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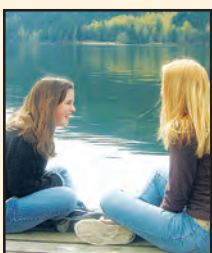
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'Children of God'

International World Changers see 'family of Christ' while working in South Africa

In the fleeting warmth of the early afternoon sun, he sat facing the campsite teeming with youth — 61 of them — from all walks of life. Making their way to the dining hall, they crowded behind the thin glass of the windowpanes, a cloud of different colors and dialects — fitting for a project based in the Republic of South Africa, a self-described "Rainbow Nation."

From his chair in the lawn, International World Changers (IWC) crew leader D. Ray Davis turned his gaze from the building below.

"There's an African proverb that says, 'If you want to go fast, go alone,'" he said. "'If you want to go far, go together.'

"I think the IMB (International Mission Board) and missionaries have realized we can't do this job alone."

The occasion was IWC in George, South Africa, where Davis, IMB associate vice president of church and partner connections, served as crew leader. IWC is an IMB-sponsored ministry that sends out teams of students to locations all over the world during their holidays from school.

However, this 11-day project in July took a new approach to missions work by halving the number of American students usually admitted and partnering them with an equal number of South African youth, an idea that was the brainchild of IMB missionaries Jeff and Lynne Holder, who hosted the event.

"We really wanted to help strengthen the work of the existing churches ... instead of just doing our own thing," Jeff said. "[We wanted] to come alongside our Baptist partners and assist them in training and church planting."

And while the Americans were assisting the local churches, nationals were able to provide the team with cultural know-how and act as translators when necessary.

How the two groups would actually interact, however, no one knew.

"We had never done this before. ... It's winter in George and we thought it might rain — and I think today's



BP photo

COMFORT — International World Changers participants comfort some of the youth whose lives were touched through the youth rally in Mossel Bay, South Africa.

the first day it hasn't," Lynne said, laughing. "[There were] questions of whether everyone would get along or [whether] the language would be an issue."

Bonding

Their prayer from the beginning was to be as people who've met before. Within a day, the team was tighter than old friends, bonding over tea as they exchanged traditions and different turns of phrase. Always offering

a smile or a hand to hold, they called themselves a family — though, from the world's perspective, they looked anything but the same. Not only were there Americans alongside Africans, but there were representatives of many ethnic groups in the still somewhat separate society of South Africa: Coloured, Xhosa, White, Indian and Afrikaner.

"Children of God always fit in perfectly," said Octavia Skippers, a 20-year-old IWC participant from

Cape Town, South Africa. "If two things fit together, it would be the family of Christ: many parts, one body. And that's what we are."

The whole camp adopted new titles — uncle or aunt, brother or sister.

The team split into four subgroups, the focus of which was to reach out to young adults in different struggling communities in and around George. A local church from each area partnered with a team of about 15 World Chang-

(See 'World,' page 3)

Alabama Baptist churches reach communities with VBS

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Yellow taxis are not a common sight in Alabama, but as churches around the state geared up for Vacation Bible School (VBS), the sights and sounds of New York City caught the attention of children and adults alike.

According to James Blakeney, an associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, most Alabama Baptist churches used LifeWay Christian Resources' "Big Apple Adventure" curriculum, which featured New York City sights and sounds and the theme "Where Faith and Life Connect."

In sanctuaries, fellowship halls and Sunday School rooms, scenes from Battery Park and Times Square, including skyscrapers and blow-up versions of the Statue of Liberty, sprang to life, creating a big city mood. In Washington Baptist Association, volunteers fixed up an older model car and painted it "taxi cab" yellow. The "taxi" visited several churches in the association throughout the summer.

"It has been a great advertisement and a lot of fun," said Elsie Moss, VBS director for Washington Association.

Volunteers played an important role in everything from teaching to crafts to recreation to snacks. At Hopewell Baptist Church, Geraldine, in DeKalb Baptist Association, 101-year-old

Nettie Crow helped with snacks and did her best to stay busy.

"They wanted me to sit down, but I told them if I was going to sit down, I would have stayed at home," Crow said.

Community outreach was an important part of VBS, since many families are introduced to a church through the ministry. After joining New Salem Baptist Church, Clanton, in November, Karen Reeser saw the need for Bible school even though the Chilton Baptist Association church had not had one in more than 10 years. She said the main goal was to reach the children in the community, and it did — more than 90 students enrolled

(See 'VBS,' page 5)

Vacation Bible School (VBS) takes place across the state. See video of VBS at NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville. Click [here](#) to watch.

COMMENT

Left with Only a Big Mouth

American historian George Marsden calls it the “Great Reversal.” Rick Warren says the result of it is that the church is left with only “a big mouth.” Both refer to evangelical Christians’ movement away from involvement in ministry to human needs and toward a focus on privatized expressions of Christianity through personal piety.

Marsden, who has written extensively about the interaction of Christianity and American culture and American evangelicalism, points to the early years of the 20th century (1900–1930) as a time of dramatic change in evangelical Christians’ role in the United States. He argues that fear of equating all humanitarian efforts with bringing in the kingdom of God caused conservative Christians to distance themselves from efforts to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the poor.

What some people call the “social gospel” became identified with theological liberalism — something conservative, Bible-believing folk like Southern Baptists would have no part of. Instead they retreated from the front lines of ministry to human hurts. (See “Fundamentalism and American Culture” published by Oxford Press in 2006.)

Evangelicals, Marsden contends, built a wall around core theological positions to defend them from the theological left, which began to question the Christian consensus of beliefs that had dominated society in the 1800s. Rather than continue to help the poor, feed the hungry, protect the weak and heal the sick as they had in the 19th century, evangelicals rallied around right belief based on a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ and expressions of that commitment through personal piety.

Warren, pastor of the 100,000-plus-member Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif., and author of “The Purpose Driven Life,” “The Purpose Driven Church” and other books, is not as analytical as Marsden. He concludes today’s evangelical church has “cut off [its] hands and feet, and all that is left is a big mouth.” That is one reason many people in the 21st century refuse to listen to the church, he says. The church is all talk and no do.

Such reasoning is behind Warren’s PEACE Plan, which he describes as “doing what Jesus did.” PEACE stands for Promoting reconciliation with God, Equipping servant leaders, Assisting the poor, Caring for the sick and Educating the next generation.

Warren says assisting the poor, caring for the sick and educating the next generation have earned



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

him and the network of churches he leads an opportunity to plant churches and equip servant leaders in nations around the world.

Proclaiming the kingdom of God through both word and deed, as Warren suggests, is a pattern used by Jesus. In Luke 9:2, Jesus sent out the 12 disciples with the command to preach the Kingdom and heal the sick. In Luke 10:9, Jesus instructed the 72 whom He sent before Him to “heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you.’”

Word and deed

Jesus described His ministry with the words of Isaiah the prophet. Luke 4:16–21 describe Jesus announcing that He was sent to “preach good news to the poor ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Again word and deed go together.

Of these verses, the commentator in the Disciple’s Study Bible, published by LifeWay Christian Resources, wrote, “Jesus’ ministry, anticipated in Isaiah 61:1–2, was addressed to the needs of suffering humanity. He demonstrated what God’s kingdom is. The Kingdom is not pride in prosperity and power. It is helping the needy enjoy life’s necessities. It is not greater wealth for the rich but deserved rewards for the faithful.”

When John the Baptist began to doubt that Jesus was the true Messiah and sent a messenger to question Him, our Lord’s response was “go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor” (Luke 7:22).

Jesus’ answer was in the evidences of the nearness of the Kingdom as seen in ministry to human hurts.

The New Testament church understood that when people look at the church, they should see the very embodiment of Jesus. That is why the New Testament church evidenced care for the poor as a central concern. Baptists often turn to Acts 6:1–7 as the time of the first deacons. Often overlooked is the concern that prompted the selection

of deacons — how to effectively care for the poor.

In Galatians 2:1–10, the apostle Paul successfully defended his ministry. The passage concludes with the sentence “All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”


James, the half brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, wrote, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27).

Late in life, John, the beloved disciple, wrote, “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:17–18).

Words and deeds — they go together in proclaiming the gospel. Together they help show the embodiment of Jesus.

If Marsden is right and evangelicals retreated from ministering to human needs because of fear of theological liberals, then it is time to confess our sin of timidity and reclaim the biblical pattern of demonstrating God’s love in ministry to human hurts as we share the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus.

As Warren says, few will listen to the message of the church as long as it is only a big mouth. Evangelical Christians, including Alabama Baptists, must also be Jesus’ hands and feet.



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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None found guilty in bingo corruption trial

Moral watchdog Dan Ireland 'disappointed' with trial results but finds positives

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

After more than 30 years of working alongside state legislators, Dan Ireland said he was disappointed with the outcome of the two-monthlong federal corruption trial that ended Aug. 11.

But Ireland, director emeritus of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), also said the issue isn't over and that some positives did come out of the trial.

What began as an FBI investigation in 2010 surrounding a potential vote-buying scheme related to electronic bingo gambling legislation (Senate Bill 380) ended with no guilty verdicts.

Twelve businessmen, lobbyists, legislators and others, including the state's top gambling magnate Milton McGregor, were indicted in 2010. Three of those eventually pleaded guilty; lobbyists Jennifer Pouncy and Jarrod Massey and Country Crossing developer Ronnie Gilley. The remaining nine became defendants in the trial that began June 6. When the trial ended, no guilty

verdicts were handed down, two defendants were acquitted and several charges were left with a hung jury (see sidebar, this page).

"I was disappointed that there wasn't more of a positive in the charges," Ireland said the morning

after the verdicts were read. "I was surprised there were no more convictions than they showed."

But he wasn't surprised by the indictments.

"I've seen that kind of thing going on for a good while," Ireland said, noting he believes there will be another trial to deal with the remaining charges that were ruled a mistrial. More indictments surrounding the case could also be coming, he added.

"If the evidence is there, I hope the FBI will do its homework and present a better case in a better way (for the next trial)," Ireland said. "I think they made a feeble effort at presenting their case."


"The defense made a good point that whoever makes donations to campaigns are pretty sure those legislators are going to be with them on legislative issues. That's not just with gambling; that's on any issue," he explained. "The defense also said that a company or person is going to support a person who will vote their way, and I believe they are right about that."

"Companies are not going down there and supporting legislators who vote against their interest," he said. But Alabama's previous "business as usual" approach to supporting candidates who support one's agenda made it difficult to



It was a factor in defeating a major gambling bill and helped encourage a tougher ethics law in the state."

Dan Ireland
Director emeritus
of ALCAP



Vote-buying bingo trial results in no convictions for the nine defendants

- ▶ VictoryLand owner **Milton McGregor** — Three charges, not guilty; 14 charges, mistrial
- ▶ Former legislative analyst **Ray Crosby** — one charge, mistrial
- ▶ Lobbyist **Tom Coker** — 11 charges, not guilty; three charges, mistrial
- ▶ Lobbyist **Bob Geddie** — 13 charges, not guilty; acquitted
- ▶ Country Crossing spokesman **Jay Walker** — 11 charges, not guilty; two charges, mistrial

The other three people indicted — Country Crossing developer Ronnie Gilley and lobbyists Jarrod Massey and Jennifer Pouncy — pleaded guilty prior to the trial. (TAB)

know the difference between making a large contribution and buying a vote, Ireland said.

"It's the way things have operated until this year ... but it was important to plug that leak," he said, noting the new ethics laws passed by the Legislature in December are a direct result of the corruption indictments.

"If there's any good in what has been done ... I think it helped to encourage a tougher ethics law in the state of Alabama," Ireland said. "The new ethics laws have put a little bit of a tighter noose around

[questionable contributions]. ... It is going to be more difficult to make sumptuous donations to candidates.

"Had the new ethics laws been in place five years ago, we would not have had such a free flow of money as we did in 2009 and 2010," he said, noting the ethics laws will need to be reviewed and adjusted frequently because the people involved in channeling money to legislators for votes will find another way to do it.

"You would think that people who are elected by the people

would have an ethical character that you could trust them but that is not true," Ireland said. "That's why you have to have these ethics laws."

The original announcement of the FBI investigation had another positive outcome, he said. "It was a factor in defeating the major gambling bill (SB 380) in 2010."

"And this year, there was no hint of a gambling bill coming up. It is the first time in at least 30 years that I can remember a gambling bill was not introduced," he said. "The trial has been a factor in changing some of the views that people have about accepting money. Plus they have limitations now that they didn't have before."

"What happened (with the indictments and trial) in Montgomery is a way to open [the way the Legislature operates] up," Ireland said. "The trial and accusations were issues that needed to be aired out publicly, and people needed to know what's going on down there."

"I hope that this court case is a wake-up call to all of Alabama — to the people, that they need to be involved ... and to candidates ... that they are a servant to the public and not a servant to special interest groups."

Special interest groups garnered a tremendous amount of power in the past because "the way it was set up, someone could donate to campaigns and switch it around from PAC to PAC where you couldn't trace it back," Ireland said.

"You were making a campaign contribution, and that's different from buying a vote. ... Making contributions is not illegal. ... But (in some cases), the difference is only terminology." ■

World Changers minister to one another

(continued from page 1)

ers to engage the youth through fun activities like bead work and nail painting for the girls and sports ministry for the boys, who flocked to the sound of the constant thud and punt of a pickup soccer match.

Each subgroup continued to visit the same community throughout the week to build relationships and minister to the new friends they found there. With many new or renewed commitments to Christ counted in every community, these World Changers ministered to one another as well.

"A lot of the South African team members are people God is using in my life and it's because they're trying to live like Jesus did," said Brandon Stotts, 17, from Longview, Wash. "They'll never know how grateful I am for them."

Even when times got rough — the first few rainy days flooded the tents where they were staying

and made the cool weather that much colder, not to mention gave everyone the sniffles or worse — the team's affirming attitudes were unaffected.

Back at the camp, each night was brought to a close with devotions and a time for the students to share both their successes and struggles.

Healed together

Whether it was issues of addiction or abuse, divorce or disease, color and culture made no difference. They shared in their brokenness and together were healed.

"It was amazing to know that I'm not the only one [going through these things]," Skippers said.

"We can shed tears together; we can overcome things together."

Lynne said: "Even though they live in different parts of the world, they still face the same struggles and issues and heartaches. And I

think it's been good for both sides to see that."

On the last day, leadership from the South African side announced plans to continue their ministry in George through short return trips on a six-month schedule.

"We can't just leave this place and not come back. We want to see the fruits of the seeds we laid for these people," said Julia October, 19, a South African student from Cape Town.

Bronwin Robertson, 19, who hailed from one of the communities where the IWC team had been working, took it as a call to action. "I'm going to fight for God in my area," he said. "My work starts now."

Goodbyes had already begun and the American team was packing their bags, but through the relationships that were built with local believers, their work would live on. (BP)



Photo by Chris Mills

NEW ALABAMA WMU OFFICERS

Becky Luther (left) of East Gadsden Baptist Church was re-elected president of Alabama WMU, Laurelle Stoudenmire (middle) of Thomasville Baptist Church elected vice president and Sonja Adams (right) of Heflin Baptist Church elected recording secretary.

Vacation Bible School



Churches make adjustments for VBS after April tornadoes

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist churches hit hardest by the April tornadoes have had to make many adjustments in the past few months, and Vacation Bible School (VBS) was no exception.

At First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, in Franklin Baptist Association, VBS director Angie Haney met with her team in May. Only five weeks after their town was devastated by the storms, they initially thought Bible school would be too much to plan.

"We just didn't feel like God wanted us to say no though, so we gave it to Him," Haney said. Within a week, Myra Campbell at Underwood Baptist Church, Florence, in Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association contacted her and offered the church's assistance in holding VBS.

Campbell and more than 50 volunteers made all the plans and reached out to families in the area. VBS began Sunday, July 17, and by Thursday's closing night, 132 had enrolled. Fourteen decisions were made during the week, and Haney said the children have been talking about Bible school ever since. She is especially glad that the children whose families sought shelter in the church basement during the tornado have made new, happier memories at church.

"Many of them were in the church basement when the tornadoes hit, so they associated the church with the storm. It was so good to see the children excited and happy to come to church," Haney said.



Photo by Doug Rogers

PARTNERSHIP — Sara Lansford (center), director of preschool ministries for First Baptist Church, Decatur, answers questions about her experience as a journeyman in Mali from a group of children at Vacation Bible School (VBS) at Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, in Franklin Baptist Association. Mountain View's buildings were destroyed by the April 27 tornadoes, and in the weeks following, First, Decatur, partnered with the church to help it hold VBS Aug. 1-5.

She added that many children who were not in church now are, all because of VBS.

In Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, Beth Yates, minister of childhood education at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, and VBS workers decided to take VBS to the community areas hardest hit by the storms.

"We wanted to provide some positive activities for kids who still lived in those communities, something that was for them and not about the storm," Yates said.

The church partnered with Rose-dale Baptist Church, The Soma Church and Alberta Baptist Church to hold VBS activities around the city June 6-10, and Yates called the results "outstanding!"

Attendance and enrollment grew each day, with a high attendance of 710.

Yates said the volunteers from all churches encouraged each other throughout the week.

"Even on the hottest days, many of our workers began to say things like 'This is the best VBS ever!' and 'We need to do things like this more than once a year!'"

To the northeast, several Madison Baptist Association churches worked together to bring VBS to children in the Harvest community through The Harvest Youth Club Community Center July 11-15 and 25-29.

Harold Sellers, director of missions for Madison Association, said though much of the area and many of the homes around the youth center were destroyed, its build-

ing suffered very little damage. "It was amazing in that God just simply put His protection over that building for future ministries," Sellers said.

James Blakeney, an associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said many churches shared their leftover supplies with churches affected by April's storms. Many others sent offerings from VBS to Alabama Baptist disaster relief.

One of those churches was Beulah Baptist Church, Boaz, in Marshall Baptist Association. Pastor Tony Holcomb said the decision was made early on to give the missions offering from VBS to disaster relief. Throughout the week, everyone was encouraged to bring his or her money, and on family night, a final offering was taken. The total for the week was more than \$1,000 — a record VBS offering, Holcomb said.

"We attribute that to the focus of the offering," he said. "With the tornadoes striking so close to home and church members who sustained damage, we were determined to give to the relief effort and everyone was very responsive."



Photo by Doug Rogers

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATIONS — Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, uses mobile chapels for its VBS. The chapels, leased by the State Board of Missions and funded by gifts given for Alabama tornado relief, were installed June 24.



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VBS brings missions opportunities

Evangelism is at the heart of Vacation Bible School (VBS) — sharing Christ with children, their parents and anyone who will come and listen. For that reason, VBS can be a missions opportunity outside the church walls as well.

For the fourth year in a row, missions volunteers at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Moulton, in Muscle Shoals Baptist Association took the message of Christ to the people of Honduras through Bible school.

Neil Carter, associate pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist, and five church members traveled to the village of Seis de Mayo June 11–18. Partnering with Evangelistic International Ministries (EIM), the team concentrated on VBS, teaching children about Jesus through simple stories, crafts and games.

Carter said getting children to come was not really a problem.

“Children are everywhere and anytime there is an activity going on, they head that way,” he said.

Recruiting volunteers for a VBS missions trip is the bigger challenge, especially when the trip involves going to a country where the children do not speak English.

Getting involved

One way Pleasant Grove Baptist members got involved was by collecting items for “shepherd bags.” EIM’s Shepherd Bag Ministry provides children with bags filled with hygiene supplies, small toys, crayons and a coloring book with the gospel message. Carter said distributing the bags provides another opportunity to present the gospel.

Team member Debbie Moss, who has been on four missions trips to Honduras, prayed that the message got through to the children, despite having to be translated from English to Spanish.

“The children were so eager to listen and ask questions, but we do have to scale it way back to simple basics,” she said.

Carter said VBS missions requires adaptability on the part of volunteers. For example, the classroom where he taught was not large enough for the 40 or so youth who came, so they moved into a nearby field, found some shade and he taught his lesson.

Despite the challenges, Carter believes that VBS missions, and missions in general, is a responsibility all Christians have. He knows that if volunteers are willing, then people will hear the gospel.

“In VBS, like any missions work, we simply have to trust God,” Carter said. (TAB)

Working together

Churches help each other by volunteering time, resources for VBS

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Recruiting volunteers for Vacation Bible School (VBS) can be a challenge in any church, but when a congregation is small or aging or both, finding volunteers can be especially difficult. For two Alabama Baptist churches, cooperation has been the key to opening ministry doors in their communities through VBS.

Snowtown Baptist Church, Dora, in Mud Creek Baptist Association held a two-day VBS in June. On the first night, 21 children attended. Pastor Dennis Smith said such a low number might be disappointing to many churches but not to his church.

“For us, this was the first time in 22 years that the number of children attending was that great,” Smith said.

He credited a “very special team” from McNeil Baptist Church, Bessemer, also in Mud Creek Association, who brought both materials and enthusiasm to help at Snowtown Baptist.

“They reached out to bring the Word of God and two days of fun to these children who live in an area that has been hardened by time and the world,” Smith said. “There can only be positive results from all the time and effort these wonderful people put into this great event.”

In Cleburne Baptist Association, a similar effort started last year when members of the association’s VBS team felt they could help by volunteering their



Photo courtesy of Mountain View Baptist Church, Ranburne

JOINT EFFORT — A group from Mountain View Baptist Church, Ranburne, meets outside during Vacation Bible School. Cleburne Baptist Association assisted the church with the event.

time and resources to assist a church that wanted to have VBS but could not because of the lack of volunteers.

Mountain View Baptist Church, Ranburne, said yes to the team’s offer. The rural church’s attendance had dwindled to a few faithful members with very few young people in the crowd and had not held VBS in several years.

Pastor David DeLong contacted associational VBS director Vickey Weathers, and they decided to hold a one-day VBS.

“We just asked them to take care

of refreshments and love those kids, and we would do the rest,” Weathers said.

The result of the effort was an enrollment of 22 children and 16 adults, one of whom was a volunteer from the church who helped with crafts.

This year, the associational team made the same offer. Mountain View Baptist was ready to hold another VBS, and this year, more volunteers from the church stepped up to help.

“They had a three-day VBS, and the associational team provided

only two teachers,” said Weathers, who served as director.

The changes in the church have extended further than just VBS. In the months since the 2010 Bible school, Mountain View has seen people come, and though the congregation is still small, Weathers believes that its willingness to step out on faith has given it new energy.

“I see God using VBS to revitalize a church that had almost given up. Now they are looking at the community around their church with new eyes,” she said. ☞

VBS reports show 3,207 professions of faith statewide



Photo by Neisha Fuson

EVANGELISTIC EVENT — Children at NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, take part in LifeWay’s ‘Big Apple Adventure.’

(continued from page 1)

over the course of the weeklong VBS.

“Each day, we had more and more kids,” Reeser said. “The Lord really blessed us.”

Reeser, who served as VBS director for the first time this year, said one advantage of using the LifeWay theme was sharing materials. Since New Salem Baptist held its VBS in July, it was able to get decorations and lesson materials from other churches that held VBS earlier in the summer.

“We didn’t have a big budget, so the help we got from other churches was appreciated,” Reeser said.

“Big Apple Adventure” VBS lessons emphasized how Jesus connected with individuals who needed Him and how believers can connect with others and share the gospel. According to Blakeney, this year’s numbers show that many connections were made this summer through Bible school.

As of the end of July, 763 churches — about 35 percent of Alabama

Baptist churches — had submitted VBS reports, he said. Twenty-seven churches reported enrollment of more than 500, and statewide enrollment had reached 107,463. Churches had given \$254,623 through VBS missions offerings — \$33,894 of which was given through the Cooperative Program with the remainder going to other missions projects, including disaster relief efforts.

Many decisions were made as well — 3,207 professions of faith have been reported so far. While final numbers will be available later this year, Blakeney believes that VBS efforts around the state have been positive.

“Vacation Bible School is the largest evangelistic event that many Alabama Baptist churches have on their calendar. When we teach the Bible and give adults, youth, boys and girls the opportunity to accept Christ as Savior, we see positive results,” he said. “Bible study, music, missions, crafts and recreation and snacks: What could be better?” ☞

Across Alabama's Associations

BARBOUR

► **Curtis Rich** is the new director of missions for **Barbour Association**. He has been in the ministry for the past 50 years and has served as director of missions for



RICH

Bullock-Centennial Association and in churches in Alabama and Georgia. He is a graduate of Norman Park Junior College in Georgia and holds a degree in pastoral training from Florida Baptist Theological College (now Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville. Rich is married to Dorothy. ► **Parkview Church, Eufaula**, recently honored Pastor **Glenn Brock** and his wife, Carol, for five years of ministry at the church with a special service. There was special music by the church's praise team and Lloyd McKeemy, pianist for the Proclaimers Quartet. Curtis Rich, director of missions for Barbour Association, spoke, and Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, congratulated the Brocks via video message. A covered-dish lunch followed. During Brock's years at the church, the average Sunday School attendance has increased by nearly 50 percent. The church also has experienced growth in the music, women's, children's and youth departments.



BROCK

► **Fairfield Highlands Church, Midfield**, will hold revival Aug. 28-31 with Evangelist Don Graham. Dale Jones will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. For information call 205-780-6621 or visit www.fairfieldhighlandsbaptist.org. Ed Cruce is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **NorthPark Church, Trussville**, will host a Beth Moore simulcast Sept. 10, 9:30 a.m.-4:15 p.m. Lunch is included. Register and purchase tickets at the

BIRMINGHAM

► **Hale Association** WMU will hold its annual meeting Aug. 30, 6 p.m., at Pleasant Hill Church, Moundville. Retired missionary Shelby Smith will speak. The associational WMU will provide the meat and tea, and a card received by each church will state what item to bring. All ladies under WMU leadership and spouses are welcome. To RSVP contact Associational WMU Director Debbie Thomas Holley at 205-799-1165 or dholley54@comcast.net by Aug. 25. Chuck Weaver is pastor

of Pleasant Hill. Bill Wallace is director of missions.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold Harvest Sunday Aug. 21, 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m., with Ron Lynch of Life Out of Death Ministries. For information call 256-729-1328 or visit www.clements baptist.org. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MARSHALL

► **Second Church, Boaz**, will hold a red book singing from the church hymnal Aug. 27. The Billy Gray Quartet will sing at 6 p.m. The congregational singing will be at 6:30 p.m. For information call Neil Vick at 256-593-4178. Jimmy Harrison is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Sage Avenue Church, Mobile**, will host Christian entertainer Scott Humston Aug. 26-27, 7 p.m., and Aug. 28, 10:50 a.m. and 6 p.m. For information call 251-479-4593. Phil Boyles is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will hold a southern gospel singing Aug. 25, 7 p.m., with The Dove Brothers. Doors will open at 6 p.m. For information call Tom Snowden at 334-285-5112. Stanley G. Holt is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Gardendale First Church** is holding Awesome August on Wednesdays at 6:15 p.m. at the north campus. Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Church, New Orleans, will speak Aug. 24. Rick Burgess of the syndicated radio and television show "The Rick and Bubba Show" will speak Aug. 31. Child care and other children's activities will be provided for birth through third grade. For information call 205-631-8791 or visit www.gfbc.com. Kevin Hamm is pastor.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Pelham**, will host a Beth Moore simulcast Sept. 10, 9:30 a.m. Doors will open at 8 a.m. Lunch is included. Travis Cottrell will lead worship. For tickets visit www.fbc pelham.org or call 205-663-7492. Mike Shaw is pastor. ► **Grace Church, Montevallo**, will celebrate its 18th homecoming Aug. 28, 11 a.m. Ron McLain will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Holy Destiny will sing following lunch. Clark Thompson is pastor. ► **South Shelby Church** will celebrate its 10th anniversary Aug. 21, 11 a.m. Hugh M. Richardson Jr., director of missions for Shelby Association, will speak. Lunch will follow. There will be a singing featuring New Ground at 1:30 p.m. T.W. Minor Jr. is pastor.



100th anniversary marked by 100 at Waco Church

Waco Baptist Church, Russellville, in Franklin Baptist Association celebrated its 100th anniversary July 17 with the help of some of its former leaders. One of those was former Pastor Larry Dover, who now serves as director of missions for Franklin Association. Dover delivered a special message to the approximately 100 attendees. The anniversary celebration also included a detailed reading of the church's history and the recognition of all former deacons and pastors.

An Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative was on hand to present a plaque, and two additional plaques of recognition from other groups were presented.

Following lunch was a two-hour musical presentation with several singers and soloists, noted Elbert Berryman, member of Waco Baptist since 1948 and chairman of the church's 100th year anniversary.

"We had good attendance and good fellowship," he said.

Pastor Billy George agreed. "Everything went really well. We had a good turnout that day."

Hanceville's Riverside Church celebrates 75 years

The year was 1936. A revival held in the Hanceville area caused the birth of a new church plant. Small but thriving, the church plant became Riverside Baptist Church.

Seventy-five years later, the church still blooms.

Pastor Wendell Peterson has led the 50-member congregation for five years and encouraged it to "keep on keepin' on" at the July 17 anniversary celebration.

That day, the sanctuary was filled with more than 80 people — some former members and family of current members. Duwayne Kelly, Riverside Baptist's pastor in 1966, shared the evangelistic message, and Nancy Beasley of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a commemorative certificate. Randy Makemson, East Cullman Baptist Association's director of missions, also attended and said the celebration created an "ecstatic atmosphere" at the church. A fellowship lunch followed the service, and "most people didn't want to leave when [the celebration] was over," Peterson said.

Steep Creek Church reaches 150-year mark

"Our goal is to reach the [lost] and to get them to have a fire to come to church," said Nina Haisten, secretary for Steep Creek Baptist Church, Hope Hull.

The Montgomery Baptist Association church celebrated 150 years of doing just that June 26 with a message from Pastor Trevor Perry on reasons to give thanks taken from Psalm 138, a certificate presented by Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Reid Foster, a plaque presented by Associate Director of Missions Bob Dempsey and a fellowship lunch.

Haisten displayed several pictures from the past and present — one of the original building (before remodeling), one of the church in the 1940s when it reopened after being closed for 20 years and one of the current building. As for the future, the congregation of about 30 has a strong desire to grow by adding more children and developing a Sunday School program.

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving
Year to Date through July 31, 2011

JULY

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,641,666
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$3,021,497
Under Goal for Month	\$620,169

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$25,491,662
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$23,939,502
Under Goal for Year	\$1,552,160

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

A word from Alabama's executive director and convention president ...



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

One Mission: The Great Commission One Program: The Cooperative Program Many Ministries: Great Commission Ministries

August 4, 2011

Dear Pastor:

We want to thank you, as a pastoral leader, for your support of giving through the Cooperative Program, which undergirds the ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention as well as the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Your church is a valuable member of the Alabama Baptist family of churches, and for that we are grateful.

As your leadership prepares the church budget for the coming year, we would like to encourage you to make sure that *The Alabama Baptist* is included in it for your resident family members. *The Alabama Baptist* continues to be an essential channel of communication for Alabama Baptists concerning the ministries supported through the Cooperative Program.

The theme selected by *The Alabama Baptist* this year is "Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring." With this in mind, you will be able to stay apprised of information about missions in Alabama, in North America, and around the world. The comprehensive coverage of the recent mission involvement by Alabama Baptists in Guatemala, Ukraine, Haiti, Appalachian Region and Michigan is just one example of the ministry performed by our state paper.

The Alabama Baptist is an inexpensive investment. It actually costs less than a postcard. The regular reading of *The Alabama Baptist* by your people will strengthen your church family. It will provide for them much needed information and inspiration, which will make them not only better Baptists but better church members as well.

If you already receive *The Alabama Baptist*, then we want to thank you for your support. To add to your subscription list or to begin participation, contact *The Alabama Baptist* toll free at 1-800-803-5201, by internet at circulation@thealabamabaptist.org, or correspond with them at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. You now have two options for subscribing to the paper – either in print or online.

As long-time readers and supporters of *The Alabama Baptist*, we highly recommend it to you as a valuable resource of information and inspiration. Thank you for all you do for the cause of Christ and also for your support of Great Commission Ministries through the Cooperative Program. God bless you and yours.

Your fellow-laborers,

Rick Lance
Executive Director-Treasurer

Mike Shaw
Convention President

Pastors vary on how to handle marriage requests

American Protestant pastors have widely varying standards for when they will and will not perform wedding ceremonies, according to a new survey by LifeWay Research.

The survey of 1,000 randomly selected Protestant pastors found that a majority (58 percent) will perform weddings for couples they know are living together. Nearly a third (31 percent) will not, and 10 percent are not sure.

The survey's results, published in the summer edition of LifeWay's *Facts and Trends* magazine, also found that only 5 percent of pastors will not perform a marriage ceremony if the bride or groom has been divorced. The majority (61 percent) will perform a ceremony for a divorced person "depending on the reason for the divorce" while 31 percent will perform a ceremony for a divorced person "regardless of the reason for the divorce."

"Marriage is a much-debated topic today and we wanted to see how Protestant pastors handled marriage requests," said Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research. "Like the churches they serve, their standards for whom they will perform marriages vary greatly."

When it comes to cohabitating couples, pastors who consider themselves mainline are more likely to perform weddings than those who consider themselves evangelical.

In response to the question, "Will you perform a marriage ceremony for a couple whom you know is living together?" 68 percent of mainline pastors say yes compared with 57 percent of evangelicals. Twenty-four percent of mainline pastors and 34 percent of evangelicals say no.

A minister's level of education also reveals differences in pastors' willingness to perform marriage ceremonies for couples who are living together.

A full 62 percent of pastors with at least a master's degree will marry cohabitating couples while only 52 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or less will perform weddings for couples living together before marriage. Twenty-nine percent of pastors with at least a master's degree will not perform such ceremonies compared with 36 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or less.

Mainline and evangelical pastors divide again on the issue of performing marriages for divorced people. In response to the question, "When asked to do so, will you perform a marriage ceremony if the man or woman has been divorced?":

▶ 41 percent of mainline pastors say, "Yes, regardless of the reason," compared with 29 percent of evangelicals.

▶ 55 percent of mainline and 65 percent of evangelical pastors answer, "Yes, depending on the reason."

▶ Only 2 percent of mainline pastors and 5 percent of evangelical pastors answer, "No." (BP)

SBOM's Wiltshire leaves post, joins World Changers, PowerPlant

One of Alabama Baptists' youth "guys," Kyle Wiltshire, is leaving his post at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) to work with students on a national scale.

Wiltshire, an associate in the SBOM's office of collegiate and student ministries for the past three years, will be the new summer staff coordinator for World Changers and PowerPlant, a student mobilization initiative, effective Sept. 1. Both ministries were recently transferred from the North American Mission Board to LifeWay Christian Resources.

"I love the process of discipleship with teens," he said. "I love teaching students who are willing and eager to learn and grow in

their faith." In his new role, Wiltshire will recruit, organize and train summer staff (college volunteers) for positions like music leader and missions communications specialist for World Changers and PowerPlant. "[The college volunteers] serve all summer, but in the process, they learn what it means to be more like Christ. ... It's a pretty cool [opportunity as summer staff coordinator to get to] see so many lives being changed," he said.

At the SBOM, Wiltshire worked with youth ministers across the state, participated in training conferences for youth ministers, helped organize

the annual Youth Evangelism Conference and was involved in Super Summer Alabama (a leadership and discipleship camp for students), which was one of his favorite responsibilities.

"Kyle is a very gifted young man who has contributed well to the cause of reaching young people for Christ and in our efforts of equipping them in the faith pilgrimage," SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance said.

"Kyle will be missed by his fellow state missionaries. He endeared himself to us all while he served alongside us in state missions." (TAB)



WILTSHIRE

Serving the Community

With the support of the Baptist Health Foundation, Baptist Health System pr

Mission of the Baptist Health Foundation

As a witness to the love of God, as revealed through Jesus Christ, the Baptist Health Foundation is committed to ensure that Baptist Health System has the charitable and community resources necessary to sustain its ministries that enhance the health, dignity and wholeness of those we serve through Integrity, Compassion, Advocacy, Resourcefulness and Excellence.

By Jen Jackson

Being an engaged member of the community is all about seeing a need and then responding. The Baptist Health Foundation was founded on the guiding principle of providing resources that support

the work of Baptist Health System (BHS). And, for the four BHS hospitals – Princeton, Shelby, Walker and Citizens Baptist Medical Centers – this extends beyond the obvious medical needs to encompass the needs of the community.

The work begins at the hospital, but permeates out into surrounding neighborhoods, positively affecting the people who are the lifeblood of the community.

More than bricks and mortar

The current expansion at Princeton Baptist Medical Center is a stellar example of how the Foundation plays a pivotal role in providing community resources. More than simply a “bricks and mortar” addition, this project will add new facilities, attract new physicians, house state-of-the-art technology and provide enhanced public spaces, including a new chapel. All of this will lead – not only to opportunities to serve patients inside the space – but also open opportunities to serve the greater community. Through generous corporate and individual donations, many people across the community can be cared for in a multitude of ways.

Beyond the walls

Outside the hospital walls, the Baptist Health Foundation works to help ensure that resources match needs. This became even more evident in the wake of the April tornados. Staff from the Baptist Health System hospitals quickly mobilized to come to the aid of the people and communities devastated by the storms, including Pleasant Grove, Concord, Cordova and Pratt City. Through the Foundation’s support, funds and resources were readily available to assist those community members who found themselves in sudden, desperate need. And aside from emergency situations, the hospitals of Baptist Health System and the Foundation support the community with ongoing programs, events and initiatives.

A passion for wellness

Princeton Baptist’s community involvement director, Kathy Boswell, exudes passion when talking about the importance of an all-encompassing, community approach to health care. “Our goal is for people to evolve into the best *well* person they can be. We start with our ‘Wellness Model,’ which identifies different areas in which individuals need to be well – physical, mental, intellectual, social, spiritual, emotional, occupational, environmental. When



Provides compassionate care beyond the walls of its hospitals and health centers

any one of these areas is off balance, a domino effect occurs, and the result is an unhealthy person.”

For Boswell, “evolution” is not just a lofty term in her title. “To evolve means to gradually change and develop,” she continues. “This concept allows us to directly help people through targeted programs and initiatives. We call this ‘The Damascus Initiative,’ which relates to Paul’s conversion while on the road to Damascus in the book of Acts. With any program we initiate, we want people to have a Damascus experience; to leave better, stronger and more determined to be well.”

Inspired to achieve more

Developed to introduce high school students to the diversity of careers in the health care industry, the Princeton Achievers program makes a tremendous impact on the youth and families in the neighboring community. The program is led by Princeton staff members who volunteer their time while working with students to explore career paths and possibilities in health care – from nursing to accounting; at the bedside or in an office. Thanks to funding from the BHS Employee Benevolent Fund, students can be awarded a \$250 scholarship for each year’s participation in Achievers. To date, more than \$40,000 in scholarships has been awarded.

Outrunning obesity

Baptist understands that healthy kids turn into healthy adults, which is why they partnered with the Junior League of Birmingham and the City of Birmingham to sponsor “5K for Kids, Small Steps to End Childhood Obesity.” The goal of this 3.1-mile run and family fun run is to educate and encourage healthy nutrition and physical activity among five elementary schools in the Princeton Baptist area. Prior to the run, more than 1,200 kids participated in a 5k fit program designed by the Princeton Baptist outpatient rehab team under the leadership of Carol Stephens. Sponsored by Princeton Baptist, this annual run brings together children, families, city leaders, runners and Princeton staff to work together in the fight against obesity.

Leadership for a lifetime

The “Leadership in Me” program is a summer initiative that teaches servant leadership and job marketability skills to youth ages 14-21. Princeton



This Princeton Baptist Physician Directory was found amidst the rubble of a home devastated by the April tornados, as if to confirm – “Baptist is here for you.”

Baptist partners alongside JCCEO, Urban Ministries, the Mayor’s Office-Division of Youth Services, Leading Edge Institute and Essentials, Inc. to provide training sessions that enforce the motto: Leadership development begins with the choices you make in your own life. The program reinforces the need for young people to find balance in everyday life and make choices that support them in being a well and happy person.

Cultivating customer service

Acutely aware of the importance of customer service, this spring Princeton Baptist partnered with the Housing Authority of Birmingham to present a Customer Service Specialist Training Program. This Occupational Wellness program is a job training class presented by staff from Jefferson State Community College, which teaches participants the keys to customer service success. A certificate of completion offers “graduates” a great resume builder while reinforcing the importance of treating people with compassion and kindness. The community evolution team at Princeton Baptist believes service is at the core of every successful business – and every happily successful person.

Serving the senior community

Caring for the senior population are Baptist Health Foundation’s nine apartment communities for seniors. These apartment communities offer seniors with limited resources a safe living environment that nourishes the body, mind and spirit. A wide variety of organized programs and events are available for residents. A good example is Princeton Towers, located on the Princeton Baptist campus in Birmingham. Among its activities to help residents stay active and

involved is a community vegetable garden. Many of the residents also volunteer their help each summer for a community Vacation Bible School sponsored by Princeton Baptist for the benefit of neighborhood children.

“Caring for the community is a job we take very seriously at the Baptist Health Foundation,” said Foundation President Mark Belcher. “And at each of our hospitals, ‘community’ is not just about caring for the people in our own backyard, it’s about caring for the whole community, wherever that may take us. Doing God’s work by living out the Baptist Health System Mission is our purpose and our greatest joy.”

For information on how to help support the Baptist hospitals and continue these good works call 1-877-474-4243, visit www.BaptistHealthFoundation.com.

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States enact record number of abortion restrictions in 2011

State governments have enacted a record number of abortion restrictions this year, including bans by six states on the lethal procedure during the last half of pregnancy.

States have adopted 80 abortion restrictions in their 2011 legislative sessions, far exceeding the previous record of 34 from 2005, according to a July report by the Guttmacher Institute.

Of this unprecedented number, four states — Alabama, Idaho, Kansas and Oklahoma — enacted bans on abortions at 20 weeks' gestation based on evidence a baby in the womb experiences pain by that point. Another two states — Mis-

souri and Ohio — approved prohibitions at 20 weeks or later based on fetal viability, which is the ability of the unborn child to live outside the womb.

Indiana also adopted a pain-capable abortion ban, as it is known, but it includes language providing discretion to abortion doctors that the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) considers a potential loophole.

The four states that enacted solid, pain-capable abortion bans followed the precedent set by Nebraska, which became in 2010 the first state to approve such a law. The legislation is typically named the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.

The Missouri and Ohio bans enacted in July and based on the unborn child's viability take effect 20 weeks into pregnancy.

Among many other types of abortion restrictions enacted by states this year are laws that:

- ▶ Prohibit "telemedicine," or webcam, abortions, which occur when doctors at remote sites counsel by means of videoconferencing women seeking abortions and dis-

pense the two-drug abortion method RU 486 to them without being in their physical presence.

- ▶ Mandate new regulations for abortion clinics.

- ▶ Ban state-controlled funding of Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers.

The Guttmacher Institute formerly was affiliated with the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. (BP)

Want to know God?

By Pastor Terry Birdsong
Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Eufaula

There are so many people hungry in the world today. If a man is physically hungry, then a meal is provided to ease his need. If a man is spiritually hungry, then a loving Savior has been provided to ease his need.

The only problem is an unsaved person does not understand how to be fed spiritually.

It takes a saved person to set the table and serve the "meal."

Being fed spiritually is somewhat like eating salted peanuts. You can't stop after you begin!


The need to know God grows so strong that you must constantly be fed in order to be content. Of course, we will never be satisfied as long as we are here on this earth.

Total satisfaction will come on the day of the Second Advent of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

An unsaved person also does not understand how to experience the grace and mercy that are abundantly available to those saved by Christ.

The saved must be ready to act as "servers" to friends, family and others who long to know God's grace and mercy and find themselves sitting at the table of need. They provide a wholesome meal that includes a large serving of the Truth and lovingkindness and then follow with a dessert of support that never ends.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Campbellsville Baptist Church has long been and is a leading church in the heart of central Kentucky. CBC is widely known for its love of mission work and mission support, its music ministry, youth ministry and its historic relationship with Campbellsville University. For more information or to submit a resumé, please contact Committee Chair Ed Pavy at pavyed@yahoo.com, call 270-789-0604 or mail to: 102 Wellington Park, Campbellsville, KY 42718.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Bivocational pastor needed at County Line Baptist Church, a church that finds joy in the Lord, located seven miles east of Warrior. Please send resumé to: colinebaptist@bellsouth.net or P.O. Box 605, Warrior, AL 35180.

INTERIM PASTOR: As we seek God's will for our future, Lake Highland Baptist, located between the Birmingham airport and East Lake Park, is looking for a bivocational interim pastor. Send resumé to: Lake Highland Baptist Church, 508 North 82nd Street, Birmingham, AL 35206.

WORSHIP PASTOR: Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, is seeking a worship pastor who has a heart and passion for worship and music ministry as his primary vocational calling. The qualified candidate will have experience in leading and will display an understanding of blended worship using piano, organ, praise team and band, as well as a worship choir. Experience in leading a fully developed church music ministry is preferred. A bachelor's degree is required, and a seminary master's degree in worship or music ministry is preferred. Send resumé to Dr. Robert Paul, senior pastor, 801 Woodward Ave, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Lakewood Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational music min-

ister leader. Please send resúmes to: Lakewood Baptist Church, 2101 Mastin Lake Road, Huntsville, AL 35810, or lwoodch@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR: Nazareth Baptist Church, Rainsville, is prayerfully seeking a part-time music director. Please send resúmes by Aug. 19th to: Amy Blevins at Nazareth Baptist Church, P.O. Box 541, Rainsville, AL 35986.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER: FBC Gordo is accepting resúmes for part-time worship leader. GFBC has a 2-service, traditional/contemporary format. The ability to play an instrument preferred. Send resumé to: dsingleton@gordofbc.org.

TWO POSITIONS: MINISTER OF MUSIC & STUDENT MINISTER: Ozark Baptist Church is accepting resúmes for two positions, a minister of music and student minister. Mail resúmes to: Ozark Baptist Church, 282 S. Union Ave., Ozark, AL 36360. Please specify what position you are applying for.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS MINISTER: We are prayerfully seeking God's person to lead our youth and young adults. Please send resúmes to: Barfield Baptist Church, 74 East Mill Road, Lineville, AL 36266. Att. Search Committee.

YOUTH MINISTER: Full-time. Duties include evangelizing middle school and high school age youth through a balanced program of ministry and recreation. Please send resumé to: Thorsby First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 307, Thorsby, AL 35171.

OTHER POSITIONS

CHILD CARE WORKERS: Child care workers needed for Brookwood Baptist Church on Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights and special events. Weekly or flexible schedule. Call Kelly at 205-967-0441, e-mail: kellyt@brookwood.org.

LIVE-IN HOUSEPARENTS NEEDED AT CHILDREN'S HOMES: Live-in houseparents needed at Christian children's homes in Alabama. Min. HS diploma and valid driver's license. Great benefits. Call 1-800-548-4256 for more information.

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

TRAVEL/VACATION GEORGIA MOUNTAIN CABIN: 2 BRs, 2 BAs furnished cabin. Wheelchair accessible. \$125/night with 3-night minimum. 6 nights @ \$125/night with 1 night free. Located in mountains of Blue Ridge, Ga. Call 941-755-3655.

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

FOR RENT/SALE ORLANDO RESORT CONDO: Resort condo in Orlando close to Disney World. For sale: Timeshare and a camper/travel trailer. Call 334-413-8433 for more information.

FOR SALE PADDED OAK PEWS FOR SALE: 31 padded oak pews for sale. 20 are 12.5', 6 are 13' and 5 are 8.5'. Contact Milly Baptist at 251-846-2263.

AUBURN HOUSE: Home for sale Auburn, Ala. 3 BRs, 2 BAs, 2-car garage, fireplace, fenced backyard, 1,400-sq. ft. 334-222-2144, jgsmith@centurytel.net. Paid \$174,000 in 2006. Asking \$160,000.

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Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

N.C. association expels church led by female pastor

MOUNT AIRY, N.C. — Surry Baptist Association in North Carolina expelled Flat Rock Baptist Church, Mount Airy, from membership July 26, two weeks after its new female pastor started at the church.

The association of 65 churches reportedly voted “overwhelmingly” at a regularly scheduled meeting to disfellowship the church for calling Bailey Edwards Nelson as pastor. Messengers viewed the church’s action as violating scriptural guidelines that they believe reserve the role of pastor to males.

Nelson, 28, a graduate of Furman University and McAfee School of Theology, is the first female pastor in Surry County, which is in north central North Carolina. Her first Sunday at Flat Rock was July 10. The following week the church received a letter from the association’s membership committee citing “concerned pastors” and asking for a meeting to discuss “possible solutions” to the issue it said threatened the fellowship of the association.

Nelson said Flat Rock’s leadership knew no “solution” short of withdrawing her call as pastor would satisfy the membership committee, so it declined the meeting.

Billy Blakley, director of missions, said the church’s “refusal” to attend the meeting with the membership committee was mentioned at the associational meeting as evidence the church was unwilling to maintain fellowship. According to Baptist Women in Ministry statistics, Nelson is one of about 20 known female pastors or co-pastors of Baptist churches in North Carolina.

Texas Baptists give \$25,000 to help East Africa famine

DALLAS — Texas Baptists are giving \$25,000 through a group of churches to help victims of the East Africa famine.

The convention is giving \$20,000 from its disaster relief funds and \$5,000 from the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger to TEAM — The Ethiopian Aid Mission, a consortium of primarily Baptist congregations in east Texas who have been serving in Ethiopia more than three years. The coalition will work with Ethiopian congregations to ensure that people who need food receive it.

About 12 million people in the Horn of Africa are facing hunger, and thousands of Somalis daily are fleeing the nation for refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. Camps are swelling in size as people begin living on the outskirts of the settlements.

According to media reports, about half of the children attempting to get to the camps are at risk of dying as a result of malnutrition and disease. Jim Palmer, who coordinates TEAM’s work in Ethiopia, recently has been in dialogue with church leaders there about how to provide assistance. TEAM congregations and partners have raised nearly \$10,000 for the relief effort as well.

CP giving down 1.02 percent from last year

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are 1.02 percent below the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank Page. The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2010–11 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget. As of July 31, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$160,098,309.08, or \$1,641,906.24 behind the \$161,740,215.32 received at the end of July 2010. Monthly CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$15,103,899.37.

For the SBC CP Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$160,098,309.08 is 96.14 percent of the \$166,518,408.48 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1–Sept. 30 fiscal year.

Balancing act

GPS 2020 prepares churches to be ‘attractional,’ ‘missional’

By Keith Manuel
Louisiana Baptist Convention

Balance. It’s a hard place to arrive in ministry. I think the problem comes, at least in part, because as pastors and leaders, we tend to lean toward our passions. Our default is always the easiest place from which to work.

Two defaults in evangelism are missional or attractional methods of evangelism.

The missional approach sends believers into the community to interact with people. Community projects like painting a school or repairing homes in a particular neighborhood are examples. Another approach is providing help for people in need through meals or yard work. These acts of kindness open the door for sharing the gospel.

The attractional approach brings the community to interact with church members. Churches use events like musicals, fall festivals or sports camps. Others may hold revivals or revival type meetings. The event becomes a bridge for sharing the gospel.

‘You need both’

Jerry Pipes, an evangelist who specializes in these two areas, once said, “The question of which is better, attractional or missional, is like asking an airline pilot who is over the Pacific Ocean, ‘Do you want your left wing or right wing to continue flying?’”

You need both.

Church planter James Welch dis-

covered the need for both approaches in his work in New Orleans. By default, Welch leaned toward the missional approach to evangelism. He led his church into its community full force. The church was living out its faith before its neighbors.

After an associational training on attractional events in preparation for the 2012 emphasis of GPS 2020 (God’s Plan for Sharing), Welch decided to try a more balanced approach. He led his church members to hit the streets of their neighborhood again. However, this time the members placed doorknob hangers inviting their neighbors to come to a special series of worship services.

According to Welch, the church plant previously embraced an incarnational model of sharing its faith, showing the glory of God to a lost world through a lifestyle that exemplifies the incarnate Jesus. However, after the GPS training the church made a language shift. It became invitational. The goal became to connect a felt need to a relationship with Jesus Christ. From the worship services to service ministries, the members and staff are now calling for a response to the gospel.

The church’s methodology is to provide a clear, simple approach for church members to share the gospel through the balance of missional and attractional events. The desire is to build relationships to intentionally provide a clear invitation to be saved — because the only hope for families and their community is Jesus Christ.

Many neighbors responded positively to the shift in language and methodology. At the culmination of the series, Welch gave the participants an opportunity to respond to the gospel. Eighteen people indicated they wanted to surrender their lives to Christ and receive His gift of eternal life. That was the largest response the church has seen during a special emphasis since the work was planted.

Research results

According to research commissioned by North American Mission Board’s (NAMB) evangelism staff through Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 92 percent of the most effective evangelistic churches in the Southern Baptist Convention used attractional events. In addition, these churches held 40 percent more attractional events than the comparative group.

All Southern Baptist churches have the opportunity to receive training that prepares them to host attractional evangelistic events in the spring of 2012 as part of GPS 2020. NAMB has provided evangelism training materials as free downloads on the website www.GPS2020.net. At the same time, your state convention’s evangelism staff will be enlisting churches to participate and provide training events, too.

Through our Cooperative Program work with the GPS 2020 emphasis, we can achieve a balanced approach to evangelism in our church plants and churches.



Someone You Should Know

SYLVIA RAY

Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford
Calhoun Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Jeremiah 29:11
FAVORITE HYMN: “Footprints of Jesus” and “I Surrender All”
HOBBIES: Reading

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Larry for 53 years; three sons, Scott, Brock and Jeff; six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?
A: All my [boys’ friends] went to Lakeview Baptist. So I decided ... ‘I want to see what’s so appealing over at Lakeview for my boys.’

When I went over there, the Lord just used that night to convict me that I really didn’t have a personal relationship with Christ. ... I accepted Christ and (it) ended up [that] we joined Lakeview Baptist Church — my three sons and my husband and myself — and we were all baptized.

Q: What led you to serve in the church?
A: I have always known the power of prayer. ... I just have an empathy for these people who are hurting. It’s all from the Lord calling me to do different things and then equipping me.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?
A: He’s made my life complete. I have that peace that passes all understanding. He’s honored me by calling each of my sons and two of my grandsons into different areas of ministry. And then He’s allowed me to be the wife of a wonderful Christian man.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in church in the future?
A: I know God called me to each of these areas that I’m working in. As long as He can use me, I will be there doing my work.



RAY

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A monthly advertising supplement — August 2011

Church Resource Guide



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— Keith Turberville, associate pastor
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Retirement investors should stick to strategy in volatile markets

American stock markets fell Aug. 8 in the wake of the Aug. 5 announcement that Standard & Poor's had lowered the United States' credit rating from AAA to AA+. The news rattled Asian and European markets the morning of Aug. 8 and led to a steep sell-off overseas. In the United States, the Dow Jones industrial average fell more than 634 points in Aug. 8 trading.

Even in the midst of volatile markets, properly allocated retirement investors should maintain their investment strategy.

Although it is always prudent to review your investments periodically, making changes in volatile markets can lead to emotional mistakes.

"Our retirement-plan participants should always keep the long-term view first and foremost," said O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources.

"It's easy to allow disturbing headlines to cloud our judgment. In all times — but especially times like these — the important thing is for investors to remain rational, consider their financial goals and to avoid making decisions guided by emotion."

Whether the market is up or down, there are three key areas that can help investors make de-

isions about how to handle their investments.

► Focus on objectives not emotions.

GuideStone retirement-plan participants can access the free GPS: Guided Planning Services tool both online or by telephone appointment.

"The important thing is for investors to remain rational."

O.S. Hawkins
GuideStone Financial Resources

With GPS, participants can see whether they are properly allocated based on their risk tolerance and in-

vesting time horizon — generally, the time until they'll need to start drawing their retirement accounts down. Tools like GPS can help an investor look at their investments more objectively and make any necessary changes to their account based on facts, not today's headlines.

► Avoid making impulsive decisions.

Guard against making ad hoc changes in your portfolio or changes based on short-term market movements can lead to failure as it promotes "buying high and selling low."

The performance of your account will be determined based on results of the financial markets in the future, not the past. Selling today cannot avoid yesterday's losses in a down market. Likewise, in an up market, you cannot buy yesterday's performance by investing in the hottest fund.

► Maintain realistic expectations about market behavior.

Markets move up and down over time in response to social, political and economic events.

Equity investments are by nature more volatile than some other asset classes such as cash and bonds. Investors should be able to accept significant short-term fluctuations in the value of their portfolios. (GuideStone)

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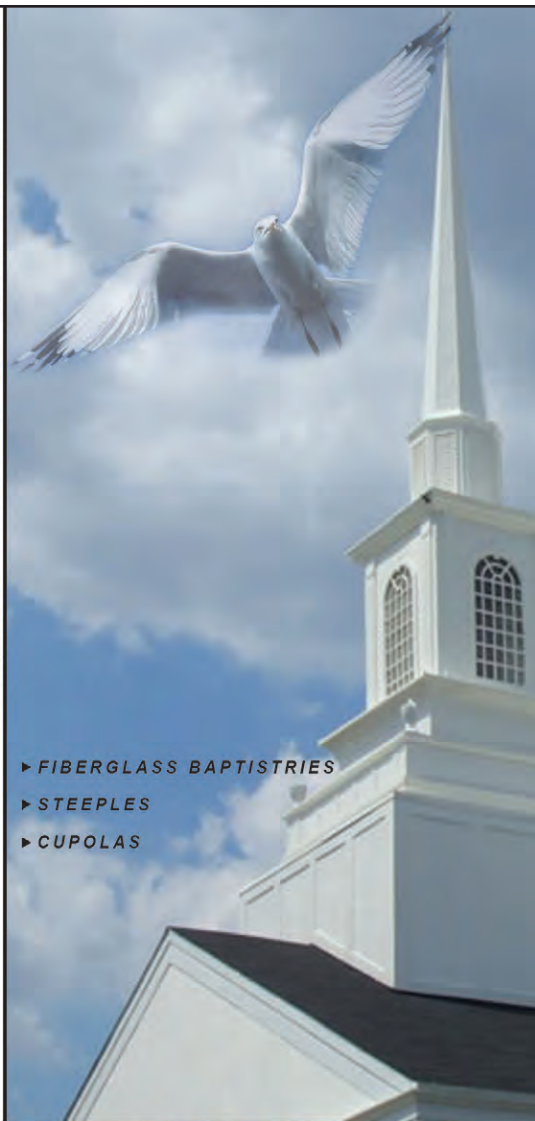
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Ephesians 6:10-11

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 21

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

RECOGNIZE THE LORD'S AUTHORITY Jeremiah 50:2-3, 24-25, 29-32, 44b

In the Old Testament, God was the King who rules nations. Yahweh was the King over all kings, Lord over all lords and God over all the nations' so-called gods. When kingdoms rejected His authority, they faced His righteous judgment. When they surrendered to Him, He blessed the work of their hands.

No matter how powerful Babylon was—against other nations, they stood guilty before the Holy One of Israel. God would raise a more impressive adversary by which to judge Babylon.

You are not the captain of your ship. You are not the master of your own destiny. First, you do not have the resources to do anything you dream. Second, you do not have the abilities to accomplish everything you desire. Third, even if you had the resources and abilities, you would not be satisfied long enough to enjoy your fulfilled goals. And in the end, you cannot take or enjoy it beyond the grave.

None Is Invincible (2-3)

The Babylonians had great confidence in their deities. Like Israelites who gave their children God-centered names (with Ja- or Jeho- prefixes and -iah or -el suffixes), Babylonians had deity-related names for their little ones. Two deities from this passage are found elsewhere in the names of Jewish inhabitants, including Daniel (BELteshazzar) and Mordecai (Marduk).

Jeremiah announced again (see Jeremiah 10:11) that the empire's gods were no match for Yahweh's wrath. Neither Bel nor Marduk, neither images nor idols would keep God's judgment from coming to pass. The Persians, by God's design, would sweep in from the north and lay waste to the city.

Resistance Is Futile (24-25, 44b)

Jeremiah reminded Judah how the religious leaders, whom he called shepherds, had led the people astray. As a priest and prophet, Jeremiah had a unique perspective regarding those entrusted to lead the nation to God. He also described how Babylon would be overrun, just as Nineveh had been several decades before.

Note the name for God employed in verse 25. He was the Lord GOD of Hosts. He was Adonai, the Master. He is GOD, Yahweh. Whenever the name for God is written in capital letters in the Old Testament, the text indicates "Yahweh." He was the Master, the covenant-making God, who ruled the hosts, the armies of heaven. No empire — not even Babylon — would stand against Him.

Yahweh remains the King of kings. Philosophers in the 19th century believed that the Bible and Christianity would fade into obscurity. Neither the Bamboo Curtain nor the Iron Curtain could keep Chinese and Eastern European underground churches from flourishing in the 20th century. During the coming decades, believers must choose to trust God in the midst of a cultural climate bent on silencing Christians in the public forum.

Resistance Is Fatal (29-32)

Arrogant leaders would not stand against God's judgment. Reading Daniel in conjunction with Jeremiah offers substance to his pronouncement. Nebuchadnezzar was reduced to temporary lycanthropy or some other mental disorder (Dan. 4:32-33). Belshazzar faced death the same night that he unashamedly offered toasts to the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone (Dan. 5:22-30). Jeremiah prophesied against Babylon's leaders, yet they failed to heed the warning.

Old Testament prophets routinely called for repentance from sin and reconciliation with God. Even the nations that acknowledged other gods were confronted with their rebellion against the Creator of heaven and earth. Whether they chose to worship Him or not, the nations were still accountable to God.

On a personal level, we need to understand that disobedience to God is an invitation to death. When we knowingly sin, we are essentially saying to God, "Kill me." Before Adam ever committed a crime, God warned that eating a piece of forbidden fruit would result in death (Gen. 2:17). Ezekiel wrote, "The person who sins ... will die" (18:4). In James, we read, "When sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death" (1:15). Resistance to God's purposes is always fatal.

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

DON'T CRITICIZE ONE ANOTHER Romans 14:1-19; James 4:11-12

The letters written by Paul and James express a deep concern for the well-being of Christian congregations. Both writers insisted on unity over discord, and both could condemn divisive behavior with some force. They were not "nice" about it. This week, we look at particular behaviors that both warned against, all of them center around caustic criticism, whether through words or actions.

It is important to distinguish between the kinds of criticism that James and Paul thought was bad and the kind they thought was necessary. These authors were engaging in a type of criticism by telling people not to criticize. But the issue is not correcting destructive behavior, for sometimes that has to be done. The problem is being critical in a way that tears down the community rather than building it up or seems as if we have divine authority. James talked about the tongue's power to set things ablaze.

The Problem With Criticism (James 4:11-12)

In this passage, James warned about "speaking evil" against a brother or sister, which he likened to judging. That verb "judge" reveals what James meant: divine judgment. He was not talking about pointing out destructive behavior (which he did) but about speech that questions fellow believers' standing before God, that judges them as unworthy of God ("I just can't believe that a Christian could vote for so-and-so"; "She calls herself a Christian, but she sure doesn't act like it"). To speak evil against a brother or sister in this way is to act as if we are God, for He alone has the power and the right to save or condemn a person.

The Need for Acceptance (Rom. 14:1-4)

Paul said something similar in this passage, which extends to the end of the chapter (see verses 10, 13); whereas James spoke generally, Paul was talking about dietary regulations (compare 1 Corinthians 8, 10). Some followed strict guidelines; others did not. Some regarded particular days to be holy (Jews had

the Sabbath; Gentiles had other days of the month), while others regarded all equally (see verses 5 and following). Paul was probably not calling those who adhere to such rules "weak in faith" but using irony: He probably wished to make his point stick by adopting the language of those who considered themselves "strong." The point was that people who hold either opinion did what they did in order to honor the Lord, and like a good Jew, Paul knew that God takes a person's intention into account. So there was no room for arguing for this or that practice when God welcomes both those who did it and those who did not.

The Goal of Edification (Rom. 14:5-19)

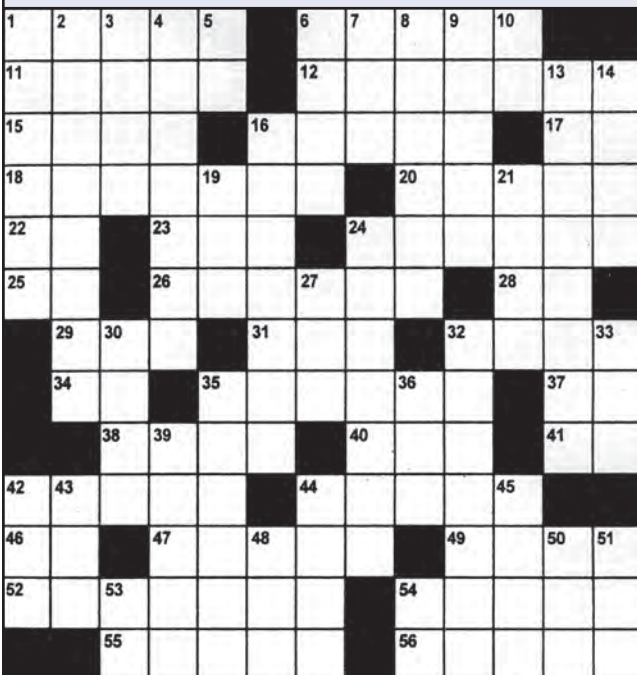
Paul continued his discussion, making the point that both keeping strict regulations and keeping none are not done for our sake but for God's. The goal is to honor God in everything. That means that even if a person, such as Paul, regards nothing as unclean, he or she ought to abstain from what "injures" or "grieves" or "offends" (all good translations of the word in verse 15) someone who does. Why? Because the goal is to "walk in love" with one another, to pursue the things that make for peace and build up one another. Arguing about matters that have no bearing on the community's standing before God and causing offense because we think we are more spiritually mature than others do the opposite.

We used to be able to count on Baptists to be abstainers from all sorts of things, including violating the Sabbath. Increasingly, however, we can find Baptists who no longer abstain from some of the most famous Baptist taboos. Less and less, therefore, can Baptists relax about giving offense through our actions. No longer are these instructions for "other" kinds of Christians. All — those who continue to abstain as well as those who do not — need to ask, "What is really at stake here, my own opinion or God's glory?"

What we have learned this week is that both words and actions can either build up or tear down the community. Both can edify or criticize. Let us seek the greater good.

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Now the Lord said unto _____. (Gen. 12:1)
- Are not _____ and Pharpar rivers of Damascus? (2 Kings 5:12)
- Abraham ... _____ the wood. (Gen. 22:3)
- Athenian woman who believed. (Acts 17:34)
- In charge of King Ahasuerus' women. (Esther 2:3)
- The Lord sent him to meet Moses in the wilderness. (Ex. 4:27)
- Infant's first word for *Daddy*.
- Joseph's wife. (Gen. 41:45)
- The works that are done _____ the sun. (Eccles. 1:14)
- I am, you are, he _____.
- Dialect for *get*.
- Eli heard the noise of the _____. (1 Sam. 4:14)
- Joshua sent men from Jericho to _____. (Josh. 7:2)
- Descendants of Eri. (Num. 26:16)
- Sarah shall bear unto thee _____. (Gen. 17:21)
- Not bow down thyself to them, _____ serve them.

Down

- I _____ the marathon.
- Place of 12 wells of water. (Ex. 15:27)
- _____ ye therefore. (Matt. 28:19)
- Sons of Aaron, took either them his _____. (Lev. 10:1)
- They went forth _____ go. (Gen. 12:5)
- King of Greek gods.
- Cut off his right _____. (Luke 22:50)
- God said, _____ shall not eat of every tree. (Gen. 3:1)
- Bright _____.
- Strong people set in battle _____. (Joel 2:5)
- And, _____, the angel of the Lord came. (Luke 2:9)
- Melts.
- Upon the great _____ of their right feet. (Lev. 8:24)
- For it is the _____ of _____ flesh. (Lev. 17:14)
- Ahian, and Schechem, and _____. (1 Chron. 7:19)
- Led him away to _____ first. (John 18:13)
- An _____ the hole.
- _____ (Acts 18:12)
- Thou shalt be a _____. (Gen. 12:2)
- Why do the heathen _____? (Ps. 2:1)
- The Lord is the _____ of all such. (1 Thess. 4:6)
- _____, myself, and I.
- And _____ bare Jabal. (Gen. 4:20)
- Candy or ice cream _____. (Gen. 4:20)
- Loves.
- Mary Poppins was one.
- Pass over through _____. (Deut. 2:18)
- Joseph's brothers didn't know his _____. (Gen. 42:26)
- "Hey, _____." (Beetle Bailey)
- Dresses. (verb)
- The fowl of the _____. (Gen. 1:26)
- The sun _____ of Ahaz. (Isa. 38:8)
- And the _____ of pure gold. (1 Kings 7:50)
- You get this at a beach.
- Leak out slowly.
- Flighty, capricious.
- _____, Larry, and Curly.
- The tents of _____ in affliction. (Hab. 3:7)
- Give _____ to his commandments. (Ex. 15:26)
- Hast thou _____ of the tree? (Gen. 3:11)
- So that it went _____ with Moses. (Ps. 106:32)
- The noise of them that sing _____ hear. (Ex. 32:18)
- Pointed tools for piercing holes.
- Broken the bands of your _____. (Lev. 26:13)
- Order _____ carte.
- Benjamin's son. (Gen. 46:21)
- Cleanseth us from all _____. (1 John 1:7)
- Do, Re, Mi, _____.
- Syllable to sing when you don't know the words.



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By Rick Sharp and Adam Borden

AARON SHUST

This Is What We Believe
Centricity Music

Aaron Shust's newest record, "This Is What We Believe," produced by Ed Cash, has the feel of a very personal, very integrated collection of worship prayers. Shust attributes this to a difficult time in his family's life when his 2-year-old son struggled with a rare, extremely painful medical condition. Doctors expected that he would have the condition for life, requiring continuous steroids to manage the pain. When testing came back showing no trace of the disease, Shust was sure that his son and his family had received a miracle. The album, with its soaring praise to God, almost certainly comes from Shust's response to this miracle.



Masterfully recorded and produced, this record is a worthy continuation of an amazing career of producing excellent Christian music. Shust currently has the most-played song for the last eight years on Christian radio, and several of these new songs may just challenge that record.

I hesitate to name some of the best songs because there truly isn't a bad one on the record. "This Is What We Believe" is among the best and sets the tone for the entire album. "Your Majesty" is another great one, as is "My Hope Is in You," written by April Geesbreght.

The new record will be released Aug. 23. If you've been a fan of Shust, and even if you haven't, do yourself a favor and listen to the album. You won't be disappointed. (Sharp)

BOOTH BROTHERS

Let It Be Known
Daywind

In an age of homogenized, va-

nilla un-identity, the Booth Brothers have decided to stand up and "Let It Be Known" who they are and Whose they are (see Dan. 3:21 and Ps. 107:2, KJV). The gospel message is



clearly presented in every Booth Brothers appearance and recording. For "Let It Be Known," the trio has chosen songs that are saturated in the name of Jesus. No "ambiguous-could-be-a-country-song-might-as-well-be-a-gospel-song" material is found on this record. Instead you will find a finely braided twine of skill, emotion and spirit.

From the start, the Booth Brothers have been known for lush harmonies and arrangements not found in the cookie cutter bin. I believe they have found their musical soul mate with the potentate of pro-

ducer Lari Goss. For 40-plus years, Goss has imprinted his stamp on gospel music. With "Let It Be Known," he masterfully melds the Booth Brothers and the message of the songs. (Borden)

GINNY OWENS

Get in, I'm Drivin'
Soul Stride Records

Five years in the making, Ginny Owens' new CD, "Get in, I'm Drivin'," is a personal, faith-based musical journey of the last few years of her life, a smoky, jazzy, R&B-tinged collection that perfectly frames Owens' expressive voice. That's not to say that a little bit of pop doesn't



sneak onto the record — it does, with great effect, on songs like "Mystery of Grace" and a lovely piano-based "Before You Fly."

Owens is a three-time Dove Award recipient and was named New Artist of the Year in 2000 by the Gospel Music Association. She has performed in such mainstream venues as Lilith Fair and Sundance Film Festival. She's also performed at the White House and has enjoyed widespread placement in the film and television industries. All that to say that Owens' musical chops are well established and this record is one of her best.

If you like your music just a tad off center, with soulful jazz, R&B and hip-hop overtones, and you'd like all that delivered with a strong message of faith, then this is definitely your record. Highly recommended. (Sharp)

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

All the Wrong Places

Rebecca Fisher. *Canyon Country, Calif.: Rebecca Fisher Books, 2011. 336 pp. (Paperback).*

This fiction book was a bit off-putting at first. The front had a drawing of a funeral home with a shadowy figure in an open doorway, and the blurb on the back spoke of "macabre and eccentric encounters." Not calming bedtime reading.

Fortunately for a reviewer who dislikes anything even remotely Stephen King-ish, the book turned out to have much more of the eccentric than the macabre. The story, apparently based on events from the author's life, is one of a young mother who flees an abusive husband and ends up living in a funeral home with her young daughter as she searches for a new life and new faith. While not the centerpiece of the story, the Christian viewpoint is clear and strong throughout the book.

The reading went quickly from a dreaded chore to a delight; the story is well told and engaging, and made for fine bedtime reading.

The Last Mile Home: Ordinary Insights From an Extraordinary God

Barbara McGreger. *Bloomington, Ind.: Crossbooks, 2010. 72 pp. (Paperback).*

This little book is a collection of stories, poems and prayers on a

variety of subjects. The stories are simple, but each one draws the reader into fresh insights and new ways of looking at the mundane things of life. The style is laid back and conversational and just far enough from the ordinary to make the entries entertaining.

The book's aim is "to teach readers that God is everywhere and works through everything and anything."

When You Can't Find God: How to Ignite the Power of His Presence

Linda Evans Shepherd. *Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2011. 192 pp. (Paperback).*

We all go through difficult times. How we face them — and how we come out of them — varies. Author Linda Shepherd's new book offers practical advice for those who are wondering where God is during our difficulties.

To give an idea of where the book will take the reader, five chapters begin with "Praying," including "Praying for Breakthroughs," "Praying Against the Spirit of Strife" and "Praying for Hope and Healing." Even the chapters that don't have prayer as part of the title are liberally laced with suggestions for how to pray, with examples written like letters to God.

"When You Can't Find God" has a companion website. For those of

us who love gee-whiz gadgetry and tech stuff, this book has a QR code that will take you straight to the website from your smartphone.

The Irresistible Church: 12 Traits of a Church Heaven Applauds

Wayne Cordeiro. *Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2011. 170 pp. (Hardback).*

Author Wayne Cordeiro should know about churches; he has helped to start more than 100 of them around the world, including New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, which has more than 14,500 in attendance each weekend.

The focus of the "irresistible church is not its irresistibility to people, but to God." Cordeiro describes such a church as "one that is constantly aligning itself to gain God's pleasure."

The traits of a church that is irresistible to God, maintains Cordeiro, include hunger for the presence of God, remembering who she is (and not trying to copy other successful churches), living heart first and connecting everything to a soul, among others. The author explains each trait carefully and gives examples and illustrations but not a blueprint. Instead, Cordeiro urges readers to "discern the truths outlined in this book, then create the irresistible church that fits them and the assignment God has given them."

Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Learning** — Bailey Flanigan Series #2, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **Leaving** — Bailey Flanigan Series #1, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
3. **Thunder of Heaven**, Tim LaHaye and Craig Parshall (Zondervan)
4. **Redeeming Love**, Francine Rivers (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
5. **The Judgment**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
6. **A Lineage of Grace**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
7. **Sons of Encouragement**, Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
8. **Hurricanes in Paradise**, Denise Hildreth (Tyndale)
9. **Love Finds a Home**, Wanda A. Brunstetter (Barbour)
10. **After the Leaves Fall**, Nicole Baart (Tyndale)

Nonfiction

1. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. **Throw It Down**, Jud Wilhite (Zondervan)
4. **Erasing Hell**, Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle (David C Cook)
5. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C Cook)
6. **Radical**, David Platt (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
7. **Jesus Calling — Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Through My Eyes**, Tim Tebow (News Corporation)
9. **Inverted**, Tom Ellsworth (Standard)
10. **Battlefield of the Mind**, Joyce Meyer (Hachette)



Photo courtesy of Provident Label Group

MAKING A DIFFERENCE — Desiring to use their musical platform to help meet needs in Jesus' name, the Grammy and Dove Award-winning band Jars of Clay established Blood:Water Mission to build clean water wells, support medical facilities and tangibly reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa.

Impacting lives

Jars of Clay reaches out to be 'hands and feet of Christ'

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Since splashing onto the Christian music scene in 1995 with the hit song "Flood," the Grammy- and Dove Award-winning Christian rock band Jars of Clay have been doing more than just riding a wave of success. They have been using their musical platform to help those in need.

Desiring to reach out and make a difference in this world, the band founded a non-profit organization, Blood:Water Mission, to build clean water wells, support medical facilities and tangibly reduce the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa while addressing the underlying issues of poverty, injustice and oppression.

Its concerts benefit the relief efforts and provide a variety of ways to help meet needs in Jesus' name. In 2005, Jars of Clay launched their first relief effort, the 1,000 Wells Project, with a goal of raising funds to build, rebuild and repair 1,000 wells in urban and rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa. This year, they celebrated achieving their goal and bringing clean water to more than 150,000 people.

"It gives weight to the things we talk about in our songs," lead singer Dan Haseltine said. "We really want our lyrics to focus on making a difference in the lives of people by reaching out and being the hands and feet of Christ."

Haseltine was inspired to establish Blood:Water Mission after taking a missions trip to Africa in 2001.

"That trip made a huge impact on my life," he said. "For me, it was important to hear people's stories. It opened my eyes to see that this was more than statistics about a disease or crisis; it was people sharing the pain in their life. Because I saw a human perspective on this subject, it made my heart overflow with a desire to help out."

Band members now take regular missions trips to Africa, and they have established a full-time staff there to assist with relief efforts.

In the last six years, Blood:Water Mission has served more than 600,000 people in 11 countries with safe water, hygiene and sanitation and has opened four comprehensive care clinics that have served more than 26,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Funds have been raised through nationwide community-led lemonade stands, car washes and other grass-roots efforts.

Building friendships

"There is a huge water crisis and a huge crisis with HIV/AIDS, but the only way for us to stay engaged and truly make a difference in people's lives is if they see that we are committed to building friendships and relationships with them and that we're implicated in their story," Haseltine said.

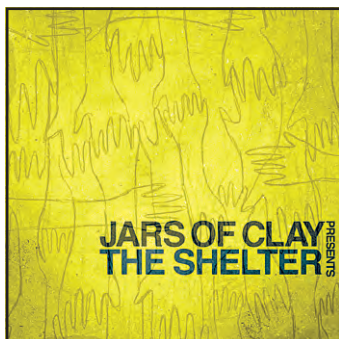
"That makes a huge difference in their lives and is what sustains a continued effort to bring healing. You can't really attack an issue or disease in a foreign country if you don't know the people — because it would strip them of their dignity. It's only through a relationship that you're able to understand: 'How do I love this person, serve this person, humble myself, see their strengths and bolster their strengths?'"

Through their music and message, Jars of Clay hope to encourage people to find ways to impact lives for God's glory and make a difference in their communities. The band's name is derived from 2 Corinthians 4:7, which states, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

Their latest album, "Jars of Clay Presents The Shelter," is a compelling and community-minded project designed to encourage believers in their daily walk with Christ. Jars of Clay were inspired by an old Irish proverb, translated as "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."

"It doesn't take giant movements to change the world," Haseltine said. "It just takes people having the courage to do small things, like being kind to a neighbor and offering a hand to help somebody. Those are very courageous acts that really do change the world. It's our desire that people will realize that Jesus is calling us to make a difference in each other's lives and to recognize what really matters most in this world."

For more information, visit www.jarsofclay.com.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian woman stripped to find 'marks,' beaten

MOTIJIL, India — Four months after a recent convert to Christianity from Islam in eastern India's West Bengal state was stripped and beaten, about 50 Muslim extremists disrupted a prayer meeting held in her home Aug. 4, threatening to burn it down if she did not return to Islam, area Christians said.

The extremists warned Selina Bibi of Motijil village in Murshidabad district that if she did not return to Islam, then she must either leave the area or see her house burned down. At her baptism at Believers Church on March 29, a large crowd of Muslim extremists disrupted the service, said a pastor identified only as Bashir. On April 5, two Muslim women along with members of the extremist group summoned Selina Bibi to one of their homes and stripped her naked, believing that converts get "Christian marks" on their bodies. Though finding none, they beat her.

Police called both parties, and they agreed in writing to allow each other to practice their respective faiths. In Natungram, also in Murshidabad district, Muslim extremists held three Christian women for an hour July 21, threatening to beat and burn them alive if they continued worshipping Christ. Moyazan Bibi and Aimazan Bibi of Believers Church said they were arriving at the house of a widow, Suryja Bibi, when a large mob of Muslim extremists pushed them around and rushed Suryja Bibi, asking her why she invited "infidels" into her home. One of the assailants twisted her hand, the women said. Suryja Bibi tried to file a police complaint the next day, July 22, but the local Muslim head and other extremists stopped her, threatening to harm her, area Christians said.

Christian pastor in Iran awaits execution decision

RASHT, Iran — A pastor in Iran found guilty of leaving Islam awaits the outcome of a judicial investigation into his spiritual background to see if he will be executed or, if possible, forced to become a Muslim, according to Christian groups with ties in Iran.

The court-ordered investigation will take place sometime this fall to determine whether Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, 34, was a Muslim as a teenager before he became a Christian at 19.

On Sept. 22, 2010, a regional court sentenced Nadarkhani, who leads a 400-strong house church movement in Rasht, to death by hanging for "converting to Christianity" and "encouraging other Muslims to convert to Christianity." Nadarkhani's lawyer appealed the verdict to the Iranian Supreme Court, in part because the pastor said he had never actually been a Muslim and therefore could not be found guilty of abandoning the religion. The court issued a written response to the appeal June 12, upholding the death penalty but ordering the investigation. Even if the investigation releases him from the charge of apostasy, it is likely the charge of evangelizing Muslims will still carry a lengthy prison sentence, sources said.

Jason DeMars, president of Present Truth Ministries, said officials have repeatedly used pressure tactics to force Nadarkhani to become a Muslim, including threats to seize his children and arresting his wife on apostasy charges. On June 18, 2010, officials found Fatemah Pasindedih guilty of the charges, but her conviction was stricken on appeal, and she was released in October.

Muslim extremists torch churches on Zanzibar island

FUONI, Tanzania — Muslim extremists burned down a church building on Zanzibar island off the coast of Tanzania on July 30, church leaders said, just three days after another congregation's facility on the island was reduced to ashes.

In Fuoni on the south coast of Zanzibar island, Islamic extremists torched the building of the Evangelical Assemblies of God-Tanzania (EAGT) at about 2 p.m., said Pastor Leonard Massasa, who oversees Zanzibar's EAGT churches. The assailants were shouting, "Away with the church — we do not want infidels to spoil our community, especially our children," Massasa said. In Kianga about six miles from Zanzibar town, another church building was burned down July 27 at about 2 a.m., said Pastor George Frank Dunia of Free Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Africa. Tanzania Assemblies of God Pastor Yohana Ari Mfundo said he has witnessed a series of attacks on Christians on neighboring Pemba island.

"We are here in Pemba because God wants us to be. But Muslims always point a finger at us — especially at my house — and we have been receiving several threats," Mfundo said.