

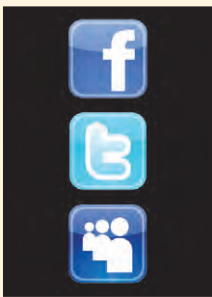


INSIDE



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'God is surely alive and moving'

Alabamian works among Muslim population in South Asia, asks for prayer

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

She knew it in seventh grade. Stormie Udall, an Alabamian, said she was at the National Acteens Convention in Birmingham when God started talking to her about it.

"During the course of the week, I was exposed to all sorts of missions work from all over the world. For the first time, my eyes were opened to how God was moving across the globe," Udall said.

And by the Thursday night invitation, she knew it was a done deal.

"That day, I dedicated my life to following Him wherever He may lead," Udall said.

She meant it.

And at the moment, the "wherever" is a megacity in South Asia, a place that contains some of the area's poorest and wealthiest people, a place desperately in need of the gospel, Udall said.

"Nearly every religion is represented here in our city, though evangelical Christianity accounts for less than 1 percent of the population," said Udall, who serves as a Southern Baptist worker alongside her husband, Carlton. "We both felt God calling us to work in a city and among a Muslim population. When we first heard about our city and the incredible needs here, we knew God was revealing His will to us."

Islam is not the major religion in the couple's city, so the people they work among face prejudices, she said.

"Unfortunately this prejudice can even be displayed among the Christian community, preventing many Muslims from even hearing the gospel."

But Udall is seeing things change.

"We are beginning to see local believers who truly are on fire for Christ. They are sharing their faith, and people are coming to know the Savior," she said.

And a church in the States recently adopted one of the city's people groups and has already seen



IMB photo

'INCREDIBLE NEEDS' — Stormie Udall (left) asks Alabama Baptists to pray for her and her husband as they build relationships and share Christ in a megacity in South Asia.

Him moving in the people's hearts.

"This church sent a team to our city to prayer walk and to begin building relationships with the people. After only a week, many people heard the gospel and several accepted Christ," Udall said.

And small group Bible studies are now meeting weekly in the homes of those who have put their faith in Him.

"God is surely alive and moving in our city," she said.

Right now, the Udalls are focusing mainly on language learning, something that brings blessings and spiritual warfare alike, she said.

"When I am at home studying lan-

guage, it is easy to feel guilty about not being outside talking to people and building relationships. However, when I am out trying to talk to people, it is easy to feel guilty about not knowing enough language," Udall explained.

Feeling of inadequacy

The enemy uses that to make workers overseas feel constantly inadequate, she said.

"The truth remains that we are weak and Christ is strong. Making it through even a day here requires full dependence on Him."

Udall asked for believers back

home in Alabama to pray that she and her husband would soon be able to communicate well with the people in their "heart language."

"Pray we will find strength and endurance through the Spirit," Udall said. "Pray also for us as we build relationships with the people around us — our neighbors, our language helpers, those we meet on the street and in shops. Pray that we will be sensitive to how God is leading and bold to share the greatest message of all time."

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

FBC Opelika hosts area revival to 'build the Kingdom'

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Rick Hagans was 9 years old, he tried to hop on a freight train bound for New York City — he felt called to preach the gospel there.

He never would've dreamed that years later he'd be bringing New York home to preach to his home state of Alabama.

For three days in early April, a team from Times Square Church in New York City spoke to a crowd of nearly a thousand at First Baptist Church, Opelika, thanks to a relationship built by Hagans with the church over the years.

The Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association church hosted congregations of various denominations from across the area for the event, called A Time

to Build. The crowd filled the church and spilled over into an overflow area with a JumboTron outside on the Lee County Courthouse lawn.

"The theme wasn't about building a church — it was about building the Kingdom," said Hagans, founder and president of Harvest Evangelism and a member of First, Opelika. "The event (See 'Congregations,' page 3)

COMMENT

Remember God's Word amid Economic Uncertainty

Is there anyone who does not know that the nation is in the midst of an economic crisis?

On the federal level, the nation barely avoided a government shutdown when Republicans and Democrats reached an eleventh-hour deal April 8 to cut \$38.5 billion from the 2011 federal budget in return for approving a budget for the remaining portion of the fiscal year.

Often unmentioned in the discussion is the fact that the cuts represent about 1 percent of the federal budget (\$3.82 trillion). Complicating future economic negotiations is the fact that anticipated income for the year is only about 57 percent of expenditures (\$2.17 trillion) and the nation's debt load equals about 76 percent of anticipated income (\$1.65 trillion).

Is it any wonder investors are now expressing concern about the worthiness of U.S. bonds?

On the state level, Gov. Robert Bentley declared 15 percent proration for most state programs the end of last month. He said General Fund income will be more than \$100 million under budget. Forecasts for the coming year border on draconian. Some anticipate another 25 percent or more being cut from state programs through proration. Some social service agencies say such cuts could put them out of existence.

In the county where I live, Jefferson County, the County Commission continues to ponder declaring bankruptcy because of astronomical sewer debt. In addition, the county struggles with the loss of income from its occupational tax, which employees have paid since 1987 and was reauthorized in 2009. But that tax has now been declared illegal because of legislative irregularities that reflect the arrogance with which the legislative process sometimes worked in the past.

The result is county workers face layoffs. Services are being cut back, and the county struggles to pay its bills. Everything from the health department to the operation of the county jail is impacted.

But that is no different from the situation faced by countless Alabama families. In the past decade, median family income declined nationwide, according to an article in *The Nation* magazine, and Alabama is no exception. Unemployment remains high. It is not an exaggeration to say many people are underpaid, overworked and stressed out.

Cuts in spending are happening everywhere as America and Americans attempt to put their financial houses in order.

As individuals and governments at all levels struggle with how to best utilize available finan-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

cial resources, an observation from the Book of Proverbs bears remembering. In Proverbs 29:7, one reads, "The righteous care about the concerns of the poor. The wicked does not understand such concern." That teaching is just as true, just as inspired, just as infallible as the apostle Paul's declaration in 1 Timothy 1:15 that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

The righteous care about the poor

The righteous — those who have God in their hearts and walk humbly before Him — care about the needs of the poor. That is the unmistakable teaching of the verse, and that teaching is reflected throughout the Bible. For example, in 1 John 3:16–17, the apostle John said, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

One who lives without concern for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the orphan, the widow does not have the love of God in his or her heart. Instead such a person is called "wicked," not even understanding why people with resources would be concerned about the "have-nots" of the world.

How financial resources are used is one indicator of what is in the heart — whether it be an individual's heart or a nation's corporate heart. That is what the Bible says.

Christians generally agree that the Church is commissioned to care for needy people. It also must be acknowledged that caring for such people is not the task of the Church exclusively. Others also are charged with the welfare of the hurting. The Bible teaches individuals (Matt. 25:31–46), families (1 Tim. 5:8) and government (Ps. 72) share that responsibility.

Just as it is wrong for individual Christians or churches to stop caring about hurting people during difficult economic times, it is wrong for governments to balance budgets by undue cuts on programs designed to help the neediest in society.

That is why it is important to note that cuts totaling at least \$2.5 billion made in the recently approved federal budget agreement impact programs serving the most vulnerable people in the world.

The WIC program, a special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children, was slashed \$518 million. The McGovern-Dole international food aid program was reduced \$354 million at a time when soaring food prices are forcing more and more people into hunger. Even former President George W. Bush's favorite aid program — the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief — was cut by \$25 million.

And this occurred in a nation where 400 families own 50 percent of its wealth. That equals as much as the bottom 155 million Americans own if all their holdings were combined.

Analysts say none of the cuts impacted those 400 families.

In Alabama, some private social service agencies are already making contingency plans for what they will do if next year's budget is as drastically reduced as currently projected. It may well be that the "least of these" will be the first to feel the impact of coming budget cuts.

Experience teaches that I have no special expertise about how to make an inadequate amount of income cover all the necessary expenses. And it must be acknowledged that there are other ways to care for the poor besides appropriating funds for government programs. But working for effective and efficient programs is also important.

And the teaching of Scripture must be remembered during these hard times: "The righteous care about the concerns of the poor." That biblical principle judges us all — individuals, governments and society as a whole.



"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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Photo by Courtney Davies

PRAISING GOD — Robin Simpson, worship leader for Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, leads the congregation in a song during the April 17 worship service at Marbury High School.

'Sharing Hope'

Relief efforts continue at Boone's Chapel, across state

By Neisha Fuson and Jennifer Davis Rash

Mike Johnson, pastor of Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, preached from Lamentations 3 on "The Unfailing Faithfulness of God" on April 17. This was a day and a half after a tornado destroyed the church's original sanctuary and children's education space and damaged the church's multipurpose building.

Meeting at nearby Marbury High School, a larger than normal crowd — more than 400 — attended the service described as "upbeat" by Johnson. "There was everything from tears to cheering," he said.

The church is waiting for final figures from the insurance company, but all downed trees and debris have been cleaned up, Johnson said. Chilton Baptist

Association's disaster relief team out of First Baptist Church, Clanton, assisted in the April 16 clean up.

At press time, church members were set to celebrate Easter back on church property and a mobile chapel was on its way for education space.

The mobile unit was provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

"These units are provided by funds set aside for Alabama Baptist churches in disaster," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the SBOM. "We are thankful for the generosity of Alabama Baptists who provide for this emergency fund."

While the mobile units are not readily available in all cases, the SBOM and its executive committee consider the crisis requests carefully, he explained.

"[Boone's Chapel] appreciate[s] everything Alabama Baptists have done," Mike Johnson said. "We are very gracious."

Another form of support came when four Alabama Baptist disaster relief chaplains counseled with adults and children at Pine Level Elementary School, near Boone's Chapel April 18. They were deployed at the request of the local school board, Mel Johnson said. Another six chaplains fanned out across Geiger, another area in the state ravaged by tornadoes.

This team is working with the American Red Cross, each one traveling with a mental health worker and a nurse, he said.

Chaplains on the scene

"They are doing condolence visits as well as working with people who have had a great deal of loss," he said.

In other areas of the state, chainsaw and recovery teams with more than 100 volunteers have been deployed.

Bethel Baptist Association and Selma Baptist Association led the disaster relief efforts in Marengo County.

"The area was hit and they responded, then it was hit again," Mel Johnson said. "And the second set of storms was worse than the first."

Elmore Baptist Association's No. 1, 2 and 3 disaster relief teams responded to the damage in Equality.

And several associations have been and are continuing to work in the Tuscaloosa area. They are from Tuscaloosa, Morgan, Pleasant Grove, Sipsey, Walker, Fayette and Pickens Baptist associations.

"We've had quite a bit of response," Mel Johnson said. "One man even accepted Christ."

"The teams have presented a tremendous amount of professionalism, but each and every time we respond, Christ always leads the way," he said.

"The chain saw is nothing more than a tool to share Hope."

To donate to Alabama Baptist disaster relief, visit www.alsbom.org, call 1-800-264-1225.



Photo by Courtney Davies

FINALE — Worship Leader Robin Simpson (left) and Pastor Mike Johnson sing 'Family of God' as the April 17 service concludes.

Congregations challenged at A Time to Build event

(continued from page 1)

exceeded its goal. Revival is to awaken the sleeping giant, the church, and I believe it did."

Pastors and members of churches of other denominations and languages "turned out in an awesome fashion" for the event, Hagans said. Carter Conlon, senior pastor of Times Square Church, brought the messages, and a worship ensemble from the New York church led a community choir made up of east Alabamians.

Those present for the event were encouraged by the Times Square Church staff to return to the heart of the gospel and love each other as Christ does, he noted.

After the challenge, the altar filled with pastors and leaders "from the biggest church to the smallest church," Hagans said.

Steve Scoggins, pastor of First, Opelika, said they were trying to embrace John 17:20-21 and be unified in their love so the world would believe in Christ.

"We were very pleased. We had a great cross section of individuals of different races and denominations," he said.

And the following Sunday when Scoggins spoke at a local Methodist church — in keeping with the spirit of unity — they expressed to him how encouraged they were by A Time to Build.

"God really blessed them through it," he said.

Encouragement is a natural outcome of unity, Hagans said. Before

the event, about 100 churches in east Alabama banded together for concentrated prayer, fasting and organization. On one particular evening, about 300 people came to the courthouse lawn as part of an all-night prayer service for revival in the community.

"We weren't trying to start a megachurch or mega-movement, but it was pretty cool to come together as the greater body of Christ and experience and enjoy that unity in worship," he said.

On the Sunday afternoon after the event ended, the team also went to Selma and led a similar service there.

In the days since, Hagans said he's heard excitement expressed over how God moved through the entire event.

"I've heard comments on Facebook and around town saying, 'Wow, that was

awesome. Can we do this again?'" he said, adding that pastors have already begun discussing how to meet together more regularly for encouragement.

God has brought a fresh fire to Opelika, he said.

"The church was awakened," Hagans said. "Now what we do in that awakened state is up to us."

For more information about A Time to Build, visit the event's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/atimetobuild. For more information about Times Square Church or to download the audio of the messages from A Time to Build, visit tscnyc.org.

"The church was awakened. Now what we do in that awakened state is up to us."

Rick Hagans
Harvest Evangelism

Marion's Faith Chapel still standing despite tornado damage all around

The April 15 tornado that wreaked havoc in the small community near Marion where Faith Chapel Baptist Church sits may have uprooted trees and taken a hit on the church building, but it didn't touch the cross.

A wooden cross wrapped in a purple linen sits in front of the church. It was there before the storm, and after the storm it stood strong and steady complete with the purple linen in place — an image that touched many people.

Lloyd Stockman, pastor of Faith Chapel, shared with enthusiasm about the wooden cross.

He also noted the church building received some damage during the storm. The roof looked as though it was "lifted and set back down by the tornado," he said.

"We sustained some building



Photo courtesy of Faith Chapel Baptist Church

damage but we are still awaiting the insurance company's review," Stockman said at press time.

And while the church building's electricity was out for the following Sunday service April 17, members showed up and were "thankful," Stockman said. The event has "drawn [the church] together and closer to the Lord," Stockman added. "I have a real hard time feeling sad about [the damage]." (TAB)

Baptized at 81

Dothan man chooses Christ; brother baptizes him after years of prayer

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

His mother and brother were Christians. He knew all about Jesus and learned about the Bible in church as a child. He even attended church off and on as a young adult.

But he never believed.

Now, at 81, James "Buford" Morris has chosen to follow Christ.

Buford's youngest brother, Mack Morris, pastor of Woodridge Baptist Church, Mobile, had been praying for him to make that decision for more than 40 years.

Mack accepted Christ at Madrid Baptist Church when he was 13. He and his mother prayed for his father and seven siblings to come to know Christ and walked about a mile to the Columbia Baptist Association church every Sunday. Buford went to church some Sundays but it never meant much to him, Mack said.

After serving overseas in the Navy, Buford returned to America in 1980 and began to attend Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan, so his children could "come up in church."

He knew church was a good place, and he wanted his children to be involved in something good. Going to church became part of Buford's lifestyle.

He went to services and left — unchanged.

Even after his children were grown and married, Buford continued to attend services, but something inside him "just didn't feel right," he said.

So Buford decided to visit some other churches and eventually ended up back at his "mother's church," Madrid Baptist.

He went to Madrid Baptist for three weeks.

After speaking with Interim Pastor Coley Myer Holloway, he said, "Something just came over me, and I took the walk (to the altar). ... I said, 'I [have got to] do this. I [have got to] do it now.'"

Buford called Mack to tell him the good news: They were no longer just brothers by blood; they were now brothers in Christ, too.

"Mack was just thrilled," Buford said.

Mack confirmed his excitement.

"It's been so special to me," he said. "[Buford] called me and said, 'I'm [go-



Photo courtesy of Mack Morris

WASHED IN THE BLOOD — Mack Morris baptizes his brother Buford after more than 40 years of praying for him to find Christ. Buford was baptized April 3 at Madrid Baptist Church in front of more than 50 people.

ing to) be baptized. I hope you can come.' He just wanted me to be there."

Holloway invited Mack to baptize his brother and share a message at the evening service April 3. He heartily agreed and decided to speak on the question "How will you be remembered?"

More than 50 people came to Buford's baptism service. Typical attendance is between 20 and 30.

Luke 15:7 came to Mack's mind during the service: "I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over

one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who don't need repentance."

"I can imagine the angels in heaven were rejoicing," Mack said.

Holloway called it a glorious service. "[Seeing the baptism] just gave [the church] a shot in the arm," he said. "It was like a fresh breath from heaven."

Holloway encouraged churches not to overlook people like Buford.

"[Seniors] need reaching and reclaiming for Christ," he said. "It's an open field. Don't neglect your senior citizens."

'It's a miracle'

And Buford's story is a testimony to that. A man who has lived a long life has been changed from the inside out and "it's a miracle," Mack said.

Buford agreed.

"I don't know how to explain it. The Spirit has gotten into me and I feel different. I feel great," he said.

For those who have been praying for years for family members and friends, Buford said to keep praying.

"Don't give up," he said. "Prayer does work." ❧

Celebrate
**Senior Adult
Sunday**

May 1



GuideStone creates tax credit resources for small churches

Small churches can find additional help from GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in evaluating whether they wish to pursue the Small Business Healthcare Tax Credit that was created under the healthcare reform law.

GuideStone has created a number of resources designed to help churches evaluate the new credit.

The resource page includes a comprehensive Q&A, step-by-step guide for deter-

mining eligibility and amount of the credit, necessary forms and other frequently asked questions.

The resource also includes a webinar with Danny Miller of Connor & Winters. Miller is a noted attorney who specializes in benefits issues for ministers.

"We urge churches to evaluate all factors before deciding whether to pursue the credit," said O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone. "These resources provide tools to help in that process."

These resources can be accessed free of charge on GuideStone's Healthcare Reform website, www.GuideStoneInsurance.org/Healthreform.

The IRS confirmed in Notice 2010-82 in December that the Small Business Healthcare Tax Credit is available to churches who participate through a self-funded denominational church health plan, including GuideStone health plans.

For more information, call 1-888-984-8433. (GuideStone)

Someone You Should Know

By Sondra Washington, Correspondent, TAB

Joyce Vaughn

Iron City Baptist Church, Anniston
Calhoun Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Philippians 4:13

FAVORITE HYMN: "Amazing Grace"

HOBBIES: Angel Mission Ministry at church

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Wayne for 51 years; two daughters, Belinda and Cindy; and two grandchildren

A member of Iron City Baptist Church, Anniston, since the 1940s, Joyce Vaughn has been involved in numerous ministries including teaching Sunday School, serving as assistant director of Woman's Missionary Union, leading the Bible Drill ministry and co-leading the church family food ministry. She is very passionate about the church's Angel Mission Ministry. Each week, Vaughn and several other women gather to visit shut-ins or sew items for the American Cancer Society and local Sav-A-Life.

Q: How did you become a Christian?

A: I went forward (in church) when I was about 10 or 12. All through the years, I wasn't sure that God had saved me. As a young adult, I was at work one day and one of the girls said if she wasn't sure she was going to heaven, she would make sure. So I made sure.

Q: What are some of your memories of Iron City Baptist?

A: I remember it was a one-room building, and they had a big [potbellied] stove that they heated it with. No running water. Outside rest room. I remember my parents talking about the little man who would pick up coal off the railroad that runs through the city to heat the church.

Q: Describe a ministry experience you've had.

A: The most awesome thing that God has ever led me to do was a missions trip to Swaziland ... in February. There are care points where the children have lost their parents, and it's literally children taking care of children. The ladies of the community feed them once a day. We carried food and visited the kids and loved on them. I taught them (the women) how to sew tote bags to sell. I've never had anything hit me any harder.

Q: What do you get from ministry?

A: It's hard to put into words. There is a peace in knowing I'm doing what God wants me to do. Any of these projects I've been involved in, they are not just something I've done. All of it's been done through God, and these other ladies have had a hand in it, too. It's not just me. ❧

Hearts in Hands ministers to hospice patients

By John Evans
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Mrs. L lived in the house with the sunken toilet.

She took care of her husband, a hospice patient who was bedridden with cirrhosis of the liver because of alcoholism. Their two granddaughters, abandoned by their mother, who fled after serving a prison sentence, lived with them.

The house, which Mrs. L's husband had built more than 50 years earlier with untreated lumber, had been mauled by termites. Its only toilet had sunk through the floor, and the cast-iron bathtub was in the process of collapsing. The front porch was too far gone to even support the weight of Mrs. L's granddaughters; one of them had fallen through the rotten wood.

Frank Burder, founder and president of Hearts in Hands, an independent ministry to hospice patients, arrived one day with a team of volunteers and his family members to fix Mrs. L's house. Standing next to her husband's bed, they started to pray, as they do before every project.

"I looked over and Mrs. L said that her husband wanted to pray," Burder recalled. "He woke up and was reaching out and crying. He couldn't talk because [he'd] had multiple strokes, but one of my granddaughters held his hand and we prayed that day."

Burder, a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, wasn't looking to start a ministry like Hearts in Hands when the Lord brought the needs of hospice patients (people who receive care, usually at home, for terminal illnesses) to his attention in 2007.

Yard work, home repairs needed

"This is something I never in my wildest dreams thought I would do," the retiree said.

That year, he was speaking with a hospice nurse who lamented that she only had time to attend to patients' health needs and not the other issues they often face. Burder learned that many patients need yard work and home repairs done, which they are often too frail to



Photo courtesy of Hearts in Hands

'SHOW WITH ACTIONS' — Hearts in Hands volunteers work on a ramp outside a home. The ministry to hospice patients helps meet physical and spiritual needs. The volunteers pray before they begin each project.

do themselves. Many live imprisoned in their homes, too immobile to leave and either without family or abandoned by it.

"It was like God was whacking me in the back of the head with a club, saying, 'Are you [going to] do something?'" Burder said.

The hospice nurse told him of an elderly woman, Miss E, who had simply lost the will to live. Miss E, on oxygen and using a walker, lived alone in a house with no air conditioning or heat. Her trash hadn't been emptied in months, her dryer didn't work, her bedsheets hadn't been changed in a long time and the grass in her yard was 3 feet deep.

Burder and some family members tamed her lawn and fixed what they could inside the house.

"When we left that day, my youngest grandson planted some pansies in a pot and asked her if she wanted to put them outside where they would get some water," he said. "She said, 'No,' that she was looking forward

to watering the flowers (herself) because she hadn't had flowers in awhile. I went home and said to my wife, 'There are more (people like Miss E) here than we know about.'"

Shut out from world

Burder was right. The hospice nurse immediately told him of other patients who needed help, and from that moment, he, members of his family and teams of volunteers have given their weekends for the cause God called them to pursue.

Hearts in Hands learns of needs through connections with eight hospice groups in the state and carries out an average of two projects a month, though Burder hopes to do more. The work varies from building wheelchair ramps to roofing to yard care. More recently, it has included simply visiting with hospice patients, many of whom, Burder said, are utterly starving for conversation.

"When they're shut in for medical reasons,

it's like the rest of the world is shut out," he said. "That's not the way it should happen. Because they're shut in, we should not be shut out."

Burder only uses volunteers from churches near patients, because one of his goals is to connect (or reconnect) patients to local churches, where they can receive more consistent support and companionship.

It's a goal Lance Lee, chaplain and volunteer coordinator with Family Comfort Hospice, agreed is important. He said he encounters hospice patients who are either not Christians or never were connected to a church and local churches will have to actively reach out to them.

"Because of their illness ... they're not able to physically come to church, so the church must come to them," Lee said.

Steve Roberson and other volunteers from Catalyst, the nondenominational men's ministry he leads, have worked with Hearts in Hands on three wheelchair ramps in their area.

"One thing I've found is that the need is much greater than I ever really realized," Roberson said. "Until you start looking, you don't know."

He said ministries like Hearts in Hands are important ways for believers to show with actions that they love God as they say they do.

"Needs don't just always look clean, like putting a check in the offering plate and that's the end of it," Roberson added. "Sometimes you have to get right down there in it."

Burder said the ministry has a crucial need for more funds and volunteers but he has confidence that God will continue to provide everything needed.

Much more than any needs Hearts in Hands may have, Burder speaks of the joy he feels in doing God's work and seeing hope return to people who had all but given up.

"You know when you see this patient smiling at you, and they haven't smiled in six months, they're smiling because they see God in you, and that's what we're supposed to be."

For more information, visit www.heartsin-hands.org.



Photo courtesy of Judson College

7TH ANNUAL OLD HOWARD 100 BIKE RIDE TAKES PLACE

More than 200 cyclists participated in the seventh annual Old Howard 100 Bike Ride at Judson College in Marion on April 16. Samford University was founded in Marion as Howard College in 1843, and the bike ride highlights the Black Belt's contribution to education and religion. Since its inception, the ride has raised more than \$15,000 for Perry County's Sowing Seeds of Hope interfaith initiative.



SBC Representatives Around the World

For the past year and a half, we have been directing a ministry center in our church building. It is open a couple of days each week and allows people to have free Internet access, play games and enjoy coffee and snacks. Our team members have been helping by working with us one day a week. Our family will be leaving Belgium in July for a yearlong stateside assignment. One of our teammates is willing to keep the center open, but he cannot do it by himself. He needs people from our church to step forward to work with him. Our pastor is encouraging church members to minister at the center and food bank. Please pray that several people will step forward so this ministry can continue.

During our stateside assignment, we will be serving as mis-

sionaries-in-residence at Union University in Jackson, Tenn. Here in Brussels, we are beginning to sort and pack our belongings. We will store some things in Belgium and ship others to the States to put in the house that we recently bought in Kentucky. The moving company will be at our house June 14-17. Please pray that we will make wise decisions about what to keep and what to give away and that the packing and shipping will go well.

If you would like for us to speak or share in your church during the coming school year, please let us know. You can contact us at djhoglen@gmail.com or 502-538-6027 (Jennifer's parents' telephone number).

**David, Jennifer, Blair, Jenna and Anika Hoglen
Brussels, Belgium**

Across Alabama's Associations

BALDWIN

► **First Church, Foley**, will hold a ladies spring conference May 21, 9 a.m., with best-selling author Marla Cilley, also known as the FlyLady. She is a mentor to those living in CHAOS (Can't Have Anyone Over Syndrome) and clutter. Lois McNair, of Gulf Shores, will lead the music. For information call 251-943-8352. Billy Nale is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will hold Family Fun Fest May 1. Services will be at 9 and 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. There will be games, inflatables, a variety show and a special children's recognition. Dress casual and bring lawn chairs and a yard tent. For information visit www.canaanbaptist.net. Morgan Bailey is pastor. ► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host To The End in concert May 7, 7 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. For information call 205-425-4991. Scott Bush is pastor.

CHEROKEE

► **Friendship Church, Centre**, in the Whorton Community, will celebrate its 175th anniversary with homecoming and decoration May 15, 10:30 a.m. Tony Peace will lead the music. Honored guests will

be recognized, and there will be a historical overview of the church. A covered-dish meal will follow. There will be wagon and mule rides for children. Bill Rorie is interim pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **County Line Church, Camp Hill**, will celebrate its 176th anniversary with homecoming May 1, 10:45 a.m. Judson Jones Jr. will speak. County Line Singers will sing. Wayne Barrett is pastor.

ELMORE

► **Tallaweka Church, Tallassee**, will hold a National Day of Prayer event May 5, noon. There will be a salad lunch and prayer service. Isaac Kervin is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Robinsonville Church, Atmore**, will celebrate 109 years of ministry with homecoming May 1, 11 a.m. Phil Johnson will lead the music. Lunch will follow. Mike McMorris is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Jerry Darnell** is the new pastor of **Pleasant Valley #2 Church, Collinsville**. He and his wife, Wanza, have three children and three grandchildren.

MADISON

► **Hillwood Church, Huntsville**, will host Ivan Parker in concert May 7, 7 p.m. Doors will open at 6 p.m. For information about advanced tickets call 256-883-0485. Tickets also can be purchased at the door. Charles Freeman is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Union Church, Grand Bay**, will host The Weston Hin-

son Group in concert May 6, 7 p.m. Weston is the son of the late Kenny Hinson, lead singer for The Original Hinsons. For information call 251-865-6284. David Walley is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Union Hill Church, Bessemer**, will hold a ladies only service May 9, 7 p.m., with Shelley Jennings from the Women of Faith praise team. For information call 205-491-1103. Mickey Bell is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Fourmile Church, Wilsonville**, will celebrate its 187th anniversary April 30, 10 a.m., with Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions. Lunch will follow. Roger Chambers is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Hillman Burt** is the new pastor of **Pleasant Valley Church, Pell City**.

WEST CULLMAN

► The Woman's Missionary Union of **First Church, Cullman**, will hold Culture Day May 17, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Ed Hayes is pastor.

OTHER

► **First Church, Mobile**, recently started a new child care program at its child development center (CDC) for children ages eight weeks to four years. Its expanded day care hours are 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. daily. A new playground is planned to open early summer. For rates and tours call CDC Director Margaret Mangham at 251-432-6513. Chris George is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

DOM Wilkins retires from Tuscaloosa Association

Jerry Wilkins retired in early April after serving as director of missions (DOM) for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association for nearly 27 years.

The association celebrated with him in late March at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, where Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, shared a message and Wade Hamner provided special music. Wilkins was presented with a plaque commemorating his years of service.

"It was a fantastic celebration and a meaningful time," he said of the service attended by more than 200 people.

Called into the ministry in 1966 while attending Temple Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, Wilkins graduated from Samford University in Birmingham and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He served as pastor of several churches in Texas while in seminary before becoming pastor of Valley View Baptist Church, Leeds.

While serving as pastor of Oakwood Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn., Wilkins was contacted by Tuscaloosa Association about the DOM position.

"It was a wonderful opportunity to encourage and have influence over many churches rather than just one (church)," he said. "I appreciate all of the associational leaders and many volunteers who made so many good things possible over the years."

Those leaders and volunteers appreciate him, too, and at the association's executive board meeting April 18, Wilkins was named director of missions emeritus.

"I've worked with a number of DOMs through the years, and I would rank [Jerry] in the top," said Gil McKee, associational moderator and senior pastor of First, Tuscaloosa. "Jerry really did a great job and was good with relationships and gave good vision and direction to the association."

Wilkins led Tuscaloosa Association to grow from 59 churches to 87 churches, build a new associational resource center and start the Christian Ministry Center, Good Samaritan Free Medical Clinic, Neighborhood Missions Ministry and disaster relief.

He and his wife of 45 years, Carole, continue to reside in Northport and are members of Lakewood Baptist Church, Northport. Carole Wilkins recently retired from biblical lay counseling.

While Jerry Wilkins is finishing up his latest book, "A Practical Guide to Associational Missions," he is available for interim pastorates and to help churches as a church conflict resolution consultant.

To contact him, e-mail jerryw@tuscaloosabaptists.org.

Westmont uses wrestling events as fund-raisers

At Westmont Baptist Church, Birmingham, youth leaders are blazing the trail with a new fund-raising idea — wrestling matches.

But the events are more than a way to raise money for youth missions trips. Youth Pastor Burke Wren said they are an opportunity to reach "people that might not ever step foot in a church."

It all started last year, when Wren and his wife, Leigh, who have led the youth at the Birmingham Baptist Association church for two years, needed a way to raise funds for a trip to Centrifuge, a LifeWay Christian Resources camp being held in Mobile. Enter Westmont deacon Mike Jackson — better known as former professional wrestler "Action" Mike Jackson.

After some brainstorming and planning, Wren and Jackson decided to hold a wrestling event at the church, a first for Jackson who had never been a part of a church fund-raiser.

Westmont hosted its second Wrestling With the Devil event April 10, and in June, the youth will use the funds raised to take a missions trip to Panama City, Fla. Much like last year, the youth were involved in the entire process from organizing to selling concessions to cleanup, Wren said.

At the event, there was special music; an opening prayer; three wrestling matches; a testimony by Judson Armstrong, a professional Christian counselor and professional wrestler; and a message and altar call by Jamie Weathers, minister of students at Maytown Baptist Church.

About 300 people attended the event, and two stepped forward to accept Christ.

"[The match] is all about God," Jackson said. "The wrestling takes a back seat."

C.B. Scott is pastor.



WILKINS

Please submit news items for Across Alabama's Associations at least three weeks prior to the event.



Photo courtesy of FBC Fairview

GAS SELL FRESH APPLE PIES FOR ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING

The Girls in Action at First Baptist Church, Fairview, in Cullman, sold homemade fried apple pies March 5-6 to kick off the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The girls sold pies to church members and others, raising \$1,304 in donations for North American missions. David Chambers is pastor.

Double-edged sword

Social media offers both good, bad possibilities in relationships

After Jason Krafsky introduced his wife, Kelli, to Facebook, he wasn't sure how to respond when she told him she had just connected online with her "first love."

"It took me a couple of days to sort through my feelings about that," Krafsky said. "I began looking at Facebook through a different set of lenses."

Krafsky trusted his wife and knew her contact with an old boyfriend was "all in fun — nothing alarming about it." And in thinking about it, he realized how many of his online friends were women — including some he had dated years earlier.

But as a minister with 15 years experience as a marriage educator and conference leader, he also knew he and his wife needed to have a serious conversation.

"I know how affairs often happen. It's a slippery slope of circumstances and choices that can happen so quickly," said Krafsky, a former church planter in the Pacific Northwest.

Clear boundaries

Together, the Krafskys determined clear boundaries regarding how they would use social media and with whom they would establish online friendships.

"It's so easy to be two or three clicks away from making a bad decision," he said.

Without question, some social media users make decisions that destroy relationships. The Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reports 20 percent of divorces now involve Facebook in some way, and 80 percent of divorce lawyers indicate they have seen an increase in the number of divorces involving social media.

Still the Krafskys remained convinced Facebook holds too much potential for good to abandon it altogether.

"A lot of good things can happen, and it can be a phenomenal tool to be a witness and provide support for people who are going through tough times. People share a lot of real life on Facebook. Getting off (social media) is not the answer. Setting limits is," Krafsky said.

In articles posted on their website, www.socialmediacouple.com, and in the book they wrote together, "Facebook and Your Marriage," the Krafskys shared some of their insights and suggested safeguards, such as keeping public any correspondence with people of the opposite sex by posting comments on a wall or commenting on status updates, not entering chat rooms or lengthy e-mail exchanges.

Before accepting or offering a Facebook friend request, they recommend asking: "Would my spouse be comfortable with me being friends with this person?"

They also suggest guidelines that include limits on the time spent on social media.

"If your spouse thinks you are spending too much time on Facebook, you are spending too much time on Facebook," Krafsky said.

Common sense and common courtesy also should guide online behavior. Complaining on Facebook about the weather may be harmless, but publicly griping about a spouse is not.

"When we started on Facebook, we made the decision not to post anything that would put each other down, complain about each other or embarrass the other person in front of our Facebook friends," the Krafskys wrote.

Social media users also should gauge and guard their feelings — particularly about renewed friendships with old boyfriends or girlfriends. The mind tends to "auto-delete" the reasons for break-ups and create false fantasies about how

warm and wonderful those relationships used to be, they warn.

"The best way to avoid going down the slippery slope is to avoid climbing the hillside of opportunity in the first place," they wrote.

While the Krafskys see positive potential for social media, another couple who have written a book on marriage together take a harder line.

Jason and Debby Coleman, authors of "Discovering Your Amazing Marriage," warn readers about the dangers not only of social media, but also the many ways the Internet can undermine marriages.

"With the Internet, the sky is the limit with regards to potentially meeting, communicating and going too far with someone other than your spouse," the Colemans wrote.

"It used to be that the risks were only within an immediate realm of influence such as the workplace, the gym, the grocery store or even your church. ... Now, all a person has to do is sign onto the Internet, do a quick search, and, voila, an affair is

Facebook cited in more and more divorces

Surveys that show Facebook being cited more and more in divorce cases should make spouses think twice before "friending" someone of the opposite sex, experts say.

A 2010 survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers showed that 81 percent of "the nation's top divorce attorneys" reported an increase in social networking websites being used as evidence in divorce cases. Facebook is the leader, being cited in 66 percent of cases that involve online evidence.

"We're coming across it more

and more," said clinical psychologist Steven Kimmons of Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Ill. "One spouse connects online with someone they knew from high school. The person is emotionally available and they start communicating through Facebook. Within a short amount of time, the sharing of personal stories can lead to a deepened sense of intimacy, which in turn can point the couple in the direction of physical contact."

The Facebook-divorce link has been discussed widely in the social media realm lately thanks to a survey from the United Kingdom

supposedly showing Facebook being at least partially blamed for one in five of all divorces. The data is from a U.K. online divorce service that found the word "Facebook" appearing in 989 of the company's 5,000 divorce petitions, all of which were uncontested, *The Wall Street Journal* reported. The company's managing director called the survey "unscientific."

Whether or not Facebook is a reason for one in five divorces, it is becoming an increasing problem in marriages, Kimmons and other marriage experts say. (BP)

waiting to happen, delivered right into your own home."

Cell phones, particularly with texting capability, also provide a means for improper relationships to develop, the Colemans noted.

"Just as with the Internet, allowing access to one another's cell phones without question builds value and trust in your marriage. The moment a spouse denies access, a seed of doubt is planted; and if left to grow and take root, it could potentially destroy the marriage. Transparency and accountability are vital components of your marriage," they wrote.

Access

While others point to technology's ability to create barriers between family members, Keith Sanford, associate professor of psychology at Baylor University, sees its potential to strengthen marital relationships.

Sanford has created an online program — Couple Conflict Con-

sultant — to enable couples to assess their ability to work through differences and provide them strategies to resolve conflict.

Couples can log on at www.pair-builder.com any time, day or night, at no cost and take an anonymous assessment that identifies strengths and weaknesses — and discover tools for healthy conflict resolution.

"Getting an appointment to see a counselor can be a time-consuming process," Sanford said. "This program is convenient, providing instant access at a point when the need is apparent, and it offers instantaneous feedback."

"It also allows us to reach couples we couldn't reach before. As valuable as relationship enhancement seminars can be, often the couples who attend are those who need it the least. The strength of the online program is that those who might feel awkward about going to see a counselor or attending a seminar can take the assessment in the privacy of their own homes." (ABP)

Social-networking applications increasingly viewed as ministry tools

With the Internet closing in on television as Americans' main source of national and international news, churches increasingly are viewing social-networking applications like Facebook as ministry tools.

"Social-networking tools have become an integral part of most people's daily lives and relationships," said Curtis Simmons of Fellowship Technologies, a Texas-based church management software company. "If churches desire to connect with their congregation and community in meaningful ways, then they need to establish a strategy for actively engaging in the social media conversation."

The rising popularity of social networking is changing the way people communicate. One in five Americans used social-networking sites like Facebook or Myspace to connect with a campaign or some other aspect of the 2010 midterm elections. eHarmony, an online dating service that matches singles based on compatibility factors like religion, claims 542 people a day get married because of the ser-

vice, accounting for nearly 5 percent of all marriages in the United States. The uprising in Egypt reportedly began with a call for civil revolt on Facebook and Twitter.

A search for "Baptist" on Facebook found more than 700 pages. That's in addition to dozens of Christian social-networking sites that have cropped up with names like Church Speak, Holypal, Your Christian Space and Be Linked As Believers, also known as BLAB.

Connecting with others

"While some people are considering editing their lives to have more time for real face-to-face communications, many people are desperately searching for ways to connect with others and develop meaningful relationships amidst the harried state of their current situations," writer Lauren Hunter said in a 2007 article for *Church Solutions Magazine*.

While a web ministry cannot take the place of face-to-face connections, Hunter wrote, "It can enhance and foster growth in relation-

ships that already exist, as well as develop new relationships and provide unique ways to reach out to ... nonbelievers."

A study by LifeWay Research revealed nearly one-half of Protestant ministers now say they use social networking in some aspect of their church's ministry. Three-fourths use Facebook to interact with their congregation, while 62 percent uses social networking to interact with individuals outside the congregation. (For more information about the study, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org and search for "LifeWay Research" AND "social networking.")

Steve McCoy, a Chicago-area pastor who blogs as Reformissionary, said in an online discussion on Christians and the Internet that he uses Twitter mostly to connect with other church leaders outside of his area.

"I need like-minded friends in ministry," McCoy said. "I can't fully explain the benefit and blessing of ... connecting to hundreds of church leaders through my blog and Twitter.

It is truly a kind of community. It doesn't replace true community. It complements it and expands it."

Older users on the rise

According to the Pew Research Center, Millennials — adults ages 18 to 33 — still are significantly more likely to use social-networking sites but the gap for older adults is closing. The fastest growth in Internet usage has come from users age 74 and older. Social-networking site usage for this age group has quadrupled since 2008, jumping from 4 percent to 16 percent. Searching for health information, once the primary domain of older adults, is now the third-most-popular online activity for all adult Internet users.

LifeWay Research Director Scott McConnell added that social networking has limits. "Biblical community requires feet and faces, not only retweets and fan pages," he said. "But clearly social networking is a helpful tool to build and maintain community." (ABP)

State legislators claim constituents want looser alcohol laws, moving bills

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

Life is different at the Alabama Statehouse this year. Pro-gambling bills, which consumed a large part of the 2010 legislative session, are not even on the radar, and pro-life bills are getting a fair hearing for the first time in years.

Yet some old habits seem to die hard even with a Republican-run session and promises of morally sound legislation.

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, said things have changed “dramatically” at the Statehouse except when it comes to pro-alcohol bills.

“Legislators who ran as family values-oriented candidates do not seem to recognize the connection between alcohol and the destruction of individual lives and the breakup of homes and families,” he said. “Almost every alcohol expansion bill has sailed through various committees and/or the two chambers (of the Legislature). When we talk with legislators about the negative aspects of alcohol, they argue that ‘It’s good for business’ or ‘My constituents are wanting this.’”

‘Dangerous’ bills

Some of the pro-alcohol bills Godfrey calls the most “dangerous” include

► House Bill (HB) 408, sponsored by Rep. Oliver Robinson, D-Birmingham, which would increase the maximum size of beer containers from 16 ounces to 25.4 ounces, not including draft or keg beer.

Godfrey said this bill would allow people to get drunk in less time

and with less drinks, which could lead to more social problems.

► HB 136, sponsored by Rep. Mike Ball, R-Huntsville, which seeks to let businesses in state parks located in wet counties and municipalities sell alcoholic beverages on Sundays if approved by voters.

“State parks should be for enjoyment of families and alcoholic beverages are ‘anti-family,’” Godfrey said.

► HB 86, sponsored by Rep. Joe Hubbard, D-Montgomery, and co-sponsored by Rep. Barry Mask, R-Wetumpka, which is being called the “Brewpub Bill.” Along with its companion bill, Senate Bill (SB) 192, sponsored by Sen. Bill Holtzclaw, R-Madison, it seeks to allow brewpubs where alcoholic beverages are brewed to sell their products to wholesalers instead of limiting sales to on-site consumers. It also would change the requirement that brewpubs must contain and operate a restaurant.

Holtzclaw is co-sponsoring the Senate bill with Sens. Del Marsh, R-Anniston; Tom Whatley, R-Auburn; Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro; Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham; and Paul Sanford, R-Huntsville.

Godfrey said the bill would allow brewpubs in any wet county or municipality.

“Currently they can only establish a brewpub in historical districts,

which limits them to larger cities,” he said. “This bill also would allow brewpubs to bottle/can their beer and sell it to wholesalers where it can be marketed in grocery stores and convenience stores.”

► HB 266, sponsored by Rep. Mac McCutcheon, R-Capshaw, which is called the “Homebrew Bill.” It would allow adults to homebrew “beer, mead, cider and wine in limited amounts for personal use” without “payments of taxes or fees and without obtaining a license.”

Co-sponsors of this bill are Reps. Mask; Ball; Hubbard; Jamie Ison, R-Mobile; Patricia Todd, D-Birmingham; Phil Williams, R-Huntsville; Alan Boothe, R-Troy; Chad Fincher, R-Semmes; Ralph

Howard, D-Greensboro; Joe Faust, R-Fairhope; James Buskey, D-Mobile; Laura Hall, D-Huntsville; Dexter Grimsley, D-Newville; Johnny Mack Morrow, D-Red Bay; K.L. Brown, R-Jacksonville; Elaine Beech, D-Chatom; Jim Patterson, R-Meridianville; Thomas Jackson, D-Thomasville; Donnie Chesteen, R-Geneva; Wayne Johnson, R-Ryland; Greg Canfield, R-Vestavia Hills; and Rod Scott, D-Fairfield.

Godfrey said this bill would allow adults to brew up to 100 gallons per year per household and transport up to 10 gallons for tasting events and competitions. He believes a law like this could not be regulated. “People used to call this ‘bootlegging,’ and now there is a group that wants to legalize it.”

► SB 345, sponsored by Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, which would expand the definition of community development districts to include private resort developments and allow them to sell alcoholic beverages within dry counties, according to Godfrey.

“This is an attempt to circumvent the will of the people,” he said. “If the citizens of a dry county vote to stay dry and some ‘community developer’ comes in and wants to sell alcoholic beverages, this bill says he/she can do so in spite of what the citizens of the county say.”

► HB 281, sponsored by Rep. Bill Roberts, R-Jasper, which would allow wet/dry votes to be scheduled at any time instead of at general elections only.

Godfrey is encouraging Alabama Baptists to ask their state senators and representatives to “stop passing all of the alcohol expansion bills now moving through the state Legislature.”

To contact your senator, call 334-242-7800. To contact your representative, call 334-242-7600.

“Almost every alcohol expansion bill has sailed through various committees and/or the two chambers.”

**Joe Godfrey
ALCAP**

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Baptist World Alliance Day set for April 30, May 1

WASHINGTON — Worship materials for Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Day are now available for download on the BWA website, www.bwanet.org, to help churches unite in celebrating the worldwide Baptist family April 30 or May 1.

BWA Day was originally called Baptist World Alliance Sunday. It was begun in the mid-1920s and was to be a day of “worldwide fellowship in praise and prayer.”

The *Baptist Times* first reported on the event in England on Feb. 7, 1926.

Quickly becoming an important tradition, BWA Day is now observed on either Saturday or Sunday worship days and provides an opportunity for people around the world to join in prayer for the wider Baptist family and especially to remember those Baptists who are suffering persecution and deprivation.

This is also the one day each year when churches are encouraged to collect an offering for the global work of the BWA.

In 2007, BWA Day moved from the first Sunday in February to the first worship day in May to provide a midyear emphasis for the Baptist world family among the churches.

The celebration now includes the Saturday prior to the first Sunday, for the Seventh Day Baptists.

2011 BWA Day worship materials have been composed by Myra Blyth, tutorial fellow in worship and pastoral studies at Regent’s Park College, Oxford, England, contemplating the quinquennial emphasis, “In Step with the Spirit.”

Calif. Baptist Foundation’s Church Loan Fund liquidated

FRESNO, Calif. — A Georgia trust company has taken control of the assets of the Church Loan Fund (CLF) operated by California Baptist Foundation after obligations to investors had not been met since the fall of 2010.

Reliance Trust Company of Atlanta now is responsible for managing the fund, liquidating its assets and making distributions to investors.

As of March 31 about 29 percent, or \$24,933,216, of the outstanding principal balance of the loans in the fund’s portfolio were more than 90 days past due and classified as “noncurrent or on nonaccrual status.” Foreclosures total \$10,688,631, or 12.5 percent of the fund.

The liquidation of the CLF “does not jeopardize the California Baptist Foundation,” according to Philip W. Kell, president of the California Baptist Foundation. He explained that the \$85.8 million CLF is an investment fund that has been operated by the foundation since 1996 and has always been a stand-alone fund.

The money received from investors has been used to make loans to churches and purchase church bonds and other similar types of investments.

The California Baptist Foundation is an agency of the California Southern Baptist Convention. The foundation, founded in 1952, serves as the trust agency for Southern Baptists in the Golden State.

Dollars under management in trusts, endowments and managed funds total more than \$101 million and continue to grow, Kell said.

Southern Seminary chair, lectures named for McCall

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees have approved an endowment to establish the Duke K. McCall Chair of Christian Leadership and the McCall Leadership Lectures with funding by Dr. and Mrs. Duke McCall and the McCall Family Foundation.

The inaugural lecture will take place this fall in conjunction with the 60th anniversary of McCall’s election as president of Southern Seminary in August 1951.

“It is historic and a matter of great satisfaction that we are able to honor Duke K. McCall as the seventh president of this institution,” said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, during the April 19 trustee meeting in Louisville, Ky.

McCall is “synonymous with Christian statesmanship and leadership,” Mohler said.

“He has left a decisive mark not only at Southern Seminary but at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the SBC Executive Committee and throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.”

Robert Sloan, president of Houston Baptist University, will be the first lecturer in the McCall series.

Gilley pleads guilty to conspiracy, bribery in electronic ‘bingo’ case

Casino owner Ronnie Gilley is now the third gambling supporter involved in the state’s federal public corruption case to plead guilty. He was the leading force behind Dothan’s Country Crossing entertainment center, which included a slot machine-style gambling business.

On April 22, Gilley pleaded guilty to 11 counts of conspiracy, bribery and money laundering, according to *The Birmingham News*. Eleven other counts against him were dropped during the negotiations.

“I’m sorry, I’m wrong,” Gilley said, according to *The News*.



GILLEY

In 2009 and 2010, Gilley promoted legislation that would have legalized and expanded slot machine-style gambling. The public corruption investigation stemmed from gambling supporters’ attempts to illegally influence legislators to pass the bill.

Now, according to *The News*, Gilley “could be a key witness [against] Victory-Land owner Milton McGregor, two sitting state senators, two former state senators and others who tried to buy and sell votes” for the bill.

At press time, Gilley’s sentencing was scheduled for April 25. (TAB)

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



ONE MISSION

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

CP, PC and Me!

Here are some basic principles we Southern Baptists would do well to affirm:

1. We need each other.
2. We can do more together than we can do alone.
3. No person or church has enough resources to do, individually, what God has called us, collectively, to do.

CP (Cooperative Program), PC (Partnership and Cooperation) and Me!

In reflecting on how we work together in funding future ministry needs, two words come to mind when I think about the Cooperative Program – partnership and cooperation.

Jesus put it this way: ...the fields are white unto harvest but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 10:2, John 9:36-38).

• **A Significant Opportunity:** Jesus reminds us that it is harvest time. He is good at opening doors that would otherwise remain closed. We have doors of ministry and mission opportunity that are

currently open. These are doors that Christ Himself has set before us. We cannot afford to miss the harvest that is now ready to be gathered. Souls hang in the balance! Through cooperation and partnership, we can reach these people while there is still time!

• **A Sobering Reality:** We have the potential of a great harvest, but we don't have enough workers. Moments of opportunity may be missed, and the consequences are frightening. At the end of 2010, Alabama Baptist churches reported 1,131,160 members. That is roughly one Alabama Baptist for every four Alabamians, yet over 60 percent of our state remains unchurched. We have enough workers to reach Alabama; we don't have enough committed workers who see their role in reaching lost family members, neighbors and fellow residents with the Gospel. Alabama is not the end of our assignment. There is a world beyond us that desperately needs the Gospel. Through cooperation and partnership we can mobilize the work force needed to answer

God's call to service.

• **A Strategic Component:** Jesus listed prayer as our greatest resource. God has resources we cannot even begin to comprehend. Prayer changes things – even the hearts of believers who have lost their passion for reaching a lost world. Don't lose sight

By Bobby DuBois
State Missionary



of the fact that He provides the workers and He guides the work. Through cooperation and partnership we can band together through prayer in an effort to rally the resources needed to reach the world for Christ.

• **A Specific Request:** Pray for laborers. Ask for more resources. Pray that good stewards of God's resources will step forward. Intercede on behalf of those without Christ, and ask for more workers who are willing to give their testimony, time, talent and treasure in this exciting work to which God has called us.

Through cooperation and partnership, we can ask God to provide the resources we need in order to be on mission with His Great Commission.

The Cooperative Program is an 86-year-old tool for


encouraging cooperation and partnership in Southern Baptist and Alabama Baptist life. We need each other. We can do more together than separately. No one church can

accomplish the task without help. A lost world is waiting.

Bobby DuBois is a state missionary and associate executive director for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. He may be reached at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 219, bdubois@alsbom.org. (This column first appeared as a guest blog article on www.RickLance.com.)



FOCUS on One Mission



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

E-ZEKIEL WEB TRAINING WORKSHOP

JOIN PROFESSIONAL E-ZEKIEL TRAINER DACIA GULLEDGE AS SHE SHOWS US HOW TO USE E-ZEKIEL TO MAINTAIN A GREAT WEBSITE.
» COST: \$60 per person on or before April 22 » \$75 per person after April 22 (a \$300+ value & includes lunch!)

REGISTER for One Day Web Workshop: www.e-zekiel.com/trainingdayal

For more information, contact State Missionary Chris Mills, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 310, cmills@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

PASTOR, DEACON, SPOUSE RETREAT

THEME: Take Up Your Towel

Shocco Springs
Friday and Saturday, September 23-24, 2011

Begins with dinner on Friday and ends with lunch on Saturday.

Retreat Leaders: Steve & Diana Davis from Indiana. Steve is NAMB Vice President-Midwest Region. Diana is an author and speaker.

COST: \$69 per person (double occupancy)

RESERVATIONS: www.shocco.org/reser or 1-800-280-1105

For other information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Mike Jackson, ext. 210, mjackson@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Judy Duncan, ext. 218, jduncan@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries



Shocco Springs
Friday and Saturday, July 22-23, 2011

FEATURING:

- worship
- missionary testimonies
- leadership, missions and personal enrichment conferences
- Alabama WMU Biennial Meeting

For all church and associational directors, coordinators, facilitators, leaders and other team members of Women's Ministry, WMU, Women on Mission, Adults on Mission, Acteens, Youth on Mission, Girls Ministry, Girls in Action, Children in Action, Mission Friends

To register, contact Shocco Springs at **1.800.280.1105** or **www.shocco.org**

For more information, contact Pat Ingram at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 292, or pingram@alsbom.org, or visit www.alabamawmu.org.

This event is funded by gifts of Alabama Baptists given through the Kathleen Mallory Mission Offering and the Cooperative Program.



...for Missions, for Ministry, for Life

LEADERS OF PROMISE FORUM

Connecting and Building Leaders Under 40

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

LEADING BY DESIGN

Led by Jay Vineyard, Associate in Leadership
Development, Georgia Baptist Convention

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

*To register or for more information, please contact
Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225,
ext. 256, jallen@alsbom.org.*

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

REACHING, TEACHING AND DISCIPLE-MAKING SUMMIT 1 & 2

New and Improved Training!

Great Commission Possible... Through Mobilizing Leaders

The world is spinning and changing rapidly. Some of the changes may be bad, some are good and some are very good.

If your church has attended the Sunday School Leader Training at Shocco Springs in years past, you will be pleased to know that the training has been upgraded to include training for church leaders — not only in Sunday School but in many other areas of church leadership and ministry.

The new name for this enhanced training is **Reaching, Teaching &**

Disciple-Making Summit. Whether you have attended before or have never been, now is a great time to participate!

On **Friday and Saturday, August 5-6**, or **Friday and Saturday, August 12-13**, bring your Sunday School and Discipleship leaders to Shocco Springs. Bring your pastor, your deacons, your missions leaders. Bring the people in your church who work with men, singles, seniors, youth or evangelism. These two training weekends are for your church leaders and

those who are interested in stepping into service.

...For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... Ephesians 4:12 (KJV)

Make plans now to come to Shocco Springs in August. Watch your mail for more information and keep your eyes on www.alsbom.org/sslt. Go to shocco.org/reser to register.

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

LEADER



Lab

Tuesday through **Thursday,**
July 19 - 21, Baptist Building, Montgomery

Leader Lab is the cornerstone offering in leadership training for Alabama pastors and staff members from the Office of Leadership & Church Health in partnership with Next Level Leadership of the North American Mission Board.

We invite all pastors, associates, staff members, spouses and lay leaders. Call for early bird registration prices that end May 31.

For details, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, jallen@alsbom.org.

2011 AREA ROYAL AMBASSADOR CAMPS

A BOY DOES NOT HAVE TO BE IN RAs TO ATTEND

- Archery
 - Air Rifles
 - Making & Cooking on a Buddy Burner
 - Compass Course
 - Water Balloon Fort
 - Mission Classes
 - Outdoor Worship
 - Hiking
 - Swimming
 - Patriotic Flag Service
 - Bible Study
 - Canoeing
 - Ropes Course
 - Frisbee
 - Football

Southeast Alabama*

The Vineyard Christian Retreat Center, Ariton

June 27-30, RA Camp, 4th-12th grade boys

Cost: \$135

June 30-July 2, Lad (1st-6th grade boys) & Dad or Mom

Cost: \$160/pair

Contact: 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227

Southwest Alabama RA Camp

Baldwin Baptist Camp, Foley

May 30-June 3

Contact: (251) 945-5112

Shocco Springs RA Camp*

Talladega

July 14-16, **1st-6th grade boys and Dad or 4th-6th grade boys and Dad Ropes Course

Camp

Cost: \$180/pair

July 18-21, **4th-12th grade boys

Cost: \$180

July 21-23, **1st-6th grade boy & Dad or Mom

Cost: \$180

4th-6th grade boy & Dad Ropes Course Camp

Cost: \$180 pair

**Boys must have attended a previous boy & Dad/Mom Camp

Contact: 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, gburlingame@alsbom.org

*State RA Camp staff will provide chaperones for every six campers at these camps. Church chaperones are not required at these camps, but they are welcome.



Northwest Alabama*
Earle Trent Assembly Baptist Camp, Florence

July 18-21

Cost: \$70-\$80

Contact: (256) 383-7021

Northeast Alabama*

Marshall Retreat Center, Guntersville

4th-12th grade boys
1st-3rd grade boys and Dad

June 23-25

Cost: \$55-\$70

Contact: (256) 582-4994

North Central Alabama*

Stoney Creek Christian Camp, Cullman

June 13-16, 4th-12th grade boys

Cost: \$150

June 16-18, 1st-6th grade boys and Dad or Mom

Cost: \$170/pair

Contact: 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227

FOCUS on One Mission

Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

Monday, May 2, 2011

East Memorial Baptist Church
1320 Old Ridge Road, Prattville



Junior Hill

SENIOR ADULTS
REACHING ACROSS
ALABAMA



Bobby Welch

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

MUSIC: Paid in Full
TIME: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Lunch is on your own.
Admission is FREE, no registration.



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



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

BAPTIST MEN'S STATE SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, AUGUST 12-13, 2011
LAGOON PARK & FAIN PARK, MONTGOMERY

- 40 TEAM MAXIMUM • ROUND ROBIN TOURNAMENT
- 8 DIVISIONS WITH 5 TEAMS EACH • ASA-SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT • SINGLE ELIMINATION IN CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND OF 16 TEAMS: EVERY TEAM WILL PLAY AT LEAST FOUR GAMES.

ENTRY FEE: \$135

FOR A LIST OF ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE AND AN INFORMATION PACKET, PLEASE CONTACT MINISTRY ASSISTANT MONDENE COKER AT 1-800-264-1225, EXT. 273, MCOKER@ALSBOM.ORG.

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Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



BY TRAVIS COLEMAN

It was Luther Rice who said, "As independent free churches, let's organize around one cause. A missionary couple, Adoniram and Ann Judson, need support. Can't we cooperate together for the cause of missions?"

Rice was soliciting financial support when he said these words after returning to the United States from India. He had left the Judsons laboring for the cause of Christ fulfilling the Great Commission in the early 1800s.

While the birth of the Southern Baptist Convention was some 30 years later and the beginning of the Cooperative Program was more than 100 years away, Rice understood something about the Lord's work.

It takes the cooperation of like-minded people to accomplish extraordinary things for God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:9a, "We are laborers together with God..." and in Ecclesiastes 4:9 Solomon said, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work." The genius of the Cooperative Program, the financial funding plan of Southern Baptist ministries, is found in Paul's and Solomon's words. We are laborers together and, when we cooperate together, we will have a good return from our work.

I owe so much to the Cooperative Program. I was saved in a cooperating church: First Baptist Church of Homestead, Fla. I learned about the Cooperative Program while involved in Training Union and Royal Ambassadors in Florida Baptist churches in Homestead, Miami and Melbourne.

I was a member of the Baptist Student Union at the University of Florida, which was funded by Cooperative Program funds. I received a ministerial scholarship from the Florida Baptist Convention while finishing my undergraduate at Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach.

I have graduate degrees from two seminaries funded by the Cooperative Program. I received valuable associational and state training in Florida and Alabama, all funded by the Cooperative Program. Much of who I am as a Christian and minister of the Gospel is because of the ministries funded by the Cooperative Program.



I speak for thousands of men and women who serve the Lord today who are thankful for the faithfulness of Southern Baptist churches that give through the Cooperative Program,

and God multiplies the effectiveness of it.

Years ago, James Pleitz, retired pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, shared an experience he had with Tom Landry, then coach of the Dallas Cowboys. Pleitz was to give the pre-game sermon for a Cowboys game.

He was picked up by a car that was carrying Tom Landry. He noticed a clipboard on Landry's lap as they rode to Texas Stadium. It was the "Game Plan." At the bottom of the page, these words were written in bold letters, "Do not change it! Do not change it! No substitutes!" The team went out and won convincingly. They followed the game plan.

There are people who would want to change the game plan of the Southern Baptists' financial funding, the Cooperative Program. I say don't change the plan. God has blessed us because of it.

I encourage our Alabama Baptist churches to give and give faithfully through the Cooperative Program. The cause of Christ is at stake. There is much work to be done while it is day. Many are dependent on us. Let's not let them down.

Travis Coleman is pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville.

Summer Missions Camps at WorldSong Missions Place

Summer Missions Camps at WorldSong Missions Place Cook Springs, Alabama

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(for girls completing grades 3-6)

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(for girls completing grades 7-12)

- June 20-24
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Children's Missions Mini Camp

(for coeds completing grades 2-6)

- July 11-14

Girls' Missions Mini Camp

(for girls completing grades 2-6)

- July 18-20

Mom & Daughter Missions Camp

(for girls completing grades K-3)

- June 17-18
- July 15-16

Mom & Me Mini Camp

(for girls completing grades 2-6)

- July 21-23

For more information, visit www.worldsongretreat.com, or contact Kathryn Helms at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, khelms@alsbom.org.

May 16-18, 2011

BAPTIST BUILDING, 2001 E. SOUTH BLVD., MONTGOMERY

Interim Ministry for Today's Church

Purpose:

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

Objectives

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

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

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

Schedule:

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

Cost

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

Leader:

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

Center for Congregational Health®

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

Certification:

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

Registration:

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

Additional information is available online at www.alsbom.org/interim_ministry. (The sponsors reserve the right to cancel the conference if registration is below 15 persons).





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MONTGOMERY, AL

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DAVE RHODES
-SPEAKER



MICHAEL KELLEY
-SPEAKER



AARON KEYES
-WORSHIP

'Light of faith in my heart'

Iranian believer finds refuge in US after being persecuted, beaten for his faith

Babak Bighash was an electrical engineer for a major government agency in Iran, commuting more than 800 miles every two weeks between his home and workplace. He was a fairly devout Muslim, yet he had unanswered questions about Islam.

About 10 years ago, he managed to pick up a Christian radio broadcast in Iran, and he heard the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery.

"After I heard the answer of Jesus and how He could pardon her, it was like a light of faith in my heart," Bighash said in an interview from Colorado Springs, Colo., where he has found fellowship and support at Vista Grande Baptist Church.

"Before I heard about Jesus, what I heard was violence, kill, kill. More than 300 times in the Quran you can read that Allah says kill people by this specification."

The question had lingered in his mind, "If God wants someone killed for a sin, why did He create them?"

"If He didn't want them, He wouldn't create them," Bighash said. "And a lot more things, like the difference between man and woman in Islam. I prayed in Islam for years. Sometimes for two or three hours I would be in the room, just me and Allah, and I prayed, prayed, prayed with the Quran. But as soon as I came out and I left the house, I didn't have any faith. I didn't have any result of my conversation with Allah."

After hearing that Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery rather than punishing her, Bighash returned to his hometown and sought more information on Jesus and Christianity. His first attempt was to approach a group of what he thought were Armenian Christians.

"Unfortunately they didn't help me and they told me, 'We cannot talk with you.' ... They gave me an address for another small group of Christians. ... 'They can talk with you about Jesus.'"

Bighash made contact with someone from the group, and that person referred him to another man, a Christian in an underground church in Iran.

"He told me the name of a street and said, 'I will wear a black shirt and brown shoes and I will have a newspaper in my left hand. You come like a taxi, and I will be your passenger.' We started talking, and I asked my question. He answered me and he gave me a tract," Bighash said. "He started to teach me about the plan of God for creation, what happened and then how God tried to bring us back to Himself.

"We had several appointments in my car and sometimes in the park. After two or three months, he asked

me, 'Do you believe Jesus as your God and your Savior, and do you believe that Jesus came?' I said yes. It was in March 1999 when Jesus came into my life."

The man introduced Bighash to other Muslims who had converted to Christianity, and he joined them regularly for worship and prayer. About six months later, Bighash's wife told him she noticed a difference in him. Before, if someone cut him off in traffic, he yelled at them, but now he was calm, she said. He didn't tell her he had become a Christian because he feared repercussions from his mother, who was a strong Muslim and who ensured that the family attended the local mosque.

But one night, Bighash was praying at home to God and his wife woke up and asked what he was doing. He told her to go back to sleep and he would explain in the morning. The next day, he called his pastor and asked what to do. The two agreed that it was time to share his faith with his wife.

She wanted more information, so the pastor's wife met her regularly under the guise of providing cooking lessons or going shopping. Eventually Bighash's wife accepted Jesus. They began going to church as a couple, along with their 3-year-old daughter.

"Sometimes the people who sang in church sang about kids. So my kid could remember this song, and one day when we were shopping, she started talking and singing this song," Bighash recounted. "It was very dangerous, and so I told my wife, 'Control her. Try to tell her don't sing and don't tell about where we were.' But it was hard because she was just 3 years old."

Soon the family stopped going to the mosque, and Bighash's mother reported them to the secret police. The mosque police started sending threatening messages to Bighash. So he stopped inviting other Christians to his home for secret meetings, and after about a year with no contact from the mosque police, Bighash figured he was safe.

He invited Christians to his home for worship again, and somehow the mosque police learned of the gathering and arrested Bighash and some others.

"They took us to a jail and I was there for two or three weeks. I was interrogated. They beat me, punched me, insulted me. Then they broke my rib. They wanted to know about our pastor, but fortunately before they arrested me, our pastor had left our house," Bighash said. "After three weeks they sent me to the judge, and the judge said, 'You made a safe place for some people



'I NEED JESUS; I NEED FAITH' — About 30 people from Vista Grande Baptist Church, Colorado Springs, Colo., traveled to federal court in Denver on March 9 to support Babak Bighash, a persecuted Iranian Christian who sought and was granted asylum in the United States.

that are Zionists and are trying to do something against the government.' Because of this, they sent me to jail for one year.

"During this one year, it was really hard because I was between a lot of criminal people. Every day I had fights with them, and they sent me to a small individual place. During this time I lost my faith, and I had only two visits with my family," he said.

When he was released from prison, Bighash was informed that he had been fired from his job with the government. Bighash was devastated, and he didn't go to church for a while.

"I understood I had a big vacuum in my life, and it's not job, it's not money," he said. "I need Jesus; I need faith; I need to spend time with the people for worship. I tried to make contact again, but this time it was very, very hard because I knew that they watched me and it was dangerous."

Before long, he found himself again at an underground church gathering. Bighash sent his wife and two daughters ahead of him, and he was the last to leave.

Suddenly a car came from behind him and some people pushed him inside, and they placed a blindfold and handcuffs on him. They took him to a place he didn't know, and for two days they made him sit in a chair quietly. When he asked for food or to use the rest room, they beat him, he said.

Interrogated

After two days, he was interrogated, sometimes for seven or eight hours at a time. Again he denied knowing anything about an underground church, and he told a judge he had only gone to the house to meet a friend. The friend wasn't home, he said, but his wife said he would arrive shortly. At that, the judge sentenced him to 72 lashes for being alone with a woman who was not his wife.

Once he had received the lashes, he was allowed to go home, though in much pain. Bighash was watched again by the mosque police, and he ended up saving his family from being hit by a car as they were leaving their home one day. Bighash arranged for his family to move to Europe to live with his wife's aunt. But he had to stay in Iran because of his alleged criminal record.

Each time he tried to get a visa to leave the country, he was denied. After many months of frustration, his attorney advised him to try once more, and out of a group of more than 600 people who applied that particular day, Bighash was inexplicably chosen for a visa to the United States. He made his way to Colorado Springs, where his second cousin lived. He got a job at a local restaurant.

At the restaurant, he was made to work 16- or 17-hour days for no pay, and he slept on the floor there each night.

One day, though, he noticed a couple praying at a table in the restaurant, and he asked to join them, though he spoke little English. When the man learned that Bighash was a Muslim who had converted to Christianity, he was enthralled. He contacted his friend Tim Farrington, who was a Sunday School teacher at Vista Grande Baptist.

"So I walked into this place with my cowboy hat and boots on, and I wanted to know if he was genuine, so I asked him — in a very loud voice in a very small shop — why he loved Jesus," Farrington recounted. "He was with other Iranians, and I wanted to see what his reaction would be. He clutched his chest and as best he could say, he said, 'The blood. The blood freed me.' That's all the English he knew.

"I invited him to come to one of our men's groups. Then we invited him to our Sunday School class."

Farrington and his wife picked Bighash up for church for a couple of

months, but as they realized he was sleeping on the floor of the restaurant, they invited him to stay in one of their spare bedrooms.

"We've just adopted him. The people of our church have given him jobs. We had a family give him a car. We had a family help him with finances," Farrington said.

Loved by the church

"The church at large just gives to him. They put it in a love offering envelope, put his name on it and our church accountant calls me when it's finally gotten to a point where she needs to give it to us.

"Babak can work here in the United States legally and he has a driver's license. He's got a Social Security card. He works for another pastor here in town part time, doing menial jobs, but he'll work his heart out," said Farrington, who also helped Bighash learn English using a Farsi-English dictionary.

On March 9, Bighash was granted political asylum in the United States, which means now he can stay indefinitely and can arrange for his wife and daughters to join him.

"He thinks that we've been here for him, but we believe he's been here for us," Farrington said. "I will tell you that I have wanted to follow Jesus with all my heart for a long time, and when I see this man and his faith, I've come to understand that I have a long way to go in my faith."

When Bighash realized Farrington got up early for a devotional time with God each morning, Bighash asked if he could join him. The two have made a practice of getting on their knees before God together, and Farrington said it's powerful to watch Bighash pour out his heart in Farsi with tears.

"He would say that he's learned from us," Farrington said, "but to be challenged by his life has been nothing short of a huge blessing to us, and everybody in our church would say that." (BP)

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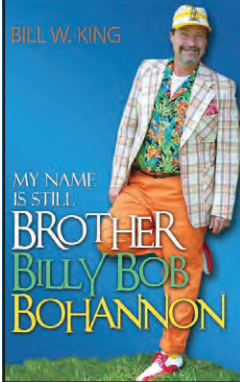


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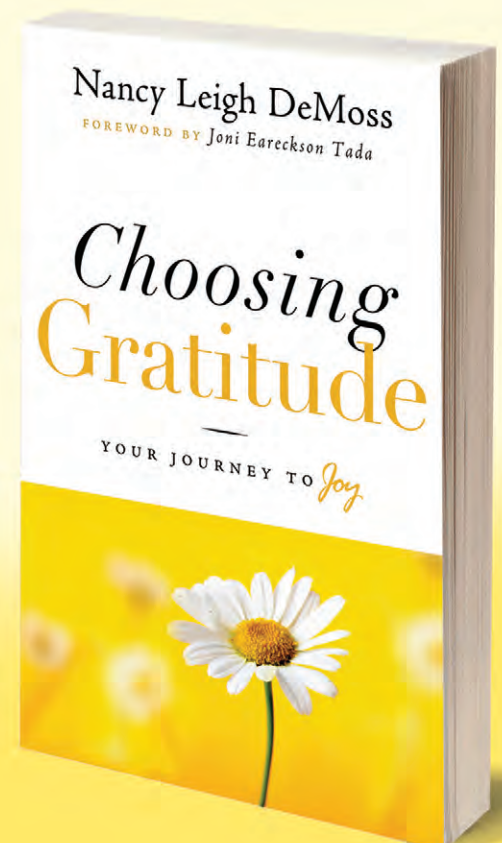
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Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

50 Years Ago April 1961

Almost but Not Quite: The Training Union of First Baptist Church, Vincent, accepted the challenge to have as many present in Training Union as Sunday School during the month of March. On March 26, Sunday School attendance was 112 and Training Union attendance was 112. Training Union attendance for the month reached 90 percent of Sunday School attendance. H. Lindy Martin, director of student affairs at Howard College in Birmingham, is interim pastor at First, Vincent. Mrs. Sammy Daniels is Training Union director.

40 Years Ago April 1971

Well-deserved Awards: Three Alabamians won six awards at the Baptist Public Relations Association (BPRA) workshop held March 29–31 in Charleston, S.C.

Awards of exceptional merit went to Jack Brymer, managing editor of *The Alabama Baptist*; Bill Nunnally, news bureau director at Samford University in Birmingham; and Mrs. Lee N. Allen, public relations director for national Woman's Missionary Union, who was also elected BPRA president for 1971–72.

30 Years Ago April 1981

Struggle for Normalcy: The Bible remained intact on a table in the vestibule of First Baptist Church, Hurtsboro, after a tornado hit the east Alabama town April 1. Fifteen windows in the sanctuary were blown out, all the windows on one side of the education building were gone, the steeple was blown over and cracked and the home of the pastor, Malvin Tuck, was shifted from its foundation. Despite the extensive damage, worship services were held in the

church building Sunday, April 5, followed by a funeral service that afternoon for a church member, Mrs. Willie McCraine, who was killed in the tornado.

20 Years Ago April 1991

Historical Marker: A historic event was commemorated April 17 with the unveiling of a sidewalk marker at the former site of O'Brien Opera House in Birmingham. The marker was unveiled by Southern Baptist Sunday School Board trustee Doug Sager, pastor of Roebuck Park Baptist Church, Birmingham, and Levan Parker, headmaster of Central Park Christian School and associate pastor of Central Park Baptist Church, Birmingham. A century ago, 855 members attending the 1891 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention peacefully settled an ongoing controversy by voting to establish a publishing di-

vision, which has become one of the largest publishers of religious literature in the world, the Sunday School Board.

10 Years Ago April 2001

Oldest WMU: Southern Baptists' oldest Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) — organized by Ruhama Baptist Church, Birmingham — recently celebrated its 125th anniversary. Honored by Birmingham Baptist Association on April 19, Ruhama Baptist's WMU leaders said remembering their heritage came during an important year. The church, Birmingham's oldest congregation, voted April 1 to merge with First Baptist Church, Irondale, and sell its building. Ruhama's WMU, now directed by Florrie Hurtt, celebrated its 125th anniversary March 28 with dramatic monologues detailing its ancestral heritage. ☪

Majority of Americans embrace pluralism, surveys say

A majority of Americans mostly reject universalism — the belief that all people will be saved — but nevertheless believe that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, with a plurality saying that good works are the key to entrance into heaven, according to a new analysis of Barna surveys.

The data, released April 18, shows that millions of adults reject the clear teachings of Scripture that faith alone, in Christ alone is necessary for salvation. Although Americans may distance themselves from universalism, they

tend to embrace pluralism — the belief that different religions lead to heaven.

By a 48–44 percent margin, U.S. adults believe that “if a person is generally good or does enough good things for others, they will earn a place in heaven.” Also, 59 percent of Americans believe that “Christians and Muslims worship the same God,” although only 43 percent believe that “the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truth.”

Americans tend to reject univer-

salism, although large percentages of adults accept it:

► 55 percent of Americans disagree with the statement that “all people will experience the same outcome after death, regardless of their religious beliefs”; 40 percent agree.

► 54 percent disagree that “it doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lesson”; 43 percent agree.

► 50 percent disagree that “all people are eventually saved or accepted by God, no matter what they do, because He loves all peo-

ple He has created”; 40 percent agree.

Sixty-nine percent of adults agree that “in life you either side with God or you side with the devil; there is no in-between position”; 37 percent disagree.

Additionally 51 percent of Americans believe they “have a responsibility to tell other people their religious beliefs.”

The survey was based on data collected during telephone surveys between 2005 and 2011. Each survey had at least 1,000 respondents. (BP)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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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.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Ebenezer Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational minister of music. P.O. Box 56, Stanton, AL 36790. Ebc1819@gmail.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH PASTOR: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time youth pastor to work with our 7th–12th grade students. Please e-mail resumés to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER TO STUDENTS: New Beginning Baptist Church

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

OTHER POSITIONS

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Want to know God?

By Pastor John Nicholson
Siloam Baptist Church, Marion

We are faced with three big words and one big choice.

Incarnation. It is a Latin word meaning “in the flesh.” In Jesus, God became one of us. The Message author Eugene Peterson memorably phrased John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.” Imagine that: God moving in just down the street from you. In Jesus, that is exactly what happened.

There are some who say Jesus was just a man who exhibited godly qualities. Others say He was just God who took on some human qualities. This simply is not an option from the biblical witness. Scripture is abundantly clear that Jesus was God in the flesh.

God did not take on human flesh in order to better understand us. He took on human flesh so we could better understand Him. Our understanding of Him is clarified once and for all at the cross, which leads us to another big word.

Substitution. We all understand the concept of substitution; we've experienced substitute teachers or been a substitute in a ballgame. A substitute takes the place of another, and that is just what Jesus did for us. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake, He (God) made Him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him, we might become the righteousness of God.” Jesus took our place. He paid a price He did not owe, the price you and I owe.

Jesus did not take our place because He owed some sort of debt. He took our place because we owed so great a debt we could never pay it. He took our place because He loved us. The Incarnation was necessary for Him to become our substitute. And in His substitutionary death, we discover the third big word.

Salvation. Jesus made it abundantly clear that He was here for one reason: “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). In case you are wondering just who “the lost” are, they are us, every single one of us. Have you been found by Him? He's looking for you.

You might start by praying something like, “Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to take my place. I need you to find me and save me today. Thank you for looking for me! Amen!” ☪

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

Life begins at 40

Just call me Grandma. Yeah, it shocked me too when a woman on the elevator asked me if my 3-year-old niece, Belle, was my granddaughter. And then a few days later, a nurse working with Belle asked me the same thing.

Granted, I know some really classy, sassy and spunky grandmothers in their late 30s and early 40s, but I'm not one of them.

And what timing! Here I am a mere 31 days until exiting my 30s and stepping forth as a 40-year-old. Gulp. Am I ready for this? And do I really look like a grandma? OK, don't answer that.

Still, changing decades provides a great opportunity to reflect on past years, evaluate where you are now and set new goals for what's ahead.

Since turning 39 last May, I've spent way too much time thinking about life as a 40-year-old, and to be honest, I haven't figured it all out yet. It seems to be a turning point in some way. Maybe because it falls somewhat as the midpoint of the unassisted living years. Maybe because we are expected to know who we are and have life figured out by the time we are 40. Or maybe because we've had enough life experiences at 40 that we should be imparting some wisdom rather than still seeking it.

I've been blessed to have a multitude of mentors in my life, and the lessons they've taught (and still teach) me continually surface as I reflect, evaluate and go forward. The combination of their wisdom, experience and love has carried me a long way.

The late Eleanor Terry (first wife of Bob Terry, president and editor of *The Alabama Baptist*) was

one of those mentors. She was an amazing woman and accomplished as much later in life as she did early in life. One of her favorite phrases was "Life begins at 40."

And while so many of my thoughts center around what I haven't done yet, how little I know, how much farther I have to go spiritually, etc., I've decided to take Eleanor's advice and embrace 40 as an opportunity to start fresh, to launch the next 40 years of life with the experience and lessons from the last 40 years.

As I say goodbye to my 30s and count down the days to my new decade, I'd like to hear from those of you who are moving into (or already have moved into) a new decade. E-mail your words of wisdom to jrash@thealabamabaptist.org.

I'll be sharing some of these over the next few months. As a way to start us off, I asked a few friends to share in this column.

My dear friend and college roommate Vickie Osborn beat me to 40 by a few months. Vickie is a member of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell. She says, "There are two things we all should do when we reach the big 4-0. First take a moment to reflect on past experiences. We should look back and be thankful for the blessings as well as adversities that have shaped us into who we are today.

"Second and most important, we should embrace the opportunities in our future by striving daily to become more godly."

Steve Woods, a good friend from NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, turned 50 this month. We serve on a ministry team together, and he thinks my column should be called "irRashional Thoughts." Steve says, "Through all our decades, life can be hard. ... We need God, family and friends to be there with us along the way.

"My advice going forward: 1. Know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. 2. Keep a good relationship with family. 3. Keep your body in decent shape. 4. Try to be happy," he says. "Complain as little as possible, and find something positive in all that you do."



Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Riley Green on simplifying life

In 2 Timothy 2:4, Paul says, "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." As I began to think through the implications of this verse, as well as the advancement of the gospel through my life, I began to realize I had made decisions that were entangling or distracting from my purpose as a Christ follower.

One of those distractions was the decision to forward Facebook and Twitter updates to my cell phone. I hadn't realized how distracting that had become in my life.

While I was in the Middle East in January, I had turned off the data on my phone. So for eight days, I didn't receive any updates or notifications. It was nice. I decided that I can "turn

off" this distraction in my life.

It has been great. While it is important to use social media to stay connected, I've moved to only checking Facebook early in the morning and in the late afternoon or evening. In my utilization of Twitter, I have selected certain tweets to be delivered to my phone but not all of them.

I will not totally disengage from these different tools for ministry (social media), but I am not being mastered by them. If my aim is to please Him, the One who enlisted me in His service, then to "not" allow this to be a distraction is worth the one less "ding" on the phone letting me know I have a message, update or post.



GREEN



Riley Green

I turned off Facebook mobile...no longer receiving FB posts to mobile phone. Peeling away for better focus. Celebrating this simple decision (kinda crazy when you think about it...celebrating something so trivial). Anyway, will check at night/early mornings.

February 10 at 8:28am · Like · Comment

4 people like this.



Stephen Hauck Great decision. I've never had any internet connection on my cell phone.... no e-mails, no facebook, etc. Many people have become extremely addicted to it, and spend way to much time on their cell phones.

February 10 at 8:36am · Like



Belinda Longnion Kock We had a few people do a 40 day fast from Facebook at our church. One guy said he found that he had 1 to 1 1/2 hour extra per day because he was not checking his FB on his phone.

February 10 at 8:40am · Like



David Brown Britton I never had those notifications on, too distracting.

February 10 at 9:18am · Like



Riley Green Total concur with all you are saying...it's been a great day not having all those "beeps" on my phone.

February 10 at 4:57pm · Like



Ann Hudson Brandt Good for you...another reason for me NOT to have an iphone. I'm all old school with the call and answer feature.

February 10 at 5:08pm · Like

Write a comment...

What is balanced living?

► It is the ability to do those things in your daily life that are fulfilling and bring your life meaning and happiness.

► It is the ability to meet the challenges that life throws at you without losing your way or your confidence.

► It is the ability to keep achieving those goals that you have set whether the way is smooth and beautiful or stormy and rough.

So how do we balance our life?

1. You must cultivate a vision of the "new you."

2. You must create a plan to be carried out.

3. You must work to accomplish the plan.

4. You must maintain, adjust and tweak the plan to sustain your gains.

To keep your plan fresh, change your routine, take short sabbaticals to avoid burnout and lean on others for support and motivation.

Stay focused on achieving a balanced diet, proper exercise, getting enough rest, daily studying (of) God's Word, maintaining close friendships and family relations and having a sense of purpose.

David Jones

Physical education teacher
Gulf Shores Elementary School
and part-time worship leader
First Baptist Church, Loxley

Kaye Farrow, a licensed marriage and family therapist in Trussville, has been a good friend and helpful resource to *The Alabama Baptist*. Her husband, Joel, is pastor of FBC Chalkville. Kaye turned 50 in November.

"Turning 50 — what once sounded so old is now sounding just right," she says. "As I approached 50, I realized this decade would bring with it a unique opportunity to ... capitalize on the wisdom of years. I felt this incredible pull to inventory my life and found myself in a place of gratitude.

"So many people have poured into my life, and God has given me so much to pour into others. This awareness stirred a passion in me to pass on all that has been passed to me."

UPCOMING TOPICS

include healthy eating and the golden rule. Send us your experiences with and suggestions on these topics. E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 1

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

EXPRESSING THE TRUTH Colossians 1:21-2:7

Reconciliation (1:21-23)

Here the apostle Paul applied the general idea of Christ's reconciling work specifically to the Colossians.

Before their conversion, they were "alienated" from and "hostile in mind" to God, resulting in "evil deeds."

At their conversion, they were reconciled "in His fleshly body through (Christ's) death."

As a result of this reconciliation, they stand before God "holy, and blameless and beyond reproach." This presentation may be yet in the future at the Last Judgment or what God through Christ already did for believers. Actually it is both.

Evidence of reconciliation is continuing faith. In the original language, the phrase "if indeed you continue in the faith" expresses confidence instead of doubt. Paul offered three reasons for remaining true to the faith. First it was the message "heard" when Epaphras initially preached to them (Col. 1:7). Second it was "proclaimed in all creation under heaven," probably meaning all the great centers of the Roman Empire. Third it was the very message Paul preached.

Suffering (1:24)

Paul's reference to himself as a "minister" (Col. 1:23) led to a fuller discussion of that ministry.

The sufferings he endured formed an important part of his ministry. First these sufferings were for the sake of others — "for your sake" and "on behalf of His body." He suffered in getting the gospel to the Gentiles, a benefit in which the Colossians shared. But his sufferings also benefited the whole church. Had he not suffered imprisonment, he might never have written this very letter. Second they were linked to Jesus' sufferings. It is not that Paul suffered to redeem sinful men as Jesus did but that He suffers when His people suffer (cf Acts 9:4-5). "That which is lacking in Christ's afflictions" does not suggest His work on the cross is deficient but that Paul was filling up the quota of suffering for Christ's sake yet re-

maining for Him to endure. Third they were for Paul a source of joy.

Preaching (1:25-29)

It was by God's "careful stewardship" that Paul was appointed to minister to the Colossian Christians and other Gentiles. Paul's mission was to "complete the word of God," i.e., either geographically by extending it to all nations or theologically by explaining the gospel's full significance.

The "word of God" Paul defined in terms of a "mystery." In the New Testament, this word never means a "whodunit" tale but always refers to a truth not known to past ages and generations — and undiscoverable by men — but now revealed by God. This glorious "mystery" God wanted the nations ("Gentiles") to know is "Christ in you," i.e., the indwelling of Christ in His people whether Jews or Gentiles. Christ's presence in a believer is the "hope of glory." In the New Testament, "hope" is never a tentative desire that may never be satisfied; it is confident and joyous expectation of "glory."

Paul's goal was to bring into God's presence at the last day fully mature believers. In its pursuit, he "labored," i.e., toiled to the point of exhaustion, and "struggled," i.e., agonized like a wrestler in a match. Yet in it all, God's power energized him "mightily."

Intercession (2:1-7)

The "intense struggle" (in the original language the word pictured a wrestler straining with all his might against an opponent) Paul mentioned was related to prayer for the Colossians, the Laodiceans and other converts whom he had never met.

He wanted them to be "encouraged," i.e., strengthened, either for trial or against error. Also he prayed for them to be enriched with assurance and understanding that comes from full knowledge of "the mystery of God, namely, Christ."

His anxious concern and ardent prayer was sparked by the threat posed by false teachers at work in Colossae. Their arguments were deceptively persuasive but absolutely wrong. How long has it been since you agonized in prayer against heresy in your community? ❏

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

OVERCOME YOUR FEARS Joshua 1:1-11, 16-18

Accept Your Responsibility (1-5)

The Israelites were at a critical moment in history. They had finally completed their wandering in the desert and were ready to enter the promised land. Further Moses, their faithful leader for the past 40 years, had died and a new leader was needed to lead them into the promised land. Could anyone fill this leadership position? God had a particular man in mind: namely, Joshua. In spite of the daunting circumstances, God commanded Joshua to lead Israel into new territory. And His command was accompanied by certain promises.

Joshua could lead the Israelites on the basis of the following promises. God had given them the land. They would conquer every square foot they trod upon. This land's boundaries were clearly marked; it stretched from the wilderness to the great river Euphrates and included all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea. This also came with the necessary promise that no opponent would stand against the Israelites. And Joshua was given personal assurance that God would be with him powerfully.

For modern-day believers, the geo-political context of the Israelites' history does not apply. They are not called to physically invade a foreign land with divine promise of victory. And most certainly, not all believers are called to be a leader like Joshua. Nevertheless this passage can speak effectively to all believers. Whenever God calls His people to go, whatever God calls them to do, they need to be confident that God leads the way. Victory in any venture lies in God's presence and His leading. And while God's specific direction for believers may vary with each circumstance, His solemn pledge to be with His people as they teach and disciple all nations (Matt. 28:19-20) is an assurance for all believers. Each disciple can obey this divine directive with the conviction that God's presence leads him or her to victory.

Hear God's Command (6-9)

Joshua's tremendous calling to lead the Israelites came with further directives from God.

First God repeatedly reminded Joshua to be "strong and courageous." Once God's will has been determined, it is imperative to follow it with strength and courage. Faith that God will accomplish all that He has promised is non-negotiable. And this faith in God necessarily leads to faithfulness. Both human responses of faith and faithfulness are required to lead effectively in God's Kingdom.

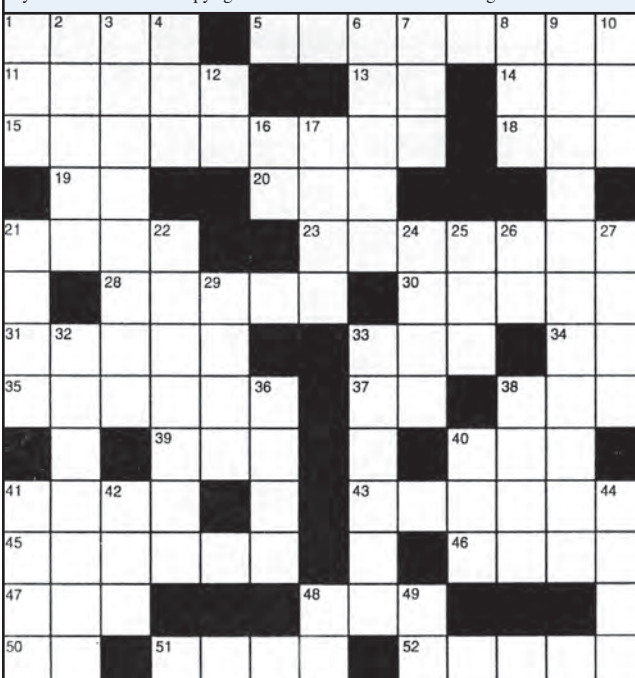
Act Courageously (10-11, 16-18)

Joshua's response to God's call to be strong and courageous and take the promised land led him to exhort the Israelites. It is not simply a matter of hearing God's command. But genuine faith requires action, i.e., faithfulness. Fear of the enemy evaporates in light of God's will and command. Insecurities and inadequacies melt away in view of God's promise of victory. And Joshua exemplified the proper response. All that God commands would be obeyed. Wherever God led, the people would follow regardless of risk. Just as Moses obeyed all of God's directives, Joshua promised obedience personally and corporately. Are modern-day leaders able to make such bold promises to God? Are we able to vow obedience not only on a personal level but also on a corporate level? Are we able to take up responsibility for others, whether family or church, before God? Here, with Joshua, we see leadership as accountability before God not only for ourselves but also others.

The only request Joshua made before God was that of His enduring presence with His people. God's presence not only distinguished them from all other people but also provided victory. Joshua, as leader for God's people, astutely recognized that God's presence was the one factor non-negotiable for his own success as well as Israel's. It is not glitzy marketing strategies and wealth that ensures victory for modern-day churches. Indeed even success for the average Christian family is based exclusively on God's continued presence. And effective leadership either within the corporate or individual family of God requires not only faith and faithfulness but also the insight that God's continued presence is ultimately the lifeline for all His people. ❏

Christian Crossword

By Helen Walter Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Thou shalt call his ____ Jesus. (Matt. 1:21)
5. They shall call his name _____. (Matt. 1:23)
11. Revises.
13. A cry of pain.
14. Avenue. (abbr.)
15. His name shall be called _____. (Isa. 9:6)
18. Married.
19. Rhode Island. (abbr.)
20. The meek shall ____ and be satisfied. (Ps. 22:26)
21. Good, better, ____.
23. Soon.
28. Characteristic.
30. King of Tyre. (1 Kings 5:1)
31. Be of good _____. (Acts 23:11)
33. Purpose.
34. South Carolina. (abbr.)
35. Damaged.
37. And, ____, the angel of the Lord came upon them. (Luke 2:9)

38. Estimated time of arrival. (abbr.)
39. Aramaic "son of."
40. Greek letter.
41. Egg-shaped.
43. On all sides.
45. Cure.
46. Rim.
47. Serpent.
48. Extra sensory perception. (abbr.)
50. Light. (abbr.)
51. I will ____ up mine eyes. (Ps. 121:1)
52. The ____ of a trumpet. (Ps. 47:5)

Down

7. A tool.
8. United Auto Workers. (abbr.)
9. ____ Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)
10. But if ye be ____ of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:18)
12. Southeast. (abbr.)
16. Musical note.
17. When they ____, I will not hear. (Jer. 14:12)
21. Composer of organ music.
22. Ye that ____ at his word. (Isa. 66:5)
24. Buckeye state.
25. Edge.
26. Transpose. (abbr.)
27. Young Men's Christian Association. (abbr.)
29. Region.
32. The ____ is the end of the world. (Matt. 13:39)
33. Continually.
36. Cart.
38. Left-handed man. (Judg. 3:15)
40. Edgar Allen ____.
41. Spoken.
42. Unit of electrical current.
44. Whatsoever ye do in word or _____. (Col. 3:17)
48. ____ cetera.
49. Postscript. (abbr.)





Christians seek to end restrictions on Malay Bibles

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Christian importers of Bibles that Malaysian officials detained are balking at conditions the government has imposed for their release, such as defacement of the sacred books with official stamps. In March, the Home Ministry stamped the words “This Good News (Malay) Bible is for use by Christians only” on 5,100 Bibles without consulting the importer, the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM), which initially refused to collect them as it disapproved of the conditions.

BSM has since collected them “to prevent the possibility of further acts of desecration” but will not sell them; rather it “will be respectfully preserved as museum pieces and as a heritage for the Christian Church in Malaysia.”

Another 30,000 Bibles detained since Jan. 12 remain in port after the Sarawak state Home Ministry told the local chapter of Gideons International that it could collect them if the organization would put the stamp on them. Gideons has thus far declined to do so, and a spokesman said April 5 that officials had already defaced the books with the stamp.

The government has made several attempts to try to appease the Christian community; on April 2, it issued a 10-point statement that included the lifting of restrictions to allow for the local printing and importation of Malay and other indigenous-language Bibles into the country.

No conditions were imposed on such Bibles in Sarawak and Sabah, but in West Malaysia, the Bibles must have the words “Christian publication” and the sign of the cross printed on the front covers. Most Christians remained skeptical. “It’s an assurance but we have been given such assurances before,” said Bolly Lapok, an Anglican priest.

US evangelist makes special appearance in Vietnam

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam — The first appearance by a U.S.-based evangelist preaching at a major event since the 1975 Communist victory in Vietnam helped the country’s Protestants to celebrate their centennial in April after government officials gave last-minute approval.

In what seems to have become standard government procedure in Vietnam, permission requested months in advance was granted — at a venue several kilometers from the one organizers sought — just three hours before the first major celebration of the Centennial of Protestantism in Vietnam (1911–2011) at Thanh Long Stadium in Ho Chi Minh City on April 9 was scheduled to begin. Argentine-born Luis Palau delivered the gospel message.

The venue change meant equipment staged in one part of the city had to be moved to the new location before it could be assembled, church leaders said. It also meant notifying many thousands of people invited to one venue about the change to the other, they said. Given the lack of government cooperation, the leader of Vietnam’s Evangelical Fellowship (of house churches) said the fact that the event went ahead at all was “an absolute miracle.”

Nguyen Xuan Duc, president of the Vietnam World Christian Fellowship, said he was encouraged about the future of the church in Vietnam. “These are watershed days for Protestantism in Vietnam,” he said. “There is no fear, but rather wonderful spontaneity and irrepressible joy. Events like this happen in spite of the government and without the blessing of some overly conservative church leaders.”

Christians in India beaten by Hindu extremists

KHATIMA, India — About 30 Hindu extremists barged into a Believer’s Church’s inaugural meeting of its Community Development Program on March 28 in Phullaiya, Khatima, accused the Christians of forceful conversion and beat them. A Gospel for Asia representative said that at about 11 a.m. the extremists stormed into the meeting, accused Anoop Jena, Mohan Babu, Rohit Gorge and another Christian identified only as Danny of forceful conversion and started beating them. The four Christians sustained bruises.

The Hindus later filed a police complaint, and officers took the four Christians to the police station for questioning. After local Christian leaders’ intervention, they were released later in the evening without charges.



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Equestrians Honored for Scholarship:** Six Judson college equestrians were included in the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association All-Academic Team listings this spring. All winners must have competed in at least two shows during the academic year. The first team awards require a grade point average (GPA) of 3.8 or higher.

First team winners include Jana Davenport, of Jemison; Corey Finlay, of Oxford; Andrea Luckie, of Alexander City; and Beverly Cox, of Athens.

The second team required a GPA of 3.5 or higher and the second team winners include Megan Cook, of Bothell, Wash.; and Faith Williams, of Crossville.

► **Judson Chemistry Professor Receives Teaching Award:** George Williams received the Mary Gibson Thompson Faculty Award at Judson College’s annual Honors Convocation on April 12. The award recognizes excellence in teaching as determined by a committee of past winners and students. Williams has taught chemistry at Judson since 1966. He has won the Thompson Award six times previously.

► **Judson Alumnae Director Honored:** Judson College’s alumnae director, Jennifer Truelove, was honored at the college’s annual J-Day as the ninth recipient of the Alumnae Association’s “Past Presidents Award for Staff Excellence.”

According to guidelines, recipients of the award are evaluated on a number of things including service to Judson, dependability, accomplishments, job involvement, interpersonal relationships, positive attitude, involvement in the campus community and willingness to accept responsibility.

Truelove, a Birmingham native, came to Judson as a freshman in 1989 and graduated in 1993 with a major in biology and a minor in computer information systems.

She earned a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in 2001 and began work as Judson College’s director of alumnae relations and annual fund in September 2007.

“I’m grateful to be able to work at Judson and with such a gifted group of women as our advancement team,” Truelove said. “This award is an encouragement and I certainly appreciate my nomination.”

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford to Host Summer Camps for Kids, Teens:** Samford University will host camps for children and teens this summer.

The Senior Piano Camp (age 12 through high school senior) will be held June 12–18. For more information, call 205-601-3694 or e-mail rshinn@samford.edu.

The preparatory department’s Adventures in Music camps (grades 1–12) will be held June 20–24 for piano and July 11–15 for piano or voice. The All Aboard for Music Preschool Camp (ages 3–6) will be held July 18–22. For more information, call 205-726-4049 or visit http://arts.samford.edu/prep_music/.

The Summer Debate Institute (middle school and high school students) will be held June 26–July 9. For more information, call 205-726-2049 or visit www.samford.edu/debate.

The theatre and dance department’s Once Upon a Time Summer Theatre camps (rising grades K4–6) will be held June 27–July 1. The Theatre Arts Intensive Summer Camp (rising grades 7–12) will be held July 18–22. For more information, call 205-726-2951 or visit http://arts.samford.edu/theatre_dance/.

Sports camps in baseball, women’s basketball, men’s and boy’s basketball, football, soccer, volleyball and softball will be held throughout the summer. For more information, call 205-726-2802 or visit <http://samfordsports.cstv.com/camps/samf-camps.html>.

► **Samford Names Student Employee of Year:** Camille Kathleen Mula, a senior accounting major from Mandeville, La., is Samford University’s 2011 Student Employee of the Year.

Mula, who has worked in the office of admission for three years, received a certificate and a \$200 cash prize from Samford President Andrew Westmoreland dur-

ing a special ceremony April 14. Student employees were nominated by their supervisors based on contributions they make in their work areas.

Mula was cited for her reliability, quality of work, initiative, attitude and professionalism in her job as tour guide, front desk receptionist and office assistant. As president of the Student Recruitment Team, she is the student facilitator for many on-campus recruitment events.

“Whether brainstorming to come up with a new way to offer campus tours for 250 families simultaneously or volunteering to get to the office at 5:45 a.m. on a Saturday to put out signs before an event, Camille continues to take the initiative to make sure the job is done to make the event a success,” wrote her nominator, Associate Director of Admission Elizabeth Primm.

“Her dedication and performance make her an outstanding student leader who embodies the true meaning of Samford’s mission and core values.”

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile Baseball Coach Honored for 700th Win:** University of Mobile (UMobile) head baseball coach Mike Jacobs was presented a plaque in the shape of home plate in recognition of his 700th career win at the university.

UMobile President Mark Foley made the presentation at the start of a March 25 game against William Carey University. The 700th win occurred March 4 when the Rams defeated crosstown rival Spring Hill College 7–3.

Jacobs was congratulated not only on his 700th win but also for a winning career as a man of faith and honor and a coach for life.

“Since coach Jacobs started the baseball program at the University of Mobile in 1990, he has not only produced a winning team — he has trained young men to be winners in life. His unwavering faith in God, commitment to excellence and love for his players as individuals mark coach Jacobs as a winner who inspires us all to believe in the best and have the confidence to achieve it,” the announcer said as Jacobs was presented the commemorative home plate.

Germans leaving Catholic church in large numbers

The number of Germans leaving the Roman Catholic Church rose dramatically in 2010 as Pope Benedict XVI’s homeland wrestled with reports of systematic sexual abuse of minors and attempted cover-ups, according to a study by a German newspaper.

About 180,000 Catholics of-

ficially ended their church affiliation in 2010, a rise of 50,000 (or 40 percent) from 2009, according to the weekly *Die Zeit* newspaper.

Leaving the church not only means a drop in attendance but also a formal severing of relations; people who formally leave a church are

no longer required to have part of their income diverted to the church as church tax.

If the figures were validated, then it would represent the first time since World War II that more Catholics than Protestants left their church in a single year.

(RNS)

'God is love'

Water filters save lives in Thailand's villages

In the mountains of northern Thailand, a woman with a squirming baby strapped to her back approaches the village water tank. She fills a cup with the unsanitary fluid and drinks it down quickly even though she knows it might make her sick. In the hot sun, even impure water feels refreshing.

Just down the hill are four blue cylinders that will solve her village's sanitation problems. The cylinders are water filters paid for by Southern Baptists and delivered just an hour earlier by a team of Thai and American volunteers — a gift from American Christians who care about people in desperate need.

Wearing shirts proclaiming, "God is Love," Southern Baptist Norah Hatley and other American and Thai volunteers spent four hours distributing food, water filters, school supplies and toiletries to people from four villages who had gathered in the shade at a rural school building.

Hatley, one of the project's chief organizers, said the predominantly Buddhist Thai staff at a local business inspired the event and petitioned American Christians to partner in the project. Once they had everything ready to deliver, the Americans and several Thai believers were invited to help distribute the supplies.

"This was a chance for us to give in such a way as to show God's love," Hatley said.

The donations tackled a host of village problems — especially water-borne illnesses. Arunothai Cheewitprasert, a teacher from one of the villages, Ban Huay Mannang, explained that even though people boil their water, they still suffer from parasites. She has to go

to great lengths to keep her students healthy. Water-borne diseases are the leading cause of disease and death around the world, according to the United Nations. Forty percent of the world's people do not have clean water to drink, and as many as 2 million people die from diarrhea each year — about 90 percent of them children under age five.

"The most important thing for us is the water. ... Sometimes, I have to buy water in the town and carry it up the mountain," Cheewitprasert said.

For Cheewitprasert, "carrying it up the mountain" means maneuvering a truck up a winding dirt road often made treacherous by heavy rain. Before the filters came, she made the trip once a month. Now, she can serve her students clean water without leaving the school.



'DESPERATE NEED' — Wearing a 'God is Love' T-shirt, a Thai volunteer hands a student bags of school supplies, clothing and books. BP photo

The project was an excellent example of healthy partnership in community development, said Ben Wolf, who with his wife Pam directs work in the Asia Rim for Baptist Global Response (BGR), an international relief and development organization. Money for the project was channeled from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund through BGR.

"It's about partnership, joining hands with community leaders and national believers."

Ben Wolf
Baptist Global Response

"Outsiders meeting all the needs of the community is not the objective of good development," Wolf said. "Community development is never about what outsiders bring into a community and give away. It's about partnership, joining hands with community leaders and national believers and collaborating

to help communities help themselves.

"It's exciting to watch as volunteers from the United States come alongside new friends from the community and the love of God becomes real in people's lives," Wolf said. "God created us to enjoy abundant, meaningful lives filled with purpose, and it's wonderful to watch as people discover that for themselves in these projects."

Supplies needed

Along with water filters, the village teachers said they had other needs and talked about inadequate supplies and few books. None of them even had a chair to sit in during the school day.

The team had planned to help with some of those needs, as well. They arrived bearing books, pencils, shoes, sports uniforms, toys, mos-

quito nets, blankets and other small necessities. BGR also used money from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund so teachers could have wheelbarrows, seeds, rakes, hoes and shovels to give hands-on agriculture lessons to their students — improving not only their health but also their chances for a better life.

Although the cross-cultural team knew they could never meet all the village's needs, they brought joy to at least one little girl in dusty flip-flops who had just received her first pair of tennis shoes.

"I've never had any before!" the girl exclaimed.

Shortly after receiving the sneakers, the girl and her classmates tucked their new treasures into book bags and headed home. They said, "Thank you!" and waved goodbye to the people who had reached out to them.

That night, the volunteers learned from school official Sanan Kaoy Yang that the villagers they had just met do not follow any religion but live in fear of evil spirits they believe inhabit their community. Those beliefs have slowly torn the villages apart. Fearing the supernatural, the people have begun to leave their homes and move to the city, where they hope for safety. Yang said the villagers needed a common belief to tie them together and relieve their fears of demons.

"They need something to hold their hearts," Yang said.

In response, the believers clasped their hands and prayed. They asked God to fill the void and prayed the villagers would see His love descend upon them. They prayed God would reveal Himself and that the villagers would recognize their water filters had come from Him.

They prayed the villagers would realize it was God who had filled their cups. (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

American Baptist leaders denounce Quran burning

VALLEY FORGE, Pa. — American Baptist leaders joined at regional and national levels in a joint statement April 8 denouncing the burning of a Quran at a Florida church.

The general executive council of American Baptist Churches USA called the March 20 desecration of the Muslim holy book by Pastor Terry Jones of Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Fla., a violation of Jesus' command to love "the neighbor as ourselves."

"The recent burning of the Quran by a church that is not representative of the larger American Christian community is an act that we deplore and causes us to reaffirm our historic Baptist commitment to religious liberty for all people and all faiths," Baptist leaders said. "In our religiously diverse world we believe it is vitally important that we all reach out to each other with respect and openness to advance mutual understanding and cooperation among faith communities."

Jones, who threatened to burn copies of the Quran on the anniversary last year of the 9/11 terrorist attacks but backed off after U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder called it dangerous, six months later burned the Quran after finding the book "guilty" in a mock trial.

As warned, the act prompted violence in the Muslim world. In Afghanistan, religious extremists killed 24 people, including six U.N. workers in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

Court dismisses National Day of Prayer challenge

WASHINGTON — The law calling for an annual National Day of Prayer imposes solely on the duties of the U.S. president, leaving private citizens no legal standing to challenge it, a federal appeals court ruled April 14.

The unanimous decision overturns a 2010 lower court ruling that found the law unconstitutional. The ruling comes just weeks before many Christian groups plan to hold annual observances to mark the contested day on May 5.

"If anyone suffers injury ... that person is the president, who is not complaining," ruled a three-judge panel of the Chicago-based 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The panel described the presidential proclamations that follow the law as requests, not commands of the public.

"Those who do not agree with a president's statement may speak in opposition to it; they are not entitled to silence the speech of which they disapprove," the court said.

The Freedom from Religion Foundation, which had argued that the proclamation violates the Constitution's prohibition of an official "establishment" of religion, said it would seek a rehearing by the circuit court's full panel of judges.

Letter describing Lincoln's belief in God found

PHILADELPHIA — On the eve of the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, a long-lost letter has surfaced that describes President Abraham Lincoln's belief in God.

The Raab Collection of Philadelphia plans to sell a recently discovered letter written in 1866 by William Herndon, a Springfield, Ill., lawyer and Lincoln confidant.

"Mr. Lincoln's religion is too well known to me to allow of even a shadow of a doubt; he is or was a Theist & a Rationalist, denying all extraordinary — supernatural inspiration or revelation," wrote Herndon of the nation's 16th president.

"At one time in his life, to say the least, he was an elevated Pantheist, doubting the immortality of the soul as the Christian world understands that term. He believed that the soul lost its identity and was immortal as a force. Subsequent to this he rose to the belief of a God."

The collection estimates the letter is worth \$35,000.

Lincoln's faith has long been an elusive topic for historians. He was never baptized, did not join a church and usually did not discuss his beliefs.

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