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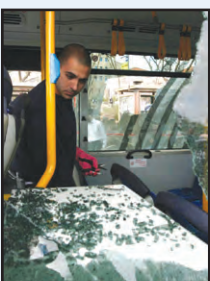
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'Safe to work here'

Baptist disaster relief volunteers gain access to Japan disaster zone

It took six days for Southern Baptist disaster relief specialists from Alabama and South Carolina to gain access to Japan's tsunami- and earthquake-stricken Tohoku prefecture.

It took only a few minutes, however, for John Hayes, of Birmingham, and Eddie Pettit, of Sunset, S.C., to understand the intense fears surrounding the nuclear crisis and how it affects disaster response.

Hardly anyone was at the airport when they arrived March 19. With no traffic, the bus trip into town took only an hour, a ride that normally takes two or more. Even pedestrian traffic at the busiest crosswalk in the country only boasted 15 to 20 people wearing surgeon's masks. Normally this corner is a sea of hundreds dressed in black business suits, jockeying for space to cross the street.

Despite living more than 200 miles from the failing Fukushima nuclear plant, Tokyo residents stayed home, creating a "ghost town" like atmosphere. In the city of almost 13 million people, most ventured out only to purchase bottled water and toilet paper.

"The fear of radiation is really the biggest obstacle in responding to Japan's disaster," Pettit admitted. "It's not only affected the Japanese but it's dominated the media and created fear throughout the world.

"We have to convince the people in the States that it's safe to work here," he added. "I want Southern Baptists to know that the radiation scare is a lot worse in the States than it is here now."

Tokyo and surrounding areas slowly come back to life three weeks after the nightmare began. People go back to work and restaurants reopen. The fear, though, is still hidden just below the surface. It comes out in simple things like wondering if the fruit or vegetables you buy came from Fukushima or if the tap water has radiation contamination.

The possibility of radiation is always in the back of people's minds, especially when Tokyo Baptist Church



BP photo

RICE FOR JAPAN — Two Southern Baptist disaster relief specialists, John Hayes (left) from Alabama and Eddie Pettit from South Carolina, carry rice to a food distribution point in Ishinomaki, Japan, on March 28.

(TBC) sits around a table dreaming up ways it can respond to this triple disaster. Hayes and Pettit consult with the church on ways to launch a disaster relief ministry.

'Let's do something now'

Every idea put on the table immediately gets thrown into the "do later" pile as team members grapple with how to handle the nuclear crisis. It seems like a major roadblock to every ministry possibility until Hayes quietly pulls out something that looks like a credit card. He peels back the red plastic and points to the blue dot on this small radiation

detection card called a dosimeter.

"Look! I've been wearing this ever since I arrived in Japan, and it hasn't registered any radiation exposure levels yet," Hayes said, noting that all International Mission Board (IMB) personnel and their children were issued a card to measure their exposure to radiation, allowing them to return to their ministries and homes. "Volunteers will wear one of these cards at all times, too. We want everyone safe while they are ministering in this disaster."

Having a way to measure radiation exposure changes the climate of the meeting. It goes from "what will we

do in the future" to "let's do something now." The timing could not have been better. The very next day, Japanese government restrictions to most areas of the disaster zone are lifted. TBC immediately sends the team trained by the disaster relief specialists in one direction, and Hayes and Pettit go another. All leave with a dosimeter hanging around their necks, offering a sense of safety but not invincibility.

Pettit said the long wait to actually visit some of the disaster area for assessment is not normal. In other natural disasters, Southern Baptist disaster (See 'Mucking,' page 5)

Children's Homes president/CEO Miller to retire

By Erin W. Tunnell
Special to The Alabama Baptist

After almost 39 years with the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) — 21 of those as president/chief executive officer — Paul Miller is preparing to retire from the work that has held his heart and mind daily.

"This has been a focal point of my life after serving God and my family," Miller said, noting that at times, it has been hard to separate where

one task ends and the others begin.

Effective Jan. 31, 2012, Miller will close the book on one era of his life to begin a new one filled with volunteer missions and time with his wife of 43 years, Diane, and family, as well as traveling and being more involved in his local church, First Baptist, Pell City.

"I'm not looking for anyone's rocking chair," he said with a smile.

Miller first came to ABCH in the summer of 1971 while in graduate

school at the University of Alabama.

Those three months helped solidify his call to work at the Children's Homes, and after graduating with his master's in social work, he came on as a full-time social worker in June 1972. In 1975, he was named superintendent of the Mobile campus.

In 1990, Miller was named executive director of ABCH, a title that later changed to president/CEO. (See 'Miller,' page 4)

COMMENT

Life Is Not 'All About Me'

The news reports from Japan have been amazing. Not the stories about the magnitude 9.0 earthquake March 11 or the tsunami reaching higher than 30 feet that did untold damage to northeast Japan. Those stories told of unimaginable death and destruction. The death toll is expected to climb near 20,000, and the economic cost is in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

We are not even describing the continuing crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, where reports indicate some of the brave employees who tried to gain control of the threat may die in a few short weeks from radiation poisoning. Around the world, as well as in Japan, people are concerned about the health impact of the radioactive isotopes cesium-137 and strontium-90.

We are referring to the amazing stories about how the Japanese public responded to this crisis with cooperation, patience and resolve. There have been no reports of looting like those that followed Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Instead reports show the Japanese public patiently doing the best it can in the face of numbing circumstances.

In places like Tokyo, where life now goes on in nearly normal fashion, individuals and businesses seem to accept rolling electrical blackouts in stride. News stories report how families and businesses adjust their schedules, knowing they will be without electricity and water for long periods each day.

The closest thing to a complaint was one lady saying she hoped the problem would be fixed by summer so there would be air conditioning during the hottest months of the year. These are reactions coming almost a month after the crisis.

Americans respond with great resilience to crises, but patience quickly wears thin much of the time. We want action and answers now. We also want to make sure our needs are being met.

This is not to say one reaction is better than the other, only to point out that the reactions are different. And that difference illustrates two very different cultural values that frequently go unnoticed. One relates to how cultures view time. The other is the concept of self.

In the United States, time is seen as a limited and valuable resource. This is often described as a monochronic view of time. There are only 24 hours in a day, and we do not want to lose any of them.

As Christians, we want to get the most out of all



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

God gives us. This is part of Christian stewardship. We want to make every moment count, so we program our cell phones to remind us of appointments and make our "to do list." If we fail to get everything marked off our list, then we think we have sinned because we failed to "redeem the time."

Definition of time

Time is viewed differently in other parts of the world. If one has participated in a missions trip to Latin America, Africa or the Orient, then one knows that events seldom begin at the time announced. Events begin when the people get there.

In such places, people believe there is always more time. It is an unlimited resource. This is called a polychronic view of time, and it can be maddening to Americans. Schedules have little authority over how one spends his or her day. Tasks always take a back seat to relationships.

One scholar noted that fewer goods and services get produced in polychronic cultures but people have a deeper sense of community and belonging.

One doesn't have to go to a foreign country to see this difference illustrated. Many Hispanic or black worship services in the United States illustrate the difference. In most Anglo churches, starting on time and finishing on time is important. Members have other plans that must be respected. But in many Hispanic and black churches, starting on time and finishing on time have no relevance. The service begins when the people are ready and goes as long as they are engaged. The clock is not important.

Another defining characteristic of the United States is the value placed on individualism. Americans stress the uniqueness of every individual. Ad-

vertisements challenge people to "be all you can be." Businesses motivate employees to perform better than their peers by honoring the employee of the month, and every sports event has its most valuable player.

At church, this trend is encouraged as everyone is urged to do spiritual gift inventories in order to identify his or her particular spiritual gift and unique place of ministry. Fulfilling the individual self is the highest value.


Most of the world embraces a different cultural value. The well-being of the group is primary, and the role of the individual is minimized. The first time a Christian from another culture told me he was willing to sacrifice his personal identity and witness for the collective identity and witness of the religious group to which he belonged, it was a concept I had trouble understanding.

In these other places, maintaining the welfare of the group is the highest value. Individuals find their identity as they relate to the group. That is why individuals frequently have deep bonds with the various groups of which they are a part, be it their extended family or employer. These are life-long relationships.

Christians in these countries frequently feel the local church of which they are a part is more important than their own well-being.

A book by Intercultural Press titled "Figuring Foreigners Out" placed the regions of the world on a graph between the poles of these two views. Not surprisingly, the United States was on the far side of a monochronic view of time and commitment to the concept of the individual. The polychronic view of time was most prevalent in Africa, while the importance of the group was most pronounced in China.

Japan fell closer to Africa than it did to the United States on the time graph and closer to China on the concept of self.

Perhaps that information helps us realize that when the immediate is not the primary and the group is more important than the individual, it may be easier to act in ways that demonstrate that life is not "all about me." 

Letters to the Editor

ELECTRONIC BINGO


Personally I am opposed to electronic bingo. Having stated my position on this matter, I still consider your article on page 2 [of the March 17] edition of *The Alabama Baptist* to be disgusting and totally inappropriate for this publication. Gloating, name-calling, demeaning and sarcastic remarks such as one "re-

siding" [sic] in the Montgomery County Jail and other disparaging comments throughout the article have no place in *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper. I believe you owe the Alabama Baptist State Convention and all Alabama Baptists an apology. The article is not supported by biblical teachings.

We must never forget that our min-

istry is the ministry of reconciliation (soulwinning), as found in 2 Corinthians 5:18. I seriously doubt that you would be an effective minister of reconciliation to any of those souls you disparaged in this article, if they could read the article themselves.

Lamar Brackin
Hartford, Ala.



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

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Someone You Should Know

By June Mathews, Correspondent, TAB

Carolyn Grizzle

Five Points Baptist Church, Sylacauga
Coosa River Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Psalm 37:5

FAVORITE HYMN: "Wonderful Grace of Jesus"

HOBBIES: Reading and doing word and number puzzles

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 46 years of marriage to Horace; two children, Richard and Karen; and one granddaughter



GRIZZLE

A lifelong Baptist, Carolyn Grizzle has served in numerous capacities in her church and association over the years. For the past 15 years, she has served as Woman's Missionary Union (WMU)

director for Coosa River Baptist Association. She is retiring from this position this month.

Q: What was your early life like?

A: I grew up in Columbiana, where my parents, my sister and I were members of First Baptist Church. I attended all available activities, including Sunday School, Baptist Training Union, Vacation Bible School and WMU organizations.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: Through the witness and influence of my parents and church leaders, I accepted Christ as Savior at an early age.

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

A: As a minister's wife for 46 years, I was blessed to serve with my husband in several pastorates in Alabama. I led music, played the piano, taught Sunday School and worked with WMU organizations as I was needed. I have served as organist and as a Sunday School teacher at Five Points for 11 years.

Q: What have you gotten from that involvement?

A: There have been unnumbered blessings, many strong friendships and the joy of seeing many young people assume church leadership roles as they have become adults.

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

A: I plan to continue being in God's work as long as I'm needed and am able to participate.



Photo courtesy of Mel Johnson

WORSHIP AND PRAISE — Haitians worship during the first service held in a new church building provided by a construction team from Hopewell Baptist Church, Andalusia. The service took place two hours after construction was completed.

An ongoing partnership

Alabama Baptists 'get on board with what God is doing' in Haiti

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

God is doing a miracle work in Haiti," said Larry Murphy, a member of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Enterprise. "We just need to get on board with what God is doing."

He would know. For two weeks in early March, Murphy, a disaster relief construction coordinator in Haiti, directed the work of two missions teams: one from Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, and another from Hopewell Baptist Church, Andalusia.

"The first week, the Eastmont team constructed a security wall around an orphanage in Jacmel. Thieves had been taking clothes and toys from the orphanage," he explained. "The second week, the Hopewell team put up a church building for the Evangelical Baptist Church in Jacmel."

Murphy saw God do a powerful work at this newly constructed church.

"We completed the church on a Thursday afternoon," he said. "The church's pastor announced he would conduct a service early that evening. You would think with only a few hours notice, hardly anyone would attend, but more than 100 persons came for worship. It was amazing. Only God could do that."

The church is one of many planted as a result of Alabama Baptists' partnership with the city of Jacmel and surrounding villages following a devastating earthquake in January 2010.

B.R. Johnson has been to the country three times. On his most recent trip in February, he served as a chaplain with a medical team in the Jacmel area.

"We ministered to more than 1,000 persons in four days," said Johnson, senior pastor of The Lighthouse Community Church, Harpersville. "I ministered to members of

the medical team through prayer and devotions. I also assisted with on-site organization and shared the gospel with Haitian people who came for medical services.

"Knowing you represented Jesus to thousands of hurting people is an amazing feeling," he said. "After my trips to Haiti, I no longer take for granted the Lord's blessings each day."

Receptiveness to the gospel

Those hurting people's receptiveness to the gospel is what impressed Don Reece most when he led an evangelism team from First Baptist Church, Springville, to the country in February.

"We divided our team into groups and went door to door in the town of Jacmel," explained Reece, a retired Southern Baptist representative to Nigeria. "Two Haitian Christians visited with each team."

But the person or people on the other side of those doors weren't the only ones hearing their good news.

"Passers-by would stop and listen to the words of our witness. At one stop, a young Haitian woman who had been listening said she wanted to receive Jesus as her Savior. It was amazing," Reece said.

There is a special need for evangelism teams to mentor the church plants, said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"The Confederated Missionary Baptists of Haiti provide pastors for these congregations, but the pastors face an overwhelming task in discipling these young believers. Evangelism teams can assist with these discipleship opportunities," he said.

Medical and construction teams are needed, too, as the partnership runs through 2012.

"We have lots of open dates for disaster relief volunteers for Haiti," Mel Johnson said.

For more information, visit www.alsbom.org/Haiti or contact Mel Johnson at 1-800-264-1225.

"Our state convention has been blessed by the participation of our churches. Their Cooperative Program support and their hands-on ministry in Haiti has truly been a Great Commission effort."

— Mel Johnson

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions



Photo courtesy of Mel Johnson, graphic by Lauren Chow

'We can do this'

FBC Cullman staff takes icy plunge after church doubles giving to Lottie Moon offering

Ed Hayes believed that something "dramatic" had to be done.

This past summer during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., Hayes learned that the International Mission Board would be limiting the number of new missionary appointments and scaling back its missionary force from 5,500 to 5,000 through natural attrition — completions of service and retirements.

He also heard reports that 6,426 people groups still haven't been reached with the gospel.

"How can we talk about cutting back on the total number of missionaries and, at the same time, reaching more people?" asked Hayes, who has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman, for 27 years.

"I know these are hard times ... [but] I knew we needed to do something to turn that around."

The following Sunday, Hayes told the West Cullman Baptist Association congregation he felt convicted that there were missionaries who were called and ready to go to the field but there was not enough money to send them.

Challenge to save

"I think we need to raise our Lottie Moon goal," Hayes told the crowd of about 550. "I think we need to double what we gave last year."

He challenged the members of his congregation to save throughout the year and double what they gave to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions the previous year.

Jim O'Dillon, minister of education and outreach for the church, wasn't expecting the announcement and admitted he

was more than a little skeptical.

At that point, First, Cullman, already had set its offering goal at \$60,000. O'Dillon said he didn't think that goal was reachable, since the church raised \$39,200 the year before, just short of its \$40,000 goal.

'Doomed to fail'

"It came close but there was no cigar," O'Dillon said. "I'm thinking the economy is not much better ... and when [the pastor said] that ... I thought, 'The man has gone completely nuts. There is no way we can give \$80,000. He has set a goal that is doomed to fail.'"

He was not alone in his assessment.

"When [the pastor] first said it, I thought, 'Yeah, right,'" church member Kathy Hacker said. "I thought, 'Well, he's really going to have to sell missions to get that.'"

And Hacker said that's exactly what her pastor did that Sunday.

Hayes made his case for the thousands of people groups who have no access to the gospel and why more missionaries must be sent to reach them.

"He made it very simple," she said. "That [piqued] my interest. ... It was very inspirational."

Hacker liked the sermon so much she had DVD copies made and gave them to several families in the congregation.

Each week, Hayes reminded the congregation to continue saving for the offering.

One Sunday, sticks of Wrigley's Doublemint gum were handed out as members left the auditorium. The gum served as another reminder for them to "double" their offering.

Instead of waiting for December, some members began to turn in a little of their offering each month. A few weeks before the church's 2010



Photo courtesy of FBC Cullman

POLAR BEAR PLUNGE — Richard Orr, minister of students for First Baptist Church, Cullman, plunges into the pool at the local aquatic center Feb. 6 after the church went well over its LMCO goal.

offering deadline, the gifts had grown to \$72,000 — far exceeding its official goal of \$60,000.

Though the pastor and his staff were surprised and pleased by the amount, Hayes said he became concerned the giving might level off.

"If we don't do something dramatic as a staff to get the attention of the church," Hayes said, "that's probably about where we'll stay."

He decided it was time to "have some fun."

Hayes told church members that if they raised the remaining \$8,000, then he and the church leadership — including O'Dillon, who originally doubted the goal could be reached — would take a polar bear

plunge into the outdoor pool at the local aquatic center.

In the remaining weeks, more than \$17,000 was raised, which put First, Cullman, well over its goal with \$89,350.

Amazing things

"The church responded tremendously," Hayes said. "We talked about it and focused on it ... and I think that was the key ... just a simple, brief reminder weekly."

On Feb. 6, the church leadership took the plunge — everyone except for Hayes.

"My doctor short-circuited my participation," said the 68-year-old, who has had a variety of health

challenges in recent years. "[The doctor] absolutely forbade me to do this. Everybody teased me about getting out of it ... but I really wanted to do it."

Since the church exceeded its goal, O'Dillon has realized two things. First a church can do amazing things when it works together. Second he learned that jumping into an ice-cold swimming pool in February is similar to being "stung by a jellyfish."

Hayes said if First, Cullman, gets close to its goal next year, then he may commit to doing something else "dramatic."

"There is a lot of world to reach," Hayes said. "We can do this." (BP)

Miller has 'peace' about retirement; ABCH looks for new leader



Photo by Erin W. Tunnell, ABCH

39 YEARS OF SERVICE — After 39 years of service — 21 as president/CEO of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries — Paul Miller will retire in January 2012. He says he has a 'peace that it's time for someone else to ... steer the ship.'

(continued from page 1)

He knew the day would come when it would be time for someone else to provide leadership for the Children's Homes. And that day is here, after much prayer and thought, Miller said.

"I have a peace that it's time for someone else to come in and steer the ship," he said.

It's the same peace Miller felt when he first came to ABCH.

Search for a new president

The search for a new president/CEO will be led by a search committee composed of the current president of the board of trustees and current and former trustees.

"We are trying to find that person God is already preparing to lead this ministry," said Dr. Merrill Barron, chair of the search committee.

"With prayer, due diligence and a sensitivity to God's leadership, we will find — not a replacement for Paul but — that person whom God has chosen to lead the next chap-

ter of this ministry that has been serving the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of children and families for 120 years."

Barron said he feels Miller has been a successful leader because of his servant heart and the fact that he was God's choice to lead the ministry.

"Paul has worked very hard and has remained faithful and obedient to that calling — always praying, always serving, always seeking God's will for what was best for the children and families that he served and for those who have worked with him," Barron said.

The search committee is now actively seeking resumés.

These may be sent via e-mail to CEOsearch@abchome.org or mail to Dr. Merrill Barron, C/O Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, P.O. Box 361767, Birmingham, AL 35236.

For more information, call 1-888-720-8805.

Planters identify ways for volunteers to minister in Japan

(continued from page 1)

relief responds immediately and hits the ground running. In Japan, it's been three weeks since the earthquake and tsunami, yet they just now make their first assessment. The radiation fears have a little to do with this delay; the main reason is government restrictions, not to mention the lack of gasoline.

"The developing countries do not have a disaster plan or the infrastructure that Japan has," Pettit said, explaining how important it is to work within the Japanese system and not just respond in the same manner as they did in Haiti. "Each disaster is different and this one is three disasters in one: earthquake, tsunami and radiation fears. It doesn't matter how long it takes us to get established; there is going to be plenty of disaster work for a long time."

Any fears of radiation are quickly forgotten as Hayes and Pettit survey an area safely outside of the 30-mile radiation zone suggested by the United States.

The magnitude of this disaster and the need for future work sink in as the pair walks down the streets of Ishinomaki. Despite the Japanese government forces working round-the-clock since the quake, the destruction is still overwhelming, a stark contrast to the normally pris-

tine and orderly Japanese lifestyle.

Hundreds of cars pile up at odd angles. Some stack on top of each other three or four high. Boats sit stranded and busted on side streets and open lots. Ships lean to one side on wide-open roads. Seven-foot high walls of trash line streets outside homes filled with a foot of mud.

Entire neighborhoods are still without electricity or kerosene. Nearly 23,000 people are in shelters, and thousands more shiver in damaged and waterlogged homes. People sit in the cold all day and night.

A snowstorm and cold front hit northeastern Japan just hours after the tsunami.

The pair see many ways Southern Baptist disaster relief teams can work and minister, filling in cracks left behind by the government forces: mucking mud, feeding hot meals to people and distributing supplies. They stop to talk to a family who owns a kimono store destroyed by floodwaters.

"We need to help get the mud and debris out of the houses. That's pretty labor intensive," Hayes said. "It might seem small to us, but it will plant a seed. We can show the love of Jesus Christ and make a difference."

Pettit and Hayes quickly teach some IMB representatives how to properly muck out the kimono shop.



IMB photo

RADIATION TEST — A dosimeter badge measures the total radiation dose a person has been exposed to as a total cumulative dose.



IMB photo

DEVELOPING STRUCTURE — John Hayes (left) of Alabama helps Yoko Dorsey set up a system for feeding hot meals to disaster victims. Dorsey is in charge of the Tokyo Baptist Go Relief Team.

As Hayes bends over to help, his dosimeter swings out from under his jacket. The Alabamian nonchalantly glances at the exposure reading and then quickly tucks it away. Nothing registers. He wonders about the TBC team just 15 miles down the road.

The TBC team members work diligently, remembering everything Pettit and Hayes taught them. They prepare 3,000 hot meals a day in a neighborhood without electricity and no access to relief supplies. Every two hours, the team leader diligently checks her dosimeter.

Nothing registers, giving them confidence to continue ministering and lead two people to Christ. (BP)

BHS hospitals first to report contaminated IV bags

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

The Baptist Health System (BHS) was the first to recognize and report the use of contaminated intravenous bags — produced by Birmingham pharmacy Meds IV — that may have caused the death of nine patients who were receiving TPN (total parenteral nutrition) in five Alabama hospitals.

The problem was discovered by BHS on March 14 after infection control workers at Princeton and Shelby Baptist medical centers noticed a bacteria called *Serratia marcescens* in patients' blood and that they had all received TPN from IV bags.

BHS stopped using the products immediately and notified the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on March 16. Still four patients died at Princeton BMC in Birmingham and two at Shelby BMC in Alabaster.

The "seriously ill patients were prescribed TPN by physicians because they had significant surgical and medical conditions and unable to receive nutrition by any other means," BHS Chief Medical Officer Elizabeth Ennis said in a news release. "We don't know, and may never know, if the *Serratia marcescens* bloodstream infection played a role in the deaths of these patients.

"Because quality patient care is our top priority, this event is deeply disturbing to all of us at Baptist Health System," she said. "We will continue our vigilant

infection control process, and we are confident that all our actions were prompt, responsible and in the best interest of our patients."

BHS terminated its relationship with Meds IV immediately and removed all of its other products from the pharmacy stock in BHS hospitals, Ennis added.

There have been 19 cases of *Serratia marcescens* reported in six hospitals. The three other deaths occurred at Prattville Baptist Hospital, managed by the University of Alabama Hospital; Medical West in Bessemer; and Select Specialty Hospital in Birmingham. Cooper Green Mercy Hospital in Birmingham reported one case but no deaths.

Different suppliers

According to *The Birmingham News*, all of these hospitals have switched suppliers.

Meds IV informed the hospitals of the problem March 15 and recalled all of its IV compounded products dating back to Jan. 1 on March 24. While the majority of the cases occurred in March, the first happened in January.

State Health Officer Don Williamson said it is likely that the bacteria tainted the product while it was being compounded at the pharmacy, the *News* reported.

Investigators are working to determine how many patients were exposed to the bacteria.

Patients "would have likely shown symptoms immediately because the bacteria was delivered straight to the bloodstream," according to the *News*. ☐

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Across Alabama's Associations

CHILTON

► **First Church, Lomax**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary April 17. Ronald Euler will speak. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. and worship at 11. Fellowship will follow. Jim Otts is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Stewart Young** is the new pastor of **Southside Church, Opp**. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Kinston. He also served as pastor of Arm Church, Monticello, Miss., and as college pastor for Greenbrier Road Church, Anniston. Young is a graduate of Leavell College and New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Carol, have two children.

DEKALB

► **First Church, Geraldine**, licensed **Pete Chadwick** to the gospel ministry March 13. Chadwick has served as the church's youth minister since 2003. He and his wife, Marsha, have two children. Kirk Griggs is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Twelfth Street Church, Rainbow City**, will hold special Easter worship services April 24, 8:15, 9:30 and 11 a.m. Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. There will be no evening service. Craig Carlisle is pastor.

MADISON

► **Harvest Church** will hold Tenebrae (Service of Shadow) on April 20, 6 p.m. Eric Fuller is pastor.

MARSHALL

► **Bethany Church, Horton**, will present the Easter Resurrection House — A Walkthrough

Journey to the Cross on April 13, 6–8 p.m. and April 16–17, 4–8 p.m. The interactive event will take participants through six scenes leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They will experience the marketplace in Jerusalem, palm entry, Lord's Supper, arrest in the Garden of Gethemane, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. Morris Stephens is pastor. ► **South Sauty Church, Langston**, will celebrate its 43rd anniversary with homecoming April 17, 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Jerry A. Butler is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► The JOY Singers senior adult choir of **First Church, Montgomery**, will present "Windows on the Word" April 17, 6:15 p.m. This program is the second in a series and will feature hymns that relate to Scripture scenes depicted in 4 of the 15 stained glass windows in the church's main sanctuary. Theresa Gordon is director. Julie McDougal and Sara Jo Bagley are accompanists. Kenny Hoomes is minister to senior adults. For information call 334-834-6310. Jay Wolf is pastor. ► **Open Acres Church, Montgomery**, will present "Believe" April 17, 6 p.m. The program will feature events of then and now performed in a skit and music. For information call 334-263-6215. Ron Davis is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► The men's ministry of **Pine Barren Association** will hold a fish fry for men and boys April 9, 6 p.m., at The Shed in Camden. Brother Billy Bob Bohannon will be the special guest. John Marks is director of missions.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Tim Thompson** is the new pastor of **Glenwood Church, Morris**. He previously served as the church's interim pastor. He is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Christian ministries from Leavell College at the Birmingham Extension Center of New Orleans Seminary at The Church



THOMPSON

at Brook Hills. Thompson and his wife, Traci, have two children.

ST. CLAIR

► The adult choir and drama ministry of **Sulphur Springs Church, Trussville**, will present "Then Came the Morning" April 17, 3 p.m. Everett Sollie is minister of music. Bobby Shipp is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Daviston Church** will celebrate homecoming April 24. Krystal Klear will sing at 10 a.m. Former Pastor Joe Lennox will speak at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Ray Hallman is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Millry**, will hold revival April 10–11 with Chris Kynard. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday at 7. Child care will be provided. Mike Maloy is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Glenn's Chapel pastor Perkins marks 60 years in ministry

Thomas Perkins, pastor of Glenn's Chapel Baptist Church, Gardendale, has been in the ministry for 60 years, and he has no plans of stopping there.

Recently the North Jefferson Baptist Association church recognized Perkins' ministry milestone with a special service that included a message by Director of Missions Steve Loggins and music by the Unity Quartet.

The service also included a slideshow of the places Perkins has served over the years as well as a plaque presented to him on behalf of Glenn's Chapel Baptist. Following the service, the church had a special time of singing and testimonies.

"I feel so honored that the Lord has chosen me to share His word for so many years in ministry," Perkins said.

Perkins, who was licensed to preach Jan. 31, 1951, has served as pastor of 20 churches and planted three churches. He has served as a police chaplain for the Bessemer and Birmingham police departments and is the director of evangelism for North Jefferson Association. He is married to Elizabeth.

"At the present, I don't feel the desire of retirement," Perkins said. "When God calls a person to preach, He doesn't take the call away."



PERKINS

Hamilton's Mount Zion doubles attendance on Friend Day

Many churches have a friend day when members invite friends and family on a specific Sunday. But do many nearly double their attendance because of it?

Mount Zion Baptist Church, Hamilton, did. The Marion Baptist Association church usually has about 45 people attend Sunday School and 55 in worship, so for its recent Friend Day, it set a goal of 60 people in Sunday School — 10 more than its 2010 goal.

"I didn't expect to see 71 in Sunday School and 97 in worship. That was just amazing," Pastor Steven Sanderson said, adding, "This is what Mount Zion could be and should be."

The church's members caught a vision, Sanderson said. Whenever members of a church see several new people attending, he said they are encouraged to invite people more often.

"Life is about relationships and if we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, He should overflow into our other relationships," Sanderson said.

Because of the recent event and the Holy Spirit's leading, Mount Zion has added a new family to its membership, which led to two baptisms, Sanderson said.

The church plans to continue with Friend Day twice a year, held strategically before revival so members can invite their friends and family to both events.

Selma Association's Benton Baptist celebrates 175 years

"Good start; don't quit." That's what Pastor Lee Tate told his church, Benton Baptist in Selma Baptist Association, as it celebrated its 175th anniversary March 27.

Tate shared from Galatians 6 and encouraged the more than 100 people in attendance to "be faithful in our generation and not leave it up to the next generation."

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a plaque in honor of the anniversary, and local artist Michael Sims presented a painting of the original church building that was constructed in 1856.

M.R. Bradley and Glenn Slye, two of Benton Baptist's previous pastors, attended the celebration, which was followed by a lunch.

Along with its history, the church celebrated some recent growth and firsts such as sending more than 10 members on their first international missions trip.



Photo courtesy of Yarbrough Street Baptist Church

YARBROUGH STREET'S FIFTH-, SIXTH-GRADERS RAISE MONEY FOR JAPAN

Fifth- and sixth-graders from Yarbrough Street Baptist Church, Montgomery, raise more than \$200 for Japan disaster relief by selling muffins and milk two Sundays in March. Also pictured are Sunday School teachers Russell and Lisa Rose.

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Renewed violence

Christian worker dies in bus bomb; Palestinian, Israeli believers try to 'bridge' gap

It's blood and grief, random rockets and sudden explosions. It's sudden tragedy for people like Mary Jane Gardner of Wycliffe Bible Translators, killed by a bus bomb in Jerusalem on March 23. And for Israelis and Palestinians, it's never over.

"Each strike by Palestinians against Israelis and each strike by Israelis against Palestinians are in retaliation for a previous attack," said Stephen Johnson, a Christian worker among Palestinians. "'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' is never ending."

It's been years of territorial back-and-forth for the two groups, ending most recently in 2009 after a war that saw 1,300 Palestinians and 13 Israelis die. Since then, relative calm had pervaded, and Israel had seemed like the eye of the political storm sweeping the region.

But that all changed in the past few weeks.

More than 80 rockets and mortar shells have been launched from the Palestinian territory of Gaza into southern Israel, and the bus bomb that killed Gardner injured more than 30 others. Retaliatory attacks by Israel have killed 10 Palestinians, with Israeli officials voicing regret over the deaths of two teens playing football outside their house.

International media have ques-

tioned why the unofficial ceasefire broke recently, and some commentators suggest the attacks perhaps were used to detract attention from protests staged in Palestine. In March, thousands of Palestinians have followed suit with the rest of the region, calling for Gaza's power-holding party Hamas and its rival Fatah to come together.

Plenty of other theories exist as to why tumult has erupted anew.

"It's an ongoing story," said Bruce Mills of Jerusalem Baptist Church. "There's conflict in many layers and levels."

In Mills' church — an English-speaking international body — Messianic Jews and Palestinian believers in Christ sit side by side every Sunday.

"They worship in spirit and truth, as brothers and sisters with no territorial claims," Mills said.

It's because they both have the same peace — peace that the rest of their countrymen need, said Ben Martin, a Christian worker among Jews. "Both are groups that need Jesus. We are not dealing with saved people — that's why we are here," Martin said.

"Both sides of the conflict need the knowledge that we know will bring peace."

The Messianic Jews he knows "cry out for the salvation of the Palestinians," Martin said.

"Both are groups that need Jesus. We are not dealing with saved people — that's why we are here."

Ben Martin
Christian worker



Reuters photo

EXPLOSION — Israeli police survey the inside of a bus at the scene of an explosion in Jerusalem on March 23. One Christian worker was killed and at least 30 people injured in the attack police blamed on Palestinian militants.

And Palestinian believers want to reach out to Jews, too, so that they can come to know salvation in Christ.

Heart for the Jews

"I have a heart to work with Jewish people, to minister with Jewish people, to make a bridge between Palestinian and Jewish people, to see them come to Christ together," said Esa, a Palestinian believer in Jesus.

Palestinians "are caught in a

seemingly never-ending cycle of violence," Johnson said, noting that believers among them are just as affected by the tensions as other Palestinians.

Amid the turmoil embroiling the Middle East and North Africa, Arab and Muslim peoples are questioning long-held assumptions, Johnson said.

"The result could be a time of more openness and individual freedoms, but it is too early to tell," he said.

He asked that Christians would pray:

► That as people weigh their questions, they would understand that Jesus is the Answer.

► That people who are already believers will be bold in sharing that they know the Truth and He has set them free.

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

Christian in Bethlehem shares faith with Jews despite resistance



IMB photo

ON THE HILL — The city of Bethlehem is where the Messiah was born and Esa, a follower of the Messiah, tries to share his faith amid the perpetual Israeli-Palestinian tensions.

It stings when people think he's a terrorist.

Esa is a follower of the Messiah who was born in his hometown — Bethlehem — 2,000 years ago.

"When I was in America, my wife and I visited different churches," Esa recounted. "I met a lady and she started to shake my hand." But when she found out Esa was Palestinian, she snatched her hand away before he could shake it, and she left. "It really hurt," he said.

"Christian" and "Palestinian" just don't go together sometimes for people, Esa said. "But we have Palestinians here who love Jesus. We pray for our brothers in Christ."

That includes those on the other side of the dividing wall that separates Bethlehem, where so many have yet to know Jesus as Savior, from nearby Jewish communities adrift in spiritual emptiness.

"God is at work in my heart," Esa said. "It's very hard when you grow up and someone hits you ... it is very hard to give them forgiveness. Growing up in this land, I saw

blood — the Arabs and the Jews were always killing each other — no peace, no love, nothing."

It is a reality he has seen up close and personal amid the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian tensions. When he was 10 years old, Israeli soldiers occupied his home, dictated when his family could leave the house and took his brother to jail after breaking three of his ribs, Esa said.

Then one turned to him and told him he was a terrorist.

'Crying, shaking'

"I could not understand what he was talking about — I was 10 years old. And I'm crying and shaking and scared with five soldiers with guns coming into my home," he said.

It wasn't the last time he heard that accusation.

But years later after he'd become a believer, when he felt that hurt again in an American church, he said God began to work on his heart and the way he felt toward the Jews.

"I said, 'God, in the name of Je-

sus I give forgiveness to the Jewish people with all my heart and I don't need anything from them. I love them, and I believe you heal me and you work in my heart to love Jewish people," Esa said. "And I heard Him say, 'You have to make peace.'"

After that, in addition to his passion for reaching his own people in Bethlehem, his heart burned to reach out and love his Jewish neighbors across the way. Every Christmas and Easter he gets permission to cross into Jerusalem, and when he does, he goes straight to the Western Wall.

"I go there to meet Jewish people and build relationships with them," Esa said. "I want to be able to take our (ministry) teams to work with them, too, and for us to work alongside Jewish [Messianic believers]. For us to work as a group ... it's still my vision and I never give up."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Name has been changed for security reasons. (BP)

Colvin becomes Alabama's first Certified Apologetics Instructor

By John Evans
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The phrase "because the Bible says so" just doesn't cut it with most people these days, Mark Colvin said.

"If we're going to do evangelism in the kind of world we have now, we're going to have to be able to answer people's questions, and those questions are different than they were 50 years ago," Colvin said.

In an effort to help provide answers in a world where atheism is growing and skepticism of the Bible abounds, Colvin, a member of Fullness Christian Fellowship, Vestavia Hills, has become Alabama's first Certified Apologetics Instructor (CAI). The certification, offered by the North American Mission Board (NAMB), trains believers to understand the historical, scientific and philosophical evidence that backs up their faith and communicate that to others.

"Christians held the intellectual high ground for 1,800 years after Jesus," Colvin said. "Only in modern times have we surrendered that to science and academia. That's ground that needs to be taken back."

His journey toward apologetics (which comes from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning "in defense of") began more than 30 years ago shortly after his conversion at age 20. While reading "The Chronicles of Narnia," by C.S. Lewis, he noticed that beneath the surface story, Lewis was writing about a Christian worldview. Colvin began defending the faith himself although he lacked education on the subject.

"I had always argued for, in a very informal and sometimes ignorant way, the truths of Christianity the best I could without knowing what I was doing," Colvin said.

While attending seminary, he read "The Case for the Resurrec-



Photo courtesy of Mark Colvin

DEFENDING FAITH — Mark Colvin, Alabama's first Certified Apologetics Instructor, speaks to a variety of listeners — from atheists to Christians. Colvin likes to help believers who are ridiculed.

tion" by Mike Licona, NAMB's apologetics coordinator. A friend mentioned Licona's association with the CAI program, and after meeting with Licona, Colvin decided to enroll in the program in 2009. The CAI program is an intensive, work-at-your-own-pace course of study that has two main requirements. The first is an academic component that includes approximately 80 hours of lectures on CD, three exams and eight books.

"The requirements of the program either forced you down the path of seriousness or weeded you out, because they're pretty rigorous," Colvin said.

After gaining knowledge of the evidence for Christianity, students are taught how to communicate it through the Dynamic Communicators Workshop, four days of public speaking training from instructor and comedian Ken Davis.

"The communications workshop taught me to be clear and to try to communicate one thing well rather than a lot of things in an inferior kind of way," Colvin said.

Variety of audiences

Colvin, who finished the CAI program March 1, speaks to a variety of audiences from Christians to atheists. He most enjoys talking about the evidence for Jesus' resurrection; he said there is a significant body of historical data even atheists would accept that builds a good case that He rose from the dead.

"Faith is not a blind leap in the dark," Colvin said. "Faith is a step in the direction that the evidence is already pointing."

He acknowledged that some may think apologetics is unnecessary, but he pointed to Paul's address to pagan Greek philosophers in Acts 17, where the apostle laid out a defense of the reality of God and the sufficiency of Jesus.

While Colvin admitted apologetics is not appropriate in every situation, he said it can help overcome some people's intellectual objections to the gospel and make them more open to its message. He pointed to one of his friends who became a believer after studying the evidence for Christianity.

"Obviously the Lord was at work in all that, and it wasn't a

head thing completely, but what it did was it made his head quit fighting with his heart," Colvin said.

Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said apologetics has emerged as a key interest for younger pastors and is an important resource for reaching younger generations. He said a state apologetics conference is in the works.

"We're really excited about Mark being the first one to hold [the CAI] certification in this state," Gilbreath said.

Colvin enjoys using apologetics to help believers, who are at times ridiculed and told their faith is akin to believing in Santa Claus. He said when he sees the relief in the eyes of Christians who realize there is solid evidence backing up their faith, it's a great reward.

"There's no reason why a believer should have to live with the idea that he has to check his brain at the door when he goes to church."

Training available

Colvin is available to help train Alabama Baptists to defend Christianity's claims. Contact him at 205-381-0699 or info@veridisciple.com. For more information, visit www.veridisciple.com.

For more information about the CAI program, visit www.namb.net/certified-apologetics-instructor.

For more information about the state apologetics conference, call Gilbreath's assistant, Stephanie McClelland, at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 245.



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UMobile, Judson prepare for upcoming golf tournaments

It's that time of year again — tee time.

On April 29, the 14th annual University of Mobile (UMobile) Classic golf tournament, presented by Catfish Junction in Saraland, will be held at TimberCreek Golf Club in Daphne, and May 9–10, the 49th annual Ministers Golf Tournament, sponsored by Judson College in Marion, will be held at Marion Military Institute's golf course.

The deadline to register for the UMobile tournament is April 16.

All proceeds will benefit scholarships provided by the UMobile annual fund.

Registration will begin at 11:30 a.m. with a shotgun start at 1:30 p.m.

A post-tournament dinner and golf polos will be provided to all golfers, and many prizes will be awarded.

Opportunities for sponsorships are still available.

Registration

To become an event sponsor or register, contact Allison Nelson, alumni coordinator, at 251-442-2226 or Hali Givens, director of annual giving and alumni relations, at 251-442-2212 or visit giving.umobile.edu.

The ministers tournament is open to all ministers serving Alabama Baptist State

Convention churches or agencies.

"We welcome ministers from across the state and look forward to a time of fellowship, good golf and moments to share news about Judson College," Judson President David Potts said.

Prizes available

And there's more than just the game to look forward to. An assortment of prizes provided by local businesses will be given away at the traditional banquet dinner May 9. Flights, or divisions, for the tournament will be assigned after the May 9 round, and prizes will be awarded to first and second place golfers in each flight. Prizes also will be awarded for closest to the pin, longest drive, birdies and eagles. Special hole-in-one prizes include a \$10,000 cash prize for the eighth hole, a Nike driver or irons, a Bose Wave music system and a \$500 gift card.

Every golfer will receive a coupon redeemable at 100ThingsToBuy.com.

The registration fee includes meals, lodging, linens, green fees and carts.

Registration is available for the first 72 golfers only.

To register, visit www.judson.edu or call 334-683-5109. (UMobile, JC)

Pro-life bills advance in Alabama Legislature with leadership support

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

For years, pro-lifers have rallied outside the Alabama Statehouse hoping to encourage legislators to pass laws protecting the lives of unborn babies. And for years, anti-abortion bills have been proposed and left to die in the Senate and House Health committees. Now that the committees are under Republican control, this legislative session is already proving to be different.

As usual, legislators have sponsored anti-abortion bills, but unlike previous years, several of the bills are already seeing movement in the Statehouse. Some, which received a second reading, could even come up for a Senate vote in the upcoming weeks.

At the March 31 pro-life rally, held at the Statehouse, first lady Dianne Bentley praised the legislators in front of more than 150 rally attendees for their life-saving efforts. Also several lawmakers who are sponsoring and co-sponsoring the anti-abortion bills explained the legislation to the crowd.

Opportunity for change

"For the first time in a very long time, there really is an opportunity for some very positive things to happen," said Lisa Hogan, executive director of Sav-A-Life Vestavia, who attended the rally. "It's very exciting to see what could happen because of who they (pro-life legislators) are and what they believe. It's very obvious that they are all godly

men, and that's refreshing to see in government."

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, is also optimistic about this year's legislative session.

"In the past, we hoped we might sneak through one pro-life bill," he said. "Now we've got a long laundry list of pro-life bills that we are getting out of committee and hope will get passed."

One of the bills that passed from committee and received a second reading is Senate Bill (SB) 201, sponsored by Health Committee Chair Sen. Greg Reed, R-Cordova. This bill would require that insurance companies not cover elective abortions unless the insured pays extra. Sen. Shadrack McGill, R-Scottsboro, sponsored a similar bill, SB 281.

Reed also sponsored SB 183 and SB 202, which also received a second reading. SB 183 would keep health care plans from providing coverage for abortion, while SB 202 would allow Alabama to opt out of "allowing abortion coverage by exchange participating health plans" provided in the new federal health care reform law. Both bills are co-sponsored by Sens. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, and Gerald Allen, R-Tuscaloosa.

Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, also had success getting SB 46 out of committee and read a second time. The bill proposes the Health Care Rights of Conscience Act, which would give health care providers, institutions and payers the

authority to refuse to perform or participate in services that violate their conscience — like abortion — without fear of termination or transfer.

Pro-life bills

In the House, Rep. Kerry Rich, R-Albertville, made progress with House Bill (HB) 18, which prohibits abortion at or after 20 weeks, when babies are believed to feel pain. The bill was passed from the House Health Committee and read a second time. One bill pro-life supporters hope will pass is SB301, sponsored by Sen. Phil Williams, R-Huntsville, and 18 of his colleagues. This bill would define the term "persons" to include all humans from the moment of fertilization. HB 405, sponsored by Rep. John Merrill, R-Tuscaloosa, and 31 of his colleagues, is the companion bill.

Other pro-life bills sponsored at the Statehouse include

► SB 308, sponsored by Sen. Clay Scofield, R-Arab, would require physicians planning to perform nonemergency abortions to administer ultrasounds and review the results with pregnant women.

► SB 34, also sponsored by Scofield, would make it a crime to expose a child at any developmental stage — including an unborn child — to a controlled substance, chemical substance or drug paraphernalia.

► SB 298, sponsored by Allen, would make it unlawful to administer any abortion-inducing drug to a woman without her receiving an exam by a physician. ☐

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Reverse Mortgage News

By **Jimmy Dixon**

What would you like to know about reverse mortgages? A common question I often get is, "How much can I get from a reverse mortgage?" Well, that depends on your age. The older you are the higher the percentage. For example, a 63-year-old can get a higher percentage than a 62-year-old.

Some folks have wanted to know, "Does my house have to be paid for?" The answer is not necessarily.

If the debt does not exceed the percentage the reverse pays, then the debt can be paid off. That means the homeowners will never have another mortgage payment as long as one of them lives in the home.

With that being said, I'm also asked, "What responsibilities will I have?" That's

simple — pay your homeowners insurance just like always, your property tax (if you're not exempt) and maintain your home.

A reverse mortgage is a loan insured by the Federal Housing Authority that allows anyone 62 or older to convert much of your hard earned home equity into tax-free money and help to provide you with financial independence.

If you want additional information about reverse mortgages, please call me and remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, I cover our great state helping folks improve the quality of their lives.

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Jimmy Dixon



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Lincoln-area church site of historical marker

March 20 was a day for memories at Refuge Baptist Church, Lincoln, as members gathered to celebrate the past and remember the Coosa River Baptist Association church's most notable deacon.

Col. Pleasant "Riggs" Crump, who served the church as a deacon for 71 years, was the last surviving Confederate soldier in Alabama. He was 104 years old when he died in 1951.

As part of its Old-fashioned Day, celebrating its 160-year history, Refuge Baptist held a me-

morial service for Crump and unveiled a plaque from the Alabama Historical Association recognizing its Halls Cemetery, where he is buried between his first and second wives, as a historic site.

In fact, Crump plotted the land for the cemetery, Pastor Joel Davis said.

"This man lived through the toughest times this country has ever seen," said Randell Thrasher, second lieutenant commander for one of the Birmingham camps of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Thrasher worked on the Crump project for two years before the historical association agreed to place the marker.

Crump was just 16 when he left for the war in 1863. Just two years later, he stood with Robert E. Lee as he surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Va.

When he came home, Crump became Refuge's longest-serving deacon.

He lived in the same house across the street from the church until his death. (TAB)



Photo by Lindsey Robinson

HISTORIC SITE — A plaque commemorating Col. Pleasant Riggs Crump, the last surviving Confederate soldier in Alabama, now stands in front of Refuge Baptist Church, Lincoln, where Crump served as a deacon for 71 years.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: First Baptist Church of Killen, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music. Please send resumes to the Personnel Committee at: First Baptist Killen, P.O. Box 236, Killen, AL 35645. For a copy of the job description, please contact the church office via 256-757-5334 or e-mail a request to: mail@firstbaptistkillen.org.

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

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF WORSHIP: Greenbrier Road Baptist Church, Anniston. Send resume to: Pastor Brad Williams at 1235 Greenbrier Dear Road, Anniston, AL 36207, or e-mail: bradwilliams@grbc.org.

PART-TIME MUSIC WORSHIP LEADER: Livingston First Baptist Church is seeking a part-time music worship leader who is spirit-motivated and flexible with people and situations. LFBC is a progressive church with recently updated audio/visual equipment. Send resumes to: LFBC, P.O. Box 2150, Livingston, AL 35470.

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

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF CHILDREN & YOUTH: The First Baptist Church of Shawmut (FBCCS) seeks a full-time minister of children and youth. FBCCS 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 resumes 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.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER TO STUDENTS: New Beginning Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational minister to students grades 1-12. Send resume to: New Beginning Baptist Church, 1076 Coley Creek Road, Alexander City, AL 35010, or e-mail: jpate@newbeginningsbc.net.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Philip R. Morris
Heflin Baptist Church

Having been born and raised and lived in Alabama for most of my life, there is one thing I have learned: People here are crazy about college football. Every coach of every team has a plan to win. How long would he last as a coach if he didn't have a plan?

Many people try to live out their life without a plan. They try everything under the sun to achieve success and happiness such as religion, doing good or trying to live right, but they come up feeling empty, lonely or left behind by life. Why? None of these things will ever work.

There is only one plan that will. Here is the good news for all of us — God has a plan for your life.

God's plan for your life is simply this: He wants to have a personal relationship with you. All you need to do is follow His plan.

First you must realize that you are a sinner and your sin separates you from God. As a result of your sin, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in your place on the cross. Admit to God that you understand that you are a sinner. Be willing to turn from (repent of) your sin and to Jesus.

Second you must believe that Jesus is God's Son (John 3:16), He died for you on the cross and God raised Him from the dead.

He is the only way to have real life here on earth and eternal life in heaven when you die.

Third you must confess your faith in Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

Through prayer, you invite Jesus to come into your life through the Holy Spirit to take control of your life. You are letting Him replace your plan for life with His perfect plan.

Finally begin to read the Bible every day. Talk to God every day in prayer. Find a good church where the Bible is taught and fully believed and become a part of it by believer's baptism. Tell someone else about God's plan. All of these steps help you grow as a new believer.

Life is not a game. The play clock is running. There are no timeouts. With God's plan, you win every time. Why not accept His plan for your life today while you still have time?

'A spiritual reality'

True rest comes from worship, being in relationship with God, scholars say

By Kristen Padilla
The Alabama Baptist

A Christian doesn't become a "couch potato" by resting and observing the Sabbath, said Ken Mathews, professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School (BDS) at Samford University in Birmingham. In fact, that's not at all how Scripture defines entering into a spiritual rest.

"There's a misconception that the Sabbath means you sit on your hands all day and there's no activity," Mathews said. When the Israelites observed the Sabbath, they worshiped God, which included "key ingredients" like prayer, sacrifice, praise, being in community and sharing a communal meal, he added.

But in order to have a biblical understanding of rest, one should start at Genesis 1 — the account of creation, said Gisela Kreglinger, assistant professor of theology at BDS.

"It's quite fascinating that in the Bible when we read about the creation account, 'For when God created the world,' ... that God also created time," Kreglinger said. "We have a pattern of six days of work and then resting on the seventh day. He rests from His work and enjoys it."

And as God did, so He commanded us, she said. And by obeying, "we are entering into God's rest and He is inviting us to rest with Him on the Sabbath. I think it's important to note that God began that rhythm (of time) with rest."

The first mention of the Sabbath is not found, however, until the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. In the Exodus account, the Sabbath is tied to creation (v. 11), and in the Deuteronomy account, it is tied to the Exodus from Egypt (v. 15), Mathews noted.

"The reason for the Sabbath observance was tied first to God as Creator in that on the seventh day, He consecrated (it) and made it holy," he said. "When we come together in worship, we are worshipping Him as our Creator and acknowledging He is sovereign Lord of all.

"In Deuteronomy 5, it's not tied to creation but redemption where it says the Sabbath was observed because God rescued His people from ... bondage," Mathews said. "[There is] a connection between God as Creator and God as Redeemer."

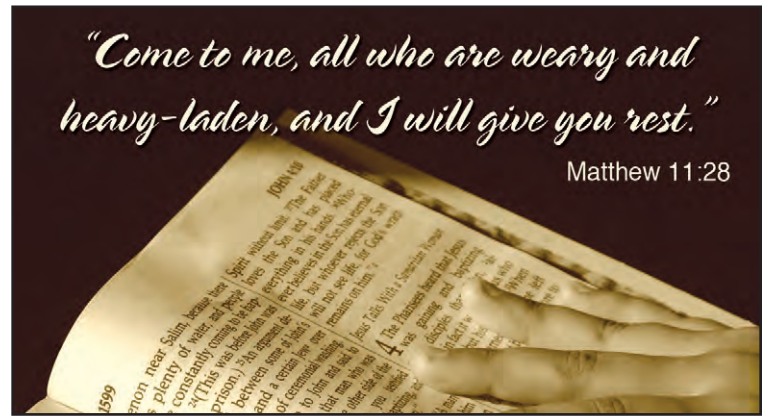
Understood from the biblical point of view, if one wants to find true, soul-satisfying rest, then he or she will find it only in God, Mathews said.

"Even though we may be resting from our activities in worship or in recreation, ultimately we will only have a satisfying rest when we place our faith and trust in God," he said.

The New Testament takes this concept further and teaches that finding rest in God means first placing one's faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

"[Rest] is a spiritual reality in which a believer rests in confidence in what God has done in salvation," said Dale Younce, professor of Christian studies at the University of Mobile.

And resting helps develop a receptivity to God's grace, Kreglinger added.



Matthew 11:28

sxc.hu, graphic by Lauren Chow

"I think the most important thing about the God we worship is that He loved us so much that He sent His Son into the world to live, suffer and die for us so that we could be reconciled to the Father through grace," she said. "If you can never rest and stop, you can never develop a receptivity to grace."

Standing in 'contention'

But oftentimes American Christians are pulled into the drivenness of their culture and they do not know how to rest, Kreglinger noted.

"On the one hand, I see this incredible dedication to God, but at the same time, in a paradoxical type of way, I see this incredible strive to make it happen," she said. "When that swaps over into Christian spirituality, it stands in contention with (the fact) that our salvation and sanctification is a gift of grace and our primary response is to be receptive and to work with God in what He is doing in our community."

Just like for Israel, observing the Sabbath and resting for Christians means going to church and worshipping God, Mathews said.

"We as Christians, if we are to enter into a fuller meaning of rest, should be fellowshipping with believers and attached to and identified with a body of believers," he said. "You go to church and be affiliated and study God's Word and hear its reading and proclaiming."

And as believers worship with others weekly, they also should worship daily, Younce said.

"[Resting] is a time each day that the believer spends time reading the Scripture, praying, committing his day to the Lord," he said.

Other suggestions for entering into a biblical rest are taking a walk and admiring God's creation, sharing a simple meal with other believers on Sunday or taking a hike with other believers and sharing a devotion, Kreglinger said.

As for her, she looks forward to Sundays when she does nothing but rest.

"I want to collapse into the arms of God," Kreglinger said. "On Sunday, I'm reminded that the most important things in this world are not what I have done but what God does and continues to do."



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FBC FLOMATON'S PIANISTS, ORGANISTS HONORED FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

First Baptist Church, Flomaton, honored (l to r) pianists Dianne Saylor and Irene Bondurant for 24 and 27 years of service and organists Ann Florie and Susan Adkinson for 40 and 41 years. On March 27, the women performed a concert and were presented with plaques.

Prioritize your responsibilities

My friend and co-worker Emily shared this with me after she heard someone speak on priorities.

Imagine you have a large Mason jar. Beside you is a pile of rocks. On the other side of you is a mound of pebbles. Theoretically the rocks and pebbles should all fit into the jar. Your job is to put both the rocks and pebbles into the jar.

First you dump the pebbles into the jar. They all fit.

Then you pick up each rock and place it in the jar. You have to do some twisting and turning of the rocks to get them to fit down into the pebbles. Some of the rocks are buried in the pebbles, and some lie on top of them. You have to force the rocks into the jar.

The fact is since you are trying to fit the rocks into a jar already filled with pebbles, you are unable to do so. Large rocks just won't fit into a jar already filled with pebbles.

So you dump the contents of the jar out. You separate the rocks from the pebbles. You start again.

This time, you place the rocks in the jar first. They all fit.

Then you dump the pebbles into the jar, one handful at a time. The pebbles slide and fall, finding their places around, under and on top of the rocks. The pebbles fill up the small empty places. They all fit in the jar.

Because you started with the

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



large rocks and then moved to the small pebbles, you were successful.

Now apply this exercise to your life. The jar is your life. The rocks and pebbles are your responsibilities.

'Which ones are rocks?'

Notice the first step: Separate the rocks from the pebbles. Of all the things you have to do, which ones are rocks and which ones are pebbles? While everything may seem important, not everything is a "rock." Placing your responsibilities into these two categories helps establish priorities.

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.

Then look at your list of "rocks." Which one has to happen first? Which one second?

Once you deal with those, you are ready to deal with the pebbles.

But here is the trap — because our pebble list is often easier and quicker to deal with, we tend to do the items on that list first. We think we can get a lot of little things done and that will help us. Unfortunately the little things eat up our time and our bigger "rocks" are left untouched. This hurts more in the long run.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Identify the large tasks in your life and begin with those. Then let the small tasks fit into the empty spaces. They always do.

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

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"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU..." JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

Family Matters

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Keep God In!

By Larry Daniels, LMFT
Pathways Professional Counselor

The best part of my work with Pathways Professional Counseling is seeing God's grace and mercy in action in the lives of the children and families with whom I work. Recently, this was very evident in a play therapy session with a child on one of our campuses. Stevie*, age 7, had been with Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries for a couple of months and had been in a difficult home situation. With children under the age of 11, I often use a play therapy room where children can play with a lot of toys in many ways, and they are free to say anything they want during these sessions.

During one particular session with Stevie, he stopped playing with the toys for a time so he could paint on the easel, which is common. He began his drawing with a yellow stick-figure near the top of the easel. Above this stick-figure, he wrote "God." He drew a blue stick-figure with what appeared to be wings beside "God," and said "That's an angel." He drew two lines underneath these two figures, and was careful to leave a blank space underneath God. Closer to the bottom of the easel he drew another horizontal line, which basically divided the easel into thirds. On the bottom portion of the easel he drew a red stick-figure with spikes on top of the figure's head, and then drew a circle around it. Above this figure he wrote "divl," and stated this was "the devil." In the middle portion of the easel he drew a house with smoke coming out of a chimney and wrote "home" beside it. He finished his drawing with a sun in the upper right corner and the conversation between he and I proceeded as follows:

Stevie: Sun.

Larry: Sun..., the sun's at the top and your home is between God and the devil.

Stevie: God protects home.

Larry: Ah, God is able to protect you in your home. There's a line between, and there's a gap that's open that connects God and your home, there.

Stevie: Devil out, keep God in!

Larry: You like that. That brings you comfort whenever you know that.

Stevie had concluded his painting at this point and continued to play with other toys. Children often express their emotions through play. I used various emotion words after his drawing, describing his play, such as "You are happy," and "You're excited." It was evident Stevie was happy and joyful for the remainder of his session.

Immediately following Stevie's session I sought out Stevie's house parents. I told them what had happened during our session and asked if they knew what might have prompted Stevie's drawing.

Bill said, "Well, two nights ago Stevie had come to us to say that he wanted to accept Jesus into his heart." Bill said they discussed with Stevie what his thoughts were about this and that Stevie understood his sin, the need to be saved from his sin and that he wanted Jesus to forgive his sin and live in his heart.

Stevie clearly understood, accepted and was living his decision to turn his life over to the control of Jesus Christ. His witness to me that day in the play room was evidence of the new life he has in our Savior. Praise God for salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ! And praise God for the house parents of ABCH who serve faithfully to protect, nurture and restore children and families through Christ-centered services, and who witness and lead the children in their care to the Redeemer!

*Name has been changed for privacy.

Want to Help?

Want to help children like Stevie? Encourage your church to give to the Annual Children's Homes Offering. Approximately one-third of our annual operating budget comes from offering and budget gifts sent directly to us from churches. Contact Kay Taylor at ktaylor@abchome.org or 1-888-720-8805 for more information.

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

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Sanctity of life: 'God's will for the world He has made'

BELTON, Texas — Sanctity of human life transcends politics and reaches far beyond one or two hot-button issues, Christian ethicist David Gushee told students and faculty at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB).

"Sanctity of life is the biblical conviction that all human beings are to be perceived as sacred, as persons of equal and immeasurable worth and of inviolable dignity," said Gushee, distinguished university professor of Christian ethics at Mercer University.

"This includes human beings at any and every stage of life," he said, "from womb to tomb; in any and every state of consciousness; of any and every race, color and ethnicity; of every level of intelligence; whatever their religion, language, nationality or gender; of every type of character and behavior, physical ability or disability, potential, class and social status and whether they are friends, strangers or enemies to us. Everyone. No exceptions."

Early Christian writings reflect a strong commitment to recognizing the sanctity of all people, said Gushee, speaking in a lecture series sponsored by the UMHB Center for Baptist Studies and the university's honors program. "Christians once changed the world through their Christ-drenched love for the abandoned of the world — lepers, slaves, prostitutes, beggars, abandoned infants and those condemned to die," he said. Today, many people associate sanctity of life only with discussions of abortion or capital punishment, but its implications actually are more far-reaching than those issues, Gushee emphasized. "The sanctity of life is not a slogan," he said.

"It cannot be confined to a single issue and it is not owned by any political party. The sanctity of life is God's will for the world He has made. Honoring that sanctity is our comprehensive moral obligation as Christians. If God has decided that each and every life is sacred, then God's people have no choice but to do the same."

FBC Orlando raises \$5.6 million for homeless

ORLANDO, Fla. — Responding to the needs of the region's homeless, First Baptist Church, Orlando, raised \$5.6 million in donations and pledges with an impromptu offering March 12–13.

The outpouring of love was a result of a March 6 story on the CBS news program "60 Minutes," which Liz Butler, the church's marketing and public relations manager, described as a "new" kind of homelessness in Central Florida in which families who lost their jobs are living in motels because they lost their homes to foreclosure.

The news report was seen by millions of viewers across the country — among them, Christian author and teacher Bruce Wilkinson, who was already scheduled to speak at First, Orlando, during the March 12–13 weekend. "He saw the story while he was working on his message," Butler said. "When he saw the interview, he said, 'Wow. We have to do something.' He called Pastor (David) Uth and said, 'Your people are going to bring in \$1 million to help these needy families.'" Wilkinson, in his messages, laid out the dire need of the people of Central Florida and urged the congregation to contribute whatever they could. The results were individual contributions ranging from one dollar to thousands of dollars and one as high as \$1 million. "We've got to help Orlando and let them know there is help," Uth said. "We have to say to them, 'God placed us here for you.' This church started in 1871 and we believe God started this church here for a reason. I believe He knew this day was coming and He positioned us so we could make a difference."

First, Orlando, has had a long partnership with numerous Central Florida Christian organizations, just about all of which will receive funds from the weekend offering.

Ethnic leaders share ideas at WMU summit

BIRMINGHAM — Hispanic, Navajo, Russian and Chinese were among the 11 cultures represented by leaders who met with the common goal of increasing missions involvement in their churches through Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). "Living in an increasingly multicultural world, we all benefit from learning about one another from one another," said Carolyn Porterfield, multicultural consultant for Texas WMU and organizer of the Ethnic Leadership Summit hosted by WMU at its national offices in Birmingham.

More than 50 missions leaders from 13 states participated. Key-note speakers Patty Lane, director of intercultural ministries for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Linda Clark, former California WMU executive director, offered insight on cultural differences and ways to nurture relationships with multicultural audiences. During breakout sessions, participants shared their own experiences and ideas to learn from each other and gain a deeper understanding of ways to effectively serve and resource multicultural churches.



SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Finch Named Business School Dean:** J. Howard Finch has been named dean of Samford University's Brock School of Business, effective July 1.

Finch's appointment was announced by J. Bradley Creed, Samford's provost and executive vice president. The selection follows a nationwide search to replace Beck A. Taylor, who resigned in May 2010 to become president of Whitworth University in Spokane, Wash.

Finch currently is Alico Chair of Financial Management and Planning at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers, where he has taught since 2000. A native of Dothan, Finch holds a bachelor of business administration degree from North Georgia College & State University in Dahlonega, a master of business administration degree from Mercer University in Macon, Ga., and master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees in finance from the University of Alabama.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Upper Room Theatre to Present 'The Music Man':** The University of Mobile Upper Room Theatre will present "The Music Man" at Saraland High School Performing Arts Center April 15–16 at 7 p.m. and April 17 at 2 p.m.

In this musical comedy, a con man goes to Iowa in order to swin-

dle a town with promises of a boys band, but he never anticipated the Iowa stubbornness of one astute librarian.

"The Music Man" is the final production of the 2010–11 academic year by the Upper Room Theatre. Bruce Earnest is director of the production. For tickets, contact the Upper Room Theatre box office at 251-442-2383 or e-mail rdoswell@umobile.edu.

► **UMobile Accepting Applications for Summer Music Camp:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Center for Performing Arts is accepting applications for the 18th Annual Summer Music Camp, June 13–17 on the UMobile campus.

Students in grades 4–11 will learn from UMobile faculty and local music educators and performers. Under the direction of Barbara Laurendine, adjunct instructor of piano in the UMobile Center for Performing Arts, the camp offers instruction in all instruments, including voice.

Campers should have a minimum of one year of disciplined study in music and a recommendation by a music teacher.

Junior Camp is offered for grades 4–7 from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Senior Camp is offered for grades 8–11 from 8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Private music lessons also are available.

Registration deadline is June 7. Full and partial tuition scholarships are available by audition, and registration deadline for scholarship auditions is May 5.

To download a brochure and registration form, visit www.umobile.edu.

bile.edu/smc or call 251-442-2420.

► **UMobile Intercultural Studies Students Serve in Czech Republic:** Five University of Mobile (UMobile) student volunteers spent their spring break teaching English and building relationships with children, teenagers and adults in Prague, Czech Republic.

The international service project included cultural and worldview training, free English clubs, conversational English classes at a local school, coffee and tea distribution and a home discussion group March 12–19.

Doug Wilson, associate professor and adviser for the UMobile Intercultural Studies Program, led the international service project.

For more information, contact UMobile at 251-442-2222.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson to Present 'Steel Magnolias':** The Judson College drama production class will present the Broadway play "Steel Magnolias" April 8–9 at 7 p.m. and April 10 at 2 p.m. in Alumnae Auditorium. Judson artist-in-residence Billie Jean Young will direct.

A tragi-comedy, the play is set in a beauty salon owned by Truvy, a wisecracking Louisiana hairdresser whose customers enjoy getting their hair done in her shop as much for the fun and fellowship as for the expertise.

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



Photo courtesy of Lakeside Baptist Church

LAKESIDE CHURCH'S GAs RAISE MONEY FOR BIG OAK RANCH

The Girls in Action of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, raised \$2,364.90 for the Big Oak Ranch in Springville by holding a coffeehouse following the March 6 evening worship service. A check was presented to Jonathan Smidt, director of the Big Oak Girls' Ranch, during the March 27 morning worship service. Breck T. Ladd is pastor.



RNS photo

TELLING THE MESSAGE — More and more churches are making their own films like 'The Grace Card,' made by Calvary Church of the Nazarene in Cordova, Tenn., as a way to share the gospel.

3, 2, 1 ... action!

Fed up with Hollywood, churches make their own films

This year's Oscars may have been passed out, but for some churches across the country, the major motion picture season is just getting started.

Frustrated with the movies Hollywood has been releasing, more and more congregations are making their own feature films.

One is Friends Church in Yorba Linda, Calif., a Quaker congregation with an evangelical megachurch worship style where members are finishing production on a film called "Not Today."

"I still hear people say it in the church, 'What are we doing? We're making a movie? What are you talking about?'" Jon Van Dyke, Friends Church's media director, told the PBS show "Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly."

Van Dyke is director of "Not Today," which tells the story of a spoiled young American who goes on a partying trip to India and gets pulled into the search for a little girl sold to human traffickers. The film was partly shot in India and centers around Dalits, the so-called "untouchables" on the lowest rung of the traditional caste system.

Friends Church connected with Dalits during missions trips.

"I had never heard of the Dalits until I went to India," said Brent Martz, producer of "Not Today" and pastor of creative ministries at Friends Church.

Friends Church committed to help free Dalits who had been trafficked and to build 200 schools for Dalit children. And, because the congregation is in the back yard of Hollywood, members decided to make a movie as well.

"It wasn't just to make a movie, because we're not in the movie business; we're a church," said Matthew Cork, the congregation's lead pastor. "But as a church, we do have

an obligation and a responsibility to tell the message, and we believe that this was the best way for us."

Some experts question whether this is something local churches should be doing.

"I guess I have an outdated notion that churches are there to inspire parishioners to then go and do things, in whatever genre, whether it's politics or media or whatever," said film producer Mark Joseph.

"I'm not sure about church as film studio or church as commercial enterprise," he said. "But that's, I think, the danger down this path."

The church film-making trend began at Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., where associate pastors and brothers Alex and Stephen Kendrick have released three feature films since 2003. Their fourth one,

"Courageous," will be about policemen struggling to be good fathers.

In Sherwood Baptist's films, volunteer church members make up nearly all the cast and crew and do everything from catering to building sets. Sherwood teamed with Provident Films, a division of Sony, and found a very receptive audience. Its third film, "Fireproof," starring Kirk Cameron, was made on a \$500,000 budget, and it took in more than \$33 million at the box office, making it the highest-grossing independent film of 2008. Sherwood films have a specific message, and making their own movies allows the church to express it. The films have an overtly Christian tone, and the upcoming "Courageous" continues that.

Sherwood's efforts have inspired other congregations. "You've got these church media directors and their pastors going, 'Hey, why can't we do that?'" Joseph said.

At Calvary Church of the Nazarene in Cordova, Tenn., optometrist David Evans wrote and directed the

church's annual Passion play for 15 years. He said after watching "Fireproof," he came away believing Calvary should make a film, too.

"I realized that God had been preparing us for the last 15 years to do something far greater than we could ever imagine, and that's what set off the course of actions for me to begin writing the basic story of 'The Grace Card,'" he said.

"The Grace Card," which Evans also directed, is a story about forgiveness and racial reconciliation. Although many in the cast are Academy Award winner Louis Gossett Jr., and it has several Hollywood partners, including Samuel Goldwyn Films.

"We want, No. 1, for God to be glorified through this movie," Evans said. "We want to plant seeds that result in people demonstrating forgiveness and extending grace. That's something we all need to do on a larger scale."

At Friends Church, filmmakers said they tried to incorporate their characters' faith into the story in a natural way. "This isn't a Christian movie," Martz said. "It's a movie about human trafficking that happens to be (seen) through the experience of a couple of Christians who are really struggling to live a good Christian life."

'Talent in the church'

Friends Church intends to deliver Hollywood quality with "Not Today," and it has an advantage over other churches. Van Dyke spent more than 22 years working in Hollywood and other church members are in the business as well. He said it's important the film, which the church hopes to release early next year, not be perceived as a "B" movie. "Clearly there's tons of talent in the church. I mean ... Hollywood should be following us. They should be going, 'Wow, look what the church is doing.'" (RNS)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Pakistani Christian sentenced for 'blasphemy' dies

KARACHI, Pakistan — A Christian serving a life sentence in Karachi Central Jail on accusations that he had sent text messages blaspheming the prophet of Islam died March 15 amid suspicions that he was murdered.

Qamar David's life had been threatened since he and a Muslim, Munawar Ahmad, were accused of sending derogatory text messages about Muhammad in June 2006, said David's former lawyer, Pervaiz Chaudhry.

On Feb. 25, 2010, David had received a sentence of life in prison, which in Pakistan is 25 years, and was fined \$1,170. Chaudhry, who said he was David's counsel until Islamic threats against his life forced him to stop in July 2010, said the Christian had expressed fears for his life several times during the trial.

"David did not die of a heart attack as the jail officials are claiming," Chaudhry said. "He was being threatened ever since the trial began, and he had also submitted a written application with the jail authorities for provision of security, but no step was taken in this regard."

Conflicting versions of his death by jail officials also raised doubts. A jail warden said David was reported crying for help from his cell March 15 in the early hours of the morning. He said David, who was breathing at the time, was transported to the Civil Hospital Karachi, but that doctors there pronounced him dead on arrival. He also said, however, that he had heard from colleagues that David was found dead inside his cell and that his body had been sent to the hospital for post-mortem, not for treatment.

Karachi Central Prison Deputy Superintendent Raja Mumtaz insisted that David was alive when he reached the hospital.

Christians slain in attack outside church in Pakistan

HYDERABAD, Pakistan — Two Christians were gunned down and two others are in a serious condition with bullet wounds after Muslim youths attacked them outside a church building in Hyderabad on March 21, witnesses said. Residents of Hurr Camp, a colony of working-class Christians in Hyderabad in Sindh province, were reportedly celebrating the 30th anniversary of their Salvation Army church when a group of Muslim youths gathered outside the building and started playing music loudly on their cell phones. They also started teasing Christian women as they arrived for the celebration, according to reports.

Christians Younis Masih, 47; Siddique Masih, 45; Jameel Masih, 22; and a 20-year-old identified as Waseem came out of the church building to stop the Muslim youths from teasing the women. A verbal clash ensued, after which the Muslim youths left, only to return with handguns.

Witnesses said the Muslim youths opened fire on the Christians, killing Younis Masih and Jameel Masih instantly, and seriously injuring Siddique Masih and Waseem.

Younis Masih is survived by his wife and four children, while Jameel Masih was married only a month ago, and his sudden death has put his family into a state of shock. "My son had gone to the church to attend the anniversary celebrations from our family ... a few hours later we were told about his death," a wailing Surraya Bibi said. "I got him married only a month ago. The cold-blooded murderers have destroyed my family, but our most immediate concern is Jameel's wife, who has gone completely silent since the news was broken to her."

Proposed Tajikistani law could violate religious freedom

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan — Public consultation on Tajikistan's controversial proposed Law on Parental Responsibility for the Education and Upbringing of Children ended March 15. Among the numerous new restrictions the draft imposes is to ban all participation by anyone under the age of 18 in religious activities — apart from funerals. As with the Religion Law, the draft Parental Responsibility Law is in parts extremely unclear, allowing much room for official arbitrary actions.

Local religious communities, independent legal experts and human rights defenders have condemned the draft law as violating the religious freedom of children and parents among other freedoms guaranteed by Tajikistan's Constitution and international human rights conventions.