



INSIDE



Pakistani hospital tends to malnourished children after flooding

◆ Page 3



FBC Tuscaloosa serves as 'command post' for local, global tornado relief volunteers

◆ Page 4



Baptists continue ministering to April tornado survivors

◆ Page 5

'Only me and God'

Southeast Asian woman shines God's light behind dark prison walls

In a prison gym in Southeast Asia, a woman wearing a navy-colored head covering holds up a picture frame. Six little faces stare through the glass.

"These are my children," she said. A grin of pride spreads across her face. She hasn't seen them since her arrest more than a year and a half ago.

Dira Amar lives in a cream-colored cell with 22 other women. She sleeps on a thin mattress atop a concrete slab and keeps her possessions in two cabinets above her bed.

Outside her cell, there's a bench, a tiny garden and fishpond. Amar has rested here to read her Bible between 1 and 3 a.m. for the past year, when the inmates have finally gone to sleep and the prison grows still.

"I want it to be quiet and calm, with no one to disturb me because I want it to be only me and God," she said. "Only at that time I feel peace."

Amar didn't know Christ a year and a half ago. She worked as an event coordinator for a local newspaper, helping organize events for the company and community. People admired her. She was a successful career woman in a Muslim nation while rearing six children. She had a home and her family had plenty to eat.

Then governmental corruption ruined her life. A local official confiscated money she collected for a student exchange program and blamed her for its disappearance. She had proof of her innocence, but against the official's power, proof meant little. She went to jail, leaving her husband and children without the income they had come to rely upon.

Amar's voice falters as she talks about her sons and daughters and how their grandmother (Amar's mother) can only feed the children cassava, a type of root eaten when families can't afford rice.

As she lived in disgrace and imprisonment, God sent her Rick Alexander, a Christian worker and volunteer English teacher at the jail. As Amar sat through his lectures on nouns and verbs, she noticed the kindness in his voice when he spoke to prisoners. She



BP photo

AT PEACE WITH GOD — In a Southeast Asian women's prison, Dira Amar tends to flowers and plants in a small garden. Amar, a former career woman, was imprisoned for an official's corruption.

wondered why this man — a white foreigner — would treat Asian inmates with such respect.

God had taught him to love people, Alexander explained. Amar asked if he worked for God.

"No," he answered. "I am only the servant."

Amar envied Alexander's integrity and loved the positive way he spoke. When Alexander gave her a Bible, Amar devoured its pages.

She wondered about giving up the religion of her family. How could she know the Bible in her hands spoke the truth? She prayed for God's guidance and, one night, she felt someone wake

her up. In the dark, she heard a voice. "I love you," the voice said. "I will not make you stand alone."

After that night, she abandoned Islam.

New person in Christ

She became a new person in Christ. During her "wee-hour" studies, she absorbs God's instructions to apply them to her life. She now understands the integrity she saw in Alexander came directly from Christ. She wants the same.

Even though Amar still lives encased by cement walls, she is at peace with her prison life — one guided by

biblical instruction and hope placed in Christ — compared to the one she lived as a Muslim woman with her children.

"Now my life has become better ... every aspect of my life, and I'm proud of it," Amar insists. "I'm proud of God. I'm proud to become a Christian. It always makes me cry. When I talk about God, it always makes me cry. I don't know why."

In her cell, she sits surrounded by women who have watched her change. They perch on the edges of cement slabs upon which they sleep. Some committed their crimes. Some did not.

(See 'Inmate,' page 13)

ERLC backs 'cut, cap, balance' on debt limit

The Southern Baptist Convention's public policy entity is sponsoring a three-part standard — including congressional approval of a balanced budget amendment — that must be met before raising the country's debt limit.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) is one of more than 220 organizations sponsoring the "Cut, Cap, Balance Pledge." The pledge consists of the following elements:

▶ "Cut — Substantial cuts in spending that will reduce the deficit next year and thereafter.

▶ "Cap — Enforceable spending caps that will put federal spending on a path to a balanced budget.

▶ "Balance — Congressional passage of a Balanced Budget Amendment to the U.S. Constitution — but only if it includes both a spending limitation and a super-majority for raising taxes, in addition to bal-

ancing revenues and expenses."

President Obama and Republican leaders in Congress have yet to reach an agreement on raising the debt ceiling, which is the legal limit on the amount of debt the federal government can borrow. The ceiling stands at \$14.3 trillion and supposedly will be surpassed Aug. 2.

ERLC President Richard Land said the "Cut, Cap, Balance" approach "is (See 'Land,' page 12)

COMMENT

Advancing the Cause of Christ

An instrument of great power in promotion of the best interest of the denomination and in advancing the cause of Christ at large” — that is how a state convention resolution adopted in 1843 described *The Alabama Baptist*. The paper had begun publication Feb. 4 of that year.

One can only wonder how the messengers to that long-ago annual meeting would have reacted when the Alabama House of Representatives recently adopted a resolution commending *The Alabama Baptist's* work and contributions. They might have said, “I told you so.”

House Resolution 919, introduced by Rep. John Merrill, of Tuscaloosa, references the state Baptist paper's recognition by Associated Church Press (ACP) as the best regional Christian newspaper in the nation. Then the resolution notes, “This award-winning Christian newspaper continues to provide information, inspiration, interpretation and involvement for residents of this state and others to help encourage and equip them to live out the principles of Christian discipleship.”

Among topics cited in the resolution are the ongoing coverage of illegal gambling in the state and the interview with gubernatorial candidates Robert Bentley and Ron Sparks.

Perhaps without intention, the resolution highlights one of *The Alabama Baptist's* foremost roles — reporting. That is what provided the potential for the paper to be “an instrument of great power in promotion of the best interest of the denomination” in 1843. That is what continues to make *The Alabama Baptist* indispensable reading for Baptists today.

No news outlet in the state has provided more thorough coverage of illegal gambling in Alabama than *The Alabama Baptist*. Before there were federal indictments or high-profile trials, the state Baptist paper chronicled battles over gambling in county courthouses as well as the Statehouse. That coverage won national awards for each of the past two years. But it is not the awards that are important. It is the fact that *The Alabama Baptist's* readers had timely and trustworthy reports about the players, the tactics and the problems related to illegal gambling.

As the House resolution says, the paper has provided information and interpretation that helped encourage and equip readers to live out their Christian discipleship. Illegal gambling is just one example. Each week, *The Alabama Baptist* provides stories that capture readers' hearts, reports that lift



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

their spirits, articles that challenge their minds and information that builds up the body of Christ.

The state Baptist paper is the only news outlet in Alabama dedicated to reporting what God is doing among Baptists in the state and around the world. More than 70 percent of *The Alabama Baptist's* editorial space features stories that impact Alabama. The paper shares news about what God is doing in the lives of individuals, churches and associations.

Moral issues of the state

The Alabama Baptist addresses moral issues facing the state, providing both a biblical understanding of the issues and information about real-life results related to them.

The state Baptist paper reports all Alabama Baptists do together through the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. Each week, *The Alabama Baptist* also tells stories of Christians around the world who face opposition and persecution simply because they claim Jesus Christ as Lord.

Faithful reporting for nearly 170 years has made the paper a trusted voice in the state. Reporting is fair and balanced. Articles are timely. Information is accurate. Alabama Baptists know *The Alabama Baptist* will tell them the truth, even when it hurts. Indeed it is the ability to report bad news — sad news — that demonstrates the state Baptist paper's reporting really is trustworthy.

The Alabama Baptist is fortunate to have a writing staff composed of active Baptists who combine their love for the Lord with the best of Christian reporting. Its work has resulted in the paper winning ACP's top regional Christian newspaper award for three consecutive years. Perhaps that is why the House resolution adds, “The achievements and exemplary talent in journalism of the staff of the newspaper bring honor to the state of Alabama.”

In 1843, messengers to the Alabama Baptist annual meeting declared, “We urgently recommend to the brethren generally to make a strenuous effort to place the paper in every Baptist family in the state.” That effort continues. The state convention lifts up the importance of *The Alabama Baptist* by including Read *The Alabama Baptist* Day on the denominational calendar. This year, that day is Sunday, July 31.

The state Baptist paper partners with more than 170 churches and associations to combine local news with state news. The result not only saves money for the church or association but also increases communication. Several studies have found church members read more local information when it was combined with *The Alabama Baptist* than they did when receiving a local church mailout.

Promotion of subscriptions from churches and individuals are always sought.

Today technology drives communication, including the paper's work. An online (or e-edition) of *The Alabama Baptist* is now available in addition to the traditional print version. Technology allows for enhancements to the e-edition including videos and other resources and links.

Whatever technology is used, the goal remains the same as that articulated in 1843 — to promote the best interest of the denomination and advance the cause of Christ. That is why the state Baptist paper is required reading as one lives out the principles of Christian discipleship. *The Alabama Baptist's* reporting makes it a necessity for every Alabama Baptist.

To those who read the paper each week, thank you. Encourage others in your church or other Baptist friends to read *The Alabama Baptist* as well. Make sure the state Baptist paper is included in the Christian literature your church provides for its members. Tell others about the stories you read in *The Alabama Baptist*. Say a good word about the paper as Alabama Baptists focus special attention on the contributions made each week by *The Alabama Baptist*. And do not forget to pray for the state Baptist paper's ministry — that it might be “an instrument of great power in promotion of the best interest of the denomination and in advancing the cause of Christ at large.”

Observe Read *The Alabama Baptist* Day on July 31.

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Someone You Should Know

By Julie Moore, Correspondent, TAB

Leola Isbell

Citronelle Memorial Baptist Church
Mobile Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Proverbs 3:5-6
FAVORITE HYMN: "I Surrender All"
HOBBIES: Embroidery and quilting
FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 47 years of marriage to Elbert; three children; and seven grandchildren



ISBELL

Leola Isbell grew up on a farm in Texas. In college, Isbell learned about an opportunity to work as a summer missionary through the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board).

She applied and was sent to Oklahoma City. She returned to Texas in 1947 and married Elbert Isbell. The Isbells moved to Alabama and served as missionaries in south Alabama for almost three decades. At 86, Leola Isbell continues to teach a women's Sunday School class at her church and lead a devotional time each week at an assisted living facility.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I became convicted in a revival meeting at our church when I was a preteen. I made my profession in Jesus that night. It was in the country, and usually baptisms were in the creek. But this one was in a pond.

Q: What led you to serve in the church?

A: I just felt like I wanted to serve the Lord. When I went to college and heard about working with missionaries in Oklahoma City, well, of course, I wanted to do that. And that led me to teach school in Alabama, and my husband and I were missionaries for almost 30 years.

Q: How does your church family support you?

A: I really do appreciate my church family. I have people that stop by to pick me up for church ... and someone volunteers to take me home. Some of them go with me every Thursday to have a devotional at the assisted living facility here in Citronelle. And I look forward to that.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

A: He has given me meaning and hope for eternal life. And I can always go to Him when there's a problem or go to Him every day.

World Hunger Fund at work

Pakistani hospital tends to malnourished children after flooding

In the Shikarpur district of Sindh province, thousands of homes were destroyed and more than half a million people were forced out of their villages in August 2010 by Pakistan's worst flooding in 80 years.

Southern Baptists responded to the need through a partnership with Shikarpur Christian Hospital that focused on helping malnourished children displaced by floodwaters.

"Shikarpur Christian Hospital has provided incredible medical care to many women in upper Sindh province since the early 1960s," said Francis Horton, who with his wife, Angie, directs work in South and Central Asia for Baptist Global Response. "And they have done it in the love of Christ and in His name."

Priscilla Carpenter, a doctor at the hospital in Shikarpur, has participated in the flood relief work since September. "We have had an overwhelmingly positive response from these people wanting to know what compels us to do what we are doing, as they have not seen the same kind of care from the majority community," Carpenter said.

After the flood, which affected 20 million people throughout the country, the hospital staff realized they couldn't help everyone. They decided to focus on one specific need — malnourished children of the flood-affected families.

Washed away crops

These children's families depended on the land for their survival and had no way to make a living after the floods washed away their crops. As field laborers, they were already very poor and had limited access to health care.

"[Tuberculosis] is a very common illness and very often the underlying reason for the



BP photo

HOPEFUL — A Pakistani girl tries to salvage a piece of furniture pulled from the ruins of her home after August 2010 floods.

severe malnutrition in these villagers. These children were ill before the flooding, but their families did not have the resources to come into town and get treatment," Carpenter said. "Many of those that we have been providing care for health are still not in a position to feed themselves as they have lost their year's income."

Most of the children showed up with a cough or serious diarrhea. One 14-month-old girl was too weak to even cry when she arrived. She was malnourished and severely anemic. When she returned for a follow-up

visit after being discharged, she crawled all over the clinic.

"We thank God that all but one child was able to be discharged in a much healthier, happier state even though some were critically ill," Carpenter said.

Doctors and nurses also used mobile medical camps to reach out to flood victims. Carpenter's team spent time talking to patients and made return, follow-up visits.

Many people want to know why Carpenter and her team want to help them. To that, Carpenter responded, "It is the love of Jesus that causes us to do it, and we are happy to share that love with them."

Because Southern Baptists give to their World Hunger Fund, people in Pakistan affected by the flood and who can't afford medical care are getting the help they need, Horton said. Their gifts, in partnership with Shikarpur Christian Hospital, helped in several ways:

► The hospital has treated 131 children and their mothers with problems like tuberculosis, malaria, intestinal parasites and upper respiratory infections.

► A total of 3,715 people received antibiotics, vitamins, iron supplements, anti-tuberculosis therapy, anti-worm medicines, anti-malarials, antipyretics, oral rehydration solution and antifungal creams.

► The staff at the hospital conducted 43 mobile medical camps, reaching 14 new villages.

► Families were taught to use oral rehydration solution. When teams of nurses followed up, they found that 80 percent of patients were using it correctly and patients were better.

For more information about the Southern Baptist Convention's World Hunger Fund, visit worldhungerfund.com. (BGR)

Rash named *The Alabama Baptist* executive editor

Jennifer Davis Rash has been named executive editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, according to an announcement made recently by Editor Bob Terry. In this new role, Rash will help make strategic decisions about the ministry of Alabama Baptists' state paper as well as provide executive leadership in implementing those decisions.

Since 2002, she has served as managing editor for the weekly publication, which has the largest circulation of Southern Baptist state papers and one of the largest circulations in Alabama. In that role, Rash has provided direction for the weekly production of the paper as well as overseeing the four-member editorial staff and a 50-plus-member correspondent network spread across the state.

She also is responsible for *The Alabama Baptist* Online and the social media aspects of the state Baptist paper.

"Jennifer is one of the outstanding Christian journalists among Southern Baptists," Terry said. "It is with great expectation for her continued contribution to the cause of Christ through Christian communications that she is appointed to this position."

He related that recently Rash was offered the editorship of another major state Baptist paper. After much prayer, she decided that the Lord's will for her life at the present time was to continue her ministry in Alabama.

Terry said the invitation only confirmed the outstanding ability Rash possesses and demonstrated the high regard in which she is held by others.

"The board of directors and I are grateful for her decision and want to do all we can to help Jennifer continue to develop her leadership skills by providing opportunities for her to grow personally and professionally as a leader in Christian communications," he said.

Rash has distinguished herself among Baptist communicators and beyond. She is a past president of Baptist Communicators Association, a Southern Baptist-related organization of media professionals. She also served on the planning committee for RCCongress 2010, a once-a-decade professional development and inspirational event that brings together communicators from scores of faith-based denominations and organizations.

Locally Rash is a member of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama Roundtable and treasurer of the Birmingham chapter of Religion Communicators Council. She also is a member of Evangelical Press Association and Associated Church Press.

Among her many honors are awards for

investigative reporting, news writing and feature writing as well as online and broadcasting work. She also has helped *The Alabama Baptist* win honors for outstanding regional Christian newspaper for more than 10 consecutive years.

Rash has served with the state Baptist paper since Jan. 1, 1996. After three years as a news writer, she was promoted to news editor and then to managing editor. Prior to that, she served two and a half years with the International Mission Board as a short-term missionary assigned to Caribbean Christian Publications.

Rash is an honors graduate of the University of Alabama, where she received the outstanding journalism student award both her junior and senior years. She also played in the Million Dollar Band and worked on the yearbook staff.

In 2007, Rash received the master of theological studies degree from Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

She and her husband, Jason, an elementary physical education teacher in Jefferson County, are members of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, where she serves on the personnel committee, among other responsibilities. (TAB)



RASH

Samaritan's Purse sets up shop in Alabama

FBC Tuscaloosa serves as 'command post' for local, global tornado relief volunteers

By Sammie Jo Barstow
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

J jeans and T-shirts are not the usual Sunday attire at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, but after an EF-4 tornado cut a path one mile wide and six miles long through the city April 27, many things changed. During May and June, people attended church on Sunday morning in work clothes and then dispersed throughout Tuscaloosa to remove debris and help tornado survivors in any way possible with Samaritan's Purse.

A representative from the Boone, N.C.-based international relief and evangelism organization contacted the church business administrator, Kris Sullivan, the day after the tornado about partnering with the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association church to provide disaster relief in Tuscaloosa. Sullivan immediately agreed to the partnership.

Two days after the storm, Samaritan's Purse staff members and volunteers began to arrive in the city. The church provided the facilities for training and organizing volunteers, as well as housing, showers, kitchen space and an office.

'Wealth of experience'

"Samaritan's Purse brought a method of organization and a wealth of experience because they do this all over the world. They also had the tools essential to hit the ground running," Senior Pastor



Photo courtesy of FBC Tuscaloosa

ORGANIZING THE TROOPS — Volunteers from the community, state, nation and world gather in FBC Tuscaloosa's fellowship hall to organize relief work in Tuscaloosa.

Gil McKee said. "Our fellowship hall became a command post, and on Saturday after the tornado hit on Wednesday, we sent out more than 600 volunteers."

In addition, hundreds of other volunteers gathered in the fellowship hall to make sandwiches and package other food items for distribution to survivors and workers.

Since the tornado, work teams have been organized at 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. each weekday in addition to the Sunday crews. In two months, 8,897 volunteers have worked 55,757 hours and completed 925 work orders. At least 36 decisions for Christ and nine rededications have been reported.

First, Tuscaloosa, member Mar-

garet Keith enjoyed registering volunteers. "People came from almost every state, plus six foreign countries. A group of firefighters from California drove straight through to spend a week here. Families, classes, churches and clubs joined with us to help Tuscaloosa recover."

But the church didn't just wait on help from Samaritan's Purse — it responded immediately to the needs of its members.

"The first two days were spent identifying church members who either lost homes or had damage. Vial Fontenot, our [minister of missions and ministry], gathered a group of men who quickly began removing trees from roofs and patching leaks," McKee said.

Wednesday and Sunday evening services were temporarily canceled or adjusted to encourage members to volunteer. Several international missions trips were canceled so fi-

nances and other resources could be redirected toward recovery. Many members also have worked through the association with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions disaster relief teams.

Vacation Bible School (VBS) was scheduled for June 6–9, but Minister of Childhood Education Beth Yates said, "We didn't feel right about doing business as usual when it came to VBS, so we decided to take VBS out to the community areas that were hardest hit by the tornado."

'God's pleasure'

Four locations were identified and VBS workers quickly adjusted their plans to partner with three churches in devastated communities to provide Bible school. Robin Ford, a member of First, Tuscaloosa, served at the Wood Village location, a mobile home park, where many of the workers were youth from the church. "Just to see these students helping the children and serving them made me really feel God's pleasure with what was going on."

Sunday School classes have adopted families needing help finding housing and replacing furniture and automobiles. In several instances, First, Tuscaloosa, has paid rent and utility deposits for families being relocated.

The church and Samaritan's Purse will continue to partner for the rebuilding phase during the next 18–24 months. "Our people have rolled up their sleeves and worked hard. I don't believe we will forget the lessons we've learned in this experience," McKee said.

And the church's generosity isn't confined to its own city. On May 22, Joplin, Mo., was devastated by a tornado. First, Tuscaloosa, sent a team of three staff members to Forest Park Baptist Church, Joplin, to encourage its staff and present a check for \$10,000.

For more information about volunteering, call First, Tuscaloosa, at 205-345-7554.



Photo by Doug Rogers

DISASTER RELIEF SHOWER UNIT HAS A NEW LOOK

Thanks to a donation from Pinedale Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, one state shower unit has become a rolling advertisement for Alabama Baptist disaster relief. There was enough money to pay for printing and affixing large disaster relief photos to both sides of the trailer, which was donated in 2009 by First Baptist Church, Montgomery. It contains men's/women's shower facilities and a washer/dryer and is used in disaster relief settings and long-term rebuilding areas. Inspecting the trailer before it was sent out are (left) Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM); Charleen Hobbs, SBOM communications services ministry assistant and member of Pinedale Baptist; and Jesse Conte, SBOM communications associate and graphic artist, who designed the artwork.

Interested in assisting
with the Alabama rebuild effort?

Visit
www.sbdr.org
to find areas of need.





BAPTISTS RESPOND

to areas devastated by April tornadoes

The Disaster Relief Benefit Concert & Cajun Cookout, held July 7 at the Alpha Ranch in Ashville, raised funds for **M.U.D. Ministries** disaster relief efforts.

The proceeds were donated to uninsured and underinsured families whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged by the April 27 tornadoes.

The event was hosted by M.U.D. Ministries (Making U Disciples), a ministry of Evangelist Eric Hixon, in partnership with Katrina Victims Give Back, a ministry of First Baptist Church, Grand Isle, La.

Those in attendance enjoyed listening to country Christian artist Hunter Erwin as well as eating a jambalaya dinner.

The group from Grand Isle had a desire to give back to volunteers from Alabama who helped Louisiana in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Group members completed disaster relief cleanup projects, children's ministry events and food distribution in northern Alabama July 5-11.

M.U.D. Ministries has been hosting missions teams from across the country for evangelism and disaster relief work. For more information, call 256-431-4429 or visit www.mudministries.com.

Concord Highland Baptist Church, Hueytown, in Bessemer Baptist Association received the latest of the **mobile chapels** being distributed by Alabama Baptist disaster relief following damage done by the April 27 tornadoes. The mobile unit for Concord Highland Baptist was installed July 14.

Other mobile chapels have been placed at the following:

- ▶ Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, Autauga Baptist Association (following an April 15 tornado)
- ▶ Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, Elmore Baptist Association
- ▶ Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, Franklin Baptist Association
- ▶ Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, Marion Baptist Association
- ▶ Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Spring Garden, Cherokee Baptist Association

Disaster relief volunteers are still needed in Tuscaloosa following the April 27 tornadoes, specifically at the **Forest Lake Baptist**

Church Disaster Relief Center, church officials reported.

The center is organized by Forest Lake Baptist members and other volunteer teams and is set to be open for more than two years.

"Our operations continue to change as the dynamics of this disaster unfold," said Terri Hibbard, relief center director.

The center deals with various tasks "through a work order system that coordinates volunteers with the needs," she said.

"Our outside relief activities now include a growing list of missions group trips, some scheduled for on-site housing at Forest Lake Baptist Church, to perform various skilled work for disaster victims," Hibbard noted. "We also provide lists of various Tuscaloosa-approved agencies and contractors as general information to get power back on and rebuild in the recovery zone."

The center operates 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Thursday and Friday and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday.

Volunteers help stock and organize clothing, household items and cleaning supplies. They also may assist those coming to pick up items and pray with them as needed.

"We greatly appreciate the love, support and prayers provided by everyone and the volunteers working in our centers," Hibbard said. "God continues to prove His overwhelming resource of supplies, labor and miracles. The relief center mission continues to bring others to Christ."

For more information, contact Hibbard at THmiracle@msn.com or 205-759-1569.

Tuscaloosa Baptist Association held a special event — **Restoring Our City, Restoring Our Hope** — June 28 to honor the Baptist churches of Tuscaloosa affected by the April 27 tornado. It may be that they were destroyed or damaged, but it also might be that they are providing facilities for volunteers and organizations to work out of.

The event was held at Circlewood Baptist Church and featured Alabama-native Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla.

Worship was led by Leo Day, minister of music at Olive Baptist, and a prayer time was led by Roger Henderson, missions and mobilization pastor of Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, Ga.

Unique form of disaster relief comes in grape, green apple

By **Julie Moore**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The hot sun blazed down unapologetically on the small community of Chalybeate Springs in Lawrence County as a family stood in its smoke-filled yard burning the last of its belongings. The April 27 tornado robbed it of its home, and the following rains ruined the remnants of its last earthly possessions. A young girl stood by, clutching what was left of a tattered teddy bear.

Up ahead, a family in a truck came into view. With hearts ready to serve those in need, it pulled its truck to the side of the road. Jay Keen and his wife, Veronna, along with their two teenage sons, Brent and P.J., emerged and walked to the back of the truck, where Jay cranked up a waiting generator and switched on a special machine.

The Keens poured in some ice from one of their coolers, and the machine began churning the ice into a perfect snow cone. They poured a colorful, sugary liquid on each cold treat — green apple for some and blue raspberry for others — before handing it to a wide-eyed, waiting child.

The snow cone machine has been in Veronna's family since she was a little girl. It sat unused for many years until she remembered it and went to her mother's house to retrieve it. Veronna carefully pulled the machine out of the barn, hopeful that it would switch on. She prayed over it, determined that if it did work, then she would use it for God's glory. Once plugged in, it began humming as if it were brand new.

Since its rediscovery, the machine has been used frequently. The Keens store it at their church, Westmeade Baptist, Decatur, and many in the community have borrowed it. "We've never had a problem with it," Veronna said, adding that someone once borrowed the machine and returned it with a brand-new switch and cord installed.

"It's a God thing," she said.

After the tornado, Veronna called friends living in the hard-hit Chalybeate Springs area to find out how she could help. Her church brought in truckloads of food, water and clothes, and her family assisted residents with yard cleanup.

On one trip, the Keens couldn't help but notice all the people standing out in the heat. Jay got the idea to hook up the snow cone machine to a generator on the back of the family's truck and pass out snow cones to help residents cool off.

"We'd just ride through the communities we knew had been hit," Veronna said.

Westmeade Baptist donated some items to help the Keens make the snow cones, and Minister to Preschool and Children Julie Buckley accompanied them on one of the trips. Buckley recalled one



man who, when he spotted the snow cone machine, said, "I've seen a lot of things come through here the last few days ... but I haven't seen that before."

Veronna chuckled as she recalled a group of six boys. One of the boys was so excited about his snow cone that he was literally jumping up and down with joy at the sight of it. "Even though it was something very little ... it made a difference for them," she said.

The Keens have passed out a variety of snow cone flavors to those affected by the April tornadoes. Veronna also made sure to include some sugar-free options. She said blue raspberry, cherry and grape have been the three favorites.

"It [doesn't] matter what age [they] are. ... They love snow cones," Veronna said, adding it has been enjoyable to see adults appreciate the refreshment so much.

Most importantly, the Keens have had opportunities to share the gospel with recipients. Veronna said the experience has opened a door for them to share with people, communicating the message that "Jesus loves them and we do, too." ❧

Tornado photos, stories sought for books

HopeInAlabama.org needs pictures, stories and videos of the April 27 storm restoration efforts to complete a book series about the hope and inspiration witnessed by the survivors and volunteers.

HopeInAlabama.org, created by Rocky Heights Print & Binding, will publish the stories and photos in conjunction with Cox Radio Inc., Hands On Birmingham and Christian Service Mission.

A portion of all proceeds will be donated directly to Hands On Birmingham and Christian Service Mission.

The following books will

be included in the series:
▶ "Through the Storm, Stories of Hope and Inspiration: Survivor and Volunteer Stories of the Storms" (Survivor, witness and volunteer stories)

▶ "Glimpses of God in Alabama, April 27, 2011" (Daily devotional; Scriptures and words of encouragement submitted by clergy, the general public and people of faith)

▶ "April 27, 2011: Portraits of Loss, Survival and Hope" (Pictorial account)

To submit stories and/or pictures or for more information, visit www.HopeInAlabama.org. (TAB)



Across Alabama's Associations

BIBB

► **Ashby Church, Brierfield**, will host The Men of Music in concert during the morning worship service July 31. Bob Hodges is interim pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **South Roebuck Church, Birmingham**, will host a L.I.F.E. Ministries International addiction recovery seminar Aug. 12-13. The seminar will focus on the rising problem of sexual addiction in our society and the steps that can be taken to help combat the problem. For information contact Casie Coggin at 205-503-1361 or cgcoggin825@gmail.com or visit www.freedom-everyday.org. Chris Crain is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Stave Creek Church, Jackson**, will hold a class for current and potential deacons to study "The Deacon I Want to Be" by Johnny Hunt July 24 and 31, 2:30-6 p.m. The church also will hold an evening of southern gospel music July 31, 6 p.m., with The Bradys. Jamie Lay is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **Scott Underwood** is the new minister of music for **Calvary Church, Russellville**. He previously served as music minister for Blythe Island Church, Brunswick, Ga. He also has served First Southern Church, Muscle Shoals; Okolona Church, Town Creek; The Village Church, Florence; and Crooked Oak Church, Tuscumbia. Underwood and his wife, Terri Lynn, have one child. Wade Wallace is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold Faith Sunday ... Trusting God for Your Spiritual Breakthrough with Bill Stafford July 24, 9:30 a.m. For information call 256-729-1328 or visit www.clements-baptist.org. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will hold a gospel concert with national recording artists Jeff and Sheri Easter July 22, 7 p.m.

For information call 256-420-8172, e-mail mhbc@ardmore.net or visit www.mablehillbaptist.org. Mike Clark is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Heritage Church, Montgomery**, will host a benefit concert for Footprints Ministry Aug. 27, 7 p.m., with Selah. Angie Smith, wife of lead singer Todd, will share her testimony. For tickets call 334-279-9976 or visit www.nicufootprints.com. Teman Knight is pastor. ► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will hold a gospel singing with The Melody Boys Quartet of Arkansas July 22, 7 p.m. For information call Tom Snowden at 334-285-5112. Stanley G. Holt is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Richard L. Richie** is the new pastor of **Flint Church, Decatur**.



RICHIE

He comes from Trinity Church, Roanoke, where he served as pastor for more than 10 years. He also has served in Annapolis, Md., Westport, Ind., and Alexandria, Va. A native of Merritt Island, Fla., Richie and his wife, Toni, have three children. ► **Southwest Church, Hartselle**, will host Free N Deed in concert July 31, 5 p.m. For information call 256-773-5994. Dewitt Crowe is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Snowtown Church, West Jefferson**, will celebrate homecoming July 24. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. followed by worship and a covered-dish lunch. The Travelers along with local groups will sing at 1 p.m. Dennis Smith is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **Pine Grove Church, Phenix City**, will celebrate its 64th homecoming Aug. 7, 10 a.m. Johnny Davis will speak. The Seekers Quartet will sing. Lunch will follow at noon. Thomas Poole is pastor.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Pelham**, will hold a homecoming block party July 31, 6-8 p.m., of the 131 people who recently went on a missions trip to Moulton to minister to tornado survivors. The church will hold the same kind of block party on its campus that it did in Moulton each night they were there with food, prizes, music, drama, human videos and puppets. For information call 205-664-0237. Mike Shaw is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Hunter Baker** is the new pastor of children and families for **First Church, Dadeville**. A Dadeville native, he comes from Auburn and holds a master of divinity from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. His wife, Christina, was a former member of First, Dadeville. They have two children and are expecting their third one. Gary Wiggins is pastor. ► **Tallapoosa Association** will hold an evangelism rally Aug. 14, 6 p.m., at First Church, Alexander City. There will be a pre-rally concert at 5:40 p.m. Dusty McLemore, pastor of Lindsay Lane Church, Athens, and Sid Nichols, director of missions for Calhoun Association, will speak. Gerald Hallmark is pastor of First, Alexander City. Barry Cosper is director of missions for Tallapoosa Association. ► **Rock Springs Church, Jacksons' Gap**, will celebrate homecoming July 24, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. The New Gospel Lights will sing after lunch. Jamey Williams is pastor.



BAKER

► **Corinth Church, Elrod**, will hold a singing July 31, 6 p.m., with Songs of Faith (Joe Brown and Johnny Duren). Dinner will follow. Shawn Odell is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Northside Church, Opelika**, will celebrate homecoming July 31, 11 a.m. Church member Khamphath Silavanh will share his testimony in his native language. His daughter will interpret. He and his family came to the United States from Laos. Wayne Ivey is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **New Prospect Church, Haleyville**, will hold its 16th annual revival celebration July 24-27. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Jamey Ragle will speak Sunday, Phil Waldrep Monday, Michael Mason Tuesday and Junior Hill Wednesday. Ron Horton is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Winston Church, Winston**, will hold its 100th anniversary celebration July 24-27. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Jamey Ragle will speak Sunday, Phil Waldrep Monday, Michael Mason Tuesday and Junior Hill Wednesday. Ron Horton is pastor.



Heflin's Oak Hill celebrates 200th anniversary

A dozen cars made their way down the bumpy dirt road in Heflin to the ashes and a few cement pillars that used to be Oak Hill Baptist Church.

The faithful few sat on picnic tables under the trees, opened their Bibles and praised God for His blessings even after an act of arson had taken their beloved old church building.

One drop, two, three, four.

Sprinkles turned into heavy rain from the open sky above as people quickly moved their cars close to one another. With each window cracked, the worship and Bible study continued.

That was 10 years ago.

On June 12, Oak Hill Baptist had a double celebration — a decade in the new church building and 200 years of existence as a church.

More than 50 people attended the celebration, about 20 more than usual. Pat Musselwhite of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a certificate, and Carroll East Sr., discipleship training director for Cleburne Baptist Association, presented historical information about it. Pastor Brian Turner gave a "celebration"-themed message, and, of course, there was food to follow the morning service.

"Some of the best" banana pudding, fried chicken and casseroles loaded the tables lined end to end on the church property, Musselwhite said with a laugh.

The afternoon was filled with music from The Happy Hearts, of Wedowee; Crimson Flow, of Alexandria; and the church's choir. And there was good reason for the songs and celebration.

Pam Higgins, who organized the celebration, emphasized the blessing of donations the Lord provided for Oak Hill during the rebuilding phase.

"So many people donated their time, materials or discounted materials," she said. "As we built, we paid [off the debt] every month."

The new building, which includes the sanctuary, fellowship hall, two bathrooms, two Sunday School rooms and two storage rooms, is not only several times larger and more modern than the original building but it is also debt-free.

Although the church has seen plenty of hardships, "[it] just keeps going," Musselwhite said.

"There was such a spirit of praise (at the celebration)," she said. "They were all giving credit to the Lord for everything that was accomplished in that place."

Woodmont marks 50 years with 'family reunion'

Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence, had a 50th anniversary celebration June 11-12 that felt more like a "family reunion," according to Frances Moore, anniversary chairwoman.

To celebrate the Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association church's history, several former pastors and staff members returned to speak Saturday evening and Sunday morning and afternoon.

Jim Compton, pastor from 1975 until 1979, and Robert Foster, associate pastor from 1983 until 1990, spoke Saturday evening, and Max Gartman, music director from 1983 until 2001, led worship. Dinner followed the celebration service.

On Sunday morning, with more than 700 in attendance, Pastor Jerry Rea brought a message from Psalm 100:5 titled "Then and Now."

He encouraged the congregation to "pass the baton" to the next generation and remember the future is as essential in God's plan for Woodmont Baptist as its charter members were in 1961.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a certificate, and Florence Mayor Bobby Irons shared a congratulatory message.

Sunday afternoon saw the returns of Richard Waggoner, Woodmont's first pastor; Jody Gamble, pastor from 1979 until 1986; and Jason Moore, who grew up attending the church.

After five decades of endurance, triumph and growth, one could look at Woodmont and praise the pastor or congregation, but "across time, it's easier to see God's work" Rea said, reflecting the message found in the church's theme verse Psalm 100:5: "For Yahweh is good, and His love is eternal; His faithfulness endures through all generations." ❧

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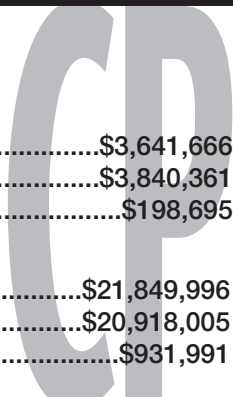
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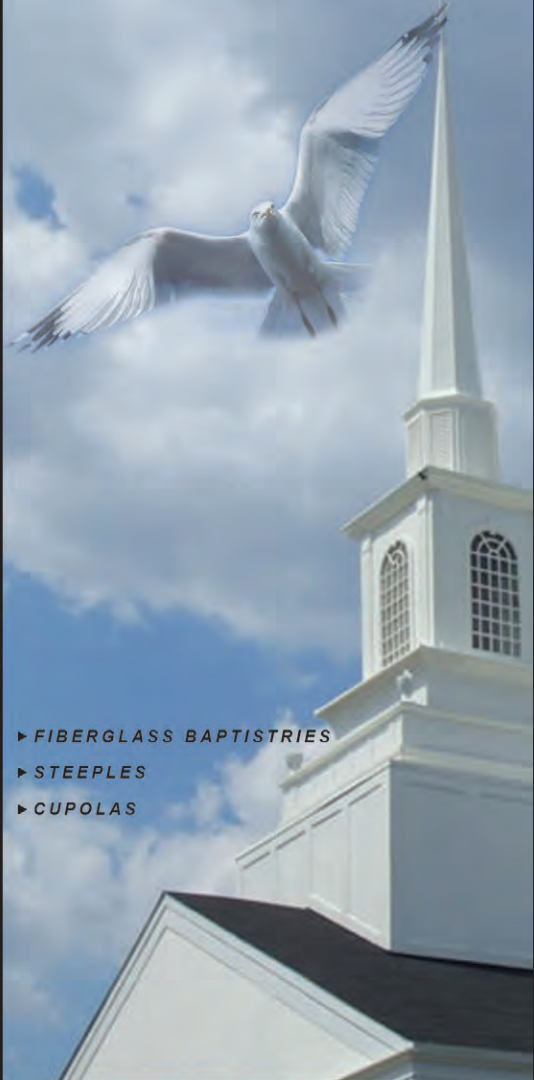


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Churches called on to develop proselytizing guidelines

Christian missionaries should renounce all “deception and coercive means” of winning converts, according to an agreement released June 28 by a broad coalition of evangelicals, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Vatican.

The document, “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct” represents the latest attempt to assuage sometimes violent tensions over proselytizing in non-Christian societies.

The WCC, the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) together “represent over 90 percent of the world’s total Christian population,” according to a WEA statement, which hailed the accord as the “first document of its kind in the history of the Church.”

The document calls on individual Christian churches to develop guidelines for proselytizing “among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion.”

Christian missionaries are to “reject all forms of violence ... including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts,” the document says.

Instead they should “acknowl-

edge and appreciate what is true and good” in other religions, and make any criticisms “in a spirit of mutual respect.”

The document also calls on missionaries to respect the “full personal freedom” of their converts by allowing them “sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation” before they adopt a new faith.

Affirms religious freedom

Noting the importance of faith healing in many ministries, the document instructs missionaries to ensure the “vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.” Likewise the document denounces proselytizing with the use of “financial incentives and rewards.”

Though not a full-throated apology for such practices, the injunctions are “tantamount to an admission that they have been going on,” said Daniel A. Madigan, an expert on Muslim-Christian relations at Georgetown University.

While the document recommends sensitivity in missionary work, it also affirms religious freedom as a fundamental human right, “including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one’s religion.”

Preparation of the document be-

gan in 2006, largely in response to accusations of “unethical methods” by Christian missionaries, according to the WEA statement. The document does not name specific countries or regions.

According to a 2009 study by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life, the highest levels of legal and social restrictions on religious freedom are found in non-Christian countries, including Iran, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Saudi Arabia.

The governor of Pakistan’s Punjab province was assassinated in January after publicly supporting a Christian woman who had been sentenced to death under the country’s anti-blasphemy law.

In Nigeria, where both Christianity and Islam have been spreading

quickly among former adherents of traditional African religions, inter-religious violence has killed hundreds in recent years.

According to John L. Esposito, director of Georgetown’s Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, objections to the document are likely to come from “arch-conservative” Christians and Muslims, with “both saying, ‘Hey, wait a second.’”

“How much are (Christians) going to say that witness in today’s world should be witness of one’s Christian life and one’s service, rather than an aggressive form of preaching and proselytizing?” he said.

Southern Baptists’ International Mission Board officials declined to comment on these guidelines. (RNS)

Want to know God?

By Pastor Jamie Lay
Stave Creek Baptist Church, Jackson

An individual called me at home late one Sunday evening after church. This person had been attending church for many, many years. There were not many services or opportunities to serve (singing in the choir, visiting, etc.) this person had missed.

Anyway, when I answered the phone, I heard this question “Guess who got saved tonight?” To which I responded by spouting off numerous names of people who I thought would have been good candidates. Every time, the reply was “Nope, nope and guess again.” Finally I told the person that I just didn’t know.

Then I heard a reply that has stayed with me through the years. This person said, “I did.” With an excited voice, the person went on to say, “Before tonight, I never understood that I was lost. When I was a young child, I made a decision that someone talked me into and I didn’t comprehend what I was doing. I just did what I was told. Then tonight God helped me to realize that the reason a person places faith in (Jesus) Christ for salvation is because all people are sinners and without the ability to do enough good things to be right with God. Tonight God spoke to me through His Word, helped me to understand that I needed to be saved not just from the world, the devil and hell but from myself. I am the reason Jesus had to die. Tonight no individual talked me into something; God drew me to Himself (and) made me to know He loved me and wanted to set me free from my guilt by faith in His Son and I received salvation.”

Friend, if one person can talk you into something, then someone else may very well talk you out of it. But when God has spoken to you through His Word and will, it’s settled. If God is drawing you to Himself now, then receive salvation and be baptized.

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PASTOR: McClendon Baptist Church of West Monroe, Louisiana, is seeking a pastor. We desire a man of God to lead our church and give spiritual and administrative leadership. Resumés can be sent to: McClendon Baptist Church, Attention Pastor Search Committee, 206 Downing Pines Road, West Monroe, LA 71292 or jrgardner@me.com.

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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

Finding God amid the routine

Capturing memories in photographs, organizing those photos in scrapbooks and being able to pull those books off the shelf to remember the special moments in life — that's part of who I am. I can't imagine life without photos.

But there are some moments God blesses us with that we can remember only by pulling from the memory etched in our minds.

Maybe we didn't have a camera with us at the time, or maybe (and even worse) we just didn't get a good enough photo to truly depict the moment.

You know what I mean. It may have been as simple as the perfect sunset over the ocean or a cloud formation in the sky. Maybe it was the majestic mountains out West or a historic moment in life when the world stood still for just a second. You were there in person witnessing this moment that left you wondering if you were really where you were and would ever breathe again.

And while I am always thankful to have the memories of these experiences, I do long to have the true level of emotion and grandeur present in these moments recorded in scrapbooks or mounted and displayed. My photography skills will likely never allow that to become reality for me, but I have met a photographer who actually has hard-copy prints of his God moments.

Capturing Him

We met at a conference. He was unassuming, gentle and relaxed, but his photos were larger than life. As he clicked from slide to slide in a PowerPoint presentation about composition, lighting and mood, I found myself



mesmerized at the sight of the photos, feeling as if I were also an eyewitness to the exact image he had seen.

As he described what he was doing when he captured each moment, I realized he grabbed these photos during normal daily activities. He wasn't in some paradise-type setting with days to sit and ponder and seek that perfect moment. His moments came in a split-second in traffic, during a drought or while at home. The difference in his photos and mine (besides the fact that he is an absolutely amazing photographer)?

Emptying ourselves

He was an empty vessel. He asked God to show him Him in the routine moments and scenes of life. And God delivered.

How often we fill our lives with clutter, chatter and chaos — so many parts and pieces that are truly unproductive and steal the precious slices of time we could be spending with God, soaking up Him and learning to "be still" as the psalmist in Psalm 46:10 describes.

Sometimes it is only when I escape on a purposeful spiritual retreat, disconnected from almost every possible part of the world, as I know it, that I can truly calm my mind and spirit. It is only then I can sense all God wants to show me.

But then other times, amid everything moving around me, I sense His movement, guidance and presence. I am aware. And when I follow His urging, the results are always amazing, no matter how minute or routine. When I ignore what I instinctively know is the correct path or decision, I always regret it. And I can almost always point back to the junction where I made the bad call.

But the moments orchestrated by God, the ones when time stands still, can be there for all of us on any given day at any given moment if we will just empty ourselves of ourselves and allow Him to fill us.

Share your God moments and what He is teaching you with us. E-mail me at jrash@thealabamabaptist.org, visit our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com or post a message on our Facebook page.

Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Lessons learned in life

Polly Ireland is a treasure among Alabama Baptists and has been well known among decades of Alabama's public officials. She recently retired from Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) and continues to keep her husband, Dan, in line. Polly, a member of Green Valley Baptist Church, Hoover, turned 80 this year. She shared some of the following lessons she has learned throughout her life:

I learned early in life about love — God is Love. I learned about family love through my family — parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We had a close family who loved God and expressed love for God and each other.

I learned that God gave His only Son, Jesus, to die for me, and I accepted Christ as my Savior at 13. I felt the importance of serving God and others and made this commitment at 16 in my home church, Rock Springs Baptist, in Chambers County.

As a teenager, I was encouraged to use my musical talents by playing the piano at Rock Springs and First Baptist Church, LaFayette.

My family expanded further when I met and fell in love with a young preacher who came to LaFayette to pastor a mission church. His name was Dan Ireland.

Since that time, God has given me numerous opportunities of service, especially in music and youth programs, and more family to love — two children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

I learned that if you make yourself available, God will give you a place of service.

When we came to ALCAP, I was given other opportunities of service throughout the state and in Montgomery with the Legislature. In retirement, I am finding new ways to serve the Lord. My entire life has been a learning process, and I hope I never get too old to learn and serve in some capacity. There is always some way to serve God if we look for the opportunities.

I also have learned that God is always there with you, no matter how difficult the experience. My entire life has been an amazing journey with God, my family, friends and all those who have crossed paths with me. We serve a mighty and an awesome God! It is my prayer that each Christian will know the joy and honor through serving our dear Lord that I experience.

An excerpt from Kathy Peel's "Be Your Best: The Family Manager's Guide to Personal Success"

"It's a simple equation. If you're too tired to take care of yourself, you're probably too tired to take care of anybody or anything else well.

"We all need to build buffers in our lives by making self-care 'deposits' to withstand the inevitable, unexpected experiences that drain us physically and/or emotionally. Too many of these types of 'withdrawals' and not enough deposits always ends in disaster. ...

"When we value and care for ourselves, we have more to give to those we love.

"The choices we make every hour of every day create our future."

"St. Augustine said, 'People travel to wonder at the height of the mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and yet they pass by themselves without wondering.' How sad. Man, as meant to be, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian is the priest of that temple. We have the responsibility to take care of it by the Creator's Handbook."

— **Dr. Pat Hart Terry**, chair of the department of nutrition and dietetics, Samford University, Birmingham

Be on the lookout — health tips from Dr. Pat Hart Terry coming soon.

"There are not only 1 billion people dying of malnutrition but there are also 1 billion people dying of obesity. We are dying of lifestyle issues.

"We are killing ourselves, not dying of infectious diseases."

— **Rick Warren**, author, speaker and pastor of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif.

Rick Warren set a goal to lose 90 pounds this year. He is about halfway there using The Daniel Plan and is sharing what he is learning at <http://saddleback.com/thedanielplan>.

"You can't break a bad habit by throwing it out the window. You've got to walk it slowly down the stairs." — **Mark Twain**

UPCOMING TOPICS

include health/wellness. Send us your experiences with and suggestions on this topic. E-mail jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com.

Land: 'All responsible citizens should endorse' pledge to reduce federal spending

(continued from page 1)
the most realistic and comprehensive proposal that has been made to begin digging our way out of this crisis."

"Our government is borrowing 41 cents of every dollar it spends," Land said. "That is generational theft. We're stealing our children's and our grandchildren's future. If something drastic isn't done and done quickly, our grandchildren will spend their entire working lives paying off our debts. And we'll be the first generation in American history to bequeath to our children and grandchildren a lower standard of living than the one we enjoyed."

"All responsible citizens should endorse it," he said.

On July 7, Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, introduced a bill that tracks closely with the "Cut, Cap, Balance" proposal.

His Cut, Cap and Balance Act would reduce federal spending next year by \$142 billion, provide caps on six categories of spending

and require adoption of a balanced budget amendment before raising the debt limit.

On July 14, Speaker of the House John Boehner urged the president and Democratic leaders to join Republicans in supporting a balanced budget amendment, according to Business Insider. Prospects for a bipartisan push on such an amendment appear slim. The House is scheduled to vote on such an amendment July 20.

Boehner's appeal to the president and his party came two days after the Republican leader in the Senate, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, proposed a complicated contingency plan that would seem to grant Obama authority to increase the debt limit without spending cuts.

Many conservatives criticized McConnell's proposal.

The coalition sponsoring the "Cut, Cap, Balance Pledge" wrote McConnell on July 13 to say it "will do everything [it] can to en-

sure that [his plan] is defeated."

"We cannot accept granting President Obama \$2.5 trillion [the amount proposed] in new debt with no enforceable reform requirements," the coalition letter said.

The coalition acknowledged not all of its members had the opportunity to approve the letter. Land said he had not seen the letter.

In addition to The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, other sponsors of the "Cut, Cap, Balance Pledge" are the American Family Association, Concerned Women for America, Eagle Forum, Family Research Council Action, FreedomWorks, Liberty Counsel and National Taxpayers Union.

Eight Republican presidential candidates, 12 U.S. senators, 36 U.S. representatives and five governors have signed the pledge, according to the coalition. (BP)

"That is generational theft. We're stealing our children's and our grandchildren's future."

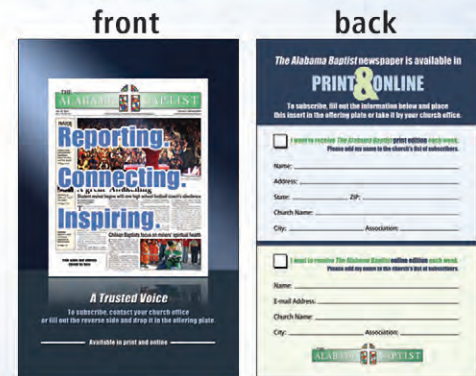
Richard Land
The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

CORRECTION

In the July 14 issue, the photo outline for Judson's 173rd annual commencement was incorrect. Robin T. Hall is chair of the trustee board.

Read
The Alabama Baptist
Day is July 31

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No electric power illuminates God's power

A busy summer here at Shocco Springs has not been short on 'firsts.' It hasn't been short on the powerful lesson of those firsts either.

A power outage two weeks ago felled a tree over campus power lines, blocking traffic in and out and keeping us in the dark for six hours.

But the groups staying with us forged ahead with evening conference/worship. Generators were running, flashlights were distributed but no power for P.A., CD or electric instruments—all those things that we think we must have to worship.

God had other plans. And here is what some of our guests had to say:

"The best part of the retreat was the power outage on Friday night. It really helped to make our worship session one of the best our group has ever been a part of. You may want to offer a 'lights out' option in the future!"

— Jimmy Skinner, Legacy Baptist Church, Dallas, Ga.

"One profession of faith during the black out; the young girl who was saved said the darkness showed her the awesomeness of God."

— Pam McElroy, Westwood Baptist Church, Alexandria

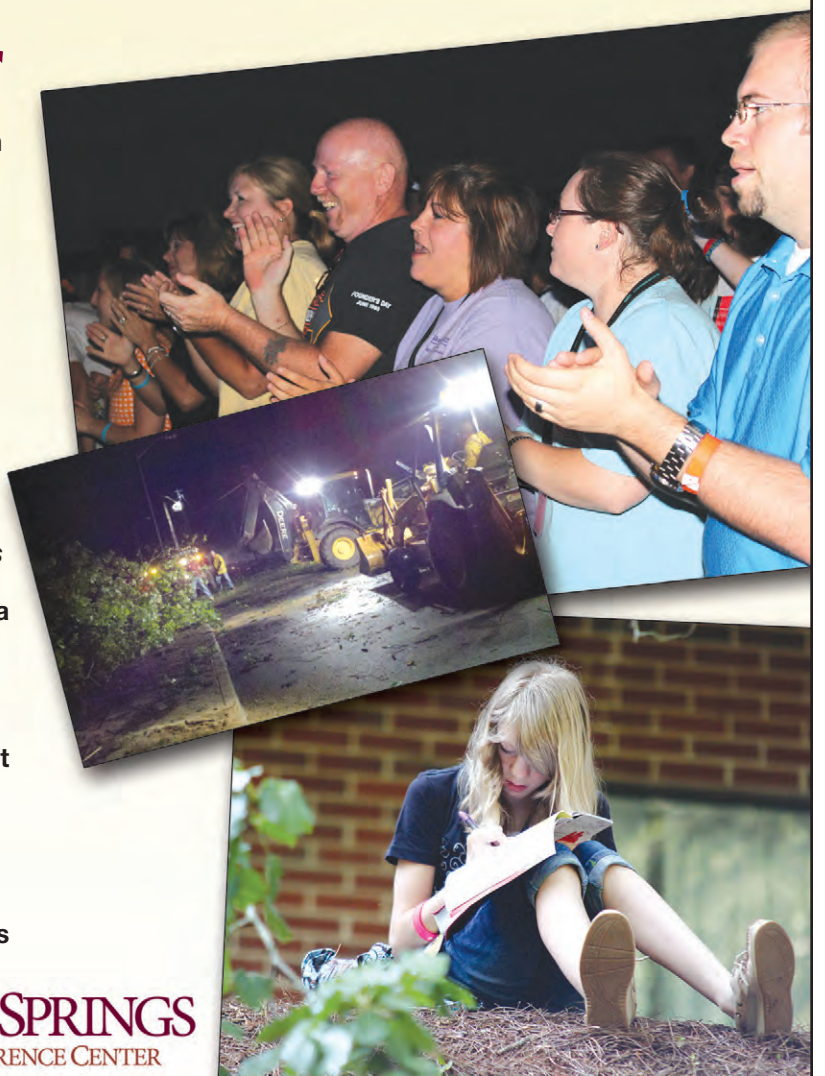
"One of the best worship services we attended; the preacher didn't need a microphone to preach and the congregation didn't need music to sing. It was like the old down home services."

— Alabama Baptist Deacons Retreat

"Of about 50 professions of faith during our stay, nine came during the black out. God used this in a mighty way. Worship Friday night was about fear — how God protects and comforts. The darkness was just perfect for the illustrations. I think Friday night was one of the most exciting times at Shocco!"

— Chip Luter, Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans

It shows us God is in charge. His work is done because of Him, not us. We see the results.



South Sudan becomes world's newest nation

The Republic of South Sudan is now the world's newest nation, raising the global number to 196, and the African continent's 54th nation-state.

After enduring two decades of warfare and the deaths of 2 million people, South Sudan saw its day of independence July 9.

Hundreds of thousands of people gathered in Juba, the new nation's capital, and heard their president, Salva Kiir, declare the southern region of Sudan independent of the north.

South Sudan's official declaration of independence was read out at 1:25 p.m., followed by Kiir being sworn in as president.

"Never again shall South Sudanese be oppressed for their political beliefs," Kiir said. "Never again shall our people be discriminated [against] on account of race or religion. Never again shall we roam the world as sojourners and refugees."

The division between the north and the south is sharp. The north is arid, Arab and Muslim, while the south has many varieties of vegetation, is black African and is predominantly Christian and animistic.

"We have reclaimed our permanent home, given to us by God as our birthright," Kiir said. "As we bask in the glory of nationhood, I call upon all South Sudanese to put the long and sad history of (civil) war, hardship and loss behind them and open a new chapter of peace and reconciliation in our lives." (BP)

Inmate sees God's blessings abound

(continued from page 1)

When Amar became a Christian, she began to take care of them, dubbing some of them her "children." To Amar, these women could never replace her husband and children, but God added them to her family. She comforts them when they feel homesick and she tells them about Jesus. When they can't pay the jail fees for amenities such as soap and pillows, Amar assists them with the little money she earns by giving haircuts to prisoners and selling purses she sews to guards.

"How can you be like that?" they ask. "How can you be so full of love and patience and humility?"

Then, just like Alexander said to her, she explains that she is a servant of Christ, and she is learning to behave like Him. No one in her prison family has decided to follow Jesus, yet, but she prays they will.

In the prison gym, she sits with Alexander's wife, Meghan, and holds her hand.

While the guards watch her closely from outside, she smiles and said she is blessed because God chose her



BP photo

HELPING OTHERS — Sewing purses is one way Dira Amar has a meager income to help other prisoners buy personal items.

to be His own. To her, that's worth the loss of an old life.

"If God has to take my life, my children and my husband, I really don't care because God knows the best thing for me," she said.

In her mind, God's blessings

abound in the absence of her family. He gave her the Alexanders; He gave her a Bible; He gave her inmates to evangelize.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons. (BP)

CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY

What are some of the possible benefits . . .

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 24

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson Professor of Christian Studies, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

SETTLE DOWN

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14

This week's passage is a portion of a letter Jeremiah wrote to Judean elders and exiles who had been relocated to Babylon. The expectation of prosperity often quoted as a personal promise in Jeremiah 29:11 originally was intended for people who had been taken against their will to live in a foreign land. God was going to bless them as they settled in Babylon and prayed for Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.

The exiles were given words of encouragement, but King Zedekiah and his rebellious followers received a word of condemnation from God. They were cursed by God for their unwillingness to listen to His words through the prophet.

Live a 'New Normal' (1, 4-7)

Build houses. Plant gardens. Get married. Have babies. Pray for your neighbors. Ask God to prosper the government. Sounds like normal living, right? Certainly! Now imagine receiving these instructions in a strange land, surrounded by people speaking a different language who don't want you living near them. Jeremiah was writing to exiles in such circumstances.

Eight years ago, God relocated my family from upstate New York to lower Alabama. We miss the cool, crisp air in autumn and the snow that covered our yard for days. Rather than pine away for earlier years or long to move closer to "home," we now have the privilege of serving God and His people where He has planted us. Before New York, we lived in Nicaragua. Each place is an opportunity for us to live a new normal.

Your new normalcy likely will be different. Keep in mind that whenever you find yourself amid strange surroundings and situations, God is willing and able to meet your needs as you live in surrender to His will.

Reject False Visions (8-9)

The people of Judah were sentenced to exile because of their syncretism, their mixing of covenant relationship with Canaanite fertility religions. They practiced forbidden sac-

rifice, astrology and divination for determining the future. In Deuteronomy, God forbade consultation with false prophets and diviners, since they sought to know the future apart from seeking God. Ezekiel 21:21 records how Nebuchadnezzar practiced various forms of divination. Jeremiah warned readers not to follow such Babylonian practices.

Believers today often show no discernment between genuine spiritual teaching and the occult. Books and movies about wizards, spells and vampires have multitudes of confessing Christians captivated. A desire to escape into fantasy is leading teens and adults to lose sight of God's Word. "What accord has Christ with Belial?" Paul asked (2 Cor. 6:15). Entertainment has become a poisonous substitute for worship.

God Is in Control (10-14)

God was in control and sovereign when Judah walked with Him. God reigned when enemy forces took leaders out of the capital and retrained them for service to another king. And He retained His control when He directed the heart of another king to release the captives.

For seven decades, Judah would experience exile for its unfaithfulness to God. In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed, its walls and gates devastated and its temple left in ruins. Seventy years later, the second temple was finally completed and dedicated to the Lord. God knew what was going to happen, and He revealed it to His prophet Jeremiah.

The chronicler cited Jeremiah in the final chapter of the Hebrew Bible (2 Chron. 36:21). Daniel was preoccupied with Jeremiah's 70-year prophecy (Dan. 9:2). In the fullness of time, God allowed a remnant of His people to return to the promised land. Jeremiah had, indeed, spoken for God.

God is still in control. Where Muslim-background believers are considered outcasts from their families and communities for believing that Jesus died and rose again for sinners, He still reigns. Where whole communities of African tribesmen begin following the Jesus path, God is still in control. Whatever you are facing, do what God says. Even in the midst of rejection and exile, God is still in control. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By James R. Strange Assistant Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Romans 6:1-19

Paul could use many models to talk about justification (being in the state of right relationship with God). In Romans, he presented two of his best-known models. One is legal, drawing a rough analogy between justification and what happens in courts. According to this model, human beings are to keep the God-given law but do not. Since all sins are capital offenses, all people are deserving of death. God regards all as guilty, yet He treated the only truly innocent one (Jesus Christ) as guilty on humanity's behalf. God raised Christ from the dead and so indicated that He accepted this payment. People can access this payment by trusting that God has accepted it. Although they are undeserving, they are pardoned and thus are justified.

The model we are looking at this week is somewhat different from the first; some call it a participationist model. In this model, sin is a power that enslaves human beings and alienates them from God. A related power, death, also enslaves and alienates. (So death does not refer to the death of the body so much as living apart from God.) God provided the solution through Christ's death and resurrection, which demonstrated that He is no longer under the power of death and hence no longer under the related power of sin. People can access God's solution by participating with Christ's death and resurrection through baptism. By being unified with Christ, people also escape these powers and live instead in submission to God and His righteousness.

Paul's use of differing models can be confusing if we focus too closely on the model itself rather than on what he used the model to represent. Both of these models point to Christ as God's saving act on behalf of a sinful humanity and show that human transformation is the result.

Embrace Your New Identity (1-11)

Some translations read, "if we have been united with Him in a death like this" (5) and "if we have died with Christ" (8). "If" really means "since." Paul was making the point that

whoever has been baptized ("We have been united with Him in death"; "we have died with Christ") has undergone a transformation. The "old self was crucified," "the body [i.e., person] of sin" was destroyed; hence we are "no longer enslaved to sin," rather we are "freed from sin."

Paul was not talking about committing individual sins here. That continues to happen sometimes, but what has changed is that we are no longer under the inescapable power of sin that alienates us from God. Instead "we walk in newness of life," "we will certainly be united with Him in resurrection," "we will also live with Him" and we are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Notice how the language is both future and present. The resurrection has not yet occurred, but we walk (that is live) in newness of life now and are alive to (that is no longer alienated from) God.

Fight Sin (12-14)

Remember sin here is a power rather than a particular transgression. Like many of his contemporary philosophers, Paul likened living morally to doing battle. However, Paul did not say we should fight sin directly (remember we cannot free ourselves from the power of sin) but that we present our "members" (selves) to God. It is God who uses us as "weapons of righteousness," that is as those who are able to live righteously in the world because of our unity with Christ. This is what it means to "have been brought from death to life."

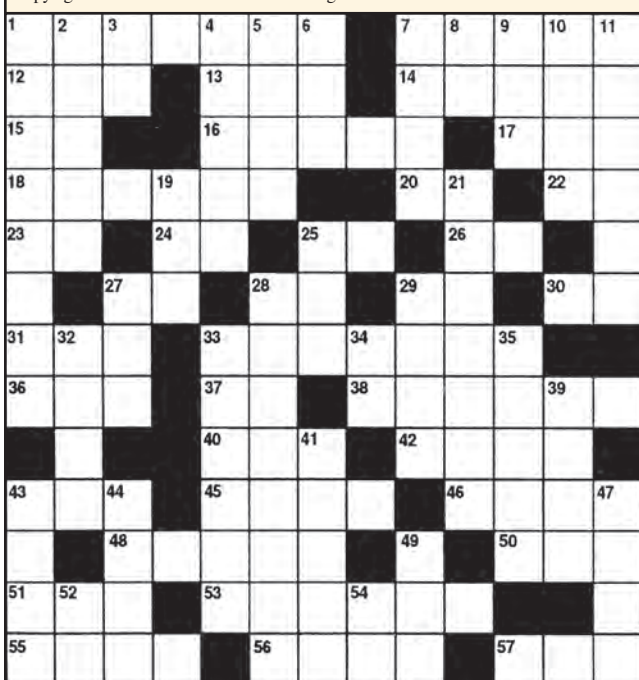
Walk in Righteousness (15-19)

Sanctification in verse 19 refers to the process of living a holy life. Justification happens through Christ's death and resurrection, whereas sanctification is ongoing, as we live enslaved no longer to sin but to God, to righteousness. Salvation is something that we hope for, having been justified and living as those who are being sanctified and trusting in God's promises.

One can see that for Paul, justification was to result, not in complacency but, in a transformed life lived in service to the One who is making us holy. ☞

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Daniel the _____. (Matt. 24:15)
- _____ stilled the people. (Num. 13:30)
- Lord, _____ long? (Isa. 6:11)
- Iron _____.
- Not live by bread _____. (Matt. 4:4)
- _____ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
- The family of _____. (1 Sam. 10:21)
- Long _____.
- Measure of weight.
- A pharaoh.
- Middle Atlantic state. (abbr.)
- _____ will we sing. (Ps. 21:13)
- I am _____ the Father. (John 14:10)
- How _____ it that ye have no faith? (Mark 4:40)
- Go up _____ Jerusalem. (Acts 25:9)
- Old Testament. (abbr.)
- Saint. (abbr.)
- That it shall _____. (Acts 27:25)

- Social Security. (abbr.)
- Yes. (Spanish)
- Samuel ran to _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)
- He looked on the _____. (Num. 24:21)
- Variation of aeon.
- And the Lord shut him _____. (Gen. 7:16)
- To scheme. (2 words)
- Disc jockeys. (abbr.)
- _____ he is come. (John 4:25)
- Long _____.
- To the slaughter, like _____. (Jer. 51:40)
- Christ _____ me. (1 Cor. 1:17)
- Elimelch's wife. (Ruth 1:2)
- Standard in golf.
- Long, narrow fish.
- Type of acid.
- Nos.
- Orderly.
- Mine enemy and my _____. (sing.). (Ps. 27:2)
- Art thou a _____? (Acts 22:27)
- Exclamation of pain.
- Houses.
- Periods of time.
- Asian holiday.
- _____ and Abel.
- American League. (abbr.)
- _____ sat in the gate of Sodom. (Gen. 19:1)
- Seth called his son's name _____. (Gen. 4:26)
- Name Rachel called Benjamin. (Gen. 35:18)
- _____ thou on my right hand. (Matt. 22:44)
- Christ _____ coat of many colors.
- Number of lepers. (Luke 17:12)
- All manner of _____. (Matt. 12:31)
- The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and _____. (Gen. 35:24)
- Put away (on a boat). _____ ago.
- Passet over the brook _____. (1 Kings 2:37)
- Consider _____ in thine heart. (Deut. 4:39)

- Let us not _____, as do others. (1 Thess. 5:6)
- Was one _____ a prophetess. (Luke 2:36)
- I will _____ all thy borders with frogs. (Ex. 8:2)
- So be it.
- The _____ true God. (John 17:3)
- The _____ of life. (Rev. 22:2)
- The _____ wherein Ishmael had cast ... the dead. (Jer. 41:9)
- Each. (abbr.)
- Egyptian god.



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By Rick Sharp, Adam Borden

DOMINIC BALLI

American Dream
Red Song Music

Self-described as “Cali-rock-reggae,” Dominic Balli’s first commercial record follows his 2008 independent release, “Public Announcement,” which ranked among iTunes’ top 30 reggae records for 2008.



You won’t hear any soaring guitars in this record; there’s not a growling power chord to be found. But the pop-flavored syncopated Latin and reggae rhythms move the well-written lyrics along just fine, thank you.

One of the more lyrically unusual pieces is “Twenty Seventeen,” a reggae-flavored retelling of Israel’s defeat of Moab and Ammon through the simple act of praise, as described in 2 Chronicles 20. “Favela,” recorded with Brazilian reggae artist Nengo Viera, is perhaps the album’s strongest song. (Sharp)

quite some time. Conviction comes through loud and clear, even in the studio, and Danen Kane’s simple acoustic-guitar-based arrangements, coupled with his strong vocals, exceptional songwriting, skilled accompanying musicians and ... well, FEEL, come together to make a wholly satisfying record. If we don’t all hear a lot from Danen Kane in the future, then I’ll be surprised. And disappointed.



Kane’s songs are biblically based, unflinchingly personal swatches of everyday life, relationships with others, with God. “Inheritance” is one of the best, a moving, funky paean to our unique inheritance when God enters our lives. The record’s first single, “Beautiful Mess,” describes our struggles to live in God’s will and is a lyrical and melodic masterpiece. There isn’t a bad song on the record. Find it and thank me later. (Sharp)

DOWNHERE

On the Altar of Love
Centricity Music

Canadian alt-rockers Downhere will release their new studio record “On the Altar of Love” on Aug. 23, their sixth studio effort since their debut album in 2001. It’s easy to say that the band doesn’t break any new ground here, but as their fans would

tell you, that’s like saying St. Basil’s Cathedral hasn’t added any new spires. Strong vocals, tight productions, uplifting Christian themes and hooky, well-developed melodies are here, from start to finish. This record feels less hectic than some of their earlier work, a good thing, I believe brought about by both musical maturity and the familiarity that comes from 10 years of writing and performing together.

“Let Me Rediscover You” is a hymnlike anthem that perhaps defines the feel of this record: moving and powerful, simple and urgent. This record will certainly please their many fans, and probably add to the growing list of music industry awards already under their belts. (Sharp)



GREATER VISION

The Only Way
Daywind

“The Only Way” is as clean as sunlight through your mama’s kitchen window and just as warm. Listening to a record like this is like therapy for your ears — the solid rhythm section with orchestra reminds me of great recordings by the Rambos or Glen Campbell’s “Gentle on My Mind.” There are no recording smoke and mirrors here, but you will find an honest offering of well-

crafted songs by some of the best writers of our time delivered by one of the most respected southern gospel groups of all time.

Rodney said, “Chris writes from a perspective that is really needed in our genre. When you hear one of his songs, you generally think, ‘I haven’t thought of that before.’ He uses fresh words that are not cliché and phrases that are easy to sing yet meaningful.

Chris said, “About Rodney’s writing, what can you say? From one writer’s perspective, Rodney’s approach to writing is incredibly thorough. A good song has to be comprised of a lyric and melody that marries well. Rodney’s music

reflects that. With a Rodney Griffin song, you can also bank on sound doctrine. There are no shallow messages to be found.” (Borden)

THE MARTINS

New Day
Gaither Music Group

The Martins arrived on the southern gospel scene many years ago with a fresh young sound that has retained its freshness with every record. With their first new recording in 10 years, Joyce, Jonathan and Judy have returned to greet the dawn of a “New Day.” The players have more No. 1 million-selling records to their credit than anyone in recent history. The result is a true Martins record. (Borden)



Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Leaving** — Bailey Flanigan Series #1, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **Learning** — Bailey Flanigan Series #2, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
3. **The Judgment**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
4. **Hurricanes in Paradise**, Denise Hildreth (Tyndale)
5. **After the Leaves Fall**, Nicole Baart (Tyndale)
6. **Lineage of Grace**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
7. **Sons of Encouragement**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
8. **Redeeming Love**, Francine Rivers (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
9. **For Time and Eternity**, Allison Pittman (Tyndale)
10. **Her Mother’s Hope**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale)

Nonfiction

1. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. **Through My Eyes**, Tim Tebow (HarperCollins)
4. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C Cook)
5. **Jesus Calling — Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Throw It Down**, Jud Wilhite (Zondervan)
7. **Radical**, David Platt (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
8. **Becoming a Man of Unwavering Faith**, John Osteen (FaithWords)
9. **Inverted**, Tom Ellsworth (Standard)
10. **Made to Crave**, Lysa TerKeurst (Zondervan)

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

My Name Is Still Brother Billy Bob Bohannon

Bill W. King. Waterford, Va.: OakTara Publishers, 2011. 234 pp. (Paperback).

Billy Bob Bohannon, pastor of the Last Baptist Church in Bird Bump, Ala., has a wealth of stories — so many, in fact, that one book was not enough to hold them all. Billy Bob’s second book continues the stories of Billy Bob, Thelma Lou Jean and their friends, family and church members.

Billed as “an infectious blend of spiritual wisdom and comedy,” the stories have an authentic rural Southern feel, sort of a cross between Jerry Clower and Jeff Foxworthy. A native Alabamian, or probably anyone who has lived in the South for any length of time, will have no trouble identifying friends and relatives in Billy Bob’s characters, like cousins Hootie, Runt, Weasel and Booger

Ray. At the end of each hilariously funny story, the reader is treated to a spiritual insight that flows seamlessly and fits perfectly.

Billy Bob is the “alter ego” of Bill King, director of missions for Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association. King developed Billy Bob for a church banquet in 2002; the character was a hit, and King soon began getting invitations to appear in other places as Billy Bob. He currently does about 70 appearances a year as Billy Bob.

When Your Neighbor Is the Savior

Botrus Mansour. Pasadena, Calif.: Hope Publishing House, 2011. 101 pp. (Paperback).

Author Botrus Mansour is a lawyer who became headmaster of a Baptist school in Nazareth, Israel. The first part of this book tells of Mansour’s life as an Arab evangeli-

cal Christian living in the Jewish state of Israel, then turns to a series of complaints, some (perhaps all) possibly well justified, beginning with the author’s contention that Christians in other parts of the world ignore Arab Christians who need their help and support.

The author does not stop there, but moves into a challenge to Western Christians’ view of Israel, writing that “the difficulty comes from a common view among many evangelicals that the current state of Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy foreshadowing the Second Coming of Christ,” then goes on to question whether the Palestinians, then, are viewed as just an obstacle to God’s plan.

It may have been helpful if the author had attempted to show his interpretation of the Scriptures that led him to his conclusions, but he did not. This is where he will probably lose many evangelical readers.

Hate 'implanted in my mind'

Former Islamic extremist finds Christ, love

As a teenager, Budi Mulyadi trained to kill Christians with a 9 mm pistol.

For months, he aimed it at a target while an instructor shouted slurs against Christianity. Mulyadi didn't know anything about the religion, just that it threatened Islam. Not once did someone explain Christ's sacrifice to him.

Yet, almost 20 years later, he serves as a Christian worker.

Today Mulyadi works with American Christian workers to manage worship sessions for youth in Southeast Asia. He helps local farmers learn better ways to raise healthy fish and grow their crops. He gives food to poverty-stricken families.

As Mulyadi works, the jobs and the people he works with bring him joy and he smiles, but his smiles fade when he talks about his adolescence. At the age of 14, he lived in an Islamic terrorist camp that imbued him with wrath and hate.

Hate "was something that was implanted in my mind," he said. "I could just think about Christians and the hate would pop up."

An obstinate child, Mulyadi ran away from an Islamic boarding school in his early teenage years. The school merely taught him Muslim scripture but had too many rules for his taste. He had already run away from home after a violent disagreement with his father. The 13-year-old had nowhere to turn. Then he met an Islamic extremist who promised him a new education.

The man took the young Mulyadi to a large compound consisting of tents and surrounded by trees. Twenty other boys slept in these tents at night and trained with knives and guns during the day. When their instructors talked to them, they touted the supremacy of Muslims and the wretchedness of Christians. The Christians, they said, deserved to die.

"We were told that the Christians were infidels," Mulyadi said. "If we would kill Christians, then that would be a free ticket into heaven for us."

At the camp, Mulyadi felt anger and self-righteousness boiling inside. At times, however, he also felt doubt and confusion. The instructors told him that Christians should burn in hell, but did he want to send them there?

The boy continued to mull over these questions as his marksmanship improved and as the gun felt more and more familiar in his hand. Eventually, the leaders believed, Mulyadi and four other boys were ready to prove their worth. Without a clear strategy, they sent their students out to kill anyone they could.

"There wasn't any specific hit, so there wasn't any specific contract," he said. "If we could find someone that was particularly 'holy' — someone that would really make a



IMB photo

TRAINED TO KILL — Budi Mulyadi learned to wield knives and guns in order to kill Christians. Mulyadi abandoned the Islamic training and found Christ. He now preaches God's word in many villages.

dent ... then that's who our primary target was."

Once they left the compound boundaries, Mulyadi discovered he wasn't the only one with doubts. The other boys had examined themselves as well, eventually determining they had no desire to kill.

"We were given a task to go kill Christians, and we had to make a decision — did we want to do that or not?" he said. "And that was the point that we broke (and went our separate ways)."

Abandon the jihad

All five boys decided to abandon the jihad. For all the camp's brainwashing, they never wanted to kill anyone.

Mulyadi went home briefly, but his father's anger forced him out on the road again. He eventually landed in a city several hours away and found a job tending the lawn of a health clinic. He spent the rest of his teen years living alone in a rented room.

As he trimmed hedges year after year, Mulyadi became interested in general spirituality — not simply what he found in the pages of the Koran.

During his spiritual search, he found the name of Jesus, a prophet according to the Koran, and questioned why Muslims never mentioned Him in their lectures and discussions. Mulyadi picked up a Bible and investigated.

Then, one night, as he prayed alone in his room, he heard a voice say, "I will send a Helper unto you."

Mulyadi didn't know where the voice came from or who the "Helper" was, but he turned to Scripture, and after exhaustive reading, found John 14:16: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever" (NASB).

From the moment he read that verse in John, the young man devoted himself to Jesus, a man who

had the power to send him a Helper — the Holy Spirit — and the power to tell him about it 2,000 years after His initial promise.

"My whole demeanor has changed, and God has filled my heart with love," he said. "I'm not an angry person anymore. My temper is gone. I don't get mad at people like I did before. Because God loves me, I am able to love others."

This love turned Mulyadi into a Christian worker. He loves the people he once hated. He leads worship for people he once scorned. He desires to bring people to Christ when he once wanted to punish them for following the Savior.

"Until God chooses to take me home, I'm going to be here on a mission to share the gospel with people who need to hear it," he said.

As Mulyadi preaches God's word in scores of villages and spends time with his family — a wife and daughter — he rarely speaks to anyone of his time as a terrorist in training. Only after an hour of questioning does he mention it, and until recently, his American partner didn't know about that section of his life.

However, every once in a while, he reunites with the four other men with whom he left the Islamic camp. They get together and discuss their work and families, and they discuss God. Although Islamic extremism filled them with revulsion for Jesus, Christ pursued every one.

All five are Christian pastors.

For more information on how to reach your Muslim neighbors with Christ's love, visit lovingmuslims.com. lovingmuslims.com offers a two-week small-group study and an eight-day prayer guide for use with the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks this September. It also offers sermon outlines, feature stories and videos and additional resources.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Some names have been changed for security reasons. (IMB)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Pakistan's Christian sanitation workers in societal gutter

LAHORE, Pakistan — While one Christian sanitation worker in Lahore has been suspended and criminal charges filed against him for objecting to discrimination against fellow workers, another was killed the same month for not tending to a shopkeeper's command fast enough.

Anayat Masih Sahotra, who has worked as a street sweeper for Lahore's Solid Waste Management (SWM) department for 24 years, said he is facing baseless charges of forgery and fraud from his employers because of his work as a labor leader for area sweepers, who are nearly all Christians.

He was suspended and accused of the crimes May 14 after he asked SWM Managing Director Wasim Ajmal Chaudhry to fulfill a promise to make 400 Christian workers regular employees with full benefits, he said.

The deep, culturally rooted disparagement Christian sanitation workers suffer was apparent in another incident in May. Abbas Masih, 36, was cleaning the streets May 21 when he was murdered for not picking up trash quickly enough, human rights advocates said.

Contempt for sweepers is rooted deeply in cultural history, the result of a merging of Brahmanic Hinduism's ritual impurity with Islamic ceremonial uncleanness regarding sweepers — almost all of whom were Hindu "untouchables" who converted to Christianity in the late 19th century.

Pakistani officials appear to want to keep Christians in this degrading occupation.

Several job advertisements from government departments clearly state that sweeper candidates must be non-Muslim; some even specify that they must be Christians.

Pastor's father beaten unconscious in attack in India

PRATAPGARH, India — Hindu extremists in Pratapgarh, Rajasthan, have threatened to kill a pastor after beating his family and violating an agreement to stop attacking them, the pastor said.

Pastor Shantilal Ninama of Believers Church said the Hindu extremists beat his 65-year-old father until he fell unconscious in one of the attacks in June.

On the evening of June 8, after agreeing to do no further harm to Ninama and his family in exchange for his dropping police charges he'd filed over a previous attack, the enraged Hindu extremists stormed into his home and began beating and stoning his father, sister, wife and three children, he said.

As the pastor sought police help, his father fell unconscious and his wife and two of his children ran out into the darkness. Another daughter hid beneath a bed, and his sister escaped and hid in a valley.

Pastor Prabhatkar Malladi, secretary of the Udaipur Diocese in Rajasthan, said the extremists were threatening to kill the pastor.

"The villagers are not allowing any Christian leaders to enter into the village to meet Pastor Ninama, but we are taking necessary steps to help the pastor and one advocate is now taking up the case," he said.

Kazakhstani pastor charged after praying for sick

TARAZ, Kazakhstan — Pastor Yerzhan Ushanov of the New Life Protestant Church in Taraz could face up to two years' imprisonment if criminal charges of harming an individual's health, brought by the National Security Committee (KNB) secret police, reach court.

The KNB claims a visitor to the church suffered after Ushanov prayed for him using hypnosis, the second time the secret police has brought such charges against a Protestant pastor in Jambyl region.

"This is not the first time the authorities in southern regions of Kazakhstan bring such absurd accusations against pastors for allegedly using hypnosis, while in reality all they do is pray for the sick," New Life Church members said.

Extremism and Terrorism Police then raided the church's Sunday worship after an alleged complaint of food poisoning and the KNB searched Ushanov's home.

The KNB secret police and the Extremism and Terrorism Police refused to comment.