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# 'God's Word spoken'

## Bible reading marathons across state impact readers, listeners

By Neisha Fuson  
The Alabama Baptist

The woman from Pleasant Grove lost everything in the April 27 tornado outbreak, but she didn't let that keep her from taking her allotted time at the podium during the May 1-5 Birmingham Bible Reading Marathon. Tears streamed down her face as she read for 15 minutes.

Another woman paused and wept as she read Peter's statement of "No, Lord, you will never wash my feet."

The girl with spina bifida amazed onlookers as she painstakingly made her way up 23 steps for her time slot and stood as she read God's Word.

Story after story like these were told following events featuring about 90 consecutive hours of Bible reading held in several cities in Alabama as well as across the nation, including Washington, which hosted the 22nd annual U.S. Capitol Bible Reading Marathon. The marathons concluded on the National Day of Prayer on May 5. This year marked the 60th anniversary of the day of prayer.

Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, asked Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham, to host the first Bible reading marathon in the Birmingham area.

It just so happens that the church is celebrating an anniversary of its own.

"It's the 100th anniversary of [Southside Baptist's] sanctuary this year. ... It's a beautiful place to stand to [read the Bible]," Senior Pastor J. Stephen Jones said.

Anyone who wanted to was welcome to participate by reading or simply listening. Volunteers read through the entire Bible and began again with the Gospels and Psalms, ending with Psalm 111 and a corporate prayer.

"We're not screaming [the reading of the Bible] out ... but it's a powerful image for the community and our church," Jones said during the event. "God's Word spoken out into the world and marketplace is an important part of being faithful to the Scriptures. I think it's going to mean



Photo by Neisha Fuson

**READ ALOUD** — Abby Harris, a student at Palmerdale Christian School in Trussville, reads from the Book of Psalms at the Bible reading marathon held at Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham, on the National Day of Prayer on May 5.

almost as much for the readers as it is for the listeners."

Sheila Wright, a member of Liberty Park Baptist, said she expected to see adults, reading-aged children, community leaders, church groups and other organizations attend and read the Bible and she saw just that. But she also saw joggers who paused to listen, people in cars driving by who stopped to listen for a little while and several homeless people who sat on the church's steps to lis-

ten. Some of the homeless people even volunteered to read when there was an open slot, often in the middle of the night.

### Various groups represented

There was a variety of denominations and religious groups represented: Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Church of Christ, Messianic Jew and nondenominational, Wright said.

Ninfa Austin, also a member of Liberty Park Baptist who helped or-

ganize and manage the marathon, said the Bible was read in English, Swahili and Korean.

More Than Conquerors Faith Church in Birmingham partnered with the two Birmingham Baptist Association churches to sponsor the event that continued through rain and heat.

"We may never know the impact that the reading and hearing of God's Word may have on an individual's (See 'Troy,' page 3)

## Michigan Baptists demonstrate partnership

By Melanie Smith  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Don Bezeau was sawing up downed trees in Harvest following the April 27 tornado outbreak, he met a skeptical resident. The man questioned Bezeau about a logo on a disaster relief vehicle.

"He said, 'Southern Baptists from Michigan?'" Bezeau quoted.

He is a Southern Baptist who helped lead a 17-member disaster relief team from the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM). Most team mem-

(See 'Chain saw,' page 5)



Don Bezeau, a member of a disaster relief team from the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, helps clear the yards of grateful homeowners.

Photo by Doug Rogers

# COMMENT

## An Important Time for Southern Baptists

For ministries that Southern Baptists do together, the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is an important time. There each entity must give an account of its faithfulness to the tasks assigned it by messengers and share how God is working through it.

The annual meeting provides opportunity for messengers from across the United States to express their judgments about the various ministries, choose those who will oversee the work of each ministry as directors and trustees and express their collective views about issues facing Southern Baptists and the nation.

The annual meeting is primarily a business time filled with reports, resolutions, motions and elections. Without this work, the SBC could not function.

When Southern Baptists gather in Phoenix June 14–15 for this year's annual meeting, it is possible that this important work will be left to the fewest number of messengers to attend an annual meeting since the close of World War II.

In 2003, when the SBC last met in Phoenix, the official registration totaled 7,077, the lowest number of messengers since 1951 when 6,493 messengers gathered in San Francisco.

Over the last decade, attendance has been under 10,000 seven times. Last year, in Orlando, Fla., controversy over the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force's report and the election of a new convention president helped push registration over the 10,000 mark. This year, no issue has captured Southern Baptists' attention in such a way. The primary business item may be a report from the Executive Committee about how to proactively involve ethnics in convention leadership.

And Bryant Wright, senior pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga., is expected to be elected to a second one-year term as president without opposition.

For those who like annual meetings filled with tension, debate and disagreements, this one is likely to be rather boring.

Perhaps that is why Wright and other convention planners have made several changes in the program. Chief among them are missionary appointment services by both the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board. Missions is the heartbeat of Southern Baptists, and by having an appointment service as the final item each day, it is hoped that messengers will be inspired and encouraged about what God is doing through the SBC.



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Another change is eliminating evening sessions. What used to take Southern Baptists three full days to do now will be done in four sessions, totaling about 15 hours. Planners hope that having evenings free each day will keep messengers focused on convention business during the daytime sessions.

What has not changed is completing most of the major business items on the first day: adopting the annual budget, electing the president and approving nominees for various boards, commissions and agencies.

### Facing challenges

Still it is questionable whether these revisions can overcome the challenges faced by any group's annual convention this year. Phoenix is a long way from the numerical strength of Southern Baptists. Even though the Phoenix-Tucson corridor has about 5.2 million people, the number of Southern Baptists in all of Arizona is about 85,000, less than the number of Southern Baptists in Mobile and Baldwin Baptist associations combined.

Given the economic recession, many will have to bypass this year's annual meeting no matter where it is held. Church receipts are such that only absolutely necessary expenses are being incurred, and some church members may not include conference and convention expenses as absolutely necessary. Too, the lack of major issues may cause some to conclude that attending this year's annual meeting is not a necessity.

In Alabama, the impact of the April 27 tornadoes will shave back the number of messengers from cooperating churches who travel to Phoenix for the convention.

No matter how many attend, Alabama Baptists will be well-represented on the program. David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, has the honor of preaching the convention sermon. Jason Breland, worship pastor of First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland, will lead worship in all four sessions. He will be joined by the worship band of First, North Mobile.

In an unusual twist, Alabama Baptist evangelist Bob Pitman will preach during the SBC Pastors Conference. While Pitman always delivers a powerful sermon, what makes this unusual is that the

president of this year's Pastors Conference is his son Vance, senior pastor of Hope Baptist Church, Las Vegas.


Of course, several members of Alabama Baptist churches will be on the program of the national Woman's Missionary Union missions celebration and annual meeting since the national office of that missions organization is located in the Birmingham area.

Perhaps it is the upcoming report on involving ethnics in convention leadership that caused this writer to notice the ethnic fellowships meeting in connection with the SBC annual meeting. They are the National African American Fellowship, the Filipino Southern Baptist Fellowship of North America, the Fellowship of Native American Christians and the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship.

Among other ethnic groups with which Southern Baptists cooperate are conventions of Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Romanian and Russian Baptists. There are other growing groups representing Baptists from various African countries, including Arab countries, and others.

Southern Baptists are the most diverse evangelical convention in terms of number of ethnic participants and ethnic groups included. Perhaps it is time for proactive efforts to make sure the rich heritage they bring to SBC life is reflected in leadership roles.

This week's issue of *The Alabama Baptist* provides a preview of this year's annual meeting (see pages 11–14). If you plan to attend, then the preview will be a valuable resource for you. If you are unable to attend, then the preview can be a prayer guide as you lift up this important time when Southern Baptists gather to affirm the convention's corporate direction for the coming year.



**THE ALABAMA BAPTIST**

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

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Photo by Neisha Fuson

**PRAYER** — Ninfa Austin (center) and Sheila Wright (right) of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, pray alongside others from the Birmingham area at the conclusion of the Birmingham Bible Reading Marathon.

## Troy, Ozark hold Bible reading marathons

(continued from page 1)

heart and life, but we are trusting God that it will (have an impact)," Wright said.

In the Wiregrass section of the state, Salem-Troy Baptist Association sponsored the fifth Bible reading marathon in Troy.

"We look at it as glorifying God," Director of Missions Averyt Walker said. "[God] said if His Word goes out, it will not return void, and that's the promise we are claiming."

Judy Stephens, the associational Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) director, helped organize the marathon in which Methodist, Pentecostal, Mormon and Baptist churches were represented.

Stephens also noted that the city helped make the event possible by providing a sound

system, tent, chairs and other items.

And for the eighth year, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Ozark, hosted a marathon at the steps of the Dale County Courthouse in Ozark, which concluded with a message by Kenneth Hale, director of missions for Dale Baptist Association.

Wilma Hart, WMU director for Dale Association and a member of Pleasant Grove Baptist, said 13 churches from the association participated as well as churches from nine other denominations.

After participating in the marathon for seven years, Hart has seen the impact that comes from God's Word being proclaimed publicly.

"You don't leave [the event] the same person," she said. "It's too tremendous."

*"[God] said if His Word goes out, it will not return void, and that's the promise we are claiming."*

Averyt Walker  
Salem-Troy Association

# Faithful to serve

## Church planter dreams big for South Roebuck area

By John Evans  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Pastor Jerome Bell leads a small congregation at South Roebuck Community Church — his wife, Hope, and daughter, Iman.

But Bell, who took the helm of the new church plant in March, has anything but small dreams for its future. He hopes to one day lead a congregation that serves as a model for racial harmony among believers.

"I know in my heart that God has called me to lead this congregation to be a house of prayer for all people," Bell said.

The church is being planted by South Roebuck Baptist Church (SRBC) in response to the area's shifting demographics. While the South Roebuck area was once predominantly white, it is now transitioning, with an influx of young black families seeking better schools for their children, Senior Pastor Chris Crain said.

The Birmingham Baptist Association church's mostly elderly, white congregation worships in a traditional style that has not been effective in reaching either the area's black residents or younger generations more interested in contemporary worship.

"Basically what we feared as we were developing this (church-planting) plan was that if we did nothing ... and kept on existing as we were existing here at SRBC, eventually this congregation we have here now would pass away and leave a spiritual vacuum in this community," Crain said.

To avoid the fate of other traditional churches that have closed their doors, in 2005, South Roebuck Baptist's members approved a plan to plant two churches that would form a "community of ministries." The church plants, while meeting as separate congregations, would still technically be part of SRBC, sharing resources and staff.

In 2007, the church sent 16 members to start North Valley Church in Margaret, designed around a contemporary style of worship with children and younger adults in mind. Next it decided to plant South Roebuck Community Church to better minister among the area's cultural diversity.

In October 2010, South Roebuck Baptist called Bell, who had previously served as pastor of a multiethnic church in Albuquerque, N.M., and served on staff with Huffman Baptist Church,



Photo by Neisha Fuson

**'GOD HAS CALLED ME'** — Jerome Bell, pastor of South Roebuck Community Church, hopes to one day lead a congregation that serves as a model for racial harmony among believers.

to head its second church plant.

"We wanted someone who has flexibility and love for all people, not to mention superior expository preaching skills," Crain said. "That, for us, was the No. 1 criteria, that this church planter had to be someone who did not preach politics or personal opinion but preached the Bible faithfully, and we found that to be true concerning Jerome."

*"He's well-qualified, well-trained, well-connected in terms of the black community and well-respected."*

Mike McLemore  
Birmingham Association

While Bell doesn't have a core group of families with which to start, he can count on support from Baptist organizations, including Birmingham Association, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and the North American Mission Board.

Furthermore SRBC is pouring itself into the effort, helping to provide his salary and conduct community outreach events to spread the word. The church also runs a day care where many of the families Bell hopes to reach drop off their children.

"I have a lot of positives on my side right now because of the prayerful vision of South Roebuck (Baptist) and leadership of Pastor Chris," he said.

Bell spends his time doing what he loves: building relationships and

sharing God's Word with the community. He hopes the Lord will draw a group of committed believers to meet for weekly Bible study — the beginnings of a church.

"I pray that He brings me in the right path with people who He wants to be a part of this vision of creating a house of prayer for all people, that when they hear what we're desiring to do, there's a compelling desire God births inside of them to be part of the work," Bell said.

Crain looks forward to South Roebuck Community not being a strictly black church but embracing all cultures. It's a vision Bell wholeheartedly supports, pointing to the church in Antioch in Acts 13 that included a diverse group of leaders.

Mike McLemore, executive director for Birmingham Association, has high hopes for South Roebuck Community and nothing but praise for Bell.

### 'Burdenous joy'

"He's well-qualified, well-trained, well-connected in terms of the black community and well-respected," McLemore said.

Bell, who calls his work a "burdenous joy," feels privileged to be given the task.

"Even though I may feel some of the stress at times, ultimately it's a joy knowing God has counted me faithful to be the one to serve in this season with my family."

## Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving  
Year to Date through April 30, 2011

**APRIL**  
CP Challenge Budget Goal .....\$3,641,666  
CP Challenge Budget Gifts .....\$3,417,233  
Under Goal for Month .....\$224,433

**YEAR TO DATE**  
CP Challenge Budget Goal .....\$14,566,664  
CP Challenge Budget Gifts .....\$14,088,771  
Under Goal for Year .....\$477,893

# Headquarters

## Experienced DR volunteers lead command center during crisis

By Gary Hardin  
 Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Vernon Lee stares at a computer screen chock full of information about disaster relief volunteers. To his right sits a stack of papers he looks through several times an hour. To his left stands someone who needs to ask a question. Large posters taped around the walls demand his constant attention. At that same moment, Lee's cell phone rings. Sound stressful? Welcome to the job of the commander of the Alabama Baptist disaster relief Incident Command Center (ICC).

When hundreds of tornadoes struck the state on April 27, Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers sprang into action, and one of their first steps involved setup of the ICC in Montgomery. The Baptist Building's chapel provided an ideal location for the command center because of the resources already there.

### 'Distinguished' team

The ICC leadership team, which is made up of volunteers around the state, was en route to Montgomery within hours of the storms hitting. These are "experts who have distinguished themselves in faithful service to Alabama Baptists through

many disaster relief deployments," said Mel Johnson, associate in the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) office of global missions and strategist (state coordinator) of Alabama Baptist disaster relief ministries.

Executive Director Rick Lance also mobilized all state missionaries to assist in the effort, both with the ICC and across the state. State missionaries were deployed to every area affected by the storms to encourage pastors, directors of missions and the thousands devastated by the tornadoes. They also helped wherever and however they could as they traveled from site to site.

And so under the direction of Johnson and Lance, the ICC came to life by midday April 28.

The initial team consisted of Lee, a member of White Springs Baptist Church, Rainbow City, commander; Ron Warren, a member of First Baptist Church, Ashville, cleanup/recovery; and Kyle Jeffries, a member of Faith Baptist Church, Athens, feeding units.

John and Fran Baughman, members of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, oversaw the administrative duties; Jay and Penny Isbell, members of Beth El Shaddai Messianic Synagogue, Bessemer, coordinated communica-



Photo by Doug Rogers

**COORDINATING VOLUNTEERS** — Ron Warren (left) manages the Alabama Baptist disaster relief cleanup and recovery effort. He was part of the ICC team stationed at the Baptist Building in Montgomery.

tions; and Michael Mims, a member of First Baptist Church, Wetumpka, and Wellman Lim, a member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, operated the ham radios.

Along with coordination of trained disaster relief volunteers, the ICC also operated a phone bank during the first two weeks of disaster relief efforts. The phone bank was staffed by SBOM ministry assistants. As calls came in, they were referred to the appropriate office for processing.

Jeff Hammack, coordinator of computer services for the SBOM, made sure the ICC's technology needs were met.

Bins of telephones and computers designated for disaster relief and stored in the Baptist Building were brought to the ICC almost immediately, he said.

Within a few hours, 20 computers were in place with wireless connections, a telephone bank was operational and ICC personnel had access to a projector, hundreds of feet of wires and cables and ham radios.

And so the state disaster relief leaders as well as disaster relief coordinators from other state conventions and the North American Mission Board worked together in the ICC.

"The Incident Command Center exists not just to coordinate resources but also to coordinate with other states and other relief agencies such as the American Red Cross," Johnson explained. By bringing everyone to one location, resources



Photo by Doug Rogers

**STAYING ORGANIZED** — Tommy Puckett, retired state disaster relief coordinator, takes over as ICC commander in Montgomery on May 9. Puckett is one of more than 8,000 trained disaster relief volunteers in the state.

can be coordinated and maximized and face-to-face meetings can be held daily to ensure everyone is on the same page, he said, noting 11 state conventions from 10 states are helping with the disaster relief effort.



Photo by Doug Rogers

**FOCUSED** — Vernon Lee leads Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers as ICC commander.

state, he spends most of his time out in the field assessing needs. The ICC commander stays in the command center to direct the operation as well as the rest of the volunteer

team. Each member of the team has a specific assignment for which he or she is responsible and guides the work in that area by placing volunteers where there are needs. As needs change, volunteers are moved from one location to another.

### Transitioning

With work starting early each day and lasting late into the night, ICC volunteers are encouraged to transition about once a week. The team members worked off and on for more than a week with Lee being the last to hand off his duties May 9.

Tommy Puckett, retired state disaster relief coordinator, took over as ICC commander, and Johnson shifted some of his time back to the command center.

Reggie Quimby and Scotty Goldman from the SBOM office of global missions also absorbed more responsibilities from the ICC as volunteers returned home and the command center was moved to their office May 13. Quimby and Goldman have assisted in various roles in the ICC since it was set up.

And with the phone bank being shut down, ministry assistants in the office of global missions will be handling the calls coming in related to disaster relief.



Photo by Doug Rogers

**PHONE BANK** — Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions ministry assistants stay busy answering phone calls from concerned people across the state — some needing assistance, some wanting to help.

# Chain saw crew using skills learned from Alabama in Alabama

(continued from page 1)

bers helped by cutting fallen trees and hauling logs and branches to the street for grateful homeowners.

The Michigan Baptists drove 600 miles to work in north Alabama because their convention is in the fourth year of a five-year partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Bezeau, a member of Frenchtown Missionary Baptist Church, Monroe, Mich., said even before the destruction was over in Alabama, he got a call to be on standby.

Ironically some members of the chain saw crew were trained by Alabama Baptists conducting classes in Michigan.

"The gentlemen who came up to train us, they were fantastic," Bezeau said.

Mickey Nardin, team chaplain and interim pastor of Harvest Baptist Church, Shelby Township, Mich., said the convention in his home state is small compared to Alabama's so Michigan churches are more often on the receiving end of the partnership.

But Nardin said the terrible destruction created a need in Alabama and "we are glad to be able to serve."

BSCM Executive Director Bobby Gilstrap said the idea of convention partnership reflects the biblical principle of "coming alongside" to help a brother or sister.

Usually that has meant the stronger conventions helping newer emerging ones, he said.

While the Michigan convention, with its 282 churches, has sent volunteers to Alabama before, the partnership cannot be equitable, Gilstrap said.

Yet in the wake of Alabama's storms, "our people can say, 'Here is something Alabama needs that we can do,'" he said.

It is like a family member pitching in to help another in a crisis, Gilstrap said.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), told him in an online interview that Michigan Baptists' help in Alabama represents true partnership.



Photo by Doug Rogers

**TREES TO REMOVE** — Duane Moore (left) and Johnnie Williams of Michigan serve on a chain saw team in Emily Spencer's back yard in Harvest to remove fallen trees. Baptists from Alabama's partner state have come to serve tornado survivors in their time of need.

"It's a two-way street, not a one-way street," Lance said.

Reggie Quimby, director of the SBOM's office of global missions, agreed.

## Serving Christ together

"Partnership is about building relationships to serve Christ together. It does not matter ... the size of the convention desiring to participate but their desire to serve others in Jesus' name," he said. "When the tornadoes came through Alabama on April 27, our brothers in Michigan called to say they were ready to come to Alabama to help. Through these years of partnership, both states have

been blessed with Alabama teams going to Michigan and Michigan teams coming to Alabama to make a difference."

The impact of the disaster relief team was big. For instance, Emily Spencer, of Harvest, said what workers accomplished May 6 at her home was a huge relief.

While she had no house damage, the trees littering Spencer's yard were a hazard to her sons, ages 11 and 13, who play outdoors.

"This is a great service, a great mission y'all have," she said.

The team also had an impact on Christian fellowship. Dian Brooks of Bethel Baptist Church, Niles, Mich., a veteran disaster

relief volunteer like most members of the team, said she loved what she felt.

Brooks said the team experienced fellowship across the board while they stayed at Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville. The Michigan and Alabama Baptists teased each other.

"I made breakfast for volunteers the first day, and they wanted to know where the grits were," she said.

Bezeau, talking over the buzz of chain saws in Spencer's yard, said it is good that one convention can support another.

"It's fantastic you can depend on each other," he said.



Photos by Doug Rogers

**MOVING DEBRIS** — Michigan volunteer Jerry Ray Lindsay carries a load of debris from the back yard to the curb at Emily Spencer's home in Harvest with Mickey Nardin (back), team chaplain.

(Upper photo) Michigan volunteers Karen Gish (left) and Dian Brooks carry tree limbs to the street. The Michigan team also brought its disaster relief trailer to be fully equipped for the trip (bottom).

## Being prayer 'partners'

Baptists in Ukraine and Guatemala are doing what they can from afar — praying. The countries' conventions have partnerships with the Alabama Baptist State Convention as Michigan does (see story, page 1).

Leaders from the conventions were in communication with Reggie Quimby, director of the State Board of Missions' office of global missions, soon after the April 27 tornadoes ripped through the state. They assured him of their prayer support.

Ukrainian Baptists also took up an offering for relief efforts. It equaled several hundred dollars, which is what an assembly line worker makes in one year, said Emery Laszlo, a Southern Baptist representative in western Ukraine. (TAB)

# Homeowner to volunteers: 'I don't know any of you, but I love you ... thank you'

By John Evans  
 Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**O**n April 27, time ran out for Joyce Lamb and her family.

Spurred on by the TV weather anchor who told them to seek shelter from the tornadoes devastating Alabama, Lamb headed down the stairs of her Birmingham home with her son, Tony, and grandson, Christopher. They never made it.

"We were going to get into the closet, but before we could get into the closet, we just heard this roar come across us," Lamb recalled.

She shut her eyes and clung to her family as they huddled at the bottom of the stairs. She remembers the sounds of the storm jarring their house — bumping, knocking, popping, cracking, things falling — getting louder with each moment. The air itself seemed to flee from the house.

"We were just praying, 'Have mercy Lord, have mercy Lord,' because we didn't know what to do because it was happening so fast and so quick," Lamb said.

Almost as quickly as it began, it ended. An eery silence washed over Lamb and her family as they rose to their feet, thankful to be alive.

They forced open the door of their house and peered outside into a twisted reality. Trees lay strewn across the street, pinning smashed cars beneath them as the overwhelming odor of gas wafted through the air.

## Samaritan's Purse

Lamb shared her story as volunteers with Samaritan's Purse, an evangelical nondenominational disaster relief organization run by evangelist Franklin Graham, sawed through and hauled off a large tree that lay in her back yard.

"I don't know any of you, but I love you, and I thank you and I pray that God bless and keep each and every one of you in all that you do," she said.

Samaritan's Purse set up at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, to as-



Photo by John Evans

**HELPING THE HURTING** — Adam Sleeper, a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, helps clear yards in Tuscaloosa after the April 27 tornado ripped through the state.

sist with cleanup efforts in Tuscaloosa and statewide.

Teams that included members of Southern Baptist churches labored throughout the day at several houses along the street, wielding chainsaws against tangled masses of trees and piling the debris into huge heaps in the houses' front yards.

Adam Sleeper, a volunteer and member of The Church at Brook Hills, said he volunteered partly to identify, in some small way, with those who suffered.

"The love of Christ spurs us on," he said. "Meeting Joyce, that puts a face and heart and soul behind everything, so it's no longer just some people on the other side of town I never go to who are hurting. It's brothers and sisters in Christ. It's the lost."

Henry Blackmon Jr., a retired neighborhood resident, sat on his porch watching the volunteers, who had earlier cleared debris from his back yard. The Army veteran recalled sheltering from the tornadoes in his bathroom with his wife, Shirley, who he describes as a "church-going" person.

Blackmon, who was presented with a signed Bible by the volunteers, said they gave him hope that

not everyone has forgotten what it means to be neighborly.

"I've never seen any volunteer work," he said. "People who don't even live in the community (but help out), that's something I've never seen."

## Simply obedience

Victor Floener, a volunteer team leader with Samaritan's Purse, described his excitement at seeing Christians of different denominations join together in the effort.

"This is not a denominational thing," he said. "This is obedience, what God has asked us to do, and that is to serve each other and to love your neighbor, and that's what we're doing. God is loving these people through us."

Before going home for the day, Sleeper drove through a maze of debris-strewn streets and National Guard checkpoints to one of the area's worst-hit neighborhoods. Jumbled heaps of rubble, half-collapsed houses and demolished cars littered the landscape.

Lamb said the terror she felt that day will forever be etched in her memory.

"I'll never forget the sound of that tornado," she said.

## New York Times takes note of SBC disaster relief

**T**he *New York Times* highlighted Southern Baptist Disaster Relief in a May 9 article, noting that after the Red Cross and Salvation Army, Southern Baptists form the largest disaster relief organization in the country.

"From an elaborate 'war room' in a church building (the Baptist Building) in Montgomery, Ala., to direct lines of communication with federal and local emergency agencies, the Southern Baptist disaster ministry is a model of efficiency," *The Times* reported.

"Its renowned chain saw crews were cutting fallen trees so medical crews could get to the injured in the hours after the tornadoes hit. They

had an enormous mobile kitchen, complete with a hot-water heater for dishwashing and five convection ovens, set up here a day before the Red Cross arrived," the newspaper said, reporting from Rainsville.

*The Times* called Southern Baptist teams "the backbone of disaster relief" in Rainsville and focused on Marteen and Wiley Blankenship, a retired Alabama couple who were among the first to arrive on the scene after the tornadoes hit.

"Some couples spend retirement playing the nation's best golf courses or hopping cruise ships. Not Marteen and Wiley Blankenship. They collect disasters the way other retirees collect pass-

port stamps," *The Times* wrote.

The Blankenships were sleeping on an air mattress in a Sunday School room in an Alabama church when they weren't serving meals to tornado victims. They told the newspaper it's their calling to assist people when disaster strikes.

"The Southern Baptists cook the food that the Red Cross provides, and then Red Cross crews help deliver it," *The Times* said. "Since March 31, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Salvation Army and the Red Cross have worked together to deliver more than 638,000 meals and snacks to communities affected by this spring's rash of severe weather." (BP)

## Identifying Disaster Fraud

### TIPS WHEN MAKING CHARITABLE DONATIONS:

- Do not respond to or click the links in any unsolicited (spam) incoming e-mails.
- Beware of organizations with copy-cat names similar to but not exactly the same as those of reputable charities.
- Rather than follow a purported link to a website, verify the legitimacy of nonprofit organizations by utilizing various Internet-based resources.
- Avoid cash donations if possible. Pay by credit card or write a check directly to the charity. Do not make checks payable to individuals.
- Legitimate charities do not normally solicit donations via money transfer services. Most legitimate charities' websites end in .org rather than .com.

*If you know about or suspect fraud, waste, abuse or allegations of mismanagement involving disaster relief operations, you can report it through the National Disaster Fraud Hotline, toll free, at 1-866-720-5721 or the Disaster Fraud e-mail at [disaster@leo.gov](mailto:disaster@leo.gov). The telephone line is staffed by a live operator 24 hours a day, seven days a week.*

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation



## DONATION CENTERS

have been set up at all stores to collect:

## CLOTHING & SHOES

(Women's, Men's, & Children's)

**If your church or organization has an excess of clothing, shoes, and other items donated for Disaster Relief, we will be glad to pick it up and make sure it gets to those who need it.**

**For more information and to arrange for pick-up, call (205) 856-1234 or (800) 964-4567.**

**ALL EXCESS CLOTHING RECEIVED GOES INTO OUR SYSTEM, WHICH ALLOWS US TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE MINISTRIES THAT DEPEND ON AMERICA'S THRIFT STORES EVERY DAY, AND TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE THE NEXT TIME A MAJOR DISASTER HITS.**

# 'Making a difference'

## 7-year-old Claire Waldrop takes lead in organizing Hueytown Baptist GAs to help storm survivors

By Lindsey Robinson  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Claire Waldrop is seven years old. She likes singing, acting, dancing, designing clothes, decorating and learning about history, except for the wars.

She loves her 6-year-old brother Sam but doesn't really like going to his baseball practices, which is where she had to be May 6. She had a butterfly painted on one side of her face and a cat on the other, from the Field Day that morning at her school, Oak Grove Elementary.

A lighthearted, chatty little girl with long blond hair, Claire is an A-honor roll student at her school. She's also the youngest "recognized" disaster relief volunteer for Alabama Baptists.

"I broke the record," she said proudly.

Almost as soon as the April 27 deadly tornado outbreak subsided, the pint-sized, big-hearted volunteer dreamed up a mission for her Girls in Action (GA) group at Hueytown Baptist Church — to make 100 first aid kits for tornado victims.

"We knew we had to get the word out pretty quickly," Claire's mother, Dana Waldrop, said. So the Waldrop family began collecting supplies in their own neighborhood in Hueytown the weekend after the storms.

Claire and Sam took a red Radio Flyer wagon and went from house to house collecting supplies, and other neighbors

brought supplies to their house.

Members of Hueytown Baptist also donated supplies as well as money that was used to purchase the final items needed for the kits.

With supplies in hand, the GA group got busy filling 100 one-gallon sized Ziploc bags with tweezers, Band-Aids, alcohol, peroxide, cotton balls, Q-tips, antibiotic cream, aspirin, hot packs and other first aid supplies.

And on May 2, Claire and her team began their deliveries while touring disaster sites in Pleasant Grove and Concord.

The delivery team — which included Claire, her GA group, her mom, one of her teachers and a high school student — dropped off the kits at Concord's disaster relief command center and Bethel Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove.

Dana Waldrop is proud that her daughter uses her oodles of energy and competitive streak to reach out to those in need.

"[Claire] comes up with the ideas; I just facilitate them," she said. "If she had a car she'd do it herself."

### 'Wants to help people'

"It does make me feel good that she's got a tender heart and wants to help people."

Claire encouraged people to "do whatever they want" to offer assistance and encouragement to storm victims.

Her list of suggestions included

going to hospitals and singing to patients, giving away clothes, food and water, and making first aid kits, like she did.

Claire got the idea to make first aid kits because she knew people who were trapped in their homes during the storm would be hurt.

"I knew a lot of people would be damaged," she said. "If they were trapped, they've got to be damaged."

Claire had a specific prayer request for the Gordons, a family from her church. Eddie and Kelly Gordon and their 18-month-old baby Eli lost their home in Concord and were hospitalized after the tornado threw them into a grove of pine trees, Dana Waldrop said.

And while Baby Eli is back home, his parents are still in the hospital, Claire noted at press time.

"I have been praying for the people who got caught in the tornado, and I hope they feel better," she said, noting she's also already thinking about projects she can do "next time this happens."

"I'm hoping I can make a big difference in the world," she said.

And Alabama Baptist disaster relief leaders think Claire is making a difference.



Photo courtesy of Dana Waldrop  
**A SERVANT'S HEART** — Claire Waldrop (wearing sunglasses) and the Girls in Action group of Hueytown Baptist Church assemble first aid kits for tornado survivors.

She caught their attention in January 2010 after the earthquake in Haiti killed more than 300,000 people.

She moved immediately to collect a truckload of supplies to help with disaster relief efforts.

After Claire went from classroom to classroom at her school collecting provisions for Haiti, she and her mom delivered them to a drop-off site at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham.

There they met Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. As soon as he saw the Waldrops' SUV loaded to the roof

with first aid materials, he awarded Claire with an honorary disaster relief badge.

### Creating a GA group

At the time, Claire's church didn't have a GA group, but her efforts toward Haiti relief attracted the attention of Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, who helped the church organize a GA group by the following September.

"Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors and Children in Action are wonderful ways to teach children how to express what they learn through Scripture," McIntosh said. ☞



WALDROP



Photo by Neisha Fuson

**BIRMINGHAM BAPTIST ASSOCIATION COMMAND CENTER**  
 Shirley Loewen, a member of The Church at Brook Hills and Birmingham Baptist Association administrator, works on a claims report from storm survivors in the Jefferson County area asking for assistance through the disaster relief command center.

## Tuscaloosa's Calvary Baptist adopts 25 families after tornado destroyed their homes

By Gary Hardin  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When the devastating April 27 tornado destroyed the homes of thousands of Tuscaloosa families, Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, took a bold ministry step and adopted 25 families.

"We made a commitment to provide everything these 25 families would need to start over — from dish towels to appliances to furniture to shower curtains," said Tim Plant, minister of education and administration. In most cases, the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association church is also paying utility and rent deposits.

This ministry decision grew out of the Hope Initiative, started by Tuscaloosa Mayor Walter Maddox in 2009. Maddox, working with the Tuscaloosa Police Department, identified seven "zones" in the city where crime was the highest. A key strategy for reducing crime involved churches and other faith-based communities building rela-

tionships with people in these zones and ministering to them.

Calvary Baptist took Zone 2, which included Rosedale Courts, a government-housing complex known for receiving the highest number of crime calls, averaging about 11 percent of all calls.

### Looking to help

So when the dust settled April 27 and Rosedale ended up being one of Tuscaloosa's hardest hit areas — only 44 of the 188 housing units were left standing — church leaders started seeking ways to help. Willie Forte, director of the Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, identified 25 families consisting of handicapped people, senior adults and single parents for Calvary.

A team from the church goes to each family to evaluate needs and form permanent relationships. A team of movers then brings all the needed items and helps set them up in the housing unit. The church estimates spending about \$5,000 per

unit to help the families start over.

Church member Billy Hatmaker has organized all the moving efforts.

"Since moving back to Tuscaloosa after my retirement, I knew I needed to do something for Rosedale. This is it," said Hatmaker, who grew up in Rosedale Courts. His wife, Barbara, also grew up there. "We're getting a lot of folks together — church members and University of Alabama students — to live and to tell the story of God to the people of Rosedale Courts."

But how was Calvary able to take on this project with no guarantee of donations?

Pastor Tim Lovett explained.

"Calvary celebrated 100 years of ministry in January 2011. As part of our celebration, we eliminated all debt to position ourselves financially to help people with no strings attached," he said. "We had no idea back then that we would be in the position to adopt 25 families but God did." ☞

# Majority of New Orleans Seminary students not on campus; number impacts CP funding

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

While some Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) seminary leaders are launching new building programs and adding new faculty members, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary officials have found themselves in an opposite position. Their most recent move was to lay off three professors, move four professors from full-time to part-time status and eliminate six ministry-based faculty positions.

"The core issue we face is that we have more full-time faculty members than our Cooperative Program (CP) income will allow us to support," New Orleans Seminary President Chuck Kelley told *The Alabama Baptist* prior to the seminary trustees meeting April 12-13.

"There are two reasons for this," Kelley said. "First giving to the Cooperative Program is in decline. It has been down for two consecutive years. Indications are it will be down for a third year.

"A decline of CP income for the SBC means a smaller CP budget for SBC entities, including New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary," he explained.

"Second our portion of the SBC operating budget is smaller due to the lingering effect of Hurricane Katrina (which devastated the seminary campus as well as the city of New Orleans in 2005) and the growing desire of students for non-residential theological education."

## Off-campus students

The percentage of CP funds going to seminaries is based largely on the number of credit hours taken on each seminary's primary campus, Kelley noted. "From the first year this distinction was made between on-campus and off-campus students, [New Orleans Seminary] has had a far larger number of off-

campus students than any other seminary."

Acknowledging the off-campus option is what many students in the five-state region New Orleans Seminary serves want, Kelley said the percentage of students using that option has jumped from 45 percent prior to Hurricane Katrina to 55 percent today. And this increase has "had a significant effect on the portion of CP funds we receive," he said.

**"We have more full-time faculty members than our Cooperative Program income will allow us to support."**

President Chuck Kelley  
New Orleans Seminary

But even with the cuts Kelley said the seminary remains "passionately committed to making quality theological education accessible to any God-called Southern Baptist."

"With these reductions in the number of full-time faculty, we are able to continue all programs, degrees and delivery systems we now offer, including all of those offered

in Alabama," he said, noting most faculty members, no matter their status, teach off-campus students at some point. "Any effect of these cuts in our Birmingham extension center will be minimal."

For the 2010-11 year, the seminary received the third highest percent — 4.29 — of the total 22.16 percent of CP dollars going toward theological education. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., received the largest amount with 4.88 percent. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was second with 4.86 percent. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., was fourth with 3.98 percent. Rounding out the list are Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., with 2.01 percent and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., with 1.90 percent.

And out of the top four, the order shakes out about the same when tuition is compared (using the last numbers available — 2008-09

academic year). The exception is that New Orleans Seminary came in fourth on the amount collected for tuition and fees — \$6,156,027. First was Southern Seminary with \$13,093,841 coming from tuition and fees that year. Southwestern Seminary brought in \$10,003,303 and Southeastern Seminary collected \$6,248,552.

As far as the number of students paying tuition and fees, the 2009-10 numbers showed that only 40 percent of New Orleans Seminary's 3,740 students were on the main campus. More than 2,200 students (305 of which were in Alabama) attended through one of the extension centers or through online classes. And while New Orleans Seminary has one of the largest doctoral programs of the six SBC seminaries, it also has a large undergraduate and certificate-level student population. In the last academic year, 342 students were in a doctoral program but almost half of the students — 1,643 — who attended New Orleans Seminary worked on something other than a seminary degree. The remaining 1,695 were enrolled in traditional master's level seminary classes.

New Orleans Seminary has 16 extension centers in the Southeast. Alabama has one official extension center, located at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, and three teaching sites in Athens, Montgomery and Clanton.

## New extension center

A second extension center site will open at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, in the fall.

"We are very excited about partnering with New Orleans Seminary to help equip ministers for more effective ministry," Pastor Teman Knight said.

Knight has taught at the seminary's extension centers for 20 years and has seen the impact they have locally and globally.

"The extension center allows ministers to continue serving in local ministry and prepare for future ministry. This is such a benefit for our churches because it prevents them from losing valuable leadership in their church while that leader is a student," he said. "The extension center also allows ministers who would otherwise not be able to attend (seminary to) receive a quality education. What they learn and the skills they develop will make our churches stronger."

For the 2009-10 academic year, there were 134 undergraduate students and 171 graduate students at the Birmingham extension. There also were 64 students in certificate programs at the other three teaching sites and two students in graduate certificate programs, which offers a specialized package of courses for students already holding a master's degree.

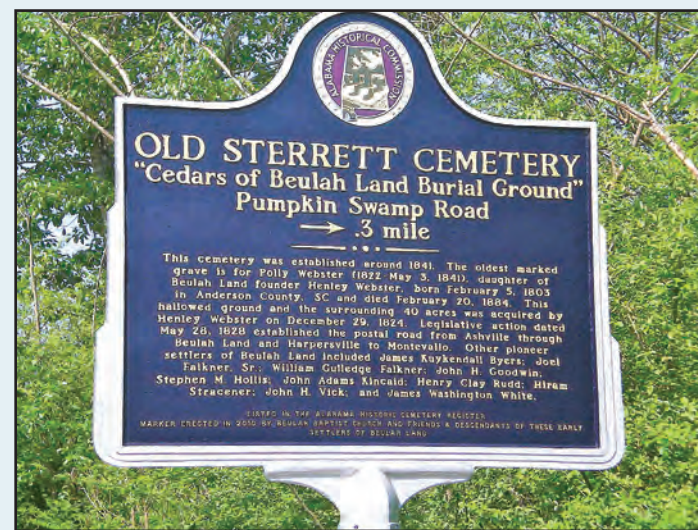


Photo by Lindsey Robinson

**HONORED** — A plaque recognizing Old Sterrett Cemetery as a historic landmark was unveiled at a dedication ceremony April 9.

## Beulah Baptist Church famous for 'Western saga' cemetery

By Lindsey Robinson

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The most famous story from Beulah Baptist Church, Sterrett, and its cemetery reads like a Western saga.

A handful of Christian pioneers forms a church and rescues a Kewahatchie chief's young daughter after her village is slaughtered. She grows up with a pioneer family, loses her first husband in the Civil War and remarries a man from the very family who rescued her as a child. She gives birth to five children before dying of tuberculosis and being buried in the cemetery.

Stories like this and Old Sterrett Cemetery's 170-year history have won the attention of the Alabama Historical Commission, which added it to the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register.

The afternoon of April 9, about 80 people gathered at the Shelby Baptist Association church to witness the unveiling of a plaque recognizing its cemetery as a historic landmark.

The event began inside the church's sanctuary with refreshments and an invocation from Pastor Earl Hardy and included speakers from the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance (ACPA), Shelby County Historical Society (SCHS) and Alabama Historical Commission.

## Stones from 1841

Glenn Nivens, SCHS recording secretary, and Rachel Clink-scale, ACPA secretary, were the event's main organizers. Clink-scale is a member of Beulah Baptist and photographed every headstone in the cemetery for Nivens to catalog. The oldest stone — from 1841 — marks the grave of the daughter of church founder Henley Webster, Clink-scale said.

Since Old Sterrett Cemetery

is about a third of a mile down a dirt road from Beulah, the congregation set off on foot to visit the site right after the sweet tea was drunk and meatballs and deviled eggs were eaten. Leading the trek were five Civil War re-enactors, who performed a musket salute inside the graveyard.

## Village survivor

Dan Acker, whose great-grandmother was Fadora Cloud Falkner, the girl who survived her village's massacre, stood at her grave and gave a history of the Falkner family. The Falkners were among Beulah's original members and fill many of the graves in its cemetery.

Acker said he didn't take much of an interest in his family history until just a few years ago. But once he and other church members decided to preserve their cemetery's history, they realized it needed a little spit and polish. So they cleared out the weeds and spiders and uncovered a few graves they'd never seen before.

The cemetery is dotted with small cream-colored headstones that look like polished porcelain. Members of the Falkner family carved these stones out of pottery when the cemetery was first constructed and they are found in just one other cemetery in Mississippi, church member Shannon Burrell said.

As a child, Burrell rode her bike over the train tracks into the cemetery so she and her friends could look at the graves and muse about who was inside them. "We were always kind of in awe of the 'Indian graves,'" Burrell said. She had heard the story of the "Indian princess," the chief's daughter who was buried there, but said hearing it from Acker was probably the best part of the event for her.

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

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

# Not so secret anymore

## The Church at Brook Hills simulcasts Secret Church for first time, reaches thousands worldwide

By Grace Thornton  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Forget football tickets — some of the hottest tickets in Alabama for the past few years have been tickets to a six-hourlong Bible study.

It's true.

Secret Church, a meeting held on Friday nights a couple of times a year at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, has sold out in minutes the last few times it's been held.

"The last several years, we have received hundreds of e-mails and phone calls asking for us to move to a larger venue or simulcast or webcast Secret Church, begging us to make a way for other churches and small groups to participate," said Angelia Stewart, communications director for Disciple-Making International (DMI), the Brook Hills ministry responsible for Secret Church. "When we realized how many people were truly hungry for a six-hour, in-depth Bible study and were desperate to participate, we couldn't help but explore how we might possibly provide them the opportunity to do just that."

The answer: A simulcast with the help of LifeWay Christian Resources on Good Friday.

The topic: Crucifixion, Salvation and the Glory of God.

All 10 of the Secret Church meetings held since 2006 have been on core subjects of the Christian faith. The style has been similar to the

way Pastor David Platt preached in secret house churches in Asia — like "drinking from a fire hydrant," with as much teaching as possible in the time allotted.

The initial purpose was to provide the recordings for believers in countries where openly studying the Bible would bring persecution. The fact that members of the Birmingham Baptist Association church were present in the worship room while the lessons were recorded was just a bonus in the beginning.

But it quickly grew into something bigger.

### Larger impact

"It was obvious to us that God was doing something that had potential impact far beyond the Brook Hills campus," said Jim Warren, DMI executive director. "We thought about a larger venue in Birmingham or a few simulcast locations around Birmingham. That led us to simulcast not just in the Birmingham area but as far away as the Internet reaches."

And on Good Friday, Secret Church reached across at least 12 time zones and into homes, college dorm rooms and churches.

"There are between 50,000 and 60,000 people involved in Secret Church tonight, in homes and church buildings from Florida to Washington, Hawaii to Maine, and everywhere in between in the United States," Platt told listeners at the first Secret Church simulcast. "And then we have brothers and sisters in



Photo by Neisha Fuson

**FIRST SIMULCAST** — A videographer sits at his post filming David Platt at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, during the 10th Secret Church but first simulcast of the six-hourlong service.

Australia, Cambodia, South Korea, Uganda, Namibia, Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Malaysia, the Cayman Islands."

Kevin Spratt, adult event coordinator at LifeWay, said he was amazed at the reach of the simulcast, which was LifeWay's first attempt at webcasting to groups smaller than churches.

"With the Internet, there's always been capability to get into individual homes, but this was the first time we had decided to do it," Spratt said. "On David's prompting to reach internationally, we decided to go for it. It's something we've always wanted to do, to get out there into the world as well."

Spratt said LifeWay is still tallying the results but a conservative estimate is that the simulcast reached between 1,200 and 1,300 groups and more than 50,000 people.

"At one point, Secret Church

trended in the top three on Twitter. That was huge for us," he said. "The event was successful on all accounts."

Stewart agreed.

"From all of the feedback we have received and the buzz on the Internet, it looks like it was successful," she said. "During the evening, we put up pictures that churches and small groups were sending in, and at one point, we put up pictures from a church in Cambodia and a small group in Guatemala City. When those pictures came up, we were just overwhelmed with what God had done."

### Spread the gospel

Stewart said Platt and other DMI leaders hope the simulcast will fuel a fire that will spread the gospel around the world.

"We don't want the teaching from that night to stop with those

attending Secret Church. We want everyone to take what they have learned and share it. We want it to spread," Stewart said.

And even with the expanding numbers, the initial purpose for starting Secret Church is still what drives the event, she said. Offerings given during the event provide funding to transcribe and translate the teaching into various languages for persecuted Christians around the world.

"Our hope in expanding Secret Church is that tens of thousands of people will learn as much as they can and will be equipped with God's Word so that they can take it out into their communities, sharing the gospel and discipling others so that we can reach the nations for the glory of God."

For more information, visit [www.disciplemakingintl.org/secretchurch](http://www.disciplemakingintl.org/secretchurch).



Photo by Neisha Fuson

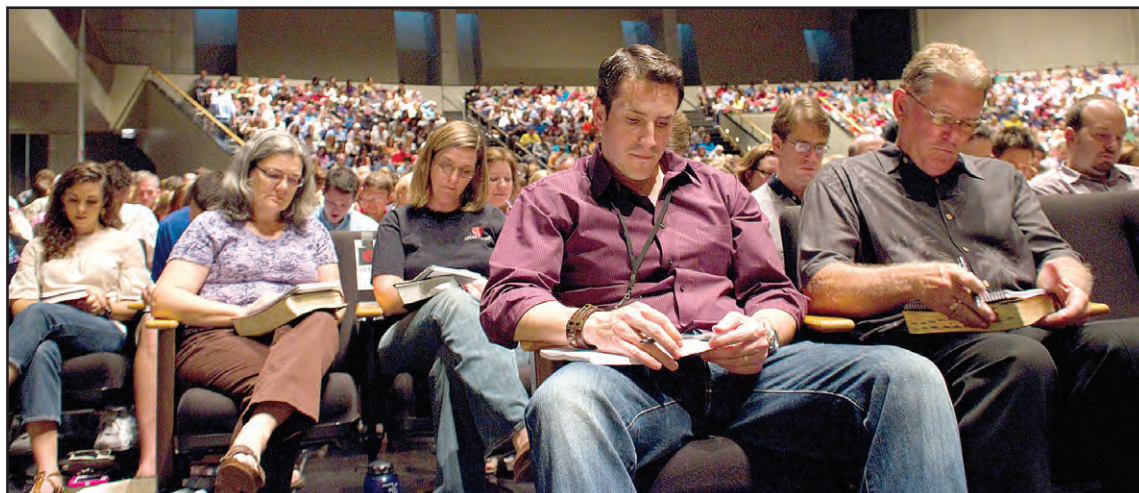


Photo by Neisha Fuson



Photo courtesy of LifeWay

**REACHING THE WORLD** — (Top, left) Members of the worship team lead in worship before the study begins at the 10th Secret Church at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, on April 23. (Bottom photos) Each of the 2,100 seats at The

Church at Brook Hills was filled with a focused listener following along in the study book from 6 p.m. to after midnight, while around the world in Cambodia (right), a group gathered at 6 a.m. to listen to David Platt lead Secret Church.

# June corruption trial nears in Montgomery; gambling bosses, locales still making news

By **Sondra Washington**  
The Alabama Baptist

It's house arrest and limited travel for Ronnie Gilley, owner of Country Crossing casino in Dothan. After recently pleading guilty to 11 counts of conspiracy, bribery and money laundering for his role in an Alabama Statehouse vote-buying scheme, Gilley is awaiting his November sentencing hearing from home instead of the Montgomery jail cell he has been confined to since February.

According to a U.S. Department of Justice press release, Gilley admitted to offering "things of value" worth millions of dollars to legislators in exchange for pro-gambling votes on proposed legislation.

"Ronald (Ronnie) Gilley thought votes could be bought and sold in Alabama," Lanny A. Breuer, assistant attorney general for the criminal division, said in the release. "He participated in a wide-ranging scheme to bribe state legislators into supporting a law that would fatten his wallet. But he, like his co-conspirators, was stopped in his tracks. Now Mr. Gilley must face the consequences of his corruption."

Of the case's original 11 defendants, most — including current and former legislators and lobbyists — are awaiting the June 6 trial date to determine their fates.

Gilley's Country Crossing business partner and co-defendant, gambling magnate Milton McGregor, may not be concerned about the

implications of Gilley's guilty plea, according to his attorney, but he has other things about which to worry.

According to The Associated Press, McGregor's VictoryLand casino in Shorter, which has been closed since 2010 to avoid a law enforcement raid, did not pay the \$1.3 million of property taxes it owes state and local governments and cannot pay its lenders for the luxury hotel recently added to its property.

Country Crossing is reportedly having similar problems paying its lenders.

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, which has fought against legalizing gambling in the state for decades, said Gilley's guilty plea proves what he

and others have believed about gambling all along.

"Everywhere gambling is introduced, it breeds corruption," Godfrey said. "I think it's very interesting and sad that we live in a culture where people can't see through the glitz and the glamour that gambling produces. He (Gilley) was bringing in all the country music stars, and the people were hearing all the promises and were given a bill of goods that it (gambling) was going to be great for the economy. But they don't tend to see the devastation it brings to families and homes and individuals and the corruption that it breeds. That was the argument that we were trying to give last year when we were fighting it in the state Legislature. ... Everybody

laughed at us and said we were trying to stop progress. Now some of the same people are writing blogs on the news reports and saying they were wrong — that Ronnie Gilley was selling us a bill of goods that he couldn't produce and, in the meantime, doing things that weren't right."

While Godfrey and his colleagues welcome Gilley's confession, their plans to fight against all gambling in Alabama have not changed.

"That is what the Bible teaches — that we are to confess our sins to God and to others and we are to forgive as God forgives us," Godfrey noted. "We are grateful to God that he has finally realized that what he was doing was wrong. We want to show Christian compassion and the Christian spirit of forgiveness. At the same time, we want to make sure gambling is stopped in Alabama. It doesn't mean we soften our stance."

At press time, Greenetrack casino in Eutaw was offering electronic gambling on machines that reportedly resemble computer monitors instead of the slot machine-style devices it and other Alabama casinos previously operated.

## 'Growing concern'

"There is a growing concern in the Statehouse and among the churches I've talked to that we are going to start letting it (gambling) creep back in," Godfrey said. "Christians that I've talked with and legislators I've talked with that are opposed to gambling are calling upon Gov. Bentley and Attorney General Strange to act soon to stop the resurgence of gambling that has started with Greene County."

**"We want to show  
Christian compassion  
and ... forgiveness."**

**Joe Godfrey  
Alabama Citizens  
Action Program**

## Across Alabama's Associations

### BETHLEHEM

► **Poplar Springs Church, Uriah**, will celebrate homecoming May 22, 11 a.m. Former Pastor Mike Grindle will speak. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. There will be a singing in the afternoon. The church also will hold revival May 23-25, nightly at 7, with Scott Tharp, pastor of Little River Church, Uriah. Walter Sheffield is pastor.

### BIRMINGHAM

► **Grantswood Church, Irondale**, will hold All Gospel Music Program May 22, 6 p.m., with Skylar Wallace, Austin Foster and Ron Foster. A fellowship will follow. Cary Baker is pastor.

### COVINGTON

► **West Highland Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate its 71st homecoming June 5, 10:30 a.m. Walt Merrell will speak. Lunch

will follow at noon. Larry Stewart is pastor.

### MONTGOMERY

► **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will hold a fifth Sunday sing concert with the traditional southern gospel group Higher Hope, of LaGrange, Ga., May 29, 5:30 p.m. A finger food fellowship will follow. Mike Stephens is pastor.

### MORGAN

► **Mount Zion Church, Hartselle**, will hold a dedication service for its new building, which includes the sanctuary and education area, June 5, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. There will be an open house after lunch. J. Wayne Penn is pastor.

### SELMA

► **Northside Church, Selma**, will hold a gospel singing with The MaHarreys May 27, 7 p.m. For in-

formation call 334-874-8276. Kenny Hatcher is pastor.

### TUSCALOOSA

► **Lakewood Church, Northport**, will hold revival May 22-25. Services will be Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Mike Smith, evangelism specialist for LifeWay, will speak Sunday. Phil Winningham, associate in the office of evangelism for the State Board of Missions, will speak weeknights. Bob Smith will lead the music. Scott McQueen is pastor.

### WASHINGTON

► **Wagarville Church** will hold Vacation Bible School registration May 21, 2-4 p.m., at the Wagarville Community Park. The old world style market setting will include a petting zoo, hay rides, cotton candy and popcorn. Jim Blair is pastor.

## Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

### StadiumFest 2011 attracts crowd of all ages

More than 400 volunteers, representing 150 churches in five states, and 39,000 people gathered in early April at Spain Park High School in Hoover for StadiumFest 2011. The second event of its kind — sponsored by the Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association — led to 225 known first-time commitments to Christ.

StadiumFest had several elements to attract a crowd of all ages. There were the Bronner Burgess Playground with comic stuntman Bello and Birmingham meteorologist James Spann, a member of Double Oak Community Church, Mount Laurel, who shared the gospel. Casting Crowns, TobyMac and Kevin Derryberry performed on the main stage, bringing raised hands in worship one moment and dancing feet in praise the next. Scott Dawson and Rick Burgess, Bill "Bubba" Bussey and Calvin "Speedy" Wilburn of "The Rick & Bubba Show" also shared during the event. Several Alabama Baptist churches volunteered at the event, including North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, and Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Calvin Kelly, senior pastor of Valleydale Baptist, said around 75 people from his church helped set up the main stage, sound system, lighting, video screen and concessions. "Many folks worked 12-hour days over the weekend getting (the event) ready," he said.

Allan Murphy, pastor of North Shelby Baptist, said around 35 people from his church — including friends and family who were invited — helped with StadiumFest.

"[North Shelby] had seven (people) trained as counselors by the Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association and used Billy Graham immediate follow-up materials," he said, noting two of the church's own made a decision to follow Christ while at StadiumFest: a 7-year-old girl and a 12-year-old girl from North Shelby's Vietnamese congregation.

"God uses various means to present the gospel," Murphy said. "[P]eople ... invited their friends to an event (not a church), and through that, the witness was born and some came to Christ."

### East Cullman Association holds women's retreat

"There's times when life pulls us down for various reasons. We need to be reminded to hold our head up high and remember we are a princess to Christ," said Debbie Keaton, East Cullman Baptist Association WMU (Woman's Missionary Union) director.

On March 25, about 300 women were reminded of that fact at the association's fourth annual Ladies Mini Retreat held at Northbrook Baptist Church, Cullman. This year's theme was "Daughter of a King: Living Like a Princess in a Not-so Fairytale World."

The event consisted of a fellowship dinner, with guest speaker Debbie Childers of The Reality Group, worship by April Pearson of Basket Case Ministries and a missions project. The project was to prepare tote bags for Princess for a Day kits to be delivered to cancer treatment facilities in the Cullman area. The women filled 116 totes with goodies like devotionals, books, lotions, pens, candies and throws and prayed for those who would receive them.

As in years past, the retreat was a "blessing."

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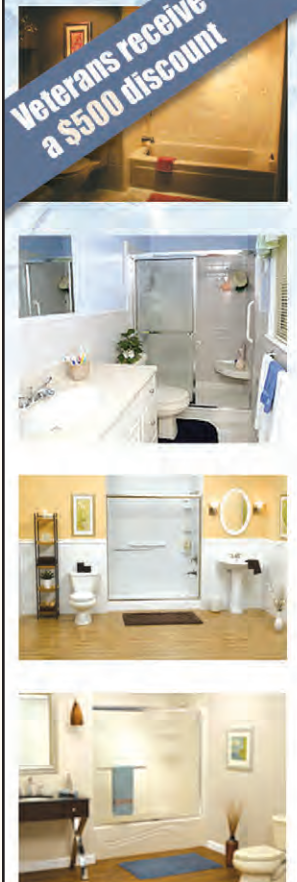
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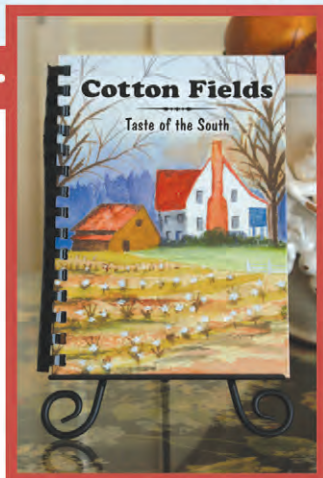
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# 'A Great Commission People'

## SBC annual meeting will focus on Great Commission, more fellowship, no night sessions

A Great Commission People with a Great Commandment Heart" will provide the focus for a June 14–15 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Phoenix that will be more compact and offer more opportunities for fellowship.

A broad range of auxiliary activities also will be held, from Crossover 2011 evangelistic outreach events to the annual Pastors Conference and national Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting and missions celebration.

The SBC's business sessions in the Phoenix Convention Center will include messengers' consideration of recommendations from the SBC Executive Committee's review of ethnic church and ethnic church leader participation in the convention.

Bryant Wright, SBC president, said last year's emphasis on "Great Commission Resurgence" (GCR) laid the foundation for this year's challenge to fulfill Christ's disciple-making command.

### 'Front and center'

"I'm very thankful for what Johnny Hunt and the GCR Task Force did in calling attention to the fact that we're not baptizing as many, we're not growing, that we're not doing our part of fulfilling the Great Commission," Wright said. "Now that we understand that, the fulfillment of the Great Commission is going to be front and center at the convention."

In January, the SBC's Committee on Order of Business announced significant changes in the annual meeting schedule, including holding two missionary appointment services, fewer business sessions and no night sessions. Wright said the changes are designed to allow a greater focus on the Great Commission and free up time for fellowship, discussions and family.

"We've asked the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the International Mission Board (IMB) to commission new missionaries during the meeting," Wright said. "It's very seldom that a church is able to experience a commissioning service. This is going to allow the churches of the convention to take part."

"Days at the convention are long and an important part of the annual meeting is fellowship, so you go to eat dinner with somebody that you haven't seen in five years and the next thing you know it's too late to

get back to the evening session," Wright said. "We're going to go a little longer in the afternoon so people can have the evening free for fellowship with friends."

The main addresses during the annual meeting, combined with a Pastors Conference focus on church planting, will inspire and challenge participants to take the gospel to a world in desperate need of Good News, Wright said.

"I realize Southern Baptists are just one part of God's Kingdom. It takes Bible-believing Christians all around the world to fulfill the Great Commission," Wright said. "But we really do have a wonderful opportunity to put the Great Commission front and center for Southern Baptists. We will have the focus of Kevin Ezell at NAMB on church planting, and also Vance Pitman's focus in the Pastors Conference on church planting in the western United States, and we also will have myself and David Platt [preaching the convention message] and Tom Elliff at IMB [the mission board's new president] challenging us to really get serious about reaching the unreached people groups of the earth."

While there are many people groups where less than 2 percent of the population is Christian, there are 3,800 "unengaged" people groups that, as far as anyone knows, have no Christian witness at all, Wright said.

"It's what's on my heart. I know it's what's on Tom Elliff's heart. The challenge we're putting before churches is, let's really make a commitment to engage the unengaged people groups with the gospel of Jesus Christ," Wright said. "I have said I feel part of why we have had less focus on the Great Commission is that we have lost our first love of Jesus Christ. It's important that we remember relationship with Christ is to be pre-

eminent and when we really follow Jesus, then we're going to have a passion for the lost."

While Phoenix is a long way for most Southern Baptists to travel, Wright said he believes those who attend will be glad they got away from the day-to-day responsibilities of the local church to let the Lord speak to them.

"It's good for Southern Baptists to go to places like Phoenix for our convention because it gives us a presence and it's a way to encourage the churches in those communities," Wright said. "When we come together, we also sense



BP photo

**THE VENUE** — The Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting will be held at the Phoenix Convention Center on June 14–15. The theme will be 'A Great Commission People with a Great Commandment Heart.'

God moving among us with a passion to reach the unreached people groups, to plant churches in areas where there's not a lot of witness for Christ. Being there together, the Holy Spirit just works among us, to give us a catalyst to move forward in faith."

Wright also encouraged convention-goers to dress "business casual."

"The heat of Phoenix is incredible. It will look kind of strange on the streets of Phoenix for people to be walking around in coats and ties in 110-degree heat," Wright said. "So we're encouraging people just to come business casual, even those on the platform. Dress comfortably for an incredibly warm climate."

"The fact the meeting is going to be compact, the fellowship time at night, the Great Commission focus — it's going to be a very focused convention," Wright said. "The convention president, the convention sermon, NAMB and IMB are all on the same page. We're all in this together. That's very exciting. For those who are interested in focusing on Christ's Great Commission, it will be very exciting to be part of this."

### Crossover events

Southern Baptists coming to Phoenix for Crossover 2011 evangelistic outreach events will assist local churches and strengthen new congregations. Dozens of congregations will join volunteers at 70 ministry venues throughout the Phoenix-Tucson corridor, a 120-

mile stretch encompassing 5.2 million residents. Volunteers will share the love of Christ as they participate in block parties, prayerwalking excursions, Intentional Community Evangelism outreach projects and acts of kindness.

Crossover 2011 also will directly impact and strengthen 10 new churches that are just starting in the five Baptist associations of the corridor.

Among the Crossover events will be outreach efforts and block parties hosted by 16 of the state's 23 Hispanic churches. The group will gather Sunday, June 5, for a Hispanic rally of local churches, spend the week doing outreach to Spanish speakers, finish with block parties throughout the city and hold a celebration of the week's successes during the weekend before the SBC annual meeting.

To learn more about Crossover 2011, visit [www.crossover2011.org](http://www.crossover2011.org). To assist new church plants in the Phoenix area, visit [www.churchplantingvillage.net/crossover2011](http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/crossover2011). For those unable to travel to Arizona this summer, Southern Baptists can join in an online prayer community at [facebook.com/SBCpray4AZ](http://facebook.com/SBCpray4AZ) or by following [twitter.com/sbcprayer4az](http://twitter.com/sbcprayer4az).

Messengers to the annual meeting will receive recommendations from the SBC Executive Committee's review of ethnic church and ethnic church leader participation in the convention. Those recommendations, adopted by the Executive Committee Feb. 22, are de-

signed "to foster conscious awareness of the need to be proactive and intentional in the inclusion of individuals from all ethnic and racial identities within Southern Baptist life."

Based on a motion presented at the 2009 SBC annual meeting in Louisville, Ky., an Executive Committee study group examined "how ethnic churches and ethnic church leaders can be more actively involved in serving the needs of the SBC through cooperative partnership on the national level."

### Ethnic leadership

The group reviewed all resolutions adopted at annual meetings regarding ethnic participation and relationships; analyzed the ethnic identities of program personalities on the platform at recent annual meetings; studied the ethnic identities of entity staff, mission board personnel, seminary faculty and recent graduates; and heard testimonies from ethnic leaders.

Also part of the study was a review of the numbers of ethnic congregations and ethnic members within the SBC, pictorial representations in convention literature, coverage of ethnic diversity in convention publications and a review of the ethnic identities of convention committees, boards and commissions.

Specific information about the recommendations being brought to messengers may be found at <http://bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=34708>. (BP)



# 'Aspire: Yearning to join God's kingdom activity'

## Pastors Conference to be diverse, help pastors see 'the big picture of what God is doing'

A diverse lineup of speakers and a focus on God's Kingdom will amplify the theme of the 2011 SBC Pastors Conference: "Aspire: Yearning to join God's kingdom activity."

The June 12-13 gathering, held in Phoenix prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in the Phoenix Convention Center, is intended to help pastors see "the big picture of what God is doing in the world" and rise above preoccupations with temporary issues, said Pastors Conference President Vance Pitman, church planter and lead pastor of Hope Baptist Church in Las Vegas.

The conference also will underscore the planting of churches in North America and taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Pitman said he is praying 1,000 churches will commit themselves during the conference to plant churches in "pioneer areas" of North America. Also, part of the annual offering taken during the

gathering will be used to finish translating the "JESUS" film into the language of an unreached people group in the Arabian Peninsula.

The remainder of the offering will be used to conduct pastors conferences on two continents that will use national leadership to assist church leaders in about 20 countries, Pitman said.

"We are currently living in some of the greatest days in the history of Christianity. There are more people right now coming to faith in Christ on a daily basis globally than any other time in human history," Pitman said. "I grew up in a traditional mindset where the focus was about the church, but I came

to understand that the reality is all churches are temporary. There's only one thing that is eternal, and that is the Kingdom of God.

"When we understand that, we realize the church has been born to be a local gathering place ... and a launching pad for the expansion of God's Kingdom to the ends of the earth," Pitman said. "If every

Southern Baptist church could understand the big picture of what God is doing in the world, it would change the discussions we are having in our fellowship. We wouldn't care anymore about the style of the dress, the style of the music, the start time of the service — the stuff we spend so much time on. We wouldn't care about it if we realized the big picture of what God's doing in the world."

The Pastors Conference program is designed to help participants see that bigger picture of God's Kingdom through a diverse lineup of speakers who nevertheless have one thing in common, Pitman said.

"It's not philosophy, style or methodology that unites Southern Baptists. There's some core theology, but really what brought Southern Baptists together was the mission, joining together in the big picture of what God is doing locally and globally," Pitman said. "We believe we can do more together than we can do by ourselves."

### Guest speakers

"If you look at our list of speakers, obviously, from a methodological and theological standpoint, we've got a pretty diverse group of people," Pitman added. "But the thread is that every speaker at our conference is a practitioner when

it comes to planting churches and working globally around the world. Every one of them is engaged in the mission of joining in God's Kingdom activity."

The conference website, [www.sbcpc.net](http://www.sbcpc.net), lists the event's speakers as including Rick Warren of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif.; Ken Whitten of Idlewild Baptist Church, Tampa, Fla.; Afshin Ziafat of Providence Church, Frisco, Texas; Louie Giglio of Passion City Church, Atlanta; Bob Roberts of Northwood Church, Keller, Texas; Peter Ndhlovu of Bible Gospel Church in Africa in Lusaka, Zambia; Paul Gotthardt of Life Baptist Church, Las Vegas; Darrin Patrick of The Journey Church, St. Louis; Gregg Matte of First Baptist Church, Houston; evangelist Bob Pitman, of Muscle Shoals; and Johnny Hunt of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga.

"If you look at every one of these guys, their theology and methodology has not become an obstacle for them in engaging the nations with the gospel," Pitman said. "Every one of them is engaged in multiplying the church and working among the nations, recognizing that is the big picture of what God is doing."

The diversity of the speakers goes further, Pitman said.

"The other highlight for me is it's

not all big church guys. Two of our preachers at this year's conference, their churches run less than 500 people in weekend attendance," Pitman said. "You don't have to pastor a megachurch to join in God's activity in the world. Both of these guys are working among the nations in different parts of the world."

### Racial diversity

"We've also got some racial diversity, which is very exciting for me. In our church in Las Vegas, we're about 55 percent white, we're probably 30 percent black, the rest are Asian, Hispanic, Polynesian," Pitman said. "We're not a white church, a black church, an Asian church or a Hispanic church; we're a Kingdom church. Our church looks like what heaven is going to look like."

"This year, the Pastors Conference platform is going to look like what heaven is going to look like." When a church is connected to "the big picture of God's Kingdom in the world," Pitman added, "we're investing in something the Book of Revelation says is going to be around forever. The degree to which we are making Kingdom disciples and engaging in Kingdom activity, we're investing in something that's going to last forever." (BP)

*"The degree to which we are making Kingdom disciples ... we're investing in something that's going to last forever."*

Vance Pitman  
Pastors Conference president

## Muscle Shoals' Highland Park Baptist part of 'the big picture'

By John Evans  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, was about \$60,000 behind budget in March. Brett Pitman, lead pastor of the Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association congregation, is thrilled that in the midst of that, the church collected \$150,000 in a week — and gave it all away.

"Jesus didn't say to make sure you're taken care of and whatever you have left over invest in the Kingdom," Pitman said. "Jesus said to take care of the Kingdom."

Highland Park Baptist, while a large congregation (running about 1,000 on Sundays), is not a megachurch. But with a determined focus on reaching the lost, it has funded taking the gospel halfway around the world and ignited a spark that is beginning to spread to other churches.

"Amazing" doesn't do it justice, because it's so incredible what God's done ... among the hearts and lives of our people," Pitman said.

When he took the helm of Highland Park in August 2010, Pitman inherited a church that he said already had a strong missions heart. His first Sunday as pastor, he set before the church a challenging vision of a day when half its income is given away, a short-term missions team is somewhere every Sunday and strategic partnerships are developed on every continent. It got started by increasing its missions budget by 50 percent, and Pitman challenged every able-bodied member to go on a missions trip within the next five years.

"I said, 'We can talk about missions, but we're gonna make missions a priority, even if

some areas of ministry suffer,'" he said. "We know the heart of God is the peoples of the earth."

Pitman and Highland Park's staff felt strongly the church should host a missions conference — its first ever — and three months later, it was a reality. The Kingdom Advancement Conference, named after one of Highland Park's core values, was held March 9-13. It brought together a number of local, national and international ministries.

Harold Peasley, director and founder of Multi Ministries of South Africa, spoke during the conference, as did Pitman's older brother Vance, senior pastor of Hope Baptist Church, Las Vegas.

Pitman said many of Highland Park's members have since gone on short-term trips and committed to pray regularly for the ministries at the conference and 30 members resolved to pray every day for a different country.

He said it even helped bring several people to Christ.

### Saving lost people

"That was not really our goal and target, but when you exalt God, lost people are [going to] be saved," Pitman said.

Church member Greg McGuire said it reminded him of what's important.

"I'm passionate about a lot of things that really don't matter, that are just temporary things," he said. "But it breathed a passion into me for eternity and just reminded me, 'Greg, remember what it was like to be lost? Remember how desperate you were? Remember how hopeless you were? Think about the people who don't have that access

to [the gospel that showed you salvation].'"

An unexpected blessing, which Pitman describes as "overwhelming," also came during the conference.

Vance Pitman is president of this year's Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference (see story, this page). The Pastors Conference's love offering, usually collected to offset expenses, will go toward missions this year. The goal is to raise \$100,000, most of which will go to the International Mission Board (IMB) to fund the translation of the "JESUS" film into the language of an unreached people group in the Arabian Peninsula and do humanitarian work among it. The rest will go toward training conferences for pastors in Africa and Southeast Asia. But that goal already has more than been surpassed, thanks to Brett Pitman. He led Highland Park to join in the effort, announcing the need a few days before its missions conference.

"I said, 'I know what the people of Highland Park can do, but I'm asking God to do something through us,'" he said.

In seven days, members gave \$150,000 — roughly five weeks' worth of offerings.

"Just because our people said, 'We're gonna put our 'yes' on the table and be obedient to God,' now people are [going to] have the opportunity to hear the gospel

for the very first time," Brett Pitman said.

Vance Pitman, who called the massive offering "unheard of," said the IMB may be able to reach multiple people groups now instead of just one.

"[Highland Park's] people just really caught this spirit of missions and the nations and taking the gospel where it had never been before," he said. And that spirit has begun to spread. Brett Pitman said three other churches (one in Alabama, Tennessee and Ohio) are taking up offerings for the Pastors Conference's love offering. It's an answer to prayer for him, who hopes Highland Park's offering is merely the beginning of a massive movement to reach the nations.

"I told Vance, 'What if this is just five loaves and two fish God is about to put His hands on and multiply? What if we (as Southern Baptist churches) gave \$1 million?'" he said.

It's part of his conviction that what happened at Highland Park is bigger than one church.

"It's not about us," he said. "We think God has called us to grow churches, but when you search the New Testament, there is nowhere we're told to grow churches. We are told to advance the kingdom of God."

For more information about the Pastors Conference, visit [www.sbcpc.net](http://www.sbcpc.net). ☞

*"Jesus didn't say to make sure you're taken care of and whatever you have left over invest in the Kingdom."*

Lead Pastor Brett Pitman  
Highland Park Baptist Church

## Pastors Conference schedule

### Session 1

June 12, 5:30–8:30 p.m.

The first session of the Pastors Conference will feature music by the ASPIRE Worship Team and Choir, video highlights of God's activity as well as features on church planting in North America. In addition, there will be a special ministry development presentation by one of the ASPIRE partners.

This session will include preaching from church planter Bob Roberts, church planter Peter Ndhlovu, Bob Pitman and Johnny Hunt.

### Session 2

June 13, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

The Monday morning session will feature music by the ASPIRE Worship Team, video highlights of God's activity as well as features on church planting in North America. In addition, there will be a special ministry development presentation by one of the ASPIRE partners.

This session will include preaching from church planter Paul Gotthardt, church planter Darrin Patrick and Ken Whitten.

### Session 3

June 13, 1:30–4 p.m.

The Monday afternoon session will feature music by the ASPIRE Worship Team and Choir, video highlights of God's activity as well as features on church planting in North America.

This session will include preaching from Afshin Ziafat, Gregg Matte and John Piper.

### Session 4

June 13, 6–8:30 p.m.

The final session of the Pastors Conference will feature music by the ASPIRE Worship Team and Choir, video highlights of God's activity as well as features on church planting in North America. David Platt will be doing a special appeal for the nations prior to receiving the offering during this session. Following the preaching, Rick Warren will lead us in a special time of commitment and calling for 1,000 pastors/churches to engage in church planting in the pioneer areas of North America.

This session will include preaching from Louie Giglio and Rick Warren. (BP)

# National Woman's Missionary Union to 'Proclaim!' missions at annual meeting

**P**roclaim!" will be the theme drawn from Luke 4:18–19 for speakers, breakout conferences and music during the Woman's Missionary Union Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting, June 12–13 in Phoenix.

Ginger Smith, executive director of the Mission Centers of Houston (Texas), will be the keynote speaker for the celebration's opening session on Sunday evening.

Smith has served since 2002 at Missions Centers of Houston, which encompasses three ministry sites — Fletcher Mission Center, Gano Mission Center and Joy Fellowship Center that minister to impoverished communities in inner-city Houston by sharing the love of Christ through programs such as kids and youth clubs, English classes, senior adult programs and Christian Women's Job Corps. During the missions celebration, Smith will address the topic of human exploitation, the focus of WMU's Project HELP.

Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, will be the keynote speaker on Monday evening. He teaches leadership, preaching and church ministry courses at Golden Gate and frequently speaks on these subjects in conferences. Iorg also is the author of "Live Like a Missionary: Giving Your Life for What Matters Most," a book to be released this summer by New Hope Publishers, a division of WMU.

Other featured speakers at the WMU missions celebration include Don and Diane Combs, International Mission Board field

personnel serving European peoples, and other field representatives with the IMB. Representing North American Mission Board will be Jan Lows, a Missions Service Corps missionary who directs Life Among the Nations international student ministry at Arizona State University, and church planting strategists Louis Spears of Arizona and Jason Williams of California.

Participants are encouraged to bring school supplies to help Spears with an ongoing ministry at Seyenna Vistas, a 67-acre mobile home and RV park in Phoenix with more than 100 children in grades 1–6. A complete list of needed supplies is available at [www.wmu.com](http://www.wmu.com).

Wanda S. Lee, executive director of national WMU, said of the missions celebration, "We will enjoy learning practical ways to strengthen and energize our missional journey.

"Both new and experienced missions leaders as well as those who may be searching for a place of service will want to be sure to attend a variety of breakout sessions," she said. "These sessions include options for how to lead WMU age-level missions organizations, and Joe Conway from NAMB will lead sessions on what's new with RAs and Challengers."

There will be three general sessions: Sunday, June 12, at 7 p.m.; and Monday, June 13, at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. A special missions feature facilitated by Gordon Fort, IMB vice president for overseas operations, is slated on Monday

## WMU missions celebration, annual meeting schedule

### Proclaim Freedom!

June 12, 7 p.m.

Pre-session music begins at 6:30 p.m.

Debby Akerman, national WMU president; Gwen Austin, Arizona WMU president; and Terrie Sullivan, Arizona WMU executive director will open the Sunday night session.

Proclaiming Freedom in Arizona will be highlighted by Louis Spears and Jan Lows of NAMB.

The Proclaiming Freedom in Our Communities segment will highlight several WMU ministries.

### Sent to Proclaim!

June 13, 9 a.m.

Wanda Lee, national WMU executive director, will open the session.

Officers will be elected and the WMU Vision Fund offering

will be collected. Debby Akerman will also deliver the president's address.

### Proclaim Good News!

June 13, 11 a.m.

International Mission Board representatives and missionaries serving in North America will share.

### Breakout sessions


June 13, 2–4:30 p.m.

### Anointed to Proclaim!

June 13, 7 p.m.

Proclaiming in California and Beyond will be highlighted by Jason Williams, NAMB, and Jeremy and Kimberly, Northern Africa and the Middle East.

Live Like a Missionary will be presented by Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

Go to [www.wmu.com](http://www.wmu.com) for additional information. 

at 11 a.m. Breakout sessions will be offered on Sunday from 2:30–5 p.m. and on Monday from 2–4:30 p.m. Debby Akerman, president of national WMU, will give her presidential address during the Monday morning session. Tangena Mishler will lead in worship along with pianist Nancy Grainger.

This year's celebration will be in the Grand Ballroom of the Wyn-

dham Phoenix Downtown Hotel, just two blocks from the Phoenix Convention Center where the Southern Baptist Convention will hold its June 14–15 annual meeting.

There is no charge to attend and no preregistration is required. On-site registration opens on Sunday at 2 p.m. Visit [www.wmu.com](http://www.wmu.com) for more information. (BP)

## Children, youth conferences to be held during annual meeting

Registration for families to enroll their children in preschool child care and the children's conference in the Phoenix Convention Center is available under the "Children & Students" tab at [www.sbcannualmeeting.net](http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net).

Child care for newborns through 3-year-olds will be available from Sunday evening through Wednesday, June 12–15. There is a nonrefundable registration fee of \$10 per

child for preschool care. This fee is in addition to the session fees for the convention. The cost per session is \$5 per child, not to exceed \$40 per family, plus the \$10 nonrefundable registration fee. Lunch also will be available for preschoolers on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at \$5 per meal. Complete payment is due for all sessions, and lunch if selected, no later than arrival at the first session.

## SBC registration available online

Registration for the Phoenix annual meeting once again will provide churches with the online opportunity to register their messengers at [www.sbc.net](http://www.sbc.net) to avoid waiting at the counter upon arrival at the convention.

After online registration, the SBC website provides a church with a messenger reference number form to be printed out and presented by each messenger at the SBC registration booth in exchange for a nametag and a set of ballots.

The appropriate church-authorized representative must complete all online registrations.

The traditional registration method also is available for those churches that are unable or may not opt to access the online registration. Registration cards are available from state convention offices.

For further information about online registration, hotel choices, parking and shuttle services for the SBC annual meeting, visit [www.sbcannualmeeting.net](http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net). (BP)

Registration is being handled exclusively online at [www.sbcannualmeeting.net](http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net). The deadline for preschool child care registration is June 1 and is limited to 150 children per session. Parents wanting to register their children after June 1 may print the required information and bring it to Phoenix, where they will be registered onsite on a space-available basis. Questions about this year's child care can be directed to [childcare@sb.net](mailto:childcare@sb.net).

Children's Conferences International will provide an age-graded, Scripture-based conference for all children ages 4–12. This year's theme, "Ride the Waves!" will include fun songs, crafts, stories, skits and games. The cost for children ages 4–6 is \$50 per child for the four days of the chil-

dren's conference, Sunday evening through Wednesday. The registration for Monday through Wednesday is \$45 per child, \$40 per child for Tuesday through Wednesday registration.

Messengers wishing to propose resolutions must submit them at least 15 days prior to the annual meeting.

Guidelines on submitting resolutions are available at [www.sbcannualmeeting.net](http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net) (by clicking on "Resolutions"). Resolutions may be submitted online but must be followed up by a letter of credentials from the submitter's church. (BP)

Questions about the children's conference program can be phoned to Children's Conferences International at 317-447-8213 or 586-879-8421 or e-mailed to [info@childrensconferences.com](mailto:info@childrensconferences.com). The deadline for enrollment is June 1 and is limited to 400 children. Parents wanting to register their children after June 1 may inquire at the first session, where they will be registered onsite on a space-available basis.

Information about the Fuge camp for grades 6 through 12, yet to be released, will be posted through [www.sbcannualmeeting.net](http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net). (BP)

# 2011 SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

## annual meeting program

### Tuesday morning, June 14

- 8:00 Congregational Worship — Jason Breland, worship pastor of First Baptist Church, North Mobile and the North Mobile Worship Band
- 8:10 Call to Order — SBC President Bryant Wright  
Registration Report and Constitution of the Convention — James H. (Jim) Wells, SBC registration secretary
- 8:15 Prayer — Chaplain Major General Doug Carver, U. S. Army Chief of Chaplains
- 8:20 Committee on Order of Business (First Report) — Will Langford, pastor of Great Bridge Baptist Church, Chesapeake, Va.
- 8:25 Welcome — Steve Bass, state missionary, Arizona Southern Baptist Convention
- 8:30 Announcement of Committee on Committees
- 8:35 Introduction of Motions
- 9:00 Congregational Worship
- 9:05 Local Arrangements Committee Presentation
- 9:10 Crossover Evangelism Report — Kevin Ezell, president, North American Mission Board
- 9:15 Woman's Missionary Union Report — Wanda S. Lee, executive director
- 9:25 Executive Committee Report (Part 1) — Frank S. Page, president
- 10:25 Congregational Worship
- 10:30 LifeWay Christian Resources Report — Thom S. Rainer, president and CEO
- 10:45 LifeWay Christian Resources Presentation — Thom S. Rainer
- 11:05 Traditional Worship
- 11:20 SBC President's Address — Bryant Wright
- 12:00 Benediction — George B. Wright III, senior pastor of Cedarcrest Church, Acworth, Ga.

### Tuesday afternoon, June 14

- 1:45 Congregational Worship
- 1:50 Prayer — Emerson Falls, pastor of Glorieta Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Okla.
- 1:55 SBC Historical Library and Archives Report — Al Mohler, president,

- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.
- 2:00 Business — Committee on Order of Business (Second Report), Referrals/Introduction of Motions
- 2:15 Executive Committee Report (Part 2) — Frank S. Page
- 2:45 Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Jeff Iorg, president
- 3:00 Election of Officers (First)
- 3:10 Special Music — Starla Harbin, recording artist
- 3:15 Committee on Nominations Report — Doug Richey, pastor of Pisgah Baptist Church, Excelsior Springs, Mo.
- 3:25 New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Charles S. (Chuck) Kelley Jr., president
- 3:40 Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission Report — Richard D. Land, president
- 3:50 Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission Presentation — Richard D. Land
- 4:10 Congregational Worship
- 4:15 Election of Officers (Second)
- 4:25 Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Paige Patterson, president
- 4:40 Introduction of New Motions (Last Opportunity)
- 4:50 North American Mission Board Report — Kevin Ezell
- 5:00 North American Mission Board Appointment Service — Kevin Ezell
- 5:50 Benediction — Fernando Amarod, Hispanic ministries facilitator, Arizona Southern Baptist Convention

### Wednesday morning, June 15

- 8:00 Congregational Worship
- 8:10 Prayer — Richard Gomez, mission service corps coordinator, New Mexico Baptist Convention
- 8:15 Business — Committee on Order of Business (Third Report)
- 8:35 Election of Officers (Third)
- 8:45 Previously Scheduled Business
- 9:00 Committee on Committees Report — Gregg Matte, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston, Texas
- 9:10 Congregational Worship

- 9:20 Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — R. Philip (Phil) Roberts, president
- 9:35 Committee on Resolutions (First Report) — Paul Jimenez, pastor of Taylors First Baptist Church, Taylors, S.C.
- 10:05 Election of Officers (Fourth)
- 10:15 Congregational Worship
- 10:20 GuideStone Financial Resources Report — O. S. Hawkins, president
- 10:35 Previously Scheduled Business
- 10:55 Election of Officers (Fifth)
- 11:05 Contemporary worship — Guest artists 33Miles (Chris Lockwood & Jason Barton)
- 11:20 Convention Message — David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham
- 11:55 Benediction — A.B. Vines, pastor of New Seasons Church, Spring Valley, Calif.

### Wednesday afternoon, June 15

- 3:00 Congregational Worship
- 3:05 Prayer — Mat McIntosh, pastor of University Fellowship Church, Norman, Okla.
- 3:10 Presentation of Outgoing Officers
- 3:15 Presentation of New Officers
- 3:20 Business — Committee on Order of Business (Fourth Report), Election of 2012 Convention Sermon Preacher, Alternate Preacher and Music Director
- 3:30 Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Daniel L. (Danny) Akin, president
- 3:45 Recognition of Past SBC Presidents
- 3:50 Previously Scheduled Business
- 4:05 Committee on Resolutions (Final Report)
- 4:30 Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Al Mohler, president
- 4:45 Congregational Worship
- 4:55 International Mission Board Report — Tom Elliff, president
- 5:05 International Mission Board Appointment Service — Tom Elliff
- 5:55 Benediction — Stan Buckley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss. (BP)

## SBC seminary luncheons scheduled for June 15

The six Southern Baptist seminaries will hold their annual alumni luncheons June 15 during the SBC annual meeting.

### Golden Gate Seminary

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's Alumni and Friends Luncheon will be June 15, at 12:15 p.m. in the Phoenix Convention Center North Building, Rooms 227 A/B/C on Level 200. Tickets are available by calling 1-888-442-8709, e-mailing rsvp@gg-bts.edu or at the booth.

### Midwestern Seminary

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will host its annual Alumni & Friends Luncheon June 15, at noon in the Phoenix Convention Center's North Building, Rooms 124 A & B, Street Level. To purchase a ticket, call

816-414-3720, e-mail IAoffice@mbts.edu or pick it up at the booth.

### New Orleans Seminary

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will host a reunion luncheon for alumni and friends June 15 in the Phoenix Convention Center's North Ballroom (Room 120A, North Building). For tickets, send a check payable to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Attention Alumni Relations, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70126, visit www.nobts.edu or pick it up at the booth.

### Southeastern Seminary

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary will host its annual Alumni and Friends Luncheon June 15 from noon to 2 p.m., in rooms 129A and 129B in the North Building of the

Phoenix Convention Center. To register, visit <http://sebts.edu/alumni/events/default.aspx>.

### Southern Seminary

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's luncheon for alumni and friends will be June 15, at 12:30 p.m. in the Phoenix Convention Center's North Building, Room 120D, Level 100. For tickets, call 502-897-4142, e-mail rdraper@sbts.edu or pick it up at the booth.

### Southwestern Seminary

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's National Alumni Luncheon will be June 15, at noon in the Phoenix Convention Center's North Ballroom, Room 120 on Level 100. For tickets, call 1-877-GO SWBTS (467-9287), visit [www.swbts.edu/sbclunch](http://www.swbts.edu/sbclunch) or pick it up at the booth. (BP)

## Alabama Baptists among nominees for SBC boards

Alabama Baptists are among nominees to serve on some Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) boards and committees.

Nominations for the SBC Executive Committee, the four denominational boards — International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources — The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business have been selected by the 2011 SBC Committee on Nominations.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the SBC annual meeting June 14–15 in Phoenix, Ariz.

► **Steve Loggins**, director of missions for North Jefferson Baptist Association — second term, Executive Committee.

► **Rick Lance**, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — GuideStone Financial Resources.

► **Jay Wolf**, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery — International Mission Board.

► **Max F. Croft**, associate pastor of Agape Baptist Church, Scottsboro — International Mission Board. Croft replaces Linda Jean Applegarth, of Montgomery, who declined to serve a second term.

► **Larry Gipson**, pastor of First Baptist Church, Oneonta — second term, North American Mission Board.

► **Edwin J. Hayes**, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman — second term, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

### Serving at SBC

SBC President Bryant Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga., also has announced the Committee on Committees.

The Committee on Committees will assemble in Phoenix just prior to the SBC annual meeting to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations, who, in turn, nominate trustees to serve on boards of the various entities of the SBC.

SBC Bylaw 19 also provides that the Committee on Committees "shall nominate all special committees authorized during the sessions of the Convention not otherwise provided for."

The Committee on Committees has 70 members, two from each of the 35 state or regional conventions qualified for representation on boards of SBC entities.

Gregg Matte, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, has been designated to serve as committee chairman.

Alabama Baptists serving on the Committee on Committees are:

► **Danny Wood**, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia.

► **Roy Hill**, pastor of First Baptist Church, Satsuma. (BP)

# Smartphone, tablet apps provide new Bible study tools

When Pastor Dennis Newkirk stands before his congregation at Henderson Hills Baptist Church, Edmond, Okla., to begin a sermon, he gives a nod to technology. While “open your Bibles” may have been sufficient a decade ago, Newkirk also encourages members to “open” their iPhones, iPads, smartphones and tablet computers.

When it comes to the Bible, there’s plenty of “apps for that.”

“At first when the iPhones and iPads came out, people were hesi-

tant to bring those into church because people kind of looked at them like they were text messaging during the service,” said Jeff Wilson, communication and innovation pastor at Henderson Hills Baptist.

“What [Newkirk] has done is he has legitimized what we’re trying to do. It’s given the people the freedom to be

able to go through and open that and do that without having any type of negative connotations.”

It’s an acknowledgement that as technology changes, Christians also are changing the way they study the Bible.

There are Christian apps on every smartphone platform, but among the two most popular platforms — Android and iPhone’s iOS — there are literally hundreds of Bible and Christian-themed apps, helping believers with everything from Scripture memorization to lesson preparation to Bible study to witnessing.

Many churches and Christian ministries have their own “apps.” Some of the apps allow users to listen to or watch sermons. (“App” is short for “application” and is another word for a software program.)

The most popular Christian app, by far, is the YouVersion Bible app, developed by a multiple-site-campus church known as LifeChurch.tv.

The free app — downloaded more than 13 million times — offers several translations and allows users easily to post verses directly onto Facebook and Twitter.

Users can search for keywords or follow a suggested Bible reading plan.

The app also allows churches to upload a pastor’s sermon notes — something that Henderson Hills is doing. That means Henderson Hills members who have the app can read the biblical text and the sermon notes, all on their smartphone or tablet computer. Users also can write their own notes on the app.

“We’re encouraging that,” Wilson said. “We are seeing more and more people who are doing it.”

Ed Litton, pastor of First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland, has several Christian apps on his iPhone. A C.S. Lewis app gives him a daily quote

from the famous author.

A Scripture memorization app helps him commit verses to memory.

Litton uses Olive Tree’s free Bible app to read Scripture. He teaches a men’s discipleship group by using either his iPad or iPhone.

Apps, Litton said, are helpful because they are handy, quick and easy to use.

## Convenient use

“In between those moments of in-depth studying, if I am thinking about a text, one of my apps will help me while it’s on my mind,” Litton said.

“That’s been practically day to day how I have used them the most.”

Litton also has downloaded apps from other churches.

“It helps me keep up with what they’re doing,” he said. “A lot of guys put their podcasts or their services on apps.”

Thomas White, vice president for student services and commu-

nications at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, has a smartphone and tablet computer and said he uses the free Logos Bible Software app, a popular app that contains not only the Bible but also allows users to sync their previously purchased Logos commentaries and reference books. He uses the Southwestern Seminary app for witnessing.

Denny Burk, dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary’s Boyce College in Louisville, Ky., has a smartphone and also uses Logos, which he said is a “handy little resource” when he’s away from his library and needs specific information. He uses the Olive Tree Bible app “all the time.”

“It’s an easy way to carry multiple Bible translations and versions right in my pocket when I am on the go,” Burk said.

## Original texts

“It allows me to consult not only my favorite English translations, but also the Greek and Hebrew texts of Scripture as well. It can parse every word in the original language texts, and it has a powerful search engine.”

Of course, Burk also uses Southern Seminary’s app.

Wilson, the Oklahoma church staff member, said apps help him stay connected wherever he is. As the church’s communications and technology pastor, he is constantly updating “the church members with what’s going on” via Facebook and Twitter.

“Apps give me information and resources at my fingertips,” Wilson said.

“I am always going to have my phone with me.” (BP)

## Most popular Christian apps

### YouVersion

▶ Platform: iPhone, iPad, Android, Blackberry, Palm web OS, Windows Phone 7

▶ Price: Free

▶ About it: The YouVersion Bible app, developed by a multicampus church known as LifeChurch.tv, includes multiple translations — such as KJV, NIV, NLT, ESV, HCSB and NASB — and allows users to search the Bible by keyword and to bookmark verses. It also allows users to post verses on Twitter or Facebook, and also to take notes directly on the app. It also includes dozens of Bible reading plans.



Learn more at OliveTree.com.

### Read the Bible for Life Bible Reader

▶ Platform: iPhone, iPad

▶ Price: Free

▶ About it: Developed by LifeWay Christian Resources, the Read the Bible for Life app includes the complete HCSB, allowing for reading without an Internet connection. Users can search the Bible for keywords. It also includes suggested plans for reading through the Bible in a



year, and a sample of the book “Read the Bible for Life” by George Guthrie. The entire book can be purchased through the app for \$9.99. Other in-app purchases also are available.

### ESV Bible

▶ Platform: iPhone, iPad, Android

▶ Price: Free

▶ About it: The ESV Bible app includes the entire English Standard Version Bible and, once installed, does not require an Internet connection to read. Users can search the Bible and also can take notes and send verses to friends via Twitter, Facebook and e-mail.



Compiled by Michael Foust, Baptist Press

*“In between those moments of in-depth studying, if I am thinking about a text, one of my apps will help me while it’s on my mind.”*

Pastor Ed Litton  
FBC North Mobile

## International Mission Board launches prayer app, spreads word about God’s work

When 79-year-old June Livingstone discovered she could see the latest pictures of her family and grandchildren on Facebook, she decided it was time to sign up. But it wasn’t her loved ones who completely hooked her on the social media craze. It was missions.

For about a year, the International Mission Board’s (IMB) office of global prayer strategy has posted prayer requests and updates from missionaries overseas through CompassionNet on Facebook. But on April 1 the IMB took it a step further and launched a prayer app — CompassionNet — which offers even easier access from smartphones (iPhones and Android phones) and iPads. There, users can also find missionary blog excerpts, video clips and prayer guides.

“[CompassionNet is] my very favorite thing on Facebook,” said Livingstone, a member of Forest Hills Baptist Church, Nashville. “It’s given me a ministry.”

Livingstone used to enjoy volunteer missions trips but can’t travel much now, so she focuses on prayer.

“I’m amazed at how much more I do pray,” she said. “I think it does me more good than it does [the missionaries].”

### Ability to interact

Ed Cox, director of the office of global prayer strategy, hopes others, like Livingstone, will continue to utilize social media to provide prayer support for God’s work.

“If we were going to communicate with Southern Baptists we need to be where they are ... and they are on Facebook. They are on Twitter,” he said.

That realization has kept the prayer office busy posting multiple prayer requests and updates each day through Twitter and Facebook.

These posts not only create awareness, they also provide encouragement for missionaries on the field, Cox said.

“[Missionaries] hear constantly, ‘I’m praying for you,’” he said. “[But] this allows them to be able to ... go into the prayer closet with the intercessor.”

“I think the powerful thing behind Facebook, as opposed to our e-newsletters and our website, is the fact that people have the opportunity to interact.”

The IMB has more than 750 followers of “IMBprayerdir” on Twitter and more than 3,100 friends of CompassionNet on Facebook. (BP)

What if  
**The Alabama Baptist**  
offered an app?

What would you like to see it do?

E-mail us at

news@thealabamabaptist.org



# 'End times' buzz: 'May 21 is Judgment Day'

Give these billboards credit: They don't hedge their bet. Judgment Day is coming May 21, 2011 — not sometime this decade, not sometime this year, but precisely on May 21.

The hundreds of billboards warning unrepentant commuters of their impending doom are courtesy of a California radio station led by 89-year-old Harold Camping, who initially predicted the world would end in 1994.

In New Jersey, about 30 believers paid to erect the signs in hopes of warning and saving their neighbors, said Bob James, a Morristown electrical engineer who organized the grassroots effort.

## 'I wanted to tell people'

"Seven billion people are facing their death! What else could I do?" said James, who views the billboards as a message of hope. "When you have this information, with my love for my fellow man, I wanted to tell people."

Warnings of "end times" are cropping up all over. Along Route 15 in Rockaway Township, a hand-made sign has a litany of upheaval that could double as a CNN news crawl: earthquakes, tsunamis and war.

"Pray! Pray! Get right. The signs of his coming are here," urges the anonymous prophesy.

Throw in buzz about the Mayan calendar's purported lights-out date of 2012 and it makes for jittery times.

"People love to speculate about the end of the world. It's human nature to want to know when Jesus is returning," said Barbara Rossing, author of "The Rapture Ex-

posed" and an ordained pastor at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. "But Christ specifically admonishes us, 'Don't try to figure it out.'"

She finds Camping's views to be at odds with even those described in the best-selling "Left Behind" books about the Rapture, when some Christians believe they will be swept up into heaven as those left behind endure years of war and hardship.

"He has some very strange teachings on his website," she said. "This is very odd thinking."

Cecil Taylor, dean of the School of Christian Studies at the University of Mobile, said, "Date-setters all have one thing in common — every last one of them has been wrong! Camping and other date-setters demonstrate the truth that the only thing men learn from history is that no one learns anything from history."

"Jesus said no one knew the time of the end (Matt. 24:36), not even He Himself in the days of His life on earth," Taylor said. "I think if anyone guessed and got it right, God would change it just to make the man wrong."

But many May 21 believers say the Bible contains clues that brook no argument. God tells Noah the world will end in seven days; the Bible also equates a day to 1,000 years. The date of the flood has been set at 4990 B.C., so adding 7,000 years plus one for the missing year "0" produces the year 2011. Translating a biblical reference to a month and day, from the Hebrew calendar to the Gregorian, results in May 21.

"It's no other date. It's only that date," said Michael Garcia, special

projects coordinator at Camping's Family Radio enterprise.

The gathering up of saved souls will begin, followed by five months of chaos and tribulation that will serve as a spiritual going-out-of-business sale. It will culminate with the end of the world on Oct. 21.

That is daunting to Anthony Hernandez, a 44-year-old technology worker from Chester Township who runs a monthly Bible study class in his home. Although he devotes himself to proclaiming the message of the May 21 date, he knows that doesn't guarantee his salvation.

"If I find myself here May 22, then I'll be unsaved, because all the believers will be taken," he said. Asked if that scared him, the father of seven answers, "It is scary. I don't know if my children are saved."

He's made no contingency plans for life after May 21, neither booking a summer vacation with relatives, nor stocking up on provisions.

## 'If I'm lost, I'm lost'

"I've done nothing, because if I'm lost, I'm lost. It's over," he said.

Although the May 21 prediction is widely dismissed, even mocked, Camping's followers see validation in that reaction. After all, Garcia said, Noah met nothing but skepticism when building his ark.

"It probably wasn't even rain-

ing at that time," said Garcia, a 39-year-old father of six.

"What was the attitude of everybody else? They scoffed — and they died," said James, who also sees inspiration in Noah's tale. "So scoffers don't bother me."

Nor is the refusal of mainstream churches to accept their prediction any cause for doubt, for Camping's

*"I think if anyone guessed and got it right, God would change it just to make the man wrong."*

Cecil Taylor  
University of Mobile

followers believe most churches are now corrupt.

Family Radio has placed about 1,000 billboards nationally. Garcia declined to disclose the cost, nor how much contributors gave in total, but individual donations ranged from \$100 to \$5,000.

End-of-the-world predictions are nothing new, said Rossing, who

specializes in eschatology, or the branch of theology examining the end of the world.

Baptist preacher William Miller had thousands of followers — called Adventists — convinced the date would be Oct. 22, 1844. Many climbed on their roofs in anticipation of their imminent ascension. When that didn't happen, the day became known as the Great Disappointment.

Belief in the discovery of secret information is alluring, Rossing said.

"It's like the decoder ring you found in your cereal box," she said. "You can be the first on your block to decode the Bible." (RNS, TAB)

## Want to know God?

By Pastor Ron Reed  
Fellowship Baptist Church, Birmingham

I would like to share what God's Word says about how to have a personal relationship with Him.

The Bible says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is our sin that separates us from God.

The Bible goes on to tell us in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." This verse simply tells us there is a price for our sin, and that is separation from God forever.

However, God has given us a gift, and this gift is found in His Son, Jesus. We see this gift demonstrated in Romans 5:8: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God's love was demonstrated by sending Jesus to die on the cross for us while we were still living in our sin.

And in Romans 10:9, God tells us how we must respond to this gift: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Simply believe Jesus died for your sin, was buried and rose again. If you feel the Holy Spirit drawing you to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, then ask Him to forgive your sin, come into your life and save you.

He will come into your life, reside forever and give you abundant life. If you receive Him, then He will not turn you away. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

If you are ready, then pray, "Father, I realize I am a sinner and need to be forgiven for my sin. I believe Jesus Christ died for me, and I now ask you to forgive me of all my sin. I confess you as my personal Lord and Savior right now. Lord, come into my life and save me, and I will turn from my sin and turn to you from this day forward. Amen."

## 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

**PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Central Baptist Church in Gardendale is seeking a part-time minister of music. Please send resumés to: Central Baptist Church, 4650 Newfound Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117, or e-mail to: lawanna@gcbaptist.org or fax to 205-631-4657.

### BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER TO STUDENTS

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

### PART-TIME MINISTER TO CHILDREN

**PART-TIME MINISTER TO CHILDREN:** First Baptist Hazel Green is currently accepting resumés for a part-time minister to children. This position involves planning, coordinating and leading a team of volunteers to minister to children (birth-5th grade) and their families. Relevant ministry experience is required. Send resumés to: David Spiers, 225 Hunt Drive, Hazel Green, AL 35750.

### OTHER POSITIONS

**ADMINISTRATOR/VERITAS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY:** Veritas Christian Academy, a ministry of Lakewood Baptist Church in Phenix City, Ala., is seeking resumés for an administrator (K5-8th grade). Candidates should have a

bachelor's degree plus 3 years related experience. Must also be or become a member of Lakewood Baptist Church. A job description is available in the church office at 4011 Lakewood Drive, Phenix City, AL 36867. 334-298-6433. Submit resumés before May 20 to: Pastor@LBCPC.org.

### AVAILABLE FOR SERVICE

**LOVING CAREGIVER:** Will sit day or night — live-in. Cook, clean, etc. Call 205-413-0690. References are available.

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**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.

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### MISCELLANEOUS

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## Op-por-tu-ni-ty Defined

Doors of opportunity open, and we walk through them. And because we do, lives change for the better.

Those doors are opening this summer at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, giving youth an opportunity to make the Shocco experience their own.

Camp Shocco for the Deaf, July 3-9, gives hearing-impaired children, ages 8-13, an opportunity for a fun-filled, meaningful camp experience at minimal cost. For more information, contact Chad Fleming at [cafleming@gmail.com](mailto:cafleming@gmail.com) or [www.campshocco.org](http://www.campshocco.org).

Camp Happy Days, June 10-13, opens doors for at-risk children within a 60-80 mile distance from Shocco, ages 9-12, getting them involved in recreational fun, activity-centered learning and plenty of games to make this summer a special one. A generous donor has provided the funds for this camp. For information, email [camphappydays@shocco.org](mailto:camphappydays@shocco.org).

Other doors are opening all summer long with benevolent groups offering scholarships or reduced costs for children in areas hit hard by the

April 27 tornadoes. This will give them a chance to experience what a Christian camp has to offer. If you are interested in helping to sponsor these children and youth, please send your donations to Shocco Springs. For more information, email [wwesterhouse@shocco.org](mailto:wwesterhouse@shocco.org).

It's all about opportunity. Come and be a part of the Shocco experience at any of the camps coming this summer:

### Student Life Youth Camp

- May 28-June 1, 2011 (Mission)
- June 1-5, 2011 (Mission)
- June 6-10, 2011 (Mission)
- June 10-13, 2011
- June 13-17, 2011 (Mission)



### Student Life Kids Camp

- June 27-30, 2011
- July 15-18, 2011
- July 18-21, 2011

### Global Youth Ministry

- June 20-24, 2011
- July 25-29, 2011



### Royal Ambassadors (RAs)

- July 18-21, 2011 — 4th-12th Grade boys
- July 14-16, 2011 — Lad, 1st-6th Grade & Dad
- July 21-23, 2011 — Lad, 1st-6th Grade & Dad
- July 21-23, 2011 — Lad, 1st-6th Grade & Mom Camp
- July 14-16, 2011 — Crusader & Dad Ropes Course
- July 21-23, 2011 — Crusader & Dad Ropes Course



### CentriKid

- July 4-08, 2011
- July 8-10, 2011
- July 25-29, 2011
- July 29-31, 2011
- Aug 1-5, 2011



### Mix456

- July 11-15, 2011



### ReMix

- July 11-15, 2011



## THANK YOU!

When disaster struck, Southern Baptists were among the first responders to deadly tornadoes that ripped through Alabama April 27.

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams, some of whom were trained right here at Shocco, answered the call for help quickly and valiantly.

We are proud to have played a small role in helping Disaster

Relief fulfill its mission of service to neighbors throughout our state.

We thank them for their dedication and compassion, and we encourage following their inspiring example of service to others through praying, giving and serving.

To learn more, go online at [www.alsbom.org/tornadorelief](http://www.alsbom.org/tornadorelief).



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 22

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

### BE FAITHFUL

#### Colossians 3:18-4:18

##### Family Relationships (3:18-4:1)

The emphasis in the passage falls on duties, not rights. Although wives' have rights, Paul talked rather about a wife's duty to her husband. He took the same approach regarding other household members.

A wife's duty is to submit to her husband. The thought is that she lets her husband lead the marriage and family. In no way does it suggest women are inferior to men. It simply calls for a wife to recognize that God commissioned the husband as the head of the household and holds him responsible for its well-being. The verb form (middle voice) shows submission is voluntary (it is not that a husband must make his wife defer to his leadership). And it is said to be "fitting in the Lord," i.e., proper and becoming to a wife who belongs to the Lord.

A husband's first duty is to love his wife. "Love" (agape) is the word for God's love. It should be sheer joy for a wife to submit to a husband who always thinks more about her happiness than his own. He must never grow "cross with" his wife and treat her harshly.

A child's duty is to "hear with a mind to obey" (literally) his or her parents. The present tense indicates ongoing action. This obedience is to be complete, i.e., "in all things" (surely Paul had in mind Christian parents whose commands were to do right things). It "pleases the Lord." Any child who lives at home and depends on parental support owes his or her parents obedience.

A parent's duty is to avoid provoking his or her children, i.e., not rousing resentment by always finding fault, nagging, over-correcting or being severe so that the children will not lose heart.

A slave's duty is to obey his or her master in everything, whether the master is watching or not. Again a Christian master is assumed, one who will not order his or her slave to do wrong. It is permissible to apply the language to an employee on his or her job, but the text's primary use is to explain how to live as a fol-

lower of Jesus should one ever find himself or herself a slave.

A master's duty is to "do what is right and fair" by his or her slave, precisely as he or she expects his or her own Master in heaven to deal with him or her.

##### Spiritual Duties (4:2-6)

Christians' duty is praying. Their prayers must be continuous, alert (never mechanical and dull) and marked with thanksgiving. Specifically Paul asked the Colossians to pray not for his personal blessing but for the gospel's advancement.

Christians also have a duty to witness. To be an effective witness, they must show practical Christian wisdom in dealing with outsiders, i.e., non-Christians. To "redeem the time" is to "make the most of every opportunity" (NIV). Their speech must be winsome, i.e., "full of grace," and wholesome, i.e., "seasoned with salt."

##### Personal Matters (4:7-18)

Paul commended two men. Tychicus was a well-loved Christian brother, a faithful servant to Paul and a bond-slave of Jesus. Onesimus was the runaway slave whom Paul led to Christ in Rome, but nothing is said of his past. He was a loyal and dearly loved brother and "one of you," i.e., the Christian community.

Paul sent greetings to the Colossians from six people. Three Jewish Christians stand first in the list: Aristarchus, Mark (Barnabas' cousin) and Jesus Justus (mentioned only here). Apparently Epaphras (the Colossian church's founder, cf. Col. 1:7), Luke ("beloved physician" may mean he was Paul's personal doctor) and Demas were Gentiles. Paul added his own greeting to the Christians at Laodicea, located only five miles down the Cayster Valley from Colossae, and Nympha and the house church that met in her residence, probably also in Laodicea.

The benediction shows Paul used a stenographer in writing the letter and then attached his signature to authenticate it. This reminded him again of the chains on his wrist, and he asked that the Colossians also remember his bonds.

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

### PURSUE GOD'S AGENDA

#### 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Galatians 1:6-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Popular notions of successful leadership abound in current Christian media and, in many cases, the gospel has all but disappeared.

##### Recognize Your Accountability to God (1 Cor. 4:1-5)

For Paul, in 1 Corinthians 4, the definition of Christian leadership began with accountability before God as servants. Accountability before God served as the solution for the acute problem of factionalism among the Corinthians in which parties promoted certain apostles over and against others based on what constituted wisdom in the worldly sense (1 Cor. 1:10-17). The skewed priority on form and rhetoric overlooked the fact that God's wisdom is aptly expressed through what the world has judged as folly, the cross (1 Cor. 1:20-25). Hence the key element for leadership among God's people is not any criteria set by the secular world but God's standards. First and foremost, accountability before God as His servant shapes and directs the leader; he or she must be ready to give an account before God not only at the final judgment but also daily. This emphasis on accountability to God should aid leaders in determining their ministry's purpose and the method of achieving that purpose.

##### Hold Uncompromisingly to the Gospel (Gal. 1:6-10)

The purpose of all ministers in God's kingdom is to preach the gospel. All of humanity falls under divine indictment — all have sinned (Rom. 3:9). And all are saved by Jesus Christ alone (Gal. 2:16). Regardless of different ministry styles, the gospel that proclaims salvation through Jesus Christ only must be the foundation for all ministries. Indeed, for Paul, the gospel that proclaimed salvation by any other means was no gospel and those who preached an alternative message were pronounced "accursed" (6-8). Paul's fervent and visceral words must be understood in context; the Galatians were influenced by those who proclaimed that works or law observance (i.e.,

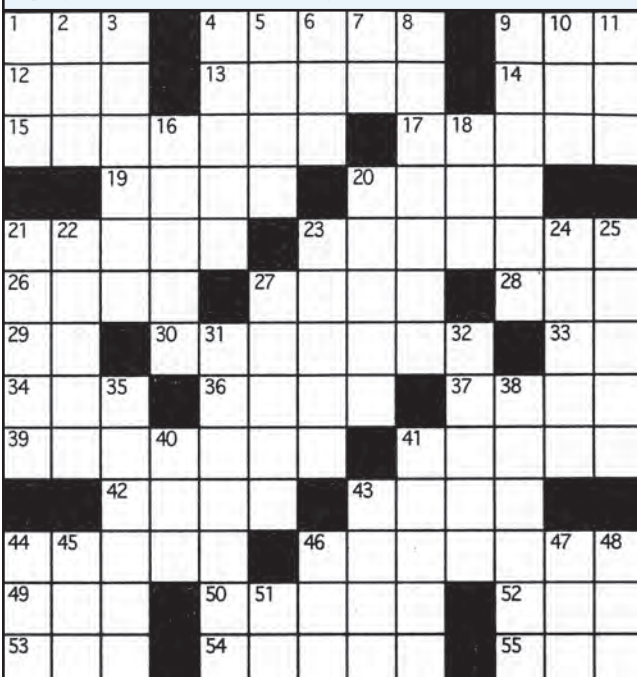
circumcision, dietary regulations) must accompany faith (Gal. 5:1-15). For Paul, law observance nullified Jesus Christ's work on the cross (Gal. 2:15-21). Paul's strong warning to the Galatians to reject any message that contradicted the gospel of Jesus Christ reminds us to exercise caution. Believers should exercise discernment, not be seduced by glamorous outward trappings but, always pierce through to the message's heart. Does the message preached cohere with the gospel declared in Scripture? This litmus test should be taken by not only the audience but also, more critically, the proclaimers. Those serving as leaders within God's kingdom should exercise caution all the more.

##### Live Out Your Devotion to the Church (1 Thess. 2:7-12)

Lest misunderstanding should exist, Christian leadership is not simply about words. Preaching devoid of Jesus Christ's character is once again not the gospel as found in Scripture. Paul's clear understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ necessarily led him to demonstrate the gospel through his actions. Modern-day Christian leadership is all too often based on persuasive speech and charisma. But Paul's testimony in 1 Thessalonians teaches us that Christian leadership requires self-sacrifice, parental love and the courage to provide a model for emulation. Paul's devotion to the Thessalonians was not minimalistic, self-serving or duplicitous. Paul loved them not as a paid employee or part-time advocate but in the deepest sense possible — as a parent loves a child. He not only preached the gospel but also invested himself into the Thessalonians. And thereby Paul demonstrated the kind of life the Thessalonians should lead by working hard; his conduct was blameless before them. The body of Christ requires not simply testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ but also lives sacrificed on its behalf. Are modern-day Christian leaders able to live as Paul lived among his converts? Can they reflect the suffering Messiah's image in their ministry? "The harvest is ripe but the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37).

## Christian Crossword

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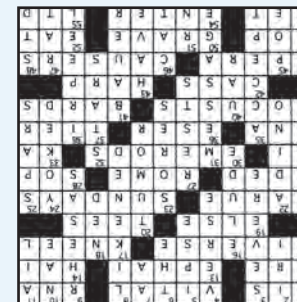


### Across

- Pronoun.
- Essential.
- Genetic initials.
- Wrath.
- \_\_\_ the Netophathite. (Jer. 40)
- "Having Bethel on the west, and \_\_\_ on the east." (Gen. 12:8)
- "Let thy cattle gender with a \_\_\_ kind." (Lev. 19:19)
- "Let us \_\_\_ before the Lord our maker." (Ps. 95:6)
- "Take thine \_\_\_, eat, drink, and be merry." (Luke 12:19)
- Component of teen's "uniform." (pl.)
- "The street" on the Left Bank.
- Evangelist's family.
- Prophet who interceded for Judah. (2 Chron. 28)
- "Claudius commanded all Jews to depart from \_\_\_." (Acts 18:2)
- Saturate in liquid.
- Brit. Isl. off Normandy.

- Tumors. (KJV)
- Cathode. (abbr.)
- Santa \_\_\_.
- Slave.
- Layer.
- "His meat was \_\_\_ and wild honey." (Matt. 3:4)
- Belonging to Shakespeare. (with "the")
- Actress Peggy.
- Jubal, father of all such as handle the \_\_\_ and organ." (Gen. 4:21)
- "Otello" is one.
- Those who bring about.
- "The Lord shall \_\_\_ the bough." (Isa. 10:33)
- "O \_\_\_, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55)
- Sup.
- Fine point. (abbr.)
- "\_\_\_ into his gates." (Ps. 100:4)
- Former Ford model.
- Extreme.
- Usually a sentence from a Bible chapter.
- \_\_\_ dixit.
- Article.
- Twelve-step group. (abbr.)
- "Who ... can be \_\_\_ unto the Lord?" (Ps. 89:6)
- Belonging to the son of Zorobabel. (Luke 3)
- Negative vote. (var.)
- Brother.
- Escape.
- Masculine name.
- Bodily swelling.
- Of a limited area.
- Chief of David's captains. (2 Sam. 23)
- "Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of \_\_\_." (Luke 16:20)
- "Be ye not unequally \_\_\_." (2 Cor. 6:14)
- Boxes.
- Retires.
- Sermon.
- "I will exalt my throne above the \_\_\_." (Isa. 14:13)

- "My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I \_\_\_." (Job 42:8)
- A city of Benjamin. (Josh. 18)
- Middle East. rep. (abbr.)
- Brand well known to hockey players.
- "\_\_\_ mercy upon me, O Lord." (Ps. 6:2)
- "For if God ... spared not the \_\_\_ world." (2 Pet. 2:4-5)
- American author.
- Siamese.
- Tattle, with "on."
- Reg.
- TLC giver.



# RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



## Sound Bites

By Rick Sharp and Adam Borden

### SEAN SPICER

*Olive Tree*

City of Peace Media and Provident-Integrity Distribution

"Olive Tree" is an instrumental collection of bluesy jazz/fusion guitar work, performed by classically trained, critically acclaimed and musically diverse Spicer. He's worked with mainstream bands such as Nazareth — you 70s and 80s



hair band aficionados remember — as well as Christian bands Jars of Clay and Avalon. Spicer covers quite a lot of musical ground here including worship arias, peaceful smooth jazz and rejoicing jazz/fusion. Spicer's technique is impressive, and his guitar tone — we guitarists always notice tone — is cool and modern. The title cut will remind many of the legendary seventies jazz/fusion band Return to Forever, and with good reason.

While perhaps not everybody's cup of tea, if you're a guitar player, guitar lover or a fan of jazz/fusion, you're going to like this CD. It's almost always a good thing to see different musical and performance art forms brought into the church, and Spicer has provided a solid, worshipful musical platform that will encourage artistic experimentation in many churches. (Sharp)

### THE MCKAMEYS

*Joy in the Journey*

Horizon/Crossroads

One of the things we miss in the world these days is consistency. Consistency in southern gospel is nowhere more well defined than with the name "McKamey." After decades of bringing some of the most treasured classic songs to southern gospel fans, The McKameys once again deliver quality southern gospel music with their new 10-song collection from Crossroads Music titled "Joy In The Journey."

You won't find the producer team of Jeff Collins and Roger Fortner trying to reinvent the wheel. What you will find is the classic McKamey family harmony and songs dripping with biblical truth.



When you want to get that red-back hymnal fix, turn up "I Have A Great Savior" or "Glorify The Lord In The Fire." (Borden)

### JOSH WILSON

*See You*

Sparrow Records

Josh Wilson's third album, "See You," a studio work produced by Matt Bronleewe (Jars of Clay, Chris Tomlin), showcases Wilson's amazing talent as an instrumentalist (he plays 18 different instru-

ments on the record) and presents a unified message exploring the tension between our faith and what we can see.

The album's first single, "I Refuse," is perhaps the best song on the record. It was written during the 1,000-year flood in Nashville, and Wilson says he realized that his prayers to "ask God to rally the community and bring other people to help" were nothing but an excuse to do nothing himself. "But," Wilson writes, "as a Christian that's not enough. We're the hands and feet of Jesus; we're supposed to do something. So that phrase came back to me ... I refuse to do nothing." The resulting song — a moving anthem — is a powerful call to action for us all.



The album's title track weaves vignettes describing Wilson's "struggle to see God at work when life is hard." The song is haunting in its message, beautifully presented and a reminder of our own difficulties in seeing God's hand in difficult situations.

Fans of Wilson's impressive live guitar work won't be disappointed. His layered acoustic guitar loops are everywhere on the record, and they're as impressive in the studio as they are amazing in live performance. (Sharp)

## Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

### Recipes ... Reflections ... Remembrances ...


*Martha Campbell Pullen and Suzanne Crocker. Brownsboro, Ala.: Martha Campbell Pullen Press, 2010. 218 pp. (Paperback).*

Do you read recipes the same way you read science fiction — by getting to the end and thinking, "Well, that's not going to happen"? If so, you might want to try this book. You'll want to get a pack of little sticky notes and mark the

ones you want to make, but have lots of notes handy because this book is full of great recipes.

The recipes range from appetizers and party foods to desserts, all simple and practical, calling for easy-to-find ingredients and a minimum of preparation time. The book has a spiral binding so it will stay flat and open while the cook is measuring and stirring — a big plus.

The book is much more than

just recipes, though. Co-written by Martha Pullen, well known for her sewing, and daughter-in-law Suzanne Crocker, author and former missionary to Africa, the book includes information about each recipe — either where it came from or how it has been used — and many interesting stories from the lives of the two authors. After each story, the authors include questions to encourage the reader/cook to write her own cooking memoir. 

### Christian Marketplace

## Top Ten Best Sellers

#### Children

1. **The Action Bible (Hardcover)**, (David C Cook)
2. **The Beginner's Bible**, (Zondervan)
3. **Devotions for the Soul Surfer**, Bethany Hamilton (Thomas Nelson)
4. **The Lord's Prayer**, Rick Warren (Zondervan)
5. **Princess Petunia's Sweet Apple Pie (I Can Read! Series)**, (Zondervan)
6. **The Beginner's Bible for Toddlers**, (Zondervan)
7. **Who Wants to Be a Pirate? (I Can Read! Series)**, (Zondervan)
8. **Jesus Storybook Bible**, Sally Lloyd-Jones (Zondervan)
9. **Tiny Bear's Bible for Boys**, Sally Lloyd-Jones (Zondervan)
10. **Lies Young Women Believe**, Dannah Gresh (Moody)

#### Nonfiction

1. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. **Throw It Down**, Jud Wilhite (Zondervan)
4. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C Cook)
5. **Radical**, David Platt (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
6. **Jesus Calling — Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
7. **Love Wins**, Rob Bell (News Corporation)
8. **The Five Love Languages**, Gary Chapman (Moody)
9. **Made to Crave**, Lysa TerKeurst (Zondervan)
10. **Battlefield of the Mind**, Joyce Meyer (Hachette Book)

#### Fiction

1. **Leaving — Bailey Flanigan Series #1**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **The Judgment**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
3. **The Journey**, Wanda Brunstetter (Barbour)
4. **Vicious Cycle**, Terri Blackstock (Zondervan)
5. **Redeeming Love**, Francine Rivers (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
6. **Her Mother's Hope**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
7. **Unlocked**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
8. **Lineage of Grace**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale House)
9. **The Thorn**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
10. **A Heart for Home**, Lauraine Snelling (Baker)





BP photo

**'GOD IS IN CONTROL'** — Jeannie Elliff (center) celebrates with new International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries after their appointment at First Baptist Church, Dallas. Her best advice to them as they head for the missions field, 'You are not in control; God is.' Elliff's husband, Tom, was elected IMB president March 16.

# Important lessons

## Jeannie Elliff shares how God proves faithful in life

The most important lesson daily life teaches Christians can be summed up in five words, as Jeannie Elliff sees it: You are not in control.

Elliff, wife and ministry partner of new International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff, has learned that lesson many times over the years, sometimes painfully. She's still learning it. But she's also learned the corollary: God is in control — and He is faithful.

It's a lesson she plans to put to good use in the coming years as she supports her husband in the mammoth task of mobilizing Southern Baptist global missions efforts.

"I've always been a person who wants to control things," she admits. "My temptation is, 'Oh, you can handle this. You can do it on your own.'"

Every time she tries, however, God shows her otherwise.

"We've had quite a few adventures in our life," Elliff says with a wry grin. Some might call those "adventures" disasters, but each experience has taught her to depend on herself less and God more.

In 1999 the Elliffs' Oklahoma home burned to the ground. Three months later, a monster tornado blew away the condo where they were living, taking their remaining possessions with it.

"These things happen in life, the fires and tornadoes and tsunamis, so you might as well get used to it," she advises. "We've got to understand God's sovereignty in all of it."

"I guess [losing everything] sev-

eral times has made me realize it's no big deal. It's all going to burn up anyway. Every woman has to come to a submission to that truth. If you know God and know His Word, you will understand that the things of this world are not to cling to."

Giving possessions up to God is one thing, but what about children?

Many missionaries struggle with that question — before and during their time on the field. As a new IMB missionary, Elliff faced it one day in 1982 in Zimbabwe when she and her four children were in a terrifying auto crash.

"When the accident happened, the van rolled several times," she remembers. "Three of the children were thrown out. Amy and I were left in the van. We got out and I saw Jon and Sarah beside the road. They were fine, but I could not find Beth. I looked all

around and couldn't find her. Then I saw that the tires were off the van. I looked under it and there she was.

"I was just devastated. I didn't know if she was alive or dead. She was lying on her side. I remember saying, 'God, she's Yours. She's not my child, she's Your child.' Then I noticed her little chest move. She was breathing. Some men who had seen the accident ran across the field and lifted the car, and I pulled her out."

### In the Lord's hands

Weeks of hospitalization and multiple surgeries followed as Beth was treated for extensive burns. Ultimately, the Elliffs resigned as missionaries to get their teenage daugh-

ter the care she needed. Tom Elliff went on to lead several key churches, including First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., where he was pastor from 1985–2005. He was twice elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

But she has never forgotten what God taught her that awful day in Zimbabwe.

### God's children

"That was a huge lesson for me," Elliff reflects. "The Lord said, 'You're not in charge, Jeannie.' Another thing I learned was I have to give my children to God. I cannot cling to them. That's a mother's desire, but when we give them to the Lord they're in much better hands."

She has learned that lesson anew with the passing years. Two of her children became missionaries. At one time, 11 of the Elliffs' 25 grandchildren lived overseas. In recent years, two bouts with cancer reminded her yet again to rely on God's grace rather than her own resources. She's healthy now but is thankful for the reminder.

"God used the cancer to humble me," she says.

An entire wall of the Elliffs' walk-in bedroom closet is covered with the photos and prayer cards of IMB missionaries. When things get hectic, she likes to go into the closet, close the door, sit down and pray. Her primary prayer for missionaries: That they will seek to know God first, and do great things as a result (see John 17:3 and Daniel 11:32).

How can others pray for her in her new role? She asks for health, strength and plenty of energy to encourage missionaries and to support her husband in his demanding job as IMB leader.

"I can't do it," she readily admits. "It's got to be God working through me." (BP)

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Christians attacked after desecration charges dismissed

GUJRANWALA, Pakistan — Hundreds of Muslims in Gujranwala on April 30 attacked Christians' homes, a school and a Presbyterian church building after learning that police had released two Christians accused of "blasphemy" — amid reports of another alleged desecration of the Quran.

Mushtaq Gill and his son Farrukh Mushtaq were released April 29 after a handwriting expert hired by police determined that the latter had not written a threatening note accompanying burned pages of the Quran, police sources said.

On April 30, however, as news of their release spread, a Muslim claimed that pages of the Quran had been burned in Gujranwala's Aziz Colony cemetery in Punjab province. Announcements over area mosque loudspeakers began blaring, and Muslim residents and members of extremist groups began gathering. The mob started rioting and hurling rocks at the houses of Christians, including a school owned by a Christian, Eric Isaac, who was among eight Christians police took into custody for questioning, as well as at a neighborhood church building. At least 18 people — 15 Muslim protesters and three policemen — were injured and had to be hospitalized after police used tear gas and batons to disperse the mob. There were no reports of injured Christians. Around 150 protesters were arrested, with two cases registered against them for attacking Christian property and "creating a law-and-order situation."

### Violence erupts after defeat of Muslim candidate

ABUJA, Nigeria — Nigeria's government imposed curfews and created a special commission to investigate violence that has targeted Christian homes, businesses and churches after a northern Muslim was defeated in the country's April 16 presidential election.

Supporters of Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler who polled about 31 percent in the balloting, took to the streets in four states of northern Nigeria. Buhari supporters lodged complaints of vote rigging even before election results were announced. After reports that incumbent Goodluck Jonathan received 57 percent of the vote, gangs of Buhari supporters launched looting and burning sprees.

The violence killed at least 120 people, injured hundreds and displaced thousands, the Reuters news service reported. Some of the violence has targeted Christians according to a statement from the Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) human rights organization.

At least two churches have been burned and Christian homes and businesses were looted in Kaduna and Zaria, the CSW statement said. One man reportedly was murdered in Zaria as he tried to stop a mob from burning a church.

### Church raided by secret police; leaders fined

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — Uzbekistan's National Security Service secret police with other officials have carried out two raids on an officially registered Baptist church in Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital. More than 50,000 Christian books and a large quantity of printing and office equipment were confiscated after police broke into the 12 Kungrad Street church building.

Later, three church leaders and the caretaker were given fines ranging between 50 and 100 times the minimum monthly salary. Officials have refused to give reasons for their actions, but there has recently been a harshening of official actions against the possession and supply of religious literature. "The authorities are interested in having small pocket-size churches and religious organizations, which will stay quiet and not have much religious activity," said one Tashkent Baptist.

### Baptist gifts deemed a violation in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — Uzbekistan officials in Tashkent have levied a large fine on a Baptist — who was physically assaulted by police — for giving a children's Bible to a work colleague. The policeman who assaulted Galina Shemetova denied that he had done anything wrong. In addition, the officially registered Zarafshan Baptist Church has been raided and given an official warning for making a financial gift to a local children's home.

The raid followed the church's required filing of its financial statements with the regional justice department, who then ordered the raid.

No officials would say what will happen to the funds the church gave the Happiness Children's Home.