



INSIDE



Alabama shares gospel in North Africa, Middle East

◆ Page 3



Crime victims identify with movie about Baptist pastor's son

◆ Page 4



'Samford Gives Back' to community, helps fulfill needs

◆ Page 5

Dealing with shock

Disaster relief chaplains deployed to Southern Union after shooting

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

We did a lot of listening today," Barry Cosper said April 7. "The main question we kept hearing ... was 'Why?'"

Cosper, director of missions for Tallapoosa Baptist Association, was one of four Alabama Baptist disaster relief chaplains serving at Southern Union State Community College in Opelika following a shooting on campus April 6. At press time, another team of chaplains was set to be on campus April 11.

A shooter killed one person and injured three others in a domestic dispute in a parking lot while students were changing classes. The school's nursing and Emergency Medical Services faculty responded immediately to assist those who were injured.

The suspected shooter, Thomas Franklin May III, turned himself in and has been charged with capital murder and attempted murder. A trial date had not been set at press time.

The chaplains were deployed by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) at the request of the school to meet with faculty and students who needed to talk about the tragedy.

"While we regret this tragedy took place, I am thankful that Alabama Baptists could offer the support of our disaster relief chaplains," said Mel Johnson, SBOM disaster relief strategist.

Each person the chaplains talked with was dealing with shock, said Jan Autery, a disaster relief chaplain and member of First Baptist Church, Tallahassee.

"Those we talked with expressed their feeling that tragedies like this aren't supposed to happen at a small community college," she said.

Eric Jackson, a disaster relief chaplain and pastor of New Home Baptist Church, Titus, said, "I felt good about our ministry with the faculty and students."

Encouraged to talk

"An experience like this has a way of waking up past crisis experiences that people have been through," he said. "We just encouraged them to talk."

But talking is just the first step to recovery from this type of disaster, said Ray Baker, associate in the SBOM's office of Christian ethics/chaplaincy ministries.

"We wanted to hear people's stories, see how they felt about the incident and then help them find some positive action to take," Baker said.

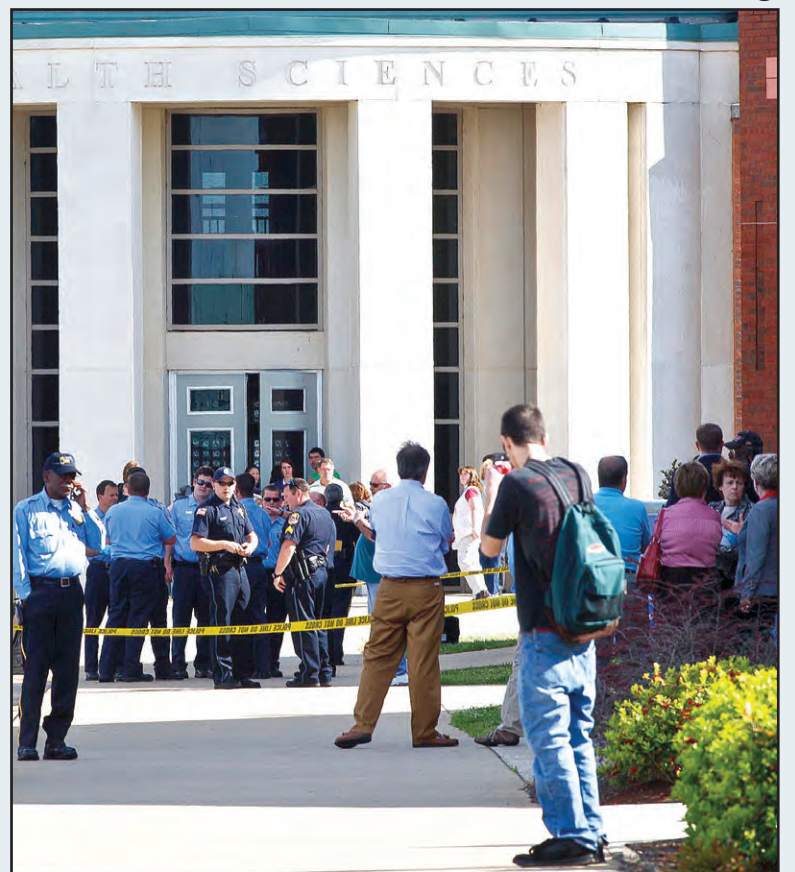


Photo courtesy of Opelika-Auburn News/Jim Rainey

TRAGEDY — Authorities respond to Southern Union State Community College in Opelika on April 6 after a man opened fire killing one person and injuring three in a parking lot.

Men's Fraternity helps state Baptists find out what a real man is

By John Evans
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Women in Selma Baptist Association are getting new husbands, thanks to Men's Fraternity.

"I've seen men change 100 percent," said Harold Lippert, pastor of West End Baptist Church, Selma, and a graduate of the intensive program.

Created in 1990 by Robert Lewis, pastor at large of Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Ark., and author of "Raising a Modern-day Knight," Men's Fraternity is designed

to teach men how to live biblical, authentic manhood.

"Men's Fraternity helps you ... find out what a man really is and what God expects in a man," Lippert said.

A number of churches in Selma Association are conducting the program, and Director of Missions Tom Stacey said people — wives, in particular — are noticing radical changes.

"Numerous times, we've heard comments from wives, saying, 'I don't know what you're teaching at that Men's Fraternity class but keep it up,'" Stacey said.

The program, which combines biblical teaching with small group discussion, centers around three one-year studies written by Lewis that focus on different aspects of manhood.

The first study, The Quest for Authentic Manhood, deals with issues men commonly face and introduces Jesus Christ as the One who can help

them with those issues. The study requires each man to write a plan detailing where he was in the past as a man, where he is now and where he hopes to be in the future.

"You just can't read [those plans] without tears when you see what their lives were and what they have become because of what they've learned," Lippert said.

Focus on family

In the second study, Authentic Manhood: Winning at Work and Home, a major focus is placed on a man's relationship with his family, teaching him to better communicate with his wife and parent his children.

The third study, The Great Adventure, prepares men to utilize what they have learned in the program.

"[It teaches you to] go out into the world, put it into practice and put your life at the feet of Jesus so you can be

the man God intended you to be," Lippert said.

Once men complete one of the studies, they take part in a ceremony celebrating their "graduation" from that part of the program. In Selma Association, 85 men are due to graduate this month, bringing the association's total number of graduates to 150.

"I'm very much of a proponent for Men's Fraternity, because I have seen what it has done in men's lives in churches that have gone through it," said Tommy Puckett, former director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' (SBOM) office of men's ministries and disaster relief.

Puckett singled out Selma Association as an example of fully embracing Men's Fraternity; the program has spread beyond church walls into the community.

Jim Creech, a member of First Baptist (See 'Fraternity,' page 3)

COMMENT

Is God Really Against Me?

Perhaps you know the feeling — the feeling that God is against you. Perhaps as you look back over your life, you conclude that all that has gone wrong proves that God is against you. Perhaps you are consumed with questions about how you can change God's mind and get Him on your side.

Countless people are gripped by the fear that unless they perform all their religion's slavish acts, God will always be against them. No matter how burdensome the tasks, such people rottenly perform their good deeds. If their deeds cannot atone for past sins, then at least they may help them escape some harsher penalty, they believe.

Some religions teach that God is against humanity. God is the direct cause of all that befalls one in life — the good and the bad — such religions teach. The only way to satisfy His wrath is to give oneself to that faith's rules. If one keeps the rules, then He will love him or her. If one does not keep the rules, then He will condemn him or her, for He loves only those who demonstrate their faith by keeping the rules.

Sometimes individual Christians may feel that God is against them. Unfortunately some so-called Christian sects have occasionally subverted the Christian faith with such thinking. But the core of the Christian faith is that God is for us, and He proved that on the first Easter.

Perhaps the clearest Old Testament imagery is seen in the Passover. Israel was a slave nation longing to be free of Egyptian persecution. After Pharaoh refused to obey God's commands as presented through Moses, He promised the death angel would claim the firstborn of every family in the land. The only way of escape was the sacrifice of a spotless lamb whose blood would then be spread on the crosspiece of the doorframe of each household.

Exodus 12 describes how God took the initiative to do what the Israelites could not do for themselves. The means of salvation for the Israelites was a sacrifice, but it was God's plan and power that brought deliverance. One finds that process repeated over and over again in Scripture.

Scholars have long pointed out that the Old Testament assumes that God acts to save His chosen people. Often the stories are about saving His people in the midst of political turmoil. But always the



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

stories are about God's efforts to save His people from their sins. One can follow that thread of redemption from the fall in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15) through the pleading of prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah all the way to Malachi's closing verses with the promise of the terrible Day of the Lord.

Even when Israel disobeyed, even when the people turned a deaf ear to God's love, He still acted to redeem them. His deeds demonstrated what the writer of 1 John would later declare when he wrote, "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

Thread of redemption

In his first letter, the apostle Peter used the image of redemption to challenge new Christians to righteous living. In 1 Peter 1:18, he wrote, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed." Obviously these early believers had been captive to something that necessitated God's intervention to overcome. It was a reference to their need for sins to be forgiven. "But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect," he continued, referencing the very words describing the lamb sacrificed that first Passover.

This sacrifice was not a random act. Rather it was part of a process "chosen before the creation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20). Sacrifice and redemption have always been tied together in God's economy. Hebrews 9:22 declares, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness."

In his letter to Titus, the apostle Paul instructed the pastor in Crete to "wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness" (Titus 2:13). There is the

process again — God acting to do what mankind cannot do for itself.

God's ultimate act of redemption was in Jesus doing for us what we could not do for ourselves — "to redeem us from all wickedness (sin)." In Romans 5:6, Paul explained it this way: "At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."

The result of God's redeeming act was to create "a people that are His very own" (Titus 2:14). Think about it. God made this mighty offering (Jesus' death on Calvary) that He might bind to Himself all the redeemed. Believers in God's great sacrifice of redemption become members of His family — adopted sons and daughters for eternity. That is not the act of a God who is against us. That is the favor of a God who loves us.

The thread of redemption running throughout the Bible is unbreakably anchored to God's love. In Romans 5:8, Paul wrote, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." In 2 Corinthians 5:19, Paul wrote, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." God always takes the initiative. God always acts to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The sacrifice that made redemption possible was not "mean old God" punishing "sweet Jesus" until God's anger cooled. No. The sacrifice that made redemption possible was God's love at work. The sacrifice was planned before time began and revealed "at just the right time" for our sake. The sacrifice proves God's love for all who will see. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

The God of the Christian faith is not against us. He is for us (Rom. 8:31). All the time and in all situations, He is for us. Those who accept God's redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord echo the words of Paul when he said nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39).

Letters to the Editor

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

A few months back, I picked up a Broadman publication copyrighted in 1953, which was titled "Good Stewards" by J.E. Willard. I understand that it was published as a Training Union "credit study," perhaps for January Bible study.

It covers every aspect of Christian

stewardship. It is indeed valuable from a personal standpoint and certainly informs God's people of their responsibility for local and worldwide missions. I wish that it could be reissued or reprinted since it is so clear in scope and intent.

Baptists have a heritage of great writers and teachers, and we are doing a

great disservice to ourselves by not utilizing those resources. We don't need too much "new;" we do need to rely heavily on following the "old paths."

I have spoken to some older pastors, and they spoke well of the materials of yesteryear.

Carl Uptain
Jasper, Ala.

THE
ALABAMA BAPTIST

"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 Elaine Price, Correspondent, TAB

Maxine Smith

Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa
Tuscaloosa Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES: The Beatitudes and Hebrews 13:5b

FAVORITE HYMNS: "The Solid Rock" and "He Hideth My Soul"

HOBBIES: Reading and tending flowers

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Howard for 63 years; two children, Rush and Carol



SMITH

Maxine Smith has served Ridgecrest Baptist Church faithfully for more than 50 years. She presently teaches an adult coed Sunday School class and sings in the choir. She also finds the time and energy to baby-sit her great-grandchildren.

Q: What was your early life like?

A: My father died when I was only 10 years old. My two siblings and I grew up in the country in Akron, Ala., with my mother and grandparents. We did not have many material things, but we did have countless friends and family and lots of love.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I came to know the Lord from the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word by Rev. H.C. Bell and the Sunday School teachers at Mount Hebron Baptist Church. I accepted Christ as my Savior during a revival at the church when I was 12 years old.

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

A: I have always had a love for the church. I have taught Sunday School for several different age groups. I have also served as church clerk and on ... committees throughout the years.

Q: What have you gotten from that involvement?

A: There are too many blessings to count, but the greatest is the fact that God has seen fit to use me in His service.

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

A: I will continue to serve in the church as long as I live and am physically and mentally able.

Q: What does the Christian life mean to you?

A: It is my source of strength and joy, my anchor. It is an unspeakable blessing to be a member of the body of Christ. ☞

'A bigger purpose'

Alabamian shares gospel in North Africa, Middle East

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Walter Proudfoot says there's no need for a weather forecast at his place. It's going to be sunny, and it's going to be hot.

Sounds a little like Proudfoot's home state of Alabama, except that where he is now, he can ride a camel to McDonald's.

Not that he would though.

Proudfoot spends most of his time walking the dusty streets and having tea with shop owners, practicing his Arabic and getting to know about their lives all at the same time.

"It's different from sharing or interacting with someone in the States," he said. "I'm getting to learn how they live and to be a part of their lives."

Being from Alabama, Proudfoot said he had a sense of what Southern hospitality was all about but it doesn't compare to what he's experiencing in his current home.

"It's incredible the amount of trust they will place in you," Proudfoot said, adding that a friend of his, soon after they met, told him he was "his brother."

Proudfoot doesn't take lightly these opportunities to share the gospel — or the calling that got him there.

"Two epic things happened in my life that made me realize God had a bigger purpose for me," he said.

First, when Proudfoot was 5 years old, his mom's car flipped and he came out of the accident unscathed.

"I know someone out there loved me enough to keep me safe," Proudfoot said. "And then a nurse told me, 'God must have big plans for your life.'"

It wasn't too long after that he accepted Christ as his Savior.

Fast-forward 20 years.



IMB photo

MAKING A DIFFERENCE — Walter Proudfoot spends most of his time with new friends practicing Arabic or drinking tea and learning the way of life in North Africa and the Middle East. Protected in two car accidents, Proudfoot knows his life is a 'testimony to God.'

"I had another wreck, where I hit a deer, ran off the road and slammed into a tree," Proudfoot said.

This time, he was injured. And as Proudfoot sat on the side of the interstate holding his head and wondering who he was and how he got there, he knew one thing was true: He needed to know if his life was in the right.

It was a question Proudfoot kept on asking, even after the stitches and the bandages went away.

"Why am I busting my tail trying to make money and stuff? All the Scripture I was reading — I kept asking myself, 'Do I really, really believe this? And if I do, what do I do

about it?' It didn't seem like the things I was doing mattered," he said.

A year and a half later, Proudfoot moved to serve the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East. He spends part of his time in the community where he lives and part of his time traveling, doing media work to share stories from overseas with people back in the States.

"I'm really glad I'm here," Proudfoot said. "There are moments where I know what I'm doing is actually making a difference. It's all a testimony to God."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Name has been changed for security reasons. ☞

Fraternity helps build relationships with brothers in Christ

(continued from page 1)

tist Church, Selma, leads a group that meets weekly at the Selma Performing Arts Center and includes men of all ages and denominations. After viewing the week's lesson on DVD, the men sit down in small groups to discuss it.

"The Holy Spirit is just really active among these groups of men, opening our hearts up to share with each other what we got from [the lesson] and how the Lord is speaking to us," Creech said. "Somebody who shares ministers to somebody else in the midst of it."

He said Men's Fraternity is more than just going through a program; it is developing relationships with brothers in Christ, as he found out when his wife was diagnosed with cancer.

"The Lord used all those relationships just to minister to us in an awesome way I've never experienced before" said Creech, who added his wife went through treatment and has "a new lease on life."

"A lot of guys met my wife, asked quite often how she was doing and said they were praying for her," he said.

Creech also said the program has helped racial reconciliation in Selma. He related the story of an elderly black man in the group who said he used to think white men "had it easy" but discovered that men face common struggles.

"As far as the challenge of living as the

men God calls us to be, he recognized that the color of your skin doesn't free you from struggling," Creech said.

Puckett said one of Men's Fraternity's advantages is that it not only helps men examine their lives but also make a plan for moving forward; he wishes the program would become a "tidal wave" spreading across the land.

Relief efforts still critical in Japan

Clean drinking water, food and assistance with cleanup operations are the most critical needs among the citizens of Japan, reports Alabama Baptist disaster relief representative John Hayes.

Hayes and three other disaster relief specialists recently returned from an assessment trip to Japan for Southern Baptists.

The greatest contribution Southern Baptists can make to the relief effort is to train church members in Japan in mass food distribution and water purification, Hayes said.

A great opportunity exists to bring Christ to Japan and strengthen the local church, he noted.

But response efforts remain slow be-

"I think this is a much-needed discipleship [tool]," he said. "[It is] the equipping of a godly man to live in our world today."

For more information, visit www.mensfraternity.com.

To schedule a consultation about starting the program, contact Puckett at 334-224-2082 or Steve Stephens at the SBOM at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 268. ☞

cause the Japanese governmental restrictions hinder the efforts of international nongovernmental organizations, said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"The response for this event will be lengthy due to the amount of destruction," he said. "We must be patient and sensitive when dealing with cultures that differ from our own."

"Baptist Global Response is working to help establish connections for volunteers and we remain committed to partnerships that will strengthen the work of our Southern Baptist representatives," Johnson said.

For more information about disaster relief efforts, visit www.alsbom.org/japan. (SBOM)

Crime victims identify with movie about Baptist pastor's son

A movie about a Baptist preacher's son who survived gunshot wounds from a brutal attack that killed his parents yet forgave their murderer is resonating with audiences not only in churches and theaters but also among victims of violent crime walking similar paths.

"Heaven's Rain," a feature film produced and co-written by Brooks Douglass, a crime survivor who went on to pioneer victims' rights legislation as a state senator, made its Tennessee premiere April 5 before a diverse audience of law enforcement, victim advocates and crime survivors. The screening was billed as an early observance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, sponsored by the U.S. Justice Department April 10-16.

"I hope you don't feel like what you are watching is a crime story," Douglass said in a question-and-answer session after the screening at Friendship Baptist Church in north Nashville. "I think of it as a story about our family. It's a tribute to my parents, and it's mostly a story about forgiveness."

The movie tells the story in vignettes from Douglass' childhood as a son of Southern Baptist missionary parents in Brazil, to Oklahoma, where his father was pastor of Putnam City Baptist Church. Then to the night of Oct. 15, 1979, when 16-year-old Brooks Douglass let two drifters into their home

who wound up robbing the family, raping his 12-year-old sister and shooting all four bound family members before leaving them for dead.

Richard and Marilyn Douglass died at the scene. Bleeding and faint, Leslie managed to help untie Brooks, who despite his own wounds got her to the family car and drove them both to a doctor, who in turn got them to a hospital in time to save their lives.

The movie climaxes with an eight-minute scene summarizing Douglass' 90-minute prison meeting in 1995 with murderer Glen Ake, during which Douglass let go of hate and anger bottled up for years and forgave the triggerman who changed his life.

Douglass said forgiving Ake "absolutely" helped him move forward in healing. "It was a life-changing moment that I did not expect to happen," he said.

Douglass said the film is not intended to pass judgment about whether others in similar situations should do the same.

"What the story is, is this is what I needed," he said. "If you can glean something from that, we all process these things differently, but we believe this is an important part."

The film also profiles Douglass' career in the Oklahoma State Senate, where he sponsored 24 bills establishing rights for crime vic-

tims. In one scene from the statehouse floor, Douglass' character describes a mother who was billed \$500 for a medical exam after her daughter's rape.

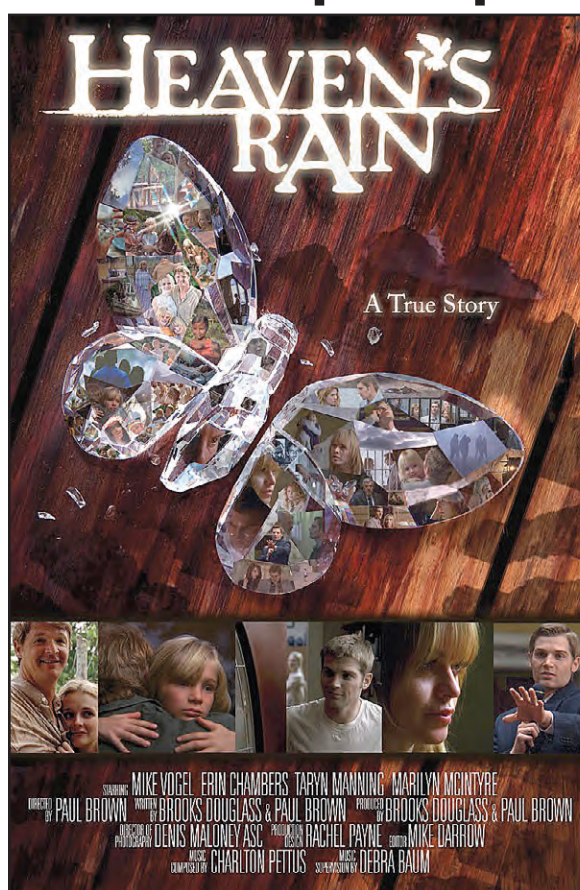
"We had to pay that for Leslie, and we were never reimbursed," Douglass said. "The car that I drove to the doctor's house that night, who took us to the hospital, it was impounded by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation as evidence. We had to pay \$150 to get the car back. It was a different world and a different system. Today hopefully you don't have to sell your home and all your belongings to pay the medical costs and the funeral expenses."

Another law Douglass fought for was the right of victims to make an impact statement as part of their attacker's sentencing.

Ake and his partner, Steven Hatch, both originally received death sentences. Hatch was executed but Ake's sentence was overturned when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the trial court erred by not providing him with a psychiatrist to assist with his insanity defense.

'Trying to move on'

Douglass said Ake was lucid enough after his arrest to give a 40-page account of a spree that included a total of four murders. Af-



heavensrainmovie.com

"I was trying to move on, and I think that made a difference in the mind of the jury. I didn't look any worse for the wear."

When he testified the first time, he had lost 43 pounds in the hospital due to his injuries. "So when I got up on the stand three or four months later, it made a difference," he said. "I looked like I had been through something. Seven years later, I didn't, and so they gave him life sentences."

Douglass encouraged fellow victim-rights advocates not to underestimate their influence to change legal systems that too often overlook rights of the victim.

"A group like this can have an enormous impact," Douglass told the audience.

"If you get a group like this to walk into a legislator's office, it's a groundswell. I mean they respond."

Douglass said he would like to return to Nashville. "This is how we are distributing this movie right now, by doing these kinds of events in your church or victims' rights organization, wherever you think there's a chance to show it," he said.

He encouraged individuals interested in hosting a showing to visit the movie's website, heavensrainmovie.com. (ABP)

New interactive Bible museum to highlight history, impact

A new multimillion-dollar, high-tech, interactive museum of the Bible was announced March 31 amid 130 artifacts of the Good Book at a private exhibition at the Vatican Embassy. The exhibit was a sample of Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant treasures from the future museum's 10,000 manuscripts and texts, one of the world's largest biblical collections. Some were as old as pages of the gospel in the Aramaic of Jesus' time; as political as the only Bible edition ever authorized by the U.S. Congress; as treasured as first editions of the majestic King James Version (KJV), displayed near the king's own seal.

These will form the basis for "a public museum designed to engage people in the history and the impact of the Bible," said museum sponsor Steve Green, an evangelical businessman and owner of the Oklahoma City-based craft chain Hobby Lobby.

World's largest collection

The Green family has amassed the world's largest collection of ancient biblical manuscripts and texts including his favorite: the 1782 Aitken Bible authorized by Congress.

While the location, architecture and even the museum's name are still in the works, 300 highlights of the Green Collection will go on tour beginning at the Oklahoma Museum of Art on May 16. The traveling exhibit, called

Passages, will move to the Vatican in October and New York City by Christmas.

The announcement was made at the Vatican Embassy to highlight Catholic contributions to the best-loved English text, the 400-year-old KJV, which draws about 80 percent of its majestic language from an earlier translation by a Catholic priest.

Meanwhile scholars at 30 universities worldwide are burrowing into rare texts from the collection and pioneering technology that enables them to bring out the ancient words in the most faded and printed-over manuscripts, said Scott Carroll, director of the collection and research professor of manuscript studies at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Carroll's primary focus has been finding and authenticating ancient manuscripts that can deepen — or alter — "our understanding of the Word of God. The Bible didn't come from the sky as tablets handed to Moses on Mount Sinai and then wind up in a hotel desk drawer," Carroll said.

"The Bible is not in a lockbox. It changes across time," he said, pointing to the earliest known manuscript fragment of Genesis, a section of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a Jewish Torah (the five books of Moses) from the time of the Spanish Inquisition and more.

Passages will also address the dramatic struggles behind the texts, as translations are a

matter of life, death and eternal fate to believers. The illustrated frontispiece of one KJV shows the king flanked by people who would be burned at the stake within 10 years.

"Translating a Bible is a soap opera of moving political and spiritual parts," Carroll said.

Other U.S. Bible museums

There are already U.S. museums centered on the Bible. The Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky., was established by conservative evangelicals to walk people through a literal reading of the Bible. The same group is launching a Noah's Ark theme park, set to open in 2014 in northern Kentucky.

And the Museum of Biblical Art in Manhattan was established by the American Bible Society, which has a Christian evangelizing mission. Green and Carroll say their museum, opening by 2016, has no theological agenda.

"Think of the great new science museums that take you inside how things work, or the Folger Library's public and scholarly center for Shakespeare," Carroll said. "This will be our approach to the Bible. It's a museum, not a ministry."

Highlights of the Green Collection include:

- ▶ The Codex Climaci Rescriptus, one of the world's earliest surviving Bibles. Using a new technology developed by the Green Collection in collaboration with Oxford Uni-

versity, scholars have uncovered the earliest surviving New Testament written in Palestinian Aramaic — the language used in Jesus' household — found on recycled parchment.

▶ One of the largest collections of cuneiform clay tablets in the Western Hemisphere.

▶ The second-largest private collection of Dead Sea Scrolls, all of which are unpublished and likely to substantially contribute to an understanding of the earliest surviving texts in the Bible.

▶ The world's largest private collection of Jewish scrolls, spanning more than 700 years of history, dating to the Spanish Inquisition.

▶ Previously unpublished biblical and classical papyri, including surviving texts dating to the time of the now-lost Library of Alexandria.

▶ The earliest-known, near-complete translation of the Psalms to (Middle) English.

▶ A number of the earliest printed texts, including a large portion of the Gutenberg Bible and the world's only complete Block Bible in private hands.

▶ Early tracts and Bibles of Martin Luther, including a little-known letter written the night before Luther's excommunication.

▶ Numerous items illustrating the contribution of Jews and Catholics to the King James translation of the Bible and other historical effects. (RNS)

Jefferson Co. 'bingo' hall reopens, raided by sheriff

The first "electronic bingo" hall known to have reopened in Jefferson County was also the first one to be closed, according to Sheriff Mike Hale.

On April 4, sheriff's deputies, along with agents from the attorney general's office, seized more than 500 machines at the Anchor Club in Brighton. The machines were "seized in place," meaning the building was padlocked until the courts are petitioned to destroy them. If the building can be linked to the gambling operation, then the sheriff's office will file to have it condemned and sold with the proceeds going to law enforcement, Hale said in an April 4 news release.

"I want to get this out in the open and call it what it is: Illegal gambling on machines that not only are illegal but are unregulated," he said.

Hale added the investigation is ongoing and an arrest or arrests are expected at its completion.

Prosecutions?

Even though Brighton is in the Bessemer Cut-off division of the county, prosecutors from the Birmingham division of the district attorney's office will be appointed to assist the attorney general's office in resulting prosecutions. Arthur Green, district attorney for the cut-off division, has previously refused to shut down similar gambling

operations, saying the state must first shut down gambling operations at Greentrack in Greene County.

In an April 4 news release, Attorney General Luther Strange said the Anchor Club raid "should serve as a signal to others who have or are contemplating such action that the state of Alabama will not tolerate illegal gambling and that law enforcement officials will stand together to investigate and prosecute suspected crimes."

'Not welcome here'

"I stand firmly and proudly with Sheriff Mike Hale in seeing that our laws are enforced throughout Jefferson County," Strange added.

Although two similar bingo operations in Midfield reportedly closed voluntarily after the raid and Fairfield officials warned those in their city planning to reopen to wait, Hale predicted the Anchor Club won't be the last illegal gambling operation to be shut down.

"We will pick them off one [at] a time and will not stop until Jefferson County is rid of this blight on our poor people ... hoping to go from rags to riches spending their last dollars," he said, adding, "They are not welcome here. Unless our state changes its gambling laws, they will never be welcome here or allowed to operate." (TAB)



Photo by Caroline Summers

'THE WORLD IS BETTER FOR IT' — Philip Lavigne (left) and Connor Ojard (right) reorganize the kitchen and warehouse at KIDS Music Center on April 2. They are members of Sigma Chi fraternity.

'Morning of service'

'Samford Gives Back' to community, helps fulfill needs

Samford University gave back to the Birmingham community in a meaningful way April 2 as more than 600 volunteers fanned out around town to paint, clean, landscape and help in a myriad of ways.

Samford's motto, "The world is better for it," was really fleshed out as so many volunteers — mostly students — decided not to sleep in but to love their neighbors, said Caroline Noland, who organized a team of residence hall assistants (RAs) for the Samford Gives Back effort. The RAs spent the morning at MedMission, where they organized medical supplies that will be given to clinics around the world.

"It's amazing what a few hours on a Saturday can mean to doctors and nurses serving developing countries," said Noland, noting that the experience hit close to home for a team member who is studying to be a doctor.

"We made use of his knowledge of medical supplies. It was a great chance for him to see the effect and impact his abilities and talents will have on those in need," said Noland, a senior business major from Boiling Springs, S.C.

Team leader Stephen Bailey found his work at KIDS Music Center just as rewarding. The morning was spent bagging canned goods, reorganizing the kitchen and warehouse, sorting donated clothing and cleaning at the community center, which offers music lessons to children, among other services.

"The workers there were thrilled to have our 30 willing hands to help them tackle some of the more intimidating tasks they had before them. Even though we didn't 'finish' anything, we felt we had made a dent in the work," said Bailey, a senior chemistry major from Brownsburg, Ind.

"Not only did we get to serve at a philanthropy most of us were entirely unfamiliar with but our volunteer hours felt more significant since we knew similar work was being done all across the city," said Bailey, president of the Samford chapter of Omicron Delta Kappa leadership honor society, which co-sponsored Samford Gives Back with the university's Community Service Council.

Exceeding expectations

The volunteers were assigned to about 30 nonprofit agencies. They headed to them after an informal early morning breakfast and on-campus rally led by Gil Franks of Birmingham's Christian Service Mission. "It set the perfect tone for the morning of service," Bailey said of the gathering in Seibert Hall.

Stephanie Campbell, Samford student affairs community service coordinator, said the turnout of 600 exceeded her wildest expectations.

"In dreaming big for the event, we aimed for around 400 participants. We could not be more proud of the Samford community for de-

siring to fulfill the needs of the Birmingham community," Campbell said.

"This shows us that when given opportunities and outlets to serve, Samford will rise above the status quo and sacrifice time in order to better the community around us."

Volunteer teams represented sororities, fraternities, groups of friends and academic units such as the 36 students, faculty, alumni and family members — including a few children — from the Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing.

Their assignment at M-POWER Ministries, which includes a free medical and dental clinic, was a perfect fit, observed nursing instructor Lora Shelton, who organized the team.

"Their mission is one of importance to those of us involved in health care, and this was a great opportunity to come together and help them with some needed projects," she said.

The M-POWER staff showed its appreciation by posting photos of the hard-working volunteers on the ministry's Facebook page. (SU)



Photo by Gary Hardin

DISASTER RELIEF VOLUNTEERS HONORED FOR SERVICE

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) presented awards to disaster relief volunteers for MVP-type outstanding service. Pictured are (l to r) Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the SBOM; Jay and Penny Isbell, who received the Emmett Jones Distinguished Service Award; David Patty, who received the Clifford McMahan Outstanding Achievement Award; and Ron Warren, who received the Mac Johnson Award.



Photo by Caroline Summers

'WILLING HANDS' — Team leader Stephen Bailey (left) and Connor Ojard (right) volunteer at KIDS Music Center on April 2 as part of Samford Gives Back. They are members of Sigma Chi fraternity.

Across Alabama's Associations

BALDWIN

► **Calvary Church, Foley**, held a retirement celebration for Pastor Richard Wash and his wife, Janice, March 27. The Washs served 12 years as missionaries with the International Mission Board in Hong Kong and have served several U.S. churches.

BIRMINGHAM

► **East Gardendale Church** will hold an Easter egg hunt April 23, 10 a.m.–noon. There will be an inflatable, games, popcorn, lemonade, candy and prizes. Allen Davis is pastor. ► **Southside Church, Birmingham**, will host the Birmingham Bible Reading Marathon sponsored by local churches May 1–5. The event will begin Sunday at 6 p.m. and will conclude on Thursday, the National Day of Prayer, at 11:30 a.m. Individuals can sign up to read aloud in 15-minute increments for 90 hours around the clock. Readers are encouraged to read from their own Bible in their own native language. For information call Pastor J. Stephen Jones at 205-933-8381.

CAHABA

► **Hopewell Church, Marion**, will celebrate homecoming April 17. There will be a special singing at 10 a.m. The worship service will follow with Ken Miller as guest speaker. Lunch will follow at noon. Joe Bob Mizzell is pastor.

CENTRAL

► **Central Association** will present a re-enactment of The Last Supper April 21, 6:30 p.m., at Weogufka Center for Arts, Entertainment and Education. Dinner will be provided. For reservations call 256-377-2411 by April 15. Wayne

Henderson is director of missions.

CHEROKEE

► **Slackland Church, Leesburg**, will present the original drama "Born to Die" April 22–23, 7 p.m., and April 24, 10:45 a.m. Doors will open 30 minutes early. Child care will be provided. For large group reservations call 256-504-1032. Billy Hunt is interim pastor.

CHILTON

► **Refuge Church, Clanton**, will hold revival April 24–27, nightly at 6. Ken Brand, pastor of Poplar Springs, Clanton, will speak Sunday; Charles Brooks, pastor of Samaria Church, Clanton, Monday; Roland Davis, pastor of Maple Springs Church, Clanton, Tuesday; and Bob Sandifer, hospice chaplain for SouthernCare in Millbrook, Wednesday. David Reed is pastor of Refuge.

COVINGTON

► **Harmony Church, Andalusia**, will host the Talley Trio in concert April 17, 10:30 a.m. Greg Cotter is pastor. ► **Southside Church, Opp**, will hold an Easter sunrise service April 24, 7 a.m., at the handicap fishing area at Lake Frank Jackson State Park. For information call 334-493-6340. Stewart Young is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **Jackson Memorial Church, LaFayette**, will hold its fifth Saturday night singing April 30, 6:30 p.m., with The Masters. Light refreshments will follow. Al Cougill is pastor.

HALE

► **Wade McCrory** is the new pastor of **New Haven Church**,

Greensboro. He and his wife, Michelle, have two children. The church also held an appreciation day for former Pastor Burton Christian and his wife, Martha, April 3.

MORGAN

► **Paul Shutt** is the new minister of music for **Lebanon Church, Falkville**. He comes from Lake Catoma Church, Cullman. Randy Ashley is pastor.

SIPSEY

► **Big Hill Church, Gordo**, will hold revival April 17–20 with Tony Latham. There will be special singing each night. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Ralph Smith is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Indian Lake Church, Northport**, will hold a cake/art auction April 17, 5 p.m. Proceeds will go to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The art will be done by the Girls in Action. Rob Lambert is pastor. ► **Unity Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold revival April 16–17 with Jerry McGowin, who served as a chaplain in Iraq. Services will be Saturday at 6 p.m. and Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Gene Dockery Jr. is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Stoney Creek Church, Vinemont**, and Christian Camp will hold an open car show and open talent show April 30, 9 a.m. The Christian-focused talent show similar to "American Idol" will feature auditions and eliminations at the amphitheater throughout the day. The band GodSpeed3 also will be in concert. To register call 256-338-5583. Mika Marcum is pastor.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Growing number of churches offer online giving

NASHVILLE — As consumers in the United States shift increasingly to online banking and bill payment, their electronic financial habits are spilling over into the church.

A new study released April 6 by LifeWay Research found that 14 percent of all American Protestant churches offer online giving.

The survey of 1,003 Protestant congregations was sponsored by LifeWay's Digital Church partner ServiceU. It found that large churches are most likely to offer online giving and that for the most part, electronic tithes and offerings are a recent development.

"Fewer and fewer Americans cash their paychecks or carry a checkbook," said Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research. "Some churches are finding that the payment preferences of enough of their congregation have changed to warrant putting an offering plate online in addition to passing them in their worship services."

A majority (55 percent) of churches with average worship attendance of 500 or more offer online giving, along with 26 percent of congregations with attendance of 200 to 499.

The survey also found that churches in large cities are more likely to offer online giving than congregations in any other setting. A full 28 percent of churches in large cities have online giving. According to data from the Federal Reserve, the trend toward electronic transactions in churches mirrors a trend in American culture at large.

Tim Whitehorn, president and CEO of ServiceU and sponsor of the study, said online giving can help church members be more consistent in their giving through automatic withdrawals from their bank accounts or credit cards.

"Despite whatever our best intentions are of trying to remember to write a check — whether it's every Sunday, once a month or twice a month, how many gifts a year does the average giver forget to give?" he said. "Consistent giving. That's what we believe online giving provides."

"Things change. Technologies change, but I think the spirit of giving is what's important."

No Saturdays off for Seventh-day Adventist mailman

ST. LOUIS — Neither snow nor rain nor Saturday Sabbaths should keep a Missouri mailman from his appointed rounds, a federal appeals court has ruled.

Seventh-day Adventist Hosea Harrell argued he was the victim of religious discrimination when the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) refused to give him Saturdays off. Harrell took the days off anyway and was fired in 2008.

Like Jews, Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday and believe the day should be kept holy by refraining from secular work.

But the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, upholding a lower court decision, ruled that giving Harrell Saturdays off would create an "undue hardship" for his fellow mail carriers and the post office where he worked. "This accommodation would have burdened other letter carriers with more Saturday work at least in part because they did not share Harrell's religious beliefs," wrote Circuit Judge Bobby Shepherd. The six other mail carriers were asked to give up their Saturdays but declined. Harrell was offered a different position with the USPS and leave to attend church services on Saturdays, but rejected both offers, according to Shepherd.

The routes could not have been covered using fewer carries, the USPS argued.

U.S. ambassador's 'faith' writings causing 'friction'

WASHINGTON — The U.S. ambassador to Malta, who helped rally Catholic support for President Obama's 2008 campaign, has spent "considerable time" writing on topics beyond the mission of his office, particularly about matters of faith, according to a new State Department investigation.

The report from the department's Office of Inspector General said Ambassador Douglas Kmiec's writings had an "unconventional approach" to the ambassadorship that has caused "friction" with Washington officials. "Based on a belief that he was given a special mandate to promote President Obama's interfaith initiatives, he has devoted considerable time to writing articles for publication in the United States as well as in Malta and to presenting his views on subjects outside the bilateral portfolio," reads the February report. The document was first reported by The Associated Press on April 8. The White House referred a request for comment to the State Department, which did not immediately respond.



Photo courtesy of FBC Selma

FBC SELMA DEDICATES NEWLY RENOVATED EDUCATION BUILDING

First Baptist Church, Selma, holds a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony April 3 for its newly renovated education building, which was built in 1924. The \$1.7 million renovation repaired and retained the exterior and modernized the interior. Pictured are (l to r) Pastor Jerry Light Sr.; renovation committee chairman Jon Moore; renovation committee members Wood Till Jr., Jim Creech, Elizabeth Driggers and Art Scroggins; project contractor Tom Bolton; TurnerBatson Architects' Jamie Collins; renovation committee member Charles Bruner; and TurnerBatson Architects' Rick Batson. Not pictured is renovation committee member Drue Lee.

New customizable teen Bible studies 'make sense to youth'

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

It's [kind of] crazy what happens when you put yourself out there to see what happens and what God will do," Les Bradford said.

What did Bradford do? He and co-worker Andy Blanks left steady jobs and stepped out in faith to start a new business to reach teens through Bible studies.

Bradford, a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, and Blanks, a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, worked for Student Life in Birmingham for years. They led the publishing team in creating the Student Life Bible Study and developed the Just Like Christ series of Bible studies, as well as other youth ministry resources. But in 2010, both felt called to start their own resourcing ministry.

"[Andy and I] have a strong desire to see teens grow in relationship with Christ because of understanding and application of God's Word," Bradford said.

He and Blanks resigned from Student Life and a short time later, were informed that the publishing division, the division they had worked in, was to be sold to NavPress.

"We had already pursued this new

vision, and the selling to NavPress was a pretty good confirmation on what God was leading us to do," Bradford said.

In March 2010, the duo co-founded youthministry360 (ym360). They spent six months creating materials, and ym360 opened for business in the fall.

It provides something not many have seen in youth ministry curriculum — Bible studies for teens that allow churches and youth workers to pick and choose which studies they want to invest their time and resources in, Bradford said. Other curricula are based on a multiyear plan, meaning a church would have to invest and commit one year at a time.

But ym360 thinks outside the box. It currently provides five 24-week studies. A new one will come out in January.

The studies come with some form of media, promotional material, student handbooks and parent information. Ym360 also provides free resources on a blog that is updated daily and has had tremendous feedback. It uses social media — mostly Facebook with

nearly 4,000 "likes" — to help answer questions and provide a virtual community for both experienced and new youth workers.

Blanks brainstorms the topics for and flow of the studies and then pitches them to a writer. Even though each writer has his or her own writing personality, one thing rings true in every study: God's Word.

"Our distinctive as an organization is that we hold Scripture in the highest regard," Blanks said. "All our resources have God's Word at [their] center."

One of ym360's core goals is to equip and serve youth workers in the local church, who, in turn, reach teens. It focuses on four areas to do just that: Bible study resources, training, community and networking.

And churches are taking advantage of the help.

Currently more than 1,000 churches are using the curriculum nationwide, and people in 27 countries are downloading the free resources online. About 100 Alabama churches are using the Bible studies and resources.

First Baptist Church, Russellville, has used several of ym360's resources.

"The studies make sense to the youth here," Minister of Youth/Edu-



BLANKS



BRADFORD

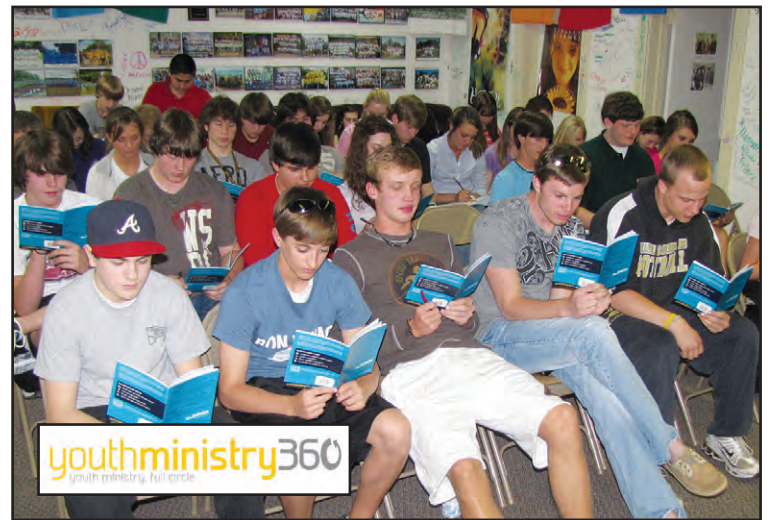


Photo courtesy of FBC Russellville

REACHING TEENS — The youth group at First Baptist Church, Russellville, studies *The Pause*, a ym360 Bible study. The youth 'can connect with the studies,' Minister of Youth Richard Parker says.

Richard Parker said, adding, "Many have said they really enjoy getting heavier into the Scriptures," especially after they studied *The Pause: Learning to Seek God*, a four-lesson discipleship Bible study. Parker said he likes how "everything you need for a lesson is all on one DVD" and appreciates the blog where he can see some helpful hints on how to handle certain situations as a youth minister.

Although ym360 mainly produces Bible studies, Bradford and Blanks plan to expand the ministry

to provide free one-day training courses for Alabama churches.

Ym360 plans to release Bible studies and devotional books sometime this fall in Christian bookstores including LifeWay Christian Stores.

"This is a true calling for us, and we love youth workers, teenagers and God's Word, and we are laser-focused on serving and equipping those in the local church," Blanks said.

For more information, visit www.youthministry360.com or call 888-969-6360.

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THIS CONFERENCE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY GIFTS OF ALABAMA BAPTISTS THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM.

A Clear (and Quick) Picture

BHF helps Walker Baptist obtain state-of-the-art CT scanner

By Susan P. Moore

The new CT scanner at Walker Baptist Medical Center won't take your breath away. And that is precisely the point.

In February, Walker Baptist installed a new computed tomography (CT) device called the GE LightSpeed VCT XT 64-Slice, which hospital officials say will greatly increase both the speed of the scan time and the accuracy of the ensuing diagnosis.

This new machine reduces x-ray scan time from about 20 seconds to only two seconds. It is so quick that patients do not even have to hold their breath — as was required with previous devices — in order to limit body movement and obtain a more accurate image.

“This takes our radiology department and hospital to the next state-of-the-art level,” said Walker Baptist radiologist Dr. Ricardo Bracer.

The 64-Slice CT gets its name from the number of visual cross-sections — or slices — it produces from a 3D computer image generated by the two-second scan. Walker Baptist previously had a machine that offered four cross sections.

“This 64-Slice CT will provide us with vastly improved image quality and imaging speed, and enhance the overall diagnostic confidence



we have in all of our studies,” said Kay Laney, director of imaging services for Walker Baptist. “There is just a tremendous difference in resolution.”

Walker Baptist Administrator Bob Phillips said this new CT scanner will enable the hospital to provide improved care for the community the hospital serves.

“While our prior inpatient CT scanner was effective as a diagnostic tool, it was prone to extended downtimes and required a lot of maintenance,” Phillips said. “The new CT scanner provides greatly enhanced image resolution, faster scan times and reduced radiation. We believe it will allow us to treat patients who, in the past, may have had to leave our community for care.”

Walker Baptist was able to obtain the scanner, thanks in large part, to a generous gift from the Baptist Health Foundation.

“It gives me, and the rest of the Foundation Board, great personal pleasure to insure that the citizens of Walker County have access to sophisticated, high quality health care technology in their community. Our job is

to make sure our physicians have all the right tools to do their job and advance the health care mission of Baptist Health System,” said chairman of the Baptist Health Foundation Board of Directors Gene Davenport.

The new, advanced CT will enable Walker Baptist physicians to have more precise information, especially when treating issues such as heart disease and blood clots. Phillips said those are conditions that greatly impact the Walker community, another reason why the new scanner is such a welcome addition to the hospital.

“In today's challenging economic climate, the decisions on how to invest precious capital resources can be very difficult,” Phillips said. “This generous gift from the Baptist Health Foundation went a very long way toward allowing Walker Baptist Medical Center to invest in equipment that will positively impact thousands of patients in our area.”

You can be part of the healing ministry of Baptist Health System by showing your support through a gift to the Baptist Health Foundation. To learn how, visit www.BaptistHealthFoundation.com or call toll-free 1-877-474-4243.

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Annual missions ed event in Lamar Association a hit

By Darla Brantley
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Basketball might have been the topic of many discussions in March, but for a group of kindergarteners through sixth-graders, the topic was missions.

On March 26, Lamar Baptist Association sponsored Missions Madness V at Kennedy Baptist Church near Fayette.

The annual event, which started in 2007, rotates among the association's churches and has been a hit among children and adults with between 80 and 150 attending. This year, there were 142 participants from eight churches registered for the five-hour event.

Missions Madness is the brainchild of Janet Estis, who served for a time with Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) as part of the children's support team and patterned her event after the Children's Missions Explosion sponsored by Alabama WMU. She saw that smaller churches did not always attend the large-scale affair and designed a scaled-down event to make teaching children about missionaries and the work they do

around the world more accessible for churches in her home association.

"My passion for missions began as a kid, and I wanted to expose children to missions and give them a chance to meet real live missionaries like the ones they learn about at church," explained Estis, now a member of Mineral Springs Baptist Church, Reform, in Pickens Baptist Association.

Missions Madness features representatives from the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board, volunteer missionaries and missions workers with state organizations such as Alabama Raceway Ministries and the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Estis said she tries to find missionaries who have some kind of ties to Lamar Association.

Meeting missionaries

Children attending this year's event met with Gil and Marguerite Butler, who serve as missions mobilizers for Marion and Winston Baptist associations with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

With 85 international missions trips under their belts, the Butlers taught the children about ways they can be missionaries and help missionaries on the field.

Leah Hawthorne, who, along with her mother, Carol, has worked with Alabama Baptist disaster relief, told them, "You don't necessarily have to be a career missionary. Just occasionally spend a week of your life doing missions."

Hawthorne, a pharmacist, and her mother, a pharmacy technician, used their skills to help with medical needs on a short-term trip to Haiti after the devastating 2010 earthquake.

Estis described her unique method of missions work. "I can still fulfill my calling to missions by being involved in missions education, missions projects or volunteer missions trips without being a career missionary," she said.

Missions Madness participants were able to spend time with a couple who serve as Southern Baptist representatives. The couple described the cultural traditions of their new home and how the children could pray for the people of the area, many of whom have never heard the good news.

They desired to teach the children that being a missionary has little to do with age, explaining that they do not have to wait until they grow up to do missions work.

The children participated in a Skype session with two other families who serve as Baptist representatives. The representatives were able to answer many questions about how they share the gospel, what kinds of food they eat and how they educate their children.

The participants also filled a jar with several kinds of raw beans and were given a recipe for bean soup. Each kind of bean represented a specific way they could pray for all missionaries.

In addition, the children tasted foods from several countries including Russia, Liberia, the Philippines, Mexico and China.

While the event was fun, it was also important, said Lamar Association Director of Missions Scott Stokes.

"We must teach our kids (about missions) now, and we cannot start too young," he said.

For more information about conducting a similar event, call Estis at 205-431-6758 or Stokes at 205-695-9625.

"We must teach our kids (about missions) now, and we cannot start too young."
DOM Scott Stokes
Lamar Baptist Association



MARKET PLACE

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

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

FULL-TIME WORSHIP & PRAISE LEADER: Taylor Road Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for a full-time worship and praise leader. Submit resumés by mail to: Taylor Road Baptist Church, 1685 Taylor Road, Montgomery, AL 36117.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: First Baptist Church of Killen, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music. Please send resumés 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.

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 resumés 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 resumé to: revwillcarter@yahoo.com, or mail to: East Huntsville Baptist Church,

808 Mayville Road, Huntsville AL 35801.

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

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR CHILDREN: Tabernacle Baptist Church in Carrollton, Ga., is seeking an associate pastor for children. An M.Div. (or equivalent) is required from an accredited seminary. Candidate must have experience in planning, developing, supervising and coordinating a ministry to children from birth to sixth grade. For more information, visit www.tabernacle.org. To apply, submit resumé by April 30 to: Tabernacle Baptist Church, Search Committee, 150 Tabernacle Drive, Carrollton, GA 30117, or e-mail: linda.bohannan@tabernacle.org.

FULL-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Harvest Baptist Church seeking full-time children's minister. Seminary degree preferred. E-mail resumés to: ndull@knology.net, or mail to: 8999 Wall Triana Hwy., Harvest, AL 35749.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR: Send resumé to: churchoffice@cottagehillbaptist.org or mail to: Cottage Hill Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 515, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127. 205-744-8521.

OTHER POSITIONS

SECRETARY: Financial. Church setting. Good bookkeeping and computer

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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.

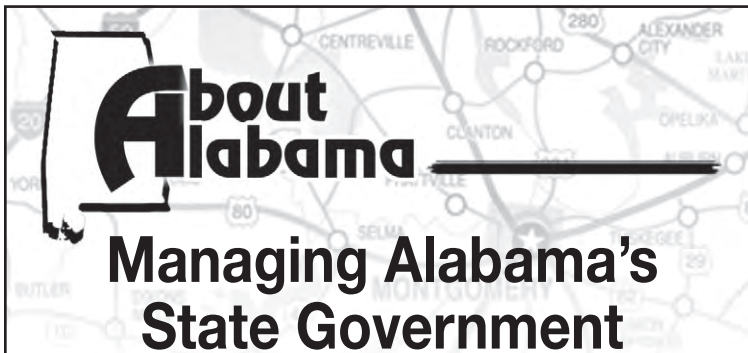
He is the only way to have real life here on earth and eternal life in heaven when you die.

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?



About Alabama

Managing Alabama's State Government

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The state of Alabama is in the middle of its biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and there are many proposals for reform. Unfortunately it often takes a crisis to spur changes in government. Alabamians would be better served if the state were organized to prevent crises by managing performance in an ongoing way.

Soon after taking office in January, Gov. Bentley appointed a study commission to find ways to improve efficiency. While there is great value in an objective assessment of the state's operations, study commissions are temporary. Many recommendations aren't implemented; some adopted reforms won't succeed, and others will become ineffective over time. What then?

Successful organizations have a self-improvement process. The state ought to investigate its performance regularly and make improvements as they are needed. The study commission's first focus should be to evaluate this performance management process within state government.

Legal authority

In Alabama, the legal authority for such a process has been in place for many years but little has been done. The two most recent study commission reports have called for creating an internal performance management process. The current commission (on which I sit) should make it three in a row. Maybe we can head off the next crisis.

The governor and finance di-

rector have broad authority to require reports on key indicators of agency success, investigate performance and exercise fiscal control over agencies receiving state appropriations. Few, if any, top executives in other states enjoy similar powers. Using this authority, our leaders can create a first-class system of performance management within Alabama's state government, as they are accountable to the voters for doing.

How?

Here's how they might do it:

First create a division in the finance department to review performance within state agencies. The power has been there since 1939.

Second ensure that agencies report meaningful performance data that indicate their success or lack of it. This authority was given to the governor by the 1901 Alabama Constitution.

Third conduct performance reviews to detect problems, recognize successes and recommend improvements where required. The finance director has had the legal power to do this since 1939.

Fourth connect performance reviews to the budget. The Budget Management Act called for this in 1976.

We've waited long enough: Now is the time to make it happen.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Jim may be contacted at jwilliam@samford.edu.

More than a program

Small groups beneficial if meet regularly, foster trust

Establishing small groups within a large church — heralded by some as a remedy to the drawbacks of burgeoning congregation size — is “good medicine” but not a cure-all, according to a national study by Baylor University sociologists.

“Simply having a small-group program in a church is no guarantee of success,” said Kevin Dougherty, an assistant professor in Baylor's department of sociology.

What matters is that the groups meet regularly, members trust one another enough to divulge matters they would not tell to a stranger and they tackle tough issues in one another's lives, Dougherty said. He and Andrew Whitehead, a Baylor graduate student in sociology, conducted the study.

Members of small groups — whether in small churches or megachurches with 2,000 or more members — are more likely to attend worship, tithe and volunteer, Dougherty said.

A growing number of Americans attend large congregations. Nearly a third of worshipers attend congregations with a weekly attendance of 1,000 or more, although fewer than 3 percent of the country's congregations are that size. Past research by Dougherty and others shows that people in large congregations typically attend less, give less financially and feel less belonging than people in smaller congregations.

‘Center of the church’

Dougherty and Whitehead tested the effectiveness of small groups at raising levels of participation and belonging. They studied the role of Bible study and prayer groups, using national data obtained from the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Survey, with 78,474 respondents in 401 congregations, as well as data from a survey of 1,014 participants within an unidentified megachurch referred to in the study as Central Texas Megachurch. The church began in 1999 with an emphasis on cell groups. Today the church has

more than 100 cell groups and attracts more than 3,000 worshipers weekly.

“Any type of small group will benefit a church, whether it's a Sunday School, a service group or a basketball league, because of the belonging and commitment they foster,” Dougherty said.

Almost 90 percent of the non-denominational Central Texas church's participants are in a small group, with groups typically consisting of eight to 15 members, usually in the same life stage. They gather in homes to sing, discuss, pray and receive instruction. “Small groups are the center of the church — not just one of many programs,” Dougherty said.

Frequency of attendance is more important for successful small groups than is length of attendance, he said, and “small size and regular interaction help foster trust. When people trust one another, they open themselves to deeper inspection and reflection. Great possibilities for change result.”

At The Heights Baptist Church in Richardson, Texas, with about 3,000 weekly worshipers, many small groups have been started by worshipers who said they wanted to “go deeper,” said Chris Havard, pastor of spiritual growth and formation.

He suggested topics they explore — such as prayer and building mates' self-esteem — and accompanying questions, Bible passages and books. “It's not tons of work, but it's practical,” he said.

At Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, with about 200 worshipers, “life groups” that began several years ago “just exploded,” said Kessa Payne, who served on an interim basis in Calvary Baptist's small-group ministry.

“Once the first group had been around for eight months, they started new ones, from four groups to a peak of 27 groups,” Payne said. “Part of the philosophy is that you don't lead a group until you've been part of one. Another part is, ‘No one ever leads alone.’”

They share meals and life stories and choose what they wish to study. Members are more apt to be involved on Sunday mornings and serve one another and the community. Small groups risk crossing the

“Any type of small group will benefit a church.”

Kevin Dougherty
Baylor University

line from intimacy to cliquishness. By constantly adding new members, “you can't go very deep, because it takes time to build relationships and trust,” Havard said. “But a closed group, while it's good for intimacy, lends itself to being inward-based. We

want them to serve and think outside themselves.”

At First Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., with about 1,200 worshipers, church members are trying a “microchurch” approach as well as traditional worship and Bible study and small groups. Pastor Jim Somerville encourages “a very flexible, loose format,” said Steve Booth, associate pastor for Christian formation. Sermons are telecast and streamed live.

The best way to get people into small groups is by personal invitation, Dougherty said, while the challenge is to help new members find a group.

“For growing churches, this can occur by regularly forming new groups,” he said. “A second approach is to limit the time period for which groups meet.”

“In congregations where people are empowered to form groups around shared interests, there should never be a shortage of groups to join. And more groups mean more active members, if done right.” (ABP)

Baptists deliver clean water to Myanmar earthquake victims

A three-day Baptist meeting in eastern Myanmar turned fatal March 24 when an earthquake struck near the Laos and Thailand border. Twenty-three people were killed and 50 others injured when a Baptist church building in Kyakuni collapsed.

The Baptists were in the middle of a worship service when the ground began to shake violently. Screaming, church members scrambled outside as the building cracked and came crashing down.

The magnitude 6.8 quake was felt as far away as Bangkok, Thailand, and in Hanoi, Vietnam. The town of Tachileik and surrounding villages in Shan state bore the brunt of the damage and fatalities.

Official counts list 74 dead. There are fears the death toll could be much higher once reports are received from remote areas. An es-

timated 3,152 people are homeless. Nearly 90 villages have been moderately or severely damaged, encompassing more than 18,000 people.

The village where the Baptist church was located was destroyed. Government officials told survivors that they will not rebuild this village. Some have moved to neighboring communities. The majority, however, moved a short distance into the jungle, using tents as their new homes.

No foreign relief allowed

Information about the true scale of the disaster has been slow to emerge given the region's mountainous terrain, linguistic barriers and security concerns.

Officials in Myanmar, which is also known as Burma, are not allowing foreign relief

workers into the affected areas. However, Myanmar Baptists are responding by taking collections in their churches and distributing simple supplies such as noodles, plastic sheeting for temporary tents, sleeping mats and cooking oil.

One of the greatest needs the local assessment team found was for safe drinking water. With the help of Southern Baptists, Baptists are trucking in 20-liter bottles of water across the border from Thailand. Pastors are then loading the big bottles onto the backs of their motorcycles and driving through muddy roads to deliver the water to remote villages.

Baptists from four associations broke through strict cultural barriers, reaching out to help people who were not part of their own communities.

“In Myanmar, people interact within their

own people groups,” a Baptist representative in Thailand explained. “It's just how it is. People stick with their own.”

Several Baptist leaders from the different people groups crossed over into Thailand to receive a crash course on disaster relief. The Baptist worker encourages Southern Baptists to join her in praying for Myanmar Christians who will be working together for the first time in this disaster relief effort:

► Pray that they will be able to supply safe drinking water and figure out how to fix the problem.

► Pray for the spiritual and emotional health of people in the affected areas. Many lost loved ones and/or their homes. Pray that the Christians will remain hopeful and show it through their actions. Pray for opportunities to not only share but show Jesus' love. (BP)

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Teen website changes lives through laughs, relationships

With just the click of a mouse, Doug Hutchcraft and Jon Taylor are pointing teenagers and young adults to Jesus Christ.

Desiring to communicate the gospel to a generation that has grown up on the Internet, they have developed a one-of-a-kind website known as The Doug and Jon Show.

The site's interactive format provides a safe haven for young people to laugh, share thoughts, open up about their challenges and be introduced to Jesus Christ.

"Young people under the age of 25 make up the largest mission

field right now," Hutchcraft said.

"The majority of this age group has no idea who Jesus Christ is. They feel hopeless and feel completely disconnected from their parents and friends. When we were thinking of ways to effectively reach them, we realized that this age group spends most of their time on the Internet — communicating with friends, checking e-mail and getting all of their information."

"We realized that if these young people are searching for information on the Internet, then Christians have to be there to point them to the truth, hope, forgiveness and love

found in a relationship with Jesus."

Based in Harrison, Ark., Hutchcraft and Taylor desire to connect students to Christ through a variety of ways with this platform, including sharing their own testimonies and life experiences.

Breaking down barriers

Their site also showcases humorous videos designed to break down barriers, build relationships and allow the truth to enter.

In a "Life Video Blog" section, they address serious issues young people face — peer pressure, loneliness, bullying and sex. Taylor's wife, Kara, offers a female perspective in a section called "Café de Kara."

"It is amazing at how young an age people can throw their lives away," Hutchcraft said.

"These days, young people face so many heartbreaking problems tied to family, school and peer expectations. Our goal with TheDougAndJonShow.com is to provide a refuge for them — a place where they can be enter-

tained or discuss tough issues ... or even choose to hear about the hope that only Jesus can offer."

Taylor agreed, adding: "We want to reach the teen who may not feel comfortable stepping through the doors of a church or attending a youth group event but is surfing the Web for answers to life's difficult questions. We share our life struggles on the site in hopes that it can be an encouragement to teens going through the same thing."

In addition to making a significant impact on teenagers, Hutchcraft and Taylor have made quite an impression on parents, as well.

"There are things that only parents can do, and we can't take the place of that," Hutchcraft said.

"But what we can do is try to help teenagers understand where parents are coming from, and say: 'Hey, give your parents a break. They're trying to connect with you. They're trying to understand.' Hopefully, we can encourage teenagers to build relationships with their parents and communicate with them."

Taylor added: "We've had par-

ents ask us how we're able to share these messages with teenagers. Parents realize the value of that and appreciate us addressing issues very bluntly, sincerely and authentically — but still in a way that teens will listen to. We hear

it over and over again from parents saying, 'My child needs this.'"

Since the site's founding in 2009, more than 11,000 teenagers from 48 countries have indicated they have committed their lives to Christ as a result of the resource.

"People talk

about viral videos and messages now," Hutchcraft said. "But the ultimate viral message happened on the day of Pentecost — when thousands came to know Jesus. That same thing is happening on the Internet today as teenagers are watching these videos, accepting Christ and then passing it on to their friends. That's the beauty and power of the gospel right there. A young believer might have a hard time knowing how to share their faith, but they don't have a hard time saying: 'You should go check out this website or video.'" (ABP)

"Our goal with TheDougAndJonShow.com is to provide a refuge for [teens]."
 Doug Hutchcraft
 The Doug and Jon Show

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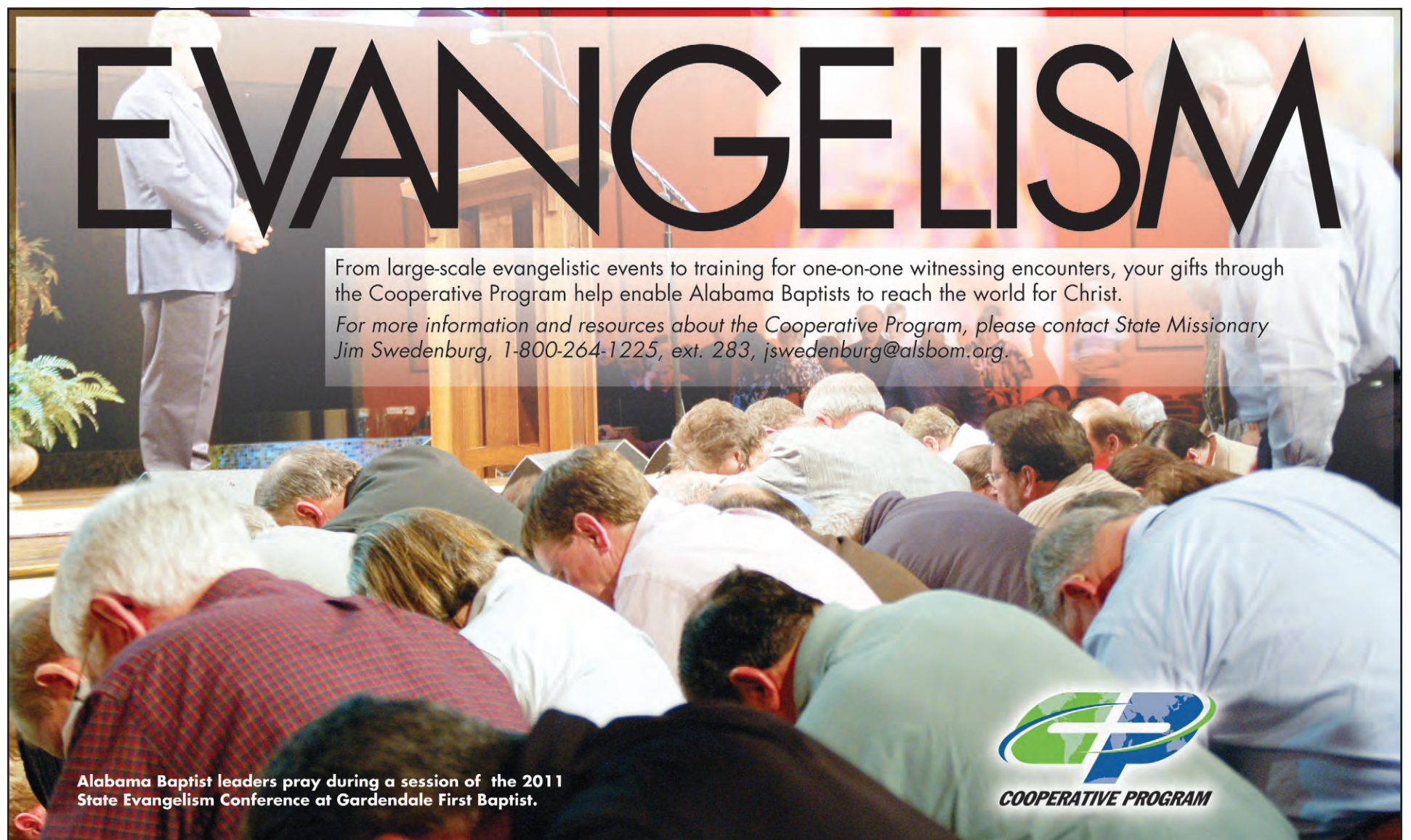


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COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

Alabama Baptist leaders pray during a session of the 2011 State Evangelism Conference at Gardendale First Baptist.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 17

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

KNOWING THE TRUTH Colossians 1:1-20

Address (1-2)

Paul named himself as author, identified the readers to whom he sent the letter and gave the usual greeting of grace and peace.

Thanksgiving (3-8)

The apostle who called the Colossians to give thanks (Col. 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2) here practiced what he preached.

He directed his thanks to God, the One responsible for the graces evident in the Colossians and the gospel's success among them.

Paul mentioned three specific things for which he was thankful. First he was grateful for the "faith ... love ... and hope" the Colossians demonstrated. "Hope" is the confident expectation of future heavenly glory. Second he was thankful for the gospel's progress in Colossae and the entire Roman world. This gospel brought knowledge of God's grace, i.e., God's undeserved favor. Third Paul was grateful for the faithful work of Epaphras (a short form of Epaphroditus). A Colossae native, this man had served Christ not only there but also in the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 4:12-13).

Petition (9-14)

Paul prayed that the Colossians would be so filled with the knowledge of God's will that they would live worthy of the Lord, i.e., please Him in all things. They needed "deep and accurate comprehension" of the divine purposes for spiritual maturity.

Walking worthy of the Lord is the result of knowing God's will. The worthy life Paul defined as bearing the fruit of good works; growing in the knowledge of God; being empowered to attain steadfastness, patience and joy; and giving thanks to God for salvation's blessings.

Paul mentioned four things God did for which believers should give thanks. Each believer got a share in the future heavenly inheritance of God's people. Each was rescued from "darkness," i.e., the realm of ignorance, falsehood and sin. Each was resettled in the pres-

ent kingdom of God. And God "redeemed," i.e., freed, and "forgave" each his or her sins.

Christ Jesus (15-20)

A pernicious heresy was at work in Colossae. The best clues to the false teaching lie in Paul's answers to it. Read the passage asking, "What false teaching would have prompted Paul to write this?"

Jesus is the "firstborn of all creation." Paul's language is precise. Jesus is not the "first made" ("protoktistos") created things" as a certain cult claims. He is the "firstborn" ("prototokos"). In a family, the firstborn had rights and privileges not shared by his siblings. He was his father's heir and was given the management of the household. The expression here means that as God's heir, the Son has management of the household, i.e., He is Lord over "all creation." Verses 16-17 state the grounds for Christ's dominion over creation. Creation was "in Him," i.e., within the sphere of His person and power. It was "through Him," i.e., He brought it into being. It is "unto Him," i.e., He is the end for which all things exist. He was "before" all things, i.e., prior in time and sustains all things. Clearly if He made "all things," then He cannot be a "made" thing, as some modern false teachers say.

Christ is also the head of the church. "He" is emphatic: He and He alone is the chief of the church. This rank He deserves because He is its "beginning," i.e., its origin and founder, and the first to come from the dead in a resurrection body. All believers will share in the resurrection, but He was the first and forever remains unique among the resurrected.

Christ has unshared supremacy, "pre-eminence," in everything. The Father willed that the fullness of deity make its home in Jesus. He was not part God and part man but fully God. And He willed that all things be reconciled to Himself through Christ's death on the cross. This cannot mean that eventually all men and angels will be saved. Such universalism is contrary to clear teachings of other Scriptures (e.g., Matt. 25:46). God willed universal reconciliation. Not all will be reconciled. All who are reconciled come by the blood.

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

RECEIVE COMFORT — GIVE COMFORT 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Paul's words of comfort to the Corinthians have been a timeless source of consolation to many believers through the centuries. His short exposition on the theme of consolation is neither a quick-fix remedy nor a superficial pop psychology of "be happy." Rather, in these short verses, Paul drew from his own experience of affliction and concluded that not only does God comfort His people but also based on his experience of suffering and God's comfort, he was able to comfort others.

Know the Source of Comfort (1-3)

Paul began by identifying the Corinthian church as one belonging to God, a fact that should serve as a beacon for the church, which was frequently misled by its contemporary culture (see 1 Corinthians). The church's identity begins with the simple fact that it does not belong to itself but God. But this God is also the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus Paul began his exposition on consolation with a doxology to God for being both God and Father. And this God is also the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. The fatherhood of God is neither oppressive nor abusive; it is full of compassion and mercy as revealed on the cross. And no believer is without need of God's tender mercy and compassion.

Be a Channel of God's Comfort (4-7)

Here Paul stated that in the daily afflictions of living as Christians, God comforts His children. And yet, contrary to the contemporary understanding that God's comfort indicates His desire to remove all forms of suffering in believers' individual lives, Paul pointed to the communal effect of knowing His consolation. God uses those moments to shape Christians to be a comfort to those suffering. This is not simply "misery loves company." Nor is this an encouragement to patronize others with one's superior knowledge or experience of suffering. Genuine struggle with adversity and intimate knowledge of God's comfort can be used by Him to bring that same consolation to others suffering for His name's sake. Believers'

affliction is not debilitating or destructive but ultimately leads them to the proper communal relations before God; they comfort others with the same comfort they received from God. And there is no adversity beyond God's comfort. His solace reaches even to the tiniest crevice. Notably Paul did not ask God to remove suffering. But Paul used even adversity to refine his character and knowledge of God's mercies so that he might effectively minister to the Corinthians in their suffering.

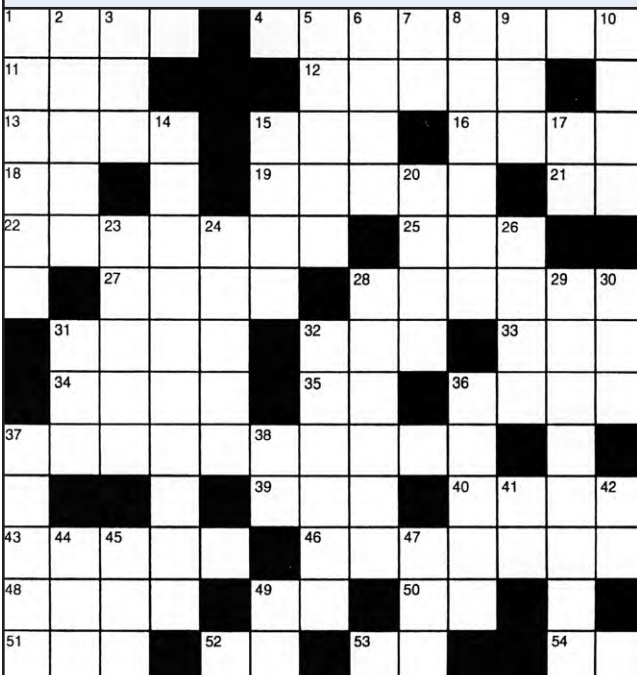
Offer Comfort Through Prayer (8-11)

Paul continued to describe what he meant by "affliction" to the Corinthians. These were the hardships he and his companions experienced in Asia (cf 2 Cor. 4:8-9; 6:9b-10; 12:9-10). Indeed the suffering was so difficult he even believed that his life was at its end. But even when death appeared imminent, Paul saw God's redemptive hand at work. The horrific experience was to lead Paul not to rely on himself. Even in affliction, God's aim is to sanctify Christians so that they might put all their trust in Him who resurrects the dead. In the face of death, believers are not without recourse; it is not their competence, resourcefulness nor resilience that saves them but God the Father who gives life even in death. And as Paul was guided to this place of vulnerability and dependence, he solicited prayers from the Corinthians. In spite of the fact that the Corinthians' suffering might not be comparable to Paul's, their prayers would bless not only him but also others.

In the modern-day church, the definition of Christian faith excludes suffering. Indeed, when we speak of suffering, it is not the kind of suffering Paul and other early believers endured for Christ's sake (cf Acts 5:33-42). But even in everyday suffering, we believe and pray that God will remove all forms of suffering; all too often, we seek complacency and convenience. Perhaps it is time to rethink what it means to be a Christian and entertain the possibility that God cannot truly be known from the comforts of an easy chair. Perhaps it is time to change our prayers from "God remove my hardship" to "God let me know your comfort and mercy in all my afflictions."

Christian Crossword

By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**
- To ___ the brokenhearted. (Luke 4:18)
 - Honor, and glory, and _____. (Rev. 5:12)
 - The hearing _____. (Prov. 20:12)
 - ___ it with the prayers. (Rev. 8:3)
 - The ___ to come. (Eph. 2:7)
 - Princes of Midian, _____. (Josh. 13:21)
 - Preach the word in _____. (Acts 16:16)
 - Lines. (abbr.)
 - The son of _____. (1 Kings 4:9)
 - Doctor of Divinity. (abbr.)
 - A ___ come from God. (John 3:2)
 - Airport code for Monte Carlo, Monaco.
 - Uz and _____. (Gen. 36:28)
 - ___ the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)
 - To rid of excess by cutting.
 - Zechariah, _____. (1 Chron. 15:18)
 - Though they be ___ like

- crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
- Japanese city.
- Established church. (abbr.)
- The waters called he _____. (Gen. 1:10)
- Biology: resembling a string of beads.
- Mother.
- She is thine _____. (Lev. 18:14)
- Let us ___ before the Lord our maker. (Ps. 95:6)
- To demand the restoration or return of.
- Following the ___ great with young. (Ps. 78:71)
- Turn ye unto _____. (Zech. 1:3)
- Symbol for chlorine.
- Scrap of cloth.
- Known unto ___ the mystery. (Eph. 3:3)
- ___; and he smelleth the battle. (Job 39:25)
- ___ in peace. (Mark 5:34)
- (Jer. 49:22)
- Now these ___ thy servants. (Neh. 1:10)
- A ___ of hospitality. (Titus 1:8)
- One of a people of southern Nigeria.
- Science fiction. (abbr.)
- I the Lord ___ the heart. (Jer. 17:10)
- Internal Revenue Service. (abbr.)
- Let us be ___ and rejoice. (Rev. 19:7)
- Offer up spiritual _____. (1 Pet. 2:5)
- Garden of _____. (Gen. 2:15)
- Idaho. (abbr.)
- To everlasting. _____. (Ps. 41:13)
- Holy garments for _____. (Ex. 28:2)
- Sons of Pharez ... Hezron and _____. (Gen. 46:12)
- Weep no _____. (Isa. 30:19)
- All things are ___ new. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Will increase in _____. (Prov. 9:9)
- Doctor of Dental Science. (abbr.)
- Technical knockout. (abbr.)
- My cry came ___ him. (Ps. 18:6)
- Witnessing both to ___ and great. (Acts 26:22)
- God my _____. (Job 35:10)
- Contraction for "I am."
- United Artists. (abbr.)
- Symbol for thulium.
- Northwest Airlines. (abbr.)
- Electroencephalogram. (abbr.)
- Circuit Court of Appeals. (abbr.)
- Every knee shall bow to _____. (Rom. 14:11)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Prospects dim for religious freedom in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Nepal — A new constitution that Nepal's Parliament is scheduled to put into effect before May 28 may not include the right to propagate one's faith. The draft constitution, aimed at completing the country's transition from a Hindu monarchy to a secular democracy, contains provisions in its "religious freedom" section that prohibit anyone from converting others from one religion to another. Most political leaders in the Himalayan country seemed unaware of how this prohibition would curb religious freedom.

"Nepal will be a secular state — there is no other way," said Sushil Koirala, president of the Nepali Congress, Nepal's "Grand Old Party," but he added that he was not aware of the proposal to restrict the right to evangelism. "Forcible conversions cannot be allowed, but the members of the Constituent Assembly should be made aware of (the evangelism ban's) implications," Koirala said. Gagan Thapa, another leader of the Nepali Congress, admitted that banning all evangelistic activities could lead to undue restrictions. "Perhaps the words 'force, inducement and coercion' should be inserted to prevent only unlawful conversions," he said.

Belarusian official claims 'right to interrupt services'

MINSK, Belarus — Two separate Council of Churches Baptist congregations in Belarus were raided during worship on successive Sundays earlier this year. The pastor of one is awaiting administrative trial for "holding an unauthorized religious service" and religious literature confiscated from him has not been returned. Three members of the other congregation were officially warned that if they continue to worship without state registration they could face criminal prosecution and a possible two-year prison term. "Every registered organization has a charter and the authorities control how the community follows it. This is unacceptable for us," said Natalia Zavalei, one of the three members.

Ideology official Svetlana Starovoitova, who joined officers in raiding Zavalei's congregation, insisted that its worship was illegal.

A religious affairs official in the capital Minsk, Mikhail Rybakov, said for communities of any faith worshipping without registration, "the authorities have the right to interrupt services."

Christians arrested for conversion without official permit

MAYURBHANJ, India — Fourteen Christians, including two pastors, were arrested March 29 for converting to Christianity without official permit in Orissa's Mayurbhanj district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that the arrests came after a police complaint was filed against pastors Samuel Mohopatra and Manuel Mahopatra and 12 newly converted Christians.

The Christians were brought before a court and were released on bail the same day, charged under the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, which, ironically, bans any conversion lacking a permit issued by authorities. Sajan K. George, president of GCIC, called on Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to withdraw the accusations and put a stop to anti-Christian violence in the state.

"The attempts by lower-level police and the Sangh Parivar are scandalous and a travesty of the noble vision and ideals enshrined in the Indian Constitution," he said.

Kazakhstan cracks down on places of worship

ASTANA, Kazakhstan — Pastor Andrei Panafidin was fined 100 times the minimum monthly wage March 4 for leading unregistered religious worship in Taraz, the seventh time he has been fined for this "offense," local Baptists said. He is the first Council of Churches Baptist in Kazakhstan known to have been fined since June 2010.

"It's a violation if they don't register — all religious communities must be registered," said an officer of Jambyl Regional Directorate for the Struggle with Organized Crime, which took part in raids on the congregation. In Shymkent, a judge has banned the local New Life Pentecostal Church from holding worship in the house where the congregation is registered. And a local administration in Almaty has — with National Security Committee secret police and Interior Ministry intervention — banned a university from renting its facilities to religious communities.

Crisis pregnancy centers 'being targeted' by some city officials

After years of staying mostly out of the spotlight, pro-life crisis pregnancy centers are increasingly coming under political attack in cities nationwide where some legislators and mayors are demanding the centers explicitly declare — in exterior signs and even in ads — that they do not perform abortions. Such legislation, pro-lifers say, is not only unconstitutional but also could lead to an uptick in abortions because some women — who otherwise would be open to hearing about alternatives to abortion — will be deterred from even entering the crisis pregnancy centers' buildings.

The latest city is New York, which has approved a law requiring crisis pregnancy centers to post signs at the entrance and in the waiting room stating they do not perform abortions or provide abortion referrals. If a center does not have a licensed medical provider on staff, then that information, too, must be posted on the signs. Although other cities have passed similar laws, New York's law goes a step further by requiring the information also be disclosed in advertisements and to people who call the centers.

Needed services

Crisis pregnancy centers are needed, supporters say, because Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, is biased in its counseling and has a financial interest in guiding women to abortions. In 2009, Planned Parenthood performed 340 abortions for every one adoption referral it made, its own data show. Crisis pregnancy centers often provide such free services as pregnancy tests, ultrasound exams, prenatal care, childbirth classes, testing for sexually transmitted diseases, post-abortion counseling and material assistance. Abortion clinics typically do not provide many of these services.

Thus far, the 52 crisis pregnancy centers in Alabama have not been a target of politicians.

Americans asked to fast to protest budget cuts

A diverse coalition of religious leaders from Bread for the World, World Vision, Mercy Corps, Sojourners, the ONE Campaign and the Alliance to End Hunger is calling on Americans of good faith to fast and pray to protest proposed budget cuts that would jeopardize the poor, sick and hungry at home and abroad.

"What we're doing is humbling ourselves before God and saying, 'I can't do this anymore and I need your help and I'm not going to let go until you do something,'" said Tony Hall, head of the Alliance to End Hunger and co-convenor of the



BP photo

UNDER ATTACK — Crisis pregnancy centers provide women with alternatives to abortion and even post-abortion counseling. But some cities are passing laws that could deter women from even entering the doors.

"What a blessing it is to live in a state like Alabama where we have a governor and legislators who value life," said Lisa Hogan, executive director of Sav-A-Life Vestavia.

Hogan suggested that Alabamians pray that there will be people in power in New York who will help change the law.

"But even with the restrictions they have had placed on them, the pregnancy resource centers in New York will not stop doing what they are doing," she predicted.

Still Melinda Delahoyde, president of Care Net, a national network of pregnancy resource centers, said the New York City Council's move to hamstring the centers could mean the city's astronomical abortion rate "could skyrocket even further." According to recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports, 41 percent of pregnancies in New York end in abortion.

'Fully informed'

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed the law March 16, saying it's needed to make sure women are "fully informed."

Matt Bowman, an attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), said pro-choicers want to "shut down the real help and hope that pregnancy centers offer women."

ADF, a pro-life legal group, filed a suit against New York on March 18. "There's not any question that crisis pregnancy centers are being targeted," Bowman said.

"You can read the pamphlets from the abortion movement targeting them. It's not hidden. I think these attacks on pregnancy centers are an attempt to distract from the growing national scandals in the abortion industry and to give women fewer choices when they experience an unexpected pregnancy."

For pro-lifers, the good news is that courts — so far — are mostly siding with them. In January, a federal judge struck down a Baltimore law that required crisis pregnancy centers to post exterior signs stating they do not provide abortions or make referrals for abortions. In ruling that the law violates the First Amendment's free speech clause, the judge, Marvin Garbis, wrote, "It is for the provider — not the government — to decide when and how to discuss abortion and birth-control methods."

Planned Parenthood claims on its website that crisis pregnancy centers have a history of "giving women wrong, biased information to scare them into not having abortions." (BP, TAB)

fasting effort known as Hunger Fast (www.hungerfast.org).

The proposed budget includes cuts to domestic spending of about \$2.3 billion from affordable housing, \$1.75 billion from job training, \$1.3 billion from community health centers, \$900 million from refugee programs and \$390 million from low-income heating assistance.

The budget cuts, announced in mid-February to combat a staggering \$1.3 trillion federal deficit, also call for slashing foreign aid by about \$5 billion, including \$450 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

Hall, an evangelical, has two goals: a groundswell of Americans joining him in fasting and prayer to oppose cuts to domestic and foreign aid programs and a few Republican House members "[breaking] rank" and speaking out against the cuts precisely "because they are evangelicals ... because of their faith."

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that evangelicals, more than any other group of Americans, are more likely to support cutting spending for foreign aid (unrelated to security interests) and programs for the unemployed. (RNS)



BP photo

COMMITMENT — The Gathering closes March 4 in Oklahoma City with an altar call for attendees intent on expanding the gospel's reach among American Indians.

Working together

American Indian-focused event aims to remove barriers

American Indians from 15 states and First Nations people from three Canadian provinces participated in The Gathering, a March 2-4 conference in Oklahoma City aimed at removing barriers to bringing hope to native peoples across North America through faith in Christ.

"We came from Nebraska expecting something miraculous because we need a miracle," said Ron Goombi, a North American Mission Board missionary to American Indians in Nebraska and Kansas.

Goombi brought people from eight tribes in the two states. "Our suicide rates are so high the tribe doesn't know what to do. The water system is breaking down," he said. "We need to live beyond the barriers we have."

A platform decorated simply with an Indian tepee, two feathered headdresses and a native drum set the stage at Southern Hills Baptist Church in Oklahoma City for the event that underscored:

▶ the effectiveness of telling stories, rather than sermonizing, in reaching native peoples.

▶ being true to the gospel while at the same time seeking to understand the worldview of American Indians and First Nations peoples.

▶ use of in-home groups, not just church buildings, to draw native peoples to the gospel.

"It pretty much confirmed what I had come to the conclusion of,

concerning work with Native Americans," said Richard Delores, a member of the Pueblo Laguna tribe and pastor of Laguna Acoma Baptist Mission in Budville, N.M., who brought four members — new Christians — to The Gathering.

Oklahoma City pastor Emerson Falls, a member of the Sac and Fox tribe who was among The Gathering's organizers, had noted prior to the conference: "A lot of our Native American pastors learned to preach the western model that the missionaries taught us, which is good and effective and God uses it. But it's not culturally relevant because our people are an oral people, and we are storytelling people, so it just doesn't make sense that we use three points and a poem in our Native American churches, and everywhere else,

they use stories." Falls is president of the Fellowship of Native American Christians and immediate past president of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

Cultural context

Among the featured speakers, who framed their messages within a cultural context, were Grant Lovejoy, an orality specialist with the International Mission Board (IMB); Jay Jackson, a former missionary with New Tribes Mission in the Philippines who now leads a cross-cultural training ministry named Global Empowerment; Jeff

lorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary; and Bill Fudge, an emeritus IMB representative in East Asia who served 34 years with the mission board.

"[Though] we're all from different places ... I believe God has given us an opportunity to work together, and I think that's kind of my highlight from it, how we can help each other, work with each other and to go forward as believers," said Alex Sunrise, pastor of several congregations in Canada's Northwest Territories.

The Gathering was the first of two national events this spring focusing on fresh ways of reaching American Indians and First Nations people. The North American Native Peoples' Summit, April 27-28 at Cross Church in Springdale, Ark., will aim at connecting American Indian leaders from across North America with non-natives who want to work with them.

Pandora Watchman, a Navajo from Gateway Community Church in Window Rock, Ariz., who attended The Gathering, said the American Indian context in which she lives can be daunting. "[People] feel like if they go to any kind of church — we have a lot of churches on the reservation — they're Christian," she said. "Even the drunk on the street will say they're a Christian."

The Gathering "was a lot to chew on, to think about, to pray about, but it was good; it was excellent," Watchman reflected, saying she would be returning to the Navajo Nation "asking the Lord, 'What do you want me to do with this?'" He's already showing me. I've been talking more boldly about the gospel with people." (BP)



BP photo

WORSHIPING — Dalecia Satepauhoodle, Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma City, uses sign language to express the Lord's Prayer.

World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Palestinian Intifada Facebook page shut down

PALO ALTO, Calif. — Facebook shut down a "Third Palestinian Intifada" page and similar groups, prompted by complaints from Jewish groups that the content had crossed the line from free speech to violent incitement.

The campaign has raised questions about whether Facebook should be used to facilitate some popular uprisings but not others, and even whether Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg has lost touch with his family's Jewish roots.

Inspired by the successful use of social media to fuel popular protests in Egypt and elsewhere, the intifada fan page had amassed more than 300,000 "likes" from users for its proposed May 15 uprising before disappearing March 29.

Facebook, which has more than 500 million users worldwide, prohibits content that is "hateful, threatening or pornographic; incites violence or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence."

The intifada page was permitted as long as the creators maintained a theme of peaceful protest and deleted violent postings. But as the controversy grew, with Israeli officials and Jewish groups urging Facebook to take down the pages, the content deteriorated.

The first Palestinian intifada began in 1987; the second uprising began in 2000. The proposed third intifada date is May 15, which Palestinians mourn as Nakba Day, or Catastrophe Day, marking the day after the 1948 establishment of Israel, when hundreds of thousands of Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes.

Millionaire buys paintings so church can keep them

CANTERBURY, England — A self-effacing multimillionaire has become a local hero after buying a series of 17th-century religious paintings and then donating them back to the Church of England in a bid to help boost art tourism.

Jonathan Ruffer, 59, paid 15 million pounds (about \$24 million) for a series of paintings of the biblical patriarch Jacob and his sons by Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbaran.

The 8-foot paintings, completed between 1640 and 1645, have been housed at Auckland Castle, the official residence of the Anglican bishop of Durham, since 1756, after a bishop bought them for a little less than 125 pounds (about \$200).

Earlier this year, the managers of the Church of England's 5 billion-pound investment portfolio proposed selling the paintings at auction in hopes of using the proceeds to fund church ministry in poorer parts of England.

Ruffer, who co-founded the successful Ruffer Investment Management in 1994, stepped in to buy the paintings. Talks have started between the National Trust, a British historic preservation charity, and the Durham County Council to open the castle to greater public access. Civil leaders hope the ongoing presence of the Zurbaran paintings will boost tourism.

Vatican: People against homosexual behavior are victims

VATICAN CITY — A Vatican official told a U.N. body March 22 that people who openly object to homosexual behavior are at risk of losing their human rights when they are prosecuted or stigmatized for their beliefs.

"People are being attacked for taking positions that do not support sexual behavior between people of the same sex," said Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, the Vatican's representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"When they express their moral beliefs or beliefs about human nature, which may also be expressions of religious convictions, or state opinions about scientific claims, they are stigmatized, and worse — they are vilified and prosecuted," Tomasi said.

"The truth is these attacks are violations of fundamental human rights and cannot be justified under any circumstances."

The Vatican envoy said there is an international "consensus between societies that certain kinds of sexual behaviors must be forbidden by law," citing pedophilia and incest as examples.

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