 2009 giving.

Bobby DuBois, the SBOM's associate executive director, said the decreased giving "reflects the downward trend in our churches."

"A large number of our churches are currently experiencing financial challenges due to a sluggish economy," he said. "Charitable giving tends to lag the rest of the economy. It took a year or so for the recessed economy to impact church giving, and it will likely take a year or more for churches to recover once the economy does rebound."

Yet Alabama Baptists surpassed the goals of designated giving to state causes and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes with \$305,102 to the state and \$504,564 to the SBC. Designated giving exceeded projections by \$5,102 for the state and \$104,564 for the SBC.

"In spite of the economic downturn, Alabama Baptists are still on mission with the Great Commission," DuBois said. "[The Alabama Baptist State Convention] remains committed as an SBC ministry partner and will be a pacesetter in missions giving so that the

gospel can be taken from our Jerusalem to the ends of the earth."

Like the CP receipts, some special offerings came up short.

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering donations totaled \$10,964,779, which was \$535,220 short of the goal. Receipts for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering were \$594,460 less than its \$6 million goal, and the World Hunger offering was \$749,201 — \$125,798 short.

Making adjustments

But Alabama Baptists did meet and exceed the goals in two areas. They gave \$1,038,988 to the Disaster Relief Offering — \$938,988 over its goal — and \$2,621,397 to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, exceeding its \$2,555,000 goal.

While \$17,734,191.88 of Alabama's CP dollars went to the SBC, total Alabama giving to the SBC was \$35,542,222.97.

DuBois said the SBOM lives and dies with the CP but eliminating ministries is the "last thing" it wants to do to deal with decreased receipts. "We will ask staff members to assume greater workloads, and we will adjust our expenses before we start cutting ministries," he said. "We are asking office directors to carefully review their office budgets to see if there

are adjustments they can make in the way they do ministry. We will continue to streamline what we do and how we do in an effort to be good stewards of resources and carry out our Great Commission assignments."

A few ways the SBOM has adjusted to the deficit are employing fewer people, eliminating the Trustee Leadership Conference and staff Christmas event, changing health insurance carriers, freezing staff salaries for the past three years and reducing postage expenses by using electronic communications more effectively.

"Churches, associations, Alabama Baptist entities and Southern Baptist Convention entities are all facing the same challenges we are," DuBois noted. "Giving is down across the board, and each member of the Baptist family is having to make hard decisions about present and future ministry. ... We are thankful for every mission dollar sent by our churches through the SBOM."

Even though the economy will likely continue its slow recovery in 2011, DuBois remains optimistic that Alabama Baptists will remain strong in their financial support of the local church, association, state convention and SBC to the glory of God.

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Chinese President Hu Jintao publicly confronted about human rights issues

American reporters and the president of the United States publicly confronted China's President Hu Jintao on Jan. 19 on the issue of human rights in China, and Hu admitted "a lot still needs to be done" on the issue.

Although Hu at first dodged a reporter's question about human rights during a White House press conference, remaining silent after President Obama fielded the question, the Chinese leader was forced to answer when a second reporter repeated the question.

According to the *Washington Post*, the first reporter asked Hu, "How do you justify China's record [on human rights], and do you think that's any of the business of the American people?"

Rather than reply, Hu looked to a reporter from China's state-run TV network and allowed her to ask a question about "friendship and mutual understanding."

Ignoring the question

When the next American reporter pointed out that Hu ignored the question about human rights, the Chinese president replied, "Because of the technical translation and interpretation problem, I did not hear the question about the human rights," the *Post* reported.

Hu continued: "China is a devel-

oping country with a huge population, and also a developing country in a crucial stage of reform. In this context, China still faces many challenges in economic and social development. And a lot still needs to be done in China in terms of human rights."

It was, according to the *Post* report, "a rare concession" from the Chinese leader, even though Hu did not actually say he believes China should conform its human rights policies and practice to the internationally accepted norms of democratic countries.

For his part, Obama kept his promise to put the issue of human rights prominently on the agenda of his four-day summit with the top leader of the emerging communist-controlled superpower.

Besides billion-dollar trade deals and talks about nuclear proliferation and trade imbalances, Obama urged Hu to allow more freedom to Chinese citizens and to open a meaningful dialogue with Tibet's exiled Dalai Lama, the *Post* reported.

Obama also reportedly raised the case of Liu Xiaobo, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning activist currently imprisoned in China, in a private meeting with Hu, officials said.

During a welcoming ceremony

for Hu on the White House lawn, Obama addressed the issue of human rights, saying: "Societies are more harmonious, nations are more successful, and the world is more just when the rights and responsibilities of all nations and all people are upheld, including the universal rights of every human being," the *Post* reported.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who previously has said human rights concerns should not interfere with progress on issues such as climate change and the global financial crisis, publicly told the Chinese ambassador Jan. 14 the United States disapproves of Chinese dissidents being silenced with imprisonment and "disappearances."

The shift in attitude on human rights reflects an American concern that if China remains a one-party state as it grows in global influence, it could be more unstable than one moving ahead with democratic reforms, the *Post* said.

China's rise

"We welcome China's rise," Obama said, according to the newspaper report. "We just want to make sure that ... rise occurs in a way that reinforces international norms and international rules, and enhances security and peace, as opposed to it being a source of conflict."

Obama also invited Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, to attend the Jan. 19 state dinner in Hu's honor — another clear indication of U.S. concern for more freedom in China, the *Post* said. (BP)

"China still faces many challenges in economic and social development. And a lot still needs to be done in China in terms of human rights."

Hu Jintao
president of China

Seminaries confer degrees on Alabamians

A number of Alabama Baptists graduated from Southern Baptist seminaries and Alabama Baptists' divinity school with degrees at the master's level or above during the fall 2010 semester.

Graduates' names, hometowns and degrees were provided by their schools.

► New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Doctor of educational ministry — Michael Jones, Birmingham, and Lee Walton, Joppa

Doctor of ministry — Danny Courson, Birmingham; Chris Martin, Decatur; and Chris Terrell, Aniston

Master of arts in Christian education — Debbie Smith, Mobile

Master of divinity — Adam Brewer, Prattville; Kyle Dean Kelley, Birmingham; Gary Schultz, Birmingham; Stephen Lee Web, Sylacauga; and Andy Wilbanks, Hoover

Master of divinity with specialization in urban missions —

Marvin Otto Robinson, Citronelle
Master of theology — Donald Clarence Sandau Jr., Prattville

► Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Doctor of philosophy — James Morris Todd III, Pintlala

Master of arts in Christian studies — Dan Philip Davis, Daphne

Master of divinity with Christian ministry — Junior White, Oxford

► Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Doctor of ministry — Earl Creston Johnson, Phenix City

Master of arts in biblical counseling — Garon James Griffiths, Foley

Master of arts in Christian education — Christopher James Ward, Auburn

Master of arts in theological studies — William Gregory Hyche, Birmingham, and Allison D'Lena Wilks, Henagar

Master of divinity — Matthew Edward Fike, Florence; Phung

Thanh Huynh, Birmingham; Kevin DeWitt McLendon, Mobile; Michael David Pate, Mobile; Tyler Morgan Smith, Anderson; and Donald Davis Thornbury III, Montgomery

► Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of arts in Christian education — Matthew Stephen Michalke, Pinson

Master of music — Gwendolyn Michelle Trippi, Mobile

► Beeson Divinity School

Master of divinity — James Mark Gill, Birmingham; Whittington Colom Goodwin, Headland; Cary Brock Hughes, Birmingham; Matthew Derek Jacks, Birmingham; Richard Parker Johnson, Montgomery; Christopher Gerald Moore, Birmingham; Shaylon Matthew Sharp, Birmingham; and Lyord Watson Jr., Brewton

Master of theological studies — Ryan Christian Adams, Leeds (TAB)

Religious persecution more prevalent in Muslim countries

The New Year's Day massacre at a Coptic church in Egypt. Christian converts facing the death penalty in Afghanistan. Swastikas painted on a Jewish synagogue in Venezuela.

As the headlines deliver fresh stories of the persecution of the faithful, two recent reports by watchdog groups and a new book take a fresh look at the persistence of religious intolerance worldwide, with Muslim-majority nations facing particular criticism.

"Religious persecution is not only more prevalent among Muslim-majority countries, but it also generally occurs at more severe levels," Roger Finke and Brian J. Grim write in their new book "The Price of Freedom Denied," published by Cambridge University Press.

Finke and Grim drew on annual reports by the U.S. State Department to conclude that religious persecution plagues all regions of the globe.

Studying 143 countries, they found that:

► 86 percent of countries in recent years had cases of people physically abused or removed from their homes based on their religion.

► High levels of government restrictions on religion were found in 78 percent of Muslim-majority nations, as opposed to 10 percent of Christian-majority nations and 43 percent of other nations.

Open Doors, a California-based evangelical group that defends Christian rights globally, also found Muslim-majority nations particularly hostile in its recent list of the most dangerous countries in which to practice Christianity. While North Korea tops the list for the ninth consecutive year in the Open Doors report, eight of the top 10 offenders are Muslim-majority nations. North Korea is followed by Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Maldives, Ye-

men, Iraq, Uzbekistan and Laos.

Open Doors President Carl Moeller said he is particularly concerned about increasing violence against Christians in Iraq and Afghanistan; Iraq broke into the top 10 for the first time, up from No. 17, and showed the most dramatic deterioration for Christians.

"These are countries we sought to bring freedom to, and they don't enjoy the most basic freedom we have in our country — religious freedom," said Moeller, whose group devised a 50-question survey to rank countries.

Vulnerable groups

A new report focusing on the most vulnerable religious communities in the world was released by the nondenominational First Freedom Center. In "Minority Religious Communities At Risk," the Richmond, Va.-based group identifies groups threatened with extinction within a decade.

"These are countries we sought to bring freedom to, and they don't enjoy the most basic freedom we have in our country — religious freedom."

Carl Moeller
Open Doors

They are, according to First Freedom: Orthodox Christians in Turkey, Jehovah's Witnesses in Eritrea, Jews in Arab lands, Jews in Venezuela, Nazarene Christians in Somalia, Masalit Muslims in Sudan, and Sabian Mandeans (a Christian sect) in Iraq.

Relying on the State Department's religious freedom reports and other sources, First Freedom, like Open Doors, calls attention to the growing violence against religious minorities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The group's president, former Ambassador Randolph Bell, said the report bolsters his view that protecting religious freedom must be integral to U.S. peace-keeping operations.

"Whenever we try to stabilize situations in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia or Nigeria, if we do not take into account the rights of religious minorities, peace will not last," Bell said. (RNS)

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'I wanted mountains'

Alabamian hikes in East Asia, takes gospel to unreached people group in 'hidden village'

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

It hit Leroy Johnson like a ton of bricks — he knew this village.

He knew it even though he'd never been to it, even though no one had ever been to it before.

He'd seen it back in Alabama four years ago before he'd ever even thought about taking the gospel into the mountains of East Asia.

"I was struggling (back in 2007) with how I could best serve Him and what that was supposed to look like. He gave me a vision one night of me in a village in some country, sharing truth with the people,"

Johnson said. "So I began to pray and look at options on how to proceed."

He had never considered serving overseas before, and he had definitely never considered East Asia. But slowly, he said, God prompted him to go there.

"God began to prepare the heart He called," said Johnson, an Alabama native who now serves as a Southern Baptist representative in East Asia. "I knew I wanted to work with unreached peoples, and I knew I wanted to go to peoples that were physically hard to reach — I wanted mountains."

And mountains he got.

"The most precious of those

confirmations of His call was the first trail I found in the mountains — a simple goat trail that led to a simple village that led to a stone hut doorstep," Johnson said.

He found that stone hut after an unlikely chain of events. He rode a bus to a village with no real plans after he got there. And the darkness there, he said, was physically oppressive.

He prayed, "Lead me to the right person who can lead me to the right bus to take me to the right spot in the mountains. Then show me which way to walk."

He stood in the street, and a man tapped him on the shoulder and pointed him to a bus. Once on the bus, a man who spoke perfect English told him where to go to find "hidden villages."

Johnson shared the gospel with the man and then got off the bus. After praying and walking for a while, Johnson felt God telling him to look up so he did.

"I saw a trail," he said, and he followed it. "After a little bit, I began to smell smoke and I rounded a bend to see a village in the middle of nowhere. I began to take pictures of the village but didn't see any people."

They were hiding from him.

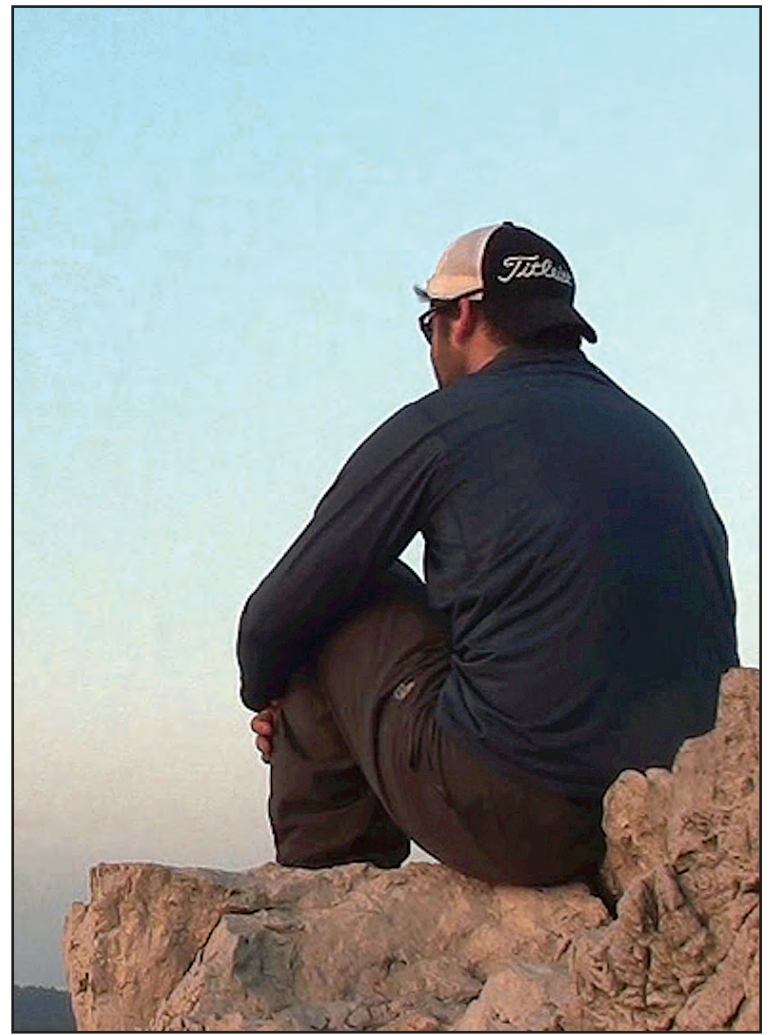
"I decided to leave. As I was walking, a man came up the trail carrying a bundle of sticks. I asked if I could take his picture, and he said yes — and then invited me into his home."

That day, the truth about Jesus



IMB photo

HEARING ABOUT JESUS FOR THE FIRST TIME — Southern Baptist representative Leroy Johnson met this family as he hiked the trail in East Asia that led him to a village no one from the outside had ever visited.



IMB photo

FOLLOWING TRAILS — Alabamian Leroy Johnson sits atop a mountain in East Asia. He serves as a Southern Baptist representative and feels called to work with unreached people groups.

Christ was shared with the village for the first time.

But God's work didn't stop there, Johnson said.

"The familiarity of the place struck me as odd. I obviously had never been there before; in fact, I later found out that no one had ever been there before. And then I real-

ized — this was the village God had shown me in that vision in the summer of 2007, from the trail, to the layout of the huts. I laughed and cried at the same time. He knows what He's doing."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. 卐

Philadelphia abortion doctor charged with murder of woman, babies

A Philadelphia abortion doctor was charged with murder Jan. 19, not only of a 41-year-old patient but of seven babies who made up only a small portion of hundreds of viable, fully delivered children whose spinal cords were severed with scissors.

Pro-life advocates responded by calling for meaningful oversight of abortion clinics, but some also pointed out an inconsistency: The killing of babies in their sixth, seventh or eighth month of gestation is normally legally protected if they are inside the womb but indictable if they are not.

Kermit Gosnell, 69, was arrested and indicted in the killings after a nearly yearlong investigation. A February 2010 raid of his clinic in West Philadelphia found deplorable conditions, resulting in its closing and his medical license being suspended. He also was charged with violating Pennsylvania's ban on most abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

The November 2009 death of Kamamaya Mongar, a mother and grandmother who had moved to the United States from Nepal only four months earlier, resulted in an indictment against Gosnell for third-degree murder. The grand jury reported Mongar died as a result of a sedative overdose. The investigation found another woman had died previously at the

clinic. Hundreds of babies at least six months into gestation were killed outside the womb after induced delivery at Gosnell's Women's Medical Society, the grand jury reported. Gosnell destroyed most of the files, limiting prosecution to only seven cases, according to the report.

'Horrific' actions

Gosnell called the killing of these children "snipping," the grand jury reported. He, or another staff member in his absence, would jab scissors into the back of a baby's neck and cut the spinal cord. In one case, a boy of at least 32 weeks gestation was so large that Gosnell joked, an aide reported, "This baby is big enough to walk ... me to the bus stop."

Gosnell's wife and eight other employees also were indicted for murder and/or other charges.

Southern Baptist bioethicist C. Ben Mitchell said Gosnell's actions were "horrific" and "evidence of a seared conscience."

"However, so is public outrage toward infanticide but near silence about abortion," said Mitchell, professor of moral philosophy at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and a consultant to The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

"To prosecute Dr. Gosnell for murdering

newborns while countenancing abortion is to make homicide a matter of geography; killing inside the womb is as grievous as killing outside the womb," he said.

In recommendations at the end of its 281-page report, the grand jury called for the Pennsylvania Department of Health to license abortions clinics as ambulatory surgical facilities. The department's failure to do so provides patients at abortion clinics with "far less protection" than those undergoing liposuction or a colonoscopy, the grand jury said. It also recommended the state legislature remove the statute of limitations for infanticide and ban the mutilation of fetal remains.

Federal and state authorities raided the Women's Medical Society last year in what was originally an investigation into prescription drug trafficking at the clinic. Among their findings that night, according to the grand jury report:

► The remains of 45 babies stored in bags, milk jugs, orange juice cartons and cat-food containers, with some in a refrigerator and others in a freezer.

► The severed feet of babies in jars.

► "Semi-conscious women scheduled for abortions were moaning in the waiting room or the recovery room."

► Conditions in the clinic that were "by far, the worst" the investigators had ever seen, with blood on the floor and on blankets covering dirty recliners, a "stench of urine," cat excrement on the stairs, "filthy and unsanitary" surgery rooms, dirty instruments and broken equipment.

Gosnell, whose abortion practice at the clinic was approved by the state Department of Health in 1979, had never been certified as an obstetrician/gynecologist, the grand jury reported. It also found none of his employees were licensed to operate or to provide anesthesia.

Oversight in responsibilities

The grand jury said the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Department of State failed in their oversight responsibilities. Gosnell's clinic had not been inspected since 1993 despite many complaints, according to the report. The report also said the National Abortion Federation (NAF) rejected Gosnell's application for admission after Mongar's death. A NAF evaluator, however, did not report the clinic conditions to her superiors, according to the report.

The grand jury estimated in its report that Gosnell made \$10,000 to \$15,000 a night performing abortions. (BP)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Pleasant Ridge Church, Hueytown**, will hold the Hueytown Revival hosted by area churches Feb. 13-17, nightly at 6:30. Chuck Kelley will speak Sunday, Fred Lowery Monday, Robert Smith Tuesday, David Nasser Wednesday and Kevin Hamm Thursday. For nursery reservations for children ages 4 and under call 205-491-3771. Rick Patrick is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Crantford Hicks** is the new pastor of **Mulga Church**. He comes from Pine Ridge Church, Bessemer, where he served as pastor. He and his wife, Cindy, have three children.

CLARKE

► **Steve Creek Church, Jackson**, will begin a new book review class Feb. 6, 5 p.m., in Room 2-I. The first book will be "The Coming Economic Armageddon" by David Jeremiah. Pastor Jamie Lay will lead the class. There will be open enrollment.

COLUMBIA

► **Bay Springs Church, Dothan**, will hold a fifth Sunday sing with the Bay Springs Quartet Jan. 30, 6 p.m. Dinner will follow. A nursery will be provided. Scott E. Wyatt is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Mountain View Church, Childersburg**, will hold a fifth Sunday night singing Jan. 30, 5 p.m., with To the End (Daryl Green, Neil Skipworth and Byron Partridge). A fellowship will follow. Bill Pruitt is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Harmony Church, Andalu-**

sia, will host Ugandan Thunder, a group of 18 boys and girls ages 8 to 11 from Uganda, East Africa, Feb. 14, 6:30 p.m. The group will sing and share about growing up in a land ravaged by a 20-year war, poverty, AIDS and malaria. Ugandan Thunder is sponsored by Pennies for Posho, a nonprofit Christian organization committed to feeding hungry children of Africa. For information call 334-222-8117. Greg Cotter is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **West End Church, Valley**, will host Brother Billy Bob Bohannon Feb. 6, 5 p.m. EST. Don Downs is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Michael Martin** is the new youth and children's minister for **First Church, East Brewton**. He was ordained into the ministry Jan. 23 at his home church, First Church, Brewton. Martin is married to Erin. Larry Watts is pastor. ► **Calvary Church, Atmore**, a former independent Baptist church, recently joined Escambia Association.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold a luncheon meeting Feb. 8, 11 a.m., with The Glory Singers, the senior adult choir of First Church, Andalusia, under the direction of Dwight Crigger. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by Feb. 1. Mike Shirah is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will host the Gold City Quartet in concert Feb. 6, 5 p.m. Donations are suggested. For information call Pastor Mike Clark at 256-420-8172.

MARSHALL

► **Second Church, Boaz**, will hold a red book singing from the church hymnal Feb. 19, 6 p.m. For information call Neil Vick at 256-593-4178. Jimmy Harrison is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Cloverdale Church, Grand Bay**, will host Ivan Parker with special guests Jerry and Tammy Sullivan in concert Feb. 18, 7 p.m., at the Alma Bryant High School auditorium. For tickets call 251-709-1396 or visit www.ivanparker.com. Harold McInnis is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will host the Dixie Echoes in concert Feb. 11, 7 p.m. Stan Holt is pastor of the church.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Pelham**, will hold a rally day with Evangelist Junior Hill, of Hartselle, Feb. 13. Services will be 8, 9:15 and 10:45 a.m. Mike Shaw is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **First Church, Dadeville**, will hold a solemn assembly service Jan. 31, 6:30 p.m. Gary Wiggins is pastor.

TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Greg Hart** is the new associate pastor of **First Church, Scottsboro**. He comes from Southside Church, Opp. He and his wife, Patsy, have two children. Kevin C. Wilburn is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Calvary Church, Tuscaloosa**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary Jan. 29-30. There will be a historical fair in the family life center on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Sunday worship services will be 8:25, 9:45 and 11:05 a.m. For information call 205-758-0495 or visit www.calvarytuscaloosa.org. Tim Lovett is pastor. ► **Unity Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host The Atnip Family, of Cody, Wyo., Jan. 30, 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service. The church also will host Southern Gospel Sounds in concert that evening at 6 p.m. A fellowship will follow. Gene Dockery Sr. is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Lakeview Church, Auburn**, will hold a ladies' conference called Ruth: Loss, Love & Legacy Feb. 18-19 with Bible study writer, speaker and author Kelly Minter. Sessions will be Friday at 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon. For information call Melissa Rohling at 334-728-0133. To purchase tickets visit www.lakeviewatthewell.com/specialevents. Al Jackson is pastor.



FBC Columbia celebrates 175th anniversary

For 175 years, First Baptist Church, Columbia, has had a strong presence in its "old," but "quaint," community. Although some consider it small, the Columbia Baptist Association church thinks big: leading the way in racial reconciliation with a slave among its founding members and a history of welcoming the black community into its fellowship and in missions giving with a record of giving 15 percent.

That rich history coupled with the excitement of having a new pastor and starting several new ministries meant there was much to celebrate Nov. 7.

With a larger than normal crowd, the church celebrated its milestone anniversary on its annual Harvest Day homecoming. On this day, a special offering is received for special projects done throughout the year.

During the service, First, Columbia, also honored those who have been members for 50 years or more, including Walter Hope Bryan, who has been a member for 80 years, longer than anyone else. In addition, Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a plaque recognizing its years of service.

But the congregation isn't spending too much time looking back because there is so much going on right now. Last year, First, Columbia, started a children's ministry, a men's ministry and a discipleship education class.

"We are laying a foundation so that our church ... can be in existence for another 175 years," Pastor Randall Johnson said. "There's a lot of excitement in our church, and we are very, very positive about what God is going to do in the future."

Member Brenda Pitchford agreed.

"With our new pastor, certainly, we hope our church will continue to grow in number as well as in spiritual maturity, and the rich history that we're so blessed to be a part of, I certainly hope that will continue for many generations to come," she said.

Hughes Memorial celebrates 100 years of service

December 12 marked the end of a year of celebration for Hughes Memorial Baptist Church, Pinson. The Birmingham Baptist Association church spent 2010 "Celebrating 100 Years in the Lord's Service."

Throughout the year, the church presented its history in slide-shows weekly. Each month, the church bell was rung following services to mark the centennial. More than 300 people gathered Sept. 26 to celebrate homecoming. Former Pastor Richard Coggin presented the message. Pat Musselwhite of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Mike McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Association, presented the church with plaques. Following lunch in the fellowship hall, the youth and deacons released balloons to mark the occasion.

On Dec. 12, Hughes Memorial Baptist held a candlelight service to close its centennial celebration. Church historian Katie Adkins extinguished the centennial candle representing 1910-2010. Pastor David Crowe lit the next century's candle and presented the church's theme for this year, "The Journey Continues: Praising Our Lord Into the Second Century."

Hughes Memorial was built in 1910 and named after Matthew Hughes, who furnished the lumber for its construction. A tornado destroyed the church in 1917. The current building was constructed in 1965.



SBOM photo

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION DOM BELCHER RETIRES

Barbour Baptist Association held a retirement celebration for Director of Missions R C Belcher (center) on Jan. 9. Pictured with Belcher are Gary Swafford (left), director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, and Glenn Brock, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Eufaula, and moderator of the association.

Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

E-mail your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org; fax it to 205-870-8957 or call 1-800-803-5201. Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

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MANY MINISTRIES:
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news and features
about missions and
ministries from the
Alabama Baptist State
Board of Missions
(800) 264-1225
www.alsbom.org

From Iraq to Alabama: God's grace breaks down barriers



bombs as well as from accidents while operating armored vehicles or disposing of unstable explosives captured from the insurgents. God was good to us, however. Our unit suffered no casualties or any serious injuries from accidents.

Iraq is also a very stressful place. We lived

In recent years it might seem to some that "victory" is an elusive concept. Our nation is currently embroiled in two foreign wars while also fighting political, social and economic battles on the home front. Having just returned from a tour of duty as a chaplain with my National Guard unit in Iraq, however, I can report that our God is still at work! I rejoice along with Paul who wrote "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 15:57).

Iraq is a dangerous place. Our soldiers were exposed to danger on a daily basis from enemy rockets and roadside

through dust storms, high heat (130 degrees plus in the summer) and separation from our families and friends. Despite the difficulty of serving far from home in a dry and barren land like Iraq, our morale remained high. I know that God sustained us.

Iraq is also a strange place. Our troops worked closely with their Iraqi counterparts and with civilian contractors from many countries around the world. By God's grace, we were able to break down barriers and build bridges across cultures to enable the Iraqi security forces to protect their own people. We experienced victory on many



levels during our year in Iraq!

So, what was the secret of our success? Our unit was made of up of talented and dedicated soldiers, but that is not enough.

In war, the enemy gets a vote and even in

peacetime training accidents happen. We were good, but being good did not insulate us from matters outside our control. I believe that God smiled upon us because He answered the prayers of hundreds of Alabama Baptist church members who lifted us up in prayer on a regular basis.

I can see no other explanation for the protection, success, and, yes, victory we experienced other than the faithful praying of God's

people. I have always appreciated God's people, but I returned from my tour of duty with a deep gratitude for the faithfulness of Alabama Baptists who prayed for me and the soldiers of my unit. It is through your prayers that we have won our victory!



By Otis Corbitt
State Missionary

State Missionary Otis Corbitt has returned to the State Board of Missions staff after being on leave during 2010. He ministers

through the Office of Associational Missions & Church Planting and may be contacted at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, ocorbitt@alsbom.org.



State Missionary Otis Corbitt is on facebook. Connect with him by visiting www.facebook.com/otis.corbitt



a gathering for girls in grades 7 through 12

complete

What's Included?

- Awesome worship
- Life conferences
- Ministry projects
- Missionaries
- Bible study
- Missions/ministry conferences

For more info or to register visit
www.alabamawmu.org or contact Erin Bishop at
 1.800.264.1225, ext. 224, or ebishop@alsbom.org.

Friday and Saturday,
 March 11-12, 2011
 Valleydale Church, Birmingham
 Girls grades 7-12 & their leaders

Cost: \$35 (includes a t-shirt and lunch
 on Saturday)

Bible study with

Worship with

Amy Pierson



Kerri Roberts



"And you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe." Colossians 2:10 NLT

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

Renew

February 26, 2011, First Baptist Church, Prattville

a day away with friends for women of all ages

Radiant

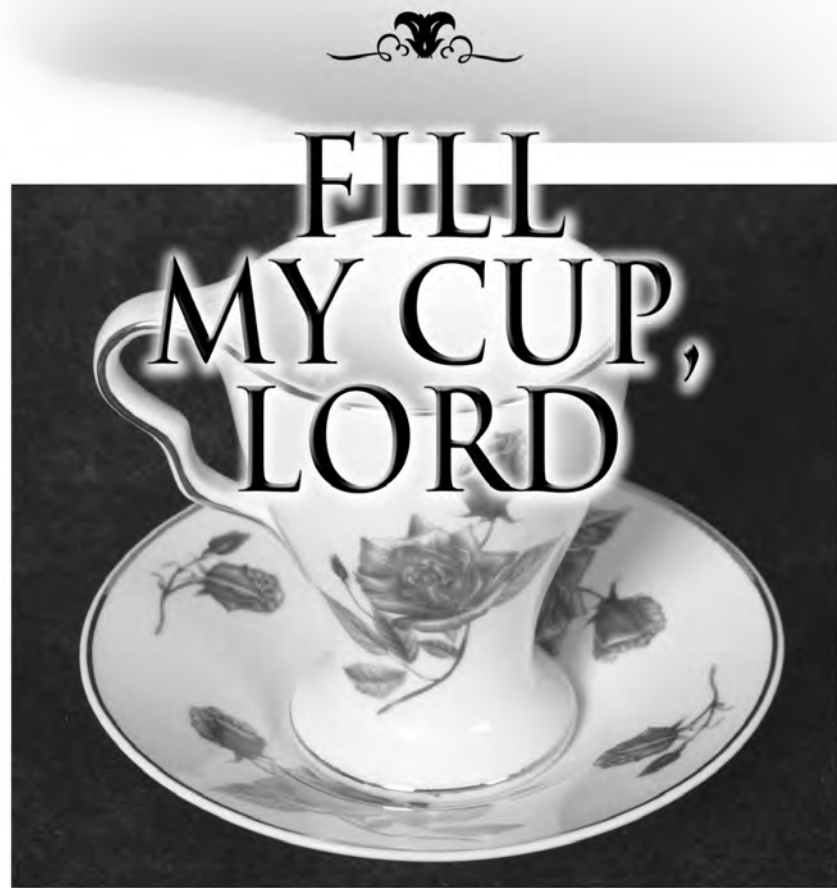
BIBLE STUDY LEADER: Kimberly Sowell WORSHIP LEADER: Shelley Jennings COST: \$35 per
 person (includes lunch) REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Monday, February 14, 2011

Experience

connection and the community of friends, be
 challenged to expand your worldview and take
 part in hands-on missions and prayer experiences.



For more information or to register contact Pat Ingram at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 292, p Ingram@alsbom.org
 or visit www.alabamawmu.org



*"I SHALL LIFT UP THE
CUP OF MY SALVATION AND
CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD."*

PSALM 116:13 NIV

ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST SECRETARIES CONFERENCE

SUNDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6-9, 2011
SHOCCO SPRINGS

General Conference Leader:
Janie Walters, Madison, Miss.

Devotional Leader: Al Sonanstine

Worship Leader: Shack On A Rock

Sample of breakout sessions being offered:

Professional Certification Modules, Communication and Administration, Personality Profile, Free to Forgive, The Potter's Wheel, Stamping Up, QuickBooks, Finances and Taxes, MediaShout, Publisher, Excel, Generations, The Value of Bible Study, Dealing with Difficult People, Time Management, The Secretary as a Wedding Coordinator, The New/First Time Secretary, The Associational Secretary and much more.

Please check out our website at
www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com and
look us up on Facebook.

For more information, please contact
Renee Rizzo, AABS President, at (334) 774-2071 or
(334) 237-0684, renerizzo@charterinternet.com.

THE BOOMERANG EFFECT: BRINGING BOOMERS BACK INTO THE CHURCH

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2011

**Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd.
Montgomery, in the Board Room**

Check-in at 9:30 a.m., conference 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

COST: \$10 (lunch included)

REGISTRATION: online at
www.alsbom.org/boomerang

TARGET AUDIENCE: pastors, ministers of education, senior adult ministers, Sunday School teachers and lay people interested in ministry with Boomers.

CONFERENCE LEADER: Gary Fenton, senior pastor, Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Homewood; author of *Good for Goodness' Sake: 7 Values for Cultivating Authentic Character in Midlife*. In the book Gary takes a direct and intelligent approach to revealing the key to pursuing authentic character at midlife. While in this conference these topics will be discussed:

- **Boomers:** Who are they and how are they different from any other generation?
- **Boomerang:** The 2nd adolescence can become the 1st real adulthood
- **Boomerang Effect:** An opportunity to become good for goodness sake
- **Back in the Church:** A Boomer Ministry can revolutionize your church

For more information, please call
1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221, emitchell@alsbom.org or
Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey, ext. 313, ddickey@alsbom.org

STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

February 28 & March 1, 2011
FIRST BAPTIST, GARDENDALE

For more information please
call the Office of Evangelism
at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 245,
smcclelland@alsbom.org
www.alsbom.org/sec

Speakers:



Will Graham



Don Wilton



Bob Pitman



Reginald Calvert



Nelson Price



James Merritt



Robert Smith



Jay Wolf



Steve Gaines



Kevin Hamm



Jerry Pipes

Worship Leaders:



Rick Stone



Booth Brothers

EVANGELISM TRACK

Monday afternoon, 1-3:10 p.m., James Merritt and Steve Gaines, speakers
Monday evening rally, 6-9 p.m., Kevin Hamm, Jerry Pipes and Don Wilton, speakers
Tuesday morning session, 9-noon, Reginald Calvert, Jay Wolf and Bob Pitman, speakers
Tuesday afternoon, 2-4 p.m., Nelson Price and Robert Smith, speakers
Tuesday evening rally, 6:45-8:30 p.m., Will Graham, speaker, plus the music of the Booth Brothers

GREAT COMMISSION MINISTRIES TRACK

MONDAY MORNING Session One – 1-2 pm

Church Finances...How to Stay on Top of Your Church Finances	De Allen	112
Community Outreach - Get Your People in the Game... "Show It, Prove It, Do It!"	Phil Cronin	107
Connections: Connecting with Students, Connecting with God, Connecting Students with God	Jamin Grubbs	108
Lights, Camera, Action...	Mark Ramsey	103
PreachingPoint.com	Jim Swedenburg	Lobby
Reaching 'em and Keeping 'em	Kevin Hamm	102
Reaching Every Man: A Strategy To Leave No Man Left Behind	Allen Oakley	106
The Do's and Don'ts	Mark Harrison	101
Upward Sports - Competing with a Purpose!	Garth Lindsey	111

BREAK – 2-2:10 PM

Session Two – 2:10-3:10 pm

Church Finances...How to Stay on Top of Your Church Finances	De Allen	112
Community Outreach - Get Your People in the Game... "Show It, Prove It, Do It!"	Phil Cronin	107
Connections: Connecting with Students, Connecting with God, Connecting Students with God	Jamin Grubbs	108
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PreachingPoint.com	Jim Swedenburg	Lobby
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Reaching Every Man: A Strategy To Leave No Man Left Behind	Allen Oakley	106
The Do's and Don'ts	Mark Harrison	101

Upward Sports - Competing with a Purpose!
Garth Lindsey 111

TUESDAY MORNING Session Three – 9-10 am

Communications Ministry and the Gospel
Gene Mason 106

Courageous, the Movie
Doug Rogers 108

Creating Quick Media Presentations
for Ministry and Missions
Jeff Hammack 111

Creativity in Worship
Jonathan Merritt 102

Fear, Facebook & Flirting
Alfred Burgess 103

Moving from a Meeting to Missions
Daniel Edmonds 107

Organizing Your Small Group Ministry for Evangelism
Scott Morgan 101

PreachingPoint.com
Jim Swedenburg Lobby

BREAK – 10-10:10 AM

Session Four – 10:10-11:10 am

And Who Is My Neighbor?
Mickey Crawford 112

Communications Ministry and the Gospel
Gene Mason 106

Courageous, the Movie
Doug Rogers 108

Creating a Climate for Evangelistic Growth
Scott Morgan 101

Evangelism and the Social Ministry
Jonathan Merritt 102

Follow Up! Turn First-Time Guests and Attenders into
Connected Disciples
Sonya Tucker 107

PreachingPoint.com
Jim Swedenburg Lobby

Reactivating Family Ministry
Alfred Burgess 103

Using New Technology in Missions and Ministry
Jeff Hammack 111

NOON

Ministers' Wives Luncheon with Lisa McKay
(registration required) Celebration Room 113

TUESDAY AFTERNOON Session Five – 1:30-2:30 pm

Adding Water to the Soup
David Coombs 102

And Who Is My Neighbor?
Mickey Crawford 112

Becoming Totally Mobile with Technology in
Ministry and Missions
Jeff Hammack 111

Creating a Climate for Local and Global Missions
Steve Marcum 101

Enhancing Worship with Technology
Reuben Prater 108

High Definition Leadership
Moving from a Meeting to Missions
PreachingPoint.com

Reaching This Generation with Technology
and Social Media

Session Six – 2:35-3:30 pm

Adding Water to the Soup
David Coombs 102

Creating a Climate for Local and Global Missions
Steve Marcum 101

Enhancing Worship with Technology
Reuben Prater 108

Follow Up! Turn First-Time Guests and Attenders
into Connected Disciples
Sonya Tucker 107

Notes from the Trenches
Lisa McKay 112

PreachingPoint.com
Jim Swedenburg Lobby

Reaching and Building Families in the 21st Century
Russ Quinn 106

Small Groups - What's Working?
Drew Tucker 103

Using Technology to Enhance Your Sermon, Bible Study,
Ministry and Missions Preparation
Jeff Hammack 111

SPECIAL EVENTS REQUIRING REGISTRATION

Q&A session with James Merritt and Steve Gaines, Monday, 11:30 a.m.
GPS dinner with Jerry Pipes, Tuesday, 5 p.m.

Ministers' Wives Luncheon at the State Evangelism Conference



featuring special guest speaker

Lisa McKay

pastor's wife and author of
You Can Still Wear Cute Shoes

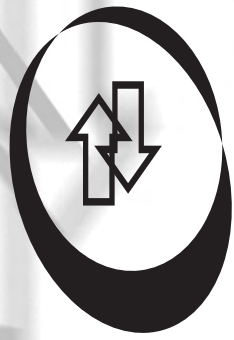
Tuesday, March 1, 2011
Noon

Gardendale First Baptist Church

This event is free, but reservations are required.
Register at www.alabamawmv.org or by calling
800.264.1225, ext. 223.

The luncheon is open to ministers' wives only.
Thank you for your understanding.





LEADERconnect FORUM

Mark Your Calendar for
Upcoming Leadership
Training Events

LEADERConnect Forum

Baptist Building, 2001 E. South
Blvd., Montgomery

Thursday, April 7, 2011
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Bringing Leaders Together to
Build Stronger Churches
COST: \$20 (Includes lunch and
resource material)
Pre-registration requested

LEADERS OF PROMISE FORUM

Baptist Building, 2001 E. South
Blvd., Montgomery

Tuesday, May 10, 2011
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Connecting and Building Leaders
Under 40
COST: \$20 (Includes lunch and
resource material)
Pre-registration requested

SPECIAL OFFER: Register for
both events at the same time, and
get a discount: \$30 for both
events

*To register or for more information,
please contact Ministry Assistant
Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext.
256, jallen@alsbom.org*

SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 11 - 13, 2011
Shocco Springs

THEME: love lifted Me

Preacher: Don Downs, pastor, West End Baptist Church, Valley

Musician: Joshua Duke, minister of music and worship,
Westmeade Baptist Church, Decatur

Celebration leader: Andrew Smith, Montgomery,
retired director of Sunday School Office

Conference leaders, Gary and Carolyn Nichols, Milton,
Fla.; Henry and Sara Jane Lyon, Montgomery; Tim and Debbie
Childers, Sylacauga; Larry and Charlene Gore, Santuck

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary
Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221, emitchell@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant
Lydia Wolfe, ext. 246, lwolfe@alsbom.org

Thank you.

Did you know?

The Cooperative Program began in 1925. Since then, Alabama Baptists have given more than \$1 Billion through the Cooperative Program.

Alabama Baptists use 28% of our Cooperative Program dollars to do Great Commission Ministries through the State Board of Missions in Alabama, send 27.9% to support state convention entities ministries in Alabama, send 1.8% to GuideStone for retirement and protection coverage for church staff members and send 42.5% to support Southern Baptist Convention ministries (which is 30% more than the average State Convention sends to the SBC).

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One Program: The Cooperative Program
Many Ministries: Great Commission Ministries



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

COOPERATIVE
PROGRAM



GREAT COMMISSION PRAYER CONFERENCE 2011

Friday and Saturday, **March 4-5, 2011**
First Baptist Church, Montgomery

Begins at 6:30 p.m. **Friday**, concludes at 12:15 p.m. **Saturday**
Registration at 6 p.m. Friday. (No need to pre-register.)

Featured Speaker: **Tom Elliff**

Cost: \$10 per person

Hotel rooms available through Courtyard by Marriott (334-272-5533)

Conference Leaders: **Thomas Wright, Elaine Helms, Lowell Snow, Richard Leach, Tim & Charlotte Cearly** and others

Conference Topics: *Prayer & Spiritual Warfare, Praying for Sub-Saharan Africa, Developing a Church Prayer Strategy, Praying for Renewal & Spiritual Awakening, From Consumerism to Intimacy, and more*

Two plenary sessions, three breakout sessions, corporate times of prayer. Focus will be on global missions with missionaries from North America and around the world

For more information, please call **1-800-264-1225**: State Missionary Mike Jackson, ext. **210**, mjackson@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Judy Duncan, ext. **218**, jduncan@alsbom.org

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

SWBTS, association property dispute still undecided

FORT WORTH, Texas — Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) notified Tarrant Baptist Association (TBA) before Christmas it had six months to vacate its offices on the edge of the seminary campus. The seminary asserted the association was in violation of its affiliation agreement — in part because of perceived toleration of homosexuality by a member church or churches.

But while TBA moderator Al Meredith contends the seminary lacks authority to take unilateral action, he expressed hope the situation can be resolved and the association's longtime fraternal relationship with the seminary be maintained. The association office received a registered letter from SWBTS on Dec. 10. The letter stated the association was in violation of its 1997 affiliation agreement, and it directed the association to vacate its property on James Avenue within six months. It also stated the title on the property should revert back to the seminary. In 1982, the seminary provided TBA land and the funds to build its office building, granting a 99-year lease on the property, Meredith explained.

At that time, the seminary and association entered into an affiliation agreement stipulating the property would not be used for commercial activity, and the association and seminary would commit to remaining in theological harmony. In 1997, the property agreement was renegotiated, and TBA received the deed to the property. "The affiliation agreement remained intact," Meredith added.

According to the agreement, if any disagreement should arise between the association and the seminary, the matter should be resolved by a three-member arbitration panel with one seminary representative, one associational representative and one party mutually agreed upon by both parties, he noted. On Dec. 20, three associational representatives met with seminary President Paige Patterson and some of his staff to discuss the situation. "We had a lengthy and amicable discussion," Meredith said in an interview. He noted during the discussion, Patterson commented he had learned information he did not have when the original Dec. 10 letter was delivered. He agreed to consider the matter further and discuss it with the seminary's attorneys. Patterson was not available for comment for this article.

Alleged attack on Baptist pastor leads to riots in India

MEGHALAYA, India — At least 10 people are dead, approximately 2,000 houses burned and an estimated 50,000 people displaced following clashes between two tribes in the northeast Indian states of Assam and Meghalaya. Baptists have mobilized resources to assist the displaced and those otherwise affected. The disturbances between the Garo and Rabha tribes began Jan. 1 following an alleged attack on a Garo Baptist pastor in Meghalaya who was returning from a family wedding earlier Dec. 22.

"Many villages have been torched and people left homeless," said Wanne Garrey of the Garo Baptist Convention. Church leaders, she said, were "trying their best to calm down the situation." The incidents occurred in the East Garo Hills region of Meghalaya and the Goalpara district of Assam, both bordering each other. The region has a large Baptist population. Much of northeast India, including the states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur, has significant concentrations of Baptist Christians.

"The Garo Baptist Convention has started its relief work," Garrey reported. "Healing will take time as many have lost their property." The area was placed under heavy curfew for several days. Even though the curfew has since been lifted, the banning of the assembly of more than five persons will continue to be in force. Shambu Singh, a government official, reportedly claimed that the ethnic clashes between the two warring tribes were "very well planned and there may be some organizations behind it." Two peace committees consisting of people drawn from the affected areas in both states have been constituted. The committees have district officials, religious leaders and civil society groups from both the warring tribes as members.

Southern Baptists give \$54.3 million to AAEO

TALLADEGA, Ala. — Southern Baptists gave \$54.3 million to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in 2010 — a \$2.3 million, or 4 percent, decline compared to the 2009 total of \$56.6 million. The amount for 2010 is not yet audited.

North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell shared the total with leaders attending the annual Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) board meeting Jan. 9 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. "Thank you for all that you do," Ezell told the WMU gathering. "We are dependent upon you as you serve the Lord and promote the Annie Armstrong offering. We are thankful for the \$54.3 million from the offering and how that is being used."

State Supreme Court withdraws first ruling against Ashville's 'electronic bingo' ordinance

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Supreme Court justices' recent ruling to withdraw their original opinion against an ordinance allowing slot machine-style gambling in Ashville now resembles the high court's opinions in other gambling cases. But it does not resolve the issue of whether Ashville's ordinance is legal, which started the legal battle in the first place.

The conflict began in December 2008 after Ashville's mayor and city council passed an ordinance allowing slot machine-style gambling. The city council then quickly issued a permit to Shooting Star Entertainment Group LLC authorizing that type of gambling on a 75-acre plot of land off I-59. St. Clair County Sheriff Terry Surles called the gambling devices planned for Ashville illegal, "jacked-up slot machines" and vowed to arrest "anyone playing these games until a (state) Supreme Court decision is made."

Local disagreement

Undeterred, Shooting Star and American Legion Post 170 brought in and operated 200 gambling machines being called "electronic bingo" for about two weeks before Surles shut them down. Meanwhile, the City of Ashville sued Surles to receive a declaratory judgment on the legality of its ordinance allowing the games. Circuit Judge Charles E. Robinson ruled that the ordinance was legal.

Surles, District Attorney Richard Minor and former Gov. Bob Riley appealed the case, and on Jan. 29, 2010, the Supreme Court unanimously reversed Robinson's ruling.

The justices said, "The ordinance provides for the operation of games that extend beyond the permissible definition of bingo."

A few weeks later, the Supreme Court decided to rehear its case without the prompting of any outside parties leaving several parties involved in the case confused about why such an action had been taken.

Now, the high court's current ruling sheds more light on the reasoning behind their actions.

On Jan. 14, 2011, the justices voted 6-2 that there was no real controversy in the case, and it should never have been heard by the court.

"There exists only an anticipated controversy; there has been no damage or injury to the parties, nor have any legal rights been thwarted or affected," they stated. "Thus, the city's action seeks only advice — not the resolution of a yet realized controversy. Such an action is nonjusticiable."

Justice Greg Shaw dissented

stating, "I see no factual development that needs to unfold in order to make ripe for review the simple determination whether the ordinance complies with Alabama law. ... I see no jurisdictional barrier to this court's original decision in this matter." Justice Michael Bolin concurred.

Minor told *The Alabama Baptist* the court's most recent ruling leaves open the potential for another declaratory judgment on whether the ordinance is legal since that issue was not addressed.

"They haven't made it any clearer on (gambling) machines (allowed) in Alabama but based

(this opinion) on the other opinions that they've released," he said.

Eric Johnston, president of and general counsel for the Southeast Law Institute in Birmingham, said it's all procedural.

"This means that the court determined that it was not an actual factual case to be appealed to them, and the law precludes them from deciding cases that are in their language 'merely anticipated conduct,'" Johnston said.

"It's procedural law, and it's got nothing to do with the merits of the case which is the real issue of 'is this ordinance constitutional or unconstitutional?' So, what could

happen then is the city of Ashville could say let's put it (the ordinance) into effect and let someone come in and open a casino and see what happens. Then, you would have an actual case."

But, he and Minor do not believe this will happen. With Attorney General Luther Strange's recent statements on gambling and Surles' agreement on the illegality of slot machine-style gambling devices, Minor said he would find it "hard to believe" that any business "would be willing to risk the investment of losing their machines" by bringing them in to

St. Clair County.

In related news, former Country Crossing lobbyist Jarrod Massey reportedly entered prison Jan. 19 to start his sentence early.

Massey was one of several lobbyists, casino owners and legislators who were indicted on a federal vote-buying scheme at the Alabama Statehouse surrounding last year's big gambling expansion bill.

He entered into a plea agreement in December 2010 with the government and became a witness for them admitting that he bribed state lawmakers to vote favorably for the bill.

"This means that the court determined that it was not an actual factual case to be appealed to them."

Eric Johnston
Southeast Law Institute

UMobile's twelve23 movement, Foley's book to be on radio

American Family Radio's flagship program, "Today's Issues," will feature the University of Mobile's (UMobile) twelve23 movement and a new

ing to see God transform America, is a project of the Center for Leadership.

Foley is the author of "It's Time," which will be available



in February. The book is about influence and how that influence may be used to transform America.

He said it is a challenge to U.S. citizens who call themselves Christians.

"It's time to commit. It's time to lead. It's time to transform America," Foley wrote.

For a complete list of radio stations airing "Today's Issues," visit www.afr.net.

For more information about the movement, visit www.twelve23.org. (UMobile)

The program will have live interviews with Foley and Joe Savage, director of the UMobile Center for Leadership. The twelve23 movement, a grassroots effort of individuals who share the common goal of want-

Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

50 Years Ago January 1961

Pintlala Mission Breaks Ground: Ground-breaking ceremonies for Pintlala Mission of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Montgomery, were held recently at the site of the proposed \$35,000 education-worship building. In addition to Pastor Robert Lowery, a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, those participating in the program were Lewis Marler, pastor of the sponsoring church; J. Frank Hixon, superintendent of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association; Curtis Massey, chairman of the building committee; and Gus Boyd Sr., the eldest member. Members of the fast-growing rural congregation plan to hold their charter service in the near future to organize formally as a Southern Baptist church. Meetings are now being held in the century-old Grange Hall.

40 Years Ago January 1971

Florence Layman Elected to Newspaper's Board: A Florence businessman has been elected to the board of directors of *The Alabama Baptist*. Douglas W. Lambert Sr., president of Lambert Transfer Company, is a charter member and dea-

con of Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence. He also has served on the boards of such organizations as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and Alabama Trucking Association.

30 Years Ago January 1981

Judson Names New Dean: Helen Patricia Turnipseed is the new Judson College dean of admissions. She has a success record that includes the directorship of the 5,000 member High Point, N.C., YWCA; chairmanship of the North Carolina Governor's Leadership Conference for Women; and a consultant position with the Manpower Consortium of Greensboro, High Point and Guilford County, N.C. A graduate of Judson, she said, "You just can't know how good it feels to come home."

20 Years Ago January 1991

Walker Association First to Receive Award: Walker Baptist Association is the first association in the Southern Baptist Convention to receive the Baptist Sunday School Board recognition for excellence in the family ministry program. Helping obtain the recognition, accord-

ing to Henry Lyon, Alabama Baptist family ministry director, were Charles W. Powell, minister to senior adults at First Baptist Church, Jasper; Judy and Roger West, members of First, Jasper; and Donald E. Black, director of missions for Walker Association. Powell coordinates senior adult work, and the Wests coordinate single adult work.

10 Years Ago January 2001

Shades Mountain Church Music Minister Retires: Aubrey Edwards, longtime minister of music for

Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, retired Jan. 7 after 24 years. During his time as minister of music, Edwards began two music programs: Starlight and the Birmingham Christmas Pageant. Starlight, though no longer occurring, featured many artists like Sandi Patty and Minnie Pearl who shared testimonies in front of large crowds. The Christmas pageant still takes place annually even though the format has changed since it began. Edwards also led several choir tours during his tenure, including one to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF *THE ALABAMA BAPTIST*, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR E-MAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

CHURCH POSITIONS

MINISTER OF MUSIC/MINISTER OF EDUCATION: The Baptist Church at McAdory in McCalla, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music/minister of education to lead the music ministry as well as plan and direct the educational programs of the church. For more information, call 205-477-8265 or e-mail resumé to: churchatmcadory@bellsouth.net, subject: Personnel.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & WORSHIP: Seeking a spiritually mature person with strong musical training and leadership experience to serve as minister of music and worship in a church with attendance of 750-800. Skills in both traditional and contemporary worship styles and the use of media in worship are required. Send resumé to: Westport Road Baptist Church, c/o Search Committee, 9705 Westport Road, Louisville, KY 40241 or chip@mywrbcc.org.

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.

INTERIM PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: CrossRoads Baptist Church in Hayden, Ala., is seeking an interim part-time minister of music. If interested you may fax your resumé to 205-647-3881, ATTN: Personnel Committee or e-mail your resumé to: connie89@me.com.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER: Riddles Bend Baptist Church is search-

ing for a bivocational youth minister. If interested, send resumé to: Riddles Bend Baptist Church, ATTN: Youth Search Committee, 5574 Riddles Bend Road, Rainbow City, AL 35906, or e-mail: fulenwider_d@bellsouth.net.

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

PART-TIME YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Contact Kennedy Baptist Church, Lamar Association, Kennedy, Ala., 205-596-3713 or e-mail resumé to: secretary@kennedybaptist.org.

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.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time children's minister to work with our 1st through 8th grade students. Please e-mail resumé to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

MAINTENANCE MAN: Maintenance man needed part-time for rental properties in Helena, Ala., area. 80 hours per month includes housing and base salary. 205-587-3090, e-mail revcoltom@juno.com.

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design, fabrication, installation and service. All types of signs from electronic messaging to traditional. Ask about our exterior light maintenance service. State-wide coverage. Christian-owned. Church references available. www.reliablesigns.com. 800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

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STEEPLES, ET CETERA: New pews, refinishing of pews, stained glass windows, baptistries and steeples. Single source for all church furnishings. More than 20 years experience serving churches exclusively. No job too small. Locally owned company. Please call Terry Barnes toll-free 1-888-980-6161. Visit our Web site at www.steeplesetc.com.

CONSTRUCTION

CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS: Let Webb Builders help your church expand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders, Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

CONFERENCES/RETREATS

TWIN RIVERS RESORT — RETREAT CENTER: NE Georgia Mountains, churches/families, 10 fully equipped cabins and lodge room for 65 to meet, sleep and eat. 866-754-2010. www.TwinRiversResort.net.

CHRISTIAN RETREAT: Stoney Creek, new 52-acre Christian-based retreat facility perfect for family reunion rentals, church gatherings, weddings and receptions. Amenities galore. Located in Vinemont, Ala. Reservations: 256-338-5583. www.stoneycreekalabama.com.

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2 BRs GULF-FRONT CONDO ON OKA-

LOOSA ISLAND: For rent, Gulf-front two-bedroom condominium on Okaloosa Island, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. Many amenities. Low rates by owner. Call Lucy, 770-831-3651. E-mail: Lucyclark9@aol.com.

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MISCELLANEOUS

FREE ORGAN FOR A CHURCH: Antique 1908 Estey 15-stop, reed organ that has magnificence in both sound and appearance. Immaculate condition. Only change is that it has been electrified (replacing the foot-pedal pump). It measures 26 inches front-to-back, 4.5 feet wide, 4 feet tall. It is solid carved and fluted dark oak. Not a scratch on it. Willing to donate to a church that can use it to glorify God but is sure to take good care of it as well. For more information, call 256-498-3319.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Herman Pair
FBC Sandusky, in Birmingham

Would it change your life if someone gave you \$1 million? Most of us would say, "Yes." There is something inside each of us that says we need a change. Well, I can't give you \$1 million, but I do know someone who can change your life. Let me share with you how your life can be changed forever.

Before God, through Jesus Christ, created this world, He knew and loved you. He knew that you would "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

God loves us even when we break His commandments and fall short of His standards. He has shown us that He loves us and wants us to know Him: "But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

How awesome to know that God loves us even though we are unloving in our sins. The good news is "for God so loved the world (you and me) that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Sin has the great price of death on it, which we have earned through our sinfulness, but God in His love has given us the greatest gift — better than \$1 million — Jesus.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Yes, God is offering you the gift of His Son, Jesus, as the payment for your sins.

It is a gift of eternal life; you must open your heart and confess with your mouth to receive it and be saved from your sins. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth, one confesses and is saved" (Rom. 10:9-10). You will have a changed life for eternity. The Bible declares, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

By faith, receive God's free gift of an eternal life of knowing Him and Jesus and be changed forever.

Observers mull impact of Tunisia revolution, effect on Christians

When 26-year-old college grad Mohamed Bouazizi lit himself on fire Jan. 4 to protest his narrow slate of future options, he sparked a revolutionary blaze that toppled Tunisia's government.

It marked a first for the Arab world — a longtime leader brought down by a populist movement. The crescendo of tens of thousands of educated, middle-class Tunisians marching on the capital city of Tunis eventually pushed authoritarian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali to flee the country Jan. 14.

Now international observers are questioning if the fire of revolution in the North African nation will spread to other Arab countries — and Christians are considering how the situation could affect believers in the region.

Much depends on how and when the dust settles on the political crisis still raging in Tunisia, analysts say.

"The outlook for Christians in Tunisia is a matter for prayer," said Malcolm B. Yarnell III, associate professor of systematic theology and director of the Center for Theological Research at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Religious tolerance

Although Islam is Tunisia's state religion, the nation has a history of religious tolerance, Yarnell said.

"There is cause both for hope and concern, especially with regard to religious liberty and the right to evangelize," he said. "Tunisia is blessed with a relatively well-educated population and has some exposure to the religiously tolerant society of secular Europe, primarily because it is a popular tourist destination for Europeans. The Tunisian

constitution guarantees religious liberty and conversion is legal."

But proselytizing is prohibited, and the president must be Muslim, Yarnell said. "Moreover, there is an Islamist party in the opposition," he added. But "its appeal to the general populace may be limited."

Yarnell urged Christians to pray for their brothers and sisters in Tunisia, who make up a tiny percentage of the population. "It is my hope that Tunisia will retain its established religious tolerance and indeed improve upon it," he said.

Political fray

As the political fray continues there, a few copycats in Egypt, Algeria and Mauritania have attempted to pull the trigger on their own revolutions, but with no apparent success. A wave of revolutions similar to Tunisia is "unlikely," according to Scott Peterson of the *Christian Science Monitor*.

"While Tunisia was one of the most effective police states in a region of authoritarian and undemocratic rulers, it also boasts many characteristics that do not apply elsewhere," Peterson wrote. "Tunisia has a strong, educated, and modern middle class — those young men and women who were on the streets and the front lines in Tunis — which nations like Algeria, Egypt and Yemen don't have."

Some analysts predict the likelihood of further revolutions in the Arab world will decrease even more if the situation in Tunisia continues much longer without resolution — or ends undesirably for the opposition. Even so, political reforms could spread widely as a result of Tunisia's revolt, Peterson predicted. Fawaz Gerges, the director of the Middle East Center at the London



BP photo

YOUNG PEOPLE SEEK OPPORTUNITY — The recent revolt against Tunisian leadership began when the young, educated middle class began staging demonstrations to protest a lack of jobs and opportunity in the face of lavishly rich government leaders.

School of Economics, agrees, according to the *Monitor*.

"[W]e might witness now a qualitatively different type of Arab politics [because] the social uprising in Tunisia has sent shockwaves through the veins of Arab rulers. ... This is a very unique moment in modern Arab history," Gerges said. "What has distinguished contemporary Arab politics in the last 50 years is political apathy and fear. [Tunisia] has shattered the myth, the claim that Arabs will not dare to rise

up against tormentors, against their dictators."

Pray for Tunisia

As the revolt continues to play out in Tunisia, Southern Baptist workers serving in the area are asking Christians to pray around the clock for the nation, its leaders and its people. They ask prayer

► for continued protection of believers in Tunisia;
► for opportunities to share about security in Jesus Christ;

► for schools, supermarkets and public transportation to be able to function normally again;

► for safety and protection for the approximately 10 million people protecting their houses and property from looting and unrest;

► for stability and quick transition of government;

► for unrest and violence to come to a stop; and

► for wisdom and the good of the people to be the order of the day for those in power. (BP)

Southern Baptists prep for Super Bowl XLV

Several Southern Baptist organizations are among those making plans to bring the message of Jesus Christ to those who flock to the Dallas area for the week of the Super Bowl.

Arguably the world's greatest single-game sports event, the Super Bowl's 45th contest, to be played Feb. 6 at Cowboys Stadium in Ar-

lington, Texas, is expected to draw nearly 150,000 visitors to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The North American Mission Board, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Tarrant Baptist Association and Dallas Baptist Association are joining forces in "Reach 45: The Big Game Evange-

lism Project" (www.reach45.com).

Included in the Reach 45 events are:

► A "Million-Card Giveaway" in conjunction with the I Am Second organization the weekend of the Super Bowl (www.iamsecond.com and www.facebook.com/iam2nd).

► I Am Second church-based discussion groups (see I Am Second website/Facebook.).

► A "Souper Bowl of Caring" service blitz (www.souperbowl.org).

► A community watch party in Arlington.

► Traffick 911's anti-human trafficking tailgate party (www.traffick911.org).

► An NFL-sanctioned Athletes in Action Super Bowl breakfast.

John Meador, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, said church groups are invited to participate in the Million-Card Giveaway, which takes place in the hours immediately before and after the game around the parking areas of the stadium. I Am Second is promoting its outreach on billboards and other advertising media. (BP)

Calvary Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa celebrates

100
YEARS OF MINISTRY

Friends and former members, celebrate this milestone with us:

CALVARY HISTORICAL FAIR

January 29 (9 a.m.-4 p.m.) and January 30 (8 a.m.-3 p.m.)

Enjoy reminiscing God's blessing to Calvary Baptist Church by browsing through the many displays at the Historical Fair in the Family Life Center.

WORSHIP WITH US

Sunday, January 30

Join us in worship for a special service that focuses on Calvary's next 100 years of ministry. Small-Group Bible Study: 9:40 and 11 a.m.

Worship Service: 8:25, 9:45 and 11:05 a.m.

Message by Calvary pastor, Dr. Tim Lovett



We look forward to celebrating with you!

For more information, details, times and locations on all of our Centennial Celebration Events, visit www.calvarytuscaloosa.org or call 205-758-0495.

Embracing Alzheimer's and Other Dementias

A Resource Conference for families, caregivers, clergy & professionals

February 4-5, 2011

at Shades Mountain Baptist Church

2017 Columbiana Road; Vestavia Hills, Ala. 35216

Friday: 1:30-5:00 p.m. Saturday: 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Visit EmbracingAlzheimers.com by Jan. 31 for discounted registration or pay \$25 at the door (Edgar's breakfast included). Call 205-599-3245 for more details or payment options.

An educational blend incorporating faith, medicine, nutrition, science, and community resource providers.

Keynote Speaker: Ellen Marie Edmonds, radio host and author of "Embracing Dementia, A Call to Love." **Other speakers include:** Daniel Potts, MD; Rhonda Dial; Dale Brakhage; Debbie Moss, RN; and Richard M. Allman, MD.

Presented by Birmingham Baptist Association & United for Life Foundation

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 30

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson

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

RIGHT NOT TO REMAIN SILENT
2 Kings 7:3-9, 12-13, 15-16a

Realize God Is Always at Work (3-7)

The army of Syria besieged the city of Samaria. No explanation for this outbreak of hostilities is mentioned. A chokehold was placed on everyone who lived in the city, civilians and soldiers alike. The effect was gradual but after some time, there was a great famine in the city. Chaos mounted and as food supplies dwindled, profiteers took advantage of people's desperation. Even virtually inedible things, normally discarded as trash, sold for exorbitant prices. Cannibalism even took place. The king, probably Jehoram, exploded in anger, not at Baal, the evil introduced into the nation by his parents or the evil hearts of people — but at Elisha. He declared he would have Elisha killed. Elisha announced that by the next day at that time, quality food would be available at low prices. The king's captain thought the man of God was out of his mind. But this was not the prediction of a man but the promise of a prophet speaking in the name of the Lord. Elisha then pronounced a judgment on the cynic: "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it" (2 Kings 7:2). During a famine, people on the edge of society such as lepers were the most vulnerable. They were not allowed to enter the city; if they did, then only death awaited them. If they remained outside, then they would be victims of famine or the first attacks of the enemy. Since they had nothing to lose, four lepers decided to defect to the Syrians. But God was at work for the good of His people. He caused the Syrians to hear the sound of a great army coming against them, and they fled, leaving all of their supplies behind. Remember that at times when it seems as if God is far from us, He will show Himself faithful to us.

Tell Others About It (8-9)

When the lepers reached the Syrian camp, they found it abandoned and a vast treasure trove available to them. They had no way of knowing what had happened, but they began to loot the tents and satisfy their hunger. But a guilty sense of responsibility came over them.

"This is a day of good news," they declared to one another. They had a responsibility to share this good news with the king. This news was not only good but it was also life-giving. They sensed a burden to share the news immediately. Out of a sense of moral rightness, these four men decided they must share their God-given good news with the suffering people inside the besieged city. We exist to spread a passion for God's glory by making disciples of all nations. May God help us to long to see others respond to the good news of the gospel of Christ. The gospel is too precious to stop with you; it needs to spread through you to others who do not know Christ.

Urge Others to Check It Out (12-13)

The king greeted the report with skepticism, believing it to be a clever tactic of the Syrians. His unbelief was deep-seated and only an appeal by one of his servants could budge him. The king's servant reasoned as the lepers did: We have nothing to lose. If we do nothing, then we will die. If the report is wrong, then the Syrians will kill the men. But if the report is right, then we all may live. We are to encourage others to check out the gospel. In order to be saved, a person must know the facts of the gospel, believe those facts are true, turn from sin and trust Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Jesus has commanded every Christ follower to make disciples. To be obedient, we must share the good news of Jesus Christ with the lost. We must not commit the sin of silence.

Share in the Joy (15-16a)

Two men were sent out to investigate. They discovered the evidence of the Syrians' flight and followed it as far as the Jordan River (about 25 miles). Then they returned and reported to the king that the Syrian army had withdrawn. The story ends by emphasizing the fulfillment of God's word through His prophet. The people of the famished city ran out and plundered the Syrians' camp. Fortunes changed because four men refused to keep God-given good news to themselves. With whom will you share the good news of Jesus Christ?

Bible Studies for Life

By Scott McGinnis

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A LIFESTYLE OF MEDITATION
Psalms 1:1-3; 119:11-16; Mark 1:35-39

"Be quiet!" As a parent of young children, I am somewhat chagrined to think of the times I have uttered "Be quiet!" in a voice that undercuts the very thing I am asking them to do. We all need peace and quiet to give our minds and souls rest from the artificial hurriedness that marks our daily routines. In the gardens of quiet that remain, we can then give our attention to the cultivation of the spiritual disciplines. In our lessons over the past few weeks, we have seen how disciplines such as humility, service and sacrifice are best understood when we look to Christ's example. But how can we truly know this example as something other than words on a page? The discipline of meditation involves learning to calm our minds and empty them of what is not useful so that we may fill them with what the living Christ has to teach us.

Delight in the Law (Ps. 1:1-3)

These verses introduce Psalm 1 and the entire Psalter with a beatitude: Those who delight in the Law (Torah) of the Lord are blessed. Blessing here should not be understood as reward in the sense that if I simply study hard enough or commit enough Scripture to memory, then I will be rewarded for my perseverance. Instead the blessing's riches lie in the practice itself. Another common translation of the word traditionally rendered as "blessed" makes this clear: "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked." Here again, the English word "happy" has its own limitations and should not be understood to mean the temporary satisfaction of our passing fancies but rather the deep, soul-sustaining sense of belonging to God and walking in His ways. The contrasts in the psalm are telling. The opposite of blessed or happy is not cursed or sad but wicked (1:4-6). Here the wicked appear more transient than evil: They are like chaff (the useless part of the grain) carried away by the breeze. They have no foundation. In contrast, the happy person is "a tree planted by streams of water," well-rooted, stable and prepared to flourish. This metaphor of two paths

or ways is common in both the Old and New testaments (Deut. 30:15-20; Prov. 7 and 8; Matt. 7:13-14). In each case, the reader is encouraged to choose the path that leads to life.

Treasure It in Your Heart (Ps. 119:11-16)

This longest of the psalms is marked by several patterns. It is divided into 22 eight-line sections, with the first letter of each section forming an acrostic that follows the Hebrew alphabet. In addition, the psalmist repeatedly used eight synonyms for Law (Torah), his subject. The result is a rich exploration of God's Torah that moves beyond the basic association with Mosaic law to the fuller context of the many ways that He instructs humankind. The psalmist found such instruction in the cosmic order (119:64, 89-91) as well as his life experiences interpreted in light of God's word (119:25-28, 81-84). The discovery of God's teaching woven throughout the cosmos in both grand and minute ways requires a keen eye and constant attention. God's word must be "treasured in the heart" (11), the object of the soul's longing (119:20). Such single-minded focus could be a recipe for a showy piety worn on the sleeve, but at its best, it forms the foundational bedrock of the life lived constantly before God.

Follow Jesus' Example (Mark 1:35-39)

How can I know what God's word is for me in this time and place? That we need to spend time in prayer and meditation to discern God's purposes in our lives is best seen in Jesus' example. Mark's Gospel records that Jesus sought time away from His followers to commune with God at crucial points in His ministry (6:46; 14:32). His message was clear enough — "the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news" (1:15) — but living out of His calling required time in "deserted places." How easy it was for Jesus in first-century Palestine, we might be tempted to believe, and how hard it is for us to find those quiet places. However, practicing the discipline of meditation has less to do with escaping all of life's distractions than it does with committing ourselves to what we know to be enduring and sustaining.

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Old Testament book.
12. A son of Shobal. (1 Chron. 1:40)
13. And an hundred sheep, beside harts, and _____. (1 Kings 4:23)
15. Veterans' Administration. (abbr.)
16. Sailor.
17. Route. (abbr.)
18. Twelve months. (abbr.)
19. Son of Amoz. (abbr.) (2 Kings 19:20)
21. Little island.
23. And Eshton begat ... _____. (1 Chron. 4:12)
24. _____, and Dumah, and Eshean. (Josh. 15:52)
26. Direction.
27. Old Testament book. (2 parts)
33. Branch office. (abbr.)
34. United Artists. (abbr.)
35. Yet he cheweth not the cud; he is _____. (Lev. 11:7)
36. And he said, _____, it is yet high day. (Gen. 29:7)
37. Zacchaeus climbed up into a _____ comore tree. (Luke 19:4)
38. And Ashur the father of _____ had two wives. (1 Chron. 4:5)
39. The throne of _____ and of the Lamb. (Rev. 22:3)
40. Women's Army Corp. (abbr.)
42. One who swears to an affidavit.
45. And _____ the daughter of Leah. (Gen. 34:1)
47. Crass.
48. The children of _____, and Hushim, the sons of Aher. (1 Chron. 7:12)
49. And if any man will _____ thee at the law. (Matt. 5:40)
52. Sweet drinks, made from limes or lemons.
53. Fifth Old Testament book.

Down

1. Third Old Testament book.
2. Every one that is proud, and _____ him. (Job 40:11)
3. Pa's mate.
4. Elevated railroad.
5. Illness on Amtrak.
6. Great trunk that carries blood.
7. Tellurium. (symbol)
8. Son of Merari. (1 Chron. 24:27)
9. Seven angels came _____ of the temple. (Rev. 15:6)
10. Raleigh is the capital. (abbr.)
11. Fair weather: for the _____ is red. (Matt. 16:2)
14. "Mr." in Spanish. (abbr.)
16. Light brown.
20. Hushim was his son. (1 Chron. 7:12)
22. Sir, come down _____ my child die. (John 4:49)
24. Association. (abbr.)
25. Blood analysis. (2 words)
26. And I saw as it were a _____ of glass. (Rev. 15:2)
28. Out of order.
29. Because they called thee an _____, saying, This is Zion. (Jer. 30:17)
30. Direction.
31. As free, and not using your liberty for a _____ of maliciousness. (1 Pet. 2:16, modern sp.)
32. For ye shall be as an oak whose _____ fadeth. (Isa. 1:30)
33. Not a brunette.
39. Flashy.
41. Behold, I send _____ Angel before thee. (Ex. 23:20)
43. Fire control. (abbr.)
44. Duke Magdiel, duke _____. (1 Chron. 1:54)
45. Alexander the coppersmith _____ me much evil. (2 Tim. 4:14)
46. Shade.
50. Son of Judah. (Gen. 39:6)
51. Called to be _____ apostle. (Rom. 1:1)

World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Innkeepers found guilty for turning away gay couple

LONDON — Two Christian innkeepers have been convicted of sexual discrimination for refusing to allow a gay couple to share a double room at their hotel in Cornwall, England.

Peter and Hazelmary Bull also were ordered by the Bristol County court to pay about \$5,700 for turning civil partners Martyn Hall and Steven Preddy away from their bed and breakfast.

The hoteliers had argued they were trying “to live and work in accordance with our Christian faith” when they refused to let the two men share a bed.

“Our double-bed policy was based on our sincere beliefs about marriage, not hostility to anybody,” Hazelmary Bull told the court. She insisted the policy “was applied equally and consistently to unmarried heterosexual couples and homosexual couples.”

But Judge Andrew Rutherford said the Bulls’ views were outdated and violated Britain’s Equality Act of 2007.

“It is inevitable that laws will, from time to time, cut across the deeply held beliefs of individuals and sections of society, so they reflect the social attitudes and morals prevailing at the time they are made,” the judge said in his 12-page ruling. “Not so very long ago,” he added, “these beliefs would have been those accepted as normal by society at large. Now it is the other way around.”

European Union calendar omits Christian holidays

NEW YORK — An “educational” calendar for students in the European Union (EU) left off Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter, while noting Jewish and Muslim celebrations.

A statement from the EU says omitting the Christian holidays was a mistake and promises future printings of the calendar will list them, Fox News reported Jan. 17.

Three million copies of the calendar reportedly were printed, Fox News reported. The calendar book was intended to be a tool for students to note homework and activities. Each page contains inspirational quotes, information or comments for reflection.

While no Christian holidays are marked on the calendar, Jewish celebrations like Yom Kippur and the Muslim holiday Aid-el-Kebir are listed, according to Fox News.

Former French government minister Christine Boutin noted the omission of Christian holidays in a Jan. 11 blog post, according to the Catholic News Agency. The calendar slights “the religion practiced or recognized as forming the cultural assembly of our ‘old’ continent,” Boutin reportedly said. She wrote that Christianity has “fallen into the limbo of collective ignorance.”

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Campus News



Judson College ► State Baptist Leaders Lead Judson Chapel:

College inaugurated its spring chapel schedule Jan. 11 with a visit by two ministers from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — Rick Lance and Keith Hibbs. Lance has been executive director for 13 years and Hibbs has been director of the office of worship leadership and church music for four years. Hibbs provided music for the chapel service and Lance spoke to assembled students, faculty and staff.



University of Mobile ► UMobile Faculty Members Give Classical Music Recital:

The University of Mobile Center for Performing Arts will present From Bel Canto to Schoenberg, a classical music recital, Jan. 31 at 7:30 p.m. in the university’s Martin Auditorium.

The recital features faculty members Mihaela Buhaiciuc, soprano; Sharon Hudson, piano; and Dana Wilson, tenor.

The repertoire includes standard vocal music of the 19th and early 20th centuries of both opera and lied genres.

The main emphasis of the performance will be to articulate vocal differences between the Italian school of Bel Canto (Beautiful Singing) and Schoenberg (Speaking Voice) through the music of Schubert, Massenet and Dvorak.

For more information, call 251-442-2420.

► **Jazz Band to Present a Concert:** The University of Mobile Jazz Band will present a concert Feb. 25 at 6 p.m. in Weaver Auditorium on the university campus.

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

For more information, call 251-442-2420.

► **UMobile Reading Council Honored with State Award:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Reading Council was cited as “one of the most successful reading programs in the state of Alabama” by Betty Fowler, state coordinator of the ALA-STAR Award program of the Alabama Reading Association.

Fowler presented the ALA-STAR award to the UMobile Reading Council during a combined meeting in December of the university’s Kappa Delta Pi education honor society and SLATE, the Student Leaders Association

for Teacher Education. The UMobile Reading Council was among 10 reading councils in the state that received the award, and one of seven to be named to the Alabama Reading Association Honor Council.

This is the fourth consecutive year the UMobile Reading Council has received the ALA-STAR award, which is given in recognition of the council’s efforts to promote literacy.



Samford University ► Samford to Honor Basketball Alumni:

The Samford athletics department will honor all basketball alumni, with a special recognition of the 1960–61 team that posted a record of 23–1, at halftime of the Bulldogs’ home game against University of North Carolina in Greensboro on Jan. 29.

After the game a reception for the players and their families will be held in the hospitality room of the Pete Hanna Center.

The 1960–61 team posted the highest winning percentage in school history and the third most wins of any Samford team. The Bulldogs accomplished all of that with no seniors on the roster. Barnes said he did have some leaders on the squad, however.

If you are a basketball alumnus and would like to be a part of the festivities, contact Garrett Rice at 205-726-4217 or by e-mail at grice@samford.edu.

► **Gospel of John Topic of Samford’s Biblical Studies Lectures:** Biblical scholar and author F. Dale Bruner will present this year’s Biblical Studies Lectures at Samford University Feb. 1–3. “An Introduction to the Gospel of John” is the theme of the series, sponsored by Samford’s Beeson Divinity School.

Bruner’s books include “A Theology of the Holy Spirit” and a two-volume commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, “The Christbook” and “The Churchbook.” A professor at Whitworth College in Spokane, Wash., from 1975 to 1997, Bruner is now affiliated with Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., where he is writ-

ing a commentary on the Gospel of John.

His lecture topics and times are “Jesus: The Autobiography of God (John 1:1–18)” on Feb. 1 at 11 a.m.; “Jesus’ Samaritan-Woman Sermon (John 4)” on Feb. 2 at 11 a.m.; “The Blind Man’s Jesus Sermon (John 9)” on Feb. 2 at 1 p.m.; and “Jesus Resurrection-Mission Sermons (John 20)” on Feb. 3 at 11 a.m.

All lectures will be in A. Gerow Hodges Chapel and are open to the public. There will be a by-reservation luncheon Feb. 2. For more information on the lectures or to register for the luncheon, call 205-726-2731.

► **Cumberland School of Law to Present Annual Symposium:** Samford University’s Cumberland School of Law presents the annual Thurgood Marshall Symposium on Feb. 3 at noon in Robinson Hall moot courtroom. For more information, call 205-726-2444.

► **Testing Deadlines Near for Samford’s New Graduate Program:** Testing deadlines for admission to Samford University’s new Fifth-Year Non Traditional Secondary Graduate Program (FYNT) are approaching. The deadline for the Alabama Prospective Teacher Testing Program (APTTP) is Feb. 4. Deadline for the APTTP Praxis II content test is Feb. 10.

The new FYNT program is designed for graduates of an accredited university who already have a B.A. or B.S. degree with a certifiable major in a core teaching field and desire to earn a Class A teaching certificate to teach at the secondary level of education (grades 6–12).

Samford is admitting students now for its first class this summer. The program accommodates people working part-time or full-time or those currently teaching with provisional certificates. Courses will be offered in late afternoon, evening or Saturdays.

For more information, please contact recruitment coordinator Ashley Cacioppo at fynt@samford.edu or 205-726-2947.

► **Samford Students to Present Step Sing:** Samford University students present Step Sing on Feb. 10–12 at 7 p.m. in Wright Center Concert Hall.

For more information, call 205-726-2855.



For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Romans 6:6

Significance of a manger

Baptist worker in Central Asia shares with shepherd on Christmas

The manger isn't a big deal to Aamil. He milks his sheep next to one every morning.

He used to work alone or maybe with his father or brother until Jacob Taylor showed up.

"I sometimes visit in the mornings to 'help' with the milking," said Taylor, a Southern Baptist worker who serves in Central Asia.

It's more watching than helping, he explained.

Aamil's sheep — about 300 of them — live in a stable at the base of a mountain.

Shepherding has been in his family for generations.

Going to help him is almost like a setup, Taylor said.

"I don't go every day, but I thought Christmas morning would be a perfect day to go visit him at his stable, both to share the Christmas story and to see what kind of a place Jesus was born in."

He went early and settled in next to a manger until Aamil finished his chores.

"After I watched him finish milking the sheep, we started talking about why believers celebrate this holiday," Taylor said. "I told him that I was especially happy to be there with him that morning because Jesus, my Savior, was born in a stable."

Taylor, still studying Aamil's language, pointed to a manger and asked Aamil what it was called.

"After he told me, I went ahead and told him as much about [Jesus'] birth as I could," Taylor said.

Then he handed Aamil a Bible in his language, opened to Luke 2.

"Right there beside his stable, he read about Jesus in a manger and how shepherds were told of good news of great joy for all people — on that day, a Savior, Christ the Lord, was born," Taylor said.



IMB photo

SYMBOLISM — Aamil is a shepherd in Central Asia who cares for about 300 sheep. Southern Baptist representative Jacob Taylor shared with Aamil next to a manger on Christmas morning.

"He asked me if he could keep my book and read it."

Taylor had to leave soon after, but as he drove away, he watched as Aamil stood in front of his stable, Bible in hand.

"His parents can't read and the mother of the family has 12 kids. Ten are still living. I am praying

that he and his sisters will read it to their family," Taylor said. "Please pray that he and his family would read God's Word and receive the Savior."

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

Group to study housing allowance

In a move that could have a major impact on the tax status of churches and pastors nationwide, an independent national commission of religious and financial experts will review several church-related tax issues — such as the limitations of the pastoral housing allowance and the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) power to investigate churches — and issue its recommendations to U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley.

The commission, formed by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) at Grassley's request, will examine church-related tax issues in the wake of a mostly unsuccessful Grassley investigation into the financial records of six television ministries,

most of whom have ties to what is known as the "health and wealth gospel." At least some of them have been accused of using donor money to live luxurious lifestyles. Because they label themselves as churches, the ministries are tax-exempt and not required to submit detailed financial information to the IRS.

Grassley, who began his probe in 2007, maintained from the start that his probe had nothing to do with doctrine but instead focused on whether donor money was being used for "legitimate, nonprofit purposes."

The commission will be known as the Commission on Accountability and Policy for Religious Organizations. It will receive no government money. (BP)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Burmese soldiers persecute residents of Chin state

HAKHA, Burma — Burmese soldiers are systematically using forced labor, torture and rape to persecute majority-Christian residents of Chin state in western Burma, according to a report released today. Titled "Life Under the Junta: Evidence of Crimes Against Humanity in Burma's Chin State," the report by Physicians for Human Rights documented "extraordinary levels of state violence" against the Chin ethnic population.

The Chin are estimated to be 90 percent Christian, and the study indicates that it is therefore difficult to separate religious attacks from ethnic and other human rights abuses. Persecution of Christians is reportedly part of a wider campaign by the Burmese junta to create a uniform society in which the only accepted religion is Buddhism, according a 2007 government memo circulated in Karen state giving instructions on how to drive Christians out of the state. Respondents specifically targeted for their Christian faith and ethnicity said soldiers threatened them with the destruction of their homes or villages and threatened to harm or kill family members.

A total of 71 households from 13 of 90 villages and towns surveyed also said government authorities destroyed their local church buildings. The most brutal attacks included the forced conscription, abduction or murder of children under the age of 15, and the rape of men, women and children.

Burmese soldiers were responsible for 94.2 percent of all specifically ethnic and religious incidents in the survey. When asked why the Burmese army acted as it did, 15 percent of respondents answered, "Because we are Christians." Another 23 percent replied, "To persecute us," and a further 23 percent said, "Because we are Chin."

Mother charged with blasphemy fears for her life

LAHORE, Pakistan — A mother of five sentenced to death on blasphemy charges has lived in constant fear since the killing of Punjab Gov. Salman Taseer, her husband told Compass Direct News as he came out of Sheikhupura District Jail after meeting with her in mid-January. Ashiq Masih said his wife, Asia Noreen (alternatively spelled Aaysa, and also called Asia Bibi), is "very afraid." Her conviction for insulting Islam's prophet Muhammad, which she denies, triggered a violent chain of events in Pakistan, including the Jan. 4 murder of Taseer by his bodyguard after the governor voiced support for her. "She knows the Muslims have announced a prize on her head and would go to any lengths to kill her," a visibly nervous Masih said. "The governor's murder in broad daylight has put her in a state of paranoia."

He added that threats by Islamist extremists have dampened Noreen's hope of getting justice from the Lahore High Court, where her appeal against the conviction has been filed but yet to be taken up. Wearing a dark cloak to hide his identity, Masih was visibly nervous after meeting with her Jan. 11. Masih said prison authorities had improved Noreen's security considerably after Taseer's killing, but prison officials have reportedly said she will be transferred to another prison soon because of security concerns.

Somali mother of four slaughtered for her faith

MOGADISHU, Somalia — A mother of four was killed for her Christian faith Jan. 7 on the outskirts of Mogadishu, Somalia by Islamic extremists from al-Shabaab militia, a relative said.

The relative, who requested anonymity, said Asha Mberwa, 36, was killed in Warbhigly village when the Islamic extremists cut her throat in front of villagers who came out of their homes as witnesses. She is survived by her children — ages 12, 8, 6 and 4 — and her husband, who was not home at the time she was apprehended. Her husband, Abdinazir Mohammed Hassan, has fled to an unknown location. The relative said he phoned her Jan. 5 to try to make arrangements for moving her family out of the area.

Al-Shabaab extremists, who control large parts of Mogadishu, were able to monitor the conversation and confirm that she had become a Christian, he said. "Asha had been receiving threatening messages" after al-Shabaab monitored her previous communications with him, he said. Mberwa's relative, whose location is also withheld for security reasons, said a "good Samaritan" in Mogadishu was caring for her four children and that they continue to weep and cry out for their mother.

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