

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



May 5, 2011
Vol. 176, No. 18

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

Toll free 1-800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

INSIDE



Tuscaloosa churches, community 'hammered' by tornado

◆ Pages 4–5



Eclectic's Mount Hebron East takes direct hit from tornado

◆ Page 7



St. Clair County churches survive storm, reach out to neighbors

◆ Page 10

'We are the body ...'

Within hours of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, being devastated by a tornado April 27, one church member could be found amid the rubble with his post hole digger. He was determined to get the cross back up as soon as possible to let the community know the church is not the building.

The church is the people — who are the body of Christ. And with the cross, Mountain View Baptist members are sending a message of 2 Corinthians 6:16: "For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"

This same theme was repeated across the state as more than 15 Alabama Baptist churches found themselves sifting through debris and dealing with major damage. But no matter the level of loss, the spirit of love and unity among church members outstaged the destruction around them.

They all held strong and affirmed that despite the loss of brick and mortar, the body itself — the church — was not harmed.

Alabama Baptist individuals, churches, entities and organizations not harmed by the storms also stepped up right away to help and care for those who had suffered loss.

Neighbor assisted neighbor and communities reached out beyond their own. Churches opened their doors to whatever role they could best play.

And trained Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers fanned out across the state within hours of the deadly tornado outbreak. Volunteers from other states soon followed.

Relief efforts began with search and rescue, then moved to cleanup, feeding and chaplaincy efforts.

While only a fraction of the overall number of Alabama Baptist churches suffered in some way, all Alabama Baptists have forever been impacted.

This edition of *The Alabama Baptist* is dedicated to the spirit of love and unity in Christ being demonstrated throughout the state. (TAB)



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

SYMBOL OF HOPE — The wooden cross outside Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, was knocked over during the April 27 tornado, but it was put back up quickly to remind the community that the building is not the church.

COMMENT

Love in Action

The tragedy and devastation of April 27 were beyond words. But so was the response of Alabama Baptists and other Christians to the needs and hurts of that catastrophic day. Individuals, churches, associations, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — all responded.

It was love in action as Alabama Baptists saw people who were homeless, hungry and hurting and answered with compassion and care. And it was only the beginning.

The straight line winds of that early morning were barely out of the area before some associations had chainsaw crews hard at work helping cut some of the thousands of trees that fell across church buildings and homes. At least one crew had to stop working and take cover as the afternoon's monster tornado neared Birmingham.

As weather warnings increased that afternoon, some churches like Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Northport, opened their facilities for neighbors to take shelter in their basements. And after the tornadoes passed, numerous churches like Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Hueytown, worked with Red Cross officials to become official sites providing temporary shelter and other basic necessities for those whose homes became part of the waste left in the wakes of the storms.

Alabama Baptists have a long and extensive relationship with the Red Cross. Nationwide, Southern Baptists have more trained disaster relief volunteers than any other organization. We also have more disaster relief units than any other organization. In Alabama, three feeding units were called into service within 24 hours of the storms passing.

Also feeding units from other states were invited to Alabama. Michigan Baptists (with whom Alabama Baptists have a missions partnership) sent a feeding unit to Cullman. Florida Baptists dispatched a feeding unit to Walker County.

From the Mississippi border to the Georgia state line, Alabama Baptists provided chainsaw units, cleanup volunteers, trained chaplains and more in the immediate aftermath of the weather's fury. Some churches were designated collection sites for donated goods. Volunteers from other churches



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

sorted the goods and continue to help with distribution.

The Baptist system of working together demonstrates again that more can be accomplished when Baptists work together than when each church ministers in its own name. After all, the goals are to help the hurting and build up the kingdom of God, not build up the reputations of individual congregations.

The rescue stage of this disaster relief effort has already passed. Hundreds died; an untold number suffered injuries. Princeton Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham and Walker Baptist Medical Center in Jasper are both working at full capacity as are other hospitals in the disaster area. Now we are in the recovery

stage and soon will move in to the rebuilding stage.

Alabama Baptists will continue in the forefront of these efforts. Countless churches will furnish cleanup teams as they did following the F-5 tornadoes in 1998. That will be followed by rebuilding teams like those Alabama Baptists provided for New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. And help will come from Baptist churches outside the state, too. The disaster relief website of the Federal Emergency Management Agency describes the services offered by Southern Baptists. The list includes mass and mobile feeding, temporary shelter, counseling, collecting and distributing goods, disaster child care, cleanup activities, repairs, reconstruction and bilingual services. Alabama Baptists even provide a unit for showering and washing clothes. All of these will be needed before April 27 is a memory.

Coordinating all of this is a statewide disaster relief headquarters in Montgomery, which works closely with the federal and state Emergency Management agencies, the Red Cross and the state's Baptist associations.

The associations, in turn, work closely with church volunteers to coordinate efforts to make sure the right kind of services are available at the right times and in the right places. The process

avoids duplication of efforts and wasted resources. It gets help to people who need it in the most efficient way possible.

The system also reflects the hearts of individual Baptists. If individual Baptists did not work through the night helping medics and other first responders care for the injured, help their neighbors salvage mementos from the rubble, volunteer to help people clean up their property or listen to their stories, show God's love in action, then Alabama Baptists as a group would not be able to respond in an organized fashion all across the state.

All of this is possible because of the financial faithfulness of Alabama Baptists. Little money is appropriated from the Cooperative Program (CP) state budget for emergencies. The CP helps underwrite some of the equipment, training and leadership related to disaster relief. But funding love in action during emergencies requires individual Baptists giving above and beyond their local church tithes.

Reaching out to survivors

Many organizations are providing channels of giving to disaster relief efforts in the wake of the April 27 tornadoes. Most are outstanding and worthy of support. But giving through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, your Baptist association or your local Baptist church will help Alabama Baptists continue to reach out to the victims of the tornadoes with the love of God communicated in word and deed. Through God's people, others will see His love in action.

Give to Alabama Baptist DISASTER RELIEF

Visit www.thealabamabaptist.org
and click on the disaster relief button.



Additional tornado coverage will
be in the May 5 online edition.

online.thealabamabaptist.org

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. **Web site:** www.thealabamabaptist.org **E-mail:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and other locations.

Subscription Rates:
Church Budget — \$12.50 (plus tax)
Individual — \$19.95 (plus tax; Web and credit card, no tax)

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY, EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash, Managing Editor
Neisha Fuson, News Writer Kathleen Penton, Copy Editor
Lauren Chow, Designer Wanda Bergeron, Local Editions
Linda Harrison, Financial Admin. Brian Giles, Advertising Director
Debbie Campbell, Director of Circulation and Public Relations

NEWS SERVICES: Baptist Press (BP), Associated Baptist Press (ABP), Religion News Service (RNS), Compass Direct News (CDN), Evangelical Press (EP), Forum 18 (F18).

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

ADDRESS CHANGE: Send old and new addresses, and name of church to Circulation Department, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Allow two weeks.

Phil Campbell, Hackleburg 'will never be the same'

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Annihilation seemed to be the intention of three deadly tornadoes that killed more than 50 people as they ripped through the small adjoining towns of Phil Campbell and Hackleburg on April 27. And while only slightly missing their goal of total destruction, the storms came about as close as anyone there ever wants to be.

"Fifty percent of our population is displaced," Tim Haney, pastor of First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, said of the nearly 1,100 people in the town. "We have no power, no water and some people lost everything," he said, noting the death toll continued to rise and several people were still missing at press time.

Both towns were literally flattened in parts.

It was as if a giant weed eater cleared a path nearly a mile wide in Phil Campbell and more than three miles wide in Hackleburg, Haney said.

Steve Lawrence, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hackleburg said, "There is hardly anything left in those three miles. The school is leveled, the stores, the Wrangler plant and all the houses are gone."

While some areas were wiped clean as if nothing ever sat there, other areas contain the splintered

remnants of homes, vehicles, businesses, etc.

And with all telephone lines down, communication became a serious issue. The towns seemed cut off from the outside world. News of loved ones flowed through the communities by word of mouth and sometimes took days to make it to the people fretting the most.

Still, in both towns, it was the church that became the central point of communication and the place people gathered throughout the days following the destruction.

First, Phil Campbell, suffered only minor structural damage to its main building and will likely have to rebuild its multipurpose building, but Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, didn't fare as well.

"The church is gone, Bro. Sammy. The church is gone."

Those were the first words Sammy Taylor, pastor of Mountain View Baptist, heard just seconds after emerging from a storm shelter within sight of the church.

"The building is a total loss," he said. "But the church is not the building. The church is the people. We'll get through this."

The Mountain View Baptist family lost two church members in the storms, an adult lady and a 9-year-old boy. First, Phil Campbell, lost two adult ladies.



Photo by Barry Holcomb

MINOR DAMAGE — The sign outside First Baptist Church, Hackleburg, was damaged by the tornado.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

MEETING NEEDS — Amy Rollins, a member of First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, organizes food items at the church. Food and clothing are being given to tornado survivors.

No deaths were reported out of the First, Hackleburg, membership. Information from Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, was not available at press time.

And while First, Hackleburg, received only minor damage. Emmanuel Baptist was destroyed. The church's pastor, Gene Thomas, was hospitalized.

Lawrence said his city was in the same shape as Phil Campbell.

"At least 50 percent, if not more, of our people are displaced," he said of the more than 1,200 people in the town.

And so he's doing the only thing he knows to do — help.

He has organized First, Hackleburg, as a resource site for the community as well as a drop-off and distribution center for clothing and

nonperishable items. Meals are being served in the church's multipurpose center.

First, Phil Campbell, has a similar set up.

Amy Rollins, a member of First, Phil Campbell, was the first to arrive at the church after the storms rolled through the area. Joining the group already there taking shelter from the storms, Rollins and the others got to work.

"I started setting up for donations for people in need right away," said Rollins, whose 6-year-old son Grant works alongside her. "We don't really know what to do, but it makes you feel better to help."

In both towns, donations and assistance are pouring in from individuals, churches and businesses across the state.

But water, food and clothes are not all those in need will receive.

Haney plans to put a New Testament in their hands as well.

"We are planning to meet their physical needs and their spiritual needs," he said, noting the Sunday service would take place as normal.

"We are out advertising we will be here Sunday," Haney said April 29, noting an average Sunday attendance is 110-120.

"You might have a few more this Sunday," a town resident picking up supplies from the church whispered in Haney's ear as he walked by.

"Amen, brother," Haney said. "I've been waiting for you to join us."

At Mountain View Baptist, the May 1 service was scheduled to take place outside next to the demolished sanctuary as a time to "be together, pray together and love on each other," Taylor said.

Plans after that as well as plans for Emmanuel Baptist were uncertain at press time.

The sadness, shock and numbness among residents in Phil Campbell and Hackleburg stilled the air for any who witnessed the surreal atmosphere surrounding the two towns.

"We are shell shocked," Rollins noted. And the dazed, robotic movements of those sifting through piles and piles of debris proved her point.

Taylor said the reality of what has happened has not truly sunk in yet. His wife, Judy, said, "I cry a lot."

And she's not alone. Few people could speak of the horrific event days later without wiping away tears.

The smell of blood in the air still haunts Haney, and the heaviness of all that has happened and all that is to come shows in the weariness of the pastors' faces.

"This is so massive," Haney said. "In the matter of four minutes life as we know it changed."



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

'SHELL SHOCKED' — Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, suffers total loss to its building. Two church members — an adult lady and a 9-year-old boy — died in the storms April 27.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Tuscaloosa churches, community 'hammered'

Alabama Baptists respond with 'cup of cold water in Jesus' name' — food,

By Joni B. Hannigan
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Trudging through the streets of Tuscaloosa following the April 27 killer tornado, Billy Gray, the interim director of missions for Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association, expressed shock at the widespread and overwhelming destruction that has made thousands homeless, caused a massive power outage and left at least 38 confirmed dead.

Estimated to travel at wind speeds of up to 200 mph, the EF4 tornado that left a mile wide debris field in its wake, hit densely populated neighborhoods of Tuscaloosa, snaking around the University of Alabama, the DCH Regional Medical Center and a high school.

Entire communities were leveled, and at least half a dozen of the association's more than 80 churches were heavily damaged.

People walked behind the police barricades, looking at the piles of timber that used to be the walls of someone's living room. They stared at trees flashing their undersides, flipping up asphalt. They watched as workers stacked huge power poles — while they wait for more to arrive. They walked in the blazing hot sun and accepted a cool bottle of water.

Their eyes lit up momentarily.

"We talked to some of these people. They are OK, they seem to be OK," Gray said. "They can laugh, but I know they are hurting."

In Crescent Ridge, an area turned nearly to mulch by the twister, Gray said he spoke with a recently widowed woman who lives close to all of her family. And all of their homes had just been destroyed.

"They are OK as far as handling things, but in looking at the devastation, the lady said, 'Every once in a while I just have to cry, but I don't make a practice of it,' Gray said. "I think that's a good way to put it."

Gray said he is appreciative for Alabama Baptist disaster relief chaplains on the ground in Tuscaloosa who are trained to assist in counseling those who are faced with loss and grief. And he is grateful for the volunteer team serving alongside the American Red Cross.

"I am extremely proud of our people," Gray said. "I have been bombarded with calls from



Photo by Doug Rogers

TUSCALOOSA CHURCHES — Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, was heavily damaged by the April 27 tornado, and, at press time, Forest Lake, Rosedale, Pilgrim Rest, Fleetwood and New Eastern Hills Baptist churches had all reported damage.

people wanting to help. It's a wonderful thing to see."

On the scene since April 28, J.D. Beck, disaster relief team leader for the Tuscaloosa Association disaster relief unit was overseeing feeding efforts at a shelter operated by the Red Cross at Beck Park.

At the 24-hour-shelter where an estimated 600 people have been staying since before the storm — Beck said the 13 Alabama volunteers were joined by two from the Southern

Baptist of Texas Convention who were visiting when the storm hit — but had their gear packed and ready and so joined in.

One of the smallest units in the state, Beck said his volunteers, nonetheless, are equipped to feed up to about 2,000 at each meal. At the Tuscaloosa site, the volunteers are working alongside the American Red Cross workers to feed the 600 at the shelter and to supply an additional 250 meals to about six Emergency Response Vehicles used by the Red Cross to distribute the food.

Beck, who has been involved in disaster relief work since 1994, said he believes in caring for people, even if sometimes it's behind the scenes work — "but you know it's going out there some where."

Standing tall beside a disaster relief trailer that holds cleaning supplies and cooking equipment, Beck stopped for a moment to work out some details with a Red Cross official about propane gas procurement.

"What Jesus said about the cup of water," Beck said is what keeps him willing to volunteer his time and effort. "If you've done it

unto the least of these, you've done it to me."

At Hopewell Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, the tornado flipped a few shingles from the roof but otherwise bypassed the imposing brick buildings and instead tore into the neighborhood.

"Hot food and water" was advertised on a sign out front. Out back, some men from the church were grilling hot dogs and hamburgers to give to those who dropped by. Sandy Guy, director of women on mission, said the congregation is praying for those who are suffering.

"We are truly blessed and thankful," Guy said, noting in the last three weeks, there have been three storms that have gone "around" the church.

Dropping off water and care packages to be distributed in the neighborhood, a team from Everglades Baptist Church, Jackson, said they wanted to help in the effort.

Only 16 blocks away, at Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, winds blew the steeple, roof and the front wall onto the steps — leaving mounds of insulation and splintered wood hanging from a huge opening in the ceiling of



Photo by Joni Hannigan

BEING RESOURCEFUL — Tuscaloosa residents gather their salvageable belongings and carry them in a grocery cart that doubles as a stroller.



Photo by Joni Hannigan

RELIEF VOLUNTEER — J.D. Beck, disaster relief team leader for Tuscaloosa Association, oversees feeding efforts at Beck Park.

by tornado

shelter, counseling, relief

the church's newly renovated sanctuary. The educational space was also heavily damaged, according to Gray.

Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, suffered extensive damage, Gray said, and he is unsure of whether the congregation will be able to continue to meet in its facility.

Left standing in an otherwise nearly flattened older neighborhood, Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, is being assessed for structural damage likely to have occurred when the church was lifted off its foundation, Gray said. The building is being used to store teacher supplies from the nearby elementary school that was destroyed. After members and volunteers shuttered broken windows and made other repairs, the church became a community center for food and supplies.

"We are trying to get more resources out to them," Gray said of Forest Lake Baptist.

The sanctuary at Rosedale Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has "quite a bit of damage," Gray said, but the congregation may be able to meet in the fellowship hall for services. "That neighborhood is gone," he said. "It is devastated."

New Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, sustained heavy damage with a large hole in the wall, roof damage and windows being blown out. They will meet elsewhere for awhile, Gray said.

A few families from Temple Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, lost their homes, Gray said, but the church received only mild damage. At rural Fleetwood Baptist Church,

Tuscaloosa, where some of the surrounding neighborhood was wiped out, Gray said one member was killed and 14 members lost their homes.

Gary Bonner, associate director for missions for Tuscaloosa Association, said he is happy churches are working together during the crisis and reaching in to their communities.

The need is extensive, he said, and the disaster relief effort needs to be ongoing.

"Not for a week or two weeks, and not even a month," Bonner said. "We've never had a tornado of this velocity come right through the center of town. There is more loss of life than in the history of Tuscaloosa County."

"It's going to take a long time. We really need to do everything we can to work together and be patient," Bonner said. "We are [going to] do everything we can in the short term but be prepared to serve in the long term."

Gray agreed. He said there is hope even for the people of Tuscaloosa.

"I would say to these people that God is with us through the bad times and as well as the good," Gray said. "I think everybody — as bad as it is — we are going to make it though, and we are [going to] come back."

Relying on God, having a good attitude and supplying people with resources will help in the long haul, Gray said.

"This has a way of rearranging your priorities," Gray said, but people can look at it and say, "OK it's bad, but we are [going to] make it."



Photo by Doug Rogers

FEEDING UNIT — Disaster relief volunteers serve food at the 24-hour Red Cross shelter located at Beck Park where around 600 people are staying.



Photo by Joni Hannigan

POWER OUT — Power lines and telephone poles lay broken and leaning on buildings in one of the hardest hit areas of Tuscaloosa on University Blvd.



Reuters photo

A HUG — U.S. President Barack Obama hugs a resident as he surveys damage in Tuscaloosa and promised federal aid after he got a close-up look at the 'heartbreaking' devastation.

'Community' became a verb

By Katie Wood

Special to The Alabama Baptist

What I saw today will be with me forever. It was the most emotionally draining day I've had in a long time. I was able to make my way to the intersection of 15th and McFarland ... 20 minutes after the tornado hit. It felt like I was in a movie — scariest feeling of my life. The military started coming in, people in the streets, cars turned over, everyone looking hopeless looking for loved ones and pets. Beams and pieces of steel wrapped around light posts that weren't knocked over, like the beams were a piece of string. Stores and restaurants I've been going to for the past four years are gone. Turned completely inside out.

I am still in shock. ... It is just a nightmare. We got up first thing this morning to walk the city and see what could be done. Our friend had a tree go straight through his house while six people were in the bathroom. It is a miracle they were saved. So

many houses completely wiped off their foundations. I'm shaking even as I'm writing this.

It was the worst feeling to see the spray paint on homes announcing the number found dead inside (just like I'd seen in pictures from Katrina). It is heartbreaking and I still can't even process it all. ... It literally looks like a bomb went off or like we are in a third-world country. It doesn't look like my town, my school, my home.

But it was amazing to see "community" become a verb today. When we walked from the mall down 15th street into the neighborhoods to help recover some personal belongings of a few friends, the neighbors were all out helping each other. There was a spirit of hope among them. They were smiling and working together. It was inspiring.

Editor's Note — Katie Wood is graduating from the University of Alabama and was in Tuscaloosa when the town was devastated. She attends Green Valley Baptist Church.

'Tragically historic'

World watches as more than 350 people killed in six states

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Countless Alabamians are still trying to recover from the surge of devastating tornadoes and severe storms that ripped through the Southeast April 27.

In all, more than 350 people in six states were killed. Alabama was hardest hit with 249 confirmed dead and eight still missing at press time. The death toll from nearby states was 34 in Mississippi, 34 in Tennessee, 15 in Georgia, five in Virginia and 14 in Arkansas.

Alabama's worst affected areas include Tuscaloos, Hackleburg, Phil Campbell, Pleasant Grove, Pratt City, DeKalb County, northern Calhoun County and South Cherokee County where a massive number of homes and businesses were completely demolished and much of the area is unrecognizable.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates there were 211 tornadoes from April 27 to 28 making the storms "the third deadliest tornado outbreak on record."

"There's just incredible devastation, particularly in those areas," said Jeff Stefkovich, meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service in Birmingham.

The State of Alabama Emergency Management Agency called the storms "one of the worst natural disasters in state history."

"The assessment is ongoing," a spokesperson for the Birmingham National Weather Service office told *The Alabama Baptist* April 29. He estimated 15 to 20 tornadoes in the Birmingham warning area alone. "The damage is quite extensive. We are just scraping the surface. ... At this time, we have not identified firmly or confirmed any F4s or F5s (level tornadoes). Neither have they been ruled out. That is forthcoming. It's going to be a long process."

Baptist chaplains minister in Alabama

Communication failure has not stopped Alabama Baptist chaplain teams from reaching hurting families in areas affected by the recent severe weather.

Ray Baker, prison ministry coordinator in the office of Christian ethics and chaplaincy ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said chaplain teams were active in Moulton, Tuscaloosa, Pleasant Grove and Birmingham. At press time, he said another team was planning to work in Phil Campbell.

"Right now, we are getting the request for one-day intervention per location," he said and noted that chaplains were currently doing trauma intervention, helping people cope with the loss and trauma of the storm and offering encouragement and grief mitigation.

Baker believed chaplains in other affected areas were already reaching out to people even though he could not reach many by phone or e-mail since much of the communication in storm-ravaged areas was not working. However, he said chaplains would be sent wherever they are requested.

"We will send people closest to the response location, get them there as quick as we can and be good stewards and get the maximum involvement," he said. "This is not going to be over in a week. There is going to be a need during recovery and building, and we are still going to be available." (TAB)

The National Weather Service Forecast office in Birmingham offered the following report of the weather day it called "tragically historic."

"There were two waves of severe weather. The first moved through during the early morning hours across northern portions of Central Alabama producing damaging straight line winds and isolated tornadoes. The second wave involved numerous supercell thunderstorms and produced long lived ... strong to violent tornadoes across the northern two-thirds of Central Alabama ... with widespread and catastrophic damage in several locations."

While reporting on the storms, many meteorologists said they believed Alabama has not experienced this kind of weather for more than 30 or 40 years.

In the wake of this tragedy, several cities including Tuscaloosa, Cullman and some Tennessee Valley towns reportedly enforced curfews to protect residents and their property.

On April 28, Birmingham Police Chief A.C. Roper said his police force had to make several arrests due to looting. Looting was also reportedly occur-

ring in Tuscaloosa and in North Alabama.

Both Gov. Robert Bentley and President Barack Obama declared a state of emergency in Alabama freeing state and federal resources needed to assess damaged areas and assist affected communities with recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Both leaders assured Alabamians they would do everything possible to help the hurting cities. President Obama declared Alabama a major disaster area April 29 making federal disaster aid available in state and local recovery efforts.

The funding is available to Cullman, DeKalb, Franklin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Marshall, Tuscaloosa and Walker counties. According to FEMA, the assistance includes "grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster."

Obama said, "We've already provided the disaster designations that are required to make sure that the maximum federal help comes here as quickly as possible. ... I want to just make a commitment to the communities here that we are going to do everything we can to help these communities rebuild. ... I want to assure him (Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox) that the American people all across the country are with him and his community, and we're going to make sure that you're not forgotten and that we do everything we can to make sure that we rebuild."

Bentley said times like these cause people to forget their petty differences of race, religion and politics. "The people of Alabama are resilient and they care about each other," Bentley said. "We are going to get through this and come out together on the other side."

To ensure this happens, Bentley approved up to 5,000 National Guardsmen to provide emergency assistance to impacted areas, a member of his communication staff said. During his April 28 news conference in Tuscaloosa, he said would send as many as the state needed to recover.

At press time, the areas requesting National Guard assistance included Marshall, Tuscaloosa, Limestone, Cullman, Jefferson, Marion, Franklin and Lawrence counties.

Likewise, the Alabama Emergency Management Agency Mutual Aid Branch announced that it deployed 35 of its 50 teams in DeKalb, Tuscaloosa, Calhoun, Franklin, Marion, Fayette and Madison counties for rescue, urban search and rescue, mortuary and law enforcement services.

"The teams belong to local governments and have agreed to assist outside their home area during time of crisis," the release stated.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

DEVASTATION — The tornadoes and severe storms that tore through the Southeast April 27-28 made it 'the third deadliest tornado outbreak on record.'



Photo by Doug Rogers

HELPING COPE — An Alabama Baptist chaplain comforts a woman outside East Side Baptist Church, Cullman.

State Board of Missions: 'All hands on deck'

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The number 3 never looked so haunting as it did that morning, the morning so many dreaded. For as long as night lingered, the reality of what came next didn't exist.

But as sure as the horrific nightmare of a day finally took its bow, the glorious rays of sunshine couldn't just be a peaceful reward for enduring the monster. Instead, they spotlighted the catastrophic condition that would change Alabama and Alabamians forever.

April 27, 2011 — another date that will go down in history — the day 70-mph-plus straight-line winds followed by more than 20 gangster-minded tornadoes banded together to obliterate a path across the state from Mississippi to Georgia.

And the number 3? Crudely spray painted on the house left in shambles meant that many body bags would be needed.

"This is our Katrina," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "We need Alabama Baptists to pull together in giving, going and praying in order to get back on our feet."

Preparing even as the storms tore through the state, Lance moved the SBOM staff to an "all hands on deck" mode and led the way for Mel Johnson, SBOM disaster relief specialist, to have his incident command center set up at the Baptist Building in Montgomery by mid-day April 28. "We will be here until the crisis needs are concluded," Johnson said.

And Bobby Dubois, SBOM associate executive director, believes this crisis isn't going anywhere any time soon. "This is going to be overwhelming," he said, noting the 200-plus fatalities and large number of people still searching for loved ones at press time. "Our number one priority is this disaster."

On April 28, SBOM staff members were reassigned to crisis management and disaster relief roles right away. Ministry assistants also were briefed and trained for specific functions. And all statewide events sponsored by the SBOM were canceled until further notice.

But even with this army of workers, monetary resources are strained, Johnson said.

"We are thankful for the greater community of faith and other nongovernmental organizations helping in times of need," he said. "But the value of the Southern Baptist Convention has given us this resource of having state missionaries and statewide resources to help folks in need. 100 percent of donations goes to the affected victims. 'Make sure we can help those in need.'"

To donate online, visit www.alsbom.org/feature5.

Mail checks to Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 11870,

Montgomery, AL 36111-0870 (mark the check "Alabama tornado relief").

Eclectic's Mount Hebron East takes direct hit from tornado

By Joni B. Hannigan
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The half-mile wide deadly tornado which tore through Elmore County late April 27 ripped down power lines, shredded trees and tossed a trailer park on a path from Wetumpka to Kowaliga before pushing through the front doors of the tiny 115-year old Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic.

The twister exploded the historic building and a 2-year-old adjacent fellowship-educational building onto the church's cemetery, its powerful winds knocking flat the heavy headstones and spewing the churned up contents nearly two miles into the surrounding woods.

Word spread quickly. Pastor Bob Williamson said a member who lives close to the church site called and told him the church was "gone."

'Nothing was left'

"What do you mean gone?" he asked. She told him it had taken a direct hit and it was leveled and "nothing was left except a pile of rubble and the slab of the fellowship hall."

At the site the next day, Williamson reflected on his first reaction to the destruction.

"I was just amazed to see the damage here, just obliterated, the church," Williamson said.

Some of the church members were weeping, he said and wondering what to do.

"Well we're going to do that last thing the Lord told us to do and that's to be the people of God," Williamson said he told them.

Planning to meet for worship at



Photo by Joni B. Hannigan

LEVELED — The April 27 tornado that tore through Elmore County severely damaged the cemetery of Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic. Heavy headstones were knocked flat on the ground.

the site May 1, the pastor said he canceled preaching at a revival. Williamson has been at the church for about six months. He and his wife, Vicky, retired from the In-

ternational Mission Board after serving a total of nearly 22 years in South Africa.

"I'm not leaving my church in this kind of struggle and going any

place," Williamson said. "We're gonna make a statement and it's gonna be, 'We're not giving up, we're going on. We're gonna be the people of God. We're gonna worship You and we're gonna be faithful to do what You told us to do and we're gonna be Mount Hebron East Baptist Church.' ... [W]e recommit ourselves to the dream to be what God wants it to be. That's what we're gonna do."

First Baptist Church, Eclectic, volunteered to bring 50 chairs to the site and a local funeral home has loaned a tent, Williamson said.

'Trust in the Lord'

"God is not surprised by this. You trust in the Lord and keep on doing the last thing the Lord told you to do unless He tells you to do something different. ... God's faithful and we want to be faithful people," he said.

"That's what we are committed to be."

Six people were confirmed dead in area, according to the local sheriff's department, but none were members of the church.

One church member's home was heavily damaged, Williamson noted.

Jim Jackson, director of missions for Elmore Baptist Association, said it's "miraculous," that none of the other 42 churches were destroyed considering the intensity of the tornado and the widespread destruction.

Jackson said some of the churches received minor damage.

While children played on the now clean slab of the fellowship hall at Mount Hebron East, stacks of hymnals, plastic flowers and a

few other tangible items stood in contrast to the splintered wood planks, insulation, cabinet doors and roofing shingles still spread out behind the church.

Congregants and their families had been coming by all day. Some stayed to help clean up. Wandering around and making small piles of things considered usable. Some of the onlookers were members of their community who had family members with ties to the church — or were just curious, Williamson said.

Dusty Duck, 27, was there most of the day helping. He and other men of the church righted most of the heavy headstones and salvaged tables and pieces of the pulpit.

"I'm just trying to lend a helping hand," said Duck, who has grown up in the church. His sister, April, helped pull old hymnals out of the basement room under the church's wooden platform before it gives way.

"My heart just dropped when I saw this," Dusty Duck said.

He lives in one of the nearby trailer parks that "by the grace of God" was not destroyed. The one that was destroyed was where four of the six who died in Elmore County lived, according to officials.

'God is still in control'

God is still in control, Dusty Duck said, and even with all that is going on he has hope that the church will persevere.

"Hopefully the good Lord will let us rebuild and become stronger than this," Duck said. "It's not the building that makes the church, it's the people." 

DROP-OFF LOCATIONS FOR DONATIONS

► **NorthPark Baptist Church;** 5700 Deerfoot Pkwy.; Trussville, AL 35173; 205-908-7985

► **First Baptist Church, Russellville;** 213 N. Jackson Ave.; Russellville, AL 35653; 256-332-2065

► **Bethsalem Baptist Church;** 2990 County Rd. 24; Billingsley, AL 36006; 205-755-1413

► **First Baptist Church, Montgomery Caring Center;** 52 Adams Ave.; Montgomery, AL 36104; 334-241-5140

► **Sixth Street Baptist Church;** 2324 6th St. Extension; Alexander City, AL 35060; 256-794-3074

► **North Jefferson Baptist Association;** 3396 Mt. Olive Road; Mt. Olive, AL 35117; 205-631-4126

► **First Baptist Church, Onenota;** 300 3rd Ave. East; Oneonta, AL 35121; 205-353-6425

► **Pineview Baptist Church;** 10291 Hwy. 5; Brent, AL 35034; 205-926-9280

► **Northport Baptist Church;** 1004 Main Ave.; Northport, AL 35476; 205-345-0100

► **Pleasant Mountain Baptist Church;** 250 Pine Mountain Cir.; Remlap, AL 35133; 205-527-1186

► **First Baptist Church, Fayette;** 432 Temple Ave. North; Fayette, AL 35555; 205-932-5562

► **Highland Park Baptist Church;** 501 W. Sixth St.; Muscle Shoals, AL 35661; 256-412-5125

► **Snowtown Baptist Church;** 6000 Flat Top Rd.; Dora, AL 35062; 205-436-3305

► **Forest Lake Baptist Church;** 107 18th St.; Tuscaloosa, AL 35401; 205-759-1569

► **First Baptist Church, Winfield;** 830 U.S. Hwy. 43 South; Winfield, AL 35594; 205-487-3257

► **New Prospect Baptist Church;** 770 Hwy. 5 N; Jasper, AL 35503; 205-384-4808 or 205-300-5530

► **Canaan Baptist Church;** 2543 Morgan Rd.; Bessemer, AL 35022; 205-425-4381 or 205-317-5561 after noon

► **First Baptist Church, Pelham;** 2867 Pelham Pkwy.; Pelham, AL 35124; 205-664-0237

► **The Church at Brook Hills;** 3145 Brook Highland Pkwy.; Birmingham, AL 35242; 205-313-7777

Source: www.alsbom.org/feature5



Baptist schools prepare for 'marathon' relief efforts

By Julie Moore
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The violent storms of April 27 prompted colleges and universities throughout the state to offer initial responses regarding disaster relief efforts. Alabama Baptist Institutions Samford University in Birmingham, University of Mobile (UMobile) and Judson College in Marion were among the leaders.

Renie Porter Moss, Samford University's assistant dean for campus life, said students turned an April 30 concert into a fundraising event. Avett Brothers, the

featured performers agreed to donate an autographed guitar, banjo and concert posters. All proceeds will be provided to the Christian Service Mission in Birmingham. Another April 30 opportunity included volunteers serving at Christian Service Mission. Volunteers were asked to help receive donations and organize the donations to be sent for distribution.

A prayer service was held on campus May 3 in Reid Chapel for those affected by the storms. Moss said additional opportunities for service will be posted on the school's website.

"Our natural instinct is to respond immediately, but we must remember that the response will be more than just today," Samford University President Andy Westmoreland said in a released statement. "It will be a marathon need that lasts for weeks and months."

According to Kathy Dean, director of media relations for UMobile, school officials urged donations through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions to help disaster relief efforts. Thousands in the broader UMobile family were directed to aid the disaster relief by visiting online at <http://www.alsbom.org/tornadorelief>.

www.alsbom.org/tornadorelief.

In addition, UMobile individual faculty and staff members are organizing teams to travel to north Alabama May 6-8 to help with relief efforts.

University President Mark Foley said, "Our University of Mobile family is continuing to pray for God's grace and provisions for those who have lost loved ones and homes. Our prayers must also include the many hundreds of volunteers."

David E. Potts, president of Judson College, sent an initial message to alumna, trustees, par-

ents and friends of the college. "The Judson College campus community continues to pray for our friends throughout the state in the wake of this destruction, and we fully intend to 'put feet to our prayers' as service opportunities crystallize in the coming days."

Judson's missionary-in-residence, Laura Lee, sponsored a campus-wide prayer service the evening of April 28 for suffering families in the state. Judson's director of faith-based service and learning, Susan Jones, was in contact with state relief agencies and planned to update the Judson community regarding upcoming volunteer projects. In addition, Jones' office collected bottled water and nonperishable food items shortly after the storms hit the state.

Judson criminal justice professor John Weber made Judson College officials aware of the Tuscaloosa County "Spontaneous Volunteer Management Team" and their efforts in partnership with St. Matthias Episcopal Church, Tuscaloosa. Weber will continue to be a resource as Judson considers how its community can be helpful in Tuscaloosa — the devastated area closest to the college.

shower units were also provided in Jefferson, Tuscaloosa, Walker, Franklin, St. Clair, Calhoun and DeKalb counties.

In all, 57 disaster relief units and more than 500 volunteers were on the ground at press time. Many Alabama Baptist churches joined the work by serving meals, collecting and distributing goods and housing those displaced by the storms.

The death toll in Alabama continued to rise. At press time, 250 deaths had been reported in the state. (TAB)

Though not hit directly, all our schools were touched by losses in the storms.

President Mark Foley
University of Mobile



Photo by Eric Harrison

SCATTERED DEBRIS — The steeple that once set atop First Baptist Church, Fultondale, lies on the ground across the street from the church in a resident's yard following the April 27 tornado.

'Our church is in our heart' FBC Fultondale heavily damaged by twister

By Julie Moore
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The large, white steeple that towered atop First Baptist Church, Fultondale, was found on its side across the street in a resident's front yard. Glass, twisted metal from the church's roof and other debris were strewn across the parking lot. Along the Birmingham Baptist Association church's location of Main Street, entire neighborhoods were destroyed and hardly a tree stood standing.

According to John McGuirk, deacon at First, Fultondale, the April 27 tornado that traveled from Tuscaloosa and wreaked havoc on all it touched, hit the church at approximately 6 p.m. The tornado knocked out the three air conditioners on top of the sanctuary and blew them — along with the church steeple — 100 feet across the road.

The south side of the church suffered the most damage. The roof of the foyer leading to the church office was completely gone. Windows along the south side of the building were blown out, as well as the door to the nursery area. In addition, church offices and the fellowship hall suffered extensive damage.

Two vacant 15-passenger vans in the church parking lot were lifted by the tornado and

moved. "One has a big piece of plywood under its front tire ... the other has a big piece of metal under the front tires," McGuirk said. "All the windows are blown out of them."

Despite the tornado devastation from the day before, the cleanup scene bustled with activity. Church members from First, Fultondale, and other area churches joined together in an effort to pick up the pieces from the destruction.

Church member Traci Orris was there with her daughter to offer

assistance by picking up roof shingles, glass and other debris. She has worshipped there for 11 years and stressed the importance of also ministering to the surrounding neighborhoods that were destroyed by the storm.

McGuirk said the congregation has been meeting at Crosspointe Baptist Church, Fultondale, since mid-March. The two churches are looking at the possibility of joining together.

"Both congregations are just gelling," he reported. "Things are going well."

Crosspointe pastor Sam Greene is currently serving as interim pastor of First, Fultondale.

Orris said some First, Fultondale, church members have been members their entire lives. She looked around for a moment to survey the damage as she stood in her church's sanctuary.

"This is [a] building — this can be fixed," she said. "Our church is in our heart."

In other Birmingham Baptist Association storm coverage, Valley View Baptist Church, Leeds, had a tree fall on the parsonage but no significant damage was reported. Chad Hays is the pastor, and his wife and baby were out of the house at the time.



Photo by Brittany Moore

EXTENSIVE DAMAGE — Windows were blown out at First Baptist Church, Fultondale, leaving debris inside the building.

'Church without walls'

Pratt City's Bethel Baptist destroyed, reaches out to community first

By Lindsey Robinson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The same supercell storm that ripped through Tuscaloosa, Fultondale and Pleasant Grove, demolishing homes and leaving a trail of dead and missing, destroyed the predominantly black Bethel Baptist Church, Pratt City, on April 27.

The church had closed at 1:30 p.m., letting preschool classes out early and canceling Bible study for the first time anyone could remember. The storm system came through shortly after 6 p.m.

Winds of at least 140 miles an hour tore the roof off the gymnasium and sanctuary and threw one church van into a ravine. The church's day care and offices were also demolished.

In a phone interview April 29, Pastor T.S. Lewis said his goal is first to rebuild the community, then work on the church damage.

"We're still our church, we're just a church without walls," he said.

Volunteers from Bethel Baptist arrived at 7 a.m. on April 29 to move tables and chairs to a relief center at Scott Elementary School on Hibernian Street. The center has a generator, and although people can't sleep there, Lewis said they will provide food, clothes, shoes and transportation all night if necessary.

"While they're now homeless, we're going to make sure they're not hopeless," he said.

In the first two days after the

storm, cleanup crews looked for membership records, tax files and any scrap of the church's 114-years history they could salvage, Deacon Lee Anderson said. Bethel Baptist was rebuilt in 1990 on the same lot, but the first church was established in 1897.

Like many members who helped clean up, Anderson is too grateful that he and his loved ones survived the storm to be overwhelmed by the loss of the church building.

"You don't sorrow over what happened," Anderson said. "You pick yourself up and thank God you're alive."

Undisturbed items

Though most of the church was reduced to piles of bricks and wooden beams, some rooms looked untouched. In the kitchen downstairs, plastic forks never moved from their holders and serving spoons and tea pitchers hung undisturbed over the stove throughout the storm.

Jim Stefkovich, the meteorologist in charge at The National Weather Service in Birmingham, said crews are continuing to survey the path of the storm and, at press time, had not determined the amount of destruction in Pratt City.

About 350 troops from the National Guard patrolled the area after the storm for security and support. Police roadblocks on Highway 78 prevented people from bringing their cars into Pratt City, so people parked on the sides of the street and in abandoned park-



Photo by Lindsey Robinson

PROVIDING HOPE — Volunteers from Bethel Baptist Church, Pratt City, move tables and chairs to a relief center at Scott Elementary School where food, clothes, shoes and transportation are being provided.

ing lots and walked to their homes.

In the wildest moments of the storm, Bethel Baptist members Rhonda Reed and Shelisa Spencer said the only sound they heard was a long, deafening train whistle. After the storm there was an unreal silence, then the smell of gas.

The natural gas leaks were so powerful in Pratt City that police pulled families out of their homes

the day after the storm so they could breathe slightly fresher air, Reed said.

The next day, people wandered in the streets looking for their homes and belongings, disoriented because the storm uprooted street signs and leveled homes.

An apartment complex next to Bethel Baptist lost its second floor. Spencer, 20, attended Bethel

Baptist her entire life and lives in Forestdale.

"As soon as I saw the church, I just broke down," she said. "I broke down."

Despite the damage to the church and neighborhood, the Bethel Baptist family has remained intact. The church planned to meet for Sunday service on April 29 at 10 a.m. in the Fair Park Arena in Birmingham. ❧

Selma, Birmingham Baptist disaster relief teams help with cleanup



Photo by Brittany Moore

DOWNED TREES — A Selma Baptist Association disaster relief team helps with yard cleanup in Birmingham neighborhoods.

By Julie Moore
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Several communities in the Greater Birmingham area suffered extensive damage from heavy storms that barreled through the early morning hours of April 27. Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams assisted in some of the hardest hit areas. These volunteers rolled up their sleeves to aid in yard cleanup and were a welcomed sight to residents reeling from the damage to their homes and property. Neighborhoods along Caldwell Mill Road in Birmingham were hit exceptionally hard. Downed trees, limbs and power lines cluttered yards and streets, and some residential roads were deemed impassable.

Mary Runnels, a resident in her neighborhood since 1972, had never witnessed this level of storm devastation on her block. "We were already up, and we were fixing our breakfast and we had the TV on, and [the weather reporters] were saying that something was coming but they weren't sure what," she recounted of that morning. Suddenly, the power went out, strong winds could be heard and trees began hitting the house.

Runnels expressed her thankfulness as she watched a group of volunteers work in her yard. They used chainsaws and heavy equipment to cut through large, uprooted trees.

Resident Allison Davis also had fallen trees covering her family's front yard. After the storm moved through, they delved into a search and res-

cue mode throughout the neighborhood to ensure the neighbors were safe. "We went and helped make sure everybody was okay," she said. "We're very fortunate the Selma Baptist Association has come through now to help us."

Lonny Bearden, who was directing disaster relief assessments in Birmingham for Alabama Baptists, cited the group from Selma and a group from a variety of churches within the Birmingham association that pooled together to work in the neighborhood. "The areas that we're still trying to get into, there are no houses left ... just the sheer scope of this disaster is causing all kinds of problems in trying to get coordinated into where the effort needs to be placed," he reported. "We only have so much resources, and the magnitude of this thing overwhelms anybody."

The SBOM has 5,400 trained disaster relief volunteers available to serve in a number of ministry opportunities. In addition to meeting people's physical needs through disaster response, a designated chaplain travels with every disaster relief team to assist with people's spiritual needs.

"We always have a chaplain, and their sole job is to deal with the people," Bearden said. He added that all disaster relief volunteers know to stop their work if someone wants to share his or her story.

"We can use all the help we can get for people who want to get trained," Bearden said. For details or a training schedule, visit www.alsbom.org or call 1-800-264-1225. ❧

'Still here today'

St. Clair County churches survive storm, reach out to neighbors

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

By the mercy and grace of God, we are still here today."

On April 29, that was the praise that went up from Marlin Cox, pastor of Greensport Baptist Church in St. Clair County's Shoal Creek Valley area near Ashville and Ragland.

It was that area where a reported 11 people lost their lives in tornadoes that struck the evening of April 27. Two other fatalities occurred in St. Clair County during the first wave of storms that hit early that morning, according to news reports.

Three of the 11 people who died in Shoal Creek Valley had ties to Greensport Baptist, Cox said.

During the storm, Cox and his wife, Jamie, were sheltered in a Shoal Creek home with a group of other people. Though all in that home were safe, the roof came off the structure.

"God was with us," Cox said April 29 in recounting what happened.

His church is one of two St. Clair Baptist Association churches located along St. Clair County Road 22 in Shoal Creek Valley where the destruction was centered. The other is Bethany Baptist Church, Ashville. Both churches

sustained significant damage.

Greensport's seven-year-old fellowship hall is caved in the front and the roof is missing. The drop-off area that used to grace the front of the building is now behind the church. There is also damage to the sanctuary, including the fact that the steeple no longer sits upon it.

The situation at Bethany is comparable. There, huge trees fell onto the sanctuary and educational building. "It looks extensive to me," Jimmy Hopkins, Bethany's pastor, said of the damage.

Hopkins' praise was that "all of [the church members] have survived. We had some close calls. But God has been good to us."

Some areas of Shoal Creek Valley are "totally ravaged," said Ben Chandler, director of missions for St. Clair Association.

"This is the closest to [Hurricane] Katrina that I've seen in a tornado," Chandler added.

Indeed, when Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), and *The Alabama Baptist* visited the area April 29, devastation is what was found.

Home after home had been reduced to rubble.

Power poles were down or missing completely. Tall trees that once were part of extensive forestation

St. Clair relief efforts

► **Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds**, has been working to provide meals for storm victims in the Moody area.

► **First Baptist Church, Ashville**, is working with several churches of different denominations to provide hot food, clothing, hygiene items and other provisions to storm victims in Shoal Creek Valley, said James Sampley, pastor of First, Ashville. Ashville Middle School is the site for this effort.

► **St. Clair Baptist Association's** shower unit is expected to be taken to locations to assist storm victims.



Photo by Leigh Pritchett

VOLUNTEERS ARRIVE — Disaster relief volunteers assist Greensport Baptist Church, Shoal Creek Valley, after the April 27 tornado heavily damaged the church building.

now are only mangled, limbless, leafless sticks jutting up from the ground.

Ron Warren — member of First Baptist Church, Ashville, and state coordinator for cleanup and recovery for disaster relief with SBOM — was among the volunteers who worked through the night Wednesday and into Thursday morning in Shoal Creek Valley to clear a path through debris so that emergency personnel could reach storm victims.

Reaching victims

Warren said volunteers cut many, many trees — some which were massive — for what seemed like miles in order to get to trapped and injured victims.

One right after the other, the large trees lay across the road. "It was odd to see that many trees," Warren said. "... I've seen worse. But I've never seen that many trees lapped over on the road."

The volunteers began around 9

p.m. Wednesday to clear a path for rescuers. Each chainsaw operator had to be accompanied by another volunteer who held a flashlight so that the cutter could see what to do. It took approximately three hours of cutting through downed trees to reach the first of the victims.

"Somewhere around 3:30 [Thursday morning], we got to the last people in that area," Warren said.

Edwin Talley — pastor of First Baptist Church, Ragland, and a member of the St. Clair Association disaster relief team — was also among the first to see the devastation Wednesday night. He and his wife, Teresa, helped to transport medics into Shoal Creek Valley and to evacuate the injured out of the area to a triage set up at Ashville High School.

Talley explained that the way was so treacherous Wednesday night that some victims had to be transported in stages, first on four-wheelers, then in trucks before reaching emergency vehicles.

Glenn Pender — pastor of Happy Home Baptist Church, Leeds, and coordinator for St. Clair Association's disaster relief, said the enormity of the storm and the need for relief is "overwhelming."

On Thursday, Pender and 20 other volunteers with the association's disaster relief team worked to help residents in the Moody area of the county, which had been hit by the first wave of storms early Wednesday morning. Another 28 volunteers from Southern Baptist churches came to assist, as did disaster relief workers from Shelby Baptist Association and Blount County's Friendship Baptist Association.

The St. Clair Association's relief team set up its command post Thursday at First Baptist Church, Moody, which had suffered damage early Wednesday.

At First, Moody, the steeple that

used to be atop the front of the sanctuary, now lies on its side in a back parking lot where the storm placed it. Also, the church sanctuary is missing some of its roof. No awnings are left in place. In addition, the support posts on the church's porches have either shifted or are down completely.

Nonetheless, Brad Moseley, the church's pastor, downplayed it. "The damage to the church is just superficial. My heart goes out to the people of the community who are devastated. We just want to do what we can for them."

It is a sentiment that Cox echoed about Shoal Creek Valley. "I really haven't paid a whole lot of attention to the church [damage] because there are so many people hurting in this community."

On Friday, the St. Clair Association's command post was relocated to Bethany Baptist, Shoal Creek Valley. Chandler said the relief effort would continue in the area "for the long haul."

Tree removal

Early Friday morning, disaster relief crews from Cleburne Baptist Association and from Hill Crest Baptist Church, Anniston, in Calhoun Baptist Association were working to remove the trees that had fallen onto Bethany Baptist.

Pender said there is also relief assistance needed in Ragland, Pell City, Riverside and Odenville.

While disaster relief meets an immediate need for storm victims, it is about more than just cleaning up the area, Pender said. Team members are there to share the hope of Jesus with the people.

Although the storms brought much sadness upon Shoal Creek Valley and the people of the area need the fervent prayers of believers, Hopkins encourages Christians to remember in prayer everyone in the state who was affected.



Photo by Leigh Pritchett

A TOWN DESTROYED — Shoal Creek Valley was hit by both morning and evening April 27 storms. According to news reports at press time, 13 people lost their lives in the area.

Family Matters

CELEBRATING 120 YEARS

Dear Fellow
Alabama Baptist
Brothers and Sisters,



One of our greatest opportunities to support missions is through giving to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. They need our prayers and our financial support. They have always depended on support from churches, Sunday school classes and individuals to provide the majority of the funds needed to continue the work, as Cooperative Program funds only supply about 3 percent of their budget needs.

The theme for this year's day of prayer for the Children's Homes is from Proverbs 22:6, "Train Up a Child." For 120 years, the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries has done that and much, much more! Whether you observe the day of prayer on Mother's Day or another day during the year, please, please share this message with your congregation.

One hundred years from now it will not matter that I was president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, or that I was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Pelham, or anything else that I do except for two things – winning souls and making a difference in the life of at least one child. Join me in praying for and giving to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

I love you, I love you, I love you. God bless you, and God bless America.

Sincerely,

Mike Shaw, Romans 5:8

Dr. Mike Shaw
Pastor, First Baptist Church of Pelham
President, Alabama Baptist State Convention

"Train up a child up in
the way he should go:
and when he is old, he
will not depart from it."
Proverbs 22:6

The Annual Day of Prayer for
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes &
Family Ministries is

**Mother's
Day**

May 8, 2011

Will you join us in
praying for the
children and families
we serve, and those
who care for them?



2011 ANNUAL OFFERING



Train up a child in the way he should go:
and when he is old, he will not depart
from it. Proverbs 22:6

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

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.

Need Information?

Want to let your church members know how their gifts to the Children's Homes are being used? Need information to promote the Annual Children's Homes Offering? We have a free DVD with videos, including one of President/CEO Paul Miller sharing stories of two children who were helped through your gifts. We also have free bulletin inserts. You can download the inserts at www.alabamachild.org/resources and view the videos at www.alabamachild.org/videos. Or order the DVD and inserts by contacting Kay Taylor at ktaylor@abchome.org or 1-888-720-8805.



Alabama Baptist
Children's Homes
& Family Ministries

Alabama Baptist Children's
Homes & Family Ministries
P.O. Box 361767
Birmingham, AL 35236-1767
Telephone: (205) 982-1112
Toll Free: (888) 720-8805



On Facebook? Find us there at:
[Facebook.com/AlabamaChild](https://www.facebook.com/AlabamaChild)
[Facebook.com/PathwaysProfessionalCounseling](https://www.facebook.com/PathwaysProfessionalCounseling)



Are you on Twitter? Follow us at:
[Twitter.com/AlabamaChildOrg](https://twitter.com/AlabamaChildOrg)
[Twitter.com/PathwaysCounsel](https://twitter.com/PathwaysCounsel)

www.alabamachild.org
www.pathwaysprofessional.com

Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

► **First Church, Prattville**, will hold Senior Celebration for senior adults May 9-12, 10:30 a.m.-noon, with Jay Wolf, pastor of First Church, Montgomery; Dale Huff, director of the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the State Board of Missions; and Daniel Wilson, associate in the office of evangelism for the State Board of Missions. There will be a fish fry Thursday at noon in the fellowship hall. For fish fry reservations call 334-365-0606. Travis Coleman Jr. is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Valley View Church, Leeds**, will hold a deacons, wives and widows banquet May 7, 5 p.m., with Brother Billy

Bob Bohannon. Chad Hayes is pastor. ► **Westwood Ballet of Westwood Church, Forestdale**, will present "How Majestic is Your Name" May 14, 6 p.m. For information call 205-798-0900. Steven Potts is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Westview Church, Sylacauga**, will host Cruise-in 2011 May 14, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. There will be classic cars and motorcycles, door prizes, a 50-50 drawing, music and food. For exhibition information call Pat or J.R. at 256-487-1430. Jimmie Roberts Jr. is pastor.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will

hold a luncheon meeting May 10, 11 a.m. Evangelist Phil Kyser will speak. This will be the last meeting before summer. Meetings will resume in September. For information call 334-684-9617. Mike Shirah is pastor.

MADISON

► **Harvest Church** will hold Night of Worship May 14, 7 p.m. Child care will be available. For information call 256-837-4129. Eric Fuller is pastor.

GET AWAY WITH GOODTIME TRAVEL

Spring into Savings!

Call now ask about our best deals of the season! Deadline: May 15



WANT TO GET AWAY? THEN JOIN US ON ONE OF OUR FANTASTIC TOURS!

- America's Heartland: April 30-May 6
- Chattanooga, TN: May 19-20
- Shenandoah Valley: May 30-June 4
- Washington D.C.: June 2-8
- National Parks and Canyons: June 15-29
- Mackinac Island & Niagara Falls: July 7-16
- New York Express on Amtrak: July 26-31
- Northwest Canadian Rockies: Aug. 4-24
- California and the Southwest: Aug. 31-Sept. 18
- New England and Canada Cruise: Sept. 24-Oct. 1
- New England and Cape Cod: Sept. 24-Oct. 5
- Act NOW to reserve your spot

CALL FOR RESERVATIONS AND FREE CATALOG
256-764-3646 • 800-606-7103 • www.GoodtimeTravel.com

Goodtime Travel Just Go!!!
Dedicated to serving God, Country & You!

SERVICE | SELECTION | PRICING
WE'VE GOT IT ALL!

CHURCHBusCenter.com

Just a few clicks and you'll find the right bus for your needs AND your budget!

- Special Financing Offers
- Exceptional Service Facilities
- Dedicated Warranty Personnel
- Full Inventory of Replacement Parts

800-367-9463
A DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION SOUTH

Greece Tour/Cruises

to a beautiful part of the world!

Steps of Paul & John

Escorted by believer guides with a tremendous understanding of Bible history, the Greek language and practical application of Scripture.

a "life changing" experience!

12 wonderful packages - year-round for the Evangelical Christian.
Excellent value for small groups, large groups, and individuals.

Also, a large selection of tours to Israel, the Churches of Revelation, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Petra, Mt. Nebo, Egypt.

www.pilgrimtours.com

Box 268, Main St., Morgantown PA, 19543 800-322-0788

"Christian Fellowship Tours Since 1987"

3 x one on one =

ONE GREAT CONVENTION

1

FREE health
checkup at our
Wellness Booth

2

FREE personal review
of your retirement
and insurance

3

FREE materials for
Mission:Dignity
Sunday

Join us at this year's SBC Annual Meeting for personal GuideStone attention and to share our mission to help God's retired servants.

June 13-15, 2011
Phoenix, Arizona

CHURCHES

STOP BY TO PICK UP
INFORMATION about
PROPERTY & CASUALTY
COVERAGE.



GuideStone
on one

Available on the iPhone
App Store

© 2011 GuideStone Financial Resources 18031 04/11

'You can trust Him'

Cullman area churches hit hard; members standing tall to 'Praise Him'

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

They're coming here to grieve," said Ken Allen, pastor of East Side Baptist Church, Cullman.

Current and former members of East Side Baptist — some who even remember it being built in 1955 — came back to see the rubble that was left over after the EF4 tornado bulldozed through the City of Cullman on April 27.

At the church, where Allen has served as pastor for eight years, the tornado took down the entire sanctuary, damaged the Sunday School area and severely damaged the church's gymnasium facility. It also damaged the building where Cullman Christian Elementary School meets.

Communication was difficult since phone and power lines were down.

Allen stayed at the church all day April 28 to be pastor to the people gathering there. But the comforting was going both ways.

Many were reaching out to the

Allen family who had survived the storms in the church building.

Allen and his wife Sandra, their four children, East Side's secretary and son and three church neighbors were huddled in the lower level of the church, beneath the stairwells, as the tornado was closing in on the Cullman area.

Allen recalled the events of the afternoon: He asked Sandra to pray aloud for the group.

She prayed fervently.

Allen was checking his computer for updates and eventually went to check the front of the church when he saw debris swirling from the tornado in the distance. At that point he told everyone to get down and get as far back in the corner as they could.

"God have mercy on us,"

flowed from Allen's mouth as he made his way down the stairwell to his family.

The tornado came over the church — shattering glass and pulling down walls and the roof. But the group was unharmed.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

VOLUNTEERS — Gov. Robert Bentley shakes hands with Annette Parker, of Hanceville, who came to serve FBC Cullman.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

'DEBRIS IS NOT ...' — East Side Baptist Church, Cullman, was destroyed by the April 27 tornado, but Pastor Ken Allen reminded his members as they came to see the rubble, '[The people] are the church.'

They slowly made their way out the front doorway (the doors were gone) and saw something "very different than what it was before."

Shocked by the condition of the area but humbled by God's sovereign grace and protection, Sandra was thankful.

"What good is your faith if you can't weather the storm?" Sandra said.

'God protected us'

And her daughter's — Haley (17) and Abby (12) — who had been sitting right next to her in the stairwell agreed.

"I was shocked and scared,"

Abby said. "But God protected us."

And Sandra reminded the girls and herself that God doesn't always protect in the same way.

"When you see His hand of protection (like this)," Sandra said, "you can trust Him even when He lifts [His hand]."

Allen was pastor at Concord Highland Baptist Church, near Hueytown, when it was hit by an EF5 tornado in 1998.

The small town of Concord was again hit in this round of storms as a large tornado sliced through the community and heavily damaged Concord Highland once again (see story, page 17). And as Allen thought back over the previous 24 hours that were "hazy" and the events that had occurred 12 years ago, the only thing he could clearly think to do was praise the Lord.

"Praise Him with us," Allen urged.

"It's easy to praise Him when the budget is fine and members are regularly attending but what about when you're not sure you have enough insurance to cover the damage or enough water to get you through the week?"

All of East Side's members were accounted for by the morning of April 28, and none were injured or had severe home damage.

Director of missions for East Cullman Baptist Association Randy Makemson confirmed that East Side Baptist was the only East Cullman Association church with damage.

Noting that East Side Baptist will have services at Christ Covenant Church, Cullman, Allen said, "The Cullman community is really stepping up."

Ed Hayes, pastor of First Bap-

tist Church, Cullman, for nearly 28 years would agree.

Several people helped clean up debris around First, Cullman, after the same tornado ripped through downtown where the church sits.

The force of the tornado tore a large hole in the gymnasium roof, lifted one third of the sanctuary roof off and destroyed a large section of the Sunday School and children's area.

Built in 1951, the over half-century old sanctuary had beautifully intricate stained glass windows, several of which were torn to the ground and mangled into a mess of window leading on the sanctuary floor.

The sanctuary was left unusable, but the gymnasium is reparable and was the planned location for upcoming worship services.

Jim O'Dillon, First, Cullman, associate pastor for education and outreach, was still at the church when the tornado hit — even though his wife had insisted on him returning home.

'Mr. Stubborn'

He was "Mr. Stubborn" — as his father and he refer to each other — and was finishing up the last two verses of a Sunday School study he was planning.

"I felt the wind get pulled out of me," O'Dillon said, "... and then I heard the windows shatter."

At press time, Shatter, Cullman, had no member reports of injuries or fatalities.

Numerous families were without gas and power. Cullman was without a local supplier for gas so the outage could last several days. Cell phones were also "going in and out," making communication difficult.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

DAMAGED EDUCATIONAL SPACE — Ed Hayes (third from left), pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman, stands outside the part heaviest hit — the Sunday School rooms — at the church he's served for nearly 28 years.

Volunteers serving thousands of hot meals daily

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Bottled water, cambros (large, in this case red, plastic containers) filled with baked beans, pulled pork and mashed potatoes to feed 6,400. Volunteers from Red Cross, Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) disaster relief and Catoma Baptist Church, Montgomery, grabbed supplies and loaded them into Emergency Response Vehicles (ERV) to distribute to communities in need across Alabama.

That was the scene at Birmingham Kitchen #1.

The BBA feeding unit began pre-

paring food, provided by the Red Cross, on April 29 for the feeding center located at Boutwell Auditorium in downtown Birmingham.

On day one, the unit prepared green beans and beef stew for 1,000 meals. By day two, the unit had prepared 3,200 meals for lunch and 3,200 meals for dinner for mass distribution centers and feeding centers across the state including Pleasant Grove, Pratt City (east and west), Hackleburg and Cullman, to name a few.

The trained disaster relief volunteers set up an outdoor kitchen at the Birmingham fire department's Drills and Training West field to cook "as long as Red Cross said they needed food to serve," said Becky Moore, a disaster relief volunteer for more than a decade and member of First Baptist Church, Pinson.

Red Cross volunteers came from Ohio, Illinois, Kansas, Florida, Colorado and Alabama. They were at the feeding unit April 30 to get their orders for delivering the food, as well as toiletries, baby food, juices and bottled water gathered by Catoma Baptist Church.

Catoma Baptist asked the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), "How can we help?"

Catoma member and trained disaster relief volunteer, Sharron Young said the church collected the supplies in Montgomery and then brought Catoma's supply-filled trailer to the feeding unit. Young helped organize the distribu-



Photo by Neisha Fuson

POTATOES TO FEED 150 — Disaster relief volunteers from Birmingham Baptist Association (l to r) Cindy Dartlow, Lisa Hogan and Dolores Smithson prepare mashed potatoes.

tion of the supplies into the ERV's.

Everyone willingly did their part. Doris McCain, Red Cross volunteer from Dothan, has served at 31 disasters — "This one makes 32," she said with a smile.

Bobbi Miller, Red Cross volunteer from Lake County, Fla., came to serve Alabama because she knew the state had helped Florida in the past.

"It's only fair to give back," Miller said.

Families came to serve and "give back" at the feeding unit.

Kelly Lee and her husband, Dennis, and son Matthew, members of Gardendale First Baptist Church,

served as disaster relief volunteers April 30. Kelly Lee had a list of centers needing cans of banana pudding and as she called out, "Pleasant Grove needs 11 cans," her family would lift the large cardboard boxes and place them in the corresponding stack.

All with smiles and hard-working hands, the 100-plus volunteers made their way from boiling pot of potatoes to cambro to ERV and back again to serve Alabama in their time of need.

Moore was pleased to lead the disaster relief team in providing "a warm meal and a cool drink" in the name of Jesus, she noted.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

PUDDING — Dennis Noland (left) and Kelly Lee (right) organize banana pudding distribution.

MARKET PLACE

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: East Hill Baptist Church, located in the city of Pensacola, Fla., is seeking a pastor to lead the church. The church currently has 570 members. The successful candidate must meet the biblical qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4. The church membership expects the successful candidate to have a minimum of 6 years of successful pastoral experience, a bachelor's degree from an accredited college plus seminary master's degree. Resumes will be accepted until June 30. Resumes including educational information, pastoral experience, personal skills and at least three professional references are to be mailed or delivered to: Pastor Search Team Chair, East Hill Baptist Church, 3960 Spanish Trail, Pensacola, FL 32504.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Coldwater Baptist Church is looking for a bivocational pastor. Send resumes to: Richard Walls, 904 Edgewood Drive, Oxford, AL 36203.

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

MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH: Fairfax First Baptist Church, Valley, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a full-time minister of music and youth. If interested, please send resume to: scgarrett@gmail.com or you may mail your resume to: Fairfax FBC, 510 Denson Street, Valley, AL 36854.

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 resumes to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

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

OTHER POSITIONS

PIANIST: Oak Bowery Baptist Church, Ohatchee, Ala., is accepting applications for the position of pianist. Please contact church office at 256-892-3711, or e-mail at: oakbowerybaptist@att.net.

BUSINESS

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

CHRISTIAN HOME-BASED BUSINESS: High-tech manufacturer offers unique opportunity for Christian family home-based business. Call toll-free 1-877-623-7088 for recorded message and complete information.

DO YOU NEED A CHURCH PIANIST?: We have piano CDs for churches to sing by. Hymns, patriotic, gospel, choruses, praise. Call Worship Service Resources 1-877-977-6800. Free demo. Special

church pricing. www.wsrpianocds.com.

CONSTRUCTION

CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS: Let Webb Builders help your church expand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders, Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

CONFERENCES/RETREATS

CHRISTIAN RETREAT: Stoney Creek, new 52-acre Christian-based retreat facility perfect for family reunion rentals, church gatherings, weddings and receptions. Amenities galore. Located in Vinemont, Ala. Reservations: 256-338-5583. www.stoneycreekalabama.com.

TRAVEL/VACATION

MOUNTAIN COTTAGE: Hayesville, Western North Carolina. Lovely, almost new mountain cottage for rent. April-October. Weekly/monthly. All conveniences. 2 BRs, 2 BAs on beautiful Hiwassee River. Low price \$500 weekly plus tax. Sleeps five. Children welcome. No pets. Call 828-389-3302 9/16b.

ORLANDO VACATION HOME: 4 BRs, 2 1/2 BAs and pool. 10 minutes to Disney. 20 minutes to Universal and Sea World. \$150/night. www.orlandovaca.com. 303-808-2978. Robert.

DESTIN OR PENSACOLA BEACH: Fully furnished, luxury beach-front resorts. Great rates. Family-oriented condos sleep 4 to 8. Call 1-800-874-0402. www.HolidayBeachResort.com.

GULF SHORES CONDO: Beautiful Gulf Shores Condo: King bed, twins, sleeper sofa 2 1/2 BAs, huge balcony, large heated swimming pool, 7th floor, great view. 251-543-7339. More details www.vrbo.com#198477.

GEORGIA MOUNTAIN CABIN: 2 BRs, 2 BAs furnished cabin. Wheelchair accessible. \$500/week (3-night minimum). \$125/night. Located in mountains of Blue Ridge, Ga. Call 941-755-3655.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS: Gulf Shores and Orange Beach. Rent direct-Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Spring special: 4 nights efficiency unit (2 adults and kids) \$444 includes everything (1, 2, 3 bedroom units also available). Even lower prices for those in the ministry. 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231, www.gulfshorescondos.com.

LOG CABIN: Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log onto www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

FOR SALE

"HOPE FOR TRYING TIMES": Divorce devotional book. Divorce can be devastating. Find encouragement and comfort in a new book of devotionals for those in distress. A caring gift for individuals or group. www.hopefortryingtimes.com.

THRIFTY MINI MALL CLOSING: Store closing sale, Thrifty Mini Mall in Hoover behind Burlington off Lorna Road. Lots of merchandise and fixtures. Everything must go. Call 205-822-0776.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Mike Shaw
First Baptist Church, Pelham

Do you want to know God in a personal way and know absolutely that when you die, you'll go to heaven? The good news is that God wants to have a personal and meaningful relationship with you.

The Bible says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Many people sincerely think that you have to be real good to go to heaven. They are wrong.

To go to heaven, you have to be forgiven.

All of us are sinners by birth and choice. "There is no one righteous, not even one; ... there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10a, 12b).

When Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, went to Calvary's cross, He became sin for us.

On the cross, He suffered agony, darkness, thirst and separation from God the Father — all the things that we will suffer if we do not repent of our sins and trust Jesus for salvation.

On Calvary, one thief rejected Jesus and died unrepentant, while the other thief acknowledged his guilt and said to Him, "Remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

The thief on the cross was not baptized and never went to Sunday School or church but he was saved.

Today repent of your sins and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and then find a church where you can learn more about God.

Don't wait. The greatest danger for those who don't know God is procrastination.

Today call on Jesus and He will answer you.

Are you on
facebook?

Become a fan of
The Alabama Baptist
newspaper.



Photo by Leigh Pritchett

TOURING THE STATE — Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, meets with Ben Chandler, director of missions for St. Clair Baptist Association, April 28. Lance made personal visits to the hardest hit areas of the state following the deadly tornado outbreak.

‘Alabama’s Katrina’ Lance urges financial assistance

After the historic storms that swept through the Southeast on April 27, Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams are on the field ministering to all affected by the disaster.

“For Alabama, this is our Katrina,” said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

The tornadoes have left the affected communities with great need.

“Responding to this critical situation following the historic series of tornadoes in our state will require supporting human resources on the ground and financial assistance to damaged and destroyed churches, so they can be functional and offer help in the name of Christ to the hurting people around them,” he said.

One of the greatest needs now is financial assistance. “I appeal to Alabama Baptists to give, in the name of Christ, to the disaster relief offering through the State Board of Missions. All monies will be used to support the sac-

rificial work of the disaster relief teams and direct assistance to the numerous churches and the people to whom they minister,” Lance said.

Lance also encourages Alabama Baptists to remember the power of prayer. “Pray too for the people affected. May the God of Psalm 46 be our refuge and strength in this time of trouble,” he added.

Donation information

To give to the disaster relief offering, mail checks payable to: State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery AL 36111-0870, for “Alabama Tornado Relief.” Credit card donations as well as other information is available online at www.alsbom.org/tornadorelief.

To find out more about the relief effort, call the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief phone bank at 334-280-7297 or 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 297. Hours of operation are: Monday–Saturday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. and Sunday, 1–4:30 p.m. (SBOM)

Hiding in a ‘safe place’

First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, members Buddy and Buna Woodruff, age 83 and 79, took refuge from the April 27 tornado in their hallway. Within a few seconds, the home they had occupied for almost 53 years was completely devastated, but neither suffered a scratch.

“When James Spann (ABC 33/40 meteorologist) said it was time to be in our safe place, Buddy and I got chairs and went to the hallway,” said

Buna. “When it hit, Buddy pulled me down against his chest and put his head over mine. We just held each other until it stopped.”

Their entire neighborhood of 17 homes was demolished, as well as several adjacent areas, but no one in their neighborhood was killed.

“God is in control and we know he protected us through this,” Buna said. “We’re giving Him all the credit for keeping us safe.” (TAB)

FBC Rainsville pastor, family ‘feel blessed just to be alive’

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Mark and Wendy Whittaker picked through the rubble of their home April 28. Fellow church members from First Baptist Church, Rainsville, in DeKalb Baptist Association, assisted their church’s minister of music and youth in the cleanup.

The Whittaker’s home was among hundreds of homes and buildings destroyed or badly damaged when the April 27 tornadoes created a half-mile swath of destruction that extended from DeKalb County into Georgia. At press time, 35 fatalities, and more than 100 injuries, resulted from the storms in DeKalb County. The town of Rainsville appeared to have been the hardest hit community in DeKalb County.

The Whittakers were eating dinner at the home of friends when a tornado destroyed their house. “We feel fortunate that we had been invited to eat dinner at another home, otherwise, we would be dead,” Wendy said.

The Whittakers weren’t the only family from First, Rainsville, to lose their home. The home of deacon Eddie Garrett, and his wife, Daphne, received significant damage. Just moments before the tornado struck, the Garretts, and their two sons, had taken refuge in the storm shelter they had built less than eight years ago.

“Other people have lost everything. We feel blessed just to be alive,” Daphne whispered. Eddie agreed. “It’s just stuff,” he said.

Plainview High School and the DeKalb County Coliseum, both in Rainsville, also received severe



Photo courtesy of Terry Dean

FALLEN STEEPLE — New Bethel Baptist Church, Centre, suffers damage from the April 27 tornadoes that ravaged the state.

damage. At press time, DeKalb authorities were still in the process of searching houses and areas that were damaged, looking for people who may have been unaccounted for or trapped underneath rubble.

The day after the Rainsville tragedy, youth from First, Rainsville, provided food and drinks at the church for anyone needing it. Josh Clifton, a member of the church, said, “All this bad news just hasn’t sunk in yet.”

Twenty miles north in Valley Head, a tornado blew away the fellowship hall of Stamp Missionary Baptist Church, in Sand Mountain Baptist Association. Tornado damage was also reported in the DeKalb County communities of Henegar and Ider.

In nearby Cherokee County, the

major portion of the roof of New Bethel Baptist Church, Centre, a part of Cherokee Baptist Association, was blown off by the early morning straight-line winds April 27. “We will rebuild as quickly as we can,” said Brett Clements, the church’s pastor.

West of Centre, the Goshen community was ravaged by a tornado that touched down less than two miles from the site of a deadly twister on Palm Sunday in 1993.

Remarkably, only one person was injured in Cherokee County, although residents awoke on Thursday to the news they would be without electricity for up to 10 days due to a wind-destroyed Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) transmission line at the TVA’s nuclear plant at Widows Creek, near Stevenson.



Photo by Lindsey Robinson



Photo by Lindsey Robinson



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

FAMILIAR SIGHTS — Alabamians in the hardest hit areas have grown accustomed to seeing the National Guard and spray painted accounts on doors, but through it all they can ‘Have Faith in God.’

Wilcox World Travel & Tours

12-day tour ISRAEL & JORDAN

Hosted by
Dale and Lanelle Huff
Harold and Helen Hancock

October 29–November 9, 2011

\$4,199 round trip from Atlanta based on dbl occupancy.
Includes all taxes and surcharges, tips, breakfasts and dinners.

**For more information, call 334-365-9397 or
334-365-2351 or e-mail: lhuff@charter.net**



Leeds Stained Glass
Where Art and Love of God Intersect

Why purchase stained glass windows?

- To share the vision of your church
- To beautify your church sanctuary
- To honor parents and family members
- To provide a lasting tribute to your love of God, church, and family

For over 30 years...
Leeds Stained Glass has provided southeast churches with a variety of beautiful and professionally crafted stained glass windows.

**E-mail or call for a FREE,
NO-OBLIGATION consultation
on designs and pricing.**

Best regards,
Terry Barnes, Owner

info@LeedsStainedGlass.com • 1-888-699-9679
www.LeedsStainedGlass.com

Check out
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST
ONLINE
a new
E-EDITION

<http://online.thealabamabaptist.org>

REVIVALS WORSHIP CONFERENCES CHOIR RETREATS



Bruce Hill, former worship leader for Gardendale First Baptist Church, is available for revivals, worship conferences and choir retreats. Bruce has recently written a worship manual, "Rebuilding the Temple of Praise," that has been a tool to take your team to the next level of worship.

bruceahilljumper@yahoo.com • 205-296-6985

'TAKE YOUR TEAM TO THE NEXT LEVEL OF WORSHIP'

"Uncertain Economy Causes Families to Rethink 2011 Summer Vacations Plans"

FAMILIES ON MISSION

A MINISTRY OF

Shelby Baptist Association

P O Box 888 • 205 Walton Street

Columbiana, AL 35051

205.669.7858 • www.shelbybaptist.org



ENJOY

A THREE WORKDAY VACATION

ENJOY a family vacation while becoming a living example of servant leadership.

ENJOY sharing your faith, strengthening others' faith and win the lost to Christ.

ENJOY meeting others' needs.

ENJOY working with families with the same values and making new friendships.

ENJOY serving On Mission together with your family.

GO TO www.shelbybaptist.org (click on the Family on Mission logo) for details and application.

DEADLINE: MAY 31, 2011

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
Debbie Snyder, Ministries Development Director
p 205.669.7858 • e debbie@shelbybaptist.org

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

Last week I sat down at the kitchen table with a customer and her nephew who had driven up from Alabaster to assist his aunt. He was very familiar with the financial hardships his aunt has been going through since losing her husband. She asked, "Why don't I just take out a line of credit at the bank?" He explained those loans have to be paid back, but the reverse mortgage requires no monthly payments. She responded in a way that I've heard others respond, "Well, that's just too good to be true."

The fact of the matter is that it is true. No payments are required. Instead of getting an equity line of credit that has to be repaid, why not get a line of credit that doesn't require any monthly payments? Most of my customers have



Jimmy Dixon

a mortgage they want paid off, but I'm also running into folks who just need a little extra cash every once in a while. So regardless of whether you need a little or a lot, there's a reverse mortgage product for you. And remember, if you only need a little, interest accrues only on the amount you take out plus the fees that are rolled in.

If you want more information, a free brochure, quote or consultation, call me direct at 205-451-0676 or toll-free at 1-866-879-7775 or e-mail: jdixon@mcgowinking.net. Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, I cover our great state helping folks improve the quality of their lives. I am Bible study director, a children's church volunteer and Upwards coach at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.



— Paid Advertising —

Alabama

MAY SPECIAL: Buy a walk-in tub or shower, get any soap dish accessory and two grab bars FREE!

Veterans receive a \$500 discount

Safety Bath



60 percent of all household injuries are from getting in or out of the bathtub!

Alabama Safety Bath also provides walk-in safety tubs with hydro-therapy for arthritis, back problems, lupus, muscular dystrophy, fibromyalgia and aches and pains. "We also provide wheelchair accessible showers, so you can roll into them and out with ease. Our customers are always surprised and pleased to learn how affordable our prices are and how much we save them compared to other companies," he said.

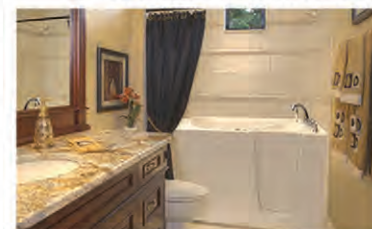


**Be Safer, Call Today
334-312-1825**

A division of Dream Baths of Alabama • www.dreambathsalabama.com

For Your Own Home or the Home of a Loved One, Alabama Safety Bath Provides a

Safe Environment for Your Bathrooms



Alabama Safety Bath Will Not Be Undersold!

Charlie and his family are longtime members of Camellia Baptist Church in Prattville. He loves working with our seniors across the state and guarantees affordability and value to all our seniors, because they deserve it most. Call Charlie and let him create a safer tomorrow for your loved ones today.

Visit our website, request a FREE estimate, www.alabamasafetybath.com



Photo by Jason Bergeron

DIRECT HIT — The Concord community in western Jefferson County was in the path of the tornado that came through the area April 27. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department initially closed off the site to everyone, including families who lived in the area. But on April 28 residents were allowed back in for a brief period of time.

Bessemer Assoc. churches help each other despite own damage

By Lindsey Robinson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Three Alabama Baptist churches in western Jefferson County were damaged by tornadoes and high winds that left much of the area in shambles April 27. But despite the damage to church buildings, a number of church groups reached out to storm victims by providing meals, water, clothing, basic necessities and even electricity.

In Hueytown, Concord Highland Baptist Church lay in the tornado's path and suffered extensive damage. Although the entrance to the sanctuary appears normal from the road, most of the facility is either gone or in shambles, according to church secretary Barbara Bowden. The roof is missing from most of the sanctuary. The church steeple

is missing. The piano is in splinters and the rest of the area is "extensively damaged."

In the kitchen below the sanctuary, Pastor Richard Larson said it looked like the wind had "sucked everything out."

The church's fellowship building was destroyed as was the church parsonage. The two families huddled in the basement of the parsonage, however, came out unscathed after the deadly winds had passed over.

Limited access

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department initially closed off the site to everyone, including families who lived in the area. But on April 28 residents were allowed back into the area for a brief period between 5 p.m. and sundown to survey the

damage and gather what belongings they could. Over the weekend, access was slowly restored.

At First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, where Daven Watkins is pastor, the tornado toppled the church steeple, blew shingles away and tore a hole through the roof of one of the children's buildings. Despite the damage, the church fed about 750 people April 28, volunteer Sherri McBee said.

"We've kind of quit counting but that's how many plates we've used," McBee said. "And they keep coming." Although the church had no electricity, they were able to cook hot dogs, mozzarella cheese sticks and spaghetti on their gas stove.

Earlier that morning Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla, was damaged by straight-line

winds, registering at 70-plus miles per hour.

According to Pastor Jonathan Reeves, the steeple was pulled down and as it fell, it cut into a three-inch water line, causing major damage to the music library, three nursery rooms, two Sunday School rooms and part of the sanctuary.

Helping other churches

Even with damage of its own, Tannehill Valley Baptist trained disaster relief volunteers were ready when they were deployed following the tornado damage nearby. The State Board of Missions shower unit trailer housed at the church also was deployed to assist the Pleasant Grove area.

Union Hill Baptist Church, Bessemer, pastor Mickey Bell said his church served about 2,000 meals April 28.

"If we're not going to open up our doors and feed people, we're not worthy to open our doors the other 51 weeks of the year," Bell declared.

In addition to feeding those who lost their homes or don't have elec-

tricity, Bell said the church is also feeding volunteers, fire and rescue workers and officials from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department who helped police the epicenter of the tornado's destruction in the area.

Bethel Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, also is providing food and supplies to storm victims.

Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, ran a free shuttle service for people who had to walk from police checkpoints to see the wreckage and to check on their homes and relatives. Church member Cindy Vanderlindin, who drove the shuttle, said trees and telephone poles were bent in half or hung from useless power lines along her route.

"If we don't lose a ton of people out of this, it will be a blessing," she said.

In addition, Cottage Hill Baptist also provided beds, meals, water, clothing and electrical outlets for people to charge their cellphones in order to contact loved ones.

Pastor Jerry Sherrell said, "We're a small church but we're trying to help the best we can."



Smoky Mountain Christian Village
Serving Through Hospitality

Welcoming Christian families, youth groups, couples and ministerial retreats and any who need to enjoy a relaxing vacation, SMCV offers exceptional accommodations and much more. Check out our website for sponsored events and camps that are tailored to build a closer walk with our Lord. Come see the opportunities that the Lord has given us.

Sincerely,
Smoky Mountain Christian Village

facebook

For more information visit our website at
www.tsmcv.org or call 1-866-997-5454



Photo by Jason Bergeron

IN SHAMBLES — Concord Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown, suffers from extensive damage following the April 27 tornado that ripped through the area.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 8

Explore the Bible

By Cecil Taylor
Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

KEEPING THE TRUTH
Colossians 2:8-23

In this section, Paul trained his guns on the “Colossian heresy” to which he earlier alluded. Actually what is known of this heresy comes from data mentioned in these verses. Clues to the heresy’s nature come in the form of warnings against certain of its components.

False Philosophy (8-15)

First he warned against being taken “captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.” “Takes you captive” describes a vigorous abduction, i.e., kidnapping. Those who peddled their heresy in Colossae were men-stealers who wanted to seize the Colossians and drag them away into spiritual slavery. In the ancient world, “philosophy,” literally “love of wisdom,” had to do with ideas about God, the world and the meaning of life. Paul’s words did not condemn all philosophy. “Hollow and deceptive” philosophy was the problem.

Three other phrases characterized this system. First it depended on “human tradition.” These, not divine revelation, formed the basis of the philosophy taught by the errorists at Colossae. Second it rested on “the basic principles of this world.” The term translated “basic principles” (“stoicheia”) had multiple meanings but here probably meant “the elemental spirits” of the world, i.e., angels and demons. Probably Paul meant the false philosophy had the elemental spirits as its subject matter (cf Col. 2:18). Third this system was not based “on Christ.” The heretics’ teaching did not match up with the truth revealed in Christ. No system can stand unless it conforms to the revelation God gave in Him.

Paul’s warnings grew from the facts of Christ’s unshared supremacy (9) and His complete adequacy (10-15).

The fullness of deity makes its home in Christ “bodily.” “In Christ,” i.e., in union with Christ, believers are “made full.” In Him, every spiritual need is met. He is the head over all that exists. There is no need to turn to any other source for anything.

Three things come to the person “in Christ.” First he or she has true circumcision, a mark

not in the body but on the heart. Second he or she has forgiveness of sins. “My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross.” Third he or she has victory over the forces of evil.

Legalism (16-17)

“What you eat or drink” probably referred to the food rules of the law of Moses, i.e., clean and unclean. “A religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day” surely pointed to annual, monthly and weekly Jewish holy days. Some in Colossae tried to force these observances on Christians. Paul declared Christians free from all such obligations. These legal stipulations were but “shadows” of the reality that came in Christ. There was no need for the Colossians to be bound by them.

Angel Worship (18-19)

These verses are puzzling but the ideas seem clear. Through fake humility and harping on “what he has seen,” perhaps “visions,” false teachers led Colossians into angel worship. All the while, they “lost connection with the Head (Christ).” Lacking vital contact with Christ, the errorists lacked life and could not help the church grow.

Asceticism (20-23)

Ascetics believe the body is evil. A believer must treat the body as an enemy, punishing and abusing it in the interest of nourishing the spirit/soul. At times, this called for denying the body food and rest. The ascetic spirit led some to demean marriage and even normal human contact (e.g., monks in a monastic order who do not marry, have no contact with the outside world and even abstain from speaking to each other).

It is not clear exactly what forms asceticism took at Colossae, but Paul urged Christians there to reject it as a way of life. He offered three reasons. First, having “died” to the world, a believer must not permit life to become again a round of rules. Second these rules are founded not on divine revelation but are strictly human in origin. Third punishing the body to the maximum cannot rid the heart of lust and sin.

Bible Studies for Life

By M. Sydney Park
Assistant Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

USE YOUR INFLUENCE
Esther 4:13-17; 8:3-8

Esther’s story takes place during the Babylonian Captivity of the Jewish people in fifth century B.C. Mordecai, along with his uncle’s daughter Esther (Hadassah), was a captive under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (Esther 2:5-7). Esther, along with Ezra and Nehemiah, focuses on Jewish history in Persia. And during Mordecai’s and Esther’s time in Persia, the king was Xerxes (Ahasuerus).

Recognize Your God-given Potential for Influence (4:13-14)

The Book of Esther begins with an account of a lengthy festivity (180 days) hosted by Xerxes with all the nobles and servants of his vast kingdom (1:1-5). The setting is luxurious (1:6) and overflowing with the king’s generosity (1:7-9). However, this festive and generous spirit quickly evaporated as his request for the presence of Queen Vashti was willfully denied (1:10-12). She was dethroned lest women of the entire kingdom should follow her example and rebel against their husbands (1:13-22). The vacancy left by Vashti became a fortuitous event that led to Esther’s appointment as queen (2:17). From this place of influence, with information from Mordecai, Esther helped uncover treason against the king (2:19-23).

After these events, when Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman elevated by Xerxes to the highest place in his kingdom, Haman sought to destroy not only Mordecai but also all Jews (3:1-6). Fueled by the sting of Mordecai’s slight, Haman directed Xerxes’ attention to the Jewish singularity of keeping no other laws aside from God’s as a potential threat to his rule and, with the price of 10,000 talents, secured a royal decree for genocide of the Jews (3:5-11). With the news of this decree, Mordecai entreated Esther to go before the king and beg for the Jews’ lives (4:8). Yet this request left Esther in a predicament; to appear before the king unsolicited was to risk certain death unless favorably received by him (4:11). Nevertheless Mordecai’s re-

sponse to Esther’s dilemma was not an indulgence to her plight; she was neither exempt from genocide nor shame of a coward. And with the promise of support from her fellow Jews (fasting for three days and nights), she resolved: “If I perish, I perish” (4:16). Given Esther’s auspicious position as queen, she had a clear opportunity to exert influence for not simply good but her people’s salvation. And despite the fact that God is not mentioned once in Esther, it can be safely assumed that her appointment as queen was tied to His protection of Israel’s remnant. Esther’s influence extended specifically to the Gentiles. Esther serves as an example for modern-day believers of faithful service within the context of a secular world. She not only brought testimony of submission (cf 1 Pet. 3:1-2) but acted to positively influence the secular rulers for the salvation of God’s people. Are there Esthers bold enough to risk even their lives in an environment hostile to Christians? And can modern-day believers diligently pursue godly influence and testimony without knowing the outcome?

Recognize That God Is the Ultimate Influencer (4:15-17)

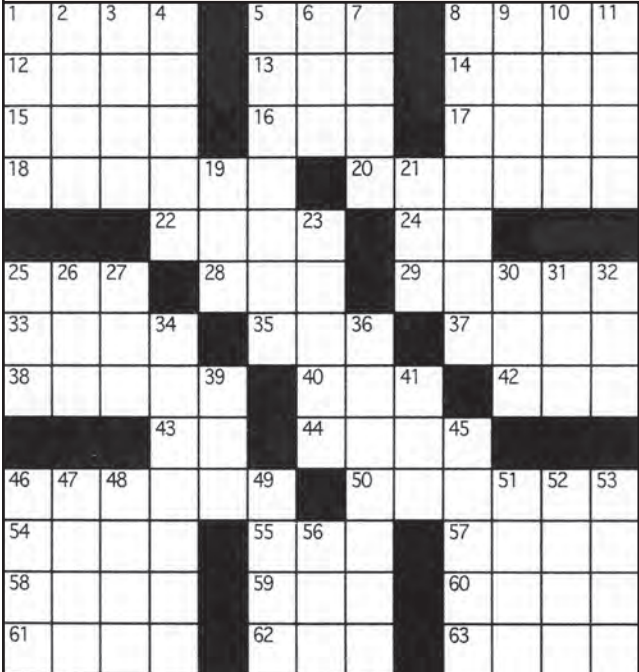
Despite the fact that God is never explicitly mentioned in Esther, the fact that the Jews fast for three days and nights indicates that they were fully aware their actions alone could not save. Esther’s story merges human responsibility with divine sovereignty. And most encouraging in this story is not simply Esther’s bravery but the support of all Jews for her.

Use Your Influence in Godly Ways (8:3-8)

And with her people’s support, Esther approached the king in humility and submission (3). If indeed it was divine providence that led Esther to her esteemed position, then she acted accordingly with humility and not arrogance. Esther serves as a challenge to modern-day believers, not only to rise from apathy in the secular world and decline the easy path of flight from unbelievers but also to continue that godly testimony with righteous deeds and character.

Christian Crossword

Copyright 1997 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



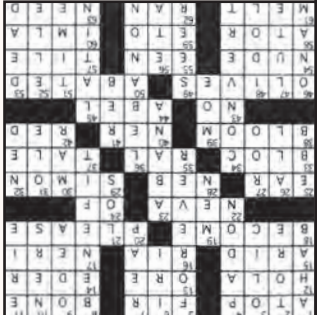
Across

- At the peak.
- “As for the stork, the _____ trees are her home.” (Ps. 104:17)
- “This is now _____ of my bones.” (Gen. 2:22)
- Hawaiian herb.
- Mine product.
- “The sons of Mushi: Mahli, and _____.” (1 Chron. 23:23)
- “... my flesh longeth for thee in a _____ and thirsty land.” (Ps. 63:1)
- Long, narrow inlet.
- “Son of Salathiel which was the son of _____.” (Luke 3:27)
- “Behold, the man is _____ as one of us.” (Gen. 3:22)
- “So then they that are in the flesh cannot _____ God.” (Rom. 8:8)
- Leningrad’s river.
- Preposition.
- What Malchus lost. (John 18:10)
- Bird’s beak.
- “He lodgeth with one _____ a tanner.” (Acts 10:6)
- Political group.
- N.C. capital.
- “We spend our years as a _____ that is told.” (Ps. 90:9)

Down

- Healthy glow.
- “Abner, the son of _____.” (1 Sam. 14:50)
- “And the first came out _____ all over.” (Gen. 25:25)
- Continent. (abbr.)
- “_____ was a keeper of sheep.” (Gen. 4:2)
- Mount of _____.
- “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force _____.” (Deut. 34:7)
- Uncovered.
- Even. (poet.)
- Piece in a game.
- One who does. (suffix)
- WWII arena.
- “The same is Micaiah, the son of _____.” (2 Chron. 18:7)
- “The elements shall _____ with fervent heat.” (2 Pet. 3:12)
- Went through a stop sign.
- “They that are whole have no _____ of the physician.” (Mark 2:17)
- children of _____.” (Neh. 7:47)
- “The kingdom, the power, and the glory _____.” (Matt. 6:13)
- “The sons of Bela: ... Uzziel, Jerimoth and _____.” (1 Chron. 7:7)
- “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also _____.” (Gal. 4:7)
- “Faithful and beloved partakers of the _____.” (1 Tim. 6:2)
- Ancient Greek auditoriums.
- Belonging to the father of Abner. (1 Sam. 14:50)
- Great Lake.
- Promise Keepers.
- _____ Alamos.
- A river of Damascus. (2 Kings 5:12)
- Wane.
- “As thou hast given him power over _____ flesh.” (John 17:2)
- One of Winnie-the-Pooh’s friends.
- Disfigure.
- Corrida cheer.
- Masculine name.
- “If any of you do err from the truth, and one _____ him.” (James 5:19)
- “A well of living water and

- streams from _____.” (Song of Sol. 4:15)
- Feminine name.
- Johnny _____.
- Language of ancient Rome.
- “And the children of Shobal ... Shepho and _____.” (Gen. 36:23)
- Ancient stringed instrument.
- “Is this man Coniah a despised broken _____?” (Jer. 22:28)
- “He that is now called a Prophet was ... a _____.” (1 Sam. 9:9)
- “A _____ to be born.” (Eccles. 3:2)
- She. (Fr.)
- “Even God who quickeneth the _____.” (Rom. 4:17)
- Greek letter.



— OPINION —

‘God cares for us like a mother’

Understanding biblical analogies can help teach about relationships between mothers, children

By Bob Terry
The Alabama Baptist

Christians freely confess that God created all things. Sometimes, however, our minds think about material things when we reference God as Creator. Yet the Bible says, “All things were created by Him,” referring to Jesus as God’s creative power. That includes the family pattern that all living things have a mother and a father. This family pattern goes beyond the human species to species of every kind. Family is clearly a pattern created by God.

While we may not be able to explain all the reasons God created family, it is clear that He desires humanity to learn what He is like as people grow up in healthy Christian families and observe such families at work.

‘Neither male nor female’

Of course, the Bible regularly refers to God as Father. Even the biblical pronouns referencing God are always in the male gender. That is why most Christians today continue to use the masculine to reference God.

But God is not male or female. The Old Testament is clear in its teaching that God is not a man (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Hos. 11:9). These references are understood as God not being a human being — neither male nor female. Jesus made the same point to the Samaritan woman in John 4:24 when He declared, “God is spirit and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

God is the perfect fulfillment of both genders for both male and female are created in His image (Gen. 1:27).

In both the Old and New testaments, one reads numerous references to God in the role of a mother. Each usage is an analogy. Most of the time, the analogy is to a human mother. Sometimes it is to another

species, a mother eagle for example.

Understanding the roles of mothers in godly families can help us understand more about God.

One analogy is to the birthing process. Deuteronomy 32:18 acknowledges that God gave birth to Israel. The passage refers to the “Rock” as the Father and God giving birth. The verse teaches Israel existed because of God’s initiative just as salvation is available today because God took the initiative.

The process of birthing a “people of God” was not an easy task. Isaiah 42:14 pictures God as a woman in labor. For a time, the woman is quiet. The verse describes God as “being quiet” and “holding myself back.” But in labor, she fights for the birth of her child. God said, “Now like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant.”

The passage concludes with God saying, “These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them” (v. 16).

A mother may struggle to bring life into the world, but the struggle is not for her benefit. All of the effort, all of the pain is to give her child the opportunity for life. Providing that opportunity is worth all the suffering a mother must endure. Even so, God endures the pain of rejection and rebellion in order to bring humanity the opportunity to become His children.

All of her life, a mother will feel differently toward her own child than toward any other. That analogy is expressed in Isaiah 49:15, where God asked, “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?”

Omniscient God

Then He answers that rhetorical question, declaring, “I will not forget you.” God knows those who have become His children through faith in Jesus just as a mother knows her child.

Celebrate

Mother’s Day Sunday, May 8

“God takes the initiative to make salvation possible just like a woman giving birth. God fights for us just like a woman in labor fights for her child to be born. God provides for our needs just like a mother nursing her baby. God knows us and never abandons us because we are His children. God cares for us like a mother comforting her child.” — Bob Terry



sxc.hu, graphic by Lauren Chow

Every new mother knows the demands of feeding a newborn. It can seem unending and all-consuming. That metaphor is used by the prophet Hosea to illustrate God’s love for Israel. God said, “I bent down to feed you.” The verse also talks about the love and kindness God poured out on Israel since its birth just as a godly mother surrounds her baby with warmth and affection.

In the closing verses of Isaiah, God said, “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you” (Isa. 66:13). One can almost see a mother holding a crying child across her shoulder as she soothes whatever hurt it is that has upset him or her. That is what God does for His children. He holds us close. He comforts us, just as our mothers did.

Think about these lessons. God

takes the initiative to make salvation possible just like a woman giving birth. God fights for us just like a woman in labor fights for her child to be born. God provides for our needs just like a mother nursing her baby. God knows us and never abandons us because we are His children. God cares for us like a mother comforting her child. All of these experiences cause us to trust God and look to Him for strength and guidance.

Again there is an analogy that illustrates the point. In Psalm 123:2–3, the Psalmist wrote, “As the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God till He shows us His mercy.”

Just as the servant girl was dependent on the mistress for her welfare, so are Christians dependent on God. And just as the mistress of the

house could be trusted to provide for the servant, so God can be trusted to provide for us. That is why we look to Him “till He shows us His mercy.” It will happen.

Teaching power

The apostle Paul understood the teaching power of these family analogies. That is why he wrote to the Galatians that “I am again in childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19).

The analogies are powerful and beautiful. They teach lessons about God drawn from the experiences of godly women living in families.

When we understand them, they teach us more about God. It is only appropriate that on Mother’s Day, we stop and say thank you to the women who have taught us such valuable lessons.

Are you going through life reactively or proactively?

Living reactively is like the familiar saying “I’m just keeping my head above water.” You are not in charge of your day. You go to work and the “to do” list is long. You spend your day trying to complete tasks so you can check them off.

I have a son who is entering his teenage years. Sometimes I believe I have spent our family time just getting to activities, being at church and helping finish homework. I wonder if I have taught him what he needs to know as he enters this new stage of life. I need more time.

Conversely living proactively is being in charge of your day. It is being able to handle the demands at hand but still finding time to address the big things. It is developing new projects. Proactive living is taking the time to

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



identify what is coming and planning for it.

Think of how Jesus lived. He was surrounded by need. The Scripture tells us Jesus had to have time to be alone and away from people’s demands. Still Jesus knew He would be leaving this world. So He taught the disciples, pre-

paring them for His departure. He knew what was coming and planned for it, even while surrounded by constant demands.

What makes the difference? How do you go from reacting to everything to living proactively when the everyday demands are not going away?

Maybe the secret is not waiting for a time when all the demands and “to do” lists disappear. Maybe it is not waiting until we have more time.

Perhaps the secret to living proactively is disciplining ourselves to set aside a consistent period of time to plan for the future. If you are most aware in the mornings, then set aside some time one morning a week to plan and work on what is coming. If the afternoons are more productive for you, then deal with new

things then. Just be consistent and disciplined about it.

Turn the e-mail off. Do not answer your phone. Turn the TV off and go to a quieter place to think and work. Then do that work or new thing first.

The Bible never says this, but it seems reasonable that when Jesus was spending time in prayer alone, He may have been talking with God about how to prepare the disciples and proactively accomplish God’s will in the remaining time.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Taking time out of my busyness to plan for the future can empower me to be proactive in my work and life.



NAMB photo

'INCREDIBLE ACCESS TO THE COMMUNITY' — North American Mission Board missionary Jim Turnbo (left), director of missions for the Western and Mountain Baptist Associations in Grants, N.M., and Jack Foster, one of his missions volunteers, discuss a future project in Rock Springs, N.M.

Canned programs out

Diversity, vastness in N.M. requires customized resources

When I am watching my pastors be effective for the Lord, and they're drawing attention to the Lord and nobody knows who Jim Turnbo is, but they see God blessing in that church, that's what gets me going like nothing else." So said Jim Turnbo.

His humility and servant-spirit notwithstanding, Turnbo's "people" — the Native American, Hispanic, African American and Anglo Southern Baptists of western New Mexico — know who Turnbo is and what he is about.

While his official title is director of missions for the Mountain and Western Baptist Associations, Turnbo, 48, is first and foremost a church planter, jointly funded by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the Baptist Convention of New Mexico. When he's not planting new churches,

he's a loving gardener tending established churches, ensuring their continued healthy growth. And in his "spare" time, Turnbo is a coach, developing a cadre of disciplined leaders among Baptist pastors and laypeople in New Mexico.

His ministry in New Mexico is sort of a fulfilled prophecy. One of his mentors once told Turnbo — a young pastor at the time — "Jim, there will come a time when God turns your attention from building your own ministry to helping others build theirs." Two years ago, he

began doing just that in the "Land of Enchantment."

The cities in Turnbo's two associations are few and far between. There's Gallup with some 20,000 inhabitants, located on I-40 almost at the Arizona state line; Grants (pop. 9,000), where Jim and his wife, Karen, live, about halfway between Gallup and Albuquerque; and Socorro and its 9,000 residents, due south of Albuquerque.

With New Mexico's vast deserts, mountains, mesas and small communities — the state conjures up visions of the Old West. To the north of Turnbo are the Native Americans — the Navajo Nation and the Laguna, Acoma and Zuni Pueblos. To his south are the Anglos, including the cowboy culture.

"Eighty percent of our people are in the open country ... so you have isolated, relatively small communities," Turnbo said. "But each pocket of people deserves the gospel and so that's what we're here for."

"We have a mission field of 90 percent lostness among the people groups identified in the four counties. These are folks who need the gospel but they're not in large cities or glamorous locations. Most of them are in isolated pockets in communities that can never support a full-time church. God has placed a core group of Christians here as His instruments for getting the gospel to them."

Turnbo supports 25 churches, and only four of them have full-time pastors with seminary training. The other 21 are served by bivocational staff, many of whom are "home-grown," indigenous lay leaders Turnbo himself has developed and coached.

Focused on relationships

"Developing leadership and raising the level of lay leaders is one of our major priorities, especially with our Native Americans. We have to be about going where the churches are. We can't just have a meeting and say 'y'all come.' We have to be more relational."

Turnbo says the state's diversity — along with the geographic size of his mission field — is a big challenge.

With a population density of only 16 persons per square mile, New Mexico is the sixth-most sparsely inhabited state in the Union. Some of the churches Turnbo supports are 400 miles apart.

In addition to the Native Americans and Anglos, Turnbo's mission field includes a large percentage of Hispanics and African Americans.

"This incredible diversity of people groups in a spread-out geography of a vast territory means you just can't take a program off the shelf and apply it to every one of our churches," Turnbo said. "You have to do customized assessment and help our churches where they're at."

Karen supports her husband as his ministry assistant, a Vacation Bible School coordinator, music leader and as a mentor for other pastors' wives. The Turnbos have three children. (NAMB)

"Each pocket of people deserves the gospel and so that's what we are here for."

Jim Turnbo
NAMB missionary

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

N.Y. minister named religious freedom ambassador

WASHINGTON — A New York minister will soon fill the Obama administration's long-vacant position to oversee international religious freedom after the Senate voted to confirm Suzan Johnson Cook for the post.

The April 14 voice vote positions Cook to become the first female and the first African-American in the post after a lengthy and controversial nomination process.

Cook declined further comment until after she is sworn in.

Cook was nominated last June but her nomination stalled in the Senate and expired in December. Despite concerns she might not have enough diplomatic experience, Cook was re-nominated in February and appeared at a second nomination hearing in late March.

The Baptist minister known as "Dr. Sujay" retired in 2009 as pastor of Bronx Christian Fellowship Church, which she founded in 1996.

She was the first woman elected to lead the prominent Hampton University Minister's Conference of black clergy.

During hearings, she cited her travels and interfaith work on five continents and her experience as a New York police chaplain as qualifications for the ambassadorial post.

Oklahoma 4th state to ban pain-capable abortion

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma has become the fourth state — and third state this year — to enact a ban on abortions of unborn babies who ostensibly are able to feel pain.

Gov. Mary Fallin, a Republican, signed the Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act into law April 20.

The measure prohibits abortions after 20 weeks of gestation based on scientific evidence a baby in the womb experiences pain by that point.

Fallin also signed legislation that prohibits health insurance policies in the state from covering elective abortions.

Oklahoma joined Idaho and Kansas in adopting pain-capable abortion bans this year. Nebraska became the first state to enact such a law when it passed the Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act in 2010.

The pain-capable approach tightens the restriction on late-term abortions.

The model legislation, which was drafted by the National Right to Life Committee, sets the benchmark earlier than one based on fetal viability, which can be 22 to 24 weeks.

New Idaho law bans physician-assisted suicide

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter signed into law April 4 a ban on physician-assisted suicide. Idaho's outlawing of assisted suicide broke a pattern in the northwest United States and blocked what pro-lifers described as an attempt to spread the practice into another state.

Voters in both Oregon and Washington have legalized assisted suicide in their states.

In 2009, the Montana Supreme Court ruled assisted suicide does not oppose public policy and provided doctors who assist in suicides with a defense against prosecution. Charmaine Yoest, president of Americans United for Life, said the Idaho Legislature "prevented a deliberate effort to create a 'right' to assisted suicide in Idaho."

The gracious and compassionate response of a people to their elderly, ill and disabled is to improve their quality of life, not end their lives." In March, the Idaho House of Representatives passed the ban in a 61-8 vote, while the Senate voted 31-2 for the measure.

Medicinal marijuana survives repeal in Montana

HELENA, Mont. — Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer, a Democrat, vetoed a bill April 13 that would have repealed the state's medicinal marijuana law, which has been criticized by both sides of the issue for its loopholes.

For instance, between 2008 and 2010, the number of citizens registered to use medicinal marijuana jumped from 842 to nearly 20,000, The Associated Press reported. Also, 25 percent of medicinal marijuana users in Montana are between the ages of 21 and 30, AP said. Schweitzer said he would rather see the law fixed than repealed.

The legislature is working on a separate bill that would make changes to the law without overturning it.