



INSIDE



State attorney general takes on Indian gambling

◆ Page 3



Cycling enthusiast still gets thrill from being on a bike, says you're never too old to ride

◆ Pages 4-5



NAMB's DeHart shares Christ through literacy ministry

◆ Page 17

A leader emerges

Oklahoma's Tom Elliff nominated as next IMB president

Thomas "Tom" D. Elliff, longtime Oklahoma pastor, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leader and former missionary, is the unanimous recommendation of a 15-member trustee search committee to be the next president of the International Mission Board (IMB).

The nomination of Elliff — who served as a missionary to Zimbabwe with his wife, Jeannie, in the early 1980s — will be presented to the full board of trustees for consideration and a possible vote when they meet March 15-16 in Dallas.

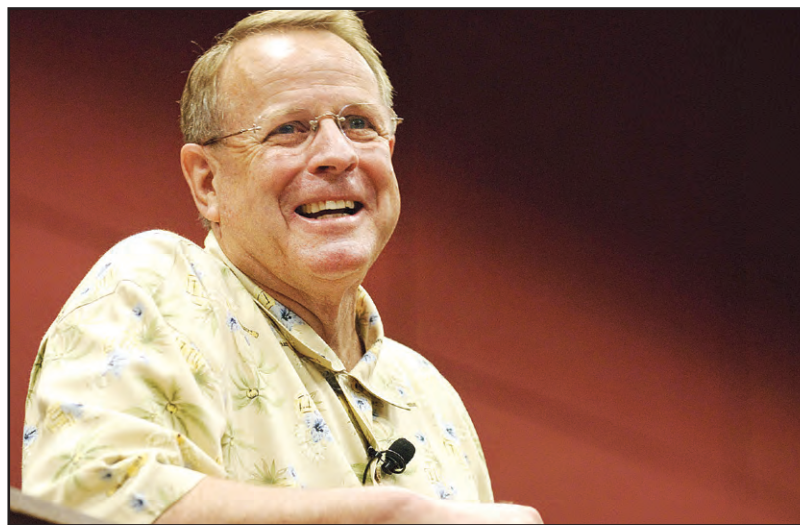
If elected, Elliff would succeed Jerry Rankin as leader of the mission board, which coordinates the work of more than 5,000 Southern Baptist missionaries worldwide. Rankin retired as IMB president July 31, 2010, after 17 years at the helm. Veteran missionary and Executive Vice President Clyde Meador currently serves as interim president.

IMB trustee chairman Jimmy Pritchard, who has led the presidential search committee throughout its selection process, announced the nomination Feb. 17. He said Elliff emerged as the committee's clear and unanimous choice in January.

"Throughout the process, we talked to some great and godly men, but we just could not get a sense of God's peace about any one of them," said Pritchard, pastor of First Baptist Church, Forney, Texas. "When Dr. Elliff's name came before us, we had a subtle sense of God's Spirit speaking to our hearts. That may sound mystical, but that's really what happened. ... Every one of us senses that God spoke and said, 'This is the moment you've been praying for. Here is your man.'"

A Texas native, Elliff, 66, was president of the Southern Baptist Convention 1996-1997 and served as president of the SBC Pastors Conference in 1990. He has led several key churches in the denomination, including First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., where he was pastor for 20 years.

He most recently served as IMB senior vice president for spiritual nurture



BP photo

EXPERIENCED — Thomas 'Tom' D. Elliff, longtime Oklahoma pastor, Southern Baptist Convention leader and former missionary, is the unanimous recommendation of a 15-member trustee search committee to be the next IMB president.

and church relations, from 2005 to 2009. In that role, he taught and counseled missionaries and helped mobilize churches throughout the convention for missions involvement.

'Wealth of experience'

Currently he leads Living in The Word Publications, a writing and speaking ministry he founded in 2005. He frequently speaks about spiritual awakening and family life in churches and conferences throughout the United States and abroad.

Elliff brings a wealth of gifts and experience to the challenging task of leading Southern Baptists' international missions work in the coming years, Pritchard said.

Elliff, said Pritchard, has lived in "many different worlds" in Southern Baptist life:

"He has heard God's call to mis-

sions as a field missionary. He has pastored some of our best churches. He was president of our convention for two years. He worked at the vice presidential level with IMB. So he is uniquely prepared, his integrity is unquestioned, and I believe that he will be able to help connect all of our entities together. He has great (a) relationship with our seminary presidents and with the North American Mission Board.

"We just see so many indicators that he is God's choice. Through the process God has spoken to him also, and we are enthusiastic. We are standing with complete and total unanimity. We are very confident that God's hand is on Dr. Elliff at this time to lead IMB. We're excited, and we can't wait for March to get here to make our presentation to the full board."

(See 'Elliff,' page 6)

Alabamian shares experiences in, vision for Egypt

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Hayden Hammond, like everybody else, has no idea.

No idea what's going to happen in Egypt.

But he does know one thing — it's a historical moment for Muslims and Christians there, and the bridge that's been built could provide inroads for the gospel.

"There's been a divide for some time, and ever growing, between the Muslims and the Christians in Egypt. But this whole situation has cre-

ated some new opportunities for dialogue," said Hammond, a Christian worker from Alabama who has spent time in Egypt and was there when the unrest escalated in late January culminating in the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Feb. 11.

Muslims and Christians are standing together in the streets, in the squares, protecting each other and joining together for a purpose, he said.

"For the first time, people are get-

Gambling bills less likely with case pending

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Since the federal government indicted several high-powered casino owners, legislators and lobbyists for a vote-buying scheme at the Alabama Statehouse last year, many are wondering if gambling supporters will push as forcefully — if at all — in this year's legislative session to legalize gambling. But with less than one week until the start of the 2011 session, some of the state's most influential gambling supporters may be too preoccupied fighting their federal charges to work on new legislation.

Ronnie Gilley, developer of Houston County's Country Crossing, is one of the defendants in the case whose company was behind the Sweet Home Alabama ads of 2009 and 2010, which urged state residents to call for the legalization of gambling. Now Gilley is imprisoned in Montgomery for bribery charges separate from the original corruption charges.



GILLEY

On Feb. 7, U.S. Magistrate Terry Moorer revoked Gilley's bond for attempting to bribe and silence Jarrod Massey, a former lobbyist for Country Crossing and former co-defendant who entered a plea agreement with the federal government for the original corruption charge.

According to *The Birmingham News*, Moorer said there was more

(See 'Gilley,' page 17)

ting to know their neighbors, standing together to protect their streets. Now they have a deeper bond, and I think it's going to open up a lot of opportunities for conversations about religion," Hammond said. "It's like, 'Hey, I'm not someone who's just trying to influence your mind, I was the guy who held the stick with you and defended our neighborhood.'"

A picture of Christians protecting Muslims during prayers in the square went viral, and images like that are

(See 'Egyptian,' page 16)

COMMENT

Preparing to Worship

We have all been there. For whatever reason, we rush into church with our tongues hanging out. Perhaps one of the children had a problem. Perhaps a task took longer than we anticipated. Perhaps we simply lost track of time. The reason does not matter. The result is the same.

We hurry into the worship service with our minds and hearts focused on something other than worshipping God. Yes. We want to worship God. That is why we are in the service, why we put forth the effort to be present. But all the things that claimed our time and attention before we scurried to our seats still dash through our minds.

Focusing on God is hard, we find. Worship is not something that can be turned on or off like pushing a button. Worship takes time. It takes preparation. Without preparation, when the service is over, we feel more as if we have fulfilled a duty than experienced the living God.

Experience has taught us that when worship begins so frantically, it often ends less than satisfactorily.

What we know anecdotally, a study by the Barna Research Group confirms scientifically. In one study, 75 percent of adults said worship is very important to them, while 92 percent of adults who attend church regularly rated worship at the same level.

However, only about one-third of the adults said they always experience God's presence during church worship events. Another one-third said they frequently experience God's presence during worship events. The remaining one-third said they experience God's presence in worship less than frequently.

Some of the responsibility for these experiences rests with the church. But Barna found a relationship between the way an individual approaches worship and the experience he or she has in worship.

The study concluded, "Part of the challenge may relate to personal preparation to worship." George Barna, who directed the study, added, "Without giving themselves time to clear their minds and hearts of their daily distractions and other problems, many people attend a worship event but never enter a worshipful frame of mind."

The study also found that only four out of 10 adults said they regularly prepare themselves for worship. A large share of regular churchgoers does not pray, meditate, confess or focus on God prior to the start of a church worship event.

As a consequence, these people reported they



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

find it difficult to connect with God spiritually during a worship event.

Churches received a share of the responsibility for the low satisfaction of worship. Churches were chided for breaking worship experiences with extraneous items. Announcements being made in the middle of a service was one example cited.

Unnecessary distractions

Unnecessary distractions such as seating latecomers in the midst of a worship time — special music, Bible reading, prayer — were also mentioned.

In short, churches must consciously avoid structuring or conducting worship events in ways that build anxieties or frustrations for participants, Barna counseled.

Worship is always God-centered. It is not man-centered or institution-centered. The Greek word most often translated worship ("proskuneo") means "to fall down before" or "to bow down before." The implication is that worship cannot be forced or coerced by an outside source. Worship is an attitude. Worship relates to the state of the individual spirit seeking to encounter God.

Perhaps that is why the primary responsibility for worship rests with the individual who centers his or her mind on God and not on the things of this world, whose heart is open and repentant as he or she seeks to encounter the God of creation through the risen Lord.

The Old Testament offers guidance about preparing for worship.

According to Jewish law, before going to the Temple to offer sacrifices, worshipers were required to cleanse themselves through ritual bathing. Those who have visited Jerusalem in the last few years likely have been taken to the Pool of Siloam, where worshipers stopped to perform the ritual bathing before proceeding to the Temple.

Frequently worshipers put on clean clothes to signify their clean status before proceeding up the street to the southern wall of Temple Mount. There they would climb the steps through the wall to the level area where the Temple stood. This is one of the few places that modern-day pilgrims can walk on steps actually used by Jesus and the disciples.

Once on Temple Mount, priests offered the many sacrifices brought by worshipers, while people gathered in the various courts to worship, pray and discuss Scripture.

No one dared come to Temple Mount haphazardly. Jews understood the need to prepare to meet God. God is holy. Before encountering Him in worship, it was necessary to cleanse, confess and pray.

In Deuteronomy 4:29, God promised His people that when they seek Him with all their hearts and souls, they will find Him. In Jeremiah 29:13, God said, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord." Those promises are still true.

But seeking God with the whole heart is more than rushing into a church worship event with no preparation — no prayer, no confession, no meditation. For the church, helping people seek God with the whole heart is more than catering to the latest fad or focusing on institutional needs.

Marking worship as important on a survey or even attending a church worship event does not make worship important. Worship only becomes important to us when we prepare to meet God in a worship event and there we fall down before Him in reverence, praise and gratitude for what He has done in our lives. And when we do that, we will experience God's presence through worship. 🙏



"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

Joshua Dollar

Friendship Baptist Church, Springville
St. Clair Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: 2 Corinthians 4 and 5

FAVORITE HYMN:
"How Great Thou Art"

HOBBIES: Geocaching

FAMILY STATUS: Engaged to Stacy Watson



DOLLAR

Between his studies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and working part time in youth ministry, Joshua Dollar has little time to spare. But when he does, Dollar enjoys geocaching, a worldwide treasure hunting game using GPS coordinates, and planning for his upcoming marriage March 12.

Dollar enjoys geocaching, a worldwide treasure hunting game using GPS coordinates, and planning for his upcoming marriage March 12.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was in the fourth grade when I accepted Christ as my Savior. It happened during a revival service at our church. ... I do remember coming to a point that evening where I realized I was lost and that Christ was the only One who could save me.

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

A: I have been involved in church to some degree ever since I can remember. As a child, I participated in Bible drills and Christmas musicals, and I tagged along on a couple of church building projects. I helped out during VBS (Vacation Bible School) and spent a summer as a church camp counselor while in high school. I now serve as the part-time youth director at Friendship.

Q: What have you gotten from that involvement?

A: The realization that God can take people like me, unqualified and inadequate, and provide them with the full ability to work the task before them. The only requirement is to be a willing servant. It is truly amazing to experience the results of a "Here am I, send me" attitude.

Q: What does the Christian life mean to you?

A: The Christian life is more than a fire insurance policy. ... It is a deliberate, daily dying of the old self, lifting up the spirit of Christ that is in us, and fulfilling our part of the Great Commission. It's not an easy life nor was it ever promised to be. But it is a rewarding and abundant life.

State attorney general takes on Indian gambling, says 'no local bingo rule ... can authorize [slots]'

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Nearly every week in 2010, bingo supporters and opponents took turns upping the ante in a gambling battle fought using the media, raids and standoffs across the state until all non-Indian gambling facilities were shut down. Even though voters and political candidates on both sides of the gambling issue seemed to fall silent during the election season regarding their future hopes for Alabama's gambling empire, the war is still waging in the state's courthouses.

But Attorney General Luther Strange may be ready to deliver Alabama's slot machine-style gambling industry a death blow.

Less than one month after newly elected Gov. Robert Bentley dissolved the Task Force on Illegal Gambling leaving Strange to enforce the state's gambling laws, Strange got to work trying to rid the state of Indian gambling.

On Feb. 11, Strange sent a four-page letter to the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) asking it to "make clear that Native American Indian tribes located in Alabama cannot engage in gambling activities that are patently illegal under Alabama law." Currently the Poarch Band of Creek Indians operates three slot machine-style gambling casinos similar to the so-called "electronic bingo" gambling halls previously shut down by the task force.

Pledging to "fight public corruption" and "stop the secret deals and corruption behind illegal gambling," Strange explained Alabama's laws against lotteries, slot machines and other gambling devices in his letter.

"While several local constitutional amendments have authorized 'charity bingo' in certain Alabama counties, absolutely no amendment to the Alabama Constitution has authorized slot machines or other illegal gambling devices in any county," Strange wrote.

'Prince of preachers' John Bob Riddle dies at 86

John Bob Riddle, former state convention president and Alabama Baptist pastor, died Feb. 12. He was 86.

"From my youth, I remember John Bob Riddle as a prince of preachers," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "He is one of the finest expository preachers I have known. This man stood tall in the pulpit."

Two of Riddle's pastors — Mike Shaw, Alabama Baptist State Convention president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, and Charles T. Carter, pastor emeritus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills — agreed.

And he "was the finest continuing student of the Greek New Testament of any active pastor I have ever known," Carter added.

At his death, Riddle was the oldest living former convention president, Shaw noted. He served as president and in all the roles that go along with that position from 1968 to 1969.

Riddle, a Gadsden native, preached his first sermon in 1943 during his time as a student at Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and soon after, took his first pastorate at the former Trinity

"Machines that accept cash or credit and then dispense cash value prizes based upon chance are slot machines under Alabama law and are not made legal by any bingo amendment. Likewise no local bingo rule, regulation or ordinance can legally authorize slot machines."

Strange also included information from recent court rulings against the type of gambling offered by the Poarch Creek Indians at Wind Creek Casino and Hotel in Atmore, Creek Casino Wetumpka and Creek Casino Montgomery.

Robert McGhee, governmental relations adviser for the Poarch Creek, said this isn't the first time the state has appealed to the NIGC to shut down the gambling operations, and he doesn't expect any federal actions against the casinos.

"Our Indian gaming enterprises are regulated by the federal, not the state government through the [NIGC]," he said. "Bingo is legally played in the state, and under NIGC statutes, our enterprises are, indeed, legal to operate within Alabama."

Strange disagrees. "The Commission should make clear that Native American Indian tribes located in Alabama cannot operate so-called 'electronic bingo machines' and other gambling devices which look like, sound like and attract the same class of customers as conventional slot machines, but play a six second game of 'bingo' in cyberspace using software that allows card-minders and auto daub features that are specifically designed to recreate a slot machine experience for the player with little to no human interaction," Strange wrote.

'Looking for loopholes'

"I would also ask that any regulations make clear that the mere fact that traditional bingo is allowed in certain parts of this state does not mean that 'electronic bingo' is legal on Indian lands in this state. ... With the gambling interests constantly looking for loop-

holes and ambiguities to exploit, it is essential that this commission maintain a consistent and cohesive posture in enforcing and clarifying Native American Indian gambling laws in a way that clearly demarcates legal and illegal gambling activities."

Tying up loose ends

Strange also is tying up the loose ends left when the state's gambling establishments shut down fearing task force raids.

On Feb. 11, Strange revoked a 2008 opinion from former Attorney General Troy King that was used as an impetus to include electronic bingo at Country Crossing, according to *The Dothan Eagle*.

The opinion was issued in response to questions about the definition of a bingo special permit holder as well as the issue of employees being paid in the operation of bingo games operated by nonprofit organizations.

King said bingo could be operated by the employees at Country Crossing, and its developer Ronnie Gilley could earn income from it.

And on Feb. 18, Strange's office announced that "thousands of controversial gaming machines" would be removed from Alabama within 60 days from VictoryLand in Shorter, Country Crossing in Dothan and White Hall Entertainment Center in White Hall.

The announcement was made after Strange and "three of the country's largest gaming machine manufacturers" — International Gaming Technology, Bally Technologies and Multimedia Games — reached an agreement allowing the companies a "window of opportunity" to remove their machines. According to Strange's office, two other companies — Cadillac Jack and Hest Technology — said they already have removed their machines and equipment from the state.

In other news, the City of Kimberly officially ended its legal battle in mid-February when the police department destroyed about \$1 million worth of gambling machines and parts at a Jefferson County landfill.



STRANGE

Chapel, a church plant of the former Ensley Baptist Church.

While a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., he served as pastor of a church in Indiana for about a year. During that time, Riddle also married his wife, Tommye. He graduated with a bachelor of divinity (now equivalent to a master of divinity) in 1949.

Riddle went on to serve as pastor of Brantley Baptist Church (1949-51) and Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Montgomery (1951-60). During his tenure, its membership grew from more than 150 to more than 3,000.

Riddle's last pastorate was at Central Park Baptist Church, Birmingham, where he

stayed for 20 years (1960-80). After retiring in 1980, Riddle served as an evangelist and guest teacher in Alabama churches.

He also served as a trustee for Mobile College (now the University of Mobile), which awarded him an honorary doctorate of divinity, and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. Riddle did extra studies at Princeton University in New Jersey and the former International Seminary in Zurich, Switzerland.

At the time of his death, he was a member of First, Pelham.

Riddle was preceded in death by his wife and daughter, Jo Beth. He is survived by two children, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. (TAB)

**Does your church have a staff position to fill?
Are you a minister looking for a church position?**

The Alabama Baptist Online has a community message board for church-related openings.

Visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/church-positions.php and post your church-related position.



'The noblest invention'

Cycling enthusiast still gets thrill from being on a bike, says you're never too old to ride

By Norman Jameson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Get a bicycle," Mark Twain once said. "You will not regret it if you live."

The day that social necessity forced me to learn to ride a bicycle, my world expanded exponentially.

If I had not risked and learned that day, while all the boys were zipping around on two wheels in the town where I was visiting a friend, then I would have spent that day confined to the house with the old folks. I could no more play with the boys than a wingless goose could fly south.

But I did learn with their patient coaxing, coaching and catching. And that day, I discovered the freedom of exploration, the power of personal propulsion and the whimsical caress of wind.

You learn how to ride a bicycle in a single moment. It may take hours to reach that moment, but you learn to ride the instant you resist the urge to stick your leg out to keep from falling and instead push hard on the pedal to give yourself a surge of momentum that forever implants in your DNA the instinctive ability to stay upright.

Writer and rider Bill Strickland says human beings were born knowing how to ride a bicycle, so we don't "learn" how, we just remember. "Scientists cannot explain how a bicycle stays upright,"

he said. "There are too many forces and variables. We can shoot a metal can across our solar system, but there are not enough mathematical formulas to explain how a 6-year-old child rides a bike."

I gave each of my children a bicycle on his or her fifth birthday. Teaching the first one to ride on a grassy slope at the local park, I ran along beside him, holding the seat while he turned the pedals and begged me to hold tight. I promised him I wouldn't let go — and then I did.

I held my spot at the moment I released him and listened to him ride away, still unaware that he was moving under his own power, warning me to keep hanging on. Eventually, 100 yards down the way, he realized I was no longer beside him and fell over. But he looked back to where I stood, measured his progress by the beacon of my smile, and he cheered himself delirious.

Last Christmas, 26 years later, I rode closely behind him, clinging to his wheel as he broke the chilly wind for me, and I remembered the day he learned — or remembered — how to ride. Last summer, his brother and I rode 500 miles in RAGBRAI (The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa), and I've already made a date with my oldest grandson to do it in 2021, when he turns 14.

Cycling has been a part of

my life since that summer day I learned to ride to keep from being left behind by my friends. When our children were little, my wife and I each rode with one in a seat over the back wheel, while the oldest rode on his own.

Author William Saroyan called the bicycle "the noblest invention of mankind." While I hesitate to put a bicycle above the printing press or ice cream, riding a bicycle on a quiet street or a single track in the woods commands the thrills and emotions of Icarus soaring, Columbus sailing, Lewis and Clark setting west.

I'm in my sixth decade and have not been far from a bike in 50 years. I ride for exercise, for fun, for mental health and occasionally for challenge. Studies indicate regular riding — or other exercise — will greatly reduce easily distracted children's dependence on such behavioral control drugs as Ritalin.

Weather conditions

I've ridden as much as 110 miles in a day, and my most miserable day on a bike established parameters by which to appreciate other days. It happened last summer dur-



Photo courtesy of Norman Jameson

LIFETIME OF CYCLING — Norman Jameson, a cyclist for more than 50 years, encourages everyone to get on a bike. In his 60s, Jameson plans to continue cycling for years to come.

ing RAGBRAI. I knew it was going to rain when we took off from Charles City headed for Manchester, but I — for some reason known only to God — left my rain jacket packed rather than wear it because I thought it would be better to have a dry jacket at the end of the day than to wear the rain jacket in the rain. We froze until our teeth chattered. Riding hard warmed us inside but increased the cold wind across our wet skin.

But rain or less-than-perfect weather no longer threatens me. I took off recently under threat of snow, dressed appropriately; got snowed upon; and had a great adventure. Your body can thrive in conditions much more difficult

than your mind often will let you test. Since I endured out of necessity the miserable, cold summer rain in Iowa, I've been more likely to ride in conditions I previously avoided.

Remembering how to ride

Where does this put you? You've likely "remembered" at some point in your life how to ride a bike, slamming the coaster brake backward and making a long, arching skid in the driveway; flying down hills; dancing on your pedals to push up the next hill. When did you get too old to ride?

Every year, RAGBRAI registers riders in their 70s. I plan to be one of them.

Twenty-one-year-old professional rider

Ben King confesses to being a Christian and said, "Cycling is an act of worship for me."

Ready to start pedaling? Begin here ...

First you need a bike and a helmet.

You can buy a dependable bicycle for \$300 with a plush seat that will absorb your neighborhood's bumps and forgive careless handling. Or you can spend \$14,000 for a carbon fiber racing machine that will feel as if you're riding a board and twitch like a thoroughbred beneath you. Be sure to ask if the price you negotiate includes pedals. There are such a wide variety of pedals that most new bikes are sold without them.

Of course, you can find a used bike at any number of garage sales, but if the bike has been "in storage" for a long time, then it will need more reconditioning than you'll want to do.

Buy at a local bike shop rather than a discount chain. The advice, fitting, bike quality and service following the sale will be worth any extra money you might spend.

The recent surge of cycling popularity prompted whole new categories

of bicycles. Don't be confused by descriptive terms like cruiser, city, commuter, cross, plush, fixie, race or mountain. Just tell your bike store guy how you plan to ride and where.

All helmets are manufactured to specific standards, and you are not buying a safer helmet by spending more money. Higher priced helmets will be lighter and fit better.

Be seen

When you go riding, be seen. Part of the benefit of the bright, flashy clothing you see cyclists wear is just that — you see them. Mount a bright flashing safety light behind you.

In mere moments, your bicycle can carry you miles from home. You may be out on a rural road by yourself, have an accident and be unconscious. Carry identification and an emergency contact number. You can get a wristband ID on which to list your vitals, contact, blood type, etc., from several vendors, including www.RoadID.com.

How do you find safe routes? On your smart phone or computer (<http://maps.google.com/>), you can actually pick a destination and ask for the best route by bike. Many areas are establishing bike lanes on municipal roads.

Searching "Alabama rails to trails" gets you 30,000 options for designated trails in the state, including 71 miles of wide, hard packed trails built on old railroad beds, on which the steepest grade will be 3 percent. (www.great-trails.com/ala.shtml)

If you start riding as part of your regimen to lose weight, then be careful not to use a short ride to justify a huge infusion of calories. On the 500-mile RAGBRAI (The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa), each summer that rolls through every 4-H Club, church bazaar, Girl Scout barbecue and pie sale in Iowa, it is not unusual for some of the 10,000 riders to actually gain weight. (TAB)

Riding tips

► As for most activity, if you are going from sedentary to active, then you should get a physical from your doctor.

► Don't go crazy starting out. One man who weighed 500 pounds (he broke his first bike) could only go around the block on his first ride. Now he weighs under 200 and rides everywhere.

► If you're just starting, then get regular pedals. You can ride with any shoes. Later you can get pedals into which biking shoes will clip, giving you the ability to pull up the pedal on one side while you push down the pedal on the other, greatly increasing your efficiency as you spin.

► Use the multiple gears of your bike. Shift before you start

up a hill. If you wait to downshift until you can't pull anymore, then there is too much pressure on the chain and cogs to shift smoothly.

► After your helmet, the next important accessory is some bicycle specific shorts. Skip gel pads in favor of dense foam.

► Seat position is important for comfort. Set the height with the ball of your foot on the pedal in the lowest position. Your leg should be slightly bent.

► Know the rules of the road. See the rules for Alabama bikes: <http://bicicoop.org/post/455718045/alabama-bike-laws>. Generally cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as automobile drivers. Share the road. (TAB)

TRIVIA FACT

The heyday of bicycling began in the 1870s with the evolution of the "ordinary." It was capable of long trips on poor roads, so its use spread fast and far. In a day when a skilled person might earn 25 cents per hour in wages, a good ordinary sold for \$75 to \$125, making it more expensive than building a house. Nevertheless the ordinary sold at a furious pace. For a short history on the evolution of bicycles, visit www.bikyle.com/history_of_bike.htm.

Cycling: A Fun Way to Exercise

Vaughn Forest staff member sheds 175 pounds

At 5 feet 6 inches and 320 pounds, Chad Boak waddled more than walked around the facilities of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, where he has been communications director for five years. He heard the comments.

Boak was always big but obesity slowly oozed over him like marshmallow crème over a second piece of pie once he started making some real money, eating out often and remaining steadfastly sedentary.

Oh, he had a gym membership, courtesy of mutual gifts with his wife, a hospice nurse at the time. But no gym ever replaced equipment worn out by him.

Beginning slow

One day, Boak's wife came home after dealing with an obese client dying of diabetes, took his hands in her own and told him, "Here's how your life is going to go."

He did not like talking about his weight and drove off in a huff. Oddly the car took him to the gym, where he fumed while walking slowly on the treadmill.

Boak returned home with a resolve to change. He fashioned an unorthodox diet limited to 1,500 calories a day — from whatever food source he chose.

And he started exercising regularly.

Over the next 11 months, Boak lost 175 pounds — 55 percent of his weight — a whole other person.

Today he's gained back some muscle weight and is a fit 155 pounds.

Right after Boak committed to get healthy, Vaughn Forest sponsored its annual 5K run. Lumbering the course at 320, it took him an hour to cover the 3.1 miles — about the speed of a casual walker. The following year, he ran it in 24 minutes.

On Jan. 15, Boak ran a marathon — 26 miles — in under four hours.

Team Vaughn Forest (see story, this page) "has been huge" in supporting his turn from an early, self-imposed death sentence to a commitment to healthy living. "Having a group of people you can meet with, people to support you, makes all the difference in the world," he said.

Three months after Boak stopped losing weight, a little girl was born into his family.

He remembered the chest pains he used to have just lying in bed, worrying that he would "die young because I'm a fat dad."

"Now," Boak said, "I will be there for my daughter." (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church

SUPPORT SYSTEM — Team Vaughn Forest took more than 40 participants to the Crab Trap Triathlon in Destin, Fla. Participants in the endurance ministry don a full range of gear for biking, running and triathlon, identifying Vaughn Forest Baptist Church and its ministry in regional group events.

'Church vs. world'

Vaughn Forest's endurance ministry reaches unchurched

By Norman Jameson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Riding Administrative Pastor Hardy Sellers' passion, Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, bridges the "church vs. world" chasm with an endurance ministry that involves dozens of church members and their unchurched friends who love to cycle, run and swim.

Sellers, who admits his passion for endurance sports like triathlons and marathons borders on "crazy," created Team Vaughn Forest (TVF) when people grew curious about his regimen, which includes running as early as 3:30 a.m.

He recently took 40 people to the beach to participate in a triathlon, a dozen to the 100-mile 3-State 3-Mountain Challenge bike ride and two to their first marathon.

The Montgomery Baptist Association church is hosting the Vaughn Forest Resurrection Run 10K/5K/1 mile run/walk April 23, and Sellers, a certified running and cycling coach, is holding training runs from the church on Saturdays starting in March.

Evangelism opportunities

All this activity is a magnet for active, unchurched people. "We just tell our people to come out and invite your friends," Sellers said.

A 35- to 40-foot cross hangs on the outside of the Vaughn Forest Baptist facility in front of the prayer room. It serves as a gathering point, where participants in TVF events can invite

their friends to meet at the cross.

TVF members also hold hands to pray before their formal competitions, and Sellers said it is not unusual for strangers to ask to join them.

He wants unchurched participants to feel, "If I ever did go to church, I'd go to a church like yours."

Passion for sports

Active people are passionate about their sports. Vaughn Forest shares their passion, which gives the church inroads into that population. Such activity provides members a great opportunity to make connections with their neighbors who have similar interests.

"By creating a relationship with them through biking and running, we become close friends, and once we become close friends, I can share my beliefs and invite them to church activities and minister to them in various ways," Sellers said.

Not only has Vaughn Forest attracted new members through TVF but also the group has helped several dozen members get fit, find energy, improve mental health and lose weight.

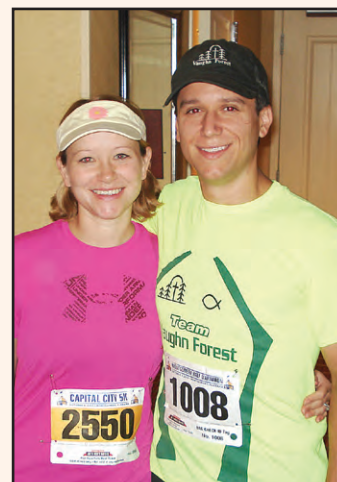
Sellers, who has been on the church's staff for 12 years and has been

an avid fitness advocate for about seven, said two participants have lost 170 and 165 pounds and have since run a marathon.

Another participant emerged from clinical depression and lost 70 pounds.

"We have story after story of incredible things God has done through this," Sellers said. "You could write a book."

For more information about the Resurrection Run, visit resurrectionrun.vaughnforest.com/index.php/team-vaughn-forest.



Photos courtesy of Chad Boak

BEFORE AND AFTER — Chad Boak, pictured with wife Christy, lost 175 pounds — 55 percent of his weight — in 11 months.

VOICE YOUR OPINION

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

Remember to:

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






Photo courtesy of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church

RELATIONSHIP BUILDER — Charles Mauney participates in cycling events with Team Vaughn Forest.

Elliff says IMB nomination was not on 'radar screen,' asks for prayer

(continued from page 1)

Reached for comment, Elliff asked Southern Baptists to pray for him, his wife and family — and for IMB trustees as they consider his nomination.

"Both Jeannie and I were incredibly humbled when the search committee approached us," he said. "Obviously we would not have moved forward to this moment had we not spent a great deal of time in prayer seeking the face of the Lord. Now we feel humbled once again that they are going to present us to the board. Along with all the members of the board, we would just encourage people to pray with us during these days."

Elliff said his discussions with the IMB presidential search committee initially came as a surprise.

"We love missions and we've given our hearts to it, but this was not on our radar screen," he said. "It has just driven us to our knees in prayer. We certainly couldn't do this if we didn't sense the Lord's leadership to do it. But we recognize that God speaks not only to individuals but to groups of people. We're confident that He will have His way as the board deals with this."

Born in Paris, Texas, Elliff is a third-generation Southern Baptist pastor. The Elliffs, who married in 1966, have four grown children and 25 grandchildren.

He received a bachelor of arts degree from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.; a master

What people are saying on 



Franklin Kirksey
Dr. Tom Elliff is a great choice as president of the IMB. His messages in print and in person as well as his ministry among us attest to his ability to lead us in times like these.



Walter Blackman
Challenging times to lead SBC in missions, praying God will give new leader abundant wisdom.



John Sparks
Praying for him and will get to pray with him at the Prayer Conference in Montgomery in March.

Are you on Facebook?
Be a fan of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper.

of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and a doctor of ministry degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

He led several churches while in college and seminary and was pastor of Eastwood Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla., for nearly a decade before being appointed with his wife as missionaries to Zimbabwe in 1981. They served in the East

African nation for about two years, but resigned in 1983 after their teenage daughter, Beth, was seriously injured in a car accident there. After they returned to the United States, Elliff led Applewood Baptist Church, Lakewood, Colo., before being called to First Southern Baptist, Del City, where he was pastor from 1985 to 2005.

He is the author of several books about prayer, spiritual awakening and family life. (BP)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing with 4-Given March 5, 7 p.m. Dinner will be at 6 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

CLARKE

► The men's ministry of **Thomasville Church** will hold its annual feast Feb. 25, 6:30 p.m., with professional angler Clay Dyer. Despite being born without lower limbs, a left arm and a partial right arm, Dyer has won nearly 20 bass tournaments. The Capstone Quartet will sing. For information call 334-636-4409. Ty Parten is pastor.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of Ma-

ple Avenue Church, Geneva, will hold a luncheon meeting March 8, 11 a.m., with Jim Mashburn, pastor of Poplar Head Methodist Church. Jason Gunter, minister of music for Maple Avenue, will provide music. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by March 1. Mike Shirah is pastor.

MOBILE

► **First Church, Irvington**, will host Irvington Heritage Day at Partridge Plantation March 13, 1 p.m. There will be food. For information call 251-957-2718 or visit www.fbcirvington.org. Ron Griffin is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will host The Kempter Family in concert March 11, 7

p.m. Stan Holt is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Flatwoods Church, Northport**, will host Brother Billy Bob Bohannon Feb. 27, 11 a.m. Cecil Smith is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Bremen Church, Cullman**, will hold a singing with The Rowlands, Feb. 27, 10 a.m. Jr. Garmon is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Sunny Home Church, Haleyville**, will hold revival March 20-23 with Sammy Wallace, of Loretto, Tenn. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Jason Thorn is pastor. ☞

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Two Samford professors honored for outstanding work

Two Samford University faculty members were cited for outstanding accomplishments as educators at the opening convocation of the spring semester Jan. 25.

Brock School of Business professor Steven T. Jones, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, received the George Macon Memorial Award for his outstanding performance as a teacher, counselor, friend to students and one who inspires students to greatness.

English professor Nancy Whitt received the Jennings B. Marshall Service Award as a faculty member who has made significant and sustained service contributions to the university.

The awards were presented by Samford provost and executive vice president J. Bradley Creed.

Jones, said Creed, is a "teacher's teacher," who seeks to help each of his students achieve full potential. "He always goes the extra mile and works tirelessly with students outside of class, both in his office and at optional help sessions," Creed said. "It is no surprise that student surveys reveal a nearly universally positive student assessment of his teaching, giving him impressively high ratings."

Jones, who holds a doctorate in finance from the University of Cincinnati, joined the Samford faculty in 2001. Active in university and professional communities, he advises student groups and mentors new faculty members. He is president-elect of the international Academy of Economics and Finance.

Whitt was cited for her longtime leadership of the Samford faculty senate and her role in critical changes ranging from core curriculum to faculty welfare. Creed noted that Whitt, who joined the Samford faculty in 1973, always has sought the betterment of the university as a place where academic and spiritual values find their full expression.

A longtime proponent of an increased diversity of students, faculty, staff and curriculum at Samford, Whitt is known "for reaching across cultures, race and religion in her quest to make Samford a better place," Creed said. She holds bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Alabama.

Selma's Elkdale Church dedicates renovated building

"Renovations started just after I arrived. It was neat to come in and be a part of it," said Cory Horton, pastor of Elkdale Baptist Church, Selma.

Last summer, the Selma Baptist Association church broke ground on a renovation project involving the fellowship hall, kitchen, bathrooms, nursery and preschool department. Members had decided it was time to update their building, which was constructed in 1953.

This was just phase one of the church's remodeling plan. Renovations to the choir suite and administrative offices are planned for the future.

On Feb. 6, Elkdale Baptist celebrated the completion of renovations and dedicated the building. Six charter members shared the history of the church and personal stories of when the building was originally erected. Maude Ellen Brown, one of the charter members, recalled seeing only a pine forest where Elkdale now stands and how a friend asked her, "Can you see it? Can you see the church?" Brown replied, "All I see is a bunch of trees." She laughed as she told the story to the congregation.

Horton's message encouraged Elkdale to remember, "The church has never been a building, but it is the people of God." ☞



JONES



WHITT

STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

February 28 and March 1 • Gardendale First Baptist Church • www.alsbom.org/sec

See pages 10-11 for the complete conference agenda.

FOCUS on One Mission



FOCUS on ONE Mission

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission
ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program
MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries

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

ALABAMA BAPTIST CONVENTION STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Remember

“Remember” is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as simply: “keep in your mind and recall it at will; not fail to do something necessary.” This is a very good and practical definition of a key word in our vocabulary. It is an especially important word for Christians.

The Old Testament offers a continual challenge for believers to be ones who “remember” what God has done in the past and therefore be hopeful about His promises for the future. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul amplified the need for us to “remember.”

One of those places where the challenge to remember is set forth is in II Timothy 2:8: “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel” (NKJV). This one verse is a brilliant reminder for Christians today to keep the message of Jesus Christ at the forefront of our daily lives. This was needed in the time of Timothy, and it is a crucial need for us in our day.

Recently, I was in New York City for a vision trip concerning future partnerships in that strategic metro area. During one late afternoon, we passed by the site where the memorable Twin Towers once proudly stood. A rebuilding

project is underway, after a lengthy debate as to how the people who lost their lives would be “remembered.” The plan is to have something of an unveiling by the 10th anniversary of the terrible event we now simply call 9/11.

As I reflected upon the site and considered the importance of the 10th anniversary of 9/11, my mind began to be filled with recollections. I quickly recalled where I was when I heard the dreadful news of the attack on America. I revisited the painful sights and sounds so prominent that infamous day.

Later, I learned that 9/11 is on Sunday this year. It will be a day of worship for Alabama Baptists and so many others of faith. My mind raced through the possibilities of what this worship time could mean.

First, for believers, this is a time to REMEMBER THE MASTER. Jesus is Lord and Master for all times, not just the good times. On this Sunday, we can REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST in ways which could be comforting and challenging to people. Let’s have a REMEMBER SUNDAY and begin by remembering who Jesus is and what He has done on the cross and through the resurrection.

Second, we need to

REMEMBER OUR MISSION. What better day would there be for us to remember our One Mission, the Great Commission? When we remember the Master, we remember His Mission for us. My plans are to be in New York City for the occasion and to seek to help a designated church start in that city. However, you don’t have to be in NYC to remember the Great Commission!

Third, we also can FOCUS ON OUR MINISTRIES on this historic day of reflection. Because we have the Great Commission as our

mission, we have various ministries emanating from the challenge of our Lord. This is a day which can be a time of creative emphasis on reaching out to others. Perhaps people will not be as inclined to be in church as they were on the Sunday following 9/11, but we should claim the opportunity anyway. Pray with me about this idea. Plan for an evangelistic and missions emphasis for 9/11.

Fourth, this 10th anniversary

can be a time to “RE-MEMBER” OUR MEMBERS. So many members of our churches are inactive. Consider planning an inreach effort to gather up those who have become slack in attendance and participation. 9/11 can be more than a reflection over the scars of the attack; it can be an occasion of rededication on the part of God’s people.

Okay, I hope I have made some sense with this idea.

Alabama Baptists seize the moment! Remember the Master! Remember the Mission! Remember our Ministries. Remember our Members. Don’t let this be just a time of



By Rick Lance
State Missionary
Executive Director-Treasurer

remembering history; let’s make it about His Story!

Other writings by Rick Lance may be found on his blog at www.RickLance.com.

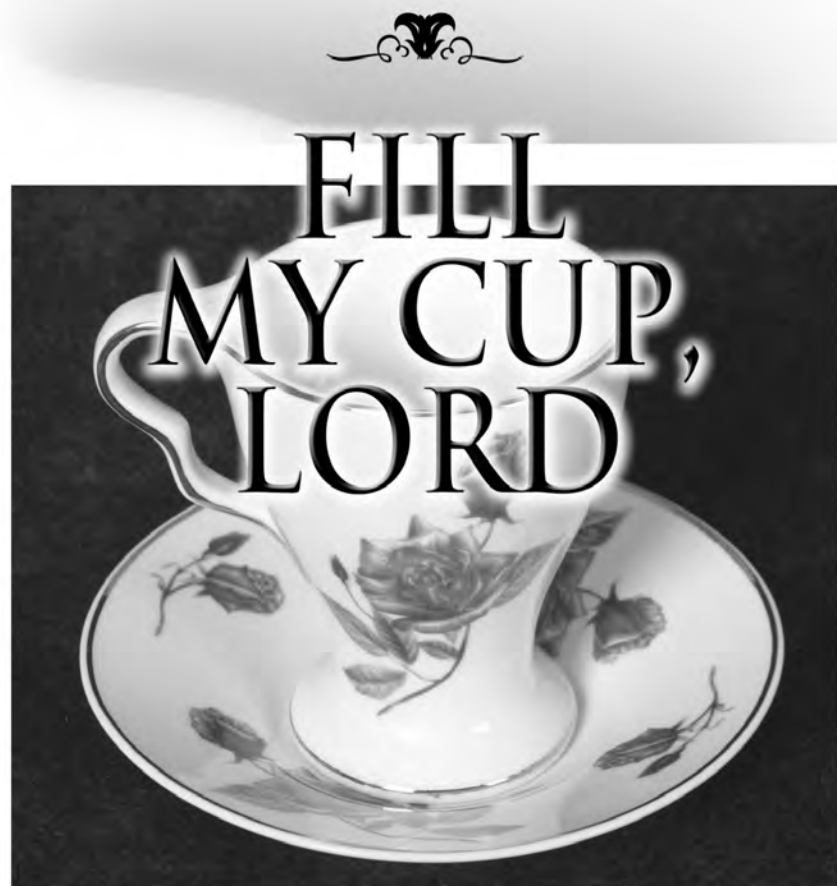
2 Peter 3:8

Two E-zekiel Web Training Opportunities:

- Getting Started with E-zekiel**
Thursday, March 31, 8-3:30, Baptist Building, Montgomery
JOIN PROFESSIONAL E-ZEKIEL TRAINER DACIA GULLEDGE AS SHE SHOWS YOU HOW TO GET STARTED BUILDING A GREAT WEBSITE WITH E-ZEKIEL.
» COST \$60 per person before March 21 » \$75 per person on or after March 21 (a \$250+ value & includes lunch!)

REGISTRATION closes on March 28 or whenever the maximum participant count is reached.
Register for “Getting Started with E-zekiel” at www.e-zekiel.com/gstraining
- One Day Web Workshop**
Thursday, May 5, 8:30 - 4:30, Baptist Building, Montgomery
JOIN PROFESSIONAL E-ZEKIEL TRAINER DACIA GULLEDGE AS SHE SHOWS US HOW TO USE E-ZEKIEL TO MAINTAIN A GREAT WEB SITE.
» COST \$60 per person on or before April 22 » \$75 per person after April 22 (a \$300+ value & includes lunch!)

REGISTER for One Day Web Workshop: www.e-zekiel.com/trainingdayal
For more information, contact State Missionary Chris Mills, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 310, cmills@alsbom.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



Gary Fenton

**Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd.
Montgomery**

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.

a gathering for girls in grades 7 through 12

complete

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)

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.

Bible study with

Worship with

Amy Pierson



Kerri Roberts

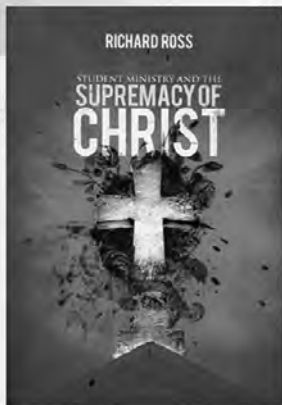


"And you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe." Colossians 2:10 NLT

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

STUDENT MINISTRY AND THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Monday, APRIL 11, 2011, Baptist Building, Montgomery



The Big Question: Are students more likely to embrace the supreme majesty of God's Son for a lifetime...

When they primarily relate to one youth leader and experience church almost exclusively with people their same age?

Or when they build heart connections with parents and several significant adults experiencing church in a rich web of intergenerational relationships?

You'll find answers to this question and discover an entirely new paradigm for your ministry in this one day conference *STUDENT MINISTRY AND THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST*.



To register or for more information, please contact State Missionary Kyle Wiltshire at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 415, kwiltshire@alsbom.org.

STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

February 28 & March 1, 2011
GARDENDALE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

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



Speakers:



Steve Gaines



Don Wilton



Jay Wolf



Nelson Price



James Merritt



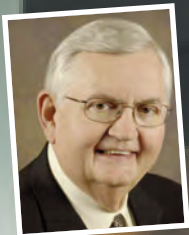
Jerry Pipes



Robert Smith



Will Graham



Bob Pitman



Kevin Hamm



Reginald Calvert



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 AFTERNOON 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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Upward Sports - Competing with a Purpose!	Garth Lindsey	111

Worship Leaders:

**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

Drew Tucker 103
Daniel Edmonds 107
Jim Swedenburg Lobby

Russ Quinn 106

David Coombs 102

Steve Marcum 101

Reuben Prater 108

Sonya Tucker 107

Lisa McKay 112

Jim Swedenburg Lobby

Russ Quinn 106

Drew Tucker 103

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.alabamawmu.org or by calling
800.264.1225, ext. 223.

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



May 16-18, 2011

BAPTIST BUILDING, 2001 E. SOUTH BLVD., MONTGOMERY

Interim Ministry for Today's Church

Purpose:

The time between permanent pastors is a critical time for a church. Members often give tirelessly to keep the ministries operating at maximum capacity. Decisions are frequently made about the future direction of the church.

Objectives

This conference will prepare a person to be better able to:

- Develop a covenant with a congregation that clearly describes the responsibilities of the interim pastor and the congregation.
- Enter a congregation in order to more quickly join with the church and its ministry.
- Study the health of a congregation and determine where the church might need assistance.
- Articulate the ethics of the interim pastor's involvement in planning for the church's future, including appropriate contact with the Pastor Search Committee.
- Prepare the church for the coming of a new pastor.
- Exit a congregation in a way to provide good closure for ministry and the opening of a new chapter in the church's life.

This conference is designed to meet the needs of interim pastors. For pastors who desire advanced training in interim ministry, this conference qualifies as 15 of the 85 hours required for training as an intentional interim pastor.

Schedule:

The training will begin on Monday, May 16, at 2 p.m. and will end before noon on Wednesday, May 18.

Cost

The cost for this training event, including tuition and materials, is \$300 for Alabama Baptist pastors, through a scholarship provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. The cost for non-Alabama Baptist pastors is \$400. Participants are responsible for their own housing and meals; however, the State Board has graciously agreed to provide lunch on Tuesday and all snack breaks during the event. (The registration deadline is April 18. Registrations received after this date will be charged a late fee of \$35.)

Leader:

B. Leslie Robinson, Jr., is the vice president and manager of Interim Ministry Resources for the Center for Congregational Health. He has served numerous congregations as an Intentional Interim Pastor/Consultant. Les is a graduate of Southern Illinois University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an accredited Interim Ministry Specialist and a training coordinator for the Interim Ministry Network.

Center for Congregational Health®

The Center for Congregational Health is a ministry of the Division of Faith and Health Ministries of the North Carolina Baptist Hospital. Their mission is to provide ministries of growth, hope and healing in the Spirit of Christ. The Center assists in opening doors to hope and wholeness with faith communities, lay leaders and clergy. The Center develops, discovers and provides resources and services that help congregations identify who they are and why they exist, understand how they function, clarify their work of missions and ministry, and develop the leadership needed to achieve the congregation's purpose.

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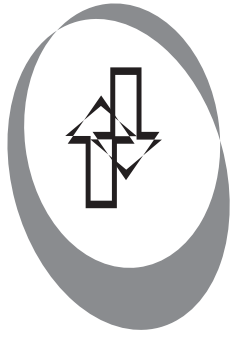
This conference is part of a series of education events leading to certification for Intentional Interim Ministry by the Interim Ministry Network.

Registration:

To register, go online to www.healthychurch.org, call (336) 716-9722 or contact Ministry Assistant Sandra Lewandowski for a registration form at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 316, slewandowski@alsbom.org.

Additional information is available online at www.alsbom.org/interim_ministry. (The sponsors reserve the right to cancel the conference if registration is below 15 persons. Cancellation Policy: Cancellation prior to April 18, 2011, ensures a 50% refund. Deposits are non-refundable after that date. Emergency-caused cancellations are considered on a case-by-case basis.)





LEADERconnect FORUM

Mark Your Calendar for
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LEADERConnect Forum

Baptist Building, 2001 E. South
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Bringing Leaders Together to
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COST: \$20 (Includes lunch and
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THEME: love lifted Me

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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.

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Monday, May 2, 2011

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This conference is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program. www.alsbom.org

GREAT COMMISSION PRAYER CONFERENCE 2011

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

Begins at 6:30 p.m. Friday, concludes at 2:15 p.m. Saturday. Registration at 6 p.m. Friday. (No need to pre-register.)



Featured Speaker: Tom Elliff
Longtime pastor, former SBC president, former IMB vice president

Cost: \$10 per person

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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.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Lynn Marshall
Concord Baptist Church, Toney

A couple of weeks ago, a young family came to me with its son, Austin. Austin wanted to be saved.

I read to Austin from the Bible, sharing with him how God loves him: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

I shared with him also that the Bible says everyone is a sinner: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

And Jesus Christ said everyone must repent of his or her sin: "I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Repentance means that we acknowledge that we are sinners and are willing to turn from our sin.


I told Austin that Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood for the forgiving of his sin: "In whom, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

Then I shared with him that the Bible also tells us what to do to be saved: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in their heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

I said, "Austin, do you understand what I have shared with you from the Bible?" He acknowledged that he understood. Then I asked, "Austin, are you ready to ask Jesus to save you?" He said, "Yes."

I asked his dad to share the sinner's prayer with his son and asked Austin to repeat it after him: "Lord Jesus, I believe you love me and that you died for me on the cross. Lord Jesus, forgive my sin. Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for saving my soul. In Jesus' name, amen." Young Austin was wonderfully saved.

Second Peter 3:9 tells us that "God desires that no one perish but that all come to repentance." We just have to call upon the name of the Lord to receive His gracious gift of salvation.

No one earns or deserves salvation. God grants it to everyone who genuinely repents of his or her sin and turns to Jesus for forgiveness (Acts 20:21). 

Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

50 Years Ago February 1961

Judson Inaugurates New President: The inauguration of Conwell A. Anderson as the 18th president of historic Judson College in Marion on Feb. 3 was one of the most outstanding events in the history of the 123-year-old institution. Some 100 representatives from colleges, agencies, educational organizations and learned societies participated in the activities. Presiding was W.E. Prout, pastor of Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, and chairman of the inauguration committee. The principal speaker was Harold A. Haswell, director of the higher education program branch in Washington.

40 Years Ago February 1971

Samford Bestows Honorary Degree on TV Personality: Samford University in Birmingham now numbers television's Art Linkletter among its alumni. Linkletter, the adopted son of a Baptist evangelist and himself a lifelong Baptist,

was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree by Samford while there to help kick off phase two of its Decisive Years Fund Campaign. He also addressed Samford students on the drug problem facing America.

30 Years Ago February 1981

Judson Association Welcomes New DOM: Walter Calvin Manderson began his service with Judson Baptist Association on Feb. 1. He is a native of Tuscaloosa and has served as pastor in Alabama, Louisiana and Arizona.

20 Years Ago February 1991

State Convention Introduces New Executive Committee Members: The following have been introduced as new members of the executive committee of the Alabama Baptist State Convention: Ron Madison, pastor, First Baptist Church, Decatur; Howard "Chip" Smith, pastor, First Baptist Church, Geneva; and Robert


Horner III, pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Huntsville.

10 Years Ago February 2001

Muscle Shoals, Cherokee Associations Welcome New DOMs: John William "Bill" Wolfe is the new director of missions (DOM) for Muscle Shoals Baptist Association. A native of Memphis, Tenn., Wolfe has served as pastor of churches in Tennessee and Mis-

issippi. He most recently served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Hayti, Mo.

Danny Flora is the new DOM for Cherokee Baptist Association. A native of Fort Payne, Flora has served as pastor of churches in Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama.

At the time of his appointment, he was an active member of Gault Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Payne. 

**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.



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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Antioch Baptist Church, a congregation of approximately 250-300, in Oxford, Ala., is prayerfully searching for God's man to serve as full-time pastor. Forward resumés and recommendations no later than March 31 to: Antioch Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 3290, Oxford, AL 36203, or e-mail to: churchsec@antiochoxford.com.

PASTOR: Hatton Baptist Church, Leighton, Ala., is prayerfully seeking to fill the position of full-time pastor. Resumés/videos may be sent to: Paul Johnson, 255 Johnson-Hale Road, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661.

PASTOR: Riddles Bend Baptist, Rainbow City, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. A Southern Baptist congregation of approximately 155. Resumés may be sent to: bedwell3@aol.com or faxed 256-413-0008.

PASTOR: Calvary Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés through April 30 for a full-time experienced Southern Baptist pastor. If possible, send DVD of sermon with resumé. Mail to: Calvary Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 740236, Tusculumbia, AL 35674.

PASTOR: Gilliam Springs Baptist Church in Arab, Ala., is prayerfully searching for God's man to serve as pastor. Resumés and recommendations should be sent to: ramon@gilliamsprings.org.

MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH MINISTER: Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Ala., (near Montevallo) is prayerfully seeking a minister of music or a music/youth minister. Send resumés to: gregsellers@yahoo.com, or P.O. Box 160, Wilton, AL 35187.

COLLEGE PASTOR: Seeking college pastor with weekly preaching responsibilities at multi-site church. Send resumé to: FBC, P.O. Box 400, Jacksonville, AL, 36265, or dstaples@fbcjville.org by Feb. 28.

STUDENT MINISTER: Grades 6th-12th, part-time. Send resumé to: Student Minister, Ridgecrest Baptist Church, 912 31st Street East, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405.

PART-TIME STUDENT MINISTER: Liberty Hill Baptist seeking part-time student minister. Send resumé to: kent@libertyhillonline.org or mail to: LHBC, 5800 Co. Rd. 37, Clanton, AL 35045.

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

OTHER POSITIONS

BOOKKEEPER: Adeliade Engineering Services is currently looking for a reliable, hardworking bookkeeper/customer rep to work with the company. Part-time position, work within flexible hours Monday through Friday, must be above 21 years, understand and speak English fluently with computer experience. For more information, contact Robert Miller at thomasrobinson2011@gmail.com.

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Ala. Numerous church references available.

CONFERENCES/RETREATS

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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LOG CABIN: Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log onto www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

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FOR SALE

COACH BUS: 49-passenger coach bus for sale. Year 1996, Van Hool Model: T-840, body: coach, engine: M11 Cummins, transmission: automatic, luggage: over head and under floor, price: \$65,000. Pictures available at www.crowwellbaptist.org. Contact Mike at 205-338-6174 or 205-288-8107.

'Always worked well together'

Union Grove's music ministry team nears 28 years together

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

If you've attended a worship service at Union Grove Baptist Church, Crossville, in the past 28 years, then chances are you've seen the DeKalb Baptist Association church's dedicated music team in action. Music minister and vocalist Donny Burns, his wife and organist Jo and pianist Judy Davis have been a trio for nearly three decades, sharing their time and talent to keep their church full of music.

"They're always there, no matter what," said Union Grove Baptist member Michelle Johnston, who is also the Burnses' niece. "They do anything in the church that needs to be done, whether it's related to music or not. I wish there were more people like them."

And according to Donny, their enthusiasm hasn't waned. He has been involved in the music ministry at Union Grove since joining the church in 1971, when he and Jo married.

In addition to leading the adult choir, he has been involved in establishing groups including a youth choir, children's choir, puppet ministry and choir chimes team.

"Many of our choir members have been faithful all through the years," Donny said. "Some come and go but some you can count on being there all the time, and that means they're good at putting up with me!"

Jo knows something about being faithful to Union Grove as well. In fact, she grew up in the church and remembers learning to play the piano there. She transitioned to playing the organ when the church needed someone to take on that role and shows no signs of slowing.



Photo courtesy of Union Grove Baptist Church

WORKING TOGETHER — Judy Davis (left), Donny Burns (back) and Jo Burns make up the three-person music ministry team that serves Union Grove Baptist Church, Crossville.

"I don't see any stopping point," Jo said. "I guess when I get too old and decrepit and can't get up to the organ, that's when I'll have to give it up."

According to Pastor Zach Richards, keeping Donny, Jo and Judy as Union Grove's music leaders is a positive for the whole congregation.

Blend music styles well

"They blend music and music styles so well, so everyone gets a bit of what they want to hear," he said. "We all take for granted that anything they produce is going to be good."

They also work to encourage a spirit of participation among their fellow church members and make themselves available to practice with those who have volunteered

to take part in the Sunday worship service.

"We try to involve anyone who wants to be involved in the program, even if they're nervous to perform in front of everyone," Jo said.

"We encourage them to try it, because that's where God might want them to be."

For Judy, working with Donny and Jo has been "a blessing." They've formed a strong bond through the years, and things have always come together naturally for the three-person team.

"If Donny picks a song I don't feel comfortable with, we work together to make it work," Judy said. "We're so used to each other that we're just a good team. We've always worked well together."

As for their favorite song to play together, they said, "All of them!"

Egyptian Christians 'making a big difference'

(continued from page 1)

helping nonbelievers understand what following Christ is about, he said.

"The [most impactful] thing we've seen from the Christians in Egypt was that response of standing together with their fellow Egyptians. Seeing the personification of what a Christian response is supposed to be is making a big difference," Hammond said. "It was a big act of unity. Right now, the divide is gone. It's my hope that we can use that and keep running with it ... and show others, 'We're here for you, and we love you.' It's a message of love."

The situation may not stay this way, but at least for now, there's opportunity, he said. "Their barrier is down as far as talking about religion goes, and so Christians in the West should pray for open doors and for Egyptian Christians to share with boldness in these days."

Could all this start a grassroots revival? Hammond definitely has visions, and they aren't all about

Westerners gaining access to the region.

"What if, in God's sovereignty, He used this as an opportunity for Egyptians to reach other Egyptians, for an indigenous uprising of the gospel to start?" Hammond asked. "[Christians] wonder how they can respond, and maybe the

best response could be praying for and supporting their brothers and sisters in Cairo. They are the ones who have access, and they are the ones with the new opportunities to share."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Name changed for security reasons.

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Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

McCall donates papers, documents SBC history

NASHVILLE — An extensive collection of personal records from one of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) most influential black leaders is now open to researchers at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA) in Nashville.

Emmanuel McCall, a member of the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) staff from 1968 to 1991 and developer of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's black studies program, has donated his personal papers to SBHLA, including more than 30 boxes of correspondence, audio-visual resources, sermons and other items.

The collection helps document the SBC's transition in the 20th century from harboring notorious racial prejudice to becoming one of the most ethnically diverse denominations in America.

McCall, author of five books, hopes his papers will provide researchers with "materials that will help them to understand how the Lord worked" in the SBC. "And the Lord did do a mighty work in what happened across the years," McCall added.

Though three institutions asked for McCall's papers, he said he decided on the SBHLA because his files hold more value for Southern Baptists than any other group.

To read more about McCall's archives, visit www.thealabama-baptist.org.

Baylor University to allow non-Baptists on board

WACO, Texas — Baylor University's board of regents amended the school's bylaws Feb. 11 to allow up to 25 percent of the board to be composed of Christians who are active members of a church in a historic Christian tradition other than Baptist.

At least 75 percent of the board will continue to consist of regents who are active members of Baptist churches. The move is an acknowledgement of "the changing demographics of Baylor's constituencies," a Baylor statement said.

"[W]e recognize that there are, within the Baylor family and outside of it, deeply committed fellow Christians who share Baylor's mission, vision and core theological principles but who are not currently affiliated in their church life with a Baptist congregation," said Dary Stone, chairman of the board.

Baylor president Ken Starr said, "Baylor maintains a strong and unwavering dedication to advancing the principles and tenets of the Baptist faith which have been and will always remain a hallmark of a Baylor University education. We will continue to operate within the Christian-oriented aims and ideals of Baptists."

Oklahoma pastor Day dies in motorcycle crash

EDMOND, Okla. — Alan Day, pastor of First Baptist Church, Edmond, Okla., died Feb. 16 from injuries suffered in a motorcycle crash.

Day's motorcycle hit a patch of sand on an off-ramp from Interstate 35 in Oklahoma City about 4:30 p.m., according to *The Daily Oklahoman* newspaper. He was wearing a helmet at the time of the crash but died at the hospital from head injuries.

Day, a former trustee of the International Mission Board and current vice chair of the Oklahoma Baptist University trustee board, celebrated his 25th anniversary at the church this past summer, associate pastor Keith Haygood told *The Oklahoman*. Born in Bogalusa, La., Day, 62, had been a pastor since 1968, serving at churches in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi and Oklahoma. He earned a bachelor's degree in history and Bible from Louisiana College. He completed M.Div. and Th.D. degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Day is survived by his wife of 42 years, Alice, and four children.

GuideStone releases tax guide for ministers

DALLAS — Ministers can find additional help in preparing their 2010 federal income tax returns with the annual Tax Return Preparation and Federal Reporting Guide from GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The 2011 guide details recent changes to tax laws and their effect on ministers. The guide includes important tax law changes signed into law by President Obama in December. The guide was written once again by Richard Hammar, a CPA, attorney and author who specializes in legal and tax issues for ministers. The guide is edited by GuideStone's compliance staff to address the tax issues that affect the greatest number of Southern Baptist pastors. The tax guide can be read in PDF format from the GuideStone website, www.GuideStone.org/taxguide. GuideStone participants can order a free printed copy by calling 1-888-984-8433.

NAMB's DeHart shares Christ through literacy ministry

Yearly thousands of immigrants come to the Atlanta metro-area — fleeing poverty, famine, disease, civil war, persecution and even death. If Paulette DeHart has her way, then they'll learn English and meet Jesus Christ — not always in that order.

DeHart is a North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary and has served as the Georgia Baptist Convention's Literacy Missions Consultant since 2003.

"What's so neat is that so many people come to the United States to improve their financial lot in life, but as one student said, they find the greatest treasure of all, the Lord Jesus Christ," DeHart said.

DeHart and her husband, Greg, are two of more than 5,000 missionaries supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) for North American Missions.

A Pleasanton, Calif., native who earned her bachelor of arts degree in urban planning at California State University, literacy and teaching English to immigrants were not on DeHart's radar screen early on. She accepted Christ at 21 and worked as a personal financial analyst. How she got into literacy and teaching English as a second language could only be called a "God-thing."

Having moved to Snellville, Ga.,

east of Atlanta where her husband worked for BellSouth, DeHart was preparing to teach her children's Sunday School class lesson. On her way to the class, she met a Hispanic man, whom she welcomed in Spanish. During their brief conversation, the man asked DeHart if she knew of any English classes nearby.

"I found out there was nothing within 13 miles and soon sensed that the Lord wanted me to offer this kind of ministry," she recalled. Two years of indecision passed, but DeHart still sensed that God was calling her to this ministry.

"I stumbled across the Georgia Baptist Convention's 'English as a Second Language' workshop" and soon "began a ministry at my church, Bethany Baptist in Snellville, that touched the lives of hundreds of people from different countries, including the Hispanic man whom the Lord used to plant the seed of this ministry in my heart."

DeHart noted that along with English as a second language, which involves teaching foreign-born adults, who want to learn conversational English, there are four other tracks taught:

- ▶ Adult Reading and Writing, which involves tutoring adults who are either illiterate, functioning non-readers, or those who are seeking to pass the GED test;



NAMB photo

A 'GOD-THING' — Paulette DeHart (right), NAMB/Georgia Baptist Convention literacy missions consultant based in Snellville, Ga., teaches English to Jasper Jackson.

- ▶ Tutoring Children and Youth, a ministry which tutors children and/or youth needing help with their schoolwork to enable them to succeed and remain in school until graduation;

- ▶ "Alfalit," a ministry that involves the teaching of illiterate Spanish-speaking persons how to read and write in Spanish so they can read the Bible in their "heart" language; and

- ▶ English as a Foreign Language, which involves teaching conversational English during short-term missions trips abroad.

Why should Southern Baptists be involved in the ministry of teaching English to immigrants?

"First the opportunity is tremendous," DeHart said. "The Lord is really bringing tremendous amounts of people to our shores, even with the economic downturn."

"The Lord has changed Christians' hearts to have hearts of compassion and we want to reach people," she said. "Adult literacy is a huge problem in Georgia and in the Southeast. Most people think there aren't any literacy problems in the U.S., but there are indeed

people who graduate from high school who are still semi-literate, sometimes illiterate. The numbers are huge. And even for those with a ninth-grade education, just because they have a ninth-grade education doesn't mean they can read and write on a ninth-grade level.

"Such people are not able to progress or be promoted on their jobs and can't provide for their families," she said. "That leads to divorce and many other dysfunctions within the family. So the ramifications (of illiteracy) are many." (NAMB)

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Gilley accused of trying to mislead investigators

(continued from page 1)

than enough probable cause to believe Gilley had violated the terms of his release by the contacts and conversations he had with Massey. *The News* also reported that Massey testified that "he believed Gilley offered him a piece of his casino developments (in Alabama and Mississippi worth up to \$1 million) to 'hold the line' on a false story to mislead federal investigators looking into allegations of buying and selling votes on a gambling bill before the Legislature last year."

The public corruption trial proceedings are set to begin in June.

In related news, *The News* recently reported that "a network of political action committees" helped state casino and racetrack owners "funnel nearly \$6.3 million from gambling interests into 2010 political campaigns."

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, said he was not surprised.

"But (Scripture says) greater is

He who is in us than he that is in the world. Despite all their (gambling supporters) financial backing, the people of Alabama elected people most of whom are not supportive of gambling in the state."

Another probe?

And in other news, the city of Birmingham may be in a gambling-related federal investigation.

According to *The News*, the U.S. Attorney's Office subpoenaed "City Council voting records on (its 2009) electronic bingo ordinance along with phone records, telephone messages and e-mails from former Councilman Joel Montgomery's office."

Although Montgomery led the city's efforts to legalize slot machine-style electronic bingo, he reportedly denied any wrongdoing.

The city council originally passed the ordinance and began issuing electronic bingo permits, but repealed it in October 2009 after Jefferson County District Attorney Brandon Falls threatened law

enforcement actions against any establishment offering the kind of gambling planned in the ordinance.

At the time, several council members intended to ask Alabama legislators for an electronic bingo gambling amendment to legalize the activity and give the city access to the "revenue" it would create. But before the council voted, Montgomery called attention to the council's previous actions.

"I want everyone in the city of Birmingham to pay close attention to the vote," Montgomery said at the time. "The majority of members of this council voted for that and now we are going to repeal it."

Montgomery, who had asked the council on several occasions to approve the large number of bingo permit applications submitted to the city, also discredited any effect Circuit Judge Robert Vance's ruling against the kind of slot machines planned for Birmingham may have had on Jefferson County's bingo plans.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 27

Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson

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

KEEP HOPE ALIVE

2 Kings 24:12-13, 19-20; 25:8-11, 27-30

When Life's Treasures Disappear (24:12-13)

King Jehoiakim's final "service" to his country was to die just in time to let his successors and those he had oppressed face Babylon's wrath. His son Jehoiachin, an inexperienced 18-year-old, succeeded him. He ruled for only three months in late 598 B.C. and early 597 B.C. He then paid for his father's political mistakes and his own sins. Nebuchadnezzar himself came to participate in the capture of Jerusalem. Jehoiachin was exiled to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar collected his unpaid tribute by raiding the Temple treasury, took Jerusalem's skilled workers and soldiers captive and appointed Zedekiah as king in Jehoiachin's place. The deportation of such elite citizens must have furthered the disintegration of Judah's society. Babylon controlled its affairs. The majority of its societal leaders were gone, as was its military. Only a few faithful people, most notably Jeremiah, attempted to change the people's hearts and the nation's destiny. Judah's surviving people were terrified and distressed by the devastating turn of events. None of these events had taken God by surprise. The holy Trinity never meets in emergency session. This disaster occurred just as God had predicted it would.

When God's Patience Ends (24:19-20)

Zedekiah's lack of character during his 11-year reign destroyed any chance of even delaying the inevitable. The writer of 2 Kings depicted him as no better than Jehoiakim. Zedekiah oppressed the poor in order to please the powerful in Judah. His indecisiveness and self-interest led him to rebel against Babylon. He joined with Egypt and other nations to rebel against Babylon about 589-588 B.C., but it was only with divided enthusiasm and loyalties. Zedekiah's people were divided over whether to trust Egypt or obey Babylon. His own self-interest led him to give in to eager army officers and false prophets who prom-

ised God's help for him if he rebelled against Babylon. Unable to stand up to his people, he rebelled. All of these reasons for the fall of Jerusalem pale in comparison to the ultimate reason: God's patience had ended and He used the Babylonians to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

When Chaos Overwhelms Everyone (25:8-11)

Nebuchadnezzar came with his army to Jerusalem and besieged the city. After more than a year of the siege, the people in Jerusalem ran out of food and the walls were breached. With the city defeated, Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar's representative, dismantled it. The offense of repeated rebellion meant that looting and partial destruction was insufficient punishment. He torched the Temple, the palace and the people's homes. He burned every important building in the city. He then deported every notable person. He excused Jeremiah as a special exception (Jer. 40:1-6). Nebuzaradan left a few poor people to tend vineyards and work in the fields. Jeremiah, who witnessed the destruction, lamented, "How the Lord in His anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud! He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; He has not remembered His footstool in the day of His anger" (Lam. 2:1). But Jeremiah also was able to say, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in Him'" (Lam. 3:22-24). We must keep our hope alive in God.

When Hopeful Changes Occur (25:27-30)

You may have expected the story to end with Israel and Judah scattered. The nation had been crushed. The land apparently had changed hands. The book, however, ended with Jehoiachin, the king who had ruled three months before being carried off into exile for 37 years, receiving favor from Babylon's new king. God demonstrated that He was still at work among His exiled people. A light of hope was still flickering in the darkness. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By Scott McGinnis

Associate Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

GOD LOVES TO WELCOME US HOME **Hosea 14:1-9**

In our study of Hosea, we have seen how the prophet's message alternates between God's angry condemnation of Israel for its sins and God's deep and loving desire to rebuild a shattered relationship. Both themes continue to sound right to the end of the book. Thus it is not surprising that this week's passage, wherein God invites Israel to return and rebuild a fruitful covenant, is preceded by the much harsher images of Chapter 13, wherein God is the lion or bear that will rip Israel apart (vv. 7-8). Chapter 13 ends with a haunting picture of pregnant women and infants, society's most vulnerable members, as victims of the coming apocalypse (v. 16). The horror of these images creates a grave and urgent context in which to explore the call to repentance.

A Call for Repentance (1-3)

Hosea's call for Israel to return to the Lord has been seen earlier (Hos. 6:1), but in this case, he offered specific words of repentance. The confession addressed two main sins that had been addressed through Hosea's ministry: Israel's turning to other nations for security and worship of other gods to secure agricultural fortunes. During the middle of the eighth century B.C., Israel was sandwiched between the two superpowers of the day: Assyria in the north and Egypt in the south. The temptation of Israel's kings was to play one power off of the other, to make compromising political alliances rather than trust in God to sustain their national fortunes. The recognition that "Assyria will not save us; we will not ride upon horses" (the Egyptians were known for their horsemanship) was a necessary step as Israel came to terms with what total dependence upon God meant. Similarly not worshipping idols that were "the work of our hands" was a rejection of the fertility gods to whom Israel had previously attributed its agricultural bounty (Hos. 2:5-9). Israel, which began as a nation of slaves, would now recognize itself as an orphan who once more needed to be adopted and cared for by God,

who consistently defends the powerless in society (Ex. 22:21-23; Deut. 27:19).

A Call for Healing (4-9)

The book's closing words belong to God. The extent of the divine love is seen in God's promise to "heal their disloyalty" (4). Not content standing on the sideline waiting for Israel to return, God responded to unfaithfulness with faithfulness and disobedience with chastening love. By taking the first step to heal Israel, God showed the kind of initiative and perseverance that marks a truly loving relationship. Much later, the apostle Paul would speak of an unfailing love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). Images from the natural world were used to describe the re-established covenant, since much of Israel's disobedience lay in misconstruing its relationship with nature. Earlier the image of dew was used to describe both Israel's fickleness (Hos. 6:4) and punishment (Hos. 13:3). Now God was a dew that settles gently, almost imperceptibly, over the newly blossoming flower of the nation (5). Similarly groves of trees that gave good shade were the sites of idolatrous worship (Hos. 4:13). Now God would be the One who faithfully shaded the newly reborn nation (7-8). The closing of our study of Hosea's writings brings us once again to the question with which we began: What can his extensive use of analogous language for God reveal to us about the divine nature? How does it help us know God to understand Him as husband, father, mother, lion, bear, rot, tree, rain or dew? First such common images reveal a God who is accessible to human understanding and open to relationship with His creation. The desire to be known resides in God; the responsibility to know God lies with us (Hos. 6:3). Second the sharply contrasting images remind us that the God we know, we know only in part. The God who is beside us as leader and companion is also the God above us. That our frail sight is not able to penetrate all the divine mysteries — how anger and love coincide in God or how justice and mercy are satisfied in God — should not be cause for frustration but rather praise. ☞

Christian Crossword

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Across

- QEI milieu.
- Noun case. (abbr.)
- Hot ____.
- Pull behind.
- Gold. (Sp.)
- Feminine pronoun. (Fr.)
- Emanation.
- Comparative suffix.
- "He burned the bones of the king of Edom into ____." (Amos 2:1)
- "Go, ____ an altar unto the Lord." (2 Sam. 24:18)
- Another name for Jesus.
- "We receive the ____ reward of our deeds." (Luke 23:41)
- Preposition.
- "Ye that labor and are heavy ____." (Matt. 11:28)
- Registered.
- ____-a-dale. (var.)
- Scold.
- Raised. (Fr., masc.)
- The sun.
- "Then the ____ taketh

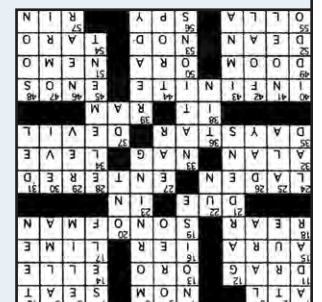
him up into the holy city." (Matt. 4:5)

- Pronoun.
- "A ____ for a burnt offering." (Lev. 9:2)
- "His understanding is ____." (Ps. 147:5)
- Son of Seth.
- Inescapable ruin.
- Pray. (prefix)
- Captain of the Nautilus.
- ____ of students.
- "Cain ... dwelt in the land of ____." (Gen. 4:16)
- Edible root.
- Cooking pot.
- Caleb was one.
- ____-Tin-Tin.

Down

- Sixth month of Jewish calendar.
- "We know that thou art ____." (Matt. 22:16)
- Heroine of Dr. Zhivago.
- "Let us make a joyful ____." (Ps. 95:1)
- Classic cookie.
- "Joy cometh in the ____." (Ps. 30:5)
- "I can of mine own ____ do nothing." (John 5:30)
- "And they came to ____, where were twelve wells." (Ex. 15:27)
- Feminine name.
- High school student.
- "I made me ____ and orchards." (Eccles. 2:5)
- Can. prov.
- Not. (prefix)
- Boy.
- In the manner of.
- "So that ____ come upon you unawares." (Luke 21:34)
- "Incline thine ____ unto me." (Ps. 17:6)
- Constituent.
- The apocalypse. (abbr.)
- A prince of Midian. (Josh. 13)
- "The First State." (abbr.)
- "By these were the ____ divided in the earth after the flood." (Gen. 10:32)
- Jack Haley portrayed this man.

- Lawyer for the state. (abbr.)
- "Be ____ always to give an answer." (1 Pet. 3:15)
- The seer against Jeroboam. (2 Chron. 9)
- Christmas. (Fr.)
- Young horse.
- A son of Helem. (1 Chron. 7)
- Cancer is one. (abbr.)
- "My salvation is ____ to come." (Isa. 56:1)
- He defeated Zimri. (1 Kings 16)
- Not later.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Police act on false complaints, arrest Christians

KANAKAGIRI, India — Acting on false complaints by Hindu nationalists, police arrested Christians in Kanakagiri village, Koppal district Jan. 25.

The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that around 6:30 p.m. more than a dozen Christians had met for worship led by pastors John Harris and Ravi Kumar of the Evangelical Church of India when a mob of nearly 20 extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh stormed into the service, led by an area extremist identified only as Purushotham.

After chasing the Christians out, they hit Harris and Kumar. The extremists telephoned the police, who took the two pastors into custody. Kanakagiri police officials said the pastors have been charged with “deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting religion or religious beliefs.”

At press time, the pastors were still in custody at Ganagavati sub-jail.

Christian prayer service disrupted, pastor detained

HIREKERUR, India — Police in Hirekerur, Haveri district, detained a pastor Jan. 23 after Hindu extremists disrupted the prayer service at the home of Rajanna Handijogar, where nearly 45 believers had met.

The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that Suresh Yakob, pastor of the Christ’s Discipleship Prayer Fellowship, was leading the weekly worship when nearly 50 extremists from the Bajrang Dal forcibly entered the house.

Yakob said Hirekerur police arrived and took him and at least 10 other Christians into custody, including a man identified only as Handijogar, his wife Girijima and their two daughters.

The pastor said police also interrogated the Hindu extremists at the station. After nearly three hours of questioning, police reprimanded the extremists, saying the Christians had not violated any laws.

“Police told me to give a written application requesting that they provide security,” Yakob said.

Hindu extremists attack pastor, beat congregation

LAL BARRA, India — Hindu extremists attacked a pastor, vandalized his church building and beat members of his congregation in Lal Barra village, Lalgahar Balaghat district Jan. 31, reported the Global Council of Indian Christians.

Around 2 p.m., Mahandra Nath Deve of Alpha Bible Church was conducting worship when nearly 25 Hindu extremists barged into the church building, grabbed a Bible from him, tore its pages and began thrashing congregants.

Deve said that even as they were slapping him, he told his congregation not to retaliate, but rather to disperse.

After Deve filed a complaint against the attackers, police arrested four Hindu extremists.

Beaten Christians ignored by area police officers

KAMAREDDY, India — Suspected Hindu extremists beat a pastor identified only as Swamidass and several other Christians, including his wife, as they were going to a meeting near Kamareddy, Nizamabad district Jan. 14.

The victims went to Tadwai police station and tried to file a complaint, but officers refused because a member of the state assembly from the area, Ravinder Reddy, allegedly called a police sub-inspector, Vijaya Kumar, and urged him to have the parties sign an agreement rather than register a case, according to the All India Christian Council.

Tribal Christians verbally abused, seriously injured

VIKRAMGARH, India — Hindu extremists attacked tribal Christians in Vikramgarh, Thane district Dec. 24.

The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that two unidentified tribal Christians from the Catholic Church were verbally abused for their faith in Christ and beaten mercilessly on Christmas Eve.

The two Christians were treated at a hospital for their injuries, according to the GCIC.

CAMPUS News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Equestrians Earn Two First Place Awards:** The hunt seat equestrian team traveled to Athens, Ga., to compete in the Valentine’s Day Classic on Feb. 12. Faith Williams, of Crossville, placed fifth and sixth in her jumper and flat class. Heather Hodge, of Thomasville, won fifth in advanced walk/trot/canter. Beverly Cox, of Athens, placed third in her beginner walk/trot/canter class. Laura Hyer, of Marion Junction, and Rebecca O’Neal, of Chatom, competed in beginner walk/trot. Hyer placed sixth and O’Neal placed fourth. On Feb. 13, Williams placed third in her jumper class. Megan Cook, of Bothell, Wash., competed in advanced walk/trot/canter class and won the first blue ribbon of the weekend for Judson. Cox placed sixth. Two groups competed Feb. 13 in walk/trot. Hyer, in group one,

placed second. O’Neal, in group two, placed first and earned the second blue ribbon. Judson won a total of eleven ribbons during the competition. Janice Palmer Williams is the hunt seat team coach.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Chamber Orchestra, A Cappella Choir to Perform:** The Center for Performing Arts will present the UMobile Chamber Orchestra and A Cappella Choir in a concert March 1, 8:15 p.m., at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The choir and orchestra are under the direction of Al Miller, dean of the Center for Performing Arts and associate professor of music. The orchestra will perform Bach Double Violin Concerto with String Orchestra. Soloists include violinists Enen Yu, adjunct instructor of violin and co-concertmaster of the Mobile Symphony Orchestra, and

Evangeline Thies, second violin principal of MSO. The A Cappella Choir will perform “Sleep” and “Lux Aurumque” by Eric Whitaker, “Set Me as a Seal” by Rene Clausen, “Almighty God of our Fathers” by Will James, “Worthy is the Lamb” No. 53 by Handel from Messiah and “The Lord’s Prayer” by Leroy Robertson. Students in the university’s Chamber Orchestra are joined by guest musicians from the Mobile Symphony. For more information, call the Center for Performing Arts at 251-442-2420.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford School of the Arts Faculty Recital:** Joseph Hopkins, dean of the school of the arts, will perform in Brock Recital Hall on March 1 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call 205-726-2851. This event is sponsored by Patty McDonald.

Christian music’s Dove nominees announced

Chris Tomlin and TobyMac each received six nominations followed by Jason Crabb with five and Francesca Battistelli with four, as the nominees for the 42nd annual Dove Awards were announced Feb. 16.

The awards, which honor Christian music’s top artists, will be handed out April 20 at Atlanta’s Fox Theatre and will be broadcasted on the Gospel Music Channel on April 24 at 7 p.m.

Tomlin and Crabb were nominated for, among other awards, song of the year, male vocalist of the year and artist of the year, while TobyMac was nominated for song of the year and artist of the year. Battistelli was nominated for song of the year,

female vocalist of the year and artist of the year.

Following is a list of nominees for some of the top awards:

► **Song of the Year:** “All of Creation” (MercyMe), “Beautiful, Beautiful” (Francesca Battistelli), “Get Back Up” (TobyMac), “Hold My Heart” (Tenth Avenue North), “Lead Me” (Sanctus Real), “Let The Waters Rise” (MIKESCHAIR), “Love Came Calling” (Triumphant Quartet), “Our God” (Chris Tomlin), “Sometimes I Cry” (Jason Crabb), “Starry Night” (Chris August).

► **Male Vocalist of the Year:** Doug Anderson, Chris August, Jason Crabb, Brandon Heath, Israel Houghton, Marvin Sapp, Chris Tomlin.

► **Female Vocalist of the Year:** Audrey Assad, Francesca Battistelli, Natalie Nicole, Britt Nicole, Janet Paschal, Kerrie Roberts, Laura Story.

► **Group of the Year:** Ernie Haase & Signature Sound, Gaither Vocal Band, Sidewalk Prophets, Tenth Avenue North, MercyMe, MIKESCHAIR, NEEDTOBREATHE.

► **Artist of the Year:** Francesca Battistelli, Jason Crabb, Ernie Haase & Signature Sound, Natalie Grant, Marvin Sapp, TobyMac, Chris Tomlin.

► **New Artist of the Year:** Audrey Assad, Chris August, Forever Jones, John Mark McMillan, No Other Name, Kerrie Roberts, Kristian Stanfill. (BP)



Photo courtesy of Coffee Baptist Association

COFFEE ASSOCIATION HONORS LAW ENFORCEMENT AT ANNUAL BANQUET

The men’s ministry of Coffee Baptist Association held its annual law enforcement banquet Feb. 17 at New Home Baptist Church, Enterprise. Pictured are (l to r) John Granger, director of missions for Coffee Baptist Association (CCBA); Rick Hayes, CCBA men’s ministry director; Lenwood Herron, New Brockton mayor; Tom Grimsley, Coffee County Commission; Kenneth Boswell, Enterprise mayor; T.D. Jones, Enterprise police chief; Dale Grimes, New Brockton police chief; Freddy Hanchey, Elba police chief; Dean Blair, Coffee County sheriff’s department; Sharon Holland, Elba work release warden; and Greg Hughes, probation and parole.

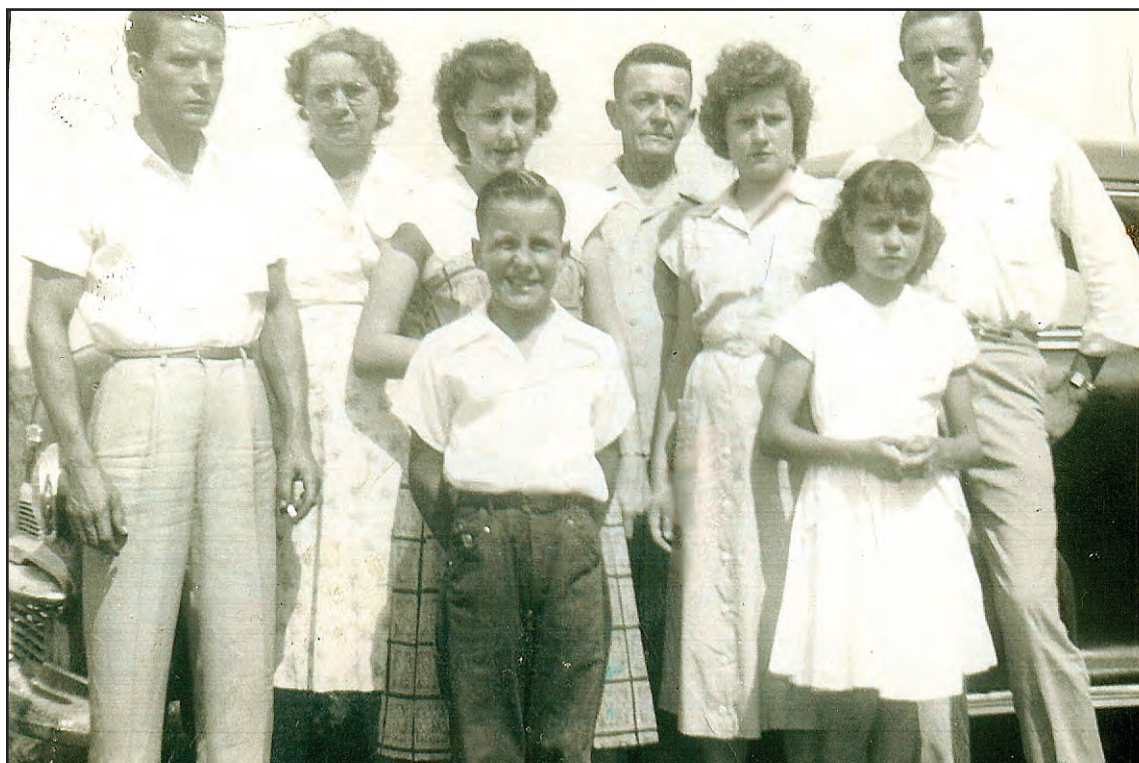


Photo courtesy of Joanne Cash

CASH FAMILY — Joanne Cash (front right) stands in front of her famous older brother, Johnny Cash (right back). Part of a family who loved to sing, Joanne grew up with music.

'I'm not gonna stop'

Joanne Cash shares testimony, hope in music

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

With "The Man in Black" for a brother, 28 albums already released and dramatic seasons of life that caused her to turn to Christ, Joanne Cash has some stories to tell.

Cash, the younger sister of music legend Johnny Cash, grew up on a cotton farm in Dyess, Ark., in the 1930s and 1940s. But the farm wasn't just the place she lived; it was also the place she worked, along with every other member of her family.

"Every day, we were out working in the fields. ... I used to pray for rain as a child so we wouldn't have to go out to work," Cash said with a laugh.

While working hard for a living was a lesson she learned early, she also learned to sing.

"I can't remember a time when there wasn't music in our home," Cash said.

Her parents always had their children in church. However, she never accepted Christ as her personal Savior as a child.

After high school, Cash married and had three children. When her marriage started to fall apart,

she turned to alcohol and drugs. Her addiction left her knocking on death's door twice in the emergency room.

"I went down the wrong road for a very long time. I was trying to cover up the pain of life and was searching for peace," Cash said.

After her marriage ended in divorce, she didn't know where to turn. A friend and co-worker, Dottie Snow, repeatedly invited Cash to go to church with her. With each invitation, Cash could only do one thing: run.

"I was afraid the Lord wouldn't accept me and all my mess," she said.

One Sunday in 1970, Cash decided she had to do something different. She drove to church and forced herself to walk through the front doors.

After listening to the sermon, even with her doubts, Cash stood to walk forward to the altar.

"He did forgive me of all my sins (and) came into my heart, and for the first time in my life, I had total peace," she said. Her life changed, along with her motivation to sing.

"My heart's desire and hope is that whatever I sing will touch someone's life and encourage them to trust in the Lord," Cash said.

She even got a second chance at love and another ministry outlet. Cash met and fell in love with

Harry Yates. They married in December 1971 and started Nashville Cowboy Church in 1990. The church began with only six members, but now around 400 members gather every Sunday at 10 a.m. in the Texas Troubadour Theatre for worship.



In March, Cash plans to record in Florence, but she won't be producing a typical CD. She'll be reading through the Book of Proverbs during her first Alabama recording session.

Singer and songwriter Leny LeBlanc recently decided to record other artists at his studio and was looking for someone for this project.

"I had always been a fan of Johnny's music, and when I heard about Joanne's singing, I thought it would be great. With her name, experience and things she's involved in, I figured it would make such an impact on people to hear her read the Word of God," LeBlanc said.

Cash will be the first outside artist to record at his studio. "Proverbs in Faith: Joanne Cash" is scheduled for release this fall.

Though in her mid-70s, Cash does not plan to slow down.

"You know, Johnny once told me, 'I want you to promise me that you'll record as long as you can, with all your heart.' So I'm not gonna stop," she said.

For more information, visit www.joannecash.com.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Pa. governor clamps down on abortion clinics

PHILADELPHIA — Abortion clinics in Pennsylvania will receive greater scrutiny under regulatory controls announced Feb. 15 by new Gov. Tom Corbett in the wake of the state government's failure to supervise a horror-filled Philadelphia clinic.

Seven employees of the state's Departments of Health and State have been fired or have resigned since a grand jury issued in January a devastating report regarding those agencies' shortcomings in overseeing the Women's Medical Society in west Philadelphia, Corbett told reporters.

Corbett announced a series of changes in each department, including the requirement that each abortion clinic will be inspected annually and will be subject to random inspections.

Abortion doctor Kermit Gosnell, the owner of the clinic, was charged with eight counts of murder — one in the death of a 41-year-old woman and seven in the deaths of viable, fully delivered children who were killed outside the womb. The grand jury reported that a February 2010 raid of the clinic found deplorable conditions, which resulted in its closing and Gosnell's medical license being suspended.

Gosnell, whose abortion practice at the clinic was approved by the Department of Health in 1979, had never been certified as an obstetrician/gynecologist. None of his employees were licensed to operate or to provide anesthesia.

The grand jury report found there had been no state inspection of the clinic since 1993 in spite of complaints.

Presbyterian court clears minister in gay 'marriage' case

BOSTON — The top court of the nation's largest Presbyterian denomination has found a Boston minister not guilty of violating church rules against performing gay "marriages" in a narrow ruling that keeps the churchwide ban in place.

The Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) on Feb. 2 cleared Jean Southard on charges she violated church rules and her ordination vows by "marrying" two women in 2008 in Massachusetts, where gay marriage is legal.

The wedding took place before the PCUSA had determined, later in 2008, that the ban on same-sex "marriage" is "mandatory" for ministers, the 16-member court ruled. The court said that ruling should not be applied retroactively to Southard's case.

Clergy in the PCUSA, which has about 2.2 million members, are allowed to bless same-sex relationships but are not permitted to "state, imply or represent" those ceremonies as marriages. A regional church court in California found a minister guilty of that offense late last year.

Same-sex civil unions set to become legal in Hawaii

HONOLULU — Hawaii soon will become the seventh state to legalize same-sex civil unions or their equivalent after its state senate Feb. 16 passed a bill by a vote of 18-5, sending it to Gov. Neil Abercrombie, who has pledged to sign it. The bill, which passed the House 31-19 on Feb. 11, will grant homosexual couples all the state legal benefits of marriage, minus the name. Critics said it was simply a stepping stone to gay "marriage" itself, and they pointed to other states — Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont — that recognized civil unions before legalizing gay "marriage."

Six other states recognize civil unions or their counterpart, domestic partnerships: California, Illinois, New Jersey, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

Five other states recognize gay "marriage": Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. The District of Columbia also recognizes gay "marriage."

Marriage amendment wins first step in Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's house of representatives passed a constitutional marriage amendment on a 70-26 vote Feb. 15, sending it to the state senate. If passed there, it must pass again in each chamber in a separately elected legislature before going to voters in 2014 at the earliest. The amendment would define marriage as being between one man and one woman. A majority of states — 29 — have such an amendment.

"The basic unit of society is the family and the cornerstone of the family is marriage," the bill's author, state Rep. Eric Turner, was quoted in the *Indianapolis Star* as saying during the floor debate. "Marriage is and should be between one man and one woman."

At least seven states are expected to consider marriage amendments this year.

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