

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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Photo courtesy of Dana Crow

ALL ACCOUNTED FOR — Family members of Gene Thomas, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, look at the site where he and other family members rode out the April 27 tornado. They took shelter in the church's basement and all nine survived.

Couple injured protecting each other Hackleburg pastor home from hospital after tornado-related injuries

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so" — the young girl's voice was clear and crisp as it echoed through the rubble. "Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong."

Four-year-old Callie Myrick was obviously alive. But what about the others?

Callie's great-grandfather, Gene Thomas, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, began to take roll.

"Dana, are you here?"

"I'm here, Dad."

"Sue, are you OK?" Thomas asked his wife.

"I'm OK."

The roll continued in the dark basement until all nine family members were accounted for.

Thomas and his wife Sue, who recently celebrated 50 years of marriage, planted Emmanuel Baptist (part

of Marion Baptist Association) in 1991 and were present when the "first nails were driven in."

They also happened to be there when all the nails were blown out of the building.

The Thomases, their daughter, three grandchildren with two of their husbands and Callie gathered at the church to ride out the April 27 tornado that leveled almost the entire town of Hackleburg.



Photo courtesy of Dana Crow

MIRACLE — 4-year-old Callie Myrick looks at the debris left behind.

After settling into the basement around 3 p.m., it was only 15 minutes later that Callie took her grandmother's advice to "just sing" when the 210-mile-per-hour-plus winds blew the church building above them away.

"Everyone said it sounded like a train," Thomas said. "I didn't hear it, but all at once I could feel the pressure and then suddenly there was nothing above us."

Despite the harrowing circumstances the group stayed calm. In fact, Thomas said there was "an enormous, quiet peace" while the storm was raging.

"We were all so calm at that time (when the tornado hit); no one was hollering or screaming. It felt so peaceful sitting there," he said. "I can truly say that God's hand was upon

us without any reservation at all."

Everyone was trapped under bricks, cement and two-by-fours, except Thomas and his wife, but they ended up being the only two to sustain severe injuries.

Sue Thomas suffered respiratory issues and a smashed index finger she received from protecting her husband's head. Gene Thomas has a pressure fracture in his back caused from pushing the pile of bricks off his wife. Their injuries resulted from protecting each other. No one else was injured.

A truck driver heard the family's screams for help and worked with a neighbor to rescue them. The truck driver was near the church looking for

his semitrailer truck, which had been tossed around in the storm, when he heard the screams. He had abandoned the truck for a ditch during the storm, and the truck ended up landing close to the church.

The Thomases spent a week in Lakeland Community Hospital, Haleyville, before being released — Sue to return home and Gene to be transferred to Huntsville Hospital for back surgery. He was released to return home a week later.

At press time, the Thomases were both expected to fully recover. Their home was not damaged during the storm.

(See 'We're,' page 7)

FBC Hackleburg opens doors to local elementary, high school

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

First Baptist Church, Hackleburg, has run the gamut of providing tornado disaster relief services to its community. From shelter to command center to animal operating room, they've done it all.

Now, with all the local schools destroyed after an EF-5 tornado barreled through town, the Marion Baptist Association church is taking its efforts a step further and allowing the local elementary and high school to finish the school year in the church building.

"Our facilities were about the only thing of any size left standing in Hackleburg," said Pastor Steve Lawrence, who also serves as the high school's volunteer band director. "It was a blessing for us. ... A lot of the teachers and staff of the school are members of this church, so it made it simple."

Since May 10, teachers and students grades K-9 have been utilizing "every square inch" of the church facility for classes, lunch, meetings and storage space. Although students in grades 10-12 are traveling down the

(See 'FBC,' page 7)

COMMENT

Not Just Another Three-Day Weekend

People warned it would happen. When Congress first considered moving Memorial Day away from its original May 30 date to the last Monday of May, several sociologists cautioned that within a decade American citizens would forget the meaning of the observance and instead celebrate a three-day weekend.

Since 1971 when the change was officially made, that is what has happened for the majority of the American public according to several opinion surveys. Now more people associate Memorial Day with the unofficial beginning of summer than with anything else. That the day is America's way of honoring those who gave the "full measure of devotion" for their country seems to be fading from public consciousness.

Perhaps that is not surprising. Few of us face the reality of death. It seems morbid. Culture teaches us to deny death as if by failing to prepare for it will somehow slow its coming.

But death is real, especially for the men and women who have and do serve in the nation's military. The number of individuals who gave their lives in military service of the United States numbers more than 1.3 million and continues to grow. It was their sacrifices that helped establish the nation. It was their valor that kept our nation united. It was their gallantry that crushed the Axis powers of World War II. It was their relentless pursuit that brought Osama bin Laden to justice.

One should never forget that during the last century egomaniacs have threatened the world. Power crazed rulers have promised to destroy this nation. Ideologies of every description have boasted of their superiority and warned of America's looming demise. Yet America stands while many of its enemies are footnotes in history books. America's freedom, America's values, America's existence, even America's safety is due, in large part, to the soldiers, marines, sailors, airmen and coastguard who gave their lives in the service of their nation.

Memorial Day may be a somber day for we do grieve for those whose lives have been lost. We do remember the families whose hearts still suffer from such losses. That is why flags fly at half staff for the morning hours of the day and that is



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

why the nation is asked to pause at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day for a moment of silence (the National Moment of Remembrance Act).

But Memorial Day is also a day of honor. It is a day for Americans collectively and individually to honor the bravery and heroism of those fallen in the nation's service. The special day acknowledges the bond successive generations have with those brave men and women. The day also reminds the living of their responsibility to those who come after them. In every Memorial Day observance, there is the haunting question about whether this generation will accept its duty to preserve freedom, faith and family for those yet to come.

Necessary sacrifices

The poem *In Flanders Field*, written after World War I, captures that truth with the lines

"To you from failing hands we throw
The torch, be yours to hold it high."

Every generation since the nation's founding has faced challenges. My grandfather's generation had World War I. My father faced World War II. My generation lived through Vietnam. My children's generation faced the Persian Gulf War, Somalia and Bosnia. Now it is Iraq, Afghanistan and the War on Terror.

The question each generation must decide is whether or not to face the hardships and make the sacrifices necessary for those who come behind them to enjoy the blessings of liberty. The alternative is to claim the blessings of the sacrifice of others for ourselves only to have those blessings swept away by our own indulgence and forgetfulness.

The way of sacrifice is the way of love. John 15:13 states, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he may lay down his life for his friends." It is not inappropriate to apply this truth to those who have died in the service of their country. And it is not inappropriate to ask if subsequent generations will be characterized by such a love ethic.

In the Old Testament, Joshua 4 stresses the importance of remembering. As Joshua embarked on his first effort as leader after the death of Moses, the Lord told him to have a representative of each of the 12 tribes pick up a stone from the middle of the Jordan River where the priest stood with the Ark of the Covenant. After crossing the river, the stones were to be assembled as a memorial to the mighty act of God that eventful day.

Joshua told the Hebrews that in time to come when children ask the meaning of the stone altar, the fathers were to tell them, "Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you until ye were passed over as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea" (Josh. 4:22-23).

Remembering was important for the Jews. It is important for us and Memorial Day helps us recall the great sacrifice of others and challenges us to equal faithfulness.

So whether you observe the day by participating in memorial services at a national cemetery or taking part in a Memorial Day parade or sharing in a family picnic, take time to remember the purpose of Memorial Day. Celebrate that meaning with those around you. Memorial Day is too important to be lost in the busyness of another three-day weekend.

Letters to the Editor

THANK YOU FOR HELPING

As president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, I want to say "Thank you, thank you, thank you" to all who have been involved in the rescue and recovery efforts in all of the places where there was death and destruction in the wake of the storms that struck the Southeast throughout

the month of April. Storms are not unusual in our area, but the ferocity and frequency of the most recent storms are unprecedented in modern times.

Our state has been helped by our own disaster relief workers and by thousands of others including some from other religious groups, and we thank everyone who has volunteered, sent supplies and donated funds for relief and recovery.

Rick Lance and Mel Johnson have labored tirelessly and all who have worked alongside them deserve our gratitude and appreciation as Alabama Baptists.

All of our entities and Alabama WMU have contributed to the efforts of being the hands and feet of our Savior in recent days. I want to encourage our churches that were not damaged in
(See 'Letters,' page 21)

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 courtesy of All Nations Church

PURE JOY — Sonny Khoumanmo (left) baptizes his son, Kenny, on Easter during All Nations Church's debut. This was Khoumanmo's first baptism as an ordained pastor.

Former 'diehard Buddhist' baptizes son

By Lindsey Robinson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For most of his life, Sonny Khoumanmo was a "diehard Buddhist." Born and raised in Laos, he moved his wife and three children to Huntsville to work at Boeing as an electrical engineer. Since there were no Buddhist temples nearby, he piled his wife and kids in the car a few times a month and drove for hours to a temple in Tennessee.

His kids weren't Buddhist but it didn't matter. Khoumanmo was the head of the house, and that was that.

On Easter, 11 years after he first accepted Christ, Khoumanmo performed his first baptism as an ordained pastor.

But it wasn't a special moment just because it was his first baptism or because it was Easter or because it was All Nations Church's debut or because of his Buddhist past.

For Khoumanmo, it was special because he was baptizing his own son, Kenny.

"That's one of the happiest days of my life," Khoumanmo said.

Khoumanmo's road to salvation was a long one, paved with doubts, pride and the cultural ties he was too afraid to sever, he said. Buddhism was the thread that held his Laotian heritage together and he wouldn't give it up without a good reason.

'The lifeboat'

But as an engineer, he believed in logic and reasoning.

"If you can't swim and you're drowning, you have to wait for someone to help you," he said.

For Khoumanmo, Jesus was the lifeboat.

"Jesus Christ is the risen God, unlike the Buddha," he said.

Pastor Aaron Phangnivong and the Laotian-Thai ministry,

now part of All Nations Church, was the first stepping stone in Khoumanmo's journey to Christ. In 1999 he became a Christian, and on April 10, 2005, he was ordained as a deacon. By November 2009 he was licensed to preach.

Khoumanmo believes there are many others just like him — not just in Laos, but in his own backyard. He hopes he and All Nations Church can share his story with local Buddhists.

'I have no doubt'

"I believe with God's help we will reach those people," he said. "I have no doubt in my mind."

Kenny, a 28-year-old information technology administrator, plays guitar in the worship band at All Nations. He said he noticed a change in the church about a year-and-a-half ago. It was subtle, but everyone — black, white, Asian, Hispanic, old, young — seemed to be mixing and learning about each other, he said.

Instead of judgment and fear of other cultures, Kenny saw curiosity and acceptance, especially when he worked with the youth.

"It didn't matter what we were doing — black, white, band geek, athlete — everyone was talking to everyone."

Though he accepted Christ at 16, Kenny said he floated between churches and never felt accepted, until he came to All Nations Church three years ago.

"You could just feel God's Spirit," he said. "It was probably the most energy I've felt in a long time."

He hopes other people will find the same acceptance at All Nations that he did as a young Christian.

"It doesn't matter what race, what color you are, you're welcome," he said.

'All tribes and nations'

Traditional Huntsville church finds new life

By Lindsey Robinson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As churches celebrated the Resurrection on Easter, one Huntsville church experienced a rebirth of its own — from a missions-minded church to a fully functioning multiethnic, multicultural church in Alabama. And it's still Baptist.

In a packed sanctuary on Easter, Pastor Larry Inman led the debut of All Nations Church, formerly Hillsboro Heights Baptist Church, in front of more than 350 attendees representing about a dozen countries.

"There were people from all tribes and nations. It was incredible," Inman said. "It was everything we hoped it could be, and more."

World flags dotted the stage and the church hummed with excitement as seven new believers were baptized. "Amazing" and "wow" was the general feedback for what was called a "Celebration of the Future," Inman said.

"We believe it's the beginning of a real revival. We're totally dependent on God," he said. "We're really out on the water."

As one of its first acts as a multicultural church, All Nations' Laotian-Thai mission church, which was led by Pastor Aaron Phangnivong, joined with its "mother" church.

Inman announced that Phangnivong, who grew up in Laos and speaks five languages, will be All Nations Church's full-time minister of missions.

'Supposed to be like this'

"It's supposed to be like this," Phangnivong said. "That's what it says in the Bible — all nations."

The rebirth of All Nations reflects Huntsville's ethnic diversity and God's call for the church to accept its expanding community, Inman said. Transitioning the church from its Caucasian roots to its new international focus began several years ago when the church decided to stay in its community and not relocate. The church, with Inman and Harold Webb, the chairman of



the deacon body, formed a transition team in the fall of 2010 to re-identify the church.

As transition team chairman, Webb was responsible for changing signs, stationary and every scrap of insignia from Hillsboro Heights Baptist to All Nations.

"Everything has to be changed when you change a church's name," Webb said.

A member since 1961, Webb saw Hillsboro Heights grow, mature and slowly age until it lost touch with the influx of immigration and industry in Huntsville.

"We were going to have to do something or we were going to die," Webb said.

So Inman and Webb, along with Madison Baptist Association Director of Missions Harold Sellers and their wives, visited The International Church in Norcross, Ga., in August 2010 to gain insight into several issues, such as how to make the language difference work, Inman said.

Sellers hopes more churches in Alabama will follow All Nations' example.

"We have other churches here that need to do the same thing," he said. "It's the Great Commission. We're going into all the world in this church, in this county."

All Nations church already looks like a miniature missions conference, Sellers said. On Sundays, a few Laotian members who can't speak English wear U.N.-style earpieces during the service. As they sit in the pew and watch Inman's lips move, they hear his sermon simultaneously translated into Laotian.

It's another hurdle jumped in terms of unifying the church despite language and cultural barriers. There are plans to translate the sermon into other languages, including Spanish, Inman said.

Off the top of his head, Inman can rattle off a list of countries — Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Guam, Vietnam, Uganda, Mexico, Brazil, Honduras — represented at All Nations. It's not a complete list, he said.

Radical change

To Inman, who has led the church since 2006, the true merit of the church is that its members were willing to embrace a shift so radical it warranted changing the church's name. In other cases, an established church like Hillsboro Heights would simply leave its community instead of opening itself to an entirely new mission.

But the open minds and hearts of his congregation are what makes All Nations Church possible, Inman wrote in an e-mail just before his Easter sermon.

"The bigger story in all of this is this: that a 55-year-old congregation would be willing to do this!" he said.

With its promising Easter beginning, Inman believes All Nations is on the right track. He knows there will be barriers to overcome, but the reward is well worth the effort.

"We realize the missions field has come to our door," he said. "We want this church to reflect what we think heaven's going to be."

For more information about All Nations Church, visit <http://www.all-nations-church.net>.

Proposed 2012 state convention budget offers more to SBC

The 2012 Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) budget being proposed to messengers in November will send \$215,000 more to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) than in 2011 if approved.

The proposed budget was approved by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) at its May 13 meeting in Montgomery.

"This shows a sense of movement and cooperative spirit with the SBC — that we are willing to be team players," said Rick Lance,

executive director of the SBOM.

The 2012 proposed base budget is \$43 million, the same as 2011. The difference is the percentage in dividing up the funds.

In 2011, 57.5 percent goes to the ABSC and 42.5 percent to the SBC. In 2012, the proposed percentage is 57 percent to the ABSC and 43 percent to the SBC.

The half a percentage, equaling \$215,000, will be taken from the Cooperative Program gifts to Samford University, Samford Extension, The Baptist Foundation of

Alabama, the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers and the SBOM.

"The lion's share comes from Samford University," Lance said. "I cannot begin to say just how cooperative our entities are in this critical time."

"This was not meant to punish anyone," he said. "These were the ones in a position to make this kind of move."

Also approved was a challenge budget goal of \$44 million and a 50-50 percentage split for all income over the base budget. (TAB)

ALABAMA BAPTIST CHURCHES DAMAGED

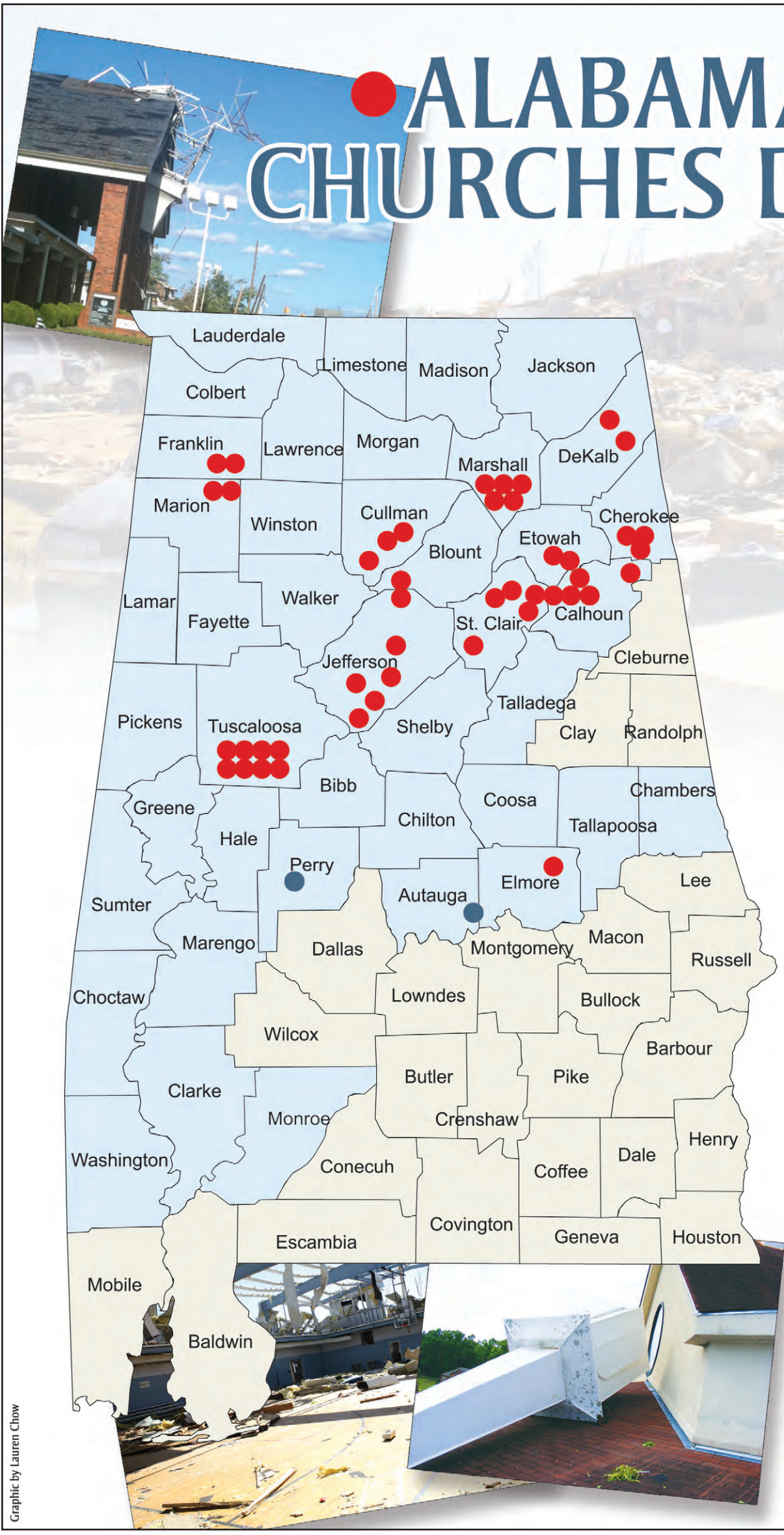
by the April 27 tornadoes

- Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- Antioch Baptist Church, Bremen (*Sulphur Springs Assoc.*)
- Bethany Baptist Church, Ashville (*St. Clair Assoc.*)
- Black Creek Baptist Church, Birmingham (*North Jefferson Assoc.*)
- Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville (*Autauga Assoc.*)
- Concord Highland Baptist Church, Hueytown (*Bessemer Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Cullman (*West Cullman Assoc.*)
- East Side Baptist Church, Cullman (*East Cullman Assoc.*)
- Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg (*Marion Assoc.*)
- Faith Chapel Baptist Church, Marion (*Cahaba Assoc.*)
- Fleetwood Baptist Church, Peterson (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Fultondale (*Birmingham Assoc.*)
- Greensport Baptist Church, Ashville (*St. Clair Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Guntersville (*Marshall Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Hackleburg (*Marion Assoc.*)
- Haney's Chapel, Guntersville (*Marshall Assoc.*)
- Harmony Baptist Church, Hayden (*Sulphur Springs Assoc.*)
- Hopewell Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- Mamre Baptist Church, Gadsden (*Calhoun Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Moody (*St. Clair Assoc.*)
- Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic (*Elmore Assoc.*)
- Mount View Baptist Church, Alexandria (*Calhoun Assoc.*)
- Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell (*Franklin Assoc.*)
- Mountain View Baptist Church, Sylvania (*DeKalb Assoc.*)
- New Bethel Baptist Church, Centre (*Cherokee Assoc.*)
- New Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- North Highland Baptist Church, Warrior (*North Jefferson Assoc.*)
- Oak Bowery Baptist Church, Ohatchee (*Calhoun Assoc.*)
- Oak Grove Baptist Church, Glencoe (*Calhoun Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Pell City (*St. Clair Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell (*Franklin Assoc.*)
- Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Spring Garden (*Cherokee Assoc.*)
- Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- Pisgah Baptist Church, Piedmont (*Cherokee Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove (*Birmingham Assoc.*)
- Pleasant Hill #2 Baptist Church, Guntersville (*Marshall Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Ragland (*St. Clair Assoc.*)
- Rosedale Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- Solitude Baptist Church, Albertville (*Marshall Assoc.*)
- Stamp Baptist Church, Fort Payne (*Sand Mountain Assoc.*)
- Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla (*Bessemer Assoc.*)
- Tates Chapel Baptist Church, Centre (*Cherokee Assoc.*)
- Temple Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (*Tuscaloosa Assoc.*)
- Ten Island Baptist Church, Ohatchee (*Calhoun Assoc.*)
- Victory Missionary Baptist Church, Guntersville (*Marshall Assoc.*)
- First Baptist Church, Wellington (*Calhoun Assoc.*)

42 of 67 counties declared federal disaster areas

Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, and Faith Chapel Baptist Church, Marion, damaged during the April 15 tornadoes

List of churches reflects those known at press time.



FBC Birmingham adopts Tuscaloosa-area students

By John Evans
 Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Meghan Jackson couldn't bear the thought of losing her students. The first-year social studies teacher at University Place Middle School, Tuscaloosa, was close to the 7th and 8th graders she taught — if they called her at any time, she would be there, and they knew that.

"Somewhere along the way I fell in love with them and they fell in love with me," she said.

When the April 27 tornadoes tore through Tuscaloosa, Jackson was ready to accept her own death as she sheltered against

the storm in a bathtub. But after she emerged into the aftermath, word that the storm leveled Alberta City was too much.

"It was at that point that I just broke down into tears because most of my students live in Alberta City, and I just prayed and prayed and prayed that they would be OK and God would be with them in whatever they were dealing with," she said.

'Feared the worst'

Some of Jackson's students couldn't be reached at first, and she feared the worst. But as things settled down and communication improved, she was spared the worst kind of grief.

"Most of our students completely lost their homes, but miraculously we didn't lose any students," she said. "They all have their lives and for that I will be eternally grateful."

A week after the tornadoes hit, school started again, but since University Park Middle School was heavily damaged, the students met in West Lawn Middle School instead.

"I went into class that first day and I told myself, 'I'm gonna be strong and I'm gonna be Super Woman,' and seeing their faces I just broke down and started crying and they started crying," Jackson recalled.

While Jackson's students had their lives, they didn't have much else. Many were living in shelters or with relatives and lacked necessities such as clothing and toiletries, not to mention school supplies.

Jackson told her sister, Brittney Dunn, a member of First Baptist Church, Birmingham, about her students' plight, and Dunn informed Amy Snow, the church's disaster relief coordinator.

"Word started spreading that the kids were going back to school, and they weren't going to have any supplies or textbooks, nothing in the room," Snow said. "It was a totally different school than anything they were used to."

Snow purchased an initial batch

of school supplies for the students, but she and Dunn soon developed a plan that involved the entire church. It began with Jackson sitting down with her students and making a list of those who lost things but hadn't received any direct help yet — about 40 students. She included their clothes and shoe sizes and listed items they needed. After she gave Dunn the list, Snow announced in church that members could "adopt" one of Jackson's students by committing to buy the student's listed needs and praying for him or her. Within two hours, all the students were adopted.

Showing God's love

"(It's rewarding) knowing ... children are getting things they need and being prayed for and ... hopefully will know that we're doing it because we love the Lord," Snow said. "Because we love the Lord we love them and we want to help them."

Dunn's family adopted a boy liv-

ing with his cousin, and she recently purchased clothes and toiletries for him.

"I just want to make his day better, and I want him to know things are going to get better for his family and his brothers, and if I can be a part of that then I'm excited," she said.

In addition to "adopting" some of Jackson's students, members of First, Birmingham, made about 200 care packages for students at the school. The packages included items like hand sanitizer, snacks, bottled water, Scripture verses and messages of support.

"I took it down there to them, and they were so thankful," Dunn said. "They couldn't believe that all of it was for them."

Snow said First, Birmingham, is committed to helping the students "for the long haul" and looks forward to ways the church can continue to assist.

For Stan Lewis, pastor of First, Birmingham, serving in such a way

is what it means to be like Christ.

"Our service as Christians shows a hurting world that Christ is alive and real and that there is hope and life beyond our earthly circumstances," he said.

'It's gonna be OK'

Jackson said her students will need school supplies for next year and probably counseling to deal with the trauma they've experienced. But she looks for them to learn something positive from the way complete strangers have stepped up to help in so many ways.

"I hope that they see that even when the chips are down and even when things are happening around them and they feel like their world is crumbling, that it's gonna be OK," she said.

"If they just have faith and they just believe in themselves and help others, there's always going to be somebody around the corner who's going to want to come together and make it all OK for them." ❧

"I want him to know things are going to get better for his family and his brothers."

Brittney Dunn
 FBC Birmingham

Huntsville churches continue assisting communities, organizing for next phase

By Julie Moore
 Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's now been almost a month since the April 27 tornadoes, and areas within the Madison Baptist Association, like many other areas in Alabama, are still processing the recent destruction.

Madison Association Director of Missions Harold Sellers reported that significant damage occurred in the region, particularly in the hardest hit areas northwest of Huntsville. Entire subdivisions were destroyed, and to Sellers' knowledge, 10 lives were lost.

"The damages are just astronomical," he said.

But just like in other areas of the state, the initial disaster relief response within his association has been "tremendous," Sellers said, noting the blessing for him has been to witness as local church leaders take the initiative and lead the way to provide help and healing.

A team from the association, mostly comprised of retired laymen, helped clear downed trees off houses. And several churches have stepped up to the plate, doing everything possible to give assistance and take care of those affected by the storms.

"We do what we have to do to serve the people and help out any way we can," said Melana Lashley, wife of Harvest Baptist Church's associate pastor of worship Brian Lashley.

Melana Lashley said on the

first Sunday after the tornadoes, members arrived at the worship service in work clothes to go out into the community and be the hands and feet of Christ. She said through this initial opportunity to serve, the church's desire to help only grew.

Harvest Baptist has since partnered with Manna House and other food donors to provide daily meals to disaster relief personnel. The church was serving between 200 and 300 people per meal the first week, she said. Volunteers have now scaled down to serving lunch only and continue to daily monitor the needs and adapt accordingly.

In addition to food distribution, Harvest Baptist also has a gymnasium full of donated clothes to give to those in need.

Mount Zion Baptist Church, Monrovia, near Huntsville, has also assisted in disaster relief response.

Pastor Ron Madison said the church served as one of the state's 15 command centers and hosted a disaster relief feeding unit from South Carolina through mid-May.

'Sense of community'

Mount Zion Baptist mobilized 50-80 people out of the church each day after the storms hit to assist with any initial needs, particularly to check in on senior adults, he said, noting a "strong sense of community" overall. District Four Commissioner Dale Strong, a member of Mount Zion, mobilized teams of community-wide volunteers out of the Monrovia Community Center.

Mount Zion, like many other churches and organizations, is be-

ginning to make the transition into a longer-term approach. A recent meeting by several church and associational leaders was held to assess long-term future needs and funnel those needs through the Madison and Limestone associations. The greatest challenge is coordinating so that relief efforts are not duplicated yet all the needs are still addressed, Madison noted.

Madison Association is seeking to be a center to connect volunteers with ongoing needs in the affected communities, and Sellers is currently focused on compiling a master list of those needs. He said the office is receiving many calls from groups across the U.S. who desire to travel to the area this summer for rebuilding projects, and the idea is to connect these groups to specific needs.

Several area churches also have canceled summer trip plans to focus on projects at home.

The association also plans to address the emotional needs of people affected by the storms. A group of licensed professional counselors is being developed, and those professionals will be routed through the association's office.

Sellers said there would be traumatic emotional hardships resulting from the storms, particularly from those who literally lost all their physical possessions and had everything they owned bulldozed into one large rubble pile and hauled away. ❧

Update on

DISASTER RELIEF efforts



Numbers as of press time

Total credentialed personnel deployed	More than 3,000
Total volunteer days worked	10,753
Meals prepared	233,390
Mass feeding units deployed	9
Mass feeding units active	2
Mass feeding units deactivated	7
Showers provided	4,958
Shower units deployed	30
Shower units active	12
Shower units deactivated	18
Laundry loads	1,655
Chain saw jobs completed	1,473
Child care teams deployed	2
Clients served	120
Child crisis response clients served (in schools)	350
Critical incident stress management chaplains	150
Clients served	5,540
Professions of faith	53

Figures for some units and clients served are yet to be communicated to the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Incident Command Center in Montgomery.

'Takes more than a tornado'

Gadsden's Mamre Baptist Church regroups following death, damage — 'we're still here'

By Mickey Noah
North American Mission Board

As pastor Allen Murphy stood beneath a giant gash in the roof of Mamre Baptist Church, Gadsden, in Calhoun Baptist Association, the sunny blue sky was visible to his packed congregation. A soft May breeze — so different from the tornado winds four days earlier — gently moved the naked electrical wires, Sheetrock and red and yellow insulation hanging down overhead.

Murphy leaned on the 50-year-old pulpit moved to the new two-year-old Mamre church building from the old Mamre church building that — before the April 27 tornado — crowned a nearby hill. Now the old church building is just a memory.

Behind the tall, gray-haired Murphy was a multicolored, stained-glass window of Jesus in the baptistry, totally unscathed. After some 100 members sang "Victory in Jesus," Murphy reminded them, "We're blessed to have a roof over our heads. We still have a place to come and worship. This is just a building. You people sitting here are the Church."

From bad to good

"Bad times bring out good things in people," he said. "Our work now is to leave this building and go out in the community where there's so much devastation and so many people who don't have anything. We must focus our prayers on them."

"It takes more than a tornado to take God away from us," Murphy said. "We may be torn and tattered, but we're still here and we should be thankful for that."

Trying — and succeeding in getting a laugh out of his stunned and hurting congregation — Murphy told the church, "I actually like this set-up. We may just adopt this arrangement in the future. We don't have to



Photo by John Swain

BLESSED — Allen Murphy, pastor of Mamre Baptist Church, Gadsden, tells his congregation, 'we're blessed to have a roof over our heads.'

worry about air conditioning. In fact, this morning I didn't have to get on to anyone for fooling with the thermostats," he said to his chuckling audience sitting in chairs on the bare concrete floor.

And although he smiled and said the occasional "amen," deacon Ralph Motes, 59, was hurting — along with his wife, Deborah — more than anyone else in the church. The day before, they had buried Spencer, their 33-year-old son, killed in the tornado

rampage, as he and 15 others huddled for safety in the basement of the old Mamre church building. The tornado demolished the 52-year-old church building, causing the walls to collapse on young Motes. The others survived.

Ironically, "Spence" had called to ask his mom and dad to come to the church for safety from the storm. They told him they would wait out the tornado at their home a few miles south of the tornado's path in AL-

exandria. That's the last time they talked to their son.

"We got a call that Spence was trapped in the basement of the old church," Ralph Motes said. "They found him on the prayer bench he was praying on. They said the last thing out of his mouth was, 'Let's pray.'"

How does Ralph Motes, as big a man physically as he is spiritually, talk to a stranger about his eldest son — a man Mamre Baptist members recalled fondly, who helped build the new Mamre church building and who worked with the church's youth?

'God saved me'

"I can talk about it because of my faith and because God saved me," Ralph Motes said, choking back his emotions. "God sent his Son to die for me and Spence. You know, Jesus was only 33 when he died."

"I've prayed so hard for peace and for strength. And I've seen God do some wonderful things in this church and community since [the tornadoes devastated the state]. God has blessed me with the support of this church. People won't understand but this has been one of the greatest times of my life," he said. "I love to see how God works. He is so good."

Murphy said what's left of the second Mamre Baptist Church building — which opened for Easter services in 2009 — would be razed and a third Mamre Baptist Church will be re-built in the same spot. Fortunately, the church building was insured. Until then, the church will hold worship services jointly with Oak Grove Baptist Church, Glencoe.

Back in 1958, the original Mamre Baptist Church gleaned its name from Genesis 13:18: "Then Abram (Abraham) moved his tent to the oaks of Mamre, near Hebron, and built an altar to Jehovah there." ❏

More than \$100,000 raised at concert for relief organizations



Photo by Chris Mills

MAKE YOUR MOVE — Mac Powell, lead singer of the Christian band Third Day, headlines the Make Your Move Tornado Relief Benefit Concert held at the BJCC on May 15.

By Chris Mills
Special to The Alabama Baptist

One of the first calls Mac Powell, lead singer of the Christian music group Third Day, made after the April 27 tornadoes hit his home state was to his friend David Nasser.

"Mac called to check on us after the storm and immediately asked how he and the band could help," said Nasser, author, conference speaker and pastor of Christ City Church, Birmingham.

That conversation led to the Make Your Move Tornado Relief Benefit Concert on May 15 at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC). And the Alabama Baptist disaster relief fund was one of four relief organizations benefiting from concert proceeds.

Baptists included

More than \$100,000 was raised and will be divided between Alabama Baptist disaster relief, Samaritan's Purse, World Vision and the Birmingham Dream Center, a ministry of Birmingham's Church of the Highlands.

Nasser said concert organizers

wanted to work with groups that represented ministry on a local, state, national and international level.

Mel Johnson, Alabama Baptist disaster relief strategist, expressed his gratitude for the financial assistance and awareness this event provided.

"On behalf of our state convention and scores of people assisted, I say, 'Thank you!'" Johnson said. "May God bless and multiply the efforts of all who have been faithful to pray and participate as Alabama begins to recover."

Nasser said he hoped the night brought healing and reminded those in attendance that God is still in control and has a purpose in the midst of the storm.

"Do not waste your storm. God can always take tragedy and turn it into a testimony," he said. "My life wasn't drastically affected by the storm physically, but if I'm not drastically affected spiritually it would be wasted. This was not just an event but an eye-opening life change."

"The biggest tragedy would be for people to go back to where they

were [before the storm]," Nasser noted.

Star lineup

Also involved in the concert were Christian music bands Tenth Avenue North and Rush of Fools, singers Trevor Morgan and Laura Story, Birmingham meteorologist James Spann, and radio talk show hosts Rick Burgess and Bill "Bubba" Bussey of The Rick & Bubba Show.

The BJCC offered the venue without charge and the Extraordinary Women Conference, which wrapped up the day before, agreed to leave the staging and lighting set up.

"Moment after moment like that happened, and within a week an event that takes a year to plan came together," Nasser said.

Donations are still being taken and merchandise from the event, including a concert download, is available at www.makeyourmove-benefit.com. Proceeds from online merchandise purchases will also be donated to the relief organizations.

To make donations directly to Alabama Baptist disaster relief, visit www.alsbom.org/tornadorelieff. ❏

FBC Hackleburg 'here to help' community in time of need

(continued from page 1)

block to have classes at Hackleburg United Methodist Church, all students use First, Hackleburg's facilities at some point throughout the day.

Lawrence said the Salvation Army even brought in a mobile kitchen to allow cafeteria workers to prepare meals, which are served in the church family life center on tables salvaged from the Hackleburg schools.

"There are no words to describe how wonderful it's been," said Joan Baker, principal of the elementary school.

"The church has been here to help us in our time of need. It's been a gift from God. I can't say enough good things about the church."

Lawrence said it has been a tremendous blessing for all involved.

"It's been a lot of healing," he said.

"The teachers wanted to see their kids as bad as the kids wanted to come back. ... They are trying to do the normal things as much as they can. ... We are just doing the best we can with what we have where we are."

The church and school are also trying to meet the students' physical needs by sending them home with air mattresses, clothing, food and other items.

'Working as one unit'

"We just all joined together as a community, and we are working as one unit trying to do God's work the best we can," Baker added.

'We're going to rebuild'

(continued from page 1)

Mark Gallups, director of missions for Marion Association, said within a couple of days he and Thomas began planning what to do next.

The front steps were all that remained at Emmanuel Baptist, but the two men agreed — "We're going to rebuild."

"When you see the devastation in times like these, you just hold on to what you know is true and that's the Lord," Gallups said. "And trust Him to help the

community and help [each person] to help the community and do the best we can."

Thomas agreed.

"After you go through something like this [you are reminded], it is only God who you can trust in anyway," he said. "My prayer is that this (disaster) will soften hearts (in Hackleburg), and [Emmanuel Baptist] will be able to touch lives of our community more so than we ever have before."



Photo by Debby Faught

CLEANUP EFFORT — Chelsea McDill, a junior at the University of Mobile, spends a day in Concord with a team from the school helping clean up debris.

UMobile 'memory team' volunteers in Concord

Debby Faught had planned to spend the early May weekend studying for finals. Instead, the University of Mobile (UMobile) student was on her hands and knees sifting through debris left after the April 27 tornadoes. As a volunteer on a "memory team," she was hoping to salvage a few special mementos for families whose homes were destroyed.

"I knew that if I had lost everything in something like this, I would want as many memories as I could find. Finding photographs and a baby's first Christmas ornament broke my heart," said Faught, a junior majoring in communication.

Student volunteers

Forty-five students and other volunteers from the Mobile community helped with disaster relief in Athens, Tuscaloosa, Concord, Cullman and Guntersville May 6-8. In addition, the UMobile Student Government Association donated \$5,000 to Alabama Baptist disaster relief, and students held a blood drive on campus.

The UMobile teams discovered that Alabamians were pulling together to help one another through the disaster. When the team that worked in Concord

stopped by a Lowe's to pick up supplies, a man ahead of them in the checkout line heard they had come from Mobile to help and insisted on paying the \$90.60 bill.

"I came ... just to see where God can use me," freshman music major Magan Wade said, and Chance Hill, sophomore business major, added, "I just came to help."

The students said they were surprised that in the midst of the devastation, they would find fragile items like a light bulb that survived being tossed around in the wind.

Chelsea McDill, a junior studying elementary and early childhood education, said she wasn't prepared for the amount of damage she witnessed.

"Leaving the worksite, I had mixed emotions. Part of me felt proud of our small accomplishment, but a large part of me still felt disheartened because, despite all our hard work, there's still so much more to be done toward rebuilding this community. What I learned today, though, is that in spite of all the destruction and devastation, God is still God and He is still good. I hope that our efforts today helped the people of Concord know that," McDill said. (UMobile)

Betty Quinn, a reading teacher at Hackleburg Elementary, said she is glad the students were not in school when the tornado struck. "Our superintendent called school off the day of the tornado," she said.

"Had it not been for that I don't know if they would ever get finished burying people in Hackleburg because we would have all been dead, I guess."

A member of First, Hackleburg, Quinn said she's happy her church is helping bring people together.

"Our minister is always around, and all of the students have become acquainted with him and his wife," she said.

"He's out there every morning to talk to them when they get off the bus. ... We have a lot of kids in school that [attend First, Hack-

leburg] so it makes it special for them."

Baker said the school year ends May 27 for Hackleburg schools.

"We're dealing with it day by day," she said.

Still healing

"I have no complaints. All of my children survived the EF-5 tornado, and I'm thankful that they are alive."

Quinn asked that people across the state continue to pray for her community.

"We are still in a healing process," she said. "We have been so devastated. We see these things on TV and see the pictures in the paper and stuff, but if you have not seen it and haven't lived through it ... it's nothing compared to the real thing."



Photo courtesy of Bubbles for Hope

Helping kids smile again

Kenny Norris (left), student minister of First Baptist Church, Sylacauga, in Coosa River Baptist Association, and his son William organize bottles of bubbles with Bubbles for Hope at Bowers Park in Tuscaloosa. William came up with the idea for the ministry after the deadly April 27 tornadoes hit the state. He knew there would be other hurting children and wanted to help. His simple plan involves giving them bubbles and sidewalk chalk in hopes that it will put smiles on their faces.

NAMB shifting primary focus to church planting but says Alabama not excluded

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Taking nine ministry assignments and condensing them into six while also reworking its mission statement to focus on church planting keeps the North American Mission Board (NAMB) on schedule with its recent orders. But initiating its first of seven years of funding changes in states like Alabama will be less restrictive than first anticipated, NAMB's top official contends.

Directed to shift from a primarily missionary-sending agency to a church-planting agency by the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force during the 2010 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting, NAMB's trustees approved the change May 11.

The new mission statement reads in part: "The North American Mission Board exists to work with churches, associations and state conventions in mobilizing Southern Baptists as a missional force to impact North America with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism and church planting ..."

The six priority areas are:

- ▶ assist churches in planting healthy, multiplying, evangelistic SBC churches in the United States and Canada

- ▶ assist churches in the ministries of evangelism and making disciples

- ▶ assist churches by appointing, supporting and assuring accountability for missionaries serving in the United States and Canada

- ▶ assist churches by providing missions education and coordinating volunteer missions opportunities for church members

- ▶ assist churches by providing leadership development

- ▶ assist churches in relief ministries to victims of disaster and other people in need.

"We want to do several things,

but church planting will be our primary focus," said NAMB President Kevin Ezell. "When people think of NAMB, I want them to think of church planting."

Ezell also said he has no plans of eliminating all funding for other ministries, and states like Alabama aren't going to be left out of the church planting formula. "We are in the process of downsizing and shifting some funds, but I do see the need to invest in every state," he said. "If we don't continue to plant churches even in our strongest areas, we are going to be in trouble down the road."

"Out of the \$50 million NAMB invests in the states, \$10 million goes to the South, and \$40 million goes to new work areas. One of the misunderstandings of the GCR was to think most money goes to the South, but that was a mistake," Ezell said. "Eighty percent of the money already goes to the new work areas. Where we need to be more strategic is in the \$40 million, not so much in the \$10 million."

And as far as disaster relief, "not one dime is being cut from the budget," he said. "We are looking for ways ... to do more with less."

Ezell did confirm travel budgets for the NAMB staff were cut in half and that he initially considered suggesting the same plan to state convention staff who are jointly funded by NAMB. He said he decided against it after talking to convention executive directors. So while several conventions like Alabama

will receive less money, Ezell said it will be up to convention staff to decide where the cuts are made.

The decrease in funding is directly related to a decrease in giving to the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, Ezell explained.

"The giving has been less over the last two years, but NAMB has not been passing that on to the states. We've been absorbing it, depending on the under spend (money not being used that is earmarked for a certain ministry)," he said. "It is not healthy to depend on people not spending the money."

"I don't believe Southern Baptists sacrificially give to have an under spend ... and so [beginning in 2012] there is no under spend at NAMB," Ezell said.

Alabama will receive about \$95,000 less from NAMB in 2012, said Bobby Dubois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). No official decision has been announced about what cuts will be made or

their possible impact on jointly funded missionaries in the state — six state missionaries on the SBOM staff receive some funding from NAMB and scores of associational ministry positions across the state are jointly funded.

Ezell said NAMB would evaluate all jointly funded positions in the fall and make decisions about which ones to continue assisting in the future. Shifts in personnel funding will take place over a period of several years. (BP contributed)



If we don't continue to plant churches even in the strongest areas, we are going to be in trouble down the road."

Kevin Ezell
NAMB president

Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

▶ **Bethel Church, Jones**, will celebrate homecoming June 5, 10 a.m. Dean Matthews will speak. Gene Lowery and the Samaritans will sing. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Stoney Barbee is pastor.

BIBB

▶ **Six Mile Church, Brierfield**, will celebrate homecoming June 5, 11 a.m. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service at noon. There will be a singing at 1:30 p.m. Bob Hope is pastor.

CLARKE

▶ **Evergreen Church, Jackson**, will host Broken Vessels (Scott and Lisa Roberts) in concert May

29, 5 p.m. Howard Gaston III is pastor. ▶ **Stave Creek Church, Jackson**, will hold A Day of Remembering in honor of those who have died for our country May 29, 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. There will be An Evening of Special Music that night. Jamie Lay is pastor.

COFFEE

▶ **Goodman Church, Enterprise**, will hold revival June 5–8 with Larry Doster, pastor of Lee Street Church, Enterprise. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. There will be special music each service. Bruce Williams is pastor. ▶ **Mount Gil-ead Church, Elba**, will hold revival

June 6–8, nightly at 6, with Earl Smith. Fred Fowler is pastor.

MORGAN

▶ **Southwest Church, Hartselle**, will host Strait Way quartet May 29, 5 p.m. Dewitt Crowe is pastor.

WASHINGTON

▶ **Pleasant Hill Church, Millry**, will celebrate homecoming June 5, 11 a.m. Former Pastor Alvin Tucker will speak. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service at noon. Stillwater Quartet, of Gilbertown, will sing after lunch. Michael G. Maloy is pastor. ☞

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Church destroyed by Mississippi River floodwaters

DORENA, Mo. — When the U.S. Army Corps Engineers blew the Birds Point levee along the Mississippi River on May 2, the waters washed away as many as 100 homes and 133,000 acres of fertile farmland. It also flooded a small Southern Baptist church. "The church is gone," said LeRoy Davenport, pastor of Dorena Baptist Church. "I've seen aerial pictures, and it's gone."

The church building is still there, but at one point the muddy waters were up to the edge of the roof. The day after Mother's Day, when the National Guard allowed property owners to inspect their homes via boats, a man reported to Davenport that he stood in the window ledge and could see pews floating inside. The church had been around since 1946 and had never had floodwater in it, though it came close a few times. When the floodway was activated, it was done so in part to save the town of Cairo, Ill., which experienced a record crest along the Mississippi River and a swollen Ohio River. With rain continuing and water levels at historic levels, the Corps said there was "no way to stop all flooding, but rather to do our best to reduce the risk to life and property in the region."

In addition to Dorena Baptist, two other Missouri Baptist churches flooded in the recent surge of the Mississippi River. Shining Light Baptist Church, Charleston, and Hooe Baptist Church, Oran, were impacted.

Church's music video gets 300,000 hits on YouTube

HOUSTON — It's unlike any Baptist-produced Easter video you've ever seen, and it's gotten more than 300,000 views on YouTube — and lots of positive feedback from around the world.

It's a high-energy music video called "Dance Your Shoes Off," and it shows 2,000 members of Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, dancing and worshipping to a song about Christ's resurrection. With the Houston skyline in the background and with hundreds of curious people watching, the members move their arms, legs and feet to the choreographed dance steps that took about a month to learn. At the end of the five-minute video, they point to the sky, and then walk off the field without their tennis shoes, and we learn all the shoes — brand new — were collected for people in need.

"It's become much more global and bigger than we had ever imagined," said Second Baptist associate pastor Steve Seelig, who got the idea for the video after watching a similar video in 2010 made by a church in Hungary. That one was called "Resurrection Sunday Dance," and involved about 1,300 people dancing in downtown Budapest.

"I was so inspired by that, and I thought, 'If an Eastern bloc country can do that, how much more should we in the Bible Belt be able to get out and celebrate our beliefs?'" he said.

Southern Baptist CP giving down 1.45 percent

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are 1.45 percent below the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank Page. The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2010–11 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget.

As of April 30, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$114,378,059.49, or \$1,686,671.03 behind the \$116,064,730.52 received at the end of April 2010. Monthly CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$15,876,815.32.

For the SBC CP Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$114,378,059.49 is 98.13 percent of the \$116,562,885.94 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1–Sept. 30 fiscal year.

Bobby Welch joins Tennessee convention staff

NASHVILLE — Bobby Welch, strategist for Global Evangelical Relations (GER) with the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) since 2007, has been named associate executive director/church growth with the Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) and will continue with GER in a reduced role.

Welch will develop, coordinate, promote and equip Tennessee Baptist churches in a statewide strategy of church planting, church revitalization and evangelism. The TBC executive board unanimously elected Welch to the position May 10. ☞

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



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

This Is Our Katrina



This is our Katrina. That is the only way I know how to describe the massive storm damage across our state. Lives have been lost. Thousands of homes and businesses have been destroyed.

Even now, a month after the killer tornadoes of April 27, several communities in our state lie in rubble and look like they have been carpet bombed.

Some people continue to search for and pray for the return of loved ones who have yet to be found. Numerous church facilities lie in ruin while others are in critically damaged condition.

I have personally done my best to travel the state and see firsthand the impact of this tornado



outbreak. So have my state missionary colleagues. From the first day after the disaster, state missionaries have been on the ground helping to coordinate the

communication needs and serve as disaster relief workers.

Trained Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers from 13 state conventions including Alabama have given more than 10,000 volunteer days of service across our state. More than 215,000 meals have been served through these trained teams.

All this ministry is in addition to countless Alabama Baptists who, in rapid response, ministered as individuals and through their local churches and associations in providing help to hurting

people in the name of our Lord.

What can you continue to do for Sweet Home Alabama? Please pray for your fellow Alabamians. Prayer is always powerful and needful. Second, please give sacrificially to Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Fund. Many have already done so. All

Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 46:7,11)

2 Peter 3:8

By Rick Lance
State Missionary
Executive Director-Treasurer



monies received will go toward helping people impacted by the storms.

This is an overwhelming situation, but we don't have to be overwhelmed. We serve the God of Psalm 46 Who is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble."

The people of Alabama are resilient and resourceful. We will get through this horrific situation. As Alabama Baptists, we will do what we can, where we can, to meet people's needs in the name of Christ. "The Lord of Hosts is with us, The God of

This column, now updated, was originally published on www.RickLance.com.

Checks for disaster relief should be made payable to: State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870. Please note

"Alabama tornado relief" on the check. To give by credit card, go online to www.alsbom.org.



Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



BY MIKE GRIFFIN

It has been my joy to be yoked together for more than half a century with millions of Great Commission Christians in serving Christ by giving through the Cooperative Program, beginning even before I knew what the Cooperative Program was.

As I came to learn about the Cooperative Program process, I never questioned that it was a good way to do missions. But, without a doubt, what sealed this conviction in my heart was the wonderful experience I had of being on the “other end” of CP giving.

My first pastorate was a church plant in Berlin, N.H. Berlin is a town that had no Southern Baptist witness and very little gospel witness at all. My wife and I had the joy of ministering there for six and one-half years as church planter apprentices with the Home Mission Board. We saw God do some great things during that time.

I remember thinking on numerous occasions, during the time of our appointment and after we began our work, “What a marvelous relationship of trust we have as Southern Baptists.”

At that time, about 15 million Southern Baptists were trusting Janice and me to faithfully share the glorious gospel of our Lord

Jesus Christ with hungry, lost souls of northern New Hampshire — trusting us enough to pay our salary for two full years and a portion of it thereafter. But we were also trusting

the 15 million Southern Baptists to continue to provide our support in order that we might devote our total attention and energy to the task to which we were called.

In addition to the financial support, the Cooperative Program provided spiritual and emotional support through our association and state convention that would have been impossible without it.

So, yes, I am a believer in the Cooperative Program as a satisfied and blessed recipient of its ministry. As Southern Baptists, if we are faithful to go if God calls, and if all of us are faithful to give, it works!

Mike Griffin is pastor of Grant's Creek Baptist Church, Fosters, in Tuscaloosa Association.



Summer Missions Camps at WorldSong Missions Place

Summer Missions Camps at WorldSong Missions Place

Cook Springs, Alabama

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High-adventure camping with a missions emphasis featuring:

- Bible study and worship experiences
- Spending time with missionaries
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Girls' Missions Camp

(for girls completing grades 3-6)

- June 13-17
- June 20-24
- June 27-July 1

Youth Girls' Missions Camp

(for girls completing grades 7-12)

- June 20-24
- June 27-July 1

Children's Missions Mini Camp

(for coeds completing grades 2-6)

- July 11-14

Girls' Missions Mini Camp

(for girls completing grades 2-6)

- July 18-20

Mom & Daughter Missions Camp

(for girls completing grades K-3)

- June 17-18
- July 15-16

Mom & Me Mini Camp

(for girls completing grades 2-6)

- July 21-23

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

MUSIC NOTES

Children's Choir Summit

a training event for all children's choir leaders and workers

Friday and Saturday, July 8-9, 2011, at Shocco Springs

Cost per person: \$95.50 (based on 3-4 occupants per room, \$20 deposit). Notable leaders from all over the Southeast leading sessions. Grand prize drawing!

Registration:

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

Other Info:

www.alsbom.org/children-summit or please contact Ministry Assistant Susan Corley at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, scorley@alsbom.org.



Cost per person: \$260 (\$80 per person deposit). Deadline for ordering t-shirts: June 10. (Order form online.)

Registration:

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

Other Info:

www.alsbom.org/mix456 and www.alsbom.org/remix or please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, cparrish@alsbom.org.

Alabama Singing Men Retreat and Alabama Singing Women Retreat

Thursday and Friday, September 8-9, 2011, at Shocco Springs

Cost per person: \$72 (double occupancy), \$92 (single occupancy)

Registration:

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

Other Info:

www.alsbom.org/asm-asw or please contact Ministry Assistant Susan Corley at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, scorley@alsbom.org.



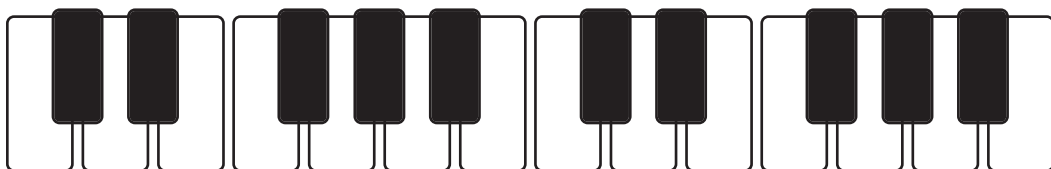
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June 27-30, RA Camp, 4th-12th grade boys

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May 30-June 3

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Talladega

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

Cost: \$180

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Cost: \$180

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Cost: \$180 pair

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Contact: (256) 582-4994

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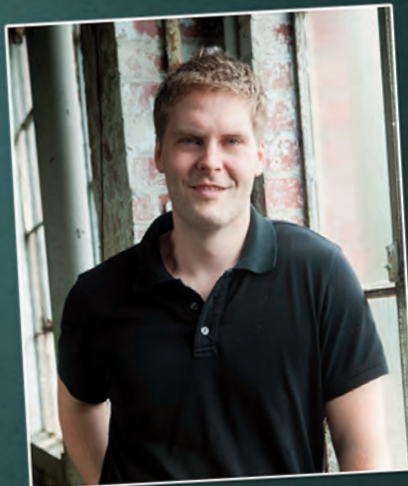
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REACHING, TEACHING AND DISCIPLE-MAKING SUMMIT 1 & 2

Shocco Springs, Talladega

CHOOSE FROM:
Friday and Saturday, August 5-6 and August 12-13, 2011

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

To perfect: to make something as good as possible or bring something to completion. So the challenge is to train church leaders as we strive together toward perfection in the work

God has called us to do!
 After the 2010 Sunday School Leader Training at Shocco, Kathleen Bennefield from Sycamore Baptist Church said, "Thank you for the opportunity to become more prepared for a job that I feel I'm totally unqualified for. I know God will equip me if He has truly called me, and I pray He has used this event towards that goal!"

In 2011, the training is Reaching, Teaching & Disciple-Making Summit, and there will be more training than ever

before at this annual conference with a new name and new design. The training is now designed not only for Sunday School leaders but for discipleship leaders, pastors, men's leaders, deacons, leaders in missions, singles ministries, senior ministries, youth ministries, technology, evangelism, and other church leadership.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



LEADER**Lab**

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

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

We invite all pastors, associates,

staff members, spouses and lay leaders. Call for early bird registration prices that end May 31.

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

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

**PASTOR,
 DEACON/
 SPOUSE**

THEME: Take Up Your Towel

RETREAT

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

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

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

COST: \$69 per person (double occupancy)

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

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



Chaplain Don Scott comforts a woman outside East Side Baptist Church, Cullman, reduced to rubble by a tornado.

COMPASSION

Gifts through the Cooperative Program help provide a way for Alabama Baptists to minister to victims of disasters, by becoming the hands and feet of Christ in times of need.

For more information and resources about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org.



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State Bible Drill, Speakers Tournament winners

The 2011 State Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament's original schedule was postponed following the deadly tornado outbreak in Alabama. It was rescheduled for May 14 and took place at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association. The winners of each division are listed below.



Photo by Lydia Wolfe

YOUTH BIBLE DRILL — (Left to right) First place, Ellie Morris, Leatherwood Baptist Church, Wellington; second, Michael Last, and third, Paul Last, both of Harmony Baptist Church, Hillsboro.



Photo by Lydia Wolfe

HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE DRILL — Leslie Haynes (left), Meadowbrook Church, Oxford, won first place, and Savannah Pritchett, First Baptist Church, Pell City, won second.



Photo by Lydia Wolfe

SPEAKERS TOURNAMENT — (Left to right) First place, Clay Greathouse, Memphis Baptist Church, Dothan; third, Joseph Brown, Winewood Baptist Christian Fellowship, Birmingham; and second, Jillie Rufe, Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Political turmoil in Syria continues; more than 600 killed by government

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

She didn't realize it was a dangerous question. All Natalie Shepherd wanted to do was learn the Arabic word for lion.

"We were sitting in a public place with my husband's Arabic teacher in Syria, and I pointed to a statue of a lion and asked him how to pronounce it," said Shepherd, formerly a Southern Baptist worker in the country. "His eyes got huge, and he said, 'Shhhh! We can't say that out loud in public!'"

The Arabic word for lion — asad — is also the president's surname, and the Shepherds' teacher didn't want to risk someone overhearing and thinking he was slandering the president's family.

That was years ago.

A lot has changed since then, said Shepherd, who in recent days has watched images on television of Syrian protesters rising up in force to demand that President Bashar al-Assad step down. The nation is the current hot spot in the region's outbreak of political turmoil, and by early May, a reported 600 people had been killed and at least 8,000 reported missing or held in custody by government forces seeking to crush the opposition, according to news sources.

On May 18, the *Times* reported, "The United States intensified political and economic pressure on Syria ... by imposing sanctions on Assad and six other senior Syrian officials," in an effort to assist the nation.

Tanks are rolling through cities and villages. Some observers have reminisced in the midst of all the violence about the thousands of Syrians killed when Assad's father, President Hafez al-Assad, flattened an entire section of a city to quell opposition forces in 1982.

The elder Assad was the one in power when Shepherd asked about the lion statue.

"As much as my teacher didn't want to be overheard talking about the president back then, I know that the people today had full awareness based on their history of what revolting would entail," she said. "This is a historic moment for Syria in many ways."

Shepherd and other Christian



BP photo

PRAYER NEEDED — Christian workers in Syria and other countries in political turmoil go about their daily lives, building relationships and showing the love of Christ, but the task is increasingly challenging.

workers in the region pray it will be a spiritually historic moment for the nation, too. She said she remembers during her time in Syria staying up

"It was a story of transformation and change ... we prayed that change would keep going."

Natalie Shepherd
Former Syrian representative

all night with believers praying that God would do whatever it took for Him to bring salvation to the peoples of Syria.

"It's been a consistent attitude among the body to really cry out to God through prayer, that the Gospel would spread and take root there again," Shepherd said.

It's happened before, she said.

She recounted a story of her husband visiting a man who lived along Straight Street where Ananias lived in Acts 9 and how, after a colleague accompanied by her husband shared with the Syrian man, he accepted Christ on the spot.

At first, the young man's family would have nothing to do with the foreigners — they wouldn't even stay in the house when he would have them over for a meal. But by the time the Shepherds left Syria, they were sitting with the entire family around the table, the mother of the family dotting on Shepherd during the meal.

"It was a story of transforma-

tion and change, and as we drove through the country and saw villages filled with minarets, we prayed that change would keep going," she said.

Church persecution

The church has met with some persecution in the country, but the gospel is still advancing, she said. One way this is happening is through a movie made by Syrian actors on the life of Paul, a film even government officials have watched.

An audio project is also underway that will soon provide Scripture for the Syrian people in their dialect, Shepherd said. "The Word is spreading."

She and other Christian workers in the region ask for believers to pray:

▶ for the Lord to keep working in Syria and for the door to be open to the gospel during this time of unrest.

▶ for Christians in Syria to be bold in proclaiming Jesus Christ.

▶ for a great harvest of souls in Syria.

Editor's Note — Names have been changed for security reasons.

CORRECTION

In the "Hands and feet" article in the May 12 issue the eight salvations because of the disaster relief efforts in Mud Creek Baptist Association were attributed to the wrong church. The salvations were at Union Hill Baptist Church, Bessemer.

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'Be eager'

Samford graduates challenged to 'make a difference,' 'pay the price'

The world is full of people representing three groups — observers, those fearful of venturing out and those eager to make a difference, Lebanese denominational leader and educator Nabil K. Costa told Samford University graduates May 14.

Costa, executive director of the Lebanese Baptist Society, said observers are content to sit back, relax and watch life pass them by.

He quoted Thomas Edison, who said, "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Fearful people, he said, "are interested in what goes on, but are too afraid to venture there themselves."

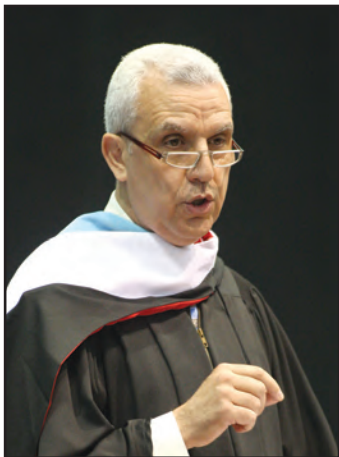
"A third group — which I hope you are a part of — is made up of people who are eager to set out and

make a difference, ready to pay the price," Costa told the seniors.

The Middle Eastern religion leader addressed an audience of more than 5,000 in Samford's Pete Hanna Center. Graduates from Samford's largest school, the Howard College of Arts and Sciences, received diplomas, along

with seniors from its School of the Arts and Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education and Professional Studies — 432 in all.

Following the annual graduation prayer breakfast May 13 a total of more than 400 other graduates received degrees during commencement programs for its business, law, nursing and pharmacy schools. Beeson Divinity School graduated May 4.



COSTA

Costa, a former businessman called to full-time ministry in 1998, was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters by Samford during the ceremony. In presenting the degree, Samford President Andrew Westmoreland described Costa as "a leading humanitarian in a strife-torn part of the world." Costa is

general secretary of an association of evangelical Christian schools enrolling about 25,000 students in Lebanon and recently was elected a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance.

"God is doing amazing things in our region, and is calling on us — and you — to be prepared for



Photo courtesy of Samford University

CAP AND GOWN — More than 400 Samford University graduates don their cap and gown for the May 14 graduation in front of an audience of more than 5,000 people in the Pete Hanna Center.

the colossal work that needs to be met," Costa said. He told the graduates that they, as Christians, have what the rest of the world needs.

"As you follow God's leading, should He give you a heart for our part of the world, know that there are incredible opportunities awaiting you," he said.

Costa said Christians are making a difference in the Middle East. "Don't underestimate the impact of a small amount of yeast on a large loaf of bread," he said.

While Christianity represents only 5 percent of the population, Costa noted that evangelical Christians are leading peacemaking endeavors between Palestine and Israel, that one-third of men and women

trained at the Lebanese Christian seminary were from non-Christian backgrounds, and that 70 percent of the students in Lebanese evangelical Christian schools are from non-Christian backgrounds.

Look for opportunities

"The Middle East has its share of challenges," he acknowledged. "We can either focus on the formidable circumstances and become discouraged or look within those circumstances for opportunities to touch lives and make a difference. We choose the latter."

Samford recognized its top student award winners at the close of the program. Kathryn Elise Ormsbee, of Lexington, Ky., and Hugh

Anthony Smith, of Columbia, Tenn., received the President's Cup for the highest academic average. Christopher Davis Fite, of Decatur, received the Velma Wright Irons Award for the second highest average. Jennifer Wrenne Taylor, of Indianapolis, Ind., received the John C. Pittman Spirit Award.

James A. Jensen, who is retiring from the school of the arts after 43 years on the faculty, led the academic procession as Mace Bearer. He and G. William Bugg, also retiring after 33 years on the school of the arts faculty, were recognized for their service by Provost and Executive Vice President J. Bradley Creed. (SU)



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

HONORED — Gene Perkins (left) and Billy Hinson, retiring professors at the University of Mobile, carry the ceremonial mace and lead the procession at the May 14 graduation ceremony in the Mobile Civic Center. Perkins is one of the university's first faculty members.

UMobile grads urged to 'keep the faith'

There are no Oscars given for Christian integrity and character, and you won't be featured on American Idol.

"But when you keep the faith, you are living the way the Christian life was designed to be lived," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, during the 45th graduation ceremony for the University of Mobile (UMobile).

Lance called upon graduates to follow the example cited by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 of living their lives as an offering to God, fighting the good fight, finishing the race and keeping the faith.

More than 340 graduates received diplomas and honors at the May 14 ceremony at the Mobile Civic Center.

The university awarded the honorary doctor of humane letters to Gary Palmer, president and co-founder of the Alabama Policy Institute.

The university's top two student awards, the William K. Weaver Jr. Excellence Award and the Annie Boyd Parker Weaver Excellence Award, were presented to graduates Andrew Frederick Schmitt, of Tal-



LANCE

lassee, and Elizabeth Morgan Carnley, of Enterprise. Retiring professors Gene Perkins and Billy Hinson carried the ceremonial mace and led the procession into the arena. Perkins is a member of the university's first faculty and was the only original faculty member still teaching at the school. The ceremony was dedicated in memory of Larry Chambers, associate professor of psychology, who died in August 2010.

Lance told graduates the Christian life is not an earned life; it is a given life.

"Before us today we have the opportunity to see these graduates go into this world as change agents to make a difference in the human debris of lostness and decimation. We applaud their achievements. We admire their steadfastness. Now we commission them to go into the world and change lives," Lance said.

The life of Jesus Christ serves as "the magnificent example of what we are to do in this world," he said. "I am reminded so much of those unsung heroes, the saints behind the scenes, who will probably never be featured in books, never be interviewed on talk shows, never receive even the honors we have seen this morning, and yet, when it is all over, the ultimate reward is 'well done, good and faithful servant.'"

"You're changed," he told graduates. "By the grace of God, you are changed. Now change the world, so that no matter how many tornadoes are unleashed, no matter how many Katrinas come our way, the main thing is serving Him and living for Him." (UMobile)

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

'We do not lose heart'

Tears flowed uncontrollably early one morning about two weeks in, but the rest of the time I've lived in a sort of numbness. One side of me tortured to rush back to my hometown to help, the other side convinced that as long as I don't go I won't have to relive the pain of what I saw.

I'm not sure if it's my survival mode kicking in or just plain denial, but I do know it all relates to April 27.

Do you sense it? It's surreal, like we are existing but not really living and that maybe, just maybe, we'll wake up soon and all of this will have just been a nightmare.

So much devastation, so much pain. If you are an Alabamian or have any connection to Alabama, you have been impacted in some way by the deadly tornadoes that stomped across our state, stealing an unfair share of lives, property and possessions.

Listening to so many who heard the horrifying whistle of that "freight train" and felt the pressure and intensity of the monster storm pulling with all its might sounds like something only found in the movies. Seeing the vicious results duplicated over and over across two-thirds of our state is overwhelming. Understanding the true loss that families have endured just shouldn't be.

But it is and life will forever be changed.

Still amid all the tragedy, there is hope and goodness. God is being glorified and His people are shining through all the dirt and debris.

The love and compassion are magnified. An overflowing spirit of giving shows no sign of fatigue. And those are all good things, because



this is going to be a long journey.

Many will seem to forget, returning to the routines of life. And well meaning friends outside the state will seem shocked to learn the tornadoes are still a vivid part of your life. There may come a time you want to stand up and shout to those bustling around you, "Hey, don't you remember what happened? How can you go back to your normal routines and not realize the pain and sadness here?"

Finding a new normal

But some type of normalcy will develop, even if the new normal revolves around the continued recovery and rebuilding effort. And our driving need to begin each conversation by asking how the other person fared in the storms and if their family is OK will fade. We will eventually find new topics of conversation, and it will be acceptable to talk about things other than the tornadoes.

For now, it is still too fresh, too real. It's only been a month and there's so much healing still to do. How that process is supposed to play out, I do not know, but I do know God is with us and will not forsake us. I know Alabama Baptists are committed for the long haul, and I know the incredible resiliency shown so far by Alabamians brings to life the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ... Therefore we do not lose heart. ... So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

It has truly been an honor to help tell the story of what God is doing through Alabama Baptists, and we will continue to keep that story alive. Beginning next week, we will launch a monthly in-depth package on work being done across the state. On the weeks in between the packages, a column will run with highlights of what Alabama Baptists are doing in recovery efforts. We also want to hear your stories.

Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

More thoughts on aging

40 is now only a few days away, but I don't think it will be as scary as I anticipated. In fact, this 39-year-old (I have to claim it one more time) is ready to embrace the next decade with enthusiasm.

I've heard from numerous people who have been willing to share tips or offer encouragement. I shared some from those turning 40 and 50 in last month's column. This month, I'm featuring two who have recently turned 60.

Richard Maddox is a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, and works for the Department of Justice in Birmingham. He shared with me things he now knows at 60 that he wished he had known at 40.

▶ The perfect will of God for believers may be summed up in two words — make disciples.

▶ The joy of really knowing the Word and the waste of ignoring the Word daily.

▶ How easy it is to be distracted by the temporal at the expense of the eternal.

▶ Long-term goals are accomplished one day at a time.

Christian author, speaker and teacher **Denise George** shared a light-hearted look at changing decades. Denise attempted to tiptoe past her 60th birthday, but her husband Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, made sure that didn't happen.

"When I turned 40 years old, I bought a pair of pink roller skates. I strapped them on my feet, took off down the sidewalk and almost broke my neck," she said. "I guess I needed to prove to myself I could still skate like a 10-year-old."

"I don't remember my 50th birthday. I was too busy rearing up energetic teenagers to even pause to realize I had crossed the half-century mark," Denise said.

"When I recently turned 60 ... I decided to keep this birthday a secret and just let it pass without notice ... but to my surprise I received 250 e-mailed birthday wishes that day.

"A little bearded birdie told me," the e-mailers confessed.

From the readers...

"Your column gives one much to think about. Keep up the good work. When I read what you write about, it is as if I have had a conversation with you."

Betty Baggott
Montgomery, Ala.

"Rashional Thoughts is very clever and very well done."

Craig Gault
Mobile, Ala.

An excerpt from Stephen Covey's 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People'

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw, Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal focuses on our need for balance and renewal in "the four dimensions of [our] nature — physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional. ... It's preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have — you."

Covey proves his point with this story:

"Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree. 'What are you doing?' you ask.

'Can't you see?' comes the impatient reply. 'I'm sawing down this tree.'

'You look exhausted!' you exclaim. 'How long have you been at it?'

'Over five hours,' he returns, 'and I'm beat! This is hard work.'

'Well, why don't you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?' you inquire. 'I'm sure it would go a lot faster.'

'I don't have time to sharpen the saw,' the man says emphatically. 'I'm too busy sawing!'"

The concept of pacing ourselves and balance has been nonexistent since the tornadoes hit April 27, and that is understandable. But we should now try to care for ourselves again and work to avoid **compassion fatigue** — emotional and physical exhaustion from excessive caring for people in distress. Stay tuned for more on this topic.

UPCOMING TOPICS

include eating well and remembering the Golden Rule. Send us your experiences with these topics. E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com.

Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

50 Years Ago May 1961

Keeping Pace: Friendship Baptist Chapel in Madison-Liberty Baptist Association has been organized into Mountain View Baptist Church, bringing to 50 the number of churches in the association. The organization of this new church, with approximately 65 members, is another step toward keeping pace with the booming population of the Huntsville area. George Wheeler, pastor of the sponsoring East Huntsville Baptist Church, led in the organization service, which included a message by George Ricker.

40 Years Ago May 1971

Historical Society President: F.W. Helmbold, librarian of Samford University, was elected president of the Southern Baptist Histor-

ical Society, which met recently in Nashville. Helmbold is also curator of the Alabama Baptist Historical Society and editor of the Alabama Baptist Historian. He and Fanna Bee, special collections librarian at Samford, appeared on the program at the annual meeting of the society.

30 Years Ago May 1981

Van Dedication: An Alabama Baptist disaster relief van was dedicated May 8 at the Baptist building in Montgomery following a meeting of the Executive Board. The van was built by Dorsey Trailers of Elba at a cost of \$85,775. Among those participating in the dedication ceremony were William T. Spencer, chairman, disaster relief committee; George E. Bagley, executive secretary, Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC); A. Earl

Potts, coordinator, Alabama Baptist disaster relief program; and Drew J. Gunnells Jr., president, ABSC.

20 Years Ago May 1991

SBOM Service Awards: Twenty-one employees of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions received service award pins at a special recognition luncheon in Montgomery. Among the 21 were David Richardson, 30 years; Eileen Gurley, 25 years; and Katie Palmer, John Sawyer and Don Watterson, 20 years. Ralph Halbrooks and Bob Duck, who will retire Dec. 31, were presented engraved plaques in recognition of their years of service. Halbrooks, church administration director, will have served more than 31 years. Duck, public relations director, will have served 23 and one-half years.

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

10 Years Ago May 2001

Capital Campaign: Dinners are being held around the state this month to raise money for Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center's expansion. The capital campaign seeks to raise \$6 million for the construction of a 52,000-square-foot worship facility for the Talladega conference center.

Chester Jernigan, chairman of Shocco Springs' board of trustees, said the new worship facility will have a capacity of 1,200 and include expanded dining room and child care space. Construction is set to begin Sept. 1, with completion expected in fall 2002. Shocco officials said the facility is necessary to meet increasing demand as Shocco seeks to minister to even more individuals.

Japan tsunami survivors still need food, clothing

The handwritten note practically cries out: "Living here! Please help us!"

The volunteers from Tokyo Baptist Church almost missed the dirty scrap of paper, attached to the battered door. It blends in with the rubble and debris left behind by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

Major parts of the house are gone, washed away a month ago by the crushing tsunami waves. Not really believing anyone will answer, volunteer Satomi Ono calls out to see if anyone is there.

A young mother cautiously pokes her head around the corner. When she sees the volunteers' warm smiles, relief rushes over her and she excitedly yells to her father. They are the only two left in their family. Her two children were swept out of her arms in the tsunami wave. Her mother and hus-

band also died on that fateful day.

The young woman invites the team inside. Despite broken dishes standing up in the mud-caked floor, Ono can see that the pair had worked hard, cleaning their disaster-stricken home. Piles of papers, toys, rotting clothes and splintered wood are ready to be deposited on the street for garbage crews.

Church distribution site

Ono explains that her church has a distribution site not more than a 20-minute walk down the road. The church's goal is to help people not living in the government-sponsored evacuation centers.

As Ono empties her bag of relief supplies, the young woman and her father stare, overwhelmed, at the bounty — some instant noodles, candles, batteries and underwear.

"There is a God!" the woman

exclaims. "Yes," Ono replies, tears now streaming down her face. "I believe He brought us to your house. He has not forgotten you."

Residents of Ishinomaki who still have a house standing are expected to "tough it out" or "make the best of it" in true Japanese fashion, persevering in homes wrecked by the 9.0-magnitude earthquake and ensuing tsunami.

The first few weeks after the disaster were the worst. More than 5 million homes were without electricity and nearly 1.5 million had no access to water. Kerosene was nonexistent, making it impossible to stay warm when a snowstorm hit hours after the tsunami. Grocery stores had no food, only empty shelves. Due to the nuclear crisis in Fukushima, supplies didn't reach the evacuation centers for days. Weeks after the quake, rationed

goods finally reached those camped out in their homes. Relief organizations and churches like Tokyo Baptist had a hard time mounting a quick response because special government permits were required to enter the disaster zone and gas to make the trip from Tokyo was almost impossible to come by.

Once the church's assessment team arrived in Ishinomaki, the initial team pulled into a restaurant parking lot to unload supplies to cook a hot meal. Before they could even open the back of the truck, a line had formed.

Local men helped the volunteers unload and older women offered their services in cooking soup over wood-fires. Not only was this the first hot meal in two weeks, most had not eaten in five days.

To donate to relief efforts, visit www.alsbom.org/japan. (BP)

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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."

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Stepping up in Marshall Association

Boaz's Sardis focuses on missions year-round with theme 'REACH: Go, Pray, Tell and Teach'

By Anna Swindle
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Members of Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz, are serious about missions, and their 2011 calendar proves it. Under the theme of "REACH: Go, Pray, Tell, and Teach," the church has divided the year into quarters, with each targeting a different area of missions: community, state, nation and world.

From January through March (Quarter One), the Marshall Baptist Association church's missions focus was the world.

During those months, members gave a \$10,600 offering to support the building of a church in Gilau, Romania.

The money will be presented to the Romanian church during a missions trip this summer. This June will mark the seventh year Sardis Baptist has partnered with this particular Romanian congregation and the 20th trip to the country.

"We structured our year to coordinate with activities we already have going on," said Zac Goforth, Sardis' minister of students and recreation. "We tried to coordinate our world mission for when they were taking up an offering for Romania, for example. And we're kind of building on it from there, adding newer projects like Bibles for Burma."

That project was intended to collect 250 Bibles for the Southeast Asian country. Instead the congregation donated and sent 1,063 Bibles.

Meeting needs

Members spent the month of March learning about and praying for Burma's needs.

During that time, the recent tsunami devastated Japan so they stepped up to help victims by providing shoes through Soles for Souls.

Now the church has moved into

Quarter Two, which runs through June and focuses on Alabama.

One way members are ministering is through Downtown Rescue Mission in Huntsville. They also are praying for and encouraging state missionaries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and supporting the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

From July through September, the church's attention will turn to the United States.

During that time, the church will take its annual home missions trip, traveling this year to South Lebanon, Ohio.

There, the Sardis team will help with church construction, lead a backyard Bible club and conduct an evangelistic crusade.

In the final quarter of the year, families will be encouraged to choose a way to minister on their own, whether it be local, state, national or international, Goforth said.

One option will be the church's Angel Tree ministry, an outreach to neighbors in need during the Christmas season.

Treating missions as a year-round endeavor has made a lasting impression on Sardis member Chris Royal.

"I didn't grow up in a church where missions was a big deal, so it's taken me awhile to get with the Baptist view of missions and it's really cool," Royal said.



Photo courtesy of Sardis Baptist Church

BIBLES FOR BURMA — Members of Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz, in Marshall Baptist Association participate in the collection of Bibles for the Bibles for Burma project March 27.

And he pointed out that the church is making missions personal to every age group.

Outreach to classmates

"I've seen my kids share with their buddies at school and church and have outreach to classmates," Royal said. "Our girls get an allowance, and they give from their allowance to the church," he said of his children. "Our youngest daughter got really excited about Bibles for Burma. ... [She] funded nine Bibles on her own.

"The fact that the church helps

us with more than just studying and learning and really puts wheels on our religion is a neat opportunity."

Pastor Mike Goforth is thrilled to see how readily the congregation has embraced being involved in missions all year long.

"Our people have really responded and stepped up," he said. "Missions has always impacted me and my family, and thankfully the church is catching on to it. And we're seeing a lot of great things happen already this year, like with the amazing response to Bibles for Burma."

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Letters

(continued from page 2)

the storms to adopt a "sister" church and help them move from recovery to restoration. Many of our pastors, staff members and brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and need some love and encouragement.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who had relatives and friends who did not survive the storm and also to those who are recuperating from injuries inflicted by the storm.

These days may prove to be a way to show the world that we love all people and want to help in any way possible to share God's love

with them. I have wept much over what the storms did in destruction, but now my tears are tears of joy and gratitude as I see my brothers and sisters working together, side by side, to fulfill the "new commandment" that Jesus gave the disciples to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

I love you, I love you, I love you and may God bless you, Alabama, and the United States of America.

Mike Shaw
Pelham, Ala.

BUT EVEN IF HE DOESN'T

Thank you for your informative

editorials that are always filled with sensible analysis and sound wisdom every week.

The May 12 editorial "But Even if He Does Not ..." was particularly timely in light of the tornadoes that struck Alabama. I don't think I have ever read a better biblically based, brief analysis on the often perplexing question of "why God allows such bad things to happen to seemingly innocent people."

Certainly, believers being perplexed about the sovereignty of God is not new.

But, the way you dealt with it is satisfying to my soul, especially the part dealing with the imperfect tense of the Hebrew verb for the word "will," which may also be read "may."

Bob Henderson
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 29

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

BE FORGIVING Philemon 1-25

Philemon is unique. It is the shortest and only strictly private letter among those by Paul preserved and included in the New Testament. Philemon is closely related to Colossians and to a lesser degree to Ephesians and Philippians.

A slave named Onesimus robbed his master, Philemon, and then fled from Colossae to Rome to lose himself in the huge metropolis. There he came into contact with Paul, who was under house arrest waiting for his hearing before Caesar or the emperor's appointee. In time, Onesimus became a believer and rendered Paul valuable service. He persuaded Onesimus to return home and straighten things out. This letter asking Philemon to receive Onesimus kindly, "as a brother beloved," Paul sent with him. In it, Paul even offered to repay any debts Onesimus might owe his wronged master.

Despite its brevity and lack of doctrinal content, this letter holds considerable value. It depicts Christian character, models Christian friendship, portrays Christian home life in the first century and implicitly strikes at the institution of slavery.

Salutation (1-3)

Paul named Timothy as his associate, but the letter is clearly Paul's because it fairly bristles with first person pronouns: "I, me, my."

He directed the letter to three people. It seems Philemon was one of Paul's converts (hinted in verse 19), and Apphia may have been his wife, also a believer ("our sister"). Some think Archippus was their son. Paul intended the letter also for the church that met in Philemon's house.

Prayer for Philemon (4-7)

In this prayer, Paul thanked God for Philemon's love, faith and compassion, thus setting him up for the request that followed.

Request of Onesimus (8-22)

Paul informed his friend that Onesimus had become a Christian and had proved a

huge help in his ministry. He said he wanted to keep Onesimus in Rome but rather sent him back to Colossae because he did not want to impose on Philemon (11-14). Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus as a "brother beloved," even as he would welcome Paul himself. He expressed his confidence that Philemon would comply with his request and even do more than he asked (21).

Conclusion (23-25)

Because Paul believed he would soon be released from Roman captivity as a result of his friend's prayers, he asked Philemon to prepare lodging for a visit.

Various greetings and a simple benediction end the short letter.

Comments

There is no better example of the gospel's social effects than this letter. Paul never played the role of social reformer. He was an evangelist and church planter. But here, in Philemon, he laid out a principle that, like a bomb with a delayed fuse, would one day blow the institution of slavery to bits. To see a slave as "a brother beloved" would in the end compel a Christian master to free his or her slaves, particularly those who were also believers. "More than I ask" (Phil. 21, NIV) suggests Paul hoped Philemon not only would forgive Onesimus and restore him as a repentant slave but would also release him from slavery and maybe even let him return to Rome to serve the apostle.

Philemon also provides a striking human picture of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Paul, Philemon and Onesimus stand for Jesus, the Father and a repentant sinner, respectively. When Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus as the apostle himself (Phil. 12, 15, 17), the truth that God accepts a believing sinner in the Beloved One, Jesus, took flesh. "If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me" is the language of imputation (cf 2 Cor. 5:18-21). The debt of sin was put on Christ's account. The believer's record is cleared, and he or she is received into the family and freed. ☞

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

INVEST IN OTHERS

Acts 9:26-27; 11:19-26; 15:36-41

Acts describes the birth of the early church. According to Luke, the church was established on some phenomenal events and its original leaders were what many would perceive as unlikely candidates for spearheading this fledgling movement. The church was anchored on the supernatural event of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead (Acts 1:1-5). His death and resurrection were the fulfillment of Israel's hope of a messiah.

Based on these miraculous acts, the oftentimes flawed and floundering disciples boldly proclaimed the gospel by the Holy Spirit's power and served as the church's founding apostles.

A basic principle of the church is that its formation and continued progress are never dependent upon human wisdom (1 Cor. 1:18-25). And God calls the most unlikely to receive His grace and serve His Kingdom (1 Cor. 1:26-31); He looks to what lies beyond the data on the resumé (1 Sam. 16:7). This was precisely the case with Saul, who became Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

Take the Risk (9:26-27)

But as God dispenses grace through His chosen instruments, His people also need to understand His ways and participate in this principle of grace. After Saul's conversion, Barnabas was one of the first among the early Christians to accept the possibility that God was at work even in someone like Saul. Other believers' hesitation in accepting Saul's conversion as bona fide is surely understandable. This man was a vicious and determined foe of the church (Acts 9:13-14). Could someone like that change? Was his conversion genuine?

All these questions and doubts were justified given Saul's past. Yet it is also clear in the manner in which he was saved that God clearly intervened in Saul's life to use him greatly (Acts 9:15-16). Every new convert needs a Barnabas to step in stride in friendship, support and mentorship. Barnabas set an example for all Christians to follow. It takes courage to stand against the popular opin-

ion, even among Christians, and it takes even greater courage to risk one's own reputation in order to endorse a convert like Saul.

Involve Others (11:19-26)

And Barnabas was not simply the man to stand in support at the beginning of Saul's conversion but continued to involve him where God was at work. Barnabas was no fair-weather friend only available for a short time or in fair circumstances. Standing alongside Saul as he faced opposition and fear from believers progressed to ensuring his participation in Kingdom work.

Barnabas was a mentor who continued to think on Saul's behalf; he continued to encourage Saul to participate with him in ministry. And it is no surprise that this visionary was described as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (24).

His friendship with Saul, his encouragement of Saul to also be involved where God was clearly at work was in step with the Holy Spirit's work — his role as mentor and friend was a natural result of faith.

Recognize Potential (15:36-41)

Just as Barnabas saw potential in Saul, he also saw potential in John Mark. There was such a sharp dispute concerning John Mark's usefulness that Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways. And it appears that John Mark was less than stellar in his missionary work. Clearly Paul was justified in his doubts.

Yet Barnabas, the champion of second chances, saw potential for John Mark and stood once again in support of a young believer. And many believers can be grateful for Barnabas' disposition of grace — how many of us are in need of second chances?

How many mature believers are willing to remember their own failures and extend support to the younger generation of believers? For those who are uncertain that Barnabas stands as a model mentor, it is good to be reminded that Paul himself renewed fellowship with Mark and came to depend on him greatly (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24). We need more Barnabases. ☞

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Chop down. (as a tree)
- Prong.
- "Without him was not any thing ____." (John 1:3)
- Gershwin.
- Golf club.
- "We ought to ____ God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)
- Captain of the Canaanites. (Judg. 4:2)
- Member of an ancient Jewish sect.
- "The wicked ____ their bow." (Ps. 11:2)
- Wales from a whip.
- Traveled with Paul to Syria and Cilicia.
- Cain was his uncle.
- Blue. (Sp.)
- Large pitcher.
- In this manner.
- "I am like a broken ____." (Ps. 31:12)
- Begat by Mizraim. (Gen. 10:13)
- Time zone. (abbr.)
- To tilt to one side, as a ship.

Down

- Pronoun.
- Of the family of the Erites. (Num. 26:16)
- Linking verb.
- Turbans. (KJV usage)
- Middle Eastern country.
- What you should just say.
- Compass dir.
- When he died at 120 his vision was most likely 20/20.
- He offered a "more excellent sacrifice." (Heb. 11:4)
- Impression.
- Chinese monetary unit.
- Word repeated in the Psalms. (pl.)
- "Sing ____ to the Lord God." (Judg. 5:3)
- Navigate.
- Shortly.
- Street ____.
- Ancient kingdom at the head of the Persian Gulf.
- Writes.
- "But the poor man had nothing, save one little ____." (2 Sam. 12:3)
- Love. (Lat.)
- Feminine name.
- In a rage.
- City on the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. (2 Chron. 8:17)
- River of Damascus. (2 Kings 5:12)
- Caleb was one.
- Song of praise.

41. "So shall thy ____ be filled." (Prov. 3:10)

- South African fox.
- "The barrel of ____ shall not abate." (1 Kings 17:14)
- Hip bones.
- Preposition.
- Weaken.
- "He casteth forth his ____ like morsels." (Ps. 147:17)
- Proverb.
- Before. (poet.)
- Direction from Beersheba to Jericho.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Muslim extremists attack Nigeria's Kurum village

KURUM, Nigeria — As she lay on the ground after being shot and then slashed with a machete, Dune James Rike looked into her husband's tear-filled eyes and asked, "Is this the end between us, so we shall not be together again?"

Pastor James Musa Rike said he held the hands of his dying 35-year-old wife and told her, "Hold on to your faith in Jesus, and we shall meet and never part again." Muslim extremists who attacked Kurum village in the Bogoro local government area of Nigeria's Bauchi state had already killed two of their children in a rampage that began May 4 at midnight.

Rike, pastor of a Church of Christ in Nigeria congregation in Kurum, next heard the cries of his 13-year-old daughter, Sum James Rike, who lay mortally wounded a few yards away. "She told me that the Muslim militants told her they would kill her and 'see how your Jesus will save you,'" he said.

The girl told her father that she responded by telling them that Jesus had already saved her, and that by killing her they would only be making it possible for her to be with Him. Rike prayed for her as she died. By shooting and setting homes on fire, the Muslim extremists killed 12 other Christians in the attack.

Bauchi police reported 16 people dead — one man, three women and 12 children. Rike and his son survived the attack, and his adopted daughter, Whulham James Rike, was injured and is receiving treatment at the general hospital in Bogoro, along with five others. The assailants set more than 20 houses ablaze before leaving the village, police said.

Christian churches, community attacked; 12 killed

CAIRO, Egypt — At least 12 people were killed and more than 200 were wounded when members of a conservative Muslim movement attacked two churches and surrounding Christian-owned homes and businesses in a poor section of Cairo on May 7.

Salafis, a hard-line Islamic movement with extremist tendencies, set fire to one of the two church buildings, leaving most of it gutted. The arson attack on the Virgin Mary Church in Imbaba was one of many recent assaults on Coptic Christians by members of the Salafist movement, and the second time in two months that a church building in the country has been set ablaze.

The first attack started early in the evening May 7 at St. Mina Church in Imbaba after a rumor spread that a Coptic woman who allegedly converted to Islam was being held in the church against her will. Clergy members of St. Mina allowed a group of Islamic imams into the church building to search for the woman, and the imams declared to the gathering Muslims that the woman wasn't in the building, according to witnesses at the scene.

The Salafist crowd was not dissuaded by the imams' report, and by 8:30 p.m. the fight had started. After unsuccessfully trying to push through the barricades, the mob went to the Virgin Mary Church, an undefended building a 10-minute walk from St. Mina.

A few men were in the building when it was attacked. All escaped except for one.

Mentally ill Christian charged with 'blasphemy' in Pakistan

CHICHAWATNI, Pakistan — Police in Chichawatni, Sahiwal district have charged a mentally ill Christian with "injuring religious feelings" under Pakistan's widely condemned blasphemy laws. Three families related to 25-year-old Babar Masih — the only other Christian families in the area — have fled their homes after a Muslim mob threatened to harm them, relatives of the accused said. Police in Chichawatni, Punjab province registered the blasphemy case against Masih on May 2 after arresting him at about 10 p.m. that night; the man's own family handed him over to police because a large number of Muslim clerics had gathered outside their house and demanded that he be turned over to them so that they could "do justice" by killing him, relatives said.

His brother, Amjad Masih, said that Masih has suffered a mental illness for the past six or seven years typified by fits of unprovoked rage, abusive language and lack of concern for food and clothing. Masih was charged under Section 298 of Pakistan's blasphemy statutes for "uttering words ... with deliberate intent to wound religious feelings" and Section 298-A for "use of derogatory remarks ... in respect of holy personages."

CAMPUS News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Lady Eagles Bring Home Honors:** The Judson College Lady Eagles softball team placed fourth in the U.S. Collegiate Athletic Association tournament in Akron, Ohio, May 6-9.

"I'm proud of students. They played as hard as they could possibly play," said head coach Lee Jones.

Meliah Matthews was named to the All-American Tournament Team, and Melia Graff was named honorable mention to the All-American Team. Graff also was named to the All-American Academic Team for having a grade point average of 3.5 or better.

► **Dothan Minister Wins Judson College Golf Tournament:** Bradley Rushing, pastor of Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan, won first place at Judson College's 49th annual Ministers Golf Tournament. Retired Alabama pastor Charles Davis, Toomsaba, Miss., won second, and David Byrd, pastor of Northside Baptist Church, Jasper, placed third.

The tournament was played May 9-10 on Marion Military Institute's golf course.

Byrd, who also served as golf committee chair, reported that the greens were marvelous, the weather was beautiful and the food and fellowship were great.

Byrd said the annual tournament is a time for ministers to relax and enjoy one another's company, plus they learn more about what Judson

offers for the young women in their churches.

Next year's 50th annual event is set for May 14-15.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Students Cited for Service, Leadership:** Samford University's top student leaders were recognized April 28 at the annual leadership and service convocation. Rich Havard, of Gloster, Miss., won the James M. Sizemore Award as the senior student who best demonstrates character, personality, scholarship and unselfish service to Samford. Marshall Pollard, of Apopka, Fla., won the John R. Mott Award as the man in the graduating class who best represents high character, scholarship and student public service.

Terra Garmon, of Gadsden, won the Gail Hyle Memorial Award as the woman in the graduating class who best exemplifies Christian character, leadership, school spirit and service. She also won a Rufus Shelton Award as this year's female student who has done the most for the betterment of life at Samford through sustained efforts. Dan Hall, of Madison, Miss., was the male recipient of the Rufus Shelton Award. Stephen Bailey, of Brownsburg, Ind., and Ashley Spann, of Douglasville, Ga., received Service Awards as the graduating seniors who best exemplify qualities of social service.

Cameron Collins, of Cornelius, N.C., and Stephanie Guckenberger,

of Huntsville, received the Luke 2:52 awards, which honor two students who excel in all areas of student life.

Annie Kraus, of Birmingham, and Scott McKaig, of Fort Wayne, Ind., received Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK) Freshman Leadership awards as the female and male students who showed exemplary character, leadership, service and scholarship during their first year at Samford.

Danielle Brown, of Birmingham, and Tara E. White, of Knoxville, Tenn., received ODK Leader of the Year awards for exemplary service to the Samford ODK circle and the campus community.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Baseball Field Named for Coach Jacobs:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) has named its baseball field "Mike Jacobs Field" in honor of head baseball coach Mike Jacobs who founded the school's baseball program in 1990 and celebrated his 700th career win in March.

UMobile's President Mark Foley congratulated Jacobs and his wife, Joy, "on a career at the University of Mobile which is unparalleled." Jacobs was surprised by the honor, which was unanimously approved by the university's board of trustees in April.

The newly named Mike Jacobs Field includes a field house, locker rooms, a player study area and stadium seating.

Dunn receives UMobile Shofar Award

The University of Mobile (UMobile) presented the Shofar Award for faithful service by an Alabama Baptist minister to William Terry "Pete" Dunn during the university's graduation ceremony May 14 (see story, page 18).

Dunn, who was a missionary to Arab-speaking lands for more than 30 years, has served as pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Uriah, since 2003.

The award is a shofar, or ram's horn, which was also sounded to signal the start of the university's graduation ceremony at the Mobile Civic Center.

UMobile President Mark Foley said the shofar was used in ancient Israel to announce the entry of the king, and to sound the alarm and call the troops into battle.

"The one entrusted with the responsibility to sound the shofar was a seasoned veteran who had



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

FAITHFUL SERVICE — Pete Dunn (left) receives the Shofar Award from University of Mobile President Mark Foley on May 14.

proven himself on the battle line and had demonstrated wisdom among the people. Each year this award is made to one with similar distinctions who, over many years of service to Christ, has never wa-

vered from his responsibility or stepped away from the assignment given to him," Foley said.

Dunn began his career as an electrical engineer and in the early to mid-1960s worked for NASA. During this time, he served as minister of music at Fulton Road Baptist Church, Mobile, where he was ordained, then as associate pastor at Littlewoods Baptist Church, New Orleans, La.

In 1968, Dunn and his wife, Patricia, were appointed missionaries with the International Mission Board. They worked in Arabia, Lebanon and Morocco.

Dunn holds a bachelor of science in electrical engineering from Auburn University, a master of arts in theology and Christian communication from Wheaton College, and a doctor of ministry in theology, evangelism and counseling from Luther Rice Seminary. (UMobile)

'Jesus Christ in my heart'

Memphis Grizzlies' point guard gives credit to God for success

Basketball did most of the talking when Greivis Vasquez arrived at Montrose Christian School from Caracas, Venezuela. He didn't speak English.

"I've come a long way," said Vasquez, a point guard for the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies, and the same could be said for his team.

Seeded eighth in the Western Conference, the Grizzlies won their first playoff game and first playoff series in franchise history when they stunned No. 1-seeded San Antonio, winning four of six games. They advanced to the semifinals but were eliminated by the Oklahoma City Thunder in game 7 with a 105-90 loss.

Vasquez was crucial in the Grizzlies' third win over the Spurs. Substituting for foul-laden starter Mike Conley, he scored seven points within a span of two minutes late in the first quarter and early in the second. He finished with nine points and two assists in the 104-86 victory.

Praising God

While teammates were praising Vasquez for his gritty performance, he praised God.

"I think this is all God," Vasquez said. "We are probably not the most talented team in the NBA, but the best thing about this team is how we handle situations. The guys are so humble and hungry. We've got good chemistry. We play together, and that is what God is all about, keeping people together."

The only Atlantic Coast Conference player ever to score at least 2,000 points (2,171), have 750 assists (772) and 600 rebounds (647), Vasquez was the University of Maryland's second all-time leading scorer.

He was the ACC Player of the Year in 2010 and Bob Cousy award winner as the nation's best point guard in 2010.

"I believe God did it all for me," said Vasquez, who became a Christian when he was 17 at Montrose, a ministry of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Md.



BP Photo

LAYUP — Greivis Vasquez (center) of the Memphis Grizzlies shoots a layup against the Sacramento Kings at FedExForum in Memphis, Tenn., in a regular season matchup.

Selected in the first round of the 2010 NBA Draft, Vasquez said his faith has grown stronger.

"I've got Jesus Christ in my heart," he said.

"There are a lot of ups and downs ... God gives me the strength to do what I have to do. I put everything in His hands."

Vasquez said he seeks to show "how important God is to me by walking in faith."

"The way I act, the things I do, the way I make decisions, God is my inspiration ... Everything I have, I don't deserve but

I'm thankful for it," Vasquez said. "He's done so much for me. All I want to do is praise Him. Everything I do is for Him."

Vasquez said he prays daily and with opposing Christian players on road trips. He also reads his Bible daily and has memorized his favorite Scripture passage, the eighth chapter of Romans. And he attends team Bible studies as well as the evangelical Life Church of Memphis.

'Want to give back'

"I want to give back to people and lead people to Christ," Vasquez said.

"I'm proud of being a Christian. Jesus is my life."

Vasquez said he wants to be known as someone "who wants to do the right thing when nobody is watching," whether it's in the playoffs or not.

"Playoff time is the highest level of basketball in the world. God has put me in this league. God has a purpose for me. If God wants me to stay in the league for 10 years, He will help me with that. He understands what I want to do in life." (BP)

"God gives me the strength to do what I have to do. I put everything in His hands."

Greivis Vasquez
NBA Memphis Grizzlies

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World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Russian, Greek Orthodox leery of ID cards

MOSCOW — Russian and Greek Orthodox leaders are objecting to plans in both countries to introduce electronic identity cards intended to streamline bureaucracy. Church officials are demanding close study of the cards and asking that authorities make them optional. The personal and financial information embedded in the cards could be manipulated to discriminate against believers, they fear.

In a recent interview with *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, an official government newspaper, Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Church Relations, said: "Credit cards ... are one thing, but a personal card in which all the information about a person's life and activities will be entered ... is a different matter." Conservative and nationalist wings within the two churches have held demonstrations in Athens, Greece and Moscow and fear the cards will compromise national and religious identity.

Segodnia.ru, an online publication that often covers religious and nationalist issues, said the cards could help build "an unheard of, super-totalitarian electronic dictatorship, in which each individual person becomes ... a robot with a bar code on his body or a microchip implanted under his skin."

Following massive rallies in Athens in March, the Synod of Bishops of the Church of Greece met with government officials in April. Metropolitan Prokopios said the church was assured that the numerals 666 — the nefarious "mark of the beast" from the Book of Revelation — would not appear in the cards in any form.

Church attendance grows 7 percent in England

CANTERBURY, England — In a challenge to conventional wisdom that church attendance is plummeting across Britain and Western Europe, the Church of England says attendance at its 43 cathedrals grew 7 percent last year. A report by Pastor Lynda Barley, head of research and statistics at the Archbishops' Council, said "attendance at services outside Sundays" was up 10 percent in 2010, and "steady growth" in the past decade "is restoring confidence in mission." About 15,800 adults and 3,100 children and young people attend Sunday services at cathedrals; over the course of a typical week, that figure rises to 27,400 adults and 7,600 children. Lisa Emanuel, a spokeswoman for Canterbury Cathedral, said that it's not unusual to welcome more than 20 nationalities at services. "We love sharing this holy and very special place and are delighted with the recent figures released by the Archbishops' Council," she said.

Canterbury Cathedral is considered the "mother church" of the 77 million-member worldwide Anglican Communion and welcomes more than 1 million visitors every year. The report said regular cathedral services attracted 2 million people in 2010, while an additional 1.63 million attended about 5,150 public or civic events.

New 'anime' film about Jesus targets youth

ORLANDO, Fla. — A new short film on Jesus' crucifixion attempts to reach youth and young adults with the gospel using the "anime" style popular in Asia, especially in quake-ravaged Japan.

The nine-minute film, "My Last Day," was released in April by the "Jesus Film" Project, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ International. The story is told from the perspective of one of the thieves crucified alongside Jesus Christ. Using some of the dialogue from the original "Jesus Film," the short film shows the thief grieving over his guilt as he realizes Christ's innocence. "It's perfect to provide opportunities to open doors to engage the 'media generation' and could be a prelude to effectively presenting the gospel to tens of thousands of young people across the globe," said Jim Green, "Jesus Film" Project executive director. "My Last Day" can be viewed at <http://www.globalshortfilmnetwork.com/my-last-day-p-344-c-8.html>.

Soldier jailed for burning Quran in England

LONDON — A British former soldier has been jailed for burning a copy of the Quran in front of shoppers in England — an act the judge described as "theatrical bigotry."

Andrew Ryan was sentenced to 70 days for setting fire to the Islamic holy book Jan. 19 in Carlisle with a cigarette lighter after his first attempt with matches failed. The 22-year-old ex-soldier's lawyer, Margaret Payne, said his fury was "directed toward radical Islam such as the burning of poppies and flags." As he was led away to a cell April 18, Ryan yelled, "What about burning poppies?"

Ryan was referring to a Muslim extremist who was convicted and fined for setting fire to a poppy — a symbol of Britain's admiration for its war dead — during an Armistice Day observance in November 2010. But Magistrates Court District Judge Gerald Chalk told Ryan, "You went out to cause maximum publicity and to cause distress." ☞