

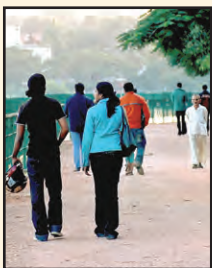


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Living out the gospel

Tuscaloosa Association launches Neighborhood Missions Ministry

By Sammie Jo Barstow
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Tuscaloosa Baptist Association has taken to heart the call to “be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8) and is teaching people exactly how to reach their “Jerusalem” for Jesus Christ.

Through its new Neighborhood Missions Ministry, the association is training and encouraging Christians to reach out to the unbelievers living right around them.

“We live behind closed garage doors, fences and gated communities, and we don’t know our neighbors as we should,” said Jerry Wilkins, director of missions for Tuscaloosa Association. “Our prayer was that God would call 100 people who would agree to be missionaries in their own neighborhoods and that we could train them to influence their communities for Christ.”

That prayer was answered abundantly in January, when 169 members of 30 churches (more than a third of the association’s churches) participated in a two-hour training event led by the Neighborhood Missions Ministry committee, which is made up of pastors and laymen. The training focused on five essential elements for effective neighborhood evangelism: get to know your neighbors, love your neighbors, pray for your neighbors, serve your neighbors and witness to your neighbors.

“The ultimate goal is to share Jesus Christ,” said Tim Fields, pastor of Big Sandy Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, and a member of the committee. “But we’re going to start by knowing our neighbors, loving them, serving them and praying for them.”

One means for developing relationships with neighbors is described in Jeremiah 29:5: “Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.” During the training session, individuals were encouraged to take the next step in the sequence by helping a neighbor with yard work or household tasks, for example.

Closely intertwined with establishing relationships are two other ele-



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SERVING YOUR NEIGHBOR — Tuscaloosa Baptist Association’s Neighborhood Missions Ministry trains and encourages Christians to reach out to unbelievers living around them by loving and serving them.

ments: serving people and praying specifically for their needs.

The reason for actively working on relationships is clear: “Unbelievers in today’s world no longer buy into a gospel they hear; they buy into a gospel they see,” said Scott Reynolds, pastor of North River Church, Tuscaloosa, and a committee member. “They need to see the gospel lived out in front of them.”

That requires perseverance because very few conversions result from only one contact, Reynolds added.

The process of bringing neighbors

to Christ may involve numerous occasions of “planting” and “watering,” while waiting for the harvest to which 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 refers, he said.

‘Be faithful’

Reynolds encouraged neighborhood missionaries to persevere and realize that each contact with an unbelieving neighbor may bring that person one step closer to accepting Christ as Savior. “There is only one true soul-winner, and that is the Holy Spirit,” he said. “Our job is to be faithful; His job is to harvest.”

With the original goal of training 100 neighborhood missionaries already surpassed, Wilkins said the committee seeks to train another 331 in the next year, bringing the total to 500. By 2015, it would like to see 1,000 missionaries working in their neighborhoods.

A DVD of the recent training will be available for pastors to use in instructing their church members who feel called to be neighborhood missionaries.

For more information, visit www.neighborhoodmissions.org.

State convention execs affirm 50-50 CP split

State convention executive directors unanimously agreed to affirm a portion of the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) report requesting a 50-50 division of Cooperative Program (CP) receipts — after consideration for shared ministry funds — between state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Frank Page, SBC Executive Committee (EC) president, announced the agreement in his report during the EC’s Feb. 22 session in Nashville.

State convention executive directors agreed to the 50-50 move during

their annual meeting Feb. 14-17 in Williamsburg, Va., said Emil Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and president of the Fellowship of State Executive Directors for 2011-12.

“Several years ago, state executive directors agreed to get more money to the Executive Committee,” which distributes Southern Baptists’ funding of the International Mission Board, North American Mission Board and other SBC entities, Turner said. “Since then, we have all been working together to make that a reality.”

The concept of shared ministry funds “has strong historic roots,” Turner said, referencing the establishment of the CP in 1925. Shared ministry funds differ from state convention to state convention, but include monies set aside for various state-supported ministries. Shared ministry fund allocations are not counted as a part of the 50-50 CP allocation forwarded to the SBC.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, “This statement made (See CP, page 11)

COMMENT

A Win-Win Nomination for IMB

For those Baptists concerned about developments inside the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the past few weeks have been filled with news. At the North American Mission Board, new President Kevin Ezell unveiled his new organizational and staffing structure during the trustee meeting Feb. 8–9.

On Feb. 21 came the installation of Frank Page as the new president of the SBC Executive Committee (see story, page 12). And in the weeks between assuming that role and his first meeting, Page had to reduce the Executive Committee's salary budget by 19 percent and then develop a proposed budget for the national convention that further reduces the Executive Committee's budget.

But perhaps the biggest news was sandwiched between those two events. On Feb. 16 came the announcement that Tom Elliff had been selected as the nominee to lead the International Mission Board (IMB). That announcement caught most Southern Baptists by surprise. Elliff turned 67 years old Feb. 21, making him only about two years younger than former President Jerry Rankin at the time of his retirement in July 2010.

Elliff's selection gives credence to the many reports that the IMB search committee was deadlocked. After all, Rankin announced his retirement in September 2009 with the stated goal of having a new president in place by the time he left office.

But the search committee could not agree. Reportedly the committee was divided between those desiring a leader with extensive missions experience and those wanting new blood, specifically a president who could relate to pastors of large SBC churches.

Missions, pastoral experience

With Elliff, both sides win. In 1981, he resigned a nine-year pastorate in Tulsa, Okla., to be appointed as a SBC missionary to Zimbabwe. An accident involving one of his children and her subsequent medical needs brought his family home two years later. Then in 2005, he resigned a 20-year pastorate at First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., to join the administrative staff of the IMB as senior vice president for spiritual nurture/church relations.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

He held that position until 2009, when he resigned to pursue a writing and speaking ministry.

In between those two stints with the IMB, Elliff served as the pastor of a megachurch and rose to the upper echelon of SBC leadership. He served as president of the SBC from 1996 until 1998 and the SBC Pastors Conference in 1990. He is one of the better-known personalities in the SBC.

Elliff already has been described as a compromise candidate — one both groups finally could agree on to break their stalemate. Some also have referred to him as an “extended interim president” because of his age. But neither of these observations should detract from the quality of the man or the importance of his tenure.

Elliff is an excellent choice. He loves missions. And because he has been a missionary and a missions administrator, his learning curve as president will not be as steep as if a pastor had been selected. At the same time, he is a pastor known for his “pastor's heart.” He understands and can relate to pastors and other SBC leaders. In that light, his selection can be seen as a win-win.

And his time of leadership will be critical. When Rankin announced his retirement, he said the trustees were united in their strategy to win the world. He said there was more unity among the trustees than anytime during his 17-year tenure. He said his resignation would allow for a seamless handoff of responsibility.

Instead there was a stalemate as the search committee cast its nets far and wide and the struggles within the committee wafted across the SBC. Lots of egos were bruised in the process.

Southern Baptists certainly are united in their support of reaching the world with the gospel. Yet questions abound about strategy (Does the IMB do missions on behalf of all SBC churches, or does the IMB facilitate some SBC churches doing missions?), funding (Should missions dollars flow through the Cooperative Program, or should churches spend their missions dollars on direct missions projects?) and relationships (How does the IMB balance its autonomy as an SBC entity with its role as a part of the family of Southern Baptist ministries?).

Elliff will have a full plate of issues if he assumes office, and how he might choose to lead

Southern Baptists to respond to these and other issues will be critical to the future of the convention.

Here, also, Elliff has a head start. He knows SBC structure. He knows SBC entity leaders. He knows pastors of leading SBC churches. And he knows the IMB. In addition, he is liked and accepted by all of them. All of this will be positive for the IMB.

Elliff undoubtedly will be elected when IMB trustees meet March 15–16 in Dallas. And this writer seriously doubts that he will be an “extended interim president” content to hold things together for four or five years while the board of trustees is reshaped through new members so it can try again to elect a president.

We anticipate that Elliff will put his stamp of leadership on the international missions movement by Southern Baptists from the moment he takes office and will be the “president” of the board every day he serves.

Well equipped for challenges

Again Elliff was a surprise choice for the position. That is obvious. But he is a good choice and is well-equipped for the challenges of this moment in Southern Baptist life.

May God bless Tom Elliff in this new role and use him to unite Southern Baptists in the Great Commission challenge of making disciples of all people everywhere.



“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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Tuscaloosa residents vote to allow Sunday liquor sales in city

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Tuscaloosans may be buying alcohol seven days a week as early as March 6 after residents voted overwhelmingly to allow Sunday liquor sales in the city.

Of the 11,377 ballots cast Feb. 22, 78 percent supported beer, wine and liquor sales from noon to 9:30 p.m. on Sundays, according to *Tuscaloosa News*.

Although some Alabama Baptists in the area fought against the referendum, they are still planning to work with the community and meet any needs and problems that may arise with the expanded sales.

Lack of voters

"I don't think our people got out and voted," said Ed Steelman, spokesperson for the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association Christian Life Committee.

"Our church people didn't really seem to be motivated that much, and I wish I knew why. ... They may have gotten a little tired. It (Sunday alcohol sales) has been brought up every year since 1996, and this is the second vote we had on it. I think maybe [church people] felt [alcohol sales supporters] were going to keep pushing for it until they got it."

Steelman said those fighting against alcohol expansion could not compete financially with supporters of the vote.

"The reason we didn't want another vote is that we don't have the money to combat things like that," he said. "They (supporters) did three mailings to registered voters. They had a phone bank set up. They were working on Facebook and Twitter. They had three 15-passenger limousines taking college students to the polls. They drove around the campus from 7 in the morning until 7 at night with big signs on the limos that said 'free rides to the polls.' ... We tried to raise some money but were not successful. They (local newspapers) wouldn't give us (a nonprofit) a break on the price of an ad in the newspaper."


Ministry will continue

Nevertheless, Steelman said the association will continue its ministry to the community.

"We still love our city, and we want to be active in our communities working with the problems caused by the Sunday sales because there will be problems," he noted. "When the problems arise, we want to be part of the solution."

Now that Sunday sales are legal in Tuscaloosa, Steelman said the City of Northport is planning to introduce legislation calling for a similar referendum on Sunday alcohol sales.

"We knew that if it passed in Tuscaloosa we would be inundated with it," he said.

"So, here we go." 

Mixed emotions

Egypt's Christians keep wary eye on Muslim Brotherhood

In Magdi Shnouda's café in Cairo, pictures of Jesus and the saints hang on the shabby walls, and the men playing backgammon and dominoes are a mixture of Christians and Muslims.

Sucking down glasses of sweet tea and strong coffee, they drape arms around one another and talk of how well they get along. They live in a neighborhood dotted with mosques and churches, and grew up like brothers, they say.

Another thing they agree on is the toppling of the regime of Hosni Mubarak, who left office after 18 days of anti-government protests. The country is now being run by the military, which has dissolved a parliament full of Mubarak cronies.

"It's excellent what's happening," said Nasraddin Mustafa, 55, a decorator and friend of Shnouda's. "Christians and Muslims are the same ... there will now be more safety and more friendship between Christians and Muslims."

The revolutionary solidarity in Shnouda's café was shaken, however, when the subject of the Muslim Brotherhood came up.

"If the Brotherhood take control, I will be the first to leave the country," said Baha al-Rashid, 40, a driver playing backgammon.

The Brotherhood, a strictly Islamic political party, is the country's most organized opposition group. Some Christians fear that if it gains more influence, it would impose Shariah, or Islamic law, and forbid them from practicing their faith.

"Neither Christians nor Muslims like them, because they are a group with their own ideas, but the rest of the Muslims are good with Christians," said Eid Ibrahim, 41, also a driver and a Christian.

Egypt has about 8 million Christians, the largest Christian population in the Middle East. Most belong to the Coptic Orthodox church ("Coptic" means "Egyptian"), even though there is a small Baptist convention. The faith has been in Egypt for 2,000 years, they say.

The Bible says Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt with the infant Jesus to escape King Herod's decree that baby boys in Bethlehem be killed. Tradition holds that St. Mark brought Christianity to Egypt in the first century. Islam did not arrive until six centuries later.

Christians here have long complained that they are shut out of some government jobs and treated as second-class citizens.

Christians have been targeted by terrorists in attacks that Mubarak's Interior Ministry blamed on "foreign elements." In the largest of many attacks against Christians last year, a car bomb in the northern city of Alexandria killed 21 people in December at a Christmas ceremony.

Even though the social divide between Muslims and Christians has grown, they often wind up as next-door neighbors, rarely speaking to one another, said Christian worker Rob Robinson. But that changed during the recent political upheaval, when men stood shoulder to shoulder with their neighbors — regardless of their religion — to protect their homes from looters. It's another answer to prayer, he added.



Reuters photo

NEW OPPORTUNITIES — A Muslim holding the Quran (left) and a Coptic Christian holding a cross are carried through opposition supporters Feb. 6 in Tahrir Square, which has become an epicentre for protest, in Cairo, Egypt.

"This widening gap between Christians and Muslims over the decades is now slamming together," Robinson said. "And it is going to be a great door-opener."

During the recent demonstrations in Cairo's Tahrir Square, many Christians joined in, protecting Muslims from police and Mubarak supporters while they prayed. Christian doctors manned some of the first-aid stands, and posters with a crescent moon and a cross proclaimed unity.

At St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral on Feb. 13, there were christening parties and worshipers cradled babies and chatted.

They agreed that a new Egypt is a good thing but that there could be problems ahead.

"In the last year, there (have) been a lot of demonstrations," said David Samuels, 31, a master's student and a Christian, speaking in a bar near the upscale Heliopolis area of Cairo. "They were protesting because of anger and discrimination against them."

Many Christians say they suspect the government was involved in the attacks to keep Egyptians divided.

Creating conflict

"When the demonstrations started, I doubted that what would happen in Tunisia would happen here," Samuels said. "But then I understood that there was real anger and people were talking about being Egyptian, not about being Christians or Muslims, and my Muslim friends were angry that the government was making conflict between Christians and Muslims worse."

Despite the euphoria, he, too, is nervous about the Brotherhood.

"I read a lot about the history of the party," he said. "They know there are a lot of bad vibes against them, so they will first try to get to the top of all the syndicates and

then come to power, which would be the worst for Christians.

"Christians have been raised on fear, and they are always afraid," he said.

Robinson said that even though believers and especially Egypt's Baptist convention is strong, they still need prayer support.

"We have a number of believers who can't be open about their faith, but they are strong," he said. "They need support."

But the opportunity to support local believers and reach Muslims open to the gospel is tenuous, Robinson added.

"God has opened an opportunity, but it isn't going to last forever," he said. "It is a time to stand beside Egypt and not forget Egypt. We need to continue to bear down in prayer for Egypt. It is time to run toward Egypt instead of running away from this part of the world."

Back in Shnouda's café, the owner was quiet as his friends chattered about the revolution, about how the political elite who stole all the money had gone, how Egypt was entering a time of more freedom and how the new government would not try to divide Christians and Muslims as the old one did.

Asked whether he agreed that the government would bring people closer, Shnouda paused. "Come and ask me this question in a year," he said. "We hope it will be better."

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

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.



NAMB photo

OPPORTUNITY TO MINISTER — Doug Lee (left), NAMB church-planting strategist and 2011 Week of Prayer missionary, serves pizza to boys on the softball team sponsored by Ogallala Community Church in Nebraska, one of his church plants where he serves as pastor.

Meet the people where they are

NAMB's Lee plants diverse churches across parts of rural Nebraska

There are local Southern Baptist associations, and then there is Oregon Trail Baptist Association in Nebraska, where missionary Doug Lee works to plant new churches. His association takes up the whole western half of Nebraska. Lee is jointly funded by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.

For the last 12 years, 58-year-old Lee — supported by his wife, Brenda — has served as director of missions for the vast association, based in North Platte. Geographically Oregon Trail Association is huge — spanning 400 miles by 200 miles.

To the east, there are farming communities. Ranching is king in the northwest — the Sandy Hills region — the western panhandle and in the southwest corner of Nebraska.

North Platte, where the Lees are based, is the sixth largest city in Nebraska but only has 24,000 people. The only other “major” cities in Oregon Trail Association are Grand Island and Kearney.

“We range from very desolate places to little tiny towns to North Platte,” said Lee, who typically puts 60,000 ministry miles a year on his red Toyota Camry.

On Thursdays, he and his wife make the 300-mile trek to lead a Bible study in Hastings. Every Sunday night, the couple travel 100 miles round-trip to Ogallala, where Lee is pastor of Ogallala Community Church. During harsh winters, he drives through blowing snow on icy roads with temperatures as low as 25 degrees below zero.

“One of the biggest challenges we face out here in western Nebraska is distance,” Lee said, “not just for me but for the others planting churches out here.”

The Lees are two of more than 5,000 missionaries in the United States, Canada and their territories supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter

Offering (AAEO) for North American Missions. They are among the NAMB missionaries featured as part of the annual Week of Prayer, March 6–13. With a theme of “Start Here,” the 2011 AAEO’s goal is \$70 million, 100 percent of which benefits missionaries like the Lees.

His overarching strategy is to meet the people where they are — on their terms and turf. For example, he holds Bible studies or worship services on Sunday nights for whom he calls the “shift workers,” those who may work in restaurants

or retail and can’t come to church on Sunday mornings.

And instead of force-fitting a new church plant on local folks — regardless of their needs, wants and circumstances — he begins with a Bible study at the home of a “family of peace.” Once that group grows, it will turn into a Sunday School and worship service.

“The people living out here in western Nebraska have a strong work ethic,” Lee said. “A lot of that comes from the early days when the settlers came. There was nothing here — no towns, no schools, no railroads. They built things from scratch, so people here are very independent and self-sufficient.”

But Anglos are not the only ones here with a pioneering spirit and strong work ethic. There are the American Indians in Nebraska who got here first. Nebraska’s first Hispanic immigrants arrived years ago to work in the soybean and potato fields. A second wave came in later to work in the meat-packing plants.

Diverse missions field

Add an influx of Sudanese, Indians and city-dwellers — moving out of Omaha and Lincoln to rural areas — and Lee’s missions field suddenly becomes very diverse, requiring the planting of diverse new churches — churches meeting the needs of various people groups, cowboy churches and churches in mobile home parks and apartment complexes.

“The diversity opens up an opportunity to minister to people in a number of ways,” Lee said. “For

instance, one of the things the Hispanic folks like — especially the kids — is soccer. All we have to say is we’re holding a soccer camp and they show up. This gives us the opportunity to share Christ with not only the Hispanic kids but the Anglo kids as well, who are getting more and more into soccer here.”

Rural areas

Lee is ever mindful that western Nebraska is sparsely populated and time, money and energy are limited. So why should he even bother? Lee, a former police officer, has a quick response.

“Well there are not many people here, and I guess it would be more cost-effective to go to heavier populated areas. I’m all for reaching the rural areas. Jesus died for the individuals in the rural areas as much as for those in the cities.”

As he drives across Nebraska’s vast plains, pastureland and hill country, Lee knows he may only encounter a person once or twice, so he intentionally and boldly makes it a high priority to witness for Jesus Christ wherever he goes.

Born in Tulsa, Okla., Lee grew up in tiny Valentine, Neb., located almost on the South Dakota border in the far north part of the state. He graduated from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. He’s served as a church planter/pastor in Kansas, Nebraska and North Dakota.

Lee and his wife have two sons, Andrew and Adam. (NAMB)

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). ❏

SBC Executive Committee responds to GCR proposals

The percentage of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) missions dollars going to overseas work will increase if a key recommendation from the SBC's Executive Committee (EC) is adopted during the June 14-15 SBC annual meeting in Phoenix.

The \$186 million Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget to be proposed during the SBC annual meeting would increase the International Mission Board's (IMB) percentage of budget receipts from 50 percent to 50.2 percent and decrease the EC's percentage by the same amount, to 3.2 percent. The EC also voted to recommend directing 51 percent of any missions receipts exceeding the budget to the overseas missions entity.

The Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force report, which was adopted during the convention's 2010 annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., had asked the EC to consider a 1 percent increase to the IMB. EC President Frank Page told the assembly he wanted to move toward that goal as quickly as possible.

Page said that in his five months at the helm of the EC he had already had to make "gut-wrenching" decisions, including a 19 percent staff cut, to be fiscally responsible and bring spending in line with reduced income.

"I want to send out a message that what some call 'bureaucracy' ... we're reducing it," Page said, noting he was proposing a seven-year move toward reducing the EC's portion of the budget to 2.4 percent. "We're going to make sure we're doing everything we can to say to our world, 'We care about you.'"

Economic realities

The proposed \$186 million CP Allocation Budget reflected the economic realities by taking a more conservative approach to the SBC's fiscal strategy. For several years, new budgets have been based on actual receipts from the previous year, a process that works well in growing economies when missions receipts are rising. That process, however, is counterproductive in down economic times — keeping budgets higher when receipts actually are declining.

The previous budgeting process would have proposed a 2011-12 budget of \$191.7 million, but budget planners recommended the \$186 million budget, believing that is a more realistic projection of actual receipts, based on recent and current patterns in the U.S. economy and receipts by churches and other charitable organizations. The lower figure allows Southern Baptist mission boards and seminaries to plan

their spending for the coming fiscal year without as much concern for whether the income projections actually will hold true. Should CP receipts exceed the budgeted goal, the IMB would receive 51 percent of any overage. The other SBC entities would receive the same percentage as in the allocation budget, with the exception of the EC, which would receive 2.4 percent.

In other business:

► EC members also voted to recommend adding a category of "Great Commission Giving" to annual statistical reports, in response to another GCR Task Force recommendation.

The task force had suggested adding that category as a way of celebrating what Southern Baptist churches are doing in missions beyond the core strategy of giving through the convention's CP. However, rather than replacing the existing "Total Missions Giving" category, the EC recommendation proposes adding the "Great Com-

mission Giving" category, providing a clearer picture of the overall missions endeavors of SBC churches.

The EC statement recommends messengers to the annual meeting "respectfully request" that Southern Baptist churches "make or retain the Cooperative Program as the principal component of their missions-giving strategy" and "strive to meet a goal" of increasing their CP gifts by 2.5 percentage points in 2013.

► The EC decided that membership in a group that welcomes and affirms gays does not automatically disqualify a church from participation in the SBC.

Membership requirement

Two years ago, the convention expelled a Texas church for violating a membership requirement banning churches that "act to affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior."

At the SBC annual meeting last June, Wes Kenney, a messenger

from Oklahoma, made a motion asking the EC "to consider any church's affiliation with the Alliance of Baptists to constitute an action, which affirms, approves or endorses homosexual behavior." By rule the motion was referred to the EC, which after study recommended against the idea.

Convention leaders said it would be unwise to disqualify a church simply because the Alliance claims it as a member. Should questions arise about a particular church's qualifications, they said, they will continue to be handled on a case-by-case basis.

The EC recommendation, which will come in the form of a motion at this year's SBC annual meeting June 14-15 in Phoenix, reports that the group "already is authorized to make recommendations to the convention between annual meetings in regard to such matters which would call into question the friendly cooperation of any local church on any grounds." (BP, ABP)

Lawley's Friendship makes community its missions field

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

According to Pastor Donald Harris, Friendship Baptist Church, Lawley, has always lived up to its name, but in recent months, it's been especially focused on sharing God's love. Inspired by the statewide evangelism emphasis God's Plan for Sharing (GPS): Across Alabama, the Cahaba Baptist Association church has made its community its missions field.

Last fall, members of the small church began going door to door, inviting neighbors to either start attending church or return to church.

"Our prayers have been for God to use the church, and everyone's been excited because we've been able to do more than we ever have before," Harris said. "The church has truly banded together because we saw such a need to get into the community."

Since October, he has baptized nine new members — a huge feat

for a church with 40 to 50 in worship each week.

And three of those new members have an especially unique story. They were homeless and struggling just to survive when Friendship Baptist members changed their world.

Helping the homeless

Longtime church member Cecil Cash noticed smoke coming from under a bridge on a few occasions and finally decided to investigate. After calling the police, he learned that a family of six — three adults and three small children — were living in two vehicles under the bridge. The family had come from near Mobile and run out of money and food.

"The next morning, after finding out about the family under the bridge, when I got up to eat breakfast, I could hardly eat thinking there was someone under there who didn't have enough," Cash said. "I

brought them some food, and when one of the children realized I was bringing breakfast, she reached up and clapped her hands. Such a little thing meant so much to them; it just broke my heart."

Since discovering the family, the church has worked to get it into a mobile home and get it necessities like food and clothing. The church might even have a job lined up for the young father of the family.

"That smoke coming from the bridge — it was like a smoke signal from God," church member Dewey Green said.

"We don't know what God's plans are, and some people at our church feel like God put these people in our path to see how we'd handle it."

According to Green's wife, Gwen, the church has handled the situation well and it continues to see positive results from its GPS focus.

"This program brought our church closer together," she said. "Usually ministries and programs will go for a while and then come to an end, but this doesn't seem to have ended. It continues to progress just the way we hoped it would." ☞

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BESSEMER

► **Tannehill Valley Church, McCalla**, will host Miles for Missions 5K walk/run and one-mile fun run April 9 at Tannehill Historical State Park. Proceeds will go to Casa Betania Children's Home in Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico. T-shirts are guaranteed for those who pre-register by March 10. Pre-registration packets can be picked up at the church April 8, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Registration will be the day of the race from 6:30 to 7:30 a.m. The 5K walk/run starts at 8 a.m., and the one-mile fun run starts at 8:15 a.m. The awards ceremony will be at 9:30 a.m. To pre-register visit www.tannehillvalley.org or www.imathlete.com/events/TVBCMilesformissions or call 205-477-6811. Jonathan Reaves is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Ann McMillan** is the new preschool director for **First Church, Trussville**. She has served as the church's interim preschool director since March 2009. McMillan is a graduate of Barton College in Wilson, N.C. She and her husband, Chuck, have two children. Buddy Champion is



McMILLAN

pastor. ► **Shades Crest Church, Hoover**, will hold its 10th annual High Country 5K April 9, 8 a.m. The race will begin at the church. There will be a kids' run at 9 a.m. Fred Hunter, meteorologist for Fox6 WBRC, will be the emcee. Registration includes a T-shirt, pre-race dinner April 8, 6 p.m., in the fellowship hall and a post-race pancake breakfast for the runner's family during

the awards ceremony on Saturday. To pre-register visit www.active.com. Pre-registration packets can be picked up April 8, 4-8 p.m., fellowship hall. Registration also will be available the day of the race from 6:30 to 7:45 a.m. For information call 205-822-1750 or visit www.shadescrest.org. Dennis Foust is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **New Haven Church, Anniston**, will hold revival March 27-30 with Philip Elliott, pastor of Bellevue Church, Gadsden. Todd Ford will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 6:45. For information call 256-237-2604 or visit www.newhavenbaptistchurch.com. Roy L. Cordle is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Zion Chapel Church, Elba**, will host an area revival March 6-11 and 13. Don Ash, pastor of White-water Church, Elba, will speak March 6, 6 p.m.; Mark Cooper, pastor of Woodland Grove Church, Elba, March 7, 7 p.m.; Donnie Marler, pastor of Victoria Church, Elba, March 8, 7 p.m.; Doug Knight, pastor of Hebron Church, Troy, March 9, 7 p.m.; Kenneth Hagler, pastor of Wise Mill Assembly of God, Elba, March 10, 7 p.m.; and Cary Maulden, pastor of Zion Chapel, March 13, 6 p.m.

CONECUH

► **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will hold revival in March with the theme The Harvest is Plentiful. Terry Harden, pastor of Excel Church, will speak March 8; Wayne McMillian, pastor of Mexia Church, March 15; Burney Enzor, pastor of Pleasant Home Church, Brantley, March 22; and Keith Pugh, pastor of Open Door Church, Tuscaloosa, March 29. For informa-

tion call 251-578-1024. Jim Griffin is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Sage Avenue Church, Mobile**, will celebrate its 60th anniversary on homecoming March 20, 10:50 a.m. Sid Nichols, former pastor and current director of missions for Calhoun Association, will speak. There will be a homecoming choir with current and former members. For those who want to participate, there will be a rehearsal at 10 a.m. in the sanctuary. A catered lunch will follow the service. For reservations call 251-479-4593 or visit www.sageavenuebc.org. Phil Boyles is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Open Acres Church, Montgomery**, will host New Grace, of Crossville, March 13, 11 a.m. For information call 334-263-6215. Ron Davis is pastor of Open Acres.

MUD CREEK

► **Union Hill Church, Bessemer**, will hold Men's Monday in March. Pastor Mickey Bell will speak March 7 on the Man and His Date, Robert Smith March 14 on the Man and His Daughter, Joel Frederick March 21 on the Man and His Debt and Danny Singleton March 28 on the Man and His Destiny. All services will be at 6:30 p.m. For information call 205-491-1103 or visit www.unionhillbc.com.

SHELBY

► **Mateo Melendez** is the new associate pastor and student minister for **North Shelby Church, Birmingham**. He comes from Chilhowee Hills Church, Knoxville, Tenn., where he was student minister. Melendez and his wife, Cherene, have four children. Allan Murphy is pastor.

SHAW SPEAKS AT BEESON

Mike Shaw, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, spoke at the opening convocation service for the spring 2011 semester at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.



Photo courtesy of Beeson Divinity School

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Fenton celebrates 20 years as pastor of Dawson

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, is celebrating 20 years with Senior Pastor Gary Fenton.

The son of a bivocational Nazarene pastor in Aurora, Mo., Fenton felt the call to ministry when he was a junior in high school. He chuckled as he recalled originally thinking there were only two paths of calling to the ministry: a pastor or a missionary. Even after learning there were many other paths from which to choose, he determined he was, indeed, called to be a pastor.

Fenton attended Bethany Nazarene University (now Southern Nazarene University) in Bethany, Okla. He became a Southern Baptist during his senior year, a direct result of meeting and learning from Herschel Hobbs, author of the 1963 version of the Baptist Faith and Message.

Fenton went on to earn his master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and led a small congregation of mostly cotton and peanut farmers in Leon, Okla., during his studies. From 1972 to 1991, he served as pastor of churches in Branson and Windsor, Mo.; Stillwater, Okla.; and Tyler, Texas. He then earned his doctor of ministry degree from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

In the fall of 1990, Fenton, who had previously never lived east of the Mississippi River, was contacted by Dawson Memorial Baptist's search committee. He felt called to lead the Birmingham Baptist Association church and began serving there March 3, 1991.

After 20 years at Dawson and more than 40 years in the ministry, Fenton said he has learned about the leadership and the body of Christ.

"Leadership is a process. I had to learn how to be a leader and have realized that a pastor is called to lead, not just to comfort and to preach," Fenton said. "I've also learned the value of church as a community of faith and not just a place where people listen to preaching. ... We need the connection to other believers before we grow spiritually."

Dawson's more than 8,000 members will celebrate his anniversary with him and his wife, Alta Faye, on March 6.

Paden Baptist's Adams marks 40 years in ministry

Jerald Adams was serving as a deacon at Bellview Heights Baptist Church, Cullman, when he felt called to be a pastor.

And this past Feb. 20, he celebrated 40 years of serving in that very role.

Adams celebrated this milestone with members of his current church, Paden Baptist, Gadsden, as well as family, friends from his previous churches and believers who came to Christ under his leadership.

Before he went to Paden in 1996, Adams served four other Alabama Baptist churches as pastor: Panama Baptist Church, Vinemont; New Friendship Baptist Church, Arab; Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vinemont; and Baldwin Heights Baptist Church, Cullman.

During the celebration organized by Paden members, photos of past missions trips and church ministries were shared. Two of Adams' favorite hymns — "The Old Rugged Cross" and "The Longer I Serve Him" — were sung.

His wife of 48 years, Joyace, also made a commemorative quilt for the occasion. It featured photos of each church Adams has served as pastor as well as a copy of his license to preach.

"The day was filled with just a lot of wonderful memories," he said. "It's just been an honor for me to be able to serve."



FENTON



ADAMS

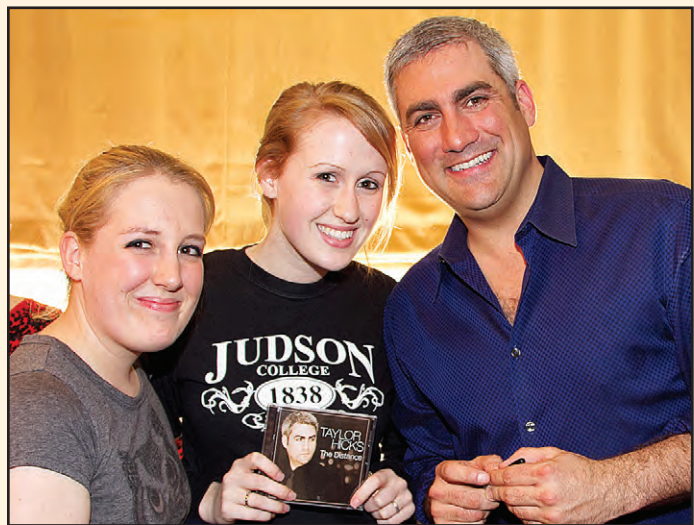


Photo by Bill Mathews

TAYLOR HICKS PERFORMS AT JUDSON COLLEGE

Former 'American Idol' winner Taylor Hicks (right) performed a surprise concert at Judson College in Marion on Feb. 23. Pictured with Hicks are students Olivia Breimhorst (left), of Gardendale, and Staci Chesser, of Bessemer.

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State paper editors hear reports

Southern Baptist entity leaders provide updates about their ministries

Southern Baptist leaders representing several entities expressed hope that churches will accomplish their missions and ministries cooperatively in their comments to editors at the Association of State Baptist Papers annual meeting.

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Bryant Wright, of Marietta, Ga., as well as leaders from the Executive Committee, International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board (NAMB), LifeWay Christian Resources and national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) addressed the editors during their Feb. 14-17 sessions in Williamsburg, Va.

Challenging Southern Baptists to replace idolizing materialism with reprioritizing the Great Commission, Wright said giving by Southern Baptists can turn around with a focus on biblical stewardship. "If individuals would be faithful to God, giving would be far beyond anything we could imagine." But, he lamented, "people are in bondage" to materialism.

While seminary students in his day were anxious to lead churches in county seat towns, Wright said, "With these young guys it's not even on their radar. They want to plant a church. We can moan and groan about people not being denominationally loyal, but it's the world we live in, so let's think about how we can do ministry in the most Christlike, spiritually impactful way."

Describing a post-denominational era as an exciting challenge, Wright said, "If we have something to offer them such as the finest church-planting ministry in America, don't you know these young guys would be excited about that?"

SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page identified "the massive individualism we see in the 20th century" as one of the most significant factors to address. "Everyone seems to think they really know better than everyone else how to do what we do. It's impacting our work denominationally."

Pleased that the Executive Committee is "back in a fiscally responsible position" fol-

lowing a 19 percent reduction in personnel costs, Page said Cooperative Program (CP) promotion now is housed in his office.

"I am also taking the primary role of being the greatest Cooperative Program promoter you'll ever find." All of the vice presidents have accepted greater responsibility in working with individual states, associations and local churches as partners in promotion, he noted.

Success is dependent on two factors, Page said — Christlike selflessness and a high level of trust. "When there is selfishness and a self-promoting agenda, CP will fail, but where there is Christlike selflessness, what you're doing matters and the Cooperative Program will flourish."

Page repeated his pledge not to micromanage the work of Baptist Press (BP) after combining the news and convention relations operations into one division. BP Editor

Art Toalston said, "The cornerstone of ... our effort has to be to do news well." While feature articles have a place, he said BP would have no credibility if it is filled with features or fluff.

Asked whether BP would include reports from entities without adding the Executive Committee's spin, Toalston said that editors should judge BP's work on a case-by-case basis. "Our publisher is the Executive Committee and our command is to do news in a cooperative venture with all of the entities and state [Baptist] papers."

LifeWay recorded \$473 million in revenue during the 2010 fiscal year ending last Sept. 30, with LifeWay President Thom Rainer reporting that the overall financial contributions of the entity's divisions were not as high as previous years due to economic constraints, but that he was pleased with the performance in the midst of tough economic

times. He said the Holman Christian Standard Bible is continuing its steady growth into market, with a 4 to 5 percent market share, a strong number for a relatively new translation.

LifeWay likely will continue to operate with a 4,700-4,800-member workforce in the next few years, counting permanent part-time employees at LifeWay Christian Stores, Rainer said.

Rainer acknowledged that LifeWay's work faces the challenge of declining denominational loyalty, stating, "We can count on a smaller percentage of [Southern Baptist] churches purchasing [LifeWay products] just because we are LifeWay."

One positive result of the decline in brand loyalty, Rainer noted, is that it can "help make us better" by forcing new efforts to strengthen its product line, such as a yet-to-be-released curriculum to provide added depth in Bible study.

While describing most churches that utilize LifeWay resources as holding beliefs akin to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and seeing themselves as Bible-believing and within the evangelical tradition, Rainer said LifeWay nevertheless must address wide differences among churches in such matters as how they engage in Bible study (from Sunday School to small groups), worship styles and congregational governance.

With 5,000 missionary personnel and a quarter of the world's population lacking access to the gospel, IMB's interim president Clyde Meador, told editors, "We cannot depend simply on missionaries." Partnerships with churches, associations and state conventions are essential to seeing the gospel carried around the world, he said.

In spite of budgeting challenges, the IMB is not backing off its commitment to deploy personnel, he insisted, anticipating 300 new long-term missionaries will be appointed this year.

Meador clarified changes in how statistics are reported, noting that the work relating to work with which IMB personnel have direct involvement is tabulated apart from statistics relating to Baptist conventions and unions overseas. New IMB categories have been added to document the number of gospel presentations, challenges to make commitments and professions of faith.

"This doesn't mean we're devaluing baptisms, but we understand better the kind of interactions our people are having," Meador explained.

Even with the new approach, Meador said the number of baptisms stemming from IMB-

related work remained strong at 360,000 and the number of new churches started was even greater than the previous year.

Convinced that NAMB can accomplish "more with less," NAMB President Kevin Ezell said, "You cannot judge the success of an entity by the size of its headquarters." He said NAMB now intends to utilize pastors and laymen who want to be part of an evangelistic church-planting effort instead of hiring "everyone to come to Alpharetta to be a specialist in every area."

State conventions are being asked to make do with less NAMB funding, but they will have a say in deciding where the reallocated money is invested, Ezell said. In addition to working with the state conventions that relate geographically to a particular region, he said NAMB will involve the state conventions that choose to invest in that region as well, forming an advisory board that develops an appropriate church-planting strategy.

While church planters can expect a faster track to start new work, Ezell also promised greater accountability, making sure all of the partners are "using the same dictionary" when defining what constitutes a church, a church plant and a missionary.

"We're not just doing things to do things," Ezell told the editors. "We want believers to connect with churches — existing churches or a new church plant. Everything has to be driven to the church."

Preferring to refer to that priority as evangelistic church planting, Ezell said the combination of terms better communicates NAMB's primary purpose.

Editors also received an update from Julie Walters, WMU communications specialist, on an extensive website redesign for WMU and the July 13-16 missions focus in Orlando for teenage girls and collegiate women known as Blume.

Preferring the use of WMU to identify the ministry, Walters explained that the 122-year-old auxiliary organization engages all ages — and both men and women — in missions.

Asked whether she expects NAMB to pass to WMU the assignment of missions education for boys, Walters only said Ezell had visited with the staff soon after taking office at NAMB. "If that were to be offered I think the [WMU] board would be interested in talking about it," she said.

A key feature of the meeting were sessions led by Donald S. Whitney, associate professor of biblical spirituality at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; novelist and pastor Randy Singer, of Virginia Beach, Va.; and IMB photographer Bill Bangham. Whitney instructed editors in the spiritual discipline of prayer, utilizing the words of Scripture as a guide, while Singer offered motivation for writing works of fiction and Bangham discussed the impact of visual elements in news reporting. (BP)



WRIGHT



PAGE



RAINER



EZELL

Samford to host 'hinge moments' seminar for clergy, congregations

Clergy and congregations experience "hinge moments" when they face decisions about challenges and opportunities. How they respond determines if they will continue to have thriving ministries.

Hinge Moments: Swinging Toward Vital Ministry, a one-day seminar at Samford University in Birmingham on April 4, will provide practical resources that help clergy and congregations address these strategic occasions in proactive and creative ways.

Sponsored by Samford's Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence (RCPE), the program is scheduled for 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. in Samford's Beeson Divinity Hall.

Presenters will include Pastor Gary Furr of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church; President Bill Wilson and Interactive Communications Coordinator Natalie Aho of the Center for Congregational Health; President and Principal Allen Walworth, Vice Presidents Gary Ealy and Brad Leeper and Senior Strategist Alan Wildes of Generis; Leadership Strategist Mike Tate of Humana Resource Management Inc.; President Andrew Westmoreland of Samford; and Program Director Michael Wilson of RCPE.

To register online, go to www.123signup.com/register?id=vcjgn.

For more information, go to www4.samford.edu/rcpe/events.html. (SU)

Getting off the couch

Increasing your level of activity results in a healthier you, experts say

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

For several years now, Alabama has been ranked as one of the fattest states in the United States, jumping from third place in 2008 to second place in 2009 and tying for second place last year.

But now not only is Alabama one of the fattest states but it's also one of the laziest states, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that came out last month.

The CDC report said the "states where residents are the least likely to be physically active in their free time are Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Tennessee. In those states, physical inactivity rates are 29.2 percent or greater for more than 70 percent of counties." And where the rates were higher for physical inactivity, the rates were higher for diagnosed obesity and diabetes, the report said.

This comes as no surprise to John Petrella, professor of exercise science and sports medicine at Samford University in Birmingham, who said there is a link between activity and health.

"Many diseases, particularly diseases related to (the) heart, are associated with inactivity," he said. "You are much more likely to have a heart attack and die from that heart attack if you don't live an active lifestyle."

"Also years of inactivity can lead to obesity and diabetes," Petrella continued. "Many of these diseases

Facts about exercising

- ▶ It is a primary prevention to promote health and lower Coronary Artery Disease mortality.
- ▶ It reduces arterial wall stiffness.
- ▶ It lowers blood pressure (systolic and diastolic).
- ▶ It lowers triglycerides.
- ▶ It raises HDL (high-density lipoprotein) or "good" cholesterol.
- ▶ It positively influences outcomes of chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and depression.

Source: Dr. Heath Hale

don't have any symptoms until it's too late. You may not feel sick until your health has already deteriorated.

"The good news is that activity and exercise can reduce your risk of all these diseases at the same time. Activity will reduce your risk of heart attack, obesity and diabetes all at once."

But even if people know the health benefits of adding more activity or exercise to their daily routine, what keeps them from being more active?

Many barriers

Dr. Heath Hale, a primary care sports medicine physician at Shelby Baptist Medical Center in Alabaster, said there are many barriers that keep people from ever getting started — a big one is not knowing where to start.

"Look at what are the biggest barriers to exercise," he said. "Once you can identify those barriers (then) you can put a plan in place."

"The most common barriers are

fatigue, boredom, time constraints, health status, lack of motivation, climate, accessibility and economic reasons, (but) I've found in my practice and in my own life, the most common barrier is time constraints."

While both Hale and Joelle Akridge, director of recreation ministries at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, understand these barriers, they can be overcome, but it has to start with the mind.

"I think the mental aspect keeps people from [moving around] because they may say, 'I don't have an hour to exercise,' but if you have 10 minutes then get up and move for those 10 minutes," Akridge said.

Hale agreed.

"Maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise is really a mind-set," he said. "People need to develop a paradigm shift from their normal way of approaching life where they go to work, come home, eat dinner, rest and go to bed."

So how does one go from being a couch potato to one who is more active?

Akridge, Hale and Petrella offer some practical tips to adding more movement to one's everyday life:

▶ Take the stairs over the elevator. "If you are in an office building, take the stairs if you have to go one to two floors up or three floors down," Petrella said. "It usually gets you there quicker than the elevator anyway."

▶ Don't choose the closest parking space. "Park further away from your destination to increase your walking in the parking lot," Petrella said.

▶ Take five minutes of every hour to get up and move around the office. "Get up from your desk when you can and move at different times in the day," Akridge said. "Some of my colleagues will eat their lunch at their desk and walk the circle around the worship service. ... Or you can walk up and down stairs for 10 minutes of your lunch break."

▶ Play active video games with your children. Akridge suggests video games like Wii Fit or Dance Dance Revolution.

▶ Start walking. "Walking is one of the best forms of activity that can improve your health," Petrella said. "Several short walks a day can make a dramatic difference in your health profile. ... A brisk 10 minute walk in the morning, at lunch and after [work] is as effective as going for 30 minutes at one time." (See story, page 9.)

▶ Walk the dog. "Do you have a dog that you just let out during the day to get his own exercise?" Akridge asked. "What if you start walking him in the morning and during the evening (instead)?"

▶ Get a partner. "Find accountability," Hale said. "It's not fun to exercise by yourself."

But whether one just wants to add more activity to his or her life or wants to start an exercise program, Hale suggests picking something he or she would enjoy the most.

"I'll ask my med students and residents, 'What is the best type of exercise,'" Hale said. "Really it's a trick question because the best answer is whatever the patient will do, whatever they enjoy the most and whatever will help them stay motivated to go from a state of inactivity to activity."

'Makes you feel better'

"For some it may be square dancing, for others it may be walking their dog," he added. "For some people, running or other load-bearing exercises are actually not best like for patients with joint disease or arthritis. They may benefit more from nonload-bearing exercises such as swimming or biking." And besides all the health benefits of going from an inactive lifestyle to an active lifestyle, at the end of the day it "makes you feel better," Hale said.

Akridge agreed.

"You can't underestimate the mood change that a little bit of exercise can give you," she said. ■

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

When I started in this business over six years ago there was only one kind of reverse mortgage — an adjustable rate. Fortunately, FHA realized that "one size does not fit all" and in the past couple of years they have introduced three great new products.

The fixed rate was one of the first. People really wanted a fixed rate option, and it sure has been popular. After that, FHA introduced a program that allows seniors who are 62 or older to purchase a home with a reverse. Some of us may want to consider this if we are trying to move closer to the kids or farther away (ha). Perhaps we need a home that is all one level, or maybe we want to downsize. The newest program is called the "Saver," and it gives seniors access to all the benefits of a reverse mortgage but at a fraction of the cost. Normally, FHA's initial mortgage insurance charge is two percent of the value of

the home, but with the "saver program," this cost is almost non-existent. For example, on a \$200,000 home, the initial cost for FHA's insurance is \$4,000, but with the saver it is \$20.

This may be a good plan for those who are thinking about opening up a line of credit at the bank. Like a home equity line of credit, you can draw on it and pay it back whenever you like, but with a reverse mortgage there are NO required monthly payments as long as one homeowner is living in the home. Many seniors are using this as a "piggy bank" to draw on whenever they have special needs or just need a little money. They are more at ease doing so because they know they won't have to make a payment back to the bank next month.

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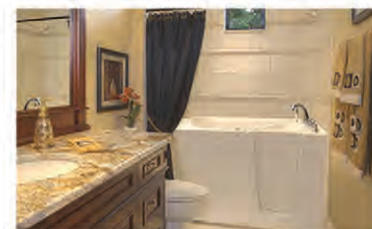
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A doctor's prescription for exercise

Dr. Heath Hale, primary care sports medicine doctor at Shelby Baptist Medical Center in Alabaster, uses the following FITT components with patients who want to begin an exercise program.

- ▶ Frequency: Recommend exercising most, but preferably all, days of the week
 - ▶ Intensity: Recommend exercising at a level within the person's exercise benefit zone (60–80 percent of maximum heart rate)
 - ▶ Time: Recommend 20–60 minutes of aerobic exercise throughout the day
 - ▶ Type: Recommend doing any type of exercising one enjoys the most
 - ▶ Other:
 1. Resistance Training exercises
 2. Flexibility exercises
 3. Warm up and cool down exercises
 - ▶ Help identify barriers to starting and maintain an exercise program
 - ▶ Discuss importance of having a plan and a partner
- (TAB)

Walking: one exercise anyone can do

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Fitness boot camps, running marathons and martial arts may be too much to handle if you are new or returning to an exercise plan. Yet, there is one exercise anyone can do despite their fitness level — walking.

Often called the easiest exercise, walking benefits the individual and the environment. According to walkinginfo.org, walking has many health benefits including “reduced risk of coronary heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases; lower health care costs; and improved quality of life.” Walking briskly for 30 minutes daily can “improve your energy level and mood (and) aid in weight loss,” the site suggests. But, there is more to walking for exercise than putting one foot in front of the other.

Joelle Akridge, director of recreation ministries at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, believes wearing shoes that fit well is important when starting a walking program.

“Make sure your shoes fit the right way and you have good socks on so you don't get blisters,” she said. “If you are buying new shoes, if you have any idea that (you) may turn into a runner, the recommendation is that you buy a size bigger so your toenails don't hit the end of the shoes all the time.”



sxc.hu

“(In) running specialty stores like Fleet Feet and Trac Shack, their folks are trained to look at how you walk and any special issues that would require you to use a certain kind of shoe,” Akridge said. “If your ankles roll to the outside (heavier weight on the outside of your foot outline) or roll to the inside (show heavier pressure on inside ball and heel), they make shoes that correct that.”

In addition to a good fit, thewalkinginfo.com recommends walking shoes with “a low heel” and “flexible sole” made from “lightweight and breathable fabric.”

Once you have a good pair of shoes, a little determination is all that's needed to begin or maintain a walking program.

Walkinginfo.org advises walkers to “set reasonable goals, build gradually and keep your activity fun” by using the following tips:

- ▶ Add more steps into your day

by taking the stairs or parking farther away.

- ▶ Walk ... one daily trip for which you'd normally drive the car.
- ▶ Get a walking buddy or take a family walk after dinner.
- ▶ Walk a child to school or participate in a Walk to School Day event.
- ▶ Walk through your neighborhood and rate it's “walkability.”
- ▶ Take walking meetings at work.
- ▶ Keep a daily activity log. Estimate the mileage you walked or the minutes you spent doing something active.
- ▶ Buy a pedometer and consider wearing it all day long.
- ▶ Form a walking group with a regular schedule. There is encouragement in numbers.

Stretching before and after beginning a walking program is also important to prevent injury and pain. The Walking Site encourages walkers to “perform ankle circles and toe points” and “stretch your calves and shins.”

Then, whether you plot a path or simply walk out your front door down the street, start walking. ■

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

www.fitness.gov
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity
www.health.gov/paguidelines
www.healthstatus.com/calculate/cbc

Birmingham's Fair Haven Retirement Community

Why Chose a Continual Care Retirement Community (CCRC) ...



While I realize that most older adults want to stay in their own homes as long as possible, I know that should a debilitating illness strike it is ALWAYS better to have a plan in place for an alternative living arrangement. While counseling older adults about plans for their long-term living arrangements, my goal is to help

them realize that a place is going to be more to their liking if they choose it themselves rather than their family choosing it in an emergency. This is one of those situations where it is better for YOU to be proactive than YOUR FAMILY to be reactive. By being proactive you can choose what type environment you want, taste the food, spend time visiting and get a feel for the place, so that when YOU decide you are ready or should you become ill, your family will know your wishes.

So why a continual care retirement community (CCRC)? Continual Care communities aim to provide just that — a wide range of living options and medical services that can change according to the needs of the resident. Most CCRCs include independent-living apartments, assisted living and rehabilitation and long-term care nursing facilities. These communities offer the ability to move between the levels of care

should you have a temporary health condition that requires rehabilitation, for instance, and then return to your home in the community when you are able. CCRCs are also very popular options for couples who due to health issues or dementia issues who may need different amounts of care. Most CCRCs have accommodations for older adults with dementia both in assisted living and in long-term care nursing facilities.

Want to know more?

Call Mary Bess Price,
marketing director for
Fair Haven Retirement
Community, at

205-956-4150

to schedule lunch and a tour.

Is there 'courage in the midst of our mistakes'?

My daughter came home from school recently and told me she needed to tell me something. Some girls in her class were caught talking and got in trouble with the teacher. My daughter was a part of the group talking and contributed to the problem, but she did not get caught.

She told me she watched her friends flip a card, which is part of the school disciplinary procedure, and felt terribly guilty. So she went to the teacher, explained that she should have to flip a card as well and went to flip her card. She told me because she was confessing to misbehavior. We talked about the importance of being quiet in the classroom and following the teacher's directions. We spent more time, though, talking about how good it was that she was proactive in telling the teacher and taking responsibility.

Growing up

I was so proud of her. It was one of those moments when I was overcome by how she was growing up. Her maturation was marked by the fact that she was willing to take responsibility for her mistake. She knew there would be consequences, but she had the courage to be honest about her misbehavior.

What changes as we get older? Why do we become increasingly reticent to take responsibility for our mistakes? When we misspeak to someone, when we jump to conclusions, when we fail to follow through with something, we hide. We blame. We try to act as though nothing has happened.

True, our mistakes get bigger and the consequences are more significant but does the principle change? Is it somehow more ethical and admirable to blame others and try to hide our mistakes?

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



Running from responsibility certainly does seem to be in our nature. From the beginning in Genesis, we see the act of blaming from both Adam and Eve. Adam blamed Eve for giving him the apple. Eve blamed the serpent for tricking her. Has that ever been something we have esteemed about Adam and Eve? When we talk about the story, we usually remark that blaming others contributed to the problem and demonstrated further disobedience by Adam and Eve.

We seem to forget how taking responsibility was once a mark of maturity. We forget that demonstrating courage in the midst of our mistakes is admirable. Claim your mistakes. Take responsibility and then take the initiative to correct them. Everyone makes mistakes. The issue is not making mistakes. The issue is how we handle them.

A Takeaway Value . . .

When you make a mistake, be proactive by claiming it and taking responsibility.

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



Judson College announces openings and welcomes applicants who wish to work and teach in Christian Higher Education:

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Application: cover letter, CV, letters of recommendation, and copies of all transcripts (nursing only) to Dr. Sara Kiser, Academic Dean, Judson College, 302 Bibb Street, Marion, AL, 36756 or skiser@judson.edu. Judson College is an Equal Opportunity Institution. For more information on each position visit the Employment section at www.judson.edu.

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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 resumes 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. Resumes/videos may be sent to: Paul Johnson, 255 Johnson-Hale Road, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661.

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

MINISTER OF WORSHIP & EDUCATION: First Baptist Church of Blountville seeks a minister of worship and education. Blountville is the county seat of Kingsport and Bristol. First Baptist currently has two blended morning worship services. The minister will be responsible for coordination of all musical presentations, leading some groups, as well as planning special events such as our Spirit of Christmas dinner theater. Education duties will include working with team to coordinate Bible study, VBS, camps and adult education opportunities. Please submit resume to: Minister Search Team, P.O. Box 587, Blountville, TN 37617, or e-mail to: fbcbtn@embarqmail.com.

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 resumes to: gregsellers@yahoo.com, or P.O. Box 160, Wilton, AL 35187.

STUDENT MINISTER: Grades 6th-12th, part-time. Send resume 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 resume to: kent@libertyhillonline.org or mail to: LHBC, 5800 Co. Rd. 37, Clanton, AL 35045.

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OBITUARY FOR MRS. ELLEN BRIDGES

Mrs. Ellen Bridges, former director of Whitesburg Baptist Preschool/Kindergarten, passed away on January 21. Mrs. Bridges was a leader of Christian preschool education. She taught classes at Samford University's summer kindergarten workshops and helped many Alabama churches establish their preschool programs.

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parts Jacksonville or Mobile. Alaska departs Seattle. East Coast Canada departs New York. Panama Canal departs Miami. 256-974-0500 or 1-800-726-0954.

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COACH BUS FOR SALE: 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.

PATRIOTIC SINGING FLAG FOR SALE: Six-tier lighted patriotic singing flag (Elizabethtown, Ky.). Used for choir cantatas. Manufacturer's construction/lighting instructions included. Photos available. Contact John Rice, john@severnvalley.org or 270-765-7822.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

BACK TO BUSINESS — The Alabama Legislature convened its 2011 regular session at the Statehouse in Montgomery on March 1.

State Legislature focused on 'transparency, fairness'

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

It's a new day for Alabama lawmakers, say state Senate and House of Representatives leaders.

As the 2011 regular session of the Alabama Legislature convened March 1, senators and representatives were expected to conduct business at a level not seen in recent years, said Senate Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston.

"We are going to have a lot more transparency in state government ... and fiscal responsibility is being taken to a new level," he said.

Todd Stacy, communications director for House Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, agreed.

"The House was already operating efficiently and more openly than the Senate and that's credit to (the previous) Speaker Seth Hammett, but Speaker Hubbard wants to continue that and build upon it," he said. "He wants to make the business that goes on in the House more transparent, fair and accountable."

New level of ethics

Legislators, working together with then-Gov. Bob Riley, started down this new transparent form of conducting state government in December when they passed major ethics reform legislation to cut down on political corruption.

And during the special session in which those bills were passed, Hubbard not only demonstrated his desire for increased transparency and accountability but also for fairness within the ranks of House members, Stacy said.

"There was a clear divide between political parties during the special session, but Speaker Hubbard did not use a heavy hand to cut off debate when the minority party was speaking even though debate went into

the wee hours of the night," he said. "The minority has the right to speak, and you never want to diminish the voice of the minority. The Republicans have been in the minority for a long time.

"Now that they are in the majority, they are going to treat the Democrats the way they would have liked to have been treated."

'Golden Rule'

"As with most things in life, if we just use the Golden Rule, we'll get along just fine," Stacy added.

Marsh said committee appointments in both the House and Senate are another place fairness will be demonstrated. Even though this was not the case in the past, "we gave fair representation to everyone," he said. Committees also are expected to do more work than they are used to doing, he added.

"In the past, the work on legislation was done on the (Senate or House) floor. The committee would just pass it out rather than work on it," he said.

Stacy said Hubbard has set up a subcommittee system that will insure better deliberation on legislation as well as actually write the bills ... instead of letting "the lobbyist write the bills" as has happened in some cases.

Another major change comes with rules in the Senate, Marsh said.

"In the past, the chair of the rules committee would come out with a rules calendar (on the spot) and no one would know what was coming," he said. "The new rules requires the rules committee to actually meet ... and to post an agenda online 24 hours in advance of the legislative day."

A full copy of the rules for both houses as well as other legislative information can be found at www.legislature.state.al.us.

CP statement affirms autonomy of state conventions, SBC partnerships

(continued from page 1)

by the fellowship of executive directors was a part of an effort to support the unified Cooperative Program campaign led by state conventions and the SBC Executive Committee. Frank Page and the leadership of state conventions will be focusing upon the emphasis called 'The Cooperative Program: Together We Are There.'

"The statement affirms the autonomy of state conventions, while recognizing the long-standing partnership with the SBC," Lance explained.

"Each state convention is uniquely different, but we have the same consuming passion to reach those who are lost. We believe the Cooperative Program is the best way to see this Great Commission objective accomplished."

Lance also noted that while gifts through the CP from churches have declined "as a percentage of undesignated receipts, contributions from state conventions to the SBC mission causes have increased as a percentage of budgets."

"This is indicative of the commitment we have to (Alabama Baptists' focus of) One Mission — The Great Commission and One Program — The Cooperative Program," he said.

Each year in Alabama, our executive committee studies the budget

allocation and will continue to do so in light of the historical relationship between Alabama Baptists and the SBC," Lance said. "I anticipate more specific recommendations regarding the budget later this year. Until then, the executive directors' statement offers a helpful framework worthy of consideration as budget recommendations are developed for next year."

At press time, Lance was expected to provide more information on this topic during the State Board of Missions meeting Feb. 28.

Page said, "We understand that we do some things together as shared ministry items, but understand it's still very historic that these state conventions are joining in wanting to do more to reach the vast lostness of this world."

"That's not going to have immediate impact, but over time, it's going to have significant impact for the work of reaching this continent and this world for Christ," he said.

Turner presented the fellowship's official statement to Page

on Feb. 18, which reads in its entirety: "We affirm the challenge of the Great Commission Resurgence report that each state convention, within their own autonomy, strive to achieve the historic goal of 50-50 division of Cooperative Program receipts with the Southern Baptist Convention after consideration of allocations for shared ministries."

"Each state convention is uniquely different, but we have the same consuming passion to reach those who are lost."

Rick Lance
Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions

"What makes it significant is that it is the first time state execs and the Executive Committee have agreed on the principles of shared ministry items," he said.

The GCR report, approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Orlando in June 2010, listed "Challenges" for various SBC entities, including those for state conventions, stating the need to "return to the historic ideal of a 50-50 Cooperative Program distribution between the state conventions and the SBC."

State conventions are free to set their own timeline for realization of the 50-50 CP allocation, Turner noted. (BP, TAB contributed)

Obama stops defending Defense of Marriage Act

The Obama administration announced Feb. 23 it will no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act, a nearly 15-year-old law that defines marriage as heterosexual unions.

In a letter to Congress, Attorney General Eric Holder said President Obama has determined the law, widely known as DOMA, is unconstitutional when applied to same-sex couples married legally under state law.

Holder, writing to House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, said the decision came as he and the president reviewed the administration's

role in current court challenges from legally married same-sex couples in New York and Connecticut.

The attorney general said Obama considered a number of factors, including a history of discrimination against gays and a "growing scientific consensus" that a person's sexual orientation cannot be changed.

In a statement, Holder noted the changing legal landscape since the law was passed, including Congress' repeal

of the military's ban on openly gay members and the Supreme Court declaring laws criminalizing homosexual conduct are unconstitutional.

In a news briefing Feb. 23, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said the president has long considered DOMA "unnecessary and unfair" but the president is "grappling" with his views on gay "marriage."

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins called the move "appalling" and urged Congress to defend DOMA.

Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, called the administration's decision "a tremendous step toward recognizing our common humanity." (RNS)



OBAMA

Kushla-Bethany Pastor Sullivan dies

Alvin C. Sullivan, pastor of Kushla-Bethany Baptist Church, Eight Mile, died Feb. 9. He was 82.

Sullivan served the Mobile Baptist Association church for 53 years and "never missed a Sunday," said Mack Morris, friend and pastor of Woodbridge Baptist Church, Mobile.

Sullivan was a pastor for 55 years, two of those spent at Four Points Baptist Church, near Mobile.

A native of Sims Chapel, Sullivan served in the military in his

youth and returned to study at Bob Jones University in Greenville, S.C. While in college, Sullivan felt called to be a pastor.

Active in the Mobile Association, Sullivan preferred to be known as "a pastor and that's it," his daughter Ruth Anne said. He was not one for frills and special recognitions but took pride in the responsibility of leading his church.

Sullivan is survived by his wife of 60 years, Dolores; two daughters and two grandchildren. (TAB)



SULLIVAN

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

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'Chief Encouragement Officer'

Page inaugurated as 6th SBC Executive Committee president

Executive Committee members, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entity heads and other guests gathered in Nashville on Feb. 21 to inaugurate Frank Page as the SBC Executive Committee's sixth president.

Page officially assumed the position Oct. 1 after serving 30 years as a pastor and in various denominational roles, including SBC president. Guests were led in worship in the Van Ness Auditorium at LifeWay Christian Resources by Travis Cottrell, and several of Page's colleagues spoke and prayed for him.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, delivered a charge on behalf of Page's colleagues at the 42 Baptist state conventions. He challenged Page to remember that being a follower of Christ is a prerequisite to being a Christian leader.

'Keep following Him'

"You will never catch up to Christ, but you must keep following Him," Lance said. "Continue to be faithful to your calling."

"Be a friend to your colleagues. You can't do this job by yourself," he said.

"I appreciate your turning CEO into 'Chief Encouragement Officer,'" Lance continued. "We are going to be your friends, not your foes. We are going to be your colleagues, not your competition. We are going to be your allies, not your adversaries."

Page delivered a statement of his vision for the office, saying he wants to have priorities that would please the Lord.

"I really will be quite happy when tonight is over because I'm not real comfortable with this kind of attention, to be quite honest with you," Page said.

"I would be quite happy if you

"I believe God's call for Southern Baptists is that we would never rest until every man, woman, boy and girl on this continent hears the good news of Jesus, so that they can say, 'That person was a blessing to me.'"

Frank Page
SBC Executive Committee



would forget me and remember our Lord.

"But God has called me to this position, and I am honored to be a part of this. So I speak to you tonight about a simple, biblical vision that I think the Lord brought to my heart," Page said, pointing to Genesis 12, the passage where God promises to make Abraham into a great nation and bless him so that he can be a blessing to others.

"I think that God's call upon Abraham's life is precious, but is it not true of all of us, that God called us to be saved and God called us to serve Him in some capacity, shape, form or fashion?" he asked.

Page added he believes God is calling Southern Baptists to be a blessing to the nations: "I believe God's call for Southern Baptists is that we would never rest until every man, woman, boy and girl on this continent hears the good news of Jesus, so that they can say, 'That person was a blessing to me.'"

"I don't believe God is going to be happy until every man, woman, boy and girl on the face of this earth hears the good news of Jesus Christ," he said. "I want us to be able to say as Southern Baptists, 'We were a blessing.'"

In addition to blessing Abraham, God made demands of him, Page noted.

"I believe God demands a commitment from us. We are to serve Him with passion," he said. "We are to give Him first-rate loyalty for a first-rate cause."

"I believe God's calling for Southern Baptists is to be closer than we've ever been before, to be purer than we've ever been before, to be more passionate than we ever have been before about sharing the good news with a lost and dying world," Page said.

Just as God's demands upon Abraham's life were life-long, Page believes God is not finished with Southern Baptists.

'Be a blessing'

"I know these men who are getting ready to speak are going to say some profound things to us, things we need to hear. But I just want you to remember with me tonight, God's vision for us is that He will bless us, but He wants us to be a blessing as well," Page said.

(BP)

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Dear Laurie,
We are in Pigeon Forge T.N. staying at Smoky Mountain Christian Village. It's beautiful here! The chalets are so nice and there is much to do. You got to check it out!
Love, Jenny

To: Laurie
115 B
Derby






Family Matters

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WHAT ALL CHILDREN NEED TO HEAR

By Steve Trader *Pathways Professional Counselor*

Have you ever met a parent that was not a good parent? I think we all may have. At times we may also feel as though we are not doing a good job in parenting our children.

This can be frustrating, to say the least. Tragically, so many of us fail to see the desired results we want when it comes to our own parenting situations.

What can we do to become the parents that we all desire to be? The answer is to model ourselves after the greatest Parent of all, God the Father. We need to do what He did with His Son, the Lord Jesus. In Matthew chapter three at the baptism of Jesus, we hear powerful words of affirmation spoken to the Son by the Father. All children need words of affirmation from their parents. Sadly, many may never hear anything but words of criticism and harshness.

What were these powerful words spoken on that special day? Matthew 3:16-17 says, "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well- pleased.'"

In that passage, the Father said two things that every child needs to hear and every parent needs to say.

"I love you!"—"This is my beloved Son" ... Children need to know that Mom and Dad love them.

You would be amazed at how many people who I have talked to through the years admit that one or both parents never said these powerful and precious words. More often than not, it is their father who never said these words. How tragic this is for a family. People long to know they are loved. This is a great need that all people have and many never receive. Parents, tell your children you love them!

"I am proud of you!"—"with whom I am well-pleased." ... Parents, let your kids know that you are proud of them. Let them hear those exact words. A man shared with me that he told his adult daughter these words just recently. He had never said this before. He said, "She broke down crying over the phone, and said how much that meant to her." When these words are spoken, a child feels approved. Many people spend their entire life seeking the approval of Mom and Dad. Parents, tell your children you are proud of them!

Mom and Dad, remember that when it comes to parenting, the days may seem long but the years will be short. Make the most of your time with your children by speaking these powerful and life-transforming words!



Annual Offering 2011 Order Now!

Order your materials for the 2011 Annual Children's Homes Offering by **March 10**. Included are bulletin inserts and a promotional DVD with short videos to promote the offering. To order, contact Kay Taylor by calling 1-888-720-8805 or emailing ktaylor@abchome.org. Please include your name, contact phone number and email, shipping address (no P.O. Boxes please), your church and association, number of inserts needed and date you plan to hold the offering.

2011 ANNUAL OFFERING



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

The 2011 goal for the Annual Children's Homes Offering is \$2.55 million. Please encourage your church to give.


* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.


Order your complimentary 2011 VBS nametags

Today!



We are currently taking orders through **March 10** for the Big Apple Adventure or Beach Blast themes. To order, contact Kay Taylor by calling 1-888-720-8805 or emailing ktaylor@abchome.org. Please include your name, contact phone number and email, your church and association, VBS theme and number needed. Nametags will be available for pickup at your local associational office by the second week in April.

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Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries
P.O. Box 361767
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Telephone: (205) 982-1112
Toll Free: (888) 720-8805

www.alabamachild.org
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 6

Explore the Bible By Cecil Taylor Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

LINK UP WITH OTHERS Philippians 1:1-11

Focused on Servanthood (1-2)

Although Paul included him as a sender, Timothy had nothing to do with writing this letter. The first person singular pronouns "I," "me" and "my" occur more than 100 times in the letter. It is Paul's letter.

In the Old Testament, "servant" meant an authorized messenger (Ex. 14:31; Num. 12:7; Ps. 105:26; Amos 3:7; Jer. 25:4; Dan. 9:6, 10). In this letter, Paul made no explicit claim to apostleship but "servants of Christ Jesus" carried overtones of authority. Timothy shared the dignity of the title because he soon would come to Philippi (Phil. 2:23) in Paul's name as a special envoy. "Saints," literally "holy ones," is the technical New Testament term for believers. Some say a saint is a man or woman whom the Roman Catholic pope has canonized on the basis of sterling character and the performance of two miracles after death. Others say a saint is a person who lives without sin. The New Testament says a saint is anyone whom God claims as His own. "Overseers" are "elders" charged with "pastoring" the church (cf Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). The terms are interchangeable in the New Testament. "Deacon" means "servant," as its use in Acts 6:1-2 indicates ("daily service," "to serve tables"). The old idea that deacons form a governing board to run the business of the church is unbiblical and wrong. They must be humble servants, not bosses. "Grace" is God's disposition of favor. "Peace" is everything that makes for well-being. Their order is significant. A stranger to God's grace is a stranger also to God's peace. That Paul placed Jesus on a par with God the Father implies His full deity. This text supports the later doctrine of the Trinity.

Fellowship in the Gospel (3-11)

"I thank my God upon all the remembrance of you" may be taken in two widely different ways. Perhaps it means "upon my remembrance of you" as if Paul's memories of the Philippians led him to thank God for them. More likely, it means "on account of your

remembrance of me," referring to Paul's joy over their "fellowship in the gospel." More than coffee and cookies after church, "fellowship" ("koinonia") includes financial support. The Philippians had contributed to Paul's ministry "from the first day." Their latest gift brought by Epaphroditus (Phil. 4:18) sparked this prayer of thanks for all their gifts. Mention of the "first day" led Paul to speak of the last day, "the day of Christ Jesus." He had confidence that the Lord who began His work in them would finish it. The verb means to complete the job, i.e., to drive the last nail. That the Philippians faithfully supported the gospel confirmed that God had begun the good work of salvation in them. This verse offers absolute assurance of a believer's eternal security. Not only because the Philippians shared in Paul's ministry when he was able to move around and now that he was in prison was his deep affection, or "longing," for them "right" but also because it came from the "heart" (literally "bowels," which people in his day took as the seat of emotion) of Jesus Himself.

The Right Kind of Love (9-11)

Paul prayed for "abounding love." "Love" is agape, "selflessness, unconquerable good will." "Abound" means overflow as an artesian well. The love Paul asked for them was not blind love but marked by "full knowledge" (the word suggests knowledge heaped up in a pile, one fact upon another) and "discernment," i.e., keen insight or spiritual sensitivity. They needed this kind of love so they could "test the things differing" (literally) with a view toward selecting the best or most important. In a culture where values differ widely, one who is not informed and sensitive to God's heart and mind is utterly at a loss. Why did it matter? So that in the day of Christ, the Philippians could pass review by the Judge with approval. "Sincere" means that they really are what they appear. "Blameless" means void of offense, i.e., neither stumbling nor causing others to stumble. The ultimate aim? Their lives would be filled with the truly good qualities only being right with God through Jesus can produce. This goodness wins glory not for the man himself but for God.

Bible Studies for Life By M. Sydney Park Assistant Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

FAITH UNDER FIRE 1 Peter 1:1-12

Exiles on Earth (1-2)

Peter's first letter was addressed to a group of Christians called "elect exiles." They were most likely those displaced from society because of their faith in Christ. Their dislocation may have included alienation from families as well as estrangement from the wider Greco-Roman culture. The references to Asia Minor provinces indicate a physical displacement; they were essentially immigrants most likely from Rome. Peter began his encouragement by reminding them that even though they were exiles on earth, they had been spiritually "chosen by the foreknowledge of God." This position comes to believers through Trinitarian activity: foreknowledge of God the Father, sanctification of the Holy Spirit and the sprinkling of Christ's blood. The entire Godhead is invested in believers being chosen by God and naturally results in obedience. In the Old Testament, covenantal terms between God and His people required confession of obedience and sprinkling of blood (Ex. 24:3-8). We also find both elements here: chosen by the foreknowledge of God and obedience of these believers in continuity with God's faithfulness.

'A Living Hope' (3-5)

Peter began with a triumphant blessing for this great election because salvation is the result of God's mercy. And in God's mercy, He is our Creator; He causes us to be born anew through Jesus Christ's resurrection. God is not only Father to His Son, Jesus Christ, but through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, God is also Father to all those born again. Peter tells us that believers are born again to "a living hope," an enduring inheritance (imperishable, undefiled and unfading). And this inheritance is in essence unlike the treasures of this earthly existence: God's living hope for believers cannot be stolen or destroyed. And believers are safeguarded by God's power through faith until the very end.

Protected by God's Power (6-9)

Peter described salvation in specific and

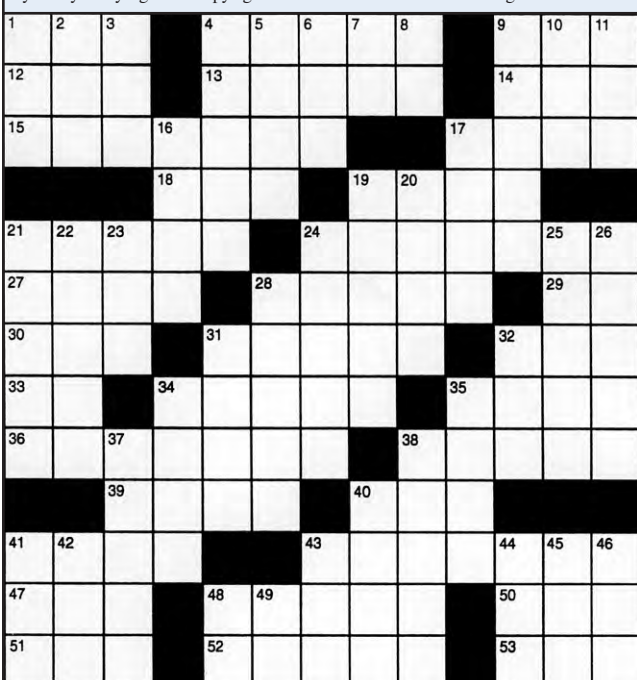
glorious terms in order to encourage his readers. In spite of the experience of hardship, suffering and trial, believers are to rejoice in the resplendent nature of salvation. Salvation originates from God's mercy, Jesus Christ's saving act and the Holy Spirit's sanctification. Salvation also has a glorious destination that abides forever. And as believers strive toward this eternal inheritance, they are not left alone but protected by God's power. But the magnificence of salvation from beginning to end was not the only reason for Peter's exhortation to rejoice in spite of hardship. Trials serve as the necessary instrument for refining and strengthening faith. And genuine faith is what yields praise, glory and honor in the end. God's protection of believers, often misunderstood as exemption from life's adversity, means rather insurance against faithlessness in view of trials. God is invested in securing a strong, authentic faith. Thus life's misfortunes are neither signs of a condemning nor capricious God but opportunities for a genuine faith. This perspective on trials requires belief that God is present in our adversity and active in producing faithfulness rather than unfaithfulness. It requires faith that God is at work in spite of all seeming signs that He is absent. Peter reminds us believing in the invisible God is the foundation of our faith (cf Heb. 11:1).

A Historical Inheritance (10-12)

The gospel message by which believers are saved is the same message the Old Testament prophets proclaimed. The prophets devoted time and earnest interest concerning the salvation Jesus Christ would bring through His death and resurrection. Thus Peter further encouraged the suffering believers with a historical inheritance; all of the Old Testament prophets' devotion with respect to grace comes to benefit believers. And the gospel message is of such magnitude that the heavenly hosts yearn to simply look upon it. This profound sense of salvation is frequently relinquished in view of material gain and lost at the smallest hint of hardship. Perhaps Peter's understanding of salvation can help us to reconsider the rich treasures of grace in its full dimension and gain courage to remain faithful in the midst of even great misfortunes.

Christian Crossword

By Evelyn Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Whether it be ___ or ewe, ye shall not kill it. (Lev. 22:28)
- A strong ___ from the enemy. (Ps. 61:3)
- Thy god, O ___, liveth. (Amos 8:14)
- Stand in ___, and sin not. (Ps. 4:4)
- Representative.
- The wheat and the ___ were not smitten. (Ex. 9:32)
- ___ is the man that trusteth in him. (Ps. 34:8)
- No man ___d for my soul. (Ps. 142:4)
- Piece out.
- Led him unto the ___ of the hill. (Luke 4:29)
- Jonah was gone down into the ___ of the ship. (Jonah 1:5)
- I sat down and wept, and ___. (Neh. 1:4)
- In the beginning was the ___. (John 1:1)
- And Jacob ___ a vow. (Gen. 42:11)
- Thy servants are ___ spies. (Gen. 42:11)
- Not willing that ___ should perish. (2 Pet. 3:9)
- All thy house shall be ___. (Acts 11:14)
- I took the little book ... and

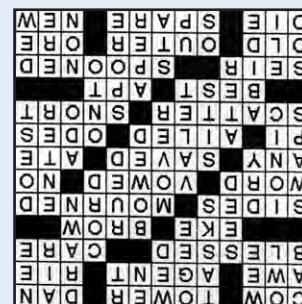
___ it up. (Rev. 10:10)

- Greek letter.
- What ___ thee, O thou sea? (Ps. 114:5)
- Poems.
- The whirlwind shall ___ them. (Isa. 41:16)
- Sound of contempt.
- Bring forth the ___ robe. (Luke 15:22)
- Given to hospitality, ___ to teach. (1 Tim. 3:2)
- When thou wentest out of ___. (Judg. 5:4)
- Fed.
- Giants dwelt therein in ___ time. (Deut. 2:20)
- Cast him into ___ darkness. (Matt. 22:13)
- Unrefined mineral.
- A time to be born, and a time to ___. (Eccles. 3:2)
- If I come again, I will not ___ into his gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
- And I saw a ___ heaven. (Rev. 21:1)
- Molding.
- Married.
- ___ passant. (French)
- Direction. (abbr.)
- He is ___ away of his own lust. (James 1:14)
- The birds of the ___ have nests. (Matt. 8:20)
- Born.
- Thy ___ shall be great. (Job 5:25)
- Ever the silver ___ be loosed. (Eccles. 12:6)
- They ___ the knee before him. (Matt. 27:29)
- Regretted.
- Trades.
- Pertaining to a charged particle.
- I will ___ up thy rivers. (Isa. 44:27)
- A pestilient fellow, and a ___ of sedition. (Acts 24:5)
- ___ into his gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
- What ___ thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19:9)
- Manservant.
- Perches.
- Why make ye this ___, and weep? (Mark 5:39)
- The children of ___ of Hezekiah. (Neh. 7:21)
- He goeth ___ meet the armed men. (Job 39:21;

Down

- The fourth part of a ___. (2 Kings 6:25)
- I am like an ___ of the desert. (Ps. 102:6)
- Tiny.
- Fulfill your works, your daily ___. (Ex. 5:13)

- 2 words)
- Who can ___ in the fierceness of his anger? (Nah. 1:6)
- Seed.
- Clown.
- And Jacob ___ pottage. (Gen. 25:29)
- Samuel ministered unto the Lord before ___. (1 Sam. 3:1)
- Depot. (abbr.)
- Not. (prefix)
- How long will it be ___ thou be quiet? (Jer. 47:6)
- Like a cloud of ___ in the heat of harvest. (Isa. 18:4)
- Bone. (prefix)
- The thorns grew ___, and choked it. (Mark 4:7)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian widow agonizes over daughter's kidnapping

KHARTOUM, Sudan — A Christian widow in north Sudan is agonizing over the kidnapping of her daughter eight months ago by suspected Islamic extremists in Khartoum.

Ikhlas Anglo said her daughter, 15-year-old Hiba Abdelfadil Anglo, went missing while returning from the ministry of education in Khartoum on June 27, 2010. Hiba, a member of Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Khartoum, had gone to the education ministry office to obtain her transcripts for entry to secondary school. Two days later, the family received threatening telephone calls and messages from the kidnappers telling them to pay 1,500 Sudanese pounds (\$560) in order to secure her return.

Anglo and others said they believe the kidnappers are Muslim extremists who have targeted them because they are Christians and that police are aiding the criminals. She said when she went to a police station to open a case, police bluntly told her she must first leave Christianity for Islam. "You must convert to Islam if you want your daughter back," officer Fakhr El-Dean Mustafa of the family and child protection unit told Anglo, she said. Recently transferred to another station, Mustafa was not immediately available for comment. Adding to the anguish of the kidnapped girl's family was Anglo's dismissal from her job when she took time off to search for Hiba. Anglo said her supervisor at Asia Health Center, where she had worked for many years as a cleaner, had told her to report back to work after recovering her daughter, but after a month she was surprised to learn that she had been fired as of July 1, 2010.

Pastor beaten after refusing to worship in Hindu temple

SECUNDERABAD, India — Hindu extremists kidnapped a pastor identified only as Jonathan D. and tried to force him to worship at a Hindu temple Jan. 26 in Secunderabad.

The All India Christian Council (AICC) reported that extremists with their faces covered grabbed the pastor from behind and forced him into a vehicle, then drove him around for about six hours. The next day, they forced him to enter a temple in a forested area, where they told him to bow down before their idols and shout "Jai Shri Ram [Hail Lord Ram]," and then beat him when he refused, verbally abusing and threatening him, according to the AICC. The pastor was able to escape on the night of Jan. 28 while the assailants were asleep. He walked about nine miles, found a main road leading to Gulbarga and, though he had no money, managed to reach Patancheru and call his family. His family had not informed police due to uncertainty and fear, according to the AICC. His relatives and church members picked him up by auto-rickshaw and returned him home.

Uzbek Bible society fined for Bible shipments

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — At a January hearing in her absence, Natalya Pitirimova, accountant for the Bible Society of Uzbekistan, was fined for violating procedures over the import of two shipments of Bibles and children's Bibles in 2008 and 2010.

The state Religious Affairs Committee, which operates Uzbekistan's strict prior compulsory censorship of all religious literature, has refused to release the Bibles despite successive appeals from Christian churches. Judge Dilshod Suleymanov also ordered that the Bible society return the shipments — totaling nearly 15,000 copies — to Russia at its own expense.

The judge claimed that the "Bible society did not present requests on time to the Religious Affairs Committee from churches in Uzbekistan that they need the literature, and subsequently as time passed, this violated customs procedures." Justice Ministry officials told the Bible society, "There is no need to import Bibles into Uzbekistan since there's an electronic version on the Internet."

Christians locked up, beaten by Hindu extremists

KANAKAGIRI, India — Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bajrang Dal locked up five Christians and beat them in Kanakagiri, Koppal district Jan. 28.

The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that the Christians — identified only as J. Ravi, Lawrence, Williams, Manjula and James — were beaten mercilessly for being Christians. The assailants told the Christians they either had to convert to Hinduism or move to another place.

The Christians later received police protection.

CAMPUS News

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Artist-in-Residence to Be Honored:** Judson College artist-in-residence, Billie Jean Young, has been named to the West Alabama "Women of Distinction" for 2011 and will be honored at an awards luncheon April 7 at 11:30 a.m. at the Indian Hills Country Club in Tuscaloosa.

The event is sponsored by the Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama and recognizes those who have made significant contributions in their communities, professions and are positive role models for past, present and future Girl Scouts.

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

Additionally Young is founder and director of "The Drama Project/Child Abuse Project," which seeks to help women and young people recognize and respond to child abuse.

Currently Young teaches drama production at Judson and in four Perry County schools.

For more information, call 205-453-9513 or visit www.girlscout-snca.org/wodwest.

► **Judson Choir to Go on Tour:** Approximately 30 members of the Judson choir will depart March 13 for a five-day tour with

stops in north Alabama, North Carolina and South Carolina.

The tour includes the choir and the FAITH ensemble.

The tour will begin at Oakmont Presbyterian Church in Birmingham where Judson music professor Jonathan Brown serves as organist. Brown also will tour as accompanist for the choir.

Students then will travel to Decatur to participate in evening worship at Central Baptist Church.

"We're excited about helping North Raleigh Ministries," said choral director Judy Ransom. "We'll work in their food bank and in the thrift store helping to sort and price clothing before singing at Trinity Baptist Church that night."

Ransom met members of Trinity Baptist last summer when they sent a team to Perry County to help in a Vacation Bible School sponsored by the Sowing Seeds of Faith interfaith initiative.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile to Host Visit Day:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) invites prospective students to attend UMobile Visit Day on March 4 and become eligible for a \$2,000 scholarship while learning about one of "America's Best Christian Colleges."

UMobile Visit Day begins at 8:30 a.m. and includes a campus tour, information about financial aid and admissions, opportunities to meet with faculty and students

and more. An optional overnight stay in the residence halls is available for a fee.

The \$2,000 visit scholarship is awarded to current high school seniors who register and attend UMobile Visit Day, apply for admission and enroll for the Fall 2011 semester.

To attend UMobile Visit Day, call 251-442-2222 or 1-800-WINRAMS, or register online at www.umobile.edu/visit.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Old Testament Scholar, Author John Haralson Hayes to Give This Year's James A. Auchmuty Lecture:** John Haralson Hayes, who retired in 2007 after 30 years on the faculty of Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, and is now professor emeritus of Old Testament, will speak March 8 at 10 a.m. in Reid Chapel. His topic will be "The Minister and Reconciliator."

Author or co-author of 31 books on the Old Testament, biblical history and preaching topics, Hayes was general editor of the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation (Abingdon Press 1999).

During his Birmingham visit, Hayes also will preach the March 6, 10:30 a.m. worship service at Shades Crest Baptist Church and teach two biblical perspectives classes at Samford University on March 7. For more information, call 205-726-2011.

Baptist author produces sign language novel

Baptist author George Joslin, of Springfield, Mo., has produced what may be the first American Sign Language-only novel.

Titled "A Deaf Man's Gospel," the novel is only available in American Sign Language (ASL) on DVD, rather than in print format. According to Joslin, his novel may be the first created just for the deaf in ASL.

"Many stories have been recorded, but not a full-length novel like this," Joslin explained. "Many things have been translated into ASL from English, but this was created in ASL."

The biblical fiction starts with the story of the deaf man Jesus healed in Mark 7:31-35, and adding some incidents from the other Gospels.

"The fiction is that the deaf man Jesus healed, named Benjamin, is added to the Gospel stories. The book portrays the observations and experiences of this deaf man," he added.

"This is a book created by a deaf

man — me, presented in ASL by a deaf man — Tim Bender — for deaf people. We have added voice to the DVD so hearing friends and family can enjoy this book along with the deaf," Joslin said.

The idea formed when Joslin began to ask himself questions as he read the biblical account: Who was this deaf man? Who brought him to Jesus? What was it like to be deaf at the time Jesus was on earth? What happened to this man after he was healed?

Biblical fiction

The Bible does not provide the man's name, his hometown or the names of those who brought him to Jesus. Because the work is fiction, Joslin chose to name him Benjamin and placed him in Capernaum, near the place where Jesus healed him. Joslin decided Nicodemus and his brother, Abner, Benjamin's father, could have led Benjamin to the Lord.

The author based his assumptions about Benjamin's life on

what is common in the deaf community and what is known about the way of life in Jesus' time. In the book, Joslin suggests the man met many of the people portrayed in the New Testament, and that he became a follower of Jesus.

Bender serves as pastor of a church for the deaf in Louisville, Ky. Buddy Burgess, a hearing man and pastor of a Virginia Baptist deaf church in Richmond, Va., did the voiceover.

Other Baptists also were part of the project. Southern Baptist evangelist Howard Baldwin of Multi-Media Evangelism Inc. handled technical aspects. Let's Sign, owned by Edith Booth of Jackson, Miss., is the distributor.

Joslin is author of two other novels, "A Life After Deafness" and "A Terp on the Line," and numerous non-fiction books on teaching ASL and interpreting for the deaf. Individuals interested in the two-DVD "A Deaf Man's Gospel" may contact Joslin at gjoslin@mchsi.com. (ABP)



BP photo

MEMORIZATION — Heather Fullington (left), Sandye Torphy (center) and Robin Schutt look up Scripture during an adult Bible drill at Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Old Hickory, Tenn.

Churchwide challenge

Tennessee church brings Bible drill to adults

Tulip Grove Baptist Church “pushed the envelope” on its children’s Bible drill by challenging adults with the question, “Are you smarter than a fourth grader?”

Following 11 weeks of practice during discipleship training hour on Sundays, a churchwide Bible drill for adults was held during a Sunday night service at the church in Old Hickory, Tenn., last fall.

Participants in Tulip Grove’s first adult Bible drill ranged in age from 18 to 60-plus, with a median age of 42.

The church used the children’s Bible drill curriculum from LifeWay Christian Resources and practiced from September to November.

“We had a fine bunch of 14 adult church members participating,” said Pam Reasonover, who has led Bible drill competition at Tulip Grove for 28 years.

“We have no adult Bible drill materials, but we do have a chart with names on it and stars and stickers for people who memorize Bible verses,” she said.

Unlike children’s Bible drill participants, the adults have no opportunity to advance beyond the church level to other competitions, but they did receive the matching shirts and certificates.

An adult presence in Bible drill is not a completely new idea at Tulip Grove. Three years ago, Alec Cort,

then-student pastor at the church, stepped up to participate in the youth Bible drill with the seventh- and eighth-graders.

After Cort’s involvement, people suggested to Reasonover that the church needed an adult Bible drill.

When Jack Lewis, the church’s minister of education, suggested the possibility in a staff meeting, the others told him to go for it.

Since the children’s Bible drill curriculum begins with the fourth grade, Reasonover asked the adults, “Are you smarter than a fourth-grader?”

“I sort of dared them to get them involved,” she said.

While some of the participants with previous Bible drill experience may have had an advantage over others, “most of the participants in the adult Bible drill did not grow up in a Baptist church, or the church they were in did not offer a children’s Bible drill,” Reasonover said. “Some were even unchurched.”

Sandye Torphy, a 50-something Bible learner who grew up Southern Baptist, recounted that she participated in what were called “sword drills” as a child.

“I love God’s Word and I want to know more,” Torphy said. “The adult Bible drill is so much fun, and I’ve learned so much. I am up to memorizing 13 Bible verses, 10 key passages and all the books of the Bible.”

But Torphy, like the other adults, had to memorize 25 verses for Tulip Grove’s Bible drill, a step up from what was expected of the children.

“Yes, adults still can memorize,” Torphy said. “Our members have seen the children’s Bible drills. Knowing where the books of the Bible are and learning the key passages — it’s a goal that they want to accomplish.”

Nine of the 14 adults who took part in the Bible drill practices also participated in the churchwide drill. But, as Reasonover put it, choosing not to participate in the church drill took nothing away from what the adult drillers did.

“The fact they took up the challenge is great,” she said. “They know more than when they started. The point is to memorize Scripture.”

Reasonover said her drillers would like to see other churches offer Bible drill for adults. “They want some competition,” she said with a laugh.

William Summey, editorial project leader of LifeWay’s *ParentLife* magazine and children’s Bible drill resources, said the materials help children learn “to follow the Scripture directive to hide God’s Word in their hearts. Kids can learn it so quickly and can memorize it so easily, but adults can do that too. ... It’s never too late to learn Scripture.” (BP)

“Kids can learn it so quickly ... but adults can do that too. ... It’s never too late to learn Scripture.”

*William Summey
LifeWay*

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Christians concerned for health-care workers

WASHINGTON — Catholic bishops and Christian medical groups are “disappointed” that the Obama administration has rescinded Bush-era conscience clauses for health care workers.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Feb. 18 issued its new guidelines, which govern medical staffers who object to procedures for religious or moral reasons.

The department said in a statement that it is “building upon provisions of the Bush administration rule that established an enforcement process for federal conscience laws, while rescinding the definitions and terms of the previous rule that caused confusion and could be taken as overly broad.”

The debate over conscience regulations involves a range of ethical dilemmas, from a physician’s refusal to prescribe birth control pills to patients who fear discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

The new rule, which takes effect in 30 days, maintains protections for health care workers who do not want to take part in abortions.

HHS also called for new initiatives to clarify the complaint process for medical professionals who feel coerced or discriminated against.

But the Christian Medical Association harshly criticized the HHS action, saying it “diminishes the civil rights that protect conscientious physicians and other health care professionals against discrimination.”

The new rule states that the now-rescinded regulation “caused significant confusion as to whether abortion also includes contraception.”

Federal law does not include contraception in a definition of abortion.

Nashville plans to protect homosexuals, transsexuals

NASHVILLE — In a move that could impact the religious liberty of business owners, the Nashville Metro Council voted Feb. 15 to extend workplace protections to homosexuals and transsexuals working for city contractors. If the bill is approved upon final vote March 15 and signed by the mayor as expected, firms that do business with the city will be required to sign affidavits saying they won’t discriminate on the basis of “sexual orientation” or “gender identity.”

The bill has an exception for businesses that employ 15 or fewer workers, *The City Paper* in Nashville reported.

Several council members said the proposal would discriminate against business owners whose religious beliefs don’t condone homosexuality or transsexuality.

“Jesus said love your neighbor,” Councilman Jim Hodge was quoted as saying in *The City Paper*. “He didn’t say endorse their lifestyle. I cannot as a businessman with 16 employees conduct my business the way I want to — the way I desire to based on my faith — if this passes. We don’t have any reason to interfere in a private contractual relationship between an employer and an employee.”

The vote was 21–16, with three council members abstaining.

Benny Hinn accused of breaking moral clause

IRVING, Texas — Christian publisher Strang Communications has sued evangelist Benny Hinn, claiming he violated a moral clause in a book agreement and owes the company more than \$250,000.

“Strang discovered that Mr. Hinn was engaged in a public, romantic and otherwise inappropriate relationship with another high-profile minister, who was divorced,” according to the suit, filed Feb. 15 in a Seminole County, Fla., circuit court.

The company said it learned of the relationship last summer when Hinn was divorcing his wife, Suzanne Hinn.

At that time there were news reports that Hinn was seen holding hands with evangelist Paula White of Without Walls International Church in Tampa, Fla.

The suit alleges that Hinn admitted to the publisher that he had an “inappropriate relationship with the other minister” and was obligated to repay advances for three future books.

Strang, which was recently renamed Charisma Media, said Hinn had refused to pay and, as of Dec. 31, owed the publisher \$251,097.

A spokesman for Hinn, who is based in Irving, Texas, could not be reached immediately for comment.

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