

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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Reuters photo

**SEEKING PURPOSE, HOPE** — A refugee who fled the unrest in Libya stays busy at a refugee camp near the Libyan and Tunisian border crossing of Ras Jdir on March 25.

## 'Radical change'

### North Africa, Middle East 'creating tomorrow' for Christ followers

By Ava Thomas  
International Mission Board

**T**he creator of tomorrow." That's what Col. Muammar Gaddafi of Libya called himself in a recent television broadcast.

And according to some international media, if the embattled leader comes out on top of his own civil war, he may be just that. His victory might give leaders momentum to turn the tide on the people's revolution spreading like wildfire across North Africa and the Middle East, some say.

Or it might not. But either way, the unrest is creating a new tomorrow for Christians in the region, said Nik Ripken, who has served 25 years with the International Mission Board and is an expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts. Historical, mostly Arab, Christians are leaving en masse from conflict-ridden nations, and that's a "major concern," he said.

"This is a time for them to recapture their witness, taking advantage of these times of radical change to be people of faith and peace among their neighbors who know no peace," Ripken said.

In Yemen, violent riots recently escalated, with more than 50 killed on the streets and threats of civil war looming. The situation is similar in Syria, where 37 have died in street clashes, according to international media outlets.

In Egypt, the people wait tensely for a transition from military rule to democracy. In Tunisia — where the first flashpoint happened in January — residents await July elections.

And quieter but still forceful protests are taking place in Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Iran.

"It is clear they are seeking for some purpose and hope in their lives," said Lucy Hamilton, a Christian worker among the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East. "We are praying He will use these times to show Himself clearly ... and open the way for His kingdom to come."

One way Christian workers are hoping this will happen is through relief efforts in the region. With the help of Southern Baptist relief, development

and hunger funds, Egyptian Baptists are distributing food, clothes and medicine. They also are offering small business loans.

In addition to work in Egypt, Southern Baptists are aiding refugees fleeing Libya. About 10,000 people could have food and medical needs met as they cross the border out of the volatile country into other nations.

The two projects combined are funded by \$250,000 in Southern Baptist gifts, and all will be accompanied with the opportunity to hear the gospel. In the region, God "is definitely at work," Hamilton said. "With everyone searching for change and more freedom ... we've found many opportunities to speak about the Truth."

Ripken said the best thing believers can pray for North Africa and the Middle East is:

► for courage for new believers to call for "lives of hope that lead to hope and peace."

► for God to do what is best for His glory among the nations, not what is best for the West.

► for international believers forced to relocate for "what we pray will be short periods of time."

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

## Ministry begins slowly; season of prayer set

By Susie Rain  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

**J**ohn Hayes knows a challenge when he sees one. The disaster relief coordinator from Birmingham Baptist Association sits in the midst of a big one in Tokyo — trying to find access to the disaster zone.

Hayes is part of Baptist Global Response's second assessment team for the Japan earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis. The team is experiencing road block after road block.

"Normally, the doors are open for us to work immediately in countries because they have nothing," he said. "In Japan, we are learning to work through their culture and abide by the government laws for access."

Right now, Japan requires special government permits to even gain access to the main road leading to the distraught northeast. Back roads are open, but with a gas shortage, many cars remain stranded along this route.

Hayes points out that the Japanese have plans to help their own people but there are still gaps that Southern Baptists can fill. With entire villages wiped out, trauma, shock and grief will run rampant. The confirmed death toll from the earthquake and tsunami is above 10,000, with more than 17,000 missing at press time.

Japan government officials say it will cost as much as \$309 billion to rebuild the country after the deadly earthquake and tsunami. The cost is about 6 percent of Japan's total economic output in 2010 and the cost estimates continue to grow every day. According to the World Bank, Japan will need up to five years to rebuild and recover.

The devastation has been described as the country's biggest crisis since the end of World War II.

At press time, the assessment team hoped to make a trip to the earthquake and tsunami area March 28.

The International Mission Board is encouraging Baptists to pray for Japan throughout April.

A daily prayer calendar, interactive prayer map and other resources are available at eastasianpeoples.imb.org.☞



HAYES

# COMMENT

## The Fall Really Happened

Four Sundays from now, Christians around the world will celebrate Easter — the most important day in human history. On April 24, they will remember the day that the power of God reached into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea in Jerusalem and brought Jesus of Nazareth back from the dead.

But Christians will celebrate more than Jesus' resurrection. They will affirm their hope that as Jesus conquered death, so shall they because of their faith in Him as their personal Lord and Savior.

That hope is grounded in Jesus' words in John 11:25–26: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

After Jesus' resurrection, the apostle Paul explained to first-century believers, "For as in Adam, all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him" (1 Cor. 15:22–23).

The hope of all Christians is that because they belong to Jesus by personally believing in Him, He will raise them up, even from the dead, and they shall share in the eternal resurrection. What greater hope is there? As Paul wrote, through Jesus, even death — "the final enemy" — is conquered.

Do not miss that resurrection is necessary because "in Adam, all die" — a reference to the fall of humankind recorded in Genesis 3. Some view the story as quaint mythology, but the Bible teaches that humanity needed the redemption Jesus provided because of Adam's fall. In other words, the fall really happened and it impacted every relationship mankind experiences.

### God's relationship with Adam

Obviously the foremost relationship impacted was the one between Adam and God. Prior to the fall, Adam enjoyed a spiritual intimacy with God. God gave Himself in relationship to Adam and Eve as He walked with them in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8). He demonstrated His goodness by providing for their needs. Adam and Eve had every opportunity to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever," which the Westminster Shorter Catechism lists as mankind's chief purpose.

But Adam traded all of that away when he branded God an enemy and deliberately disobeyed His command. The result was spiritual poverty as intimacy with God was lost. Adam and those who came after him spiraled downward toward denying God's authority, even His very existence. False



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

gods sprang up and much of humanity valued material relationships above knowing God and loving Him "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5). Many people still do.

Again it was Paul who summarized this process when he wrote in Romans 1:21ff, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him ... but exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

The fall changed Adam's relationship to himself also. Adam and Eve were created with God's image in their beings (Gen. 1:27). That gave them dignity and worth. God's image set them above all else in creation. But after the fall, the first emotion Adam and Eve experienced was shame. The Bible says their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked and made clothes to hide behind (Gen. 3:7).

The fall caused Adam and Eve to immediately see themselves in a different light, and that process continues to this day. Some people are so overcome with shame and fear that they live in self-loathing. Others seem to have a god complex, causing them to believe the world revolves around them.

Fallen humanity cannot see itself properly because it does not see God properly.

Relationship to others was another casualty of the fall. At creation, God rejected the hyperindividualism often expressed in today's America. God said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). In Genesis 1:27, when God created, He created male and female together. God intended people to live in relationship with one another, not to exist as islands unto themselves.

After the fall, Adam was concerned about himself, not others. Adam blamed Eve for his sin. The value of relationship with others was sacrificed to Adam's selfish need for a scapegoat. And again, the process continues. Self-centeredness and the lack of love for others cause community needs to be ignored and people reduced to objects to be abused and exploited for one's own personal gain.

The Old Testament command to "love your neighbor as yourself" is little more than a faint echo in today's value system.

Even humanity's relationship to creation was changed by the fall. Originally man was given stewardship over creation. He was to join God in the continuing care of all He had made perfect. Adam and Eve were to manage the physical resources in such a way that life would be sustained and bounty created.

After the fall, God cursed the ground, turning man's partnership with creation into painful toil and the childbearing process into physical pain.


All of these problems continue today — relationship to self, others, creation and God.

The broken relationship with self results in painful behaviors. The broken relationship with others results in discrimination and divisions. The broken relationship with creation results in pollution and exploitation of nature.

### Right relationship with God

But the chief problem is the broken relationship with God. None of the other problems can be fixed until the primary problem is resolved. Once a person has the most important relationship set right, then it is possible for the discipleship process to begin and the other relationships to be restored. People need to be restored to a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The fall really happened. But praise God, so did Easter. And the hope that causes Christians to celebrate Christ's resurrection also empowers them to deal with the brokenness of this world.



**"If ye continue in my word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31–32).**

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## Someone You Should Know

By Neisha Fuson, The Alabama Baptist

### Mae McDonald

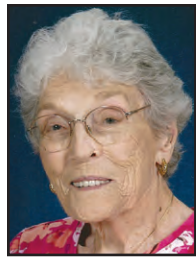
First Baptist Church, Alabaster  
Shelby Baptist Association

**FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE:** Psalm 19:14

**FAVORITE HYMN:** "Amazing Grace"

**HOBBIES:** Baking

**FAMILY STATUS:** Widowed after 70 years of marriage to Bill; one daughter, Joyce; two grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren



**M**ae McDonald turned 95 on Feb. 5 and celebrated her birthday at First Baptist Church, Alabaster, on March 13. Instead of gifts, she asked that dona-

**McDONALD**

tions be made to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

#### Q: What was your childhood like?

**A:** I grew up in Columbiana, Ala., with my mother and father. [There were] eight children total. I'm the only one left now. I rode to school in a two-horse covered wagon.

#### Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

**A:** I joined the church as a child, but I really didn't know what I was doing. I became a Christian several years later at Fourmile Baptist Church (in Wilsonville and was) baptized in a creek.

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

**A:** I've been a part of WMU (Woman's Missionary Union) and have taught Sunday School at [First,] Alabaster.

#### Q: What have you gotten from those ministries?

**A:** For 30 years, I attended Woodland Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham, a mission [of] West End Baptist Church, Birmingham. I was active in WMU ... and I really enjoyed it.

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

**A:** (I'll do) whatever the Lord leads me to do.

#### Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

**A:** He means everything to me. I couldn't do without Him. I look forward to being at His feet one day. ¶

# 'Outside the church walls'

## Elmore's Mount Hebron takes church 'Off Campus' to local school

By Anna Swindle  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**M**ount Hebron Baptist Church's March 6 worship service was, in many ways, a typical Sunday service. It included the Elmore church's praise team, a performance by the children's choir and a sermon.

But this was not just any Sunday service — March 6 was a special service called Off Campus Church, held at Holtville High School and tied into a broader missions outreach.

"Our church is very missions-minded, but this is the first time we've ever done something of this magnitude in our community," Church Administrator Jane Barrett said.

One benefit of the local focus was the opportunity it created for more church members to do missions than ever before, Senior Pastor Steve King said.

"Some people in our congregation aren't able to participate in foreign missions, and so Off Campus Church allowed us to help members see that the mission field is right here in our own neighborhood," King said.

Members of the Elmore Baptist Association church knew they wanted to hold a worship service for the community, and the high school was an ideal setting.

"We're a small town and don't have a civic center or anything, so the high school is the heart of the community," church member Carol Browder said. "We wanted to get outside the church walls to share the gospel."

The congregation first turned to prayer and then decided to get its foot in the school door by donating school supplies and other small goodies for each teacher. It reached out to school staff members to see what work could be done to improve the property, and soon church members were scraping and clean-

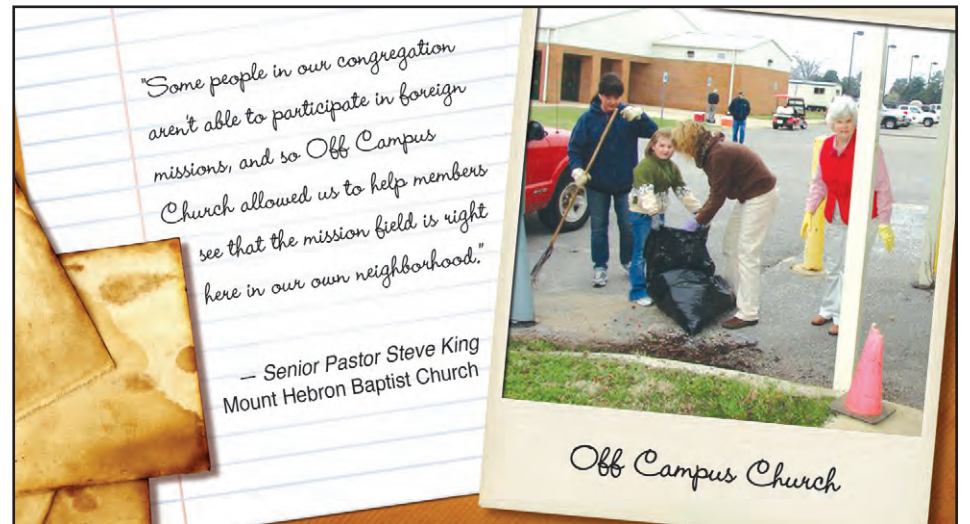


Photo courtesy of Mount Hebron Baptist Church, graphic by Lauren Chow

ing windows, painting classrooms and bathrooms, picking up trash and raking leaves.

"We've had lots of teachers turn in thank-you cards since the event," said Principal Jimmy Hull, who is a member of Mount Hebron. "It was wonderful to see everything come together, especially since I have a strong commitment to both the school and the church."

### Prayer walking

In preparation for the worship service, church members participated in two prayer walks around the school's campus: one the day before the event and another the day of the event. Following the service, members served a hamburger and hot dog lunch to everyone in attendance — and then some.

"This is a very small, rural community, so we wanted to do something to reach out to the people who work on Sundays," Barrett said. "So we took plates of hamburgers and hot

dogs and passed them out for lunch to four or five businesses near the school. We also took meals and shared them with a group home in that area."

Though attendance was lower than the church had hoped — an estimated 300 people, including church members — Browder said she and her fellow members still believe the service was a worthwhile venture.

"Even if they didn't come that day, I feel like the projects that were done would touch a lot of lives anyway," Browder said. "Lots of teachers know what was done, and they'll share that with others."

And for those who didn't attend Off Campus Church, they'll get a second chance this fall. King said the church is already planning to host the event again at another local high school. Since it will be football season, it wants to try to get the school's coaches and football players involved. ¶

# Less sleep can mean greater daily fat intake

By Neisha Fuson  
The Alabama Baptist

**N**ot getting enough sleep? You may be at risk for an increased appetite and a greater daily fat intake, according to a recent study from scientists at New York Obesity Nutrition Research Center of St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital.

Presented at the American Heart Association conference in Atlanta on March 23, the sleep study, led by Dr. Marie-Pierre St-Onge, research associate of the Obesity Nutrition Research Center, observed 13 men and 13 women. All participants were good sleepers (sleeping on average seven to nine hours a night) and healthy eaters, between the ages of 30 and 45. The participants spent six days sleeping only four hours and one month later were observed for six days sleeping nine hours. The first four days of each six-day period, a controlled diet was provided for participants. The controlled diet — which consisted of average foods that an American might eat on any given day, i.e., oatmeal for breakfast, a sandwich for lunch and frozen lasagna for dinner — was for specific research purposes.

"We wanted to assess the hormones that are affected by food intake and eating patterns so that whatever data we obtained on hormone measurements were based on sleep and not on food intake," St-Onge said.

### If you have to stay up late, try these snacks instead of high-fat or high-calorie options

- **NONFAT YOGURT** with low-fat granola
- **LOW-FAT POPCORN** with Parmesan cheese
- **OATMEAL:** rich in soluble fiber and protein so it will help suppress your appetite through the late hours



Source: USA Today, HealthyDietRecipes.com  
graphic by Lauren Chow

During the last two days of each six-day period the food intake was self-selected and measured.

The results?

When the participants slept four hours or less, they ate more the next day.

On average, the sleep-deprived women consumed 329 extra calories a day, and men consumed 263 more calories a day. Women

also consumed about 30 grams more fat on shorter amounts of sleep. Consuming 300 extra calories a day equates to about 30 pounds of extra weight a year.

And as obesity in America continues to rise, the number of hours of sleep continues to decline. On average, an American slept for seven hours a night in the 1970s, whereas today, the average is just over six hours, according to some reports.

Sleep expert Nabeel Farah of Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas told KDAF-33 in Dallas, "If you're sleep deprived and you're tired the next day, you're probably not going to want to spend time to sit down and cook a nice, healthy meal.

"You might be more inclined to go to McDonald's or something and get something quick," he noted.

In regards to further studies on severe sleep deprivation and its long-term effects, St-Onge said this was a single-day measurement study. Future studies are needed to establish whether the results would be observed long term and how only minor sleep deprivation (six or seven hours of sleep a night) may affect the results.

The study concludes that if severe sleep deprivation is a common occurrence, dietary choices will suffer and could potentially lead to obesity and increased risk of cardiovascular disease. ¶

# 'Obviously slot machines'

## State, federal agencies at odds over legality of Poarch Creek casinos

By **Kristen Padilla**  
The Alabama Baptist

Newspapers and other media outlets reported March 21 that the electronic "bingo" machines at the Poarch Band of Creek Indians' three facilities — Atmore, Montgomery and Wetumpka — are legal. They said they know this because of a letter National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) chairwoman Tracie Stevens sent to Gov. Robert Bentley and Attorney General Luther Strange.

But upon close reading of Stevens' letter, she actually never said the slot-style machines used at the Poarch Creek casinos are legal, and in fact, they are not legal according to the Indian Gaming Regulation Act (IGRA) definition of Class II type-gambling that Stevens gives in the letter.

What Stevens said was, "[So] long as a state permits the game of bingo, regardless of the state's definition of the game, an Indian tribe within that state may also play bingo as defined in IGRA."

So how does IGRA define bin-

go, which is Class II gambling?

It is a game of chance "commonly known as bingo ... which is played for prizes, including monetary prizes, with cards bearing numbers or other designations, in which the holder of the card covers such numbers or designations when objects ... are drawn or electronically determined, and in which the game is won by the first person covering a previously designated arrangement of numbers or designations on such cards."

### Not subject to state law

IGRA adds that Class II gambling does not include "electronic or electromechanical facsimiles of any game of chance or slot machines of any kind."

Stevens argues in her letter that tribes are not subject to state law definitions but IGRA's federal law, which regulates their Class II gambling operations.

But according to federal law, are the Poarch Creek machines legal?

Robert Sertell, slot machine expert and chairman of Casino Horizons Corporation, says no.

In 2004 Sertell was hired by the NIGC to make a site visit to the Poarch Creek facilities and to report back on the findings of the machines being dubbed as electronic "bingo." In both the site visit report and the senior level supplement to the report, Sertell said the machines being used were illegal under Class II definitions.

"Every single machine that I played and/or observed in these three facilities meets the Johnson Act (U.S. Code 15U.S.C.1171 (a) (1)(2)(3)) definitions of a gambling device and a slot machine," Sertell said in his report. "Advocates of these machines assert that they are electronic bingo machines, and therefore are legal, permitted Class II devices; No, they are not. They are very obviously slot machines, gambling devices and proscribed to Alabama tribes because they are otherwise illegal to nontribal citizens of Alabama, and because no Tribal-State compact exists."

The machines that Sertell found illegal in 2004 as outlined by federal definitions of slot machines are still illegal today, he said.

"When the National Indian Gaming Commission tries to say Poarch Creek is operating Class II machines by their own federal laws, they are not," said Sertell, who revisited the sites in 2010. "They are slot machines under federal definition and under Alabama definition. They tried to hide (behind Stevens' letter) and say they operate Class II gaming that is not under their definition."

In Sertell's 2004 report he also said the machines he found at the Poarch Creek casinos did not allow for the player to cover the numbers.

### Humanly impossible

"The great majority of these machines that I played or observed in the field are set to conduct the ball draw function so that it is displayed almost instantly at the beginning of play, and at computer speed, rather than in serial fashion at human speed," he said. "This means that no human player could observe each bingo number as it is called, and then search their own card (or cards) for a matching number before daubing or marking each match."

And the reasons Sertell said the Poarch Creek machines were illegal under Class II definitions are the same reasons former NIGC chairman Philip Hogen refused Alaska's Metlakatla Indian Community's request to use electronic "bingo" machines as Class II gambling in 2008.

Hogen rejected the request, which intended to authorize "one-touch ... fully electronic, fully automated, multiplayer bingo games," because it violated the Class II gambling federal definitions.

"[IGRA] also requires that the game be won by the first person covering a previously designated arrangement of numbers of designations on such cards," Hogen wrote to the Metlakatla Indian Community. "Inherent in the language of 'first person covering' is an element of competition. ... Players must compete to be that 'first person.'"

"Thus the statutory language requires the game to have multiple players, and it requires them to compete with one another to be the first to cover or 'daub' a particular pattern," he continued. "In my view, the fully electronic, fully automated game described in the Tribe's amended ordinance does not meet this part of IGRA's statutory definition."

In addition to the machines not allowing for a "first person covering," Hogen also told the Alaskan tribe that the machines do not allow for human error in the game commonly known as bingo.

"The players' only responsibility in this type of game is touching

a button once to start the game," he said. "The gaming equipment thereafter automatically performs all other functions, including drawing numbers, covering the numbers on each player's card and awarding any prizes earned based upon patterns achieved."

"I conclude that a game so designed does not meet IGRA's statutory definition of Class II bingo, does not meet the NIGC's definition of Class II 'game similar to bingo,' and is, in fact, a Class III facsimile of a game of chance."

Hogen's arguments are very similar to Sertell's conclusion of the Poarch Creek machines.

"As a practical matter, since most of the machines that I observed in the field played in auto-daub, the player was offered a machine that looked and sounded exactly like a slot machine, required only one touch of a button to play, whose betting and payoff tables were exact replicas of those found on slot machines, and that completed all game functions automatically without any player participation whatsoever, in approximately six seconds, just like an acknowledged slot machine," he said in his 2004 report.

Even with all this evidence that would prove Poarch Creek is operating Class III gambling, also known as casino and slot machine-type gambling, the NIGC is the only entity with the power to regulate Indian gambling — it has the power to issue a notice of violation and of closure.

But since the NIGC profits from Indian gambling, the state of Alabama may continue to have a tough fight.

The NIGC website states, "Each gaming operation under the jurisdiction of the Commission shall pay to the Commission annual fees as established by the Commission." The rates of these fees are no more than 2.5 percent of the first \$1.5 million and no more than 5 percent of amounts in excess to the first \$1.5 million.

### 'Illegal on tribal lands'

Sonny Reagan, deputy attorney general of Alabama, confirmed that Indian gambling is a matter of federal law but said the attorney general's office has concerns that at least some of the Poarch Creek machines violate federal law.

"The NIGC letter reaffirmed the attorney general's position that Class III slot machines are illegal on tribal lands in Alabama and further state that electronic bingo machines may be used as long as their use does not change 'the fundamental characteristics' of the traditional game of bingo," Reagan said.

"We will continue to pursue our concerns with the National Indian Gaming Commission."

## Jefferson County casinos reopen despite warnings from attorney general

By **Kristen Padilla**  
The Alabama Baptist

Casinos in Jefferson County are reopening and a court battle is heating up again, thanks to an order from Jefferson County Circuit Judge Eugene Verin on March 21.

Less than two hours after Fairfield City Attorney Michael Trucks and Jefferson County District Attorney Arthur Green jointly filed with the Bessemer division circuit court to "reinstate" its Nov. 10, 2009, order allowing "charity bingo halls" to continue operating, Verin granted their request.

In his initial order, Verin blocked any "interference of the Jefferson County Sheriff" Mike Hale and said the facilities could operate as long as the state allowed Greenetrack to remain open. Three days earlier, Greenetrack in Greene County reopened with a reportedly new form of electronic bingo.

### Open for business

On March 25, several Bessemer area casinos began opening including Anchor Club Entertainment Charity Bingo in Brighton and Magic City Bingo in Midfield even though Verin modified his order pending an appeal to the Alabama Supreme Court filed by Attorney General

Luther Strange on Hale's behalf. Verin refused Strange's motion to the circuit court to stay its March 21 order and instead relieved Hale "from his consent" to the 2009 order.

Verin also set a hearing for April 15 to address "major concerns of the principals of this case" and set April 8 as the date when "all matters for the court's consideration must be filed."

Strange said he was pleased that Verin "dissolved his injunction against Sheriff Mike Hale."

"This ruling makes clear that Sheriff Hale and all other law enforcement agencies have the authority to enforce the law against any illegal gambling in the Bessemer division of Jefferson County," Strange said in a press release. "There should be no presumption of cover for anyone planning to open an illegal slot machine operation under the guise of bingo."

"Let there be no doubt that the office of attorney general will enforce state laws against illegal gambling," he said. "Those who undertake to resume or open a business using slot machines do so at their own peril and will face whatever law enforcement action may be determined necessary and proper."

In other news, prosecutors and defense lawyers in the Alabama bingo probe case were still waiting

to hear at press time U.S. Magistrate Judge Wallace Capel Jr.'s decision on whether or not the FBI wiretap evidence could be used at the June 6 trial.

### Unintentional mistake

The defense lawyers for the casino owners, lobbyists and current and former state senators accused of buying votes for a gambling bill last year asked Capel on March 22 to toss out the wiretap evidence after prosecutors failed to turn over all the documents to them. Capel told prosecutors to turn in all of the documents by the end of the day March 22, which they did, and resumed the hearing March 24.

During the March 24 hearing, one of the prosecutors said mistakes were made but they did not believe "those mistakes rise to the level of prejudice," citing the FBI agents were using new, complicated equipment which made it difficult for them to find all relevant e-mails to turn over to the defense, The Associated Press reported.

Even though Capel had yet to make his decision, he suggested to the defense that it would be rare to see a wiretap tossed out as evidence, according to *The Birmingham News*.

## Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

### S.C. pastor's son killed in tragic miniature train crash

SPARTANBURG, S.C. — A children's outing turned to tragedy March 19 for a Baptist church in South Carolina when a miniature train at a park derailed, killing the 6-year-old son of its pastor and injuring several others.

Benjamin Easler was killed when a miniature train at Cleveland Park in Spartanburg, S.C., left the track and tipped over while carrying 15 children and adults from Corinth Baptist Church in Gaffney, S.C. His father, Pastor Dwight Easler, was hospitalized two nights with a broken ankle and lacerations on the head that required stitches.

The boy's mother, Tabitha, who is eight months pregnant, was treated for bruises and scrapes at a hospital and kept overnight for observation. Two sons, Matthew and Seth, each broke both arms, and Matthew had facial cuts requiring surgery.

Another child, Bryson Ziegelhefer, was in intensive care at Spartanburg Regional Medical Center with bruises and swelling to the brain. He had surgery to repair a wound on his leg that evening.

Authorities don't know what caused the train, a popular park attraction since 1952, to jump the track, but riders said it seemed to be going a little fast. Park officials said the derailment happened within the first hour of the first day of operation this season.

In all there were about 30 people on board, including three adults and 12 children, ages 6 to 11, from Corinth Baptist Church. Several sustained injuries ranging from scratches and bruises to broken bones and lacerations.

### BWAid director Montacute makes plans to retire

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Paul Montacute, director of the Baptist World Alliance's (BWA) relief-and-recovery arm BWAid since 1994, will retire in July 2012, the BWA executive committee learned in meetings March 7-9. BWA leaders are expected next March to elect a successor to Montacute, former youth director of the Baptist Union of Great Britain who joined the BWA staff in 1990.

In other business the executive committee granted membership to three organizations — the Association of Evangelical Baptist Churches in the Congo, the Baptist Churches Union Community of the Congo and the Free Baptist Churches in Burundi. Their addition brings BWA total membership to 222 organizations.

Baptist leaders also agreed to conduct "bilateral dialogues" with Pentecostals and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, received financial statements that showed the organization finished the year \$15,000 in the black and voted to conduct the 2012 BWA annual gathering — a summer meeting of the executive committee, related groups and Baptists from various regions around the globe — in Santiago, Chile. The 2011 annual gathering will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### New Zealand Baptist asks for prayer following quake

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — Two weeks after a magnitude 6.3 earthquake demolished much of Christchurch, New Zealand, emergency workers were still pulling bodies from the rubble and residents are being told to keep boiling or treating drinking water. A New Zealand Baptist leader has asked believers worldwide to pray for the country during a time of unprecedented struggle.

"This is a time of severe trauma and uncharted territory for all people," Kelyyn Fairhall, national administrator of Baptist Churches of New Zealand, said in a statement sent to the Baptist Global Response relief and development organization. "There will be huge questions and issues that our pastors and their leaders have to grapple with over the next few days, weeks and months."

Churches in New Zealand have partnered with each other or with relief agencies to form hubs of operation, Fairhall added. "They are all working hard to respond to the needs around them," Fairhall said.

### Pastor found dead; assistant beaten in church

ARLINGTON, Texas — A 29-year-old Baptist pastor and Truett Seminary graduate was found dead and his 67-year-old ministry assistant severely beaten inside their church March 3.

According to the Tarrant County medical examiner's office, Clint Dobson, pastor of NorthPointe Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas, had been suffocated with a plastic bag. Judy Elliott was taken to John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth in critical but stable condition. Police arrested Steven Lawayne Nelson, 24, and Anthony Gregory Springs, 19. They face charges of capital murder and attempted capital murder. *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reports Nelson is being held on a \$1 million bond. Springs, who is also charged with aggravated robbery, is being held on a \$1.5 million bond. The arrest came after police found Elliott's missing car March 5.

# Studies reveal going to church helps Christians avoid divorce

It's been proclaimed from pulpits and blogs for years — Christians divorce as much as everyone else in America.

But some scholars and family activists are questioning the oft-cited statistics, saying Christians who attend church regularly are more likely to remain wed.

"It's a useful myth," said Bradley Wright, a University of Connecticut sociologist who recently wrote "Christians Are Hate-filled Hypocrites ... and Other Lies You've Been Told."

"Because if a pastor wants to preach about how Christians should take their marriages more seriously, he or she can trot out this statistic to get them to listen to him or her."

The various findings on religion and divorce hinge on what kind of Christians are being discussed.

Wright combed through the General Social Survey, a vast demographic study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and found that Christians, like adherents of other religions, have a divorce rate of about 42 percent. The rate among religiously unaffiliated Americans is 50 percent.

When Wright examined the statistics on evangelicals, he found worship attendance has a big influence on the numbers. Six in 10 evangelicals who never attend had been divorced or separated, compared to just 38 percent of weekly attendees.

Wright questions the approach of The Barna Group, evangelical pollsters based in Ventura, Calif.

Barna's latest published di-

voice statistics say one-third of all adults, including "nonevangelical born-again Christians," have ended a marriage.

Barna's statistics are tied to its highly specific — and controversial — definitions of born-again Christians and evangelicals.

For instance, Barna labels Christians "born-again" if they have made a personal commitment to Jesus and believe they will go to heaven because they have accepted Him as their Savior.

Evangelicals, on the other hand, are those who fit the born-again definition but also meet seven other conditions, including sharing their beliefs with non-Christians and agreeing that the Bible is completely accurate.

David Kinnaman, Barna's president, said the statistical differences reflect varied approaches, with Wright looking more at attendance and his research firm dwelling on theological commitments.

### Measuring stats

"We've tried to measure it based on theological perspective, not merely their church attendance or whether they call themselves Catholic or mainline," Kinnaman said.

Glenn Stanton of Focus on the Family wrote a recent column

for Baptist Press highlighting Wright's interpretation of the state of divorce for Christians.

"The divorce rates of Christian believers are not identical to the general population — not even close," he wrote. "Being a committed, faithful believer makes a measurable difference in marriage."

*"The divorce rates of Christian believers are not identical to the general population — not even close."*

Glenn Stanton  
Focus on the Family

Brad Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, agrees there's been some confusion.

"You do hear, both in Christian and non-Christian circles, that Christians are no different from anyone else when it comes to divorce, and that is not true if you are focusing on Christians who are regular church attendees," he said.

Wilcox's analysis of the National Survey of Families and Households has found that Americans who attend religious services several times a month were about 35 percent less likely to divorce than those with no religious affiliation.

Nominal conservative Protestants, on the other hand, were 20 percent more likely to divorce than the religiously unaffiliated.

"There's something about being a nominal 'Christian' that is linked to a lot of negative outcomes when it comes to family life," Wilcox said. (RNS)



Photo courtesy of Mount Zion Baptist Church

### ROYAL AMBASSADORS AT ASHLAND'S MOUNT ZION COLLECT FOOD ITEMS

Royal Ambassadors (RA) at Mount Zion Baptist Church, Ashland, collected 569 food items for the Carey Baptist Association food pantry in February. Pastor Richard East (second from left) promised he would wear a cheese hat if the RAs gathered more than 500 items. He did just that. Also pictured are (l to r) RA leader Tim Greaser, RAs Chad Cox and Brandon Greaser, brotherhood Director Dewey Clifton and RA leader Patrick Bone.

# Across Alabama's Associations

## AUTAUGA

▶ Acteen Activators of **Boone's Chapel Church, Prattville**, will hold CPR certification classes April 9-10 for a missions trip fund-raiser. Classes will be Saturday from 9 a.m.-noon and Sunday from 2-5 p.m. For information call 334-365-4191. Mike Johnson is pastor.

## BETHEL

▶ **Myrtlewood Church** will hold revival April 10-13 with Randy Hagan. Rob Lane will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and nightly at 7. Steve Walley is pastor. ▶ **Thomaston Church** will hold revival April 10-13 with Evangelist Tim Cox. Mitzi Gates will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 6:30. Randal Mims is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

▶ **Deerfoot Church, Trussville**, will hold a Judson College emphasis April 10, 10:30 a.m. Faith, Judson's ladies' ensemble under the direction of Judy Ransom, will sing. Deerfoot's sanctuary choir will perform its Easter musical "The King Is Coming" April 17, 10:30 a.m. For information call 205-655-0798 or visit [www.deerfootbaptist.org](http://www.deerfootbaptist.org). Roger Willmore is pastor. ▶ **Green Valley Church, Hoover**, will host Journey to the Cross: A Walk-Thru Experience of Christ's Passion April 20-21. The event will be a blend of living portraits, inspiring monologues and images from the movie The Passion of the Christ. Groups of 12 will walk through the journey with guided groups leaving every six minutes beginning at 6 p.m. For reservations call 205-822-2173 or visit [www.gvbc.org](http://www.gvbc.org). Bobby DuBois is interim pastor. ▶ **Hilldale Church, Center Point**, will hold an Easter block party April 16, 10 a.m.-noon. There will be an egg hunt and other activities. For information call 205-853-3000. Ron Pate is pastor.

## CAREY

▶ **Mount Moriah Church, Delta**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary April 2, 2-4 p.m. Dinner will follow. Jimmy Bray is pastor.

## CLEBURNE

▶ **Heflin Church** will hold revival April 3-6 with Levi Skipper,

pastor of Concord Church, Clermont, Ga. Services will be Sunday at 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and weeknights at 6:30. A nursery will be available. For information call 256-463-2576 or visit [www.heflinbaptist.org](http://www.heflinbaptist.org). Philip R. Morris is pastor.

## COVINGTON

▶ **Southside Church, Opp**, will host a blood drive with the American Red Cross April 6, 2-6 p.m., in the fellowship hall. Donors will be entered into a regional drawing to win a pair of roundtrip Delta Air Lines tickets. A picture I.D. is required. To sign up call Nitaya Stanley at 334-493-6340 or visit [www.givelife.org](http://www.givelife.org) and use code SBCO. Stewart Young is pastor.

## ELMORE

▶ **Robert "Bob" Williamson** is the new pastor of **Mount Hebron East Church, Eclectic**. He has served the past 15 years as a church planter in Cape Town, South Africa. He also has served as pastor of First Church, Eclectic, and Moffett Road Church, Mobile. Williamson and his wife, Vicki, have two children and four grandchildren.



WILLIAMSON

## GENEVA

▶ **Barry Gordon** is the new pastor of **El Bethel Church, Chancellor**. He previously served as pastor of Crossview Church, Fitzgerald, Ga. He is a graduate of Trinity College of Florida and Bethany Divinity College and Seminary in Dothan. Gordon and his wife, Debbie, have four children. ▶ The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold a luncheon meeting April 12, 11 a.m.



GORDON

Minister of Music Jason Gunter and a group from the church will present musical selections. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by April 5. Mike Shirah is pastor.

## LIMESTONE

▶ **Mays Memorial Church, Toney**, will dedicate its new sanctuary April 10, 11 a.m. The bluegrass gospel group Sunday Tradition will sing. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Harold Fanning is interim pastor.

## MOBILE

▶ **Mobile Association** will hold its WMU/Women's Ministry Annual Celebration April 28, 6:30 p.m., at Dauphin Way Church, Mobile, with Jolene Ivey. For tickets call 251-661-7111. Adam Dooley is pastor of Dauphin Way. Thomas Wright is executive director of Mobile Association. ▶ **First Church, Irvington**, will hold the J.P. Breland Memorial Concert on June 18, 7 p.m. For tickets call 251-957-2718. Ron Griffin is pastor.

## NORTH JEFFERSON

▶ **Jon Donald** is the new youth minister for **Central Church, Gardendale**. He is currently enrolled at the New Orleans Seminary extension center at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham. He and his wife, Emily, have one child. R. Harold McClendon is pastor.

## SHELBY

▶ **Beulah Church, Sterrett**, will hold a dedication ceremony for the Old Sterrett Cemetery, which has been named a historical site, April 9, 2 p.m. The ceremony will begin at the church then move to the cemetery where there will be Civil War re-enactment actors on site. Bring photos and memorabilia from your family's history to be displayed at the church. Earl Hardy is pastor.

## ST. CLAIR

▶ **Heritage Church, Pell City**, will hold revival April 4-7, nightly at 6:30. There will be a different evangelist each night. Joey Rich is pastor.

## TUSKEGEE LEE

▶ **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**, recently celebrated and honored Lynn Humphries and Frank Owsley for 50 years of faithful service as deacons. Mark Brumbeloe is pastor.

## WEST CULLMAN

▶ **Fairview West Church, Hanceville**, will hold revival April 10-13 with Evangelist Wendell Wood. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Truman Davis is pastor.

## Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

### Underwood pastor McDaniel retires after 25 years

In the early 1980s, Donnie McDaniel, a deacon at Underwood Baptist Church, Florence, helped the church call a pastor. But he never imagined God would later call him to lead the Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association church.

The pastor McDaniel helped call retired after two years. McDaniel was still a deacon and again served on the pastor search committee.

"I was [working] at Reynolds Metals in Muscle Shoals and was praying, 'God, you gotta send us a man [to lead the church],' and He said in my heart, 'You're the man,'" McDaniel said.

Weeks after feeling called, Underwood Baptist called him to the pulpit. He joyfully accepted and shared his heart about God's call.

On March 6, the church honored McDaniel for nearly 25 years of faithful leadership and said farewell as he retired for health reasons.

The two-hour tribute to McDaniel included special guests from various places such as Honduras, where he has served on missions trips.

McDaniel was saved at a 1973 revival at Underwood led by Evangelist Junior Hill; met his wife, Carolyn, there; was married and served as a deacon there; and finally became pastor March 23, 1986.

A graduate of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., with a bachelor of science in religion, McDaniel led the church to reach many milestones. The staff grew from one pastor to several part-time and full-time staff members serving in the areas of student, senior adult, worship and other ministries. He baptized 1,212 believers during his ministry.

"The 25 years have been a God thing, and it has been unbelievable what He did. I give Him all the credit for it," McDaniel said.

### Delta's Mount Moriah marks 150 years of service

Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Delta, was established in August 1860, back when Delta was actually the town of Rocky Mountain. Over the years, the Carey Baptist Association church has survived dire financial situations — at one point in 1890, it had only \$2.85 to its name — and changing associations three times.

On April 2, the church will celebrate its 150th anniversary from 2 to 4 p.m.

Several Alabama Baptist leaders and church members will spotlight Mount Moriah Baptist's rich history at the anniversary celebration.

Director of Missions Bruce Willis will speak, and Anita Sparks of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission will present a plaque recognizing the milestone. The church's oldest member, Irene Daugherty, will also share some childhood memories and stories about her role as a member of the first building fund committee.

The celebration will include a parade of the saints, recognizing the oldest members, and a slideshow of photographs of church functions and members and former pastors dating back to 1903. About 150 people are expected to attend and enjoy the dinner that follows.

Typically about 60 people gather at Mount Moriah on Sundays. "I hope to see church growth and especially spiritual growth in the next 150 years," said Pastor Jimmy Bray, who came to lead Mount Moriah about eight months ago.



McDANIEL

**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](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org/church-positions.php) and post your church-related position.



Want to see your news in  
**The Alabama Baptist?**

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



## Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

**ONE MISSION:**  
The Great Commission

**ONE PROGRAM:**  
The Cooperative Program

**MANY MINISTRIES:**  
Great Commission Ministries



# ONE MISSION

*news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (800) 264-1225 □ [www.alsbom.org](http://www.alsbom.org)*

## What Can We Do for the Japanese People?

All of us are shocked by the enormous impact of the earthquake in Japan. The aftershocks, now in the multiple hundreds, are seismically strong enough to be considered earthquakes in most places. The Japanese people have been hard hit by this history-making disaster.

As if an earthquake of historic proportions is not enough to shake the country, the tsunami adds to the disastrous effects near the coastline of the island nation. Waves, in some places 30 feet high, have made cities and villages into mud piles. The shortage of power and water create an array of other problems that complicate relief efforts.

The aura of a nuclear meltdown is so foreboding. I have trouble digesting the arcane information offered by scientists and other specialists who are seeking to inform the general public. My mind is easily bogged by such discussions and the implications are far reaching in terms of other nations utilizing nuclear power.

People in this country, especially Southern Baptists and Alabama Baptists, want to be of help. As we view the images on the Internet and on television, we feel helpless. That is a natural response to such a huge disaster we experience vicariously through the media. We simply wonder, "What can we do to help?"

My initial reply may sound a bit hollow or trite, but it is heartfelt. We need to pray like never before. The Japanese people need our prayers now

more than ever, and we must focus our intentional praying upon them. Prayer, desperate praying, has incalculable power to help people, even in the worst of circumstances. Additionally, praying for the people places us alongside them spiritually.

Pray for the families who have lost loved ones and who now find themselves stunned by unbelievable and unimaginable grief. The thought of parents having children lost in the enormous waves of the tsunami leads us to tears. It also ought to cause us to pray fervently for those so affected by this loss. When we pray, we share their grief and weep for them.

Pray for the Japanese leaders as they seek to make the right decisions for their people in the aftermath of this disaster. We can pray for them to have wisdom in seeking to assist their nation in the long-term recovery period before them. Although Japan is a well-developed country with a sophisticated economy, no nation has faced this kind of situation since World War II. Imagine how we would handle such a disaster.

Pray for the relief workers who are there presently and who will be coming in the future. Among those doing rescue and recovery are our American military personnel. The USS Ronald Reagan and other vessels are there helping with food distribution and medical assistance.

Non-military people are in Japan, and many others will follow, once approval by officials is given. Alabama

Baptists, along with numerous other well-trained disaster relief people, stand ready to assist when called upon by those on the ground in Japan. A disaster of this magnitude will mean that the strategy will be different than most situations we have encountered in the past, and it will be difficult, but certainly doable.

The second way we can be of help is to give to disaster relief ministries of Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists. On our website at [www.alsbom.org/japan](http://www.alsbom.org/japan) you can find information which will be

By Rick Lance  
*State Missionary  
Executive Director-Treasurer*



helpful in making the right decisions about where to give. Like Hurricane Katrina (August 2005), the tsunami in Indonesia (December 2004) and the earthquake in Haiti (January 2010), we will devote the funds given to support disaster relief needs identified by our partners in this ministry.

Third, we can look forward to potential opportunities to do other kinds of missions work in Japan. The Japanese people need the Gospel like all others in our world. As a history buff, I can remember reading about General Douglas MacArthur's appeal to send missionaries to Japan, following World War II. Interestingly, a high-ranking general was the one who

reportedly saw the need then, and it will be a colossal challenge for us in the future. Right now, our Lord may be giving us a second opportunity to be a people of hope. We can offer the good news of Christ to those shaken by an earthquake, washed over by a tsunami and frightened by a nuclear meltdown.

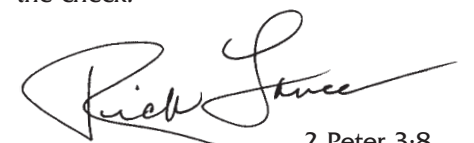
Pray, give and go are the three verbs which describe our missions strategy in so-called normal times. It is

certainly the call we have in times of catastrophic circumstances.

Pray for the people in Japan. They need it desperately. Give to help them in this time of disaster. If the opportunity permits, go – or help someone else go – to be the compassion of Christ in

person for the people shaken, frightened and disoriented by this unprecedented disaster.

To contribute and for the latest updates, go online to [www.alsbom.org/japan](http://www.alsbom.org/japan). Contributions by check may be mailed payable to: State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870. Please note "Japan disaster relief" on the check.



# E-zekiel Web Training Workshop

- One Day Web Workshop  
Thursday, May 5, 8:30 - 4:30, Baptist  
Building, Montgomery

JOIN PROFESSIONAL E-ZEKIEL  
TRAINER DACIA GULLEDGE AS SHE  
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April 22 » \$75 per person after April 22  
(a \$300+ value & includes lunch!)

**REGISTER** for One Day Web Workshop:  
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For more information, contact State Missionary  
Chris Mills, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 310,  
[cmills@alsbom.org](mailto:cmills@alsbom.org).

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

## Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program

BY CHANCE DARLINGTON

Being raised in a Christian home and in a Southern Baptist church, I have heard about the Cooperative Program from the time I was a small child. I can still remember being a little boy in Mission Friends and Mrs. Pearl Alexander explaining to me that the dollar that I had just placed in the offering plate was going to help little boys and girls around the world learn about Jesus. "Wow, Mrs. Pearl! That must be a magic dollar!"

I know today that there was nothing magical about that dollar, but Mrs. Pearl was right about that dollar helping little boys and girls around the world learn about Jesus. I was able to see that firsthand back in 2005 when I traveled to Ukraine for a summer mission trip.

We were staying in a small village not far from the Russian border. We were working with an International Mission Board missionary in the area to share the Gospel with this village that was overflowing with young chil-

dren, many of whom had never heard the name of Jesus.

We would play games and have fun with the children during the day, and then we would have a worship service under a big tent in the middle of a field at night.

One evening it was pouring down rain. It was a mess. We figured that the attendance would be down that night because of the rain. It's that way in our churches in America, right?

But not that night: People of all ages begin to show up, many of whom had to walk miles to arrive. That night I saw something that changed me. I saw the hand of God working in people who a day before said they didn't know who Jesus was! Lives were changed and souls were saved that night. I write about this experience because it is one that was made possible by the funds of the Cooperative Program.

Why do I believe in the Cooperative Program? I believe in it because I have seen the fruit of it personally. I am under the deep conviction that we can accomplish so

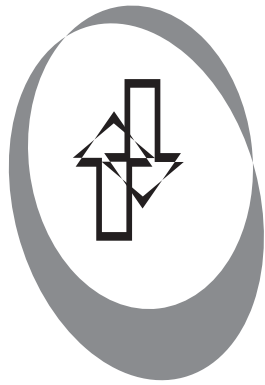
much more working together rather than alone. We all have the same goal, to see people saved. In order for that to happen, the Gospel message has to go out to the entire world.

Listen to Paul in Romans 10:13-15: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 'How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (NIV)

This pastor believes the support of the Cooperative Program gives us the best shot at carrying out the command of our Lord: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20, NIV)

*Chance Darlington is pastor of The Church at Pine Level, Deatsville.*





## LEADERconnect FORUM

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR FOR  
UPCOMING  
LEADERSHIP  
TRAINING  
EVENTS**

### LEADERConnect Forum

Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery  
Thursday, April 7, 2011 • 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Bringing Leaders Together to Build Stronger  
Churches

**COST: \$20 (Includes lunch and resource material)**  
Pre-registration requested

### LEADERS OF PROMISE FORUM

Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery  
Tuesday, May 10, 2011 • 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Connecting and Building Leaders Under 40

**COST: \$20 (Includes lunch and resource material)**  
Pre-registration requested

**SPECIAL OFFER:** Register for both events at the  
same time, and get a discount: \$30 for both events  
*To register or for more information, please contact  
Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext.  
256, jallen@alsbom.org.*

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

## STUDENT MINISTRY AND THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Monday, APRIL 11, 2011, Baptist Building, Montgomery

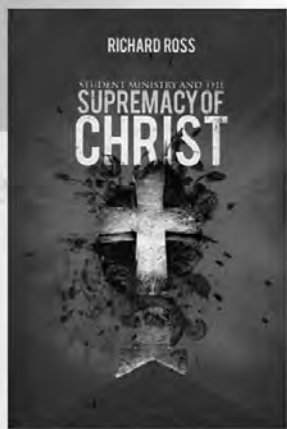
**The Big Question:** Are students more likely to embrace  
the supreme majesty of God's Son  
for a lifetime...

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

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

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

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



Conference Leader  
Richard Ross

# Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

Monday, May 2, 2011

East Memorial Baptist Church  
1320 Old Ridge Road, Prattville



Junior Hill

*SENIOR ADULTS  
REACHING ACROSS  
ALABAMA*



Bobby Welch

**SPEAKERS:**

Junior Hill,  
*evangelist, author*  
Bobby Welch,  
*former president, Southern Baptist Convention*

**MUSIC:** Paid in Full

**TIME:** 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
Lunch is on your own.  
Admission is FREE, no registration.



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WWW.PAIDINFULL.NET

For more information, call or email Amy Nelson at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 258, anelson@alsbom.org.



This conference is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program. [www.alsbom.org](http://www.alsbom.org)

**District Bible Drills** are for participants in children, youth and high school Bible Drill, along with Speaker's Tournament participants who have made the score required to advance through both church and association drill levels. Children who achieve the required score at the District Drill are declared state winners. Youth and high school drillers who achieve the required score, along with the District Speaker's Tournament winner, will advance to the State Drill level.

**ALL DISTRICT BIBLE DRILLS DATES:**

**Thursday, April 14**

- District 2: First Baptist Church, Boaz
- District 5: Heritage Baptist Church, Dothan
- District 7A: Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile
- District 8: First Baptist Church, Demopolis

**Sunday, April 17**

- District 11-A: Crosspoint Baptist Church, Trussville
- District 12-A: Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery

**Monday, April 18**

- District 1: East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle
- District 11-B: Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham
- District 12-B: First Baptist Church, Prattville

**Tuesday, April 19**

- District 3: Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford
- District 7-B: College Park Baptist Church, Saraland
- District 10: First Baptist Church, Russellville

**Thursday, April 21**

- District 4: First Baptist Church, Opelika
- District 6: Evergreen Baptist Church, Evergreen
- District 9: First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

**State Bible Drill/Speakers Tournament:**

- April 30: Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery

For more information or resources for Bible Drills, go online to [www.alsbom.org/bibledrills](http://www.alsbom.org/bibledrills) or please contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 313, [ddickey@alsbom.org](mailto:ddickey@alsbom.org).

# DISTRICT BIBLE DRILLS

# SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 11 - 13, 2011  
Shocco Springs

## **THEME: Love lifted Me**

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

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

**Celebration leader:** Andrew Smith, Montgomery,  
retired director, Office of Sunday School, State Board of Missions

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

Register with Shocco by calling 1-800-280-1105 or online at  
[www.shocco.org/reser](http://www.shocco.org/reser)

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary  
Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221, [emitchell@alsbom.org](mailto:emitchell@alsbom.org).



# UNCHARTED

REGISTER NOW at [www.thestudenthub.org/YEC](http://www.thestudenthub.org/YEC)

## YOUTH EVANGELISM CONFERENCE 2011

VAUGHN FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH  
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-WORSHIP

May 16-18, 2011

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# Interim Ministry for Today's Church

## Purpose:

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

## Objectives

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

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

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

## Schedule:

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

## Cost

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

Registrations received after this date will be charged a late fee of \$35.

## Leader:

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

## Center for Congregational Health®

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

## Certification:

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

## Registration:

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

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





# Get Acquainted Day

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**Tuesday, May 3, 10 am - 3:30 pm**  
**9 - 9:30 - Check-in and refreshments**

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- **Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission**
- **Tour the Baptist Building**
- **Spouses welcome**
- **Lunch provided**

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**Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, [chobbs@alsbom.org](mailto:chobbs@alsbom.org), or go online to [www.alsbom.org/gad](http://www.alsbom.org/gad).**



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

## Want to know God?

By Pastor Stan Lewis  
First Baptist Church, Birmingham

Small children's honesty is one quality that makes them so endearing to us. Whatever is in their heart, they say.

But through the process of socialization, we slowly teach them not to be quite so honest when they speak about other people or certain situations.

And slowly over time, they lose their innocence and honesty, and eventually they are less appealing to everyone else because the child who has grown up is less trustworthy.

Perhaps this is what is so appealing about Jesus — His honesty. Finally we see a person who was without any deceit or cunning.

He had no hidden agendas and never left anyone with any doubt about what was in His heart.

In the Gospels when we see Jesus in social situations, He does not withhold painful truth. With religious hypocrites, He called them what they were.

Even with His closest disciples, He openly rebuked them for their political scheming or when they tried to hinder His work.

In every case in which we see Jesus speak and interact with people, He is absolutely honest and that is why we love Him.

So when Jesus says, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," we want to trust Him.

He is believable beyond doubt when He says, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me," all because He was a man of unparalleled truth.

And because we see no deceit in Jesus when He tells us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," we know we can trust Him and turn our lives over to Him.

Today won't you follow the Man who never lied to anyone? He claimed to be the Messiah who came to deliver us from our sins, and since He never lied once, we can believe that He is the One who will deliver us if we will just believe in Him.

Call upon Him today and let Him speak truth into your life.

# Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

### 50 Years Ago March 1961

**Beautiful Chapel:** The beautiful new chapel of Highland Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, is complete, and moving day has been set. The congregation voted to name the chapel in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Henry L. Lyon. During the 15 years of Dr. Lyon's pastorate, much has been accomplished and the Lyons have greatly endeared themselves to the congregation and staff. In the event of the death of either Dr. or Mrs. Lyon, the chapel will automatically become the Lyon Memorial Chapel.

### 40 Years Ago March 1971

**Building Purchase:** Once the home of the world's largest engraving company, the Dewberry Engraving Building has been purchased by the Birmingham Baptist hospitals to house a number of central support services, which do not require constant patient contact. Harry Jeffcoat Jr., chairman of the Baptist Medical Centers' (BMC) board of trustees, in announcing the purchase said hospital personnel will occupy the building early in the fall. The BMC

has become the largest hospital system in Alabama, operating more than 900 beds: 427 at Princeton BMC and 485 at Montclair BMC.

### 30 Years Ago March 1981

**Name Change:** At its February meeting, the Alabama Council on Alcohol Problems voted to change its name to Alabama Citizens Action Program.

Director D.L. Ireland stated the new name is more in keeping with the total work of the interdenominational agency and noted that the acronym ALCAP is being retained.

Clarke Pope, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Guntersville, is president of the organization. Other officers are Richard Cunningham, pastor of St. John Baptist Church in Birmingham, vice president; George Jackson, director of the extension division of Samford University in Birmingham, secretary; and Hudson Baggett, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, treasurer.

### 20 Years Ago March 1991

**Largest Hymnal:** The new Baptist Hymnal, scheduled for release

March 14, is described as "inclusive, but not faddish," by Ray Burdeshaw, director of the church music department of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, who served on the committee for the new hymnal. Promotional materials describe the hymnal as "doctrinally sound, musically versatile and physically appealing," but what most people in the pew want to know is, "Does it have 'Amazing Grace'?" It does — along with 600 other songs. It is the largest hymnal ever published by Southern Baptists.

### 10 Years Ago March 2001

**New Employees:** Members of the executive committee of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions approved two employment recommendations at their March 15 meeting in Montgomery. Teman Knight, pastor of York Terrace Baptist Church, Sheffield, since 1994, will become an evangelism associate. Matthew Kerlin was approved to serve as senior campus minister at the University of Alabama. Kerlin has served as university minister at Belmont University in Nashville since 1999.

### CORRECTION

The photo cutline for the article "Michigan Baptists' new exec brings new ideas" in the March 24 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* had an incorrect association name for the men's breakfast with Bobby Gilstrap. The correct name is Oakland Baptist Association.

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

**FULL-TIME SENIOR PASTOR:** Clearview Baptist Church in Pinson, Ala., is accepting resumés for the position of full-time senior pastor. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, Clearview Baptist Church, 5271 Old Springville Road, Pinson, AL 35126, or pastorsearch@clearviewbaptist.com.

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

**FULL-TIME MINISTER OF WORSHIP/FAMILY MINISTRIES:** Ridgecrest Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for a full-time minister of worship/family ministries. Submit resumés to: Worship Search Team, 5260 Vaughn Road, Montgomery, AL 36116, or e-mail: michael@rbcmontgomery.com.

**PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER:** East Huntsville Baptist Church in the Five Points area of Huntsville, Ala., is seeking part-time music minister. Send resumé to: revwillcarter@yahoo.com, or mail to: East Huntsville Baptist Church, 808 Maysville Road, Huntsville AL 35801.

**PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER:** Carrolls Creek Baptist Church in Northport, Ala., is seeking part-time music minister. Send resumé to: broalan@charter.net, or mail to: Carrolls Creek Baptist Church, 14247 Hwy. 69 N., Northport, AL 35475.

**MINISTER OF YOUTH & RECREATION:** Traditional, conservative, growing Southern Baptist church in Memphis, Tenn., metropolitan area seeks minister of youth and recreation. Send resumé by April 15 to: Personnel, Covenant Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1165, Collierville, TN 38027-1165.

**YOUTH MINISTER:** Fairview Baptist

Church is prayerfully seeking a part-time youth minister. Please send resumés to: fairviewbc@knology.net, or 600 River Road, Valley, AL 36854.

**BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER TO STUDENTS:** Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, NW Florida, seeking bivocational minister for students grades 6-12. One willing to devote time, resources and energy to help youth grow in their personal relationships with the Lord. Send resumés to: PRBC Search Committee, 1015 Pleasant Ridge Road, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435, or e-mail: prbc1015@gmail.com.

**FULL-TIME MINISTER OF CHILDREN & YOUTH:** The First Baptist Church of Shawmut (FBCS) seeks a full-time minister of children and youth. FBCS is located in Valley, Ala., midway between Atlanta, Ga., and Montgomery, Ala. The minister will be responsible for the planning, execution and expansion of all ministries related to children and youth and will assist the pastor in some areas of adult-related ministry. Minimum required education and experience: bachelor's degree, a degree in theology, Christian education or youth ministry is a plus. Experience preferred in an established successful youth program. Must show a faithful pursuit of leadership characteristics as listed in 1 Tim. 3. Must maintain a good rapport with young people. A more detailed job description will be provided to selected candidates prior to interview. Salary will be commensurate with experience and education. Interested applicants may submit resumés via e-mail to: chuckanderson@charter.net, or by regular mail to: The First Baptist Church of Shawmut, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 2300 23rd Drive, Valley, AL 36854.

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR CHILDREN:** Tabernacle Baptist Church in Carrollton, Ga., is seeking an associate pastor for children. An M.Div. (or equivalent) is required from an accredited seminary. Candidate must have experience in planning, developing, supervising and coordinating

a ministry to children from birth to sixth grade. For more information, visit www.tabernacle.org. To apply, submit resumé by April 30 to: Tabernacle Baptist Church, Search Committee, 150 Tabernacle Drive, Carrollton, GA 30117, or e-mail: linda.bohannan@tabernacle.org.

### OTHER POSITIONS

**PART-TIME PERSONAL ASSISTANT:** We are seeking an intelligent/dependable part-time personal assistant. Seekers must be willing to learn, hard-working, computer literate, shopping and errands. For more information, contact Thomas Robinson at michaelgilbert20001@gmail.com.

### BUSINESS

**CHURCH SIGNS:** Reliable Signs offers design, fabrication, installation and service. All types of signs from electronic messaging to traditional. Ask about our exterior light maintenance service. Statewide coverage. Christian-owned. Church references available. www.reliablesigns.com. 800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

### CONSTRUCTION

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### TRAVEL/VACATION

**GATLINBURG TOWNHOUSE RENTAL:** Gatlinburg townhouse rental on Baskins Creek. Great rates. 4 BRs, 3 BAs. Short walk to downtown attractions. 205-333-9585, hhideaway401@aol.com.

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**CHURCH FOR RENT:** I-65 frontage at exit 234 in Calera. Holds up to 100 people with warming kitchen and classrooms. Price negotiable. Call 888-608-1173 or visit calerachurch.com for more information.

**CHURCH CLASSROOMS FOR RENT OR SALE:** Available immediately. 16x60 double classroom, 24x36 single classroom, 28x56 multiple classrooms/office. Call 888-608-1173 or visit roseoffices.com for more information.

# 'God's timing'

## FBC Florala successful in revitalization effort

By **Sondra Washington**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One mile and a state line was all that separated two struggling churches — each clinging to something the other desperately needed. Clear Springs Baptist Church, Laurel Hill, Fla., was growing in membership and bursting at the seams of its small building, while First Baptist Church, Florala, had no pastor and more room than its dwindling congregation could use.

In February 2010, after a great deal of prayer and several joint meetings, the two churches came together at First, Florala, a member of Covington Baptist Association, with Pastor Charles Lennard at the helm. Since then, those witnessing the

union have been steadily amazed at how God has moved in the church and surrounding community.

"We've seen God do some amazing things through His people there (at First, Florala) and we are very grateful," Director of Missions Larry Cummings said. "It's a model for other churches of what God can do if they are open to His leadership. ... It's been a pleasure to watch what's transpired there."

Before joining with Clear Springs Baptist, First, Florala, averaged 35 in worship. Now the church gets visitors every week, new members every month and usually has between 175 and 200 in attendance.

Part of that growth is because the majority of Lennard's Clear Springs congregation of about 200

followed him to First, Florala, but it's also because the church has been reaching out to the community. For instance, the youth do missions Saturdays, when they go out and do things like mow yards, pick up trash and repair houses.

When Clear Springs came, it brought a lot of pastors, which meant the church was able to move into new ministries like Awana and add to the youth, Sunday School and children's program.

"I did not think we would progress as fast as we have," Lennard noted. "It was a perfect match — people loving, supporting and encouraging one another. ... Both groups had a heart for missions and coming together. It has been more blessed than we expected (and) a lot more joy than we expected."

Sara Goolsby, who has been a member of First, Florala, for about 50 years and was chairwoman of the pastor search committee before the churches united, said she truly feels that this experience has been "very God-led and -directed."

Goolsby said some leaders of both churches had talked about teaming up two years earlier but it was not the right time.

"I don't think it would have worked three or four years ago," she said. "It wouldn't have been as successful as this has been. ... Our church had its ups and downs and had been through some tough times. ... God's timing is always perfect."

After watching First, Florala,

steadily "go down" over the years to the "worst situation" she had ever seen it in, longtime member Lucille Cox was the person who brought the idea of uniting with Clear Springs to Goolsby. Cox said First, Florala, needed to make some changes but it didn't rush its decision even though she felt certain that God was calling Lennard to the church.

"It was not a fast, spur-of-the-moment thing," she said, noting the process took several months. "We thought it out and went through the channels we needed to go through."

Clear Springs had planned to build a church, but with the down economy, the bank wouldn't lend it any money. And the church's decision to unite with First, Florala, instead of building a church and going into debt is just fine with Linda Russell.

"It has been a great experience," she said. "I think we still have the same group spirit that we had out there (at Clear Springs). We just have more room, and we've been able to grow. Everyone has accepted us. It's worked out really well."

When the church celebrated its first birthday Feb. 6, Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was the guest speaker. Lance said he has never witnessed such a good account of how a congregation has worked together in a declining area to have a thriving church.

### Bright future

Cummings agreed the revitalization of First, Florala, is a wonderful story and said he is excited to see what the future holds for the church.

"We are very positive about what is going to be happening in Florala in the next few years because of the ministry of that church."

## Pastors, the Pulpit & the Moral Crisis of Our Time conference set for Montgomery in April

The Christian church in America must take a stand in a nation that is experiencing moral and cultural decline and church leaders in Alabama can lead the way, said Joe Savage, director of the University of Mobile (UMobile) Center for Leadership.

Savage and a group of church, business and civic leaders invite pastors and church leaders of all denominations, as well as the general public, to a conference April 30 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at Fresh Anointing House of Worship in Montgomery. The conference, Pastors, the Pulpit & the Moral Crisis of Our Time: A Conference to Promote the Cultural and Spiritual Restoration of America, is co-sponsored by the UMobile Center for Leadership; its Twelve23 Movement, which calls for a spiritual transformation of

America; and The Common Sense Campaign, a grass-roots movement to restore a constitutional republic.

"Our goal is to inform and inspire church leaders while encouraging them to lead their congregations to action that addresses the moral issues of our time," Savage said.

### Practical information

The conference will provide practical information designed to empower congregations to become more engaged in the difficult issues facing society.

Keynote speaker will be Mark Foley, UMobile president and author of a new book, "It's Time," which argues that individual Christians must experience a personal revival in order for a national spiritual revival to occur that will transform America and, ultimately, the world.

## IMB would not exist without CP, Elliff says

Without Cooperative Program (CP) support, Southern Baptists would not have the International Mission Board (IMB), the largest evangelical missions entity in existence, Tom Elliff, the IMB's new president, told the *Florida Baptist Witness* after his unanimous election by trustees March 16.

"We wouldn't have our 5,000 boots on the ground," Elliff said of the CP, Southern Baptists' primary funding channel for missions and ministry. "We wouldn't have our International Mission Board if it wasn't for that."

Asked whether the CP remains effective in getting funds to the international missions field, Elliff said, "I do not believe that the CP is antiquated."

Elliff said Southern Baptists "cannot fulfill the Great Commission without being consumed with the Great Commission theme in the days ahead" but also that "the International Mission Board does not operate in a vacuum."

Elliff told trustees, "[T]he simple truth behind CP [is] that we learned a long time ago we can do things together better than we can alone."

Elliff admitted there can be confusion about the role of Southern Baptist churches in re-

lation to support of the CP which provides support to the IMB — while the IMB is asking churches at the same time to partner with them.

"Hearing me say that we want to involve churches in no way means that I want to diminish the emphasis on the Cooperative Program," Elliff told the *Witness*. "Part of the value the IMB can add to the whole equation is how [churches] can pray for and strategize and reach with and partner with us."

As churches are engaged, "they begin to see the value of the IMB, they begin to see the value of the Cooperative Program," said Elliff, further noting that the Southern Baptist Convention's six seminaries and the North American Mission Board are "certainly part of this equation. They're all essential in terms of reaching people, in reaching the unreached."

However, Elliff said, "I do believe that it is unrealistic to believe that we will receive enough money through the CP and the Lottie Moon Christmas offering to send enough missionaries out in the world to take care of the task."

"Churches are going to have to be a part of the equation," he said. (BP)

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

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# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

## Simplifying life is simple, not easy

**S**lack and skirts flow freely now. Shirts and jackets have plenty of elbowroom. Dresses and jeans alike can be snatched at a moment's notice, ready to wear, no scurrying around to deal with wrinkles or missing accessories.

Why would I want to tell you about my newfound love for a simplified closet, you ask?

I admit it is a stretch, but my closet has given me the perfect visual for what I seek in so many areas of life — purposeful, prepared and paced. It is organized and balanced for all that is needed but focused and simplified to avoid chaos and wasted time.

We've been talking about balance as well as various areas of health and fitness the past few months, and they are proving to all work together in success and defeat.

### Dealing with clutter

Another piece of the puzzle deals with clutter. It could be physical clutter (like what was in my closet prior to my recent redesign project). It could be calendar clutter (overscheduling ourselves). It could be mental and emotional clutter (too many unresolved or burdening issues). And it could be all of these at the same time.

When you pull back and look at the various parts of your life, can you find clutter anywhere? How does it make you feel? Is it slowing down your productivity, your ability to focus, your motivation?

Do you ever feel overwhelmed, as if you are in a pit, as if you are suffocating or sinking lower and lower with no chance of ever finding the surface again? Do you sometimes find yourself just wanting to run?



Granted, we all have moments like this and that is just part of life, but if these occasional moments turn into daily living, then it might be time to pull back and reassess.

Please know what I'm describing here deals with preventing and/or resolving a chaotic, overwhelmed, exhausted lifestyle through simplification and balance. If you have serious mental or emotional health issues, then I suggest seeking the help of a trained counselor. And Pathways Professional Counseling would be a good place to start ([www.pathwaysprofessional.org](http://www.pathwaysprofessional.org)). This is a ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

But if your struggles can be tempered by a few lifestyle changes, then I'd like to suggest the concept of simplification. I'm trying to learn this concept myself and am seeking tips.

God tells us clearly that we are to "seek ye first the kingdom of God" in Matthew 6:33 and to "be still" in Psalm 46:10. But how can we seek Him before anything else and expect to hear Him at all if we are too overwhelmed and exhausted to even think clearly? And if we aren't listening to God or immersing ourselves in His Word, then what good does all the stress and chaos do anyway?

And while actually pulling back to simplify and declutter life is hard enough on its own, the frustrating part for me is that it's not a one-time event. We have to stay on top of clutter in our lives, or it will eventually creep back in.

Think about the junk drawer in your kitchen. It's so easy to toss junk mail and random items that float by in that drawer until you decide what to do with them. If you don't clean the drawer out often, then before you know it, it is stuffed full of clutter. But if you clean it out often, then you can keep the junk from piling up.

During the next few weeks, we will deal with simplifying concepts in all areas of life as well as publish your thoughts and suggestions on this topic. Be sure to send those to jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment at [online.thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com](http://online.thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com).

## Rashional EXTRAS ...

*What topics are on your mind?*

*E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org*

### From the readers

After walking my second mile of the day, I read your article on exercise (in the Feb. 10 issue or online at [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org)). While I am not as healthy as I need to be, I have set 2 miles a day for at least 6 days a week as my 2011 goal.

Keep it up! I look forward to seeing your progress. Maybe I will see you as an accountability partner for me. When I read your article, it will spur me to walk!

Thanks, Jennifer. Good job!

**Kay Taylor**

*Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries  
Birmingham, Ala.*

LOVE your new column!!

**Lynn Suddith**

*First Baptist Church, Russellville*

Loved your "Rashional Thoughts." The idea of freshness and balance on a daily basis especially appeals to me.

I look forward to your future installments.

**Mary L. Wimberley**

*Birmingham, Ala.*

I appreciate your article on sleep and can identify for sure. Two thoughts. First, I am a big believer in power naps. When I was working an office job, I would grab a nap at lunch time — sometimes even in my car in the parking lot. Five minutes does wonders for my ability to concentrate and be more productive. I feel better and am more alert with five to six hours of sleep and a power nap than with seven to eight hours of sleep. Second, I have "prayed through" a problem or issue before going to bed rather than spending hours awake during the night thinking about it. I claim Philippians 4:4-7, read it and pray asking the Lord to give me the peace that passes all understanding and reminding myself that my worry during the night will not help the situation. I also make me a list of things that I will do the next day to deal with the problem so that I am not awake trying to develop my strategy.

**F. Max Croft**

*Scottsboro, Ala.*

### Taking time to 'defrag'

Every so often, my computer becomes sluggish. Frequent use of certain programs and documents causes pieces of information to become scattered, requiring my computer to search for the pieces before I can use them. To fix it, I need to run a program that retrieves the pieces and groups them together where they are easily accessible. This process is called "defragmentation."

Like my computer, my life gets fragmented. One situation tugs on my emotions while I'm trying to concentrate on something else. Demands from every direction bombard me. I want to accomplish everything that needs to be done, but my mind won't stop and my body won't start. Soon I begin to feel weary and useless.

Prayer can help to defragment our lives. When we cast our cares on the Lord, He will show us what we need to do and what only He can do.

Judy Ackerman Link

Cast all your care upon Him; for He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

### UPCOMING TOPICS

*include hugs as greetings and prayer. Send us your experiences and suggestions on these topics. E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com.*

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 3

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

### LOOK UP TO HEAVEN Philippians 3:1-21

#### Against Legalists (1-11)

With “for the rest” (literally) and the repetition of “rejoice” throughout this letter, Paul turned to the remaining topics before him.

Legalists were Jewish Christians who said Gentiles had to become Jewish proselytes either before they could accept the Jewish messiah, Jesus, or perhaps before they could become fully mature as believers (cf Gal. 3-4). “Dogs,” “men who do evil” and “mutilators of the flesh” are the Judaizers, the legalists. Jews called Gentiles “dogs;” Paul turned the name on them as unclean people outside God’s new covenant in Christ. The Judaizers thought they worked righteousness; Paul said they worked evil. “Mutilators” involves wordplay: “Peritome” meant circumcision; “katatome,” the word used here, meant mutilation. Making circumcision essential to salvation and/or full Christian maturity mutilated it. The true sign a man belongs to God is not a mark in the flesh but worship in the Spirit (cf John 4:23-24), glory in Christ Jesus and no dependence on the flesh, i.e., no dependence on heritage.

In case his opponents thought he decried Jewish heritage because he had none, Paul listed those assets. Ancestry. “Circumcised the eighth day,” i.e., born into Judaism. “Of the tribe of Benjamin,” i.e., among Israel’s elite (Benjamin was the only tribe that remained faithful with Judah; 1 Kings 12:21). A “Hebrew of Hebrews,” i.e., of pure Jewish descent and faithful to Jewish customs and manner of life. Orthodoxy. “A Pharisee,” i.e., one who cut himself off from common life, tasks and people to devote himself to the details of the law. Activity. To a Jew, zeal was the greatest quality of the religious life. Zealously he persecuted by prosecution. Morality. By Pharisaic legal standards, he was “faultless.”

Whereas once he tallied these things as assets, because of Christ, he now counted them total loss — probably because they stood in the way of his coming to Jesus. In repeating this statement, he extended it several ways. “Whatever was to my profit” now became

“everything,” “for the sake of Christ” became “the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ” and “loss” became “rubbish, refuse, dung.” The rest of the paragraph simply expands “that I may gain Christ.” Paul wanted only the “righteousness” given by God through faith. “To be found” may refer to being overtaken by death or facing the final judgment. Either way, Paul wanted to turn out as actually in Christ. He wanted to “know” Christ personally. Also he wanted to know (by experience) both the “power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings.” In union with Christ, Paul “died” in a spiritual sense and rose to new spiritual life. As a consequence, he hoped to “attain,” arrive at, the “resurrection of the dead.” The peculiar word (“ek Anastasis”) describes raising some (the saved) from among the total number of the dead.

#### Against Libertines (12-21)

Libertines applauded Paul’s teaching about grace but abused it by loose living. Paul made it clear he did not claim to have finally “arrived” in the Christian life. He had not become “perfect,” i.e., fully complete in Christ. He was still trying to “grasp” that for which Christ “grasped” him on the Damascus Road. He had eyes only for the goal. Past failures — yes, and even past successes — meant nothing. Specially honored athletes were not crowned below in the stadium. The king called them up to crown them on his dais. It was for this “upward” or “above” calling by God to receive the prize that Paul disciplined and drove himself.

All believers with any degree of maturity “take such a view of things,” i.e., recognize they have a long way to go. God expects each to live up to the level of Christian maturity he or she has attained. Some “mimicked” Paul; others proved rather “enemies of the cross.” Their destiny was destruction, i.e., moral ruin. Their deity was digestion, i.e., their appetites ruled. Their degradation was their dignity, i.e., boasting of things that disgraced them. They had a mind set earthward, not heavenward. In the closing two verses, Paul set forth the heaven-mindedness of God’s true people. ☞

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

### BALANCE GRIEF WITH HOPE John 11:20-27, 32-36, 43-44

To experience death is to be human. And knowing grief in the face of death is also a natural human experience that often leads to depression, anger, hopelessness and psychological paralysis. While the Christian faith is not an anesthetic for grief, faith in Jesus Christ places grief in the proper context of hope, that our lives are not meaningless but serve a greater purpose of glorifying God and that there is life after death.

#### An Intellectual Approach to Grief (20-27)

One critical point in the account of Lazarus’ death is found in verse 4; his death serves as an occasion for God’s glory as His Son, Jesus, is glorified. Although Lazarus’ resurrection is unique and does not set a pattern of similar expectations for believers, our grief can be a vehicle for God’s glory.

Digging further into the narrative, we find Lazarus’ two sisters, Martha and Mary, in mourning. And as depicted in Luke 10:38-42, the two sisters are distinct not only in their understanding of how best to serve Jesus but also in their response to Lazarus’ death. Martha first approached Jesus as He drew near to their home. She expressed firm belief in Jesus’ healing powers; had He been there, Lazarus would have been healed. Indeed she was aware that Lazarus would rise from the dead in the final resurrection and that those who believe in Christ will never die. What is notable in Martha’s interaction with Jesus is the lack of emotion in the face of grief. Possibly, for Martha, the best way to manage this crisis was to grasp tightly to what she knew to be true intellectually. For many, their grief is so profound the outward display of emotions becomes impossible. Jesus did not chastise Martha but redirected her attention to His identity as the Resurrection and the Life for her faith in Him was the anchor she needed in her grief.

#### An Emotional Approach to Grief (32-36)

In contrast to Martha, Mary responded to grief with unhindered emotions. Yet, given

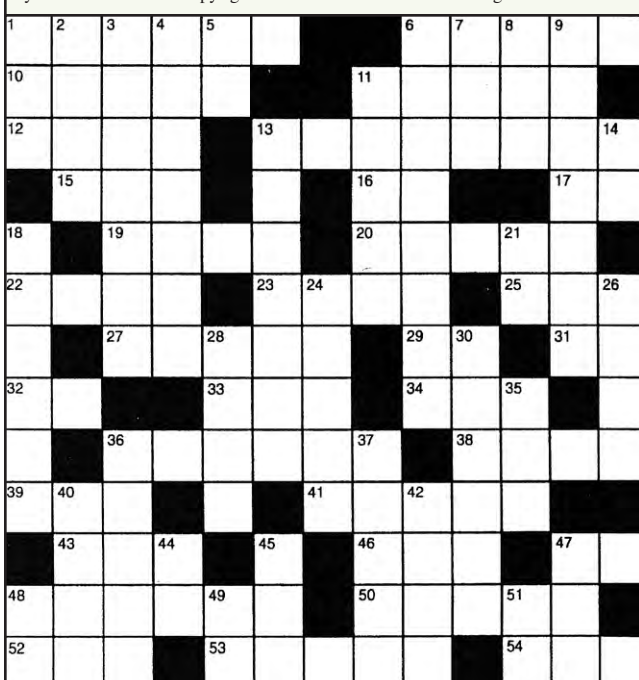
her emotional display, she mirrored Martha’s words of faith; Jesus’ presence would have saved Lazarus from death. Both sisters acknowledged faith in Jesus in their grief. The emotive response or lack thereof is not the critical point; both are legitimate. The non-negotiable matter is faith in Jesus. And here we have a unique portrait of God the Creator in Jesus. He wept upon seeing sin’s devastating effects, namely, death and its destructive effects on those remaining. Humans are helpless in the face of death (cf Rom. 5:12-14). God is the only solution and hope (cf Rom. 5:15-21). And God is neither distant nor uncaring but ultimately self-sacrificing in His compassion (cf Mark 10:45). In view of this portrait of Jesus, our grief is not endless and all-consuming. God is responsive to our suffering.

#### The Supernatural Approach to Grief (43-44)

For Martha and Mary, Jesus’ compassion had an immediate and unique effect; He called their brother back to life. The meaning of Jesus’ words “I am the resurrection and the life” (25) comes to an unexpected culmination. The Creator of life itself (John 1:3-4) commanded the dead Lazarus to live again. And without hesitation, Lazarus obeyed. For Martha and Mary, the belief that Jesus is the Christ led them to witness Him as He really is — God, the Creator and Sustainer of all life. Lazarus’ death was the occasion when both sisters witnessed the full meaning of Jesus’ identity as God’s Son. It was also the occasion for all those present to observe God’s glory at work even in death. Lazarus’ death becomes the means by which God is glorified so that many might come to faith. Although Lazarus’ resurrection is unique, it does set a precedent for all believers in that God is able to bring glory to Himself in the midst of grief as believers press in to hold on to their faith in Jesus as His Son and Savior. Lazarus’ resurrection serves to remind us that there is life beyond death for those who believe that Jesus indeed conquered death (2 Tim. 1:10). ☞

## Christian Crossword

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### Across

- Older son of Rachel.
- Lo, my \_\_\_ arose. (Gen. 37:7)
- A place for sacrifices.
- The sun and the moon and eleven \_\_\_ made obeisance to me. (Gen. 37:9)
- Twelve months.
- Joseph’s position in Egypt. (Gen. 39:4)
- (Jacob) poured \_\_\_ upon the top of it. (Gen. 28:18)
- Virginia. (abbr.)
- Greek letter.
- Number on baseball team.
- Figure \_\_\_.
- The truth shall make you \_\_\_. (John 8:32)
- Pharaoh took off his \_\_\_ from his hand. (Gen. 41:42)
- The \_\_\_ of gladness. (Ps. 45:7)
- Fear and \_\_\_ shall fall

- upon them. (Ex. 15:16)
- Height. (abbr.)
- Colorado. (abbr.)
- There \_\_\_ none greater. (Gen. 39:9)
- Consumed.
- Road surface material.
- Joseph dreamed \_\_\_.
- (Gen. 37:5; 2 words)
- \_\_\_ me in thy truth. (Ps. 25:5)
- \_\_\_ t a certain man found him. (Gen. 37:15)
- Israel \_\_\_ Joseph more than all his children. (Gen. 37:3)
- Trouble.
- How ... can I ... \_\_\_ against God? (Gen. 39:9)
- For example (abbr.).
- Method of dyeing cloth.
- Passage.
- \_\_\_ Testament.
- Delete.

- Metropolitan. (abbr.)
- Noisy bird.
- Spread for bread.
- Soiled.
- Opposite of “later.”
- Pronoun. (abbr.)
- Make \_\_\_ paths for your feet. (Heb. 12:13)
- Possesses.
- Before.
- Free from germs.
- There came up out of the river \_\_\_ kine. (Gen. 41:18)
- Run.
- Rhode Island. (abbr.)
- Continent.
- \_\_\_, every one that thirsteth. (Isa. 55:1)
- Perfect model.
- Nay, my \_\_\_, but to buy food. (Gen. 42:10)
- Seven \_\_\_ came up in one stalk. (Gen. 41:22)
- Biblical unit of money.
- Rosy.

- And he \_\_\_ no more. (Deut. 5:22)
- Receiver of the Ten Commandments.
- I will fasten him as a \_\_\_. (Isa. 22:23)
- I am the \_\_\_, ye are the branches. (John 15:5)
- Each.
- Keep me as the apple of the \_\_\_. (Ps. 17:8)
- Toward.
- Whence come \_\_\_? (Gen. 42:7)
- Room. (abbr.)





### 'Harassment continues' for Turkish Christians

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Though the horrific scale of the 2007 Malatya murders has not been repeated in Turkey's Protestant church, a recent report shows harassment continues to be a daily problem for the country's Christians and churches. Discrimination, slander and attacks against churches were among the examples of ongoing harassment that the Turkish Association of Protestant Churches (TAPC) recorded in 2010. In a report published earlier this year, TAPC's Committee for Religious Freedom and Legal Affairs showed Turkish laws and "negative attitudes of civil servants" continue to make it nearly impossible for non-Muslims to establish places of worship. Missionary activities are still considered a national threat despite the existence of Turkish laws guaranteeing citizens the freedom to propagate and teach their faith, and children are victims of discrimination at school, according to the report. "After four years (since the Malatya murders), Turkey's religious freedoms have not improved as desired," attorney Erdal Dogan said. In the trial of the five primary suspects in the murder of three Christians in Malatya, plaintiff attorneys fear the departure of one of the three judges to a Supreme Court of Appeals post in Ankara could further stall the nearly four-year-old case. The loss of Judge Eray Gurtekin, who had presided over the case since it began Nov. 22, 2007, could threaten to set back the progress of the court that has been examining links between the killers and alleged masterminds, according to Dogan.

### Malay-language Bibles detained by authorities

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — The detaining of 30,000 copies of the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs in the Malay language at Malaysia's Kuching Port has "greatly disillusioned" the nation's Christian community. The books, imported from Indonesia by the local branch of Gideons International for distribution in schools, churches and longhouses in Betong, Saratok and other Christian areas in Sarawak state, have been detained at the Kuching Port since January. Authorities told an unnamed officer of the importer Jan. 12 that he could not distribute the books in Sarawak state since they "contained words which are also found in the Quran." The officer was ordered to transport the books to the Home Ministry's office for storage. In March, when the same officer enquired of the Home Ministry officials on the status of the Malay Bibles, authorities said they had yet to receive instructions on the matter. This is not the first time government authorities have detained Malay-language Bibles, and Bishop Ng Moon Hing, chairman of Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), decried the action. "The CFM is greatly disillusioned, fed up and angered by the repeated detention of Bibles written in our national language," Hing said. "It would appear as if the authorities are waging a continuous, surreptitious and systematic program against Christians in Malaysia to deny them access to the Bible in [Malay]." An earlier consignment of 5,100 copies of the Good News Bible in Malay, imported by the Bible Society of Malaysia, was detained in Port Klang in March 2009.

### Christian graves demolished for shopping area

KOT ADDU, Pakistan — Christians in south Punjab province are accusing senior district officials of supporting local Muslims who allegedly demolished 150 Christian graves and desecrated holy relics — and are now threatening Christians seeking legal redress. In the Kot Addu area of Muzaffargarh district, Waseem Shakir said that an influential Muslim group last Nov. 6 took illegal possession of a 1,210-square-yard piece of land designated as a Christian cemetery and set up shops on it. "The situation has come to the point where even the local police have warned their higher-ups that the tension could provoke a Gojra-type incident," he said, adding that Muslim instigators are now openly trying to intimidate him and Boota Masih, who registered a case with police, into dropping the matter. In Gojra on Aug. 1, 2009, Muslim hordes acting on an unsubstantiated rumor of blasphemy of the Quran — and whipped into a frenzy by local imams and banned terrorist groups — killed at least seven Christians, looted more than 100 houses and set fire to 50 of them. At least 19 people were injured in the melee. Christians had repeatedly taken up the Kot Addu issue with District Police Officer Chaudhry Manzoor and District Coordination Officer Tahir Khurshid. Manzoor rejected the Christians' accusations. "It's not as serious a case as they are portraying," he said. "The people who have built shops on the land are not illegal occupants but the real owners."



### JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Fairy Tale Opera to Be Performed at Judson:** "Hansel and Gretel," an opera by Engelbert Humperdinck, will be performed by the Judson College Delta Psi chapter of Delta Omicron International Music Fraternity on April 14 at 7 p.m.

A special performance for area schoolchildren will be given April 15 at 10 a.m. Both performances will be in Alumnae Auditorium.

Based on the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, the opera is about a brother and sister from a poor family who get lost in the forest while searching for food. The drama includes ballet under the direction of Jillian Copeland.

The cast includes Laura Noble, of Huntsville; Sarah Jean Watters, of Spratt; Miriam Hart, of Tallassee; Holly Beth Johnson, of Lacey Spring; Brittany Hall, of Dadeville; and Molly Beasley, of Cottonwood.

Associate professor of religious studies Scott Bullard also will perform as soloist. Music professor Betty Campbell will direct.

For more information, contact the music department at 334-683-5149.

### SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Bell to Deliver Robbins Lecture:** John L. Bell, an ordained minister and hymnodist of the Church of Scotland, is delivering the Ray Frank Robbins Lecture at Samford University on March 31 from 2:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. Bell is speaking on "Social Justice in the Name of Jesus."

The Robbins Lecture, inaugurated in 2008 by the department of religion, is in honor of the longtime professor of New Testament at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary who began his academic career at Samford. The lecture-

ship focuses on the intersection of scholarship and Christian living.

Bell is an international preacher, lecturer, hymn writer and author with a passion for congregational song.

He has received fellowships from the Royal School of Church Music and the hymn societies of both the United States and Canada.

He holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow.

Bell will be leading a musical event titled "Justice and Peace at God's Request" at Samford's school of the arts in Brock Recital Hall from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Bell is speaking to students at Brock Forum on March 30 at 2:45 p.m. on "Bible and Spirituality" in a University Fellows program.

For more information, call 205-726-2991 or visit [www.samford.edu](http://www.samford.edu).

► **School of the Arts to Host A Cappella Choir Concert:** Samford University's school of the arts will present A Cappella Choir spring concert in Reid Chapel on April 1 at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, call 205-726-2851.

► **Pharmacy School Sponsors Health Care Conference:** Samford University's Healthcare Ethics and Law Institute (HEAL) will examine Eliminating Healthcare Delivery Disparities: An Ethical Quagmire? during its 10th anniversary conference on April 8 from 8:25 a.m.-3:45 p.m. in Brock Forum of Dwight M. Beeson Hall.

The conference — sponsored by Samford's McWhorter School of Pharmacy — is designed to help Alabama institutional ethics committees and those involved in patient care with today's most pressing ethical and legal issues.

Visiting speakers will include David Satcher, former U.S. surgeon general and director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute in Atlanta; Robert Veatch, a pioneer of medical ethics and professor at the Kennedy Institute of

Ethics and Georgetown University in Washington; and Gregory E. Pence, philosophy professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

HEAL Director Bruce D. White will present a case study, "The Family From Hell," and will provide closing comments.

For more information, visit [www.samford.edu/heal](http://www.samford.edu/heal) or contact Lori Bateman, HEAL program manager, at [lbbatema@samford.edu](mailto:lbbatema@samford.edu) or 205-726-2820.

► **Nurse Anesthesia Program Ranked Among Nation's Top One-third:** The nurse anesthesia program at Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing was recently ranked 32 out of 110 programs nationwide by *U.S. News & World Report*. The rankings are included in the 2012 edition of Best Graduate Schools.

"We are pleased with being ranked in the top one-third of all programs in the country, especially since we are a relatively young program," said program director Mary C. Karlet, who also noted that most of the top-ranked programs are housed at major medical centers or large research universities.

Karlet is the chair of the department of nurse anesthesia.

Many of those programs have been in place for decades — unlike the Samford program, which has yet to celebrate its 10-year anniversary.

### UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Guitar Recital Set at UMobile:** The University of Mobile Center for Performing Arts will present a faculty recital featuring Mark Habib, adjunct professor of guitar, at 4 p.m. on April 1 in Lyon Chapel.

For more information, call 251-442-2420 or e-mail [awilks@umobile.edu](mailto:awilks@umobile.edu).

## GuideStone introduces new iPhone app

Participants can now access MyGuideStone™ through an app for iPhone and iPod touch, available for free download by visiting GuideStone's website at [www.GuideStone.org/mobileapp](http://www.GuideStone.org/mobileapp).

With the app, participants can:

► Check their retirement account balances and the 10 most recent transactions on their accounts.

► View their accounts, retirement plans and fund selections.

► Check insurance coverage amounts and premiums.

► See policy dependents.

"Our participants don't have the luxury of sitting behind a desk ev-

ery day," said GuideStone president O.S. Hawkins. "They are visiting their church members, working with patients in hospitals, teaching classes in colleges and seminaries or attending committee meetings. This app will allow our participants easier on-the-go access to their GuideStone retirement and insurance information."

A mobile experience for the BlackBerry Torch and Android-based devices is available at [www.MyGuideStone.mobi](http://www.MyGuideStone.mobi). Soon, GuideStone will provide a similar solution for other web-enabled mobile devices.

"Since the first launch of its website, GuideStone has continuously made enhancements to the user experience," Hawkins said. "The launch of the app continues demonstrating our commitment in providing our participants the access to account information they want in the format they wish to receive it." (BP)

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# 'Walk toward hope'

## Heath's 'Leaving Eden' drives home gospel message

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

After challenging listeners to see the world as God sees it with his hit song "Give Me Your Eyes," singer/songwriter Brandon Heath embarked on a personal journey filled with soul-searching and found a new perspective while reflecting on original sin and the consequences for everyone.

This season of reflection inspired the vision behind Heath's latest album, "Leaving Eden," which contains insightful and thought-provoking songs that focus on God's redemption, restoration and relationship through Christ.

"The title track states the obvious pain in the world by just reading the news headlines but turns toward reconciliation despite the hate and frightening things that happen in life," he explained. "I want to celebrate the goodness in the world, and that's what the rest of the songs on the project talk about. I feel like I have a choice to protect what little innocence is still left in my life, because I think that's what attaches me to God.

"Even though we're leaving Eden, there is another destination: heaven. We have a choice. We can walk toward hope, or we can walk toward hopelessness. For me, I really want to walk toward heaven. I want to go home."

While challenging listeners to walk toward hope by establishing a personal relationship with Christ, Heath's message and music are being well received.

The Dove Award-winning artist reached another career milestone as digital sales of his 2009 Pop/Contemporary Recorded Song of the Year, "Give Me Your Eyes," surpassed 500,000, officially certifying it as a Recording Industry Association of America Gold digital single.

His latest album ranks No. 1 on the iTunes Christian Albums chart. The album's current single, "Your Love," also holds the No. 1 spot on radio, topping Billboard's Christian Songs, as well as the AC Monitor and Indicator charts.

He was inspired to write the song as a testament of God's unfailing and immense love for His children.

"I want people to know that they are absolutely loved by God and that He really wants us to know His love and grace so we can love other people more," Heath said. "As I was writing this song, I was thinking about a guy that I met one time



Photo courtesy of Brandon Heath

**MUSIC WITH A MESSAGE** — Singer/songwriter Brandon Heath focuses on God's redemption, restoration and relationship through Christ on his latest album, 'Leaving Eden.'

who has climbed many mountains and has even peaked Mount Everest but he doesn't know God and I keep wondering what he's searching for. If he would only realize what he's missing, he would find true fulfillment by resting in God's unconditional love."

At Heath's concerts, he desires to share valuable life lessons he's learned in hopes of inspiring others and leading them to a relationship with Christ.

"I think that the longer I get to know the character of Jesus, the more compassion I personally have for others," Heath said. "It is one thing to have compassion and quite another to act on it. Most times, it starts with the people around you."

Since 2008, he and songwriter/producer Jason Ingram have hosted an annual benefit concert, Love Your Neighbor, which gathers musicians for a great night of music and supports needs

within the Nashville community. In 2010, the event raised more than \$61,000 to help rebuild a church that had been severely damaged by flooding.

By taking a public platform and merging it with his heart for community, Heath also has been involved in raising awareness for a variety of organizations such as Young Life, Blood: Water Mission, International Justice Mission, Food for the Hungry, Restore International and other human rights groups.

Grounded on a firm foundation, he remains focused on delivering music with a powerful message that changes lives for God's glory.

### 'A fresh start'

"Hopefully people are not only connecting to the music but also to the message behind it," Heath said. "I want people to realize that if they will place their faith in Christ, they will be delivered from their old life, given a new lease on life and a fresh start to lead the kind of life that God wants His children to lead — with our lives glorifying Him."

For more information, visit [brandonheath.net](http://brandonheath.net).

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Pornography given its own .xxx online domain

SAN FRANCISCO — Pornography now has its own online domain, to the chagrin of pro-family advocates.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which oversees the creation of Web addresses, approved the establishment of the .xxx domain for sexually explicit material in a 9-3 vote at the March 18 meeting of its board in San Francisco.

The decision does not mean all pornographic sites will be limited to the .xxx domain, however. Porn businesses still will be able to use .com and other domains.

Pro-family leaders decried ICANN's action.

"The addition of this new domain will just make the Internet even more of a moral minefield," said Dwayne Hastings, vice president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "Anything that further legitimizes pornography as a morally neutral endeavor is not good.

"Pornography is not a victimless crime," he added. "It contributes to prostitution, sex trafficking and sexual assaults. It destroys lives and tears families apart.

"Most of us live lives insulated from this destructive filth, and that's good," Hastings said. "The problem is that a growing number of people, including children, are being exposed and exploited by pornography and those who make billions off its production and sale." The profits from pornography in the United States are staggering, according to statistics cited by Hastings: \$13 billion in revenue from porn in a year and \$3 billion from child porn, which is illegal.

"We are disappointed that ICANN ignored the clear advice of governments worldwide, including the United States," said Lawrence Strickling, assistant secretary for communications and information at the Department of Commerce and administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. "This decision goes against the global public interest, and it will open the door to more Internet blocking by governments and undermine the stability and security of the Internet."

### Smithsonian to restore, display 'Jefferson Bible'

WASHINGTON — A Smithsonian museum is restoring the "Jefferson Bible," a unique volume the third president cut and pasted himself — omitting lots of theology — from portions of the New Testament.

Thomas Jefferson assembled the book in 1820 when he retired after two terms as president. "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth" resembles a scrapbook that puts Jesus' life in chronological order. Its 86 pages include clipped passages from the Gospels in English, Latin, French and Greek.

It includes the crucifixion and burial of Jesus but not the resurrection and leaves out the miracles attributed to Him.

Conservators at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History will repair the fragile book's torn pages. It is scheduled to be displayed starting in mid-November for four months. The project will cost about \$225,000.

"The volume provides an exclusive insight to the religious and moral beliefs of the writer of the Declaration of Independence, the nation's third president, as well as his position as an important thinker in the Age of Enlightenment," said Brent D. Glass, director of the museum.

### Christian iPhone app pulled, called 'hateful'

ORLANDO, Fla. — For the second time in four months, Apple has pulled a leading Christian app from its iPhone app store based on pressure from homosexual activists. Critics say the decision could have a societal impact far beyond the realm of iPhone owners. ("App" is short for "application" and is simply a software program for a smartphone.)

One of the nation's most powerful and popular companies, Apple, pulled the Exodus International app March 22 after 150,000 people signed a petition urging the company to remove what the petition called a "hateful and bigoted" app. Truth Wins Out, a homosexual group, started the petition.

The app reflected Christian doctrine, teaching that people — through the power of Christ — can be freed from homosexual desires. Exodus is a Christian organization dedicated to reaching out to homosexuals.

Last year Apple also pulled the Manhattan Declaration app, which contained the text of a document with Christian teachings. Among other things, the document opposes gay "marriage." Many leading Christian leaders signed it.