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Called to a 'coffee culture'

Alabama girls' love for coffee meets missions calling in Macedonian coffeehouse

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

It didn't take much to sell Ginna Caldwell and Hannah Gilstrap on their current jobs.

Make coffee. Drink coffee. Talk to people. Get up the next day and do it again.

Perfect.

The two were already working as baristas in Alabama when they said "yes" to spending a couple of years running a coffeehouse in Ohrid, Macedonia, as International Mission Board (IMB) journeymen.

"A friend told me once, 'You can't spend your whole life in a coffeehouse, Ginna.' I beg to differ," Caldwell said with a grin. "I love the coffee culture — sitting, having conversations, getting to know people. Discipleship happens over a cup of coffee."

In the summer, the little city of Ohrid is crawling with vacationers. Businesspeople in the Balkans flock there to eat fish and ajvar (a salad made of red bell peppers) next to a lake so calm and clear you can see clean to the bottom.

"I have peace in my heart there by the lake," one tourist said.

But Gilstrap likes it best when the summer is over and all the tourists fade back into the urban grind they came from. That's when the real peace comes, she said.

"The people of Ohrid come into the coffeehouse and hang out for hours playing chess, having conversations and talking about spiritual things," Gilstrap said. "I love creating community and something like this coffeehouse does that. That's why I'm drawn to it."

The coffeehouse, Ima Vreme — Macedonian for "there is time," sits tucked in a side street just off the city center, perfect positioning for locals to pass by often, drop in and stay.

"We have long talks and we listen with the intent of speaking the truth of Christ into their lives," said Caldwell, who, along with Gilstrap, was commissioned by The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

Brian Davis said that's the heart of Ima Vreme.

On warm nights, as the girls make



IMB photo

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION — Hannah Gilstrap (left) and Ginna Caldwell plan for that night's shift at the coffeehouse founded by Baptist representatives in Ohrid, Macedonia. The two spend hours each day making coffee and having conversations with locals in hopes of sharing the gospel.

iced coffee and chat with regulars, Davis sits at a table just outside the open door of the coffeehouse, engaging a few men in deep conversations about faith and God.

"It's not a business. We aren't out to just make great coffee and have a lot of traffic. We want to plant house churches, and the coffeehouse gives us a reason to talk," said Davis, who serves as an IMB church planter in Ohrid with his wife, Mandy. "We want to do everything we do with intentionality and have a constant trickle

of people that's going somewhere."

And it is going somewhere. Three Bible studies have started out of conversations at Ima Vreme in the four years it's existed, and the soon-to-be pastor of one of Davis' house churches came to faith because he came through the coffeehouse.

'Something bigger'

"It's just a coffeehouse — we don't use it as a church meeting place or anything else. But people know it represents something bigger," Davis said.

And the neutral location affords a lot of creativity in how to bring people through the doors and make friends who will come back for more conversations, he said. "Twice a month, we try to have something special, from PlayStation tournaments and karaoke nights to art exhibits and cooking classes."

A band from William Carey University in Hattiesburg, Miss., even came once to do a concert series, and other missions teams have helped distribute

(See 'Normal,' page 16)

'Governmental system back to zero' in Libya?

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

It may be several years before the dust settles in Libya and Christians can hope for a clear way to the nation's hard-to-reach people groups, said Drew Carson, a Christian leader among Northern African and Middle Eastern peoples.

"Unlike any other situation so far (in the Arab Spring), this whole situation in Libya sort of takes the governmental system back to zero," said Carson, noting that in Egypt and

other places, when the leader fell, the government was still intact.

That's not the case in Libya, where rebels are pressing the Gaddafi regime, hoping it will crumble from the inside out. "Even the security and government apparatus are gone. There will be chaos and it will be a very dangerous place for two to three years as they reset and get their country back in order," he said.

But Christian leaders in the region are still optimistic that in the long view, there will be new avenues to

reach Libya through a new government that gives more freedom.

"Overall I'm positive about a total reset in Libya," Carson said. "In a sense, what you have is the chance for a rebirth of a country. Hopefully, in the midst of that, there will be an opportunity for freedom of thought and freedom of expression."

In the meantime, the gospel has found other ways into Libya.

"We were denied visas to Libya (more than a decade ago) when we

(See 'Gospel,' page 3)

COMMENT

‘Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine’

Christians have been singing Fanny Crosby’s famous lyrics for almost 140 years, and the words still bring smiles to faces and joy to hearts. It is wonderful that believers can know that “Jesus is mine.” That truth also means believers are His.

In Romans 8:15–17, the apostle Paul declared that those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord receive “the Spirit of sonship.” Believers are part of God’s family. That is why they cry out to God as “Abba, Father.” As children of God, they are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.”

This assurance becomes the believer’s shelter amid the storms of life that strike every human being. The Christian does not live with a spirit of fear but with the Spirit of God because he or she is a child of God.

When Paul asked the rhetorical question “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ,” his response was “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38–39).

For some Christians, accepting this blessed assurance is difficult. Evidently it has been since the dawn of Christianity. The apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:13, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Children of God

John wanted believers to “know” they are children of God. In addition to stating that as a purpose of the letter, he twice more emphasized that point. In 1 John 3:24b, he wrote, “And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.” In 1 John 4:13, he wrote, “We know that we live in Him and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit.”

Both Paul and John celebrated the believer’s blessed assurance. And for both, this blessed assurance was directly tied to the presence of God’s Spirit in his or her life. After all, it was the Holy Spirit’s work that first brought him or her to repentance.

Jesus said of the Spirit, “He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin because men do not believe in me” (John 16:8–9). Without the Spirit’s work, one can never be convicted of sin and until one is convicted of sin, one will never



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

turn to Jesus’ atoning death on the cross for forgiveness and salvation.

Conviction of sin is only the beginning of the Spirit’s work in the believer’s life, however. Paul taught that those made alive by the Holy Spirit should continue to walk in the Spirit’s power and presence (Gal. 5:25). That is why Jesus referred to the Spirit as “Paraclete” — one who walks alongside. From the first twinges of guilt for sin through repentance and faith all the way to the resurrection, the believer lives in the power and presence of God’s Holy Spirit.

Again Paul: “We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for the adoption as sons, the resurrection of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). The Spirit’s power and presence are present possessions in believers’ lives as “first fruits” of an expected harvest to come.

Resurrection is much more, Paul wrote, but believers have a foretaste of what is to come by walking in the Spirit’s power and presence in this life.

Ephesians 1:13–14 use two other images to convey the same principle. Verse 13 says Christians have been “marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.” A seal was used on ancient documents to assure validity. It was a way of guaranteeing articles’ genuineness. Paul wrote that God’s “seal” on believers is the Spirit’s power and presence.

Down payment

Verse 14 uses the image of a down payment. There the Spirit is described as a “down payment, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.” All of the Spirit’s work in one’s life is a down payment or the first installment in anticipation of him or her being gathered as God’s possession.

Even the resurrection will be the work of God’s Spirit. Romans 8:11 declares, “And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.”

Again, because God’s Spirit — the first fruit, the seal, the down payment — lives in the believer, the Spirit will raise him or her to new life

just as Jesus was raised from the dead. This is the blessed assurance the Bible offers every believer.

The call to live in God’s Spirit is meant to change the believer. The old self’s sinful nature is “put to death” as God’s love results in a nature attune with His Spirit. Paul outlined this as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). These are qualities of life expected as part of the harvest of living in the Spirit. Baptists frequently call this “growing in grace.”

John also called for change in the lives of those who have blessed assurance. In 1 John 3:1, he observed, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And this is what we are.” That reality caused the apostle to urge his readers to “love one another for love comes from God.” He said, “Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7–8).

The greatest commandments

Paul emphasized loving God allows His Spirit to change believers’ very nature. John called for letting God’s Spirit lead believers to love their neighbor as they love themselves. The two conclusions sound like what Jesus called the greatest commandments (Matt. 22:37). And on this kind of living in God’s Spirit rests Christians’ blessed assurance about which we so happily sing.



“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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Baptist relief agencies on alert as Hurricane Irene approaches US

As Hurricane Irene swirled toward the East Coast with heavy rains whipped by 110 mph winds at press time, its potential to produce disastrous property damage prompted a deluge of news reports and a constant hum across social media.

In the midst of this slowly developing potential disaster, Baptist relief agencies were moving response teams into position near enough to be there quickly but far enough to be safe as the storm passes.

Disaster relief teams have been put on alert, and several churches have been identified as response sites, said Dean Miller, who leads Virginia Baptist disaster-response efforts.

Remain in contact

Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said state disaster relief directors were planning to remain in constant contact over the Aug. 27–28 weekend as state and national authorities and relief agencies prepared for Irene's impact.

"As many as 12 states and six state Baptist conventions lie in the path of a potential impact zone," he said at press time. "Coupled with the hurricane force of wind will be the added element of storm surge and heavy rainfall. Some forecasters are predicting a potential rainfall that may yield as much as 15 to 20 inches.

"The threat of flooding and wind damage will result in mass evacuations from coastal communities," Johnson said. "State conventions (have) joined together in preparation and coordination for Irene's landfall. Feeding units, chain saw units, chaplains and additional Alabama resources are at the ready to assist our neighbors, many of which responded to help us earlier this year."

On a wider scale, Hurricane Irene already has blasted through the Caribbean and Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid for the Baptist World Alliance, as of Aug. 26 was waiting to hear from member churches about damages.

Irene passed mostly north and, apart from the Bahamas, the Caribbean was "not badly hit," he said.

As North Americans are consumed with the relentless movement of Irene toward the coast, Baptist World Aid, working through member conventions and churches, is still active in the Horn of Africa, where food shortage puts people "in dire need" (see story, page 16).

(ABP, TAB)

Free from Gaddafi

Prayers voiced for safe, secure access to Jesus in Libya

Tripoli, Libya, woke up Aug. 22 to the imminent end of 42 years of rule by Muammar Gaddafi — the longest-running Arab leader ever.

In Syria, meanwhile, violent clashes continued in the streets between President Bashar al-Assad's forces and his opponents.

NATO-backed rebel forces in Libya seized control of much of Tripoli on Aug. 21 after months of brutal war tactics by Gaddafi.

The rebels continue to fight for the rest of the capital city.

In one part of Tripoli, a local imam sang not the call to prayer but the national anthem of the pre-Gaddafi monarchy, according to BBC News.

President Barack Obama called it a "tipping point," asserting in a statement that Tripoli is "slipping from the grasp of a tyrant."

He and other world leaders are calling for Gaddafi to end his claim to power.

Christian leaders like Nik Ripken, meanwhile, are praying for stability of a different kind in Libya.

"Often we ask people to pray that governments provide the safety and security necessary for the gospel to spread, such as the early church had under the Roman Empire," said Ripken, who has served 25 years with the International Mission Board and is an expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts.

"But when stability is the stability of governments that deny their people even access to Jesus, then that is the worst form of persecution."

Pray for stability

Ripken asks believers worldwide to pray for the kind of stability in Libya where access to Jesus is a basic human right.

And Christian leaders across the region join him in that request, praying for similar freedoms in other nations affected by the Arab Spring, the wave of political protests and change sweeping North Africa and the Middle East since December 2010.

Violent clashes still happen in countries

Gospel still on the move in Libya

(continued from page 1)

tried to get them, but we were always bumping into Libyans in neighboring countries," said David Garrison, who formerly worked in Northern Africa and the Middle East. "I would tell them, 'I'm an American who loves Libya.' They would melt, their defenses would go down and we would be able to have a cup of coffee together."

Through this, he was able to see Libyans come to faith in Jesus Christ. And though it's been a while since he's had any contact with the country itself, he does know that the gospel is still on the move there.

Just a couple of years ago, Garrison was in South America for a meeting and bumped into a Libyan man. "We began to speak to each other in Arabic, and as I asked questions, I learned that he had heard the gospel years ago and come to faith through a ministry that Southern Baptists help to start more than a decade ago," he said.

That had happened because believers outside the country had shared the gospel

with Libyans when they left their country, like Garrison had done — and then they took the message back in with them.

A number of evangelical Christians and Coptic Christians are in the country.

As for the coming years, Garrison said he hopes new access will be a possibility. "The future remains unknown, but it is very exciting to see what is happening. When something unusual happens (like the civil war), it's a good chance God is up to something."

As Garrison sees Libyans on TV waging bloody war with each other, one thought is louder than all the machine-gun fire.

It was a Libyan who carried the cross of Jesus Christ.

"The first person who was touched by the blood of Jesus was a Libyan — Simon of Cyrene," Garrison said. "With a history like that, I believe God has a special love for this people."

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

like Syria, where al-Assad released a statement Aug. 22 saying that his government would not fall.

About 2,500 have died in Syria's crisis, according to the BBC.

Natalie Shepherd, who formerly lived and worked alongside her husband in Syria, said she believes God will work through the unrest there to bring people to salvation in Jesus Christ.

"Years ago during Ramadan we joined a small group of Christ-followers inside Syria to pray all night. I remember we cried out to God to do whatever it takes to bring millions inside Syria to salvation in Jesus," Shepherd said.

Today she is praying that God will use

what is happening in Syria now as a catalyst for that very thing.

"I want to see thousands encounter Christ just like Saul did on his way to Damascus, so we begin to see bold, passionate disciples like Paul spreading the good news," Shepherd said.

Ripken said Christians in the West can help not only by praying for the spread of the gospel in war-torn nations but also by learning not to be persecutors themselves.

"Pray today that we will not join the persecutors by denying our family, neighbors and friends access to Jesus," Ripken said.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed. (BP)

Sunday alcohol sales rejected in Tuscaloosa County, passed in Northport

According to an Aug. 24 report from *The Tuscaloosa News*, Northport joined the city of Tuscaloosa in Sunday alcohol sales after voters approved the measure in an Aug. 23 special election. But Tuscaloosa County voters gave an overwhelming no to Sunday sales the same day.

Sixty-one percent of county voters opposed the proposal to sell alcohol between noon and 9:30 p.m. on Sundays, while approximately 55 percent of Northport voters approved the move.

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), said, "We are disappointed that Northport voted to allow Sunday alcohol sales, but we rejoice that Tuscaloosa County voted down this measure."

"ALCAP tried to encourage the local legislators from Tuscaloosa County and Northport to stop this push by 'big alcohol' during the 2011 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature, but we were unsuccessful," he said. But ALCAP remains available to work with local communities facing wet/dry ref-

erendums (visit www.alcap.com for more information).

Northport Mayor Bobby Herndon said he was surprised by the vote but pleased, and that he took a lot of flack for supporting Sunday sales but was standing up for the city's businesses and future growth, according to *The Tuscaloosa News*.

East Coast quake damages churches

The rare East Coast earthquake Aug. 23 left two Baptist churches near the epicenter with cracked walls and broken glass, but no major damage, said spokespersons at each congregation.

Mineral Baptist Church and Louisa Baptist Church — each in towns of the same name about 50 miles northwest of Richmond, Va. — were near the center of the 5.8-magnitude quake felt from South Carolina to New England.

Many buildings in the two communities were damaged, including both town halls and

The county's decision to continue the ban came as no surprise to Probate Judge Hardy McCollum, the report stated.

The polling places at Carrolls Creek Baptist Church, Northport, (268–172) and Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Northport, (148–58) were among the strongest sets of "no" votes in the county. (TAB)

the Louisa County High School, where six students and at least one staff member were injured. Mineral Baptist was left with "some pretty big cracks in the drywall, mostly in hallways and in the sanctuary," said Carolyn Sims, administrative assistant at the church.

At Louisa Baptist, the damage was "mostly minor things, nothing major," said administrative assistant Becky Day.

A Category 3 storm is expected to hit the North Carolina coast, bringing significant rain and high winds to Virginia (see story, this page). (ABP)

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Missionaries struggle with empty-nest syndrome, too

Rebecca Millsapp balked at returning to the missions field in 2006. She already had sacrificed a lot to answer God's call on her life. A decade earlier, she and her husband Joshua gave up their dream home and lucrative jobs in medicine and technology in Alabama for a call to missions in southern Asia. They didn't regret the decision.

But now Rebecca was hesitating about leaving her daughter Aubrey in the States to attend college while the rest of the family returned home half a world away.

"I took comfort in knowing there were people around who would take care of her if she needed it," the missionary mom said. "I had seen God take care of our family in so many other situations, and I knew He was big enough to continue to do this." But her "mom's heart" still was full of grief as she returned overseas.

Grappling to adapt is nothing new for the Millsapps. It took a while for the family to adjust to their new surroundings in southern Asia. Rebecca remembers her first impressions

upon arrival. Her children were ages 8, 5 and 2.

"I walked into this small, concrete apartment and began to look around for the refrigerator. There wasn't one. There was no stove, either. I soon discovered that the temperature was so cold in [this country] I could place food on my concrete counters and it would keep," Rebecca recalled.

Over time, the family grew accustomed to the people, their culture and their land — even the frigid temperatures.

But now the family ties were being tested.

While Rebecca battled the desire to stay close to Aubrey in the United States, her youngest child, Percy, was relieved to be returning "home" to Asia.

Separation anxiety

"How do you balance those two worlds?" the missionary mom asked. Nearly three years later, Rebecca experienced that anguish again when it was time for her son Brody to attend college. Like so many parents, she struggled with

separation anxiety, all the more so because she wasn't just sending her child a few hours away or even a few states away; she was faced with leaving yet another child halfway around the world.

And she was beginning to feel the pangs of empty-nest syndrome. Even so, Rebecca said God taught her that "it's not as much about me as I think it is."

It worked out for the Millsapps to spend about a year in the United States, enabling them to be closer to Aubrey and Brody for part of their time in college. The flip side, however, was Percy's struggle to adapt to teenage American culture after growing up overseas. As soon as he began to feel settled in the United States, it was time for the family to return to Asia.

Only he didn't want to go. He told his parents that after the challenge of finally adjusting to American high school, he didn't think he could make the transition back overseas. "He was just so full of emotion and said to us, 'I don't want what seems to be my selfishness in wanting to stay here to interfere with your and dad's call to missions,'" Rebecca said. "And we quickly said to him, 'That's not your burden to bear.'"

After seeking counsel from other International Mission Board personnel, Rebecca and Joshua extended their time stateside until Percy, who recently graduated from high school, gets settled in college.

"If I could encourage my col-

leagues and friends who are in the same season of life, I would say be open and honest," Rebecca said. "You'll be amazed at how many people come alongside you and encourage you, and say, 'You know, I never really thought of it that way' because [some people think] we have this 'halo' that's 10 feet wide."

'We're real'

"I mean, why would anyone with a halo that big struggle with any of this stuff? Just remind people that we're real, and we struggle with the same things other people struggle with."

The Millsapps' call to missions hasn't been put on hold. While stateside, Joshua and Rebecca are helping deploy and train others to serve among the peoples of southern Asia. In 2012, the couple will return to Asia while all three children remain in the United States, each living in a different state.

"If I was just completely honest and vulnerable and transparent, if the decision was just mine and there were no other factors besides a mother's heart — wanting to be where my children are — I would stay [in the United States]," Rebecca said.

"But knowing that God has called me to do this and that I still feel that call to missions, I am expecting God

to show up in a great way, with hefty doses of grace and mercy."

Going overseas without their children will affect Joshua and Rebecca's ministry as well. For nearly 17 years, they have had children with them as they work. Often, Rebecca said, it was their children who opened the door for ministry opportunities to other families with children. Now, she said, they can live in areas without a good school or pediatrician and can travel more frequently. But that freedom is emotionally expensive.

"It'd be easy to just let these waves of grief that you feel — of ending the season of life of having kids at home — to be the primary thing throughout your day, and God just doesn't allow me to do that," Rebecca said. "He reminds me to focus on the things that are most important; He reminds me that it was a very important season of life, and I did it to the best of my ability

and [with] His help.

"There's always going to be another place that I can plug in with my gifts and skills and talents. ... He's always there with another door I can walk through if I'm open to that."

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

"If I could encourage my ... friends ... in the same season of life, I would say be open and honest."

Rebecca Millsapp
IMB Missionary

"We struggle with the same things other people [do]."

Rebecca Millsapp
IMB Missionary

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By Julie Payne
Correspondent, TAB

Someone You Should Know

AMOS LEE BAILEY

York Baptist Church
Bigbee Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16
FAVORITE HYMN: "Beulah Land"
HOBBIES: Fishing and hunting
FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 64

years of marriage to Elnor; one daughter, Susan; and two grandsons



BAILEY

Amos Lee Bailey, 86, has lived in York since he was a child and has been a member of York Baptist Church since 1943. He serves as a deacon and Sunday School teacher. Bailey has taught the senior adult men's class for more than 10 years.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was always in a Christian home, so it came naturally to me. I was just an average teenager, and then I met my wife. She had such an influence on me. ... I put everything away except her. I started teaching the Sunday School class, then about 10 years after that I was superintendent of (Sunday School) [and] I've been a deacon

since I was about 24 years old.

Q: What led you to teach Sunday School?

A: I had two Sunday School teachers when I was just a little boy [who] had such an influence on me. You don't realize how much impact you're having on the children until you teach. Anyway I could serve I always did, because I felt like it was not only my duty but a privilege. We have such a loving church that's so easy to minister to.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

A: I've had a good, healthy life for the most part. I was in a car wreck and almost killed once and had cancer. But you can feel the

hand of the Lord sustaining you. ... You knew that God was there with you and that you never would walk by yourself.

Q: Why have you given so much service to the Lord?

A: If it wasn't for God's love for us and for His forgiveness and if He hadn't sent Jesus to die for us, we'd all be doomed for hell. We only have so much; we never could give back to the Lord what He's given to us.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in teaching Sunday School in the future?

A: I am going to teach [while] I'm physically able and mentally able.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Baptist leaders urge reconciliation in Nagaland

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Five Baptist leaders have signed letters to officials of various political factions urging renewed commitment to reconciliation in the northeast Indian state of Nagaland.

Letters dated Aug. 4 cited a July Baptist World Alliance (BWA) resolution endorsing a peace agreement signed by three Naga factions in 2009. In separate letters with identical wording, they applauded party leaders for their commitment to the Covenant of Reconciliation and challenged them to redouble efforts to make it a reality.

Signers included BWA officials Neville Callam, general secretary, and Raimundo Barreto, director of freedom and justice. Others included Ken Sehested, formerly of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Dan Buttry, an American Baptist missionary, and John Sundquist, former executive director of American Baptist International Ministries, all with long histories of advocating for Naga peace.

Group members said they now sense “growing opportunities made possible” by the Forum for Naga Reconciliation, formed through efforts of Wati Aier, principal of the Oriental Theological Seminary in Dimapur, Nagaland, in 2008.

Aier, who worked nearly two decades to bring about the signing of the Covenant of Reconciliation in June 2009 and a high level meeting of the leaders of the Naga factions in September 2010, was this year’s recipient of the Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award at the recent BWA annual meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The letters urged Naga leaders to participate in meetings facilitated by the forum as soon as possible. “We believe your participation in the meeting is central in reaching a sustainable reconciliation agreement among the Naga groups,” they said.

For decades, several Naga groups have been in conflict with each other and with the Indian government over issues of autonomy and sovereignty for Nagaland state and the Naga people. Between 1992 and 2009, more than 2,330 insurgency related fatalities have been recorded in Nagaland.

9th Circuit rules in favor of pro-life counselor

OAKLAND, Calif. — The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has unanimously ruled the city of Oakland violated the freedom of speech of a Baptist man who does sidewalk counseling at abortion clinics.

A three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit, which is widely considered the most liberal of the federal appeals courts, decided unanimously the city was discriminatory in its enforcement of a 2008 ordinance. The measure established an 8-foot “bubble” around women who were seeking to enter abortion clinics and required their permission before a person could step into the zone to speak to them or provide them with written information, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported.

Oakland “has enforced the ordinance against anti-abortion speakers but not pro-abortion speakers,” Judge Marsha Berzon said in the panel’s 3-0 opinion. Oakland’s policy “unconstitutionally suppresses speech based on the content of its message,” Berzon wrote.

The city policy had allowed clinic workers to shield the women as they walked into the clinic. But the court’s ruling said for the policy to be constitutional, it must apply to the escorts, too.

Walter Hoyer, an elder at Progressive Missionary Baptist Church in Berkeley and the president of Issues4Life Foundation, challenged the ordinance. From public sidewalks outside Oakland abortion clinics, Hoyer offers help to women seeking abortions. He holds a sign that reads, “Jesus loves you and your baby. Let us help.”

New Hope Publishers’ app available for download

BIRMINGHAM — New Hope Publishers has launched its New Hope Digital application featuring all of New Hope Digital’s podcasts, “Voices” columns and the publisher’s blog. The app can be downloaded from iTunes or Android Market.

New Hope is the trade publishing imprint of national Woman’s Missionary Union. “Our desire is for readers and retailers to have convenient access to information from and about our authors,” New Hope publisher Andrea Mullins said. “The app will be an excellent tool for retailers wanting to help a customer know more about an author or a book from New Hope Publishers.”

“Readers will enjoy delving into current missional issues,” Mullins said. “We are exploring every possible means for making quality Christian content available to everyone.”

‘We build our children’ FBC Pell City ‘adoption’ ministry incorporates entire church

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ask Kevin Walls and he’ll tell you his church’s children’s ministry is based on a variation of Matthew 16:18: “On this rock, I will build my church.” The interim minister to children said the mantra of First Baptist Church, Pell City, is “On this church, we build our children.”

To support that claim, Walls has established several new initiatives at the St. Clair Baptist Association church, including an “adoption” program.

“I tried to come up with a different word than ‘adoption,’ but I couldn’t think of a better term,” he said. “We asked church members to adopt a child in our church family as a way to incorporate our entire church in our church ministry — seniors, young adults, parents. We wanted to give an opportunity to our church members to take ownership with the children’s ministry.”

Walls and his wife, Jamie, spearheaded the program, creating “adoption papers” for the 70-plus children. The papers included a photo of the child, some of his or her likes and dislikes and prayer requests for the new school year.

“We charged the kids with obeying their teachers over the school year, studying hard, etc., and meanwhile charged the adults to pray for their adopted child every day of the school year,” Walls said. “They had to agree to look for opportunities to bless this child during the school year.”

The church responded enthusiastically, adopting every single child



Photo courtesy of FBC Pell City

SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT — James and Ann Dendy of FBC Pell City take part in the ‘adoption’ ministry by investing in the life of 8-year-old Gabe Rivera during the school year.

during a recent Sunday night service.

“It showed me they certainly want to support our children through spiritual encouragement and prayer,” Minister of Education/Administration Tim Gold said. “You’ve got to have an encouraging membership to uplift the children and obviously we have that. I’m proud of the church.”

First, Pell City, members James and Ann Dendy were quick to participate in the adoption. They’re now “adoptive parents” to 8-year-old Gabe Rivera and look forward to offering him

support throughout the school year. On his adoption papers, Gabe asked for prayers for good grades, new friends and letting his light shine for Jesus.

“Who better to pray for the children of our church than our church family?” Ann Dendy said. “I think

this program has excited many of the adults in our church. Our church really values supporting children in church and Sunday School.”

James Dendy said he is especially looking forward to praying for good friendships for Gabe, since finding the right friends is such an important part of a child’s life and growth.

As for Walls, he plans to keep the church and community updated on the program via Facebook and newsletter updates. For instance, if a child does something like praying with someone or sharing Christ at school, then an anonymous post will be placed on Facebook to give everyone an idea of what’s going on in relationships with adoptive parents.

Gold has been pleased with the new ideas Kevin and Jamie Walls have brought to First, Pell City.

“Typically for children’s ministry, you’ll have a group of volunteers, but what they’ve done has captured the attention and the focus of the church at large to understand the necessity to bring children before the Lord,” he said.

“Who better to pray
for the children of
our church than our
church family?”

Ann Dendy
FBC Pell City

US politics more religious than voters

Has America gotten more religious, or just American politics? The country has grown less religious since the 1970s.

As a result, faith-filled rhetoric and campaign stops make Americans appear more Christian than they really are, according to Mark Chaves, a Duke University professor of sociology and religion. Using data collected between 1972 and 2008, Chaves said America is not only losing its religion but also has lost confidence in religious leaders and wants them to be less involved in politics. The findings — along with new research by Harvard professor Robert D. Putnam and Notre Dame professor David E. Campbell, co-authors of “American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us” — paint a shifting portrait of American politics. Some core American beliefs have remained stable over the past

two generations, however, including belief in a higher power, the afterlife and the belief that God is personally concerned with human beings.

“Compared to Europe, Canada and Australia, Americans are still very religious,” Chaves conceded.

Other findings

Among the other findings in “American Religion”:

► There is a declining (though still very high) belief in God or a higher power: In the 1950s, 99 percent of Americans said they believed in God; in 2008, about 93 percent did.

► Nearly 20 percent of Americans now say they have no religion, compared to just 3 percent in 1957.

► Only 25 percent of Americans attend weekly religious services, although up to 40 percent claim they do.

► Fewer Americans approve of their religious leaders getting involved in politics. In 1991, about 30 percent of Americans strongly agreed that religious leaders should avoid political involvement; by 2008, 44 percent felt that way.

► Belief that the Bible should be taken literally dropped from about 40 percent in the early 1970s to about 30 percent in 2008; Chaves said this trend corresponds with the rise in college education.

► From 1972 to 2008, the percentage of people with great confidence in religious leaders declined from 35 percent to less than 25 percent. A sharp dip around 2002 was probably due to the Catholic Church clergy abuse scandal, but otherwise the trend has consistently been downward for decades, along with interest in joining the clergy.

(RNS)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Joe W. Kitchens** is the new pastor of **North Highlands Church, Hueytown**. He previously served as pastor of Dry Ridge Church in Kentucky. He also served other churches in Kentucky and taught at Anchored Christian School in Bowling Green, Ky. Kitchens attended Tennessee Temple University in Chattanooga and Boston Baptist College. He holds a bachelor's degree and master's degree in theology from Bethany Theological Seminary in Dothan. He and his wife, Jeanne, have four children. ► **The Church at McDory, McCalla**, will host gospel singer/songwriter Squire Parsons Sept. 11, 6 p.m. For information call 205-477-8265. Bill McCall is pastor. ► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host The Dotson Family Quartet and Stanley & Company in concert Sept. 2, 7:30 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Rick Stone** is the new music pastor for **First Church, Birmingham**. He previously served as music pastor for First Church,



STONE

Jonesboro, Ga. He has also served other churches in Alabama. Stone holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and master of education from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Rosemary, have three children and four grandchildren. Stan Lewis is pastor. ► **First Church, Pleasant Grove**, will host a hunting and fishing expo presented by Bass Pro Shop, of Leeds, Sept. 8, 7:30-8:30 p.m. There will be a hamburger supper from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m. in the family life center. Door prizes will be given away during the evening. For tickets call Andrea Brown at 205-744-2803. Daven Watkins is pastor. ► **Shades Mountain Church, Vestavia Hills**, will hold a commemorative service for the 10th anniversary of 9/11 with The Annie Moses Band, of Franklin, Tenn., Sept. 11, 6 p.m. For information call 205-822-1670 or visit www.shades.org. Danny Wood is pastor. ► Members and friends of the former **South Avondale Church, Birmingham**, will hold a reunion Sept. 24, 11 a.m., at First Church, Irondale. Sack lunches will be served. For reservations call Fannie Daniel at 205-956-5407 or e-mail lavellemw@charter.net. ► **South Roebuck Church, Birmingham**, will host C3: Combined Campus Celebration Sept.

7, 6:30 p.m. The three congregations of the South Roebuck family of ministries — South Roebuck Church; North Valley Church, Margaret; and South Roebuck Community Church, Birmingham — will worship together. For information call 205-836-7288 or visit www.mynvc.org. Chris Crain is pastor of South Roebuck and North Valley. Jerome Bell is church planter/pastor of South Roebuck Community.

CAHABA

► **Linda Collins** is the new music director for **Ocmulgee Church, Selma**. She served as music director for Enon Church, Centreville, for 17 years. She is married to Lee. Danny Sumerlin is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Stave Creek Church, Jackson**, will host a Sunday School/new church year celebration Sept. 11. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m., and it will be high attendance day. There will be special announcements during the service at 10:55 a.m. New discipleship training classes will begin at 5 p.m. with the Experiencing God study material. The evening service will be at 6 p.m. with devotional music, devotion time and committee orientation. An ice cream social will follow in the fellowship hall. Jamie Lay is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Todd Reaves** resigned as pastor of **Mignon Church, Sylacauga**.

DEKALB

► **Vernon Church, Collinsville**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 18, 10:45 a.m. Wendell Dutton will speak. There will be special singing. Lunch will follow. Charles E. Woodfin is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **First Church, Russellville**, will hold revival Sept. 11-14 with Dale Huff, director of the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the State Board of Missions. Services will be Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday and Tuesday at 7 p.m. and Wednesday at 6 p.m. Barry Holcomb is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Oneonta**, will hold a Service of Remembrance Sept. 11, 10:15 a.m. It will be a time of reflection for those who gave their lives on 9/11. There will be a special time of prayer for the families of victims. Local first responders will be recognized and thanked. Larry Gipson is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 11. The Singing Ambassadors will sing at 10 a.m. The service will be at 11 a.m. Lunch

will follow. For information call 256-420-8172 or visit www.mable-hillbaptist.org. Mike Clark is pastor. ► **Murphy Hill Church, Toney**, will host a gospel singing event called Freedom Sings Sept. 11, 6 p.m., with The Dixie Echoes Quartet, of Pensacola, Fla., and Image, of Huntsville. For information call 256-828-3171. Mike McFarlen is pastor.

MOBILE

► **First Church, Irvington**, will hold revival Sept. 18-21 with Wayne Hudson of Complete in Christ Ministries. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. For information call 251-957-2718 or visit www.fbcirvington.org. Ron Griffin is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Sharon Heights Church, Birmingham**, will begin a new Sunday morning worship service at 8 a.m. beginning Sept. 11. The church also will celebrate We Will Remember day Sept. 11, 8 and 10:45 a.m. Firefighters, police and military personnel will be recognized. The church will hold revival Sept. 18-21 with Evangelist Ronnie Hill. Services will be at Sunday at 8 and 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. There will be a special emphasis one hour prior to the service on weeknights. Child care will be available. For information visit www.sharonheights.org. Jason Dunlap is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **Ladonia Church, Phenix City**, will host Another Day Closer to Heaven Ministry's Saturday night gospel sing Sept. 3, 6 p.m. EST., with singer/songwriter Denny Grimes, CJ Grimes, gospel trio Trinity, Bobby Ellis, Betty Ellis and Clyde Brooks. There will be giveaways from local businesses and eateries. David Howle is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Sixth Street Church, Alexander City**, will host a Sub-Sahara Africa Base Camp Sept. 23-24. The event will begin Friday at 5:30 p.m. and end Saturday at 5 p.m. The purpose of the base camp is to help individuals and churches know how to engage with unreached people groups in the region of West Africa. There will be discussions on discipleship, leadership training, cultural insights and more. The church has sent a team and is committed to working with the Kakabe people of Guinea. To register visit www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=974828. For information call 256-234-2408 or e-mail mhaines@sixthstreetbaptistchurch.com. Matt Haines is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Mountain Brook's Moebes retires after 53 years

Sixteen-year-old James D. Moebes had his life planned: He was going to be a dentist.

But God called him to become a minister. For 18 months, he fought it. "I finally gave in to God's persistence and I haven't looked back," Moebes said.

Now he is about to turn 70 and will retire after more than 53 years in the ministry. Moebes described those years as "the most fulfilling work and experience to which I could ever have given my life."

On Sept. 11, Moebes will deliver his last sermon as senior minister of Mountain Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham Baptist Association. He has held that position for more than 30 years. For six years prior to that, he was the church's executive minister. And for a time in the 1960s, he was student minister.



MOEBES

He earned his bachelor of arts from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham; master of divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; and master of arts and doctor of philosophy from the University of Alabama (UA).

Moebes served as assistant director of financial aid and assistant dean of admissions and records at UA; associate dean of student affairs at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta; dean of students, assistant dean for academic affairs and assistant to the president at the University of Alabama in Huntsville; and assistant professor at Alabama A&M University in Huntsville.

In his ministry, he was on staff at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, and pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church near Aliceville. Moebes was a pastor in Kentucky and interim pastor in Georgia and Huntsville. Moebes also has been active in national and international missions and taken dozens of Builders for Christ trips.

In addition, he served as chair of the Alabama Baptist Education Commission, on the board of directors of the Baptist Health Foundation, on the board of trustees of Trinity Medical Center in Birmingham and has been involved in various other organizations.

Jason Harkins, Mountain Brook Baptist's chairman of deacons, said Moebes has a friendly, fatherly manner that draws people to him. "He just has this way of connecting with people" and communicating the gospel, he said.

Moebes and his wife, Gail, have a son, David; a daughter, Stacey, and four grandchildren.

Kilgore retires after 30 years at Trussville's Ridgecrest

Johnny Kilgore, associate pastor of music and senior adult families for Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Trussville, was recognized Aug. 27 for 30 years of ministry at the Birmingham Baptist Association church during a special reception in honor of his retirement.

Kilgore attended Jacksonville State University, where he met his wife, Pat; served in the U.S. Air Force for four years; and later attended the University of Alabama for his master's degree. He went into the ministry in the mid-1960s, surrendered to the Lord for full-time ministry and was called to First Baptist Church, Wetumpka, in 1973.

The pastor of First, Wetumpka, Mickey Castleberry, moved to Ridgecrest Baptist, and Kilgore joined him there in 1981.

Throughout his time at Ridgecrest, Kilgore filled a number of roles, including interim pastor. He said the music landscape changed during his years of ministry. "When we first started, it was mainly a lot of choirs and ensembles," Kilgore explained. "Now it's gone into praise and worship songs and just a different direction."

He said one of the joys of being at Ridgecrest for an extended duration was watching the youth choir members grow up and accomplish great things. "We've been very fortunate to have the Lord's hand on the lives of many people in our church, and a lot of them are active ministers now," Kilgore noted.

One of the highlights of his service was receiving the Paul Stewart Excellence in Music Ministry Award in 2005 in recognition of outstanding music ministry. He also served as president of the Alabama Baptist Education Music Association from 2005 to 2006.

Kilgore's post-retirement plans include a revival in October and spending quality time with his parents.



KILGORE



Baptists RESPOND

to areas devastated by April tornadoes

Homes, lives continue being rebuilt in District 2

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On April 27, multiple storms and cyclones traversed Alabama, changing the landscape and the lives of many residents.

The impact was felt directly in 42 of the state's 67 counties, said Jim Swedenburg, an Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) missionary assigned to District 2.

That district — which comprises Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Etowah, Marshall and Jackson counties — suffered much devastation, Swedenburg said.

But now the buzz of disaster relief chain saws has been replaced by the tap-tap-tap of hammers as homes are being rebuilt, lives are being restored and hearts are turning to Jesus.

DeKalb Baptist Association

DeKalb County took a significant hit that killed at least 35 people.

Ken Clement, director of missions (DOM) for DeKalb Baptist Association, said the path of destruction was 38 miles long.

Mountain View Baptist Church, Sylvania, and 309 homes were destroyed; 176 homes were damaged, he said.

But help arrived soon. The SBOM sent a feeding unit that was based for weeks at Broadway Baptist Church, Rainsville. Volunteers served more than 70,000 meals to displaced people and disaster relief personnel working in the area. The Red Cross delivered meals to outlying areas. First Baptist Church, Rainsville, and Mount Olive Baptist Church, Fort Payne, also provided meals, Clement said.

The association's volunteers trained in chain saw, construction, chaplaincy and child care were called to action, he added.

"Our people did work. But some were limited because they had damage themselves," Clement said. Because of that, Alabama Baptist helpers and chaplains were sent from other parts of the state.

Also as many as 70 chain saw relief workers and chaplains came from Louisiana and another 75-80



Photo by Doug Rogers

HOT MEALS — Disaster relief volunteers prepare a meal at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' main feeding unit stationed at Broadway Baptist Church, Rainsville, following the April 27 tornadoes.

arrived from Kentucky, Clement said.

The Alabama Baptist disaster relief child care unit set up at a Federal Emergency Management Agency site in Rainsville, where it remained a couple of weeks.

Disaster relief shower and laundry units also were at Broad-

way Baptist, Clement said.

Likewise some churches with showers made their facilities available to locals and volunteers.

Offering lodging to volunteers were Broadway Baptist; First, Rainsville; Minvale Baptist Church, Fort Payne; and First Baptist Church, Geraldine. And some

are still doing so, Clement said.

Construction crews from Baldwin, Tuskegee Lee, Etowah and Cherokee Baptist associations have assisted in DeKalb Association. Plus Carpenters for Christ worked to help rebuild Mountain View Baptist.

(See 'Associations,' pages 8-9)

District 2

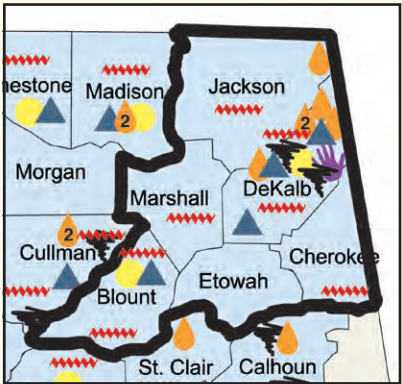
- Tennessee River Association
- Marshall Association
- Friendship Association
- Blount Association
- Etowah Association
- Cherokee Association
- Lookout Mountain Association
- DeKalb Association
- Sand Mountain Association

Explanation of districts

Alabama's 75 associations are grouped into 12 geographical districts. The districts allow the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions to work with and offer resources in a more localized way. Each district has various state missionaries assigned to it. When there are meetings or workshops that need to take place with all associational leaders, the district setup allows for a more practical model for those events. The April 27 tornadoes and resulting damage is a prime example of how having the 12 districts allowed for immediate strategizing and organization on the state and associational level. *The Alabama Baptist* will highlight storm recovery and relief assistance in each of the 12 districts once a month during the next year.

Highlights from District 2

State disaster relief efforts in the area (shown by county)



- 7 of the 9 associations have Alabama Baptist disaster relief efforts focused on them.
- 4 on-site command centers were set up immediately following the tornado damage.
- 2 state feeding units were set up to help the numerous local units.
- 5 shower unit locations were brought in during the first few weeks (locations where units traded out noted by numbers).
- 1 child care team assisted in the area.
- 2 Alabama Baptist churches in the area were severely damaged.

Associations see ministry focus shift toward recovery,

(continued from page 7)

"I've been amazed and thrilled to see the response" in relief efforts and collecting needed supplies, Clement said.

In fact, the clothing contributions overflowed. When Joplin, Mo., experienced its own destructive storms just a few weeks later, the association sent clothes there.

Now the ministry focus has changed to recovery, dispersing funds and scheduling volunteer efforts to rebuild homes, Clement said. These duties are being handled through the Jackson/DeKalb Long Term Recovery Committee, of which he is a member.

Clement said DeKalb Association is using some disaster relief donations to address needs it learns about through Project Rebound, a project in which representatives talk with people to see what they still need.

Already some houses are under construction but more work lies ahead.

"We've made some progress," Clement said. "We've got a long way to go."

Volunteers in construction and cleanup will be needed for a while.

"That's going to be a long-term need," Clement said.

Although the storms were a great tragedy, he said something positive has come from the pain — Mountain View Baptist has seen eight to 10 people come to know Christ as Savior.

Sand Mountain Baptist Association

The morning of April 27, an EF4 tornado swept through Macedonia, Pisgah and the Flat Rock area.

That evening, an even more powerful and deadly EF5 tornado struck Rainsville.

"Stamp Baptist Church (in Henagar) was heavily damaged," said David Patty, DOM for Sand Mountain Baptist Association, which covers portions of Jackson and DeKalb counties.

In Jackson County, 115 homes were destroyed and 200 more were damaged, Patty reported. At least eight people died.

But this tragedy's impact on the people of Jackson and DeKalb counties was not confined to their counties. Patty said three of the University of Alabama students killed when tornadoes hit Tuscaloosa that day were from the Sand Mountain area.

Immediately after the morning storm, the association's chain saw unit deployed and worked all day. At times, it had to seek shelter from subsequent storms, Patty said.

By the next day, teams were coming from elsewhere to help and disaster relief headquarters were established at Happy Home Baptist Church, Henagar. Happy Home Baptist also housed volunteers, as did Henagar and Ider Baptist churches.

The next week, 11 chain saw teams arrived from Kentucky, along with three teams from DeKalb and Tennessee River Baptist associations, Patty said.

The initial cleanup lasted about six weeks, he said. During that time, more volunteers came from Pennsylvania, Arkansas and Alabama, such as Tuskegee Lee Association.

Even now, the response continues.

"We've got teams out as far as February," wanting to help, Patty said. "We need many more."

Patty, who serves as chairman of the Jack-

How to help

Almost all of these associations say more monetary donations are needed to assist people affected by the April 27 storms. Also almost all of these associations are in need of skilled volunteers to help in rebuilding projects. Most need both.

- ▶ Blount Baptist Association — Contact local churches.
- ▶ Cherokee Baptist Association, 256-927-5016
- ▶ DeKalb Baptist Association, 256-638-4441
- ▶ Etowah Baptist Association, 256-547-1691
- ▶ Friendship Baptist Association, 205-274-2879
- ▶ Lookout Mountain Baptist Association, 256-593-5936
- ▶ Marshall Baptist Association, 256-582-2882
- ▶ Sand Mountain Baptist Association, 256-451-3750
- ▶ Tennessee River Baptist Association, 256-259-6135

For a list of needs across the state, visit www.sldr.org. Also the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) is helping to connect volunteers with associations that need assistance. Contact the SBOM's tornado rebuild assistant, Penny Flowers, at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 597. (TAB)

son/DeKalb Long Term Recovery Committee, said it has approved more than 35 requests for assistance with repairs and rebuilding.

"Many of them need volunteer help because they have no money," he said. "We try to find that for them."

Patty said more skilled people and funds are needed.

Tennessee River Baptist Association

Dwight Everett, DOM for Tennessee River Association, said Bridgeport, in the northeastern corner of Alabama, received severe damage.

"There's a small area of Bridgeport that looks as bad as anywhere I've been," Everett said.

On April 27, the association's chain saw unit worked almost constantly. Twice it had to take cover from storms, Everett said.

In fact, the unit cleared one road of debris that morning and then had to do it again later in the day, he said.

Chain saw teams from Kentucky worked for two weeks in Jackson and DeKalb counties, Everett said.

Volunteers from Tennessee River Association worked with the SBC feeding unit in Rainsville, he said. Also First Baptist Church and Calvary Baptist Church, both in Scottsboro, helped to feed disaster relief workers at Happy

Home Baptist.

Now the aim is getting lives and homes rebuilt. This is the mission of the Jackson/DeKalb Long Term Recovery Committee, of which Everett is a member.

He reported that Bridgeport has done a lot of recovery work on its own. Elsewhere, however, much work is left to be done.

"Money is what's needed now more than anything. There are a lot of people underinsured," Everett said.

Recently his association held disaster relief training and saw a great response. Everett noted that the April tragedy helped people see the need to be trained and ready.

In fact, Trinity Baptist Church, Scottsboro, has purchased a generator so that it may serve as a feeding site and distribution center next time, he said.

Blount Baptist Association

"The northern part of [Blount] County was hit hard enough that there was a lot of work (to be) done here," said Ennis Stone, moderator of Blount Baptist Association.

Once the storm subsided, people cleared roads, cut trees off homes and cleaned yards, Stone said.

"We were just busy trying to help each other," said Randy Burtram, pastor of Pleasant View Baptist Church, Holly Pond.

Churches and individuals have continued to do that, said Ed Engle, vice moderator of Blount Association.

However, the churches have not confined their assistance only to their neighbors. Engle pointed to Warrior River Baptist Church, Altoona, which took a monetary donation to a church in Hackleburg in Marion County to help affected people in that area.

Friendship Baptist Association

Ernie Carroll — DOM for Friendship Baptist Association, which also covers Blount County — noted that seven homes were destroyed that day.

As soon as possible, the association's chain saw team went to work.

Water, snack foods, blankets and other items were delivered to Friendship Association by Gateway Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, Carroll said. Some items went to Gethsemane Baptist Church, Hayden, and others to Blountsville Baptist Church to distribute to people affected by the storms.

Volunteers who were working in Pratt City in Jefferson County also were given lodging at Gethsemane Baptist, Carroll said.

At Blountsville Baptist, an "amazing" thing happened: It quickly became a headquarters for disseminating supplies not only to local people but also to other areas.

"It became a major operation," one that gave it a greater connection with its community, Carroll said.

The weekend after April 27, using money from the SBOM, the association took food vouchers into the communities, he said.

A Florida feeding unit set up at Bethel Baptist Church, Snead, and stayed a couple weeks, Carroll said.

Friendship Association churches have been diligent in giving money for relief efforts, he said. Individually, churches also are addressing needs that come to their attention. One example, Carroll said, is Straight Mountain

Baptist Church, Oneonta, which put a roof on a home.

Though tragic and destructive, the storms created opportunities for ministry.

"It was a time when the church became the total church. It met people at the level where they were hurting," Carroll said.

The storms also focused attention on ministry possibilities in the Summit community, which he now calls a missions field.

Summit's volunteer fire department building served as a distribution center, Carroll said. However, the building needs renovations.

"I'd like to see churches take one room at a time and redo it," Carroll said. "There needs to be a lot of outreach efforts in the Summit area. That is a wide-open missions field."

Also he said the storms showed the importance of getting disaster relief training and being ready to respond.

Likewise Carroll encourages churches with facilities capable of accommodating displaced people to keep their buildings in order. Then they will be prepared to respond instantly to displaced people and volunteers.

Cherokee Baptist Association

On April 27, Cherokee County was hit more than once. As a result, 35–40 homes were damaged and 35–40 more were destroyed. Four churches — New Bethel Baptist, Bates Chapel Baptist and Pilgrim Rest Baptist, all in Centre; and Pisgah Baptist, Piedmont — sustained damage, said Wendell Dutton, DOM for Cherokee Baptist Association.

The association took the lead in setting up a distribution center in a school gymnasium in Centre, Dutton said. Locals gave generously to the effort. In addition, a truckload of supplies arrived from a church in Indiana. "We kept it open until the first of August," Dutton stated.

Though the center is officially closed, Cherokee Association continues to help families obtain what they need, he said.

Dutton said repairs to New Bethel Baptist and Bates Chapel Baptist have been completed and work is in progress at Pisgah Baptist.

The damage to Pilgrim Rest Baptist, though, was massive (see story, page 13). Congregants will soon be meeting in a mobile chapel provided by Alabama Baptist disaster relief on the site, Dutton said.

Unlike other associations, Cherokee Association has not received volunteer assistance from disaster relief teams inside or outside the state, he said.

Basically, though, people in the county have been able to do what was necessary by "neighbors pitching in to help neighbors," Dutton said, adding that various churches' brotherhood groups have helped people with needs and projects.

"Our people just came together in this county in a phenomenal way to help their neighbors," Dutton said.

Recently the Cherokee County Long Term Recovery Committee was formed, and the association is a part of it. Through that committee, Dutton said, people who were uninsured or underinsured are able to receive vouchers for building supplies.

Lookout Mountain Baptist Association

The area encompassed by Lookout Mountain Baptist Association escaped significant damage April 27. Nonetheless the associa-

"Money is what's needed now more than anything. There are a lot of people underinsured."

DOM Dwight Everett
Tennessee River Association

rebuilding efforts

tion's churches — located in Cherokee and DeKalb counties — acted expediently. They accumulated about \$12,000 in funds and supplies, such as hygiene items and diapers, to give to those affected, DOM Lloyd Borden said.

Two congregations in Georgia learned of the efforts and sent a truckload of supplies, Borden said.

After the supplies were gathered, about 35 people packaged them for distribution, he said.

Plus Lookout Mountain Association purchased 140 plastic storage containers and gave them to affected residents in DeKalb and Jackson counties, Borden said.

While most of the supplies went to people in those two counties, a load was taken to Pratt City, he said.

In addition, the association has given some funds to Cherokee Association's Pilgrim Rest Baptist for rebuilding its structure, Borden said. And Lookout Mountain Association plans to give some funds to state disaster relief.

The association's people "give and they give all over again," Borden observed.

"Anytime you do something in the name of the Lord and in the name of the church is a blessing," he continued.

Lookout Mountain Association consists of 16 churches that probably average 30-35 each in Sunday worship. All have bivocational pastors.

Small churches might feel as if they cannot do much to help. But a church with only 15 people attending has as much obligation and privilege to serve as bigger churches, Borden said.

"We demean ourselves because we're small," he said. But "we all need to be known as helpers through Jesus Christ."

Borden said his association sees how readiness is essential.

"We need to stock some things that we can get out to people," such as tarps, storage containers, etc., he said. "We need to be ready at all times to respond (and to keep in mind) that this is part of our Christian duty."

Etowah Baptist Association

Etowah Baptist Association's construction team usually works on a summer project somewhere else. This year, coordinators pursued several possibilities but none worked out. At the time, no one understood why.

Then came April 27 and the reason became clear: The team's ministry was to friends and neighbors, DOM Gary Cardwell said.

In Etowah County, 12 homes were damaged or destroyed, Cardwell said.

Shortly after the storms, the association's chain saw unit and chaplains went into the Webster's Chapel, Happy Hollow and Ford's Valley areas of the county. Also Etowah Association assisted in Ragland in St. Clair County, Oak Grove in Talladega County and Ohatchee in Calhoun County.

In Oak Grove, "we worked weeks and weeks," Cardwell said.

Some of the association's churches formed teams to go to locations to work as well. First Baptist Church, Hokes Bluff, provided food for those affected by the storms, and Cardwell ministered in Pleasant Grove in Jefferson County as a disaster relief chaplain.

Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City, devoted some of its facility to a collection and distribution center. Most churches

in the association contributed to it, Cardwell said.

Through Etowah Association's Youth Network Work Crew (see story, this page), youth are assisting people with storm cleanup.

Since April 27, Etowah Association's shower unit "has been all over north Alabama and so has the big District 2 (shower) unit," Cardwell said. Recently the association's unit was in Northport in Tuscaloosa County.

In June, the association's construction team helped in rebuilding a Rainsville church of another denomination.

In a continuing effort to assist in rebuilding, the association is participating in the Etowah County Long-term Recovery Committee.

"That's been a help," Cardwell said of the committee. "We're able to take care of some needs through that."

"A number of homes are back together or in the process of being rebuilt," he noted.

By doing what the Lord has called Christians to do, "it has afforded a great platform for the gospel," Cardwell said.

There have been reports that some people prayed to receive Jesus Christ and that others' faith was strengthened through the assistance they received from Alabama Baptist disaster relief workers.

Needed now are volunteers skilled in certain areas of construction, Cardwell said.

Also monetary donations continue to be accepted for assisting people through the

association and the long-term recovery committee.

Marshall Baptist Association

The destructive forces of April 27 damaged or destroyed 880 homes in Marshall County, said Randall Stoner, DOM for Marshall Baptist Association.

At least five people died in the Ruth community.

"It was devastated," Stoner said of the community.

Marshall Baptist Retreat Center, Haney's Chapel Baptist Church and Victory Baptist Church, all in Guntersville, experienced significant damage, he said. Three other churches received some damage.

Marshall Association's chain saw crew deployed quickly and assisted more than 100 families, Stoner said. Crews from Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi and Florida also arrived to help.

Friendship Association responded to Marshall Association's need by delivering food items to Central Baptist Church, Albertville, for distribution, Stoner said.

Marshall Association churches swiftly went into action. Stoner enumerated around 15 churches that prepared meals, delivered food in communities, housed volunteers or distributed needed items. Some did so for months.

Eastside Baptist Church, Arab, moved its worship services into a mobile home park in Ruth to minister to people, Stoner said.

Moreover individuals in the association are serving with Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters and Project Rebound to assist people in the restoration phase, he added.

Stoner said Marshall Association's needs now are threefold: prayer, disaster relief funds and volunteers in cleanup and construction.

"We've learned to see that we can make it if we all pull together," he said. "America is still the best place to live in the world."

Etowah's Southside Baptist adopts area father, daughter

By Anna Keller

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alan Broome was living and ministering in Mississippi when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, so he's no stranger to mobilizing teams to help with cleanup and rebuilding efforts following storm damage. Now the outreach pastor at Southside Baptist Church in Etowah Baptist Association, Broome and several others from his church family have been helping to put their community back in order following the devastating April tornadoes.

"Immediately following the storms, we started receiving calls from church members who had friends or family members impacted by the storm," he said. "We started by offering debris removal, counseling, a clothes and toys closet — things like that."

That initial approach quickly grew into a monthslong effort to help community members get back on their feet — and created life-changing relationships.

Albert Davis, a member of Southside Baptist, was helping a fellow church member in the heavily impacted Shoal Creek Valley area when he heard of a man named Gary and his daughter who needed help. Their home had been damaged in the storm, and the man, who had lost a leg in a work accident a few years earlier, needed handicap accessible features.

"We started by building a handicapped ramp for him — the St. Clair Baptist Association furnished the materials and we provided the labor," Davis said. "That's where it started and then the project grew."

Since that first building project, he and fellow Etowah Association church members have built an extra room and specially equipped bathroom for Gary. They've also re-roofed the house and are in the process of

installing a heat pump and air conditioner.

Though the work itself has been significant, perhaps the best thing to come out of the situation is that Southside Baptist gained two new worshipers.

"Since the time we started helping Gary, he's become a Christian and gotten his little 4-year-old girl in church and they're getting involved," said Jack Carter of Southside Baptist, who has been a part of the outreach. "He came to church one Sunday, then came again and was saved that second week. His daughter is even in our church's day care now." As it turned out, Gary had spent the last three years — since the accident that caused him to lose his leg — relatively secluded. Since interacting with the Southside Baptist folks, Broome said, the transformation has been remarkable.

"It's been amazing to see Gary with Albert, in particular," he said. "Gary has become almost a son to him. Albert's mentoring him, helping him with some decisions and parenting advice, since Gary's a single dad and has lots of questions."

Skilled workers needed

And Gary's story is just one of many the church has generated in the last few months through its cleanup efforts. "It really created a lot of excitement throughout our church as well as within the community around our church," said Scott Harris, Southside Baptist's pastor. "Our folks responded with passion, saw the need in the community and really responded. We had a Sunday night where we decided as a church to go into the community and help folks, and we had about 150 people show up." At this point in the overall rebuilding process, Broome said skilled workers such as electricians and carpenters are particularly needed.

Youth network cleans up 'back yard'

By Anna Keller

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The Youth Network Work Crew, which coordinates countywide events for Etowah Baptist Association such as See You At The Pole and Disciple Now, is used to traveling thousands of miles for missions trips, but after this April's storms, the need was right in its back yard.

"The network was underlying but we felt like we needed to be really active in helping with cleanup," said Greg Walker, youth minister at Immanuel Baptist Church, Hokes Bluff. "I think initially the first time any of [the youth] came out to the area, they were kind of awestruck. Some areas were so devastated." Director of Missions Gary Cardwell said there were only about 12 homes destroyed in Etowah County so the association has reached across county lines to help other communities. The network has been busy all summer with activities including picking up debris, raking, weed eating and "whatever it takes to get ... people back into their homes," according to Walker.

Following the storms, Etowah Association churches conducted surveys and gathered word-of-mouth information to create a list of people they could help — and as they quickly discovered, the need was substantial.

So the network set a goal to send a youth group into the community each weekend throughout the summer. Now that summer is nearing a close, there's still much to be done. But the network plans to continue reaching out. "To hear the youth talk about it, they've enjoyed being the hands and feet (of Christ) and (the opportunity) to actually be the church," said Mark Thrift, who's been filling in as North Gadsden Baptist Church's unofficial youth minister for the last five years. "We've met some good people to minister to, and it's a great reminder that young people can be ministers."

It's also been important for the youth to witness such extreme need, Walker said.

"For many of them, it's a life change," he said. "They see how someone has lost absolutely everything and they don't have insurance. It's eye-opening and I think it lets them get in touch with reality that bad things can happen close to home."

Thrift said the response has been heartwarming. "People in the community are so appreciative and thankful," he said. "They realize that it's not about us — it's all about God and all from God. There's been so much appreciation and love, and the youth love them back. It's amazing to see these needs being met."

FBC Scottsboro's 'Colonel' leads relief volunteers with precision

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Feeding a large number of hungry disaster relief workers is an enormous task.

It requires planning menus, procuring food items, lining up preparers, anticipating condiments, scheduling a cleanup crew, enlisting drivers and delivering the meals to the feeding site — all on schedule.

For this, military precision is almost a must.

Enter Larry H. "Mac" McKinnon.

The retired sergeant first class has 36 years of service in the Army and Army National Guard. And though he spent years as an enlisted man, his ability to organize, mobilize "troops" and execute a plan has, in civilian life, garnered him the nickname "Colonel."

When storms swept through Alabama on April 27, McKinnon's church — First Baptist, Scottsboro — responded on two fronts immediately.

The Tennessee River Baptist Association church served as a center for collecting and distributing donated items for displaced people. It also assisted Happy Home Baptist Church, Henagar, in Sand Mountain Baptist Association with feeding disaster relief volunteers working in that area.

A certain number of meals needed to be prepared at First, Scottsboro, and then delivered to Happy Home Baptist to feed the volunteers. Some meals also had to be taken to volunteers working in remote areas.

Kevin Wilburn, pastor of First, Scottsboro, felt that McKinnon's military background particularly gifted him for the task of feeding an army.

"I knew if I got him, I got M.M., his wife. So that's why I did it," a chuckling Wilburn said of getting McKinnon to lead the effort.

McKinnon said it was a tremendous responsibility to prepare 80 meals three times a day and deliver them to where they were needed when they were expected.

In the early days of this ministry, "we were feeding National Guard folks, too," Wilburn added.

McKinnon said the final tally on meals prepared at First, Scottsboro, was more than 1,000.

"It was a pretty big effort by a lot of people," he said.

Plus his wife was at his side. "She was my right hand in the kitchen," McKinnon said.

For any given meal, 30 or more volunteers were needed to cook, deliver, clean up and take care of administrative tasks, McKinnon said.

Some volunteers were from First, Scottsboro; others were from other churches and the community.

Also "Calvary Baptist Church



Photo by Gary Hardin

'COLONEL' — Larry H. 'Mac' McKinnon, retired sergeant first class who served in the Army and Army National Guard, and his wife, Mary Margaret, minister together in disaster relief.

(Scottsboro) helped us deliver food," Wilburn said.

Individuals, businesses and churches donated items to feed disaster relief crews, while First, Scottsboro, purchased some. But McKinnon said the desserts — those "many delicious desserts" — came from the community and First, Scottsboro, members.

While the food service volunteers worked on a rotating schedule, McKinnon was on-site constantly.

"Somebody has to be," he explained. "That keeps the continuity going."

During this effort, his day began about 4 a.m. Before food service volunteers began arriving, McKinnon planned menus, listed jobs necessary for preparing each meal and decided who would do which task and what was needed to complete the meal, right down to providing relief workers with sanitizer for washing their hands and plenty of liquids for hydrating. His crew also sent extra food to Happy Home, to make certain there was enough for everyone.

He even made charts that allowed the food service volunteers to see "the big picture" and know what was transpiring at any given moment.

"He does the right thing the right way to get people mobilized to serve," Wilburn said. "He tried to let everyone have a part in what's happening."

Each day, McKinnon's food service platoon prepared a traditional hot breakfast; a sandwich lunch with fruit and dessert; and a sit-down-type evening meal.

"We really tried to fix some really good meals," he said.

When all was quiet on the kitchen front, McKinnon finally would go home.

(See '16-hour,' page 12)

Open for summer season Marshall Baptist Retreat Center repaired after storms

By Martine Bates Sharp
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The 13-acre Marshall Baptist Retreat Center sits on the shores of Lake Guntersville, across from Lake Guntersville State Park — a near-perfect setting for such a facility.

On April 27, however, it was not such a good place to be, as an EF2 tornado roared through the state park and the retreat center, leaving extensive damage at both facilities. At the retreat center alone, the damage totaled nearly \$500,000.

Amazingly the retreat center was able to clean up, do some repairs and reopen in time for the summer season, which began June 1.

Director Phil Robeson described the recovery as "an absolute God thing," especially in light of the number of decisions made at the retreat center over the summer.

"We had a total of 48 decisions for campers who prayed to receive Christ this summer. We usually have between 25 and 30," Robeson said. "That's indicative of it being in God's plan for us to open back up June 1."

Marshall Baptist Association Director of Missions Randall Stoner said, "The souls that have already been saved since it opened back up makes it all worthwhile. People don't always realize that it's not just a retreat center; it's a major ministry effort."

The retreat center caters to a wide variety of church groups who reserve the facility for meetings and retreats, as well as Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action training.

Robeson said the retreat center does no programming but instead provides the facility, cleaning staff and lifeguards and, after an orientation, "turns the groups loose" to their leaders.

Even though the tornado did not actually touch down at the retreat center, according to Robeson, the associated winds wreaked havoc on the campground.



Photo courtesy of Marshall Baptist Association

TARP FOR PROTECTION — The Marshall Baptist Retreat Center office was significantly damaged by the April 27 storms. A tarp was placed over the roof for temporary protection.

Most of the damage was from downed trees, he said. The staff documented 150 trees down, with 78 on "property of some kind" — buildings, fences, boats, the playground and a truck. The office, a large pavilion, the playground and the pier were destroyed; all the canoes and paddleboats were flattened; and damage was done to the kitchen/dining hall and gym.

"It was a massive undertaking," Stoner said of the restoration. "A contractor, Russell Pinion, brought in a lot of equipment and basically ran 24/7."

According to Robeson, 1,200 tons of topsoil had to be hauled in to fill the gaping holes left when the trees were uprooted.

Many volunteers, both local and out of state, helped in the cleanup and rebuilding. In all, according to Robeson, more than 100 volunteers

helped clear the property and make the needed repairs. Crews came from Lake Charles, La., and Memphis, Tenn.

Stoner added, "A church from New Orleans that we had helped [after Hurricane Katrina in 2005] loaded up and came up here to help us."

Calling the retreat center "the crown jewel of the association," he said, "It's a blessing most associations don't have. It's an opportunity for people to fish, swim and picnic right on the lake, with no smoking, drinking or profanity. It's safe and secure and you don't have to worry about the outside world."

Stoner said his association is looking forward, not backward. "[The retreat center] does look different. There is extra space where there were trees, but we're building back better and improving some things. Anyone who came here for the first time would not know there had been a tornado."

For more information, visit www.marshallbaptistretreat.com.

"[The retreat center] does look different. There is extra space where there were trees, but we're building back better."

Randall Stoner
DOM Marshall Association

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

Joining together

Jackson/DeKalb Long Term Recovery Committee reaches out to area residents

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Facing its third disaster recovery effort in three years, the Jackson/DeKalb Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) is proving that a private-public partnership can effectively help residents in a time of need.

The LTRC began in 2008, when an EF4 tornado cut a 10-mile path of damage in the Pisgah/Rosalie area of Jackson County on Feb. 6.

"It didn't make national news, but for this area, it was pretty dramatic," said David Patty, Sand Mountain Baptist Association director of missions.

That tornado destroyed 44 homes. The committee, then known as the Sand Mountain LTRC, brought together representatives of Sand Mountain Association and the Upper Sand Mountain Parish (United Methodist Church) as well as directors of county agencies, including the Jackson County Emergency Management Agency and Department of Human Resources, and the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and local fire departments and mayors. The committee organized volunteer teams and donations, and 14 families received help rebuilding their homes.

On April 10, 2009, an EF3 tornado hit the communities of

Powell, Macedonia and Sylvania, and the LTRC saw the need once again. This time, officials and agencies from DeKalb County were involved, including DeKalb Baptist Association. In the following months, the committee helped build eight homes.

Then came April 27 and the massive destruction all over north Alabama. Patty admitted that those who had volunteered with the LTRC in the past, including him, felt overwhelmed.

"We were all pessimistic. Ninety-eight percent of the damage was on Sand Mountain — 424 homes completely destroyed and 379 heavily damaged," he said.

The committee did not do anything for the first

month, Patty said, because teams were still cutting trees and digging homes out of the rubble. After that first month, a few volunteers got together and discussed the possibility of putting together a joint committee for both counties — and it worked.

"All the county representatives were there from both counties, and we agreed to blur the county line," Patty said.

The committee began meeting weekly at Northeast Alabama Community College in Rainsville, located on the border of the two counties, which Patty said was

"All the county representatives were there from both counties, and we agreed to blur the county line."

DOM David Patty
Sand Mountain Association

'A wonderful thing,' Henagar pastor says

David Hairston counts himself among those who have been blessed by the efforts of the Jackson/DeKalb Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC).

In the aftermath of the April 27 tornadoes, Hairston, pastor of Henagar Baptist Church in Sand Mountain Baptist Association, was faced with unimaginable loss.

His home suffered major damage from the storm that raged through Henagar, but he lost much more than a house. Hairston's 90-year-old mother, Violet, a member of Stamp Baptist Church, Fort Payne, in Sand Mountain Association, died when her house was destroyed by the tornado.

"There was nothing left but the dirt under her house," Hairston said.

The next few weeks were difficult for him and his family, but the LTRC has provided much more than financial help, he said.

"Emotionally we had a pretty rough time. But these folks just came in and loved on us and we really needed that."

Hairston is rebuilding his home, and the committee has helped by providing funds to supplement his insurance and organizing volunteer labor for the project.

Several volunteers have helped, including a missions team from Pennsylvania who helped frame the new house's walls. Hairston expects to have a roof on soon and said the work would not be nearly so far along without the LTRC's help.

'Tremendous show of love'

"They (the volunteers) wouldn't have found us without the LTRC guiding them to me and to others who were working on their homes," he said.

Hairston called the committee "a wonderful thing" and said he has seen unbelievers come to appreciate how God's people respond in difficult times.

"It's a tremendous show of love for the associations and churches to work together, but that's just what Christians do," Hairston said. (TAB)

symbolic of the unity it was seeking.

Volunteers serve as caseworkers under the direction of Tayna Rains, director of the Upper Sand Mountain Parish.

Helping families

Each caseworker goes into the community to interview families and help them with the proper paperwork. The caseworkers meet on Thursday to review applications for assistance, and then applications are presented to the full LTRC on Tuesday.

The committee considers federal assistance and insurance payments

as it decides how to allocate funds. Many requests are for volunteer labor, Patty said.

He said the storm-damaged area has been blessed with help. Teams from Pennsylvania, Kentucky, South Carolina, Georgia and other parts of Alabama have already come or are scheduled to come through October. So far, 84 cases have been approved, and 14 of those are complete rebuilds. The approved cases also include requests for appliances and furniture.

The committee received \$120,000 from the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham's Bama Rising Fund, which

came from the proceeds of the Bama Rising Concert held June 14 and organized by the Fort Payne-based country music group Alabama. But financial donations are still needed, Patty said.

Building teams are still needed as well, he said. Volunteers of all skills levels are needed to help with construction projects. Coordinators are available to help volunteers arrange food and lodging during their stay. For information about volunteering, call Roger Haney at 256-451-7179.

For general information, call Sand Mountain Association at 256-451-3750. 

DeKalb Association churches continue to rebuild, help those in need

By Sammie Jo Barstow
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On April 27, Chris Hampton started the day as the men's ministry director at Broadway Baptist Church, Rainsville, a role he's filled for several years. By the end of the day, he also had become the coordinator for volunteer disaster relief at the DeKalb Baptist Association church.

Four months later, Hampton expects this new role to continue for some time.

"We've just started in the rebuilding stage now," he said.

In addition to helping with minor repairs and debris removal, Broadway Baptist has taken on the challenge of completely rebuilding a house for one church family.

Although requests have diminished, Broadway is still involved in helping people who do not qualify for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency or are uninsured or underinsured.

"Many people are struggling even to provide food for their families. Our church has given out many food cards so they can go to the grocery store and buy perishable items like milk, bread and meat," Hampton said.

Several DeKalb Association churches provided meals immediately after the storms.

Pastor Kent Wilborn was not surprised when the women of Mount Olive Baptist Church arrived at the church early the day after the tornado and cooked breakfast for volunteers and displaced people.

"At noon, they cooked another meal, and that night, they cooked again. These ladies provided three meals a day for anyone who came to eat for more than a month," Wilborn said.

Mount Olive Baptist, a small rural church near Rainsville, still sends out teams of men to do heavy equipment work, and many times, they carry sandwiches prepared by the women. Wilborn said the church has been blessed with monetary donations and continues to provide food and buy necessary items for families in its area.

Helping the community

Although the recent storms were by far the worst destruction the area has experienced, Jeff Mann, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rainsville, said this is the fourth time since 2008 that his church members have been involved in disaster relief within a 15-mile radius of the church.

In 2008, they helped after a tornado struck the Pisgah-Rosalie area. In 2009,

it was Sylvania and in 2010, Geraldine.

In the early days after the disaster, the church was faced with a difficult decision. Sixty-seven adults and teens were scheduled for a missions trip to south Alabama for the week of July Fourth. With its community in such devastation and so many of its members having suffered loss, should it cancel the trip?

According to Mann, church members prayed for the answer. They decided to work at home through May and June and then go on the missions trip, as planned, with a few modifications.

"We shifted from doing ministry at home to doing a different kind of ministry in another location. I think it was an encouragement to our members to get away for a week, and I believe we offered some blessings in what we did for those people," Mann said.

First, Rainsville, deacon Eddie Garrett had participated in the summer missions trip for nine years, but he wasn't able to go this year. The storm destroyed his and his wife's home, as well as the homes of their two sons and their families and grandson and his family. Out of four homes, they salvaged almost nothing. After the storm, the families walked through a pasture, picking up clothes and small items.

Although Garrett was disappointed about not being able to go on the missions trip, today he is busy helping his family and others rebuild.

'It's humbling'

"I've always been on the other end of this situation by being able to help others. Now others are helping me and it's humbling," Garrett said. "Our houses were destroyed and our vehicles were destroyed but my children and grandchildren and their families are alive, and we're praising God for His goodness and blessings."

Although some families suffered great loss, Hampton, Wilborn, Mann and Garrett all commented on how much joy has emerged through the grief and tears.

"We've always had a close church," Mann said. "But if you can get any closer, we are now."

Each church also has experienced growth since the storms.

On a recent Sunday, a family came to worship at Mount Olive Baptist and the father borrowed a guitar and joined the praise band.

"He blessed our hearts! Just one of many blessings we've experienced," Wilborn said. 

From 29 to 82

'Large percentage' of volunteers use vacation time from full-time jobs

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Disaster relief often is a spur-of-the-moment ministry.

So it would be logical to think that those who are able to volunteer for disaster relief are either retired or not employed outside the home.

But the fact is "a large percentage of our folks are not retired," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Tennessee River Baptist Association's disaster relief team is evidence of that. As of the last training session that was held in June, the association has 57 volunteers (in chain saw, chaplaincy, shower unit, water purification and cleanup and recovery), noted Bennie Lenz, the association's disaster relief coordinator. Of that number, only three are retired.

"Prior to that (training session), we had only one person in the group who was retired," added Lenz, who attends Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro.

"Our youngest (volunteer) is 29; our oldest is 82," he said. The association also has a female chain saw team member — Lenz's wife, Donna.

When storms hit Alabama in April, Lenz juggled his job as right-of-way specialist with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and his desire to volunteer in disaster relief.

When he sent out the call for volunteers, the Lord assembled the team for him, he said. The team worked in Jackson, Marshall and DeKalb counties, Lenz said.

He was able to work the day of the storms and the following day. But it was several weeks before Lenz could assist again because he was working 16 hours or more each day for TVA.

For weeks, Tennessee River Association's team served, sometimes as a group and sometimes as individuals attached to other disaster relief teams.

"We had somebody out every day for the first three weeks," Lenz said.

Many of those people were like Lenz in that they were taking vacation or personal days from their jobs

16-hour days no match for McKinnon

(continued from page 10)

"Generally my day would end about 8 o'clock that night," he said.

Nonetheless McKinnon's 16-hour days did not close before he verified that he had a head count for the next day's meals, as well as all that was needed to prepare them.

Yes, the days were long and filled to the brim with activity. But McKinnon — whose military service took him to such places as Europe, Panama and Ecuador — counted it a blessing to be able to assist in this way.

"It was a personal pleasure to me to be able to serve my community," he said.

in order to volunteer in disaster relief.

As of Aug. 19, there were 6,139 Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers. (This is the number of volunteers who have been trained, cleared by background checks and received the necessary credentials to qualify for state and national disaster relief deployment.) More than 63 percent of those volunteers — 3,916 to be exact — are age 56 or older, Johnson reported.

The rest of the volunteer force consists of 83 individuals who are 18 to 25, 292 who are 26 to 35, 619 who are 36 to 45 and 1,229 who are 46 to 55, he said.

'Refresh' original teams

When disaster relief volunteers are needed — especially if the response involves traveling to another place — the ones who are able to go quickly tend to be the retirees, Johnson said.

However, when given a few days to work out their schedules, those who are employed come along to "refresh" the original strike team, he explained.

"I usually don't have a problem getting off," said Johnny Dolberry, who attends Center Point Baptist and works for the Scottsboro Housing Authority.

But "sometimes I have to make arrangements" to be off, said Dolberry, who is trained in chain saw and cleanup and recovery with Tennessee River Association's disaster relief team.

He said his wife, Patricia, works full time at NCI MFG in Scottsboro and is

a volunteer in cleanup and recovery.

Todd McLaughlin, who attends Trinity Baptist Church, Scottsboro, devotes a certain amount of his vacation time just to disaster relief. "I save my vacation time for that. I set aside two weeks every year and don't touch it for anything else."

McLaughlin, who is trained in chain saw and operates a tractor with a grapple for the disaster relief team, said his work schedule at the Scottsboro Housing Authority has some flexibility. He can begin taking vacation time within hours of receiving a disaster relief call, even on a normal business day.

"Pretty much, anytime they call me to go, I go," McLaughlin said. "I can be ready to go out in a couple of hours."

He said his wife keeps bags packed for him so that he can respond quickly.

The fact that people still in the workforce are volunteering with disaster relief shows a commitment to serve, Lenz said.

"I think it shows they're willing to go when God calls. They're willing to sacrifice their vacation time and personal time when God calls," he said.

Disaster relief volunteers do what they do to help hurting people at their point of need. But somehow involvement in the ministry has a lasting impact on the volunteers.

"You're the one who gets blessed," Dolberry said.

Lenz added, "It's a blessing to me every time I go."

For more information about volunteering for disaster relief, visit www.sldr.org.

Needs continue in Friendship Association

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Milt Hill's church just keeps finding out about things. Needs. Lives that need a little help. It's been happening ever since the tornadoes happened in April.

"Just today, I was able to take some money to a family where the husband got thrown out of his house (by a tornado) — him and his pregnant wife. Both were really broken up," said Hill, pastor of Blountsville Baptist Church in Friendship Baptist Association.

In April, ministry to the broken community became a full-church effort "because of their hearts' desire to help these folks," Hill said. "We had members in our church who began coming in talking about needs related to the storm. About 20 people in our community completely lost their homes." That's a huge dent in the town, he said.

So Blountsville Baptist — along with Gethsemane Baptist Church, Hayden — became a distribution site.

"We divided up the responsibilities in the community and got more done that way. The Methodists came in and started feeding people, and we dealt with food, clothes, water — those types of things," Hill said.

And they were able to help people from all around — all the way to Hackleburg, Tuscaloosa, Gadsden, Decatur, Altoona and Cullman in addition to their immediate community.

"The Lord allowed us to minister to a lot of folks," Hill said. "Folks started coming up and giving us cash donations to help us buy a lot of the stuff we were providing to the folks that needed it."

And Blountsville Baptist has been struck with the desire to keep doing those things. The tornadoes were "an experience that changed this group of Baptists tremendously," Hill said. "There's been a lot of kinship of spirit in our work. The destruction spurred the church to begin with, but now the church wants to do other missions work — this has inspired them."

Ernie Carroll, director of missions for Friendship Association, said it's "amazing" what's been going on at Blountsville Baptist.

"A tremendous connection has been made with the community because of what that church has done," he said. "The missions attitude of the church itself has been transformed by the event, too."

"[Churches] should have their facilities up to par to meet the needs of people affected in a crisis by giving them immediate food or shelter and providing lodging for volunteers coming to help," Carroll said.

Individuals should be encouraged to get credentialed in disaster relief so they can respond quickly, Carroll said. And they should prepare for a blessing, Hill said. "We have been able to help a lot of folks, and we don't get any payback but the blessing from God — and that has been wonderful."

Piedmont's Faith Baptist makes big impact on community

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A familiar saying explains that big things come in small packages. That proved true as a small Piedmont church performed big-sized disaster relief ministry during the weeks following the April 27 tornado.

Faith Baptist Church provided six weeks of relief ministry to Piedmont's hard-hit Goshen community.

The community is no stranger to tornadoes. On Palm Sunday in 1994, an EF4 tornado ripped the roof from Goshen United Methodist Church and slammed it down on a nearly full house of worshipers. By the time the tornado had done its damage, 20 church members had died.

On April 27, an EF4 tornado wiped out numerous homes and buildings in the community, leaving a half-mile-wide scene of devastation, but there were no fatalities.

"Amid an area of significant damage, the Faith congregation stepped up to help quickly," said Wendell Dutton, Cherokee

Baptist Association director of missions.

The church performed some of its ministry in partnership with Goshen United Methodist. A command and relief center had been established at the Methodist church, but the needs in the community were so great that Faith Baptist decided it would set up a relief center as well.

Distribution center

The 40 or so worshipers quickly turned the church's fellowship hall into a distribution center. Tornado survivors were given food, clothing, water, bedding, tarps and more. Several times a day, church members delivered boxes of relief supplies to survivors.

Pastor David Smart couldn't believe the outpouring of donations and other support.

"We received food and supplies from churches and individuals as far away as South Carolina. Several community fire departments in Randolph County delivered trailer truckloads of supplies. Members from First Baptist (Church), Piedmont, helped pack boxes in our fellowship hall. The Cherokee County Com-

mission provided ice each day. Local businesses and Piedmont residents donated food and water. A man from Georgia brought huge pans of barbecue meat and buns."

In fact, Faith Baptist received so much that it shared supplies with other tornado-damaged areas, Smart's wife, Annie, pointed out.

"We would get out of church on Sunday mornings, and a truck filled with relief supplies would be in our parking lot waiting for our people to help unload," she said.

Church member Jackie Bramlett took a week's vacation so he could minister to tornado survivors.

"We heard amazing stories. Most people just needed to talk," Bramlett said. "I got a blessing from just seeing the expressions of relief on people's faces."

Faith member Kenneth Ledbetter, who worked in the center and made deliveries in the community, felt proud of his church family.

"We're small but we did all anyone could do. We helped a lot of people."



Photo by Gary Hardin

RECOVERY — A mobile chapel was delivered to Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church in the Rock Run community July 5. Church members are working to get water and electricity supplied to it.

Small church feels love, support Pilgrim Rest Baptist withstands tornado, pastors' accident

By Sammie Jo Barstow
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Rolling hills, rivers and lush green pastures are familiar sights in rural Cherokee County in northeast Alabama. Small communities line the two-lane highways, and the picturesque view often includes a white-frame church with a steeple. Many of those churches have stood for more than a century and ministered to generations of believers.

Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church in the Rock Run community near Spring Garden is one of those. Its original rectangular structure was built when the Cherokee Baptist Association church was established in 1896 and has been remodeled over the years to include Sunday School rooms, a kitchen and a fellowship hall.

Off the foundation

The violent storms that passed through Alabama on April 27 literally lifted the sanctuary off its foundation and set it down again. It was so damaged that the building was condemned.

The sanctuary needs to be torn down and rebuilt, but no definite decisions about rebuilding have been made yet.

Since the storm, the small congregation has been meeting in the fellowship hall, which was largely undamaged.

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) through Alabama Baptist disaster relief funds has provided a mobile chapel, and church members are working to get water and electricity supplied

to it, said Gary Gowens, a deacon and longtime church member.

Gowens remembers the exact date when the mobile chapel was delivered — July 5 — because it was two days after Pastor Steve Tierce was seriously injured in an automobile accident.

Tierce is a second-generation pastor of Pilgrim Rest Baptist.

According to his wife, Patty, the outpouring of love and concern from the church and community has been overwhelming. A benefit singing recently raised \$5,700 to help the Tierce family, and a community yard sale is planned in the near future.

"We're a very small church, and we live in a small community, but the morning of Steve's surgery after the accident, there were at least 60 people in the waiting room praying for Steve. Our church and other friends have just poured out the love on us," Patty Tierce said.

After spending six weeks at UAB Hospital in Birmingham, Steve Tierce was transferred to Floyd Medical Center in Rome, Ga.

Patty Tierce said they have been told that her husband's recovery will be a series of small steps.

"We have really seen the power of prayer since Steve's accident.

We're asking everyone to pray that Steve will be taken off the ventilator very soon and that he will continue to heal," she said. "The support for us has just been wonderful and overwhelming, and I think many doctors and other people in both hospitals have seen God at work."

But the Tierces aren't the only ones receiving support.

"This church is recognized as being the center of the community even by people who do not attend church."

Wendell Dutton
DOM Cherokee Association

"I can't even express how much support the church and Steve's family have received," Gowens said. "Our folks have come together in a big way to help the church and our pastor."

The SBOM donated money to supplement the insurance and help through the transition of replacing the sanctuary.

Donations also came from surrounding associations, as well as individuals.

Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Association, believes the recent crises faced by Pilgrim Rest affirm the importance of churches in rural communities.

"This church is like many rural churches. They have such a valuable part in the life of their community," he said.

"This church is recognized as being the center of the community even by people who do not attend church."

'After the Storm' retreat ministers to church leaders

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Tears, hugs, hard questions, encouraging conferences, time to worship and rest marked the After the Storm: Personal Recovery Retreat held at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega on Aug. 16-17.

The retreat, intended for tornado ministry-fatigued church leaders and their spouses, was provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). The event was coordinated by the office of LeaderCare and church administration. Pathways Professional Counseling, the counseling ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, provided staff who gave a listening ear to those who needed to talk.

Many who attended the retreat voiced that they were dealing with compassion fatigue following the April 27 tornadoes that devastated the state.

Patrick Branch, pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church near Tuscaloosa, admitted he needed the getaway. "Since the tornadoes, I've been touchier, on edge," he said, noting he has ministered to many members of his church who suffered tornado damage.

Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has ministered nonstop to tornado victims. Charlotte Payne, wife of Donald Payne, Forest Lake's pastor, said, "I hurt for my husband. He carries so many burdens. I'm tired and worn out. Our church members are tired."

Sammy Taylor, pastor of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, said that along with the emotional impact of ministering to his community that lost 13 residents, the disruption of the

church's ministry has been difficult.

Mountain View Baptist's building was destroyed, so church members had to adjust to meeting across town at the Bevell Center at Northwest-Shoals Community College for three months. For the past month, church members have been back on church property though with the addition of two mobile chapels provided by Alabama Baptist disaster relief. "We have been overwhelmed

"This retreat is a gift from fellow Alabama Baptists and others who desire to do something helpful for you personally."
Executive director Rick Lance
SBOM

by love," Taylor said. "Churches across the country have given support. We haven't been alone."

Rick Lance, executive director of the SBOM, said in an e-mail invitation to the event, "This retreat is a gift from fellow Alabama Baptists and others who desire to do something helpful for you personally and to involve you with others who

have experienced 'the storm' like you."

Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, brought two worship service messages. He encouraged those in attendance with Jesus' promise of victory in John 16:33. "Jesus is the ultimate victor," Wolf said. "That means I'm not a victim."

Chuck Register, executive leader for church planting and missions development for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, led one of several breakout sessions, Adjusting to the New Normal.

Register, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Gulfport, Miss., shared from his personal experience of Hurricane Katrina destroying First, Gulfport, in 2005 while he was pastor.

"Acknowledge the reality of compassion fatigue in your life," he said. "You aren't Superman."



Photo by Gary Hardin

CARRYING BURDENS — Chuck Register (right), executive leader for church planting and missions development for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, offers encouragement to Pastor Sammy Taylor of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell.

Biker trades bottle for the Bible, excited about new F.A.I.T.H. Riders chapter in state

By Brian Blackwell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ron Burleson's motorcycle drove him to salvation in Jesus Christ.

After spending many years drinking alcohol, Burleson said the moment he began riding his motorcycle in 2005 was the day he traded the bottle for the Bible.

And from that point forward, he said, his life has never been the same.

"When I returned to riding motorcycles after stopping riding for a long time and quit drinking, that was part of God's plan for me," Burleson said.

"The F.A.I.T.H. Riders are something else that God has in store for my life. I couldn't be more excited for what the future holds for myself and this ministry."

In a few days, he and about a dozen other Christian motorcycle enthusiasts at Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds, will celebrate the launch of their F.A.I.T.H. Riders chapter. A dedication service is

planned during the church's 10 a.m. service Sept. 4.

This will be Alabama's 13th chapter of the motorcycle ministry, which has chapters in 21 other states.

Burleson said while each chapter operates independently, the welcoming atmosphere he's witnessed when being around other chapters is one thing that led him to start one at Cedar Grove Baptist.

'Church family'

"No matter where I see F.A.I.T.H. Riders, it's like they've welcomed me with open arms," Burleson said. "They're like a church family away from church."

Wilsonville Baptist Church's chapter has enjoyed several years of reaching out with activities like a monthly bike night, featuring food, entertainment and motorcycle rides during which the approximately 15 members distribute evangelistic tracts.

"The Lord has used our ministry as tools to lead people to Him and

plant many seeds as well," Wilsonville chapter director Jeff Smith said.

Like the Wilsonville Baptist chapter, the chapter of Camp Ground Baptist Church, Ozark, participates in a wide variety of ministry efforts, including a monthly bike night and two annual bike rides that benefit a local charity.

"There is a special place for all of us to share God's Word," said Stephanie Tyre, one of about 10 active members of the Camp Ground Baptist chapter. "I think God put us on motorcycles to share with other bikers."

"I like to watch people read our Christian patches on our vests and realize we are just like them with the love of bikes and we praise God doing it," Tyre continued. "Most bikers respect other bikers and the organization they represent, Christian or not. We are trying to get one biker at a time to come to love Jesus and what He has done for us."

For more information about Alabama chapters, visit <http://faithriders.com/chapters.html>.

Second bingo trial delayed until January

A second Alabama bingo trial — stemming from mistrials in the bingo corruption trial on charges where the jury could not reach a verdict — will be delayed by U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson until Jan. 9, according to a report from *The Birmingham News*.

But Thompson has not ruled if three separate trials will be held for the seven remaining defendants in the case, *The News* reported.

Prosecutors argued that the defendants should be tried in three proceedings, with one prosecutor citing a more streamlined process, as well as prevention of jury confusion and redundant cross-examination.

Thompson was doubtful that separate trials would be quicker, all according to the *The News*.

Thompson had originally scheduled the retrial for Oct. 3, but defense and prosecuting attorneys said more preparation time was needed, according to The Associated Press (AP).

The initial trial began in June and ended Aug. 11, with 33 undecided charges made against seven of the nine defendants, according to the AP.

► VictoryLand owner **Milton McGregor** — Three charges, not guilty; 14 charges, mistrial

► Sen. **Harri Anne Smith**, I-Slocumb — 11 charges, not guilty; eight charges, mistrial

► Former Sen. **Jim Preuitt**, R-Talladega — 12 charges, not guilty; three charges, mistrial

► Former Sen. **Larry Means**, D-Attalla — 14 charges, not guilty; two charges, mistrial

► Former legislative analyst **Ray Crosby** — one charge, mistrial

► Lobbyist **Tom Coker** — 11 charges, not guilty; three charges, mistrial

► Country Crossing spokesman **Jay Walker** — 11 charges, not guilty; two charges, mistrial

Two of the defendants, **Sen. Quinton T. Ross Jr.**, D-Montgomery, and lobbyist **Bob Geddie**, were both acquitted.

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

FBC Jasper's associate pastor emeritus Charles W. Powell dies

Charles W. Powell, associate pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Jasper, died Aug. 19. He was 83.

"Charlie Powell was an outstanding follower of Christ and a faithful servant," Senior Pastor Dennis Culbreth said. "He had a heart for people and continued to witness for Christ until his death."

Powell came to the Walker Baptist Association church in 1970 to serve as minister of education and later



POWELL

served as associate pastor for senior adults. He retired in 2000 and was named associate pastor emeritus in June 2011 during a special Charles W. Powell Day church service.

Powell was preceded in death by his first wife, Betty Miles Powell, and son, Charles W. "Chuck" Powell II.

He is survived by his wife, Betty Joyce; one daughter; one granddaughter; and four stepchildren. (TAB)

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Schedule a personal visit to Belhaven University or attend our next Discover Day on September 9th 2011.

This article first appeared last Spring and is considered worthy of re-printing. Enjoy!

A Reverse Mortgage Testimony

By Bro. Max and Carolyn Youngblood, retired pastor and wife

After more than 50 wonderful years in the ministry in Alabama, Carolyn and I found ourselves with a mortgage with more than 20 years left to pay. (Part of the reason for this comes from living in a pastorate for most of those years. Those years resulted in not having any equity in a home. Churches, if you are not already doing so, please consider giving your staff a housing allowance.)

I had heard of Reverse Mortgages but did not think we would qualify since we had less than 50 percent equity in our home. After I saw Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist* I decided to give him a call. Jimmy came to our home and we had a great time of fellowship and gained a great deal of information on the subject. We were still skeptical but

we completed an application.

To shorten a long story, that was a little over one month ago and the other day we closed on the reverse mortgage, and we never left our home for any part of the process. We also received enough cash to do the things we need to do.

Carolyn and I highly recommend this to anyone 62 or over that could use this kind of help. It has been an answer to prayer for us.

For a free brochure or more information, call Jimmy Dixon direct at 205-451-0676, or toll-free at 1-866-879-7775. Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director, a FAITH team leader, deacon and Upwards coach at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.



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Photo courtesy of Judson College

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY — Members of the Judson College soccer team sort and fill backpacks for local students at the Sowing Seeds of Hope interfaith initiative. They also worked at the old armory in Marion that functions as a community center by sweeping, mopping, dusting and washing windows and tables and went to a local nursing home for an old-fashioned hymn sing with the residents. The team made community missions a significant part of its practice by devoting two days to outreach during the month of August. Emanuel Stephens is the team's coach.

Want to know God?

By Chris Mills
Alabama Baptist state missionary

Purpose. Isn't that what we search for in life? We attend conferences, read blogs and seek counsel, looking for something to fill our lives with meaning and direction. We search in all these places for that which can be found only in one person: Jesus Christ.

In John 10:10, Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." It is in Jesus that we find our fullest life. It is in Him that we find our purpose.

Jesus, as God's Son, came to earth as a man, lived a perfect life, was beaten and tortured for our sin, died on a cross and rose the third day, victorious over sin and death. Through His death and resurrection, He offers us the gift of eternal life, restoring the relationship with Him for which we were created.

Jesus fulfilled His purpose in life and desires to fulfill our search for purpose. Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." To find purpose, you must believe, follow and surrender to Him.

When you enter into a relationship with someone, you want to know everything about him or her. In accepting Christ's sacrifice for your sins, you enter an intimate love relationship with Him. You should want to know Him more. In knowing Him more, you begin to tell others about Him. You want others to know about your newfound purpose in Christ. You want others to know your Savior.

Real purpose is found in Christ alone.

Balancing justice, mercy with God's help

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:8 NKJV)

That verse became very important to me years ago when I was in seminary and first began to think about leadership. Certainly the passage is clear enough. God desires that we act with justice, mercy and humility.

The fact that both justice and mercy are included has always struck me as interesting. Is it possible to act with justice and mercy?

To embrace these characteristics in our leadership and lives is a strength. The problem arises because we each tend to embrace one more than the other. When that happens, our strength is taken to an extreme and becomes our weakness. Our leadership suffers.

For example, do you know some-

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



one who expects others to do his or her part? He or she is honest and holds people accountable. However, left unchecked, he or she can become hard and unyielding. He or she can make people feel judged and alienated.

Do you know someone who is compassionate? He or she makes others feel important and heard. However, left unchecked, he or she can be too soft and not hold others accountable. He or she may let

deadlines go unmet and have difficulty seeing something through to the end.

Can you see this in parenting? Do you know parents who act with justice but it is taken to the extreme? What about parents who employ mercy to a fault? I sometimes feel like a pingpong ball, alternating one day with justice and the next with mercy!

What about you? Which one are you more comfortable embracing? Are there times when you lean too heavily on one characteristic and it becomes your weakness?

That must be why God called His people to act with both justice and mercy. They can balance each other. Perhaps that is why humility is mentioned as the third characteristic.

Sometimes I have difficulty knowing when to act with justice and when to act with mercy. I ac-

tually can remember times when I have been in situations at work and wondered to myself if I should respond with justice or mercy.

I truly believe it is only through God's leadership through His Holy Spirit that we know when to employ justice and when to employ mercy. By humbling ourselves to God's leadership, we can act appropriately. Then He can lead through us.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Leadership is a balance of justice and mercy, humbly set before God to employ.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jean Roberson, MSW, LCSW, is a ministry consultant for national Woman's Missionary Union. She serves as team leader for the adult team and director of Christian Women's Job Corps/Christian Men's Job Corps and International Initiatives.

MARKET PLACE

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: East Heights Baptist Church, Tupelo, Miss., is seeking a senior pastor who can operate in a team approach with pastoral staff. Our total Sunday morning attendance is 200-225 with great potential in the community for growth. Send resumé to: randymccoy@bellsouth.net or Randy McCoy, 290 Tyler Willis Lane, Tupelo, MS 38804.

PASTOR: Mulberry Baptist Church is accepting resúmes in search of God's man to pastor our traditional missions-minded church in Chilton County. Please send resúmes and references to: Mulberry Baptist Church, 3233 County Road 29, Thorsby, AL 35171.

PASTOR: Central Heights Baptist Church in Florence, Ala., is now accepting resúmes for pastor. All full-time and bivocational resúmes are desired. Please mail all resúmes to: Central Heights Baptist Church, c/o Pastor Search Committee, 10090 Co. Rd. 15, Florence, AL 35633. 256-764-4869.

SENIOR PASTOR: Church prayerfully seeking God's leadership in search for senior pastor. Please mail resumé to: First Baptist Church of Rogersville, 222 College Street, Rogersville, AL 35652.

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.

EXECUTIVE PASTOR: First Baptist Church at the Villages is a young, growing and spiritually vibrant church with a mature constituency. To further our commitment to be a Great Commission and Great Commandment church, we are seeking an executive pastor. This position will complement our other ministerial staff and assist our active team-led ministry. For complete de-

tails, please visit the church's website, fbcvillages.org.

WORSHIP LEADER/DIRECTOR: Ethelsville Baptist Church, Ethelsville, Ala., in Pickens County, is accepting resúmes for a person to lead worship and direct all music activity. Part-time/bivocational position. Resúmes may be submitted to: mhowton@centurytel.net or mailed to: Ethelsville Baptist Church, 230 Main Street, Ethelsville, AL 35461.

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.

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.

YOUTH PASTOR: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time youth pastor to work with our 7th through 12th grade students. Please e-mail resúmes to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER: Malvern Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational youth minister. Send resúmes to: Malvern Baptist Church Youth Search Committee, P.O. Box 97, Malvern, AL 36349.

CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time children's director to work with our 1st through 6th grade students. Please e-mail resúmes to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Baptist Church at McAdory in McCalla is seeking a part-time children's minister. Send resumé and cover letter to: bcamcmsearch@gmail.com or send to: Baptist Church at McAdory, ATTN: Children's Ministry Director Search Team, 4954 Eastern Valley Road, McCalla, AL 35111. Pastor Bill McCall.

OTHER POSITIONS

CHURCH SECRETARY: Edgil Grove Baptist Church of the Walker Baptist Association is accepting resúmes for the position of church secretary through

Sept. 29. Send resúmes to: 100 Edgil Grove Road, Jasper, AL 35502, ATTN: Pastor David Miller.

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

OUTREACH

CLAVINOVA/GUITAR/VOCALISTS NEEDED: Mountainview Baptist Church is seeking praise and worship team members. We need Clavinova and guitar players as well as vocalists interested in joining a young Southern Baptist church plant in the beautiful community of Chelsea, Ala. This is a great opportunity for someone who has a heart for worship but is maybe lacking in experience! We have one contemporary service on Sunday mornings. Please contact Pastor Grady Covin at 205-601-6986 or e-mail: gradycovin@bellsouth.net.

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CHRISTIAN RETREAT: Stoney Creek, new 52-acre, Christian-based retreat fa-

cility perfect for family reunion rentals, church gatherings, weddings and receptions. Amenities galore. Reservations: 256-338-5583. www.stoneycreekalabama.com. Vinemont, Ala.

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.

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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 SALE

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.

MISCELLANEOUS

BOOKS NEEDED: If a church or individual has "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren that could either donate or sell, please contact Bob Hamm, 251-633-6800. Bob is a Mobile chaplain who uses these as a textbook in addiction centers.

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'Red alert' crisis

Downloadable slideshow aids relief efforts in Africa

With Southern Baptist famine relief efforts gearing up in the Horn of Africa, support for those efforts is being mobilized with the posting of a downloadable multimedia slideshow on the crisis.

Famine in the Horn of Africa has claimed tens of thousands of lives and forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes, according to the United Nations. An estimated 12.4 million people are endangered by the crisis.

"We have had a flood of inquiries from churches and individuals about how they can help people in desperate need in Africa," said Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response. "We've been able to talk with them about the 'red alert' crisis in the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund, but haven't been able to offer them much by way of information about relief efforts underway or media resources to help raise support."

The "red alert" crisis in the World Hunger Fund has emerged as giving to the fund has sharply declined. The overseas portion of the hunger relief fund is down to \$4.1 million — enough to meet the needs of Southern Baptist international hunger projects for just six months, apart from response to the Africa crisis.

Southern Baptists donated \$4.3 million to the World Hunger Fund in 2010, only 40 percent of what they gave during a 12-month span a decade earlier and the lowest do-



800,000 children
could die of
malnutrition across
the Horn this year.

BP photo

RESOURCES — A downloadable multimedia slideshow on the famine crisis in the Horn of Africa helps mobilize Southern Baptist relief efforts.

nations to the fund have been in 20 years. Part of the problem has been that the crisis is located in a part of the world that is difficult, even dangerous, to access, Palmer said. Getting projects underway has been a challenge for even the largest humanitarian groups in a crisis that has hit Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Djibouti.

Contributions

"We are delighted to report that one feeding site is operating and assessments are in process in two other locations," Palmer said. "We are going places that few other organizations can go, and we are able to do this in a large part due to the generosity of Southern Baptists and their contributions to the World Hunger Fund."

The Horn of Africa famine will

be a continuing, long-term problem, Palmer added.

"Humanitarian partners on the ground are saying the people are very responsive to the expressions of God's love they are seeing and hearing," Palmer said. "But the scope of this crisis is enormous and rooted in long-term environmental and social problems. Please keep praying that God would raise up a multitude of Christians to help these people in their time of need."

The multimedia slideshow is available at www.vimeo.com/africastories/famine-imb. (BP)

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

'Normal believers' build relationships, 'do what we are called to do'

(continued from page 1)

school supplies from the coffeehouse.

"If we try it and it flops, it's OK," Davis said. "We do what we can to bring people in, meet them and build relationships, and then we put a lot of effort into follow-up."

And Gilstrap and Caldwell — in addition to studying the Macedonian language when they're not at the coffeehouse talking in it — spend a lot of time preparing English lessons to teach at the coffeehouse. The intensive classes taught there are packed with people.

Investing time

And Caldwell is investing time in translating a women's Bible study on Ruth into Macedonian.

"When I was in college, I heard a lot of missionaries' stories and began to realize that no

matter what I do with my life, I needed to be doing it with the intent of building relationships and sharing the gospel," said Caldwell, who attended Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, during her college years. "And right now, this couldn't be more perfect — for both of us."

Gilstrap agreed, though she said it's completely different from what she used to picture missionaries doing.

"Growing up in GAs (Girls in Action), I heard about missionaries, and I never had any desire to be one or move out of Alabama," said Gilstrap, who grew up at Shiloh Baptist Church, Somerville. "But in college, I started learning more about missions — that it's not extra-holy people out there being missionaries, it's just normal believers in Christ who are getting out there, doing what we are all called to do." (IMB)

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Family Matters

CELEBRATING 120 YEARS

finding Hope

By Erin Tunnell, ABCH Communications Manager

Tall and lean, Shaquina entered the Gardendale group home, trying to hide her runner's body behind stooped shoulders, eyes that rarely smiled and a mouth that spoke even less. After living in five different homes and leaving all her family in Mobile, the teenager was done caring.

"I was really unhappy. I was very depressed and suicidal," she remembers.

With only two years left in high school, she wasn't even sure she wanted to finish. When Carolyn Clendenin, her social worker from Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), tried to get her to talk about what led her to the group home, Shaquina just said she was unhappy at her former foster home.

But there was more to the story. She had lived in Mobile with her grandmother until 7th grade, but left because she was physically and verbally abusive toward Shaquina. Shaquina then went to live with her father. But "there was a lot of drugs and stuff going on in the home that wasn't okay for me."

So in her ninth-grade year, Shaquina's aunt told her that she was going to go to Birmingham to live with her mother and help care for her little sister, who was 8 years younger than Shaquina. When Shaquina arrived she found herself providing for her sister while their mother, who was abusing drugs and alcohol, would be gone for weeks at a time. Sometimes the 14-year-old would take her little sister to find their mother and bring her home, only for her to leave again after a few days.

While there, the father of her little sister began to be abusive toward Shaquina. "At that point I told myself I was done and I wasn't going to stay there anymore," she remembers. After that, Shaquina lived in two more foster homes before her social worker with Alabama Department of Human Resources brought her to the Gardendale group home of ABCH. She was 17, and she had given up. Given up hope and given up on school and track, the two things that had always gotten her through.

And then she stepped through the doorway into another world. "It was like a culture shock," Shaquina remembers. "I loved it. It definitely felt like home."

As she spent more time at the home, she became happier, and her love for school and running track returned. "I started becoming the person I was meant to become." She also realized she was still missing something in her life. One day at church, when the preacher told everyone to close their eyes and pray, Shaquina realized God was what was missing. "So I prayed He would come into my life and He did," she said. "I felt relief, like a weight was lifted from my life." After high school, ABCH helped Shaquina go to college at Alabama A&M University, where she is studying social work. At first, she had not planned to



run track. But some girls from the team encouraged her to try out, and she began running the mile and 800-meter races, as well as cross-country.

"This is the only thing that I'm really good at," Shaquina says. "When I'm running nothing else matters. I'm just focusing on the distance I'm running and all my problems aren't there." Shaquina is so good at running that she was offered a full scholarship. Shaquina is second in the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) in the 800, and third in the conference in the mile. She was the only team member to bring home medals from the SWAC meet, and has been named MVP by the coach for cross country, and MVP for the 2010-2011 school year.

She's also excelling academically, making the Dean's List three times since she arrived at A&M. And she is building a relationship with her parents, with God's help. She saw her father during Christmas last year, and they talk on the phone regularly. She says it's going well. "He tells me ... every time we talk that he loves me. But I still haven't had the courage to say it back."

And earlier this year she saw her mother, who was in the hospital with a brain aneurysm. Her mom asked if they could start over. "I told her, 'Yes,' as long as she promised me that she's going to do right. But I heard she was missing again, so we'll see," Shaquina said. "It was so hard for those words to come out of my mouth, but I was like, 'I have to forgive her for me. I have to move on so I can be happy.'"

But most importantly, Shaquina has hope again, and dreams. "I want to get married and have three kids. I want to give my kids something that I wasn't able to receive when I was younger," she says.

To those who have given of their resources to the Children's Homes, Shaquina says, "Thank you for giving me hope, because I wouldn't be where I am (today) without your help."

Have a bicycle? Ride to support ABCH!

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries will participate in Birmingham's Ride for Refuge (the RIDE) on Sunday, Oct. 23rd. The RIDE is a fundraiser for the Children's Homes and other Birmingham-area ministries, and will be held at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Homewood. Registration will be at noon and the RIDE will begin at 1:00 p.m. Participants are encouraged to choose from a 5, 15, or 30-mile route.

We need team captains and team members who will seek out people to sponsor them. To sign up, visit <http://bit.ly/abchRIDE>. You can also sign up to sponsor a rider or team while there. You can also email jsansom@abchome.org, or call 1-888-720-8805 for more information.

2011 ANNUAL OFFERING



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

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

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 4

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

GOOD NEWS TO TELL

Romans 1:1-17

The Book of Romans is one with an important history. Saint Augustine, Martin Luther and John Wesley are three notable individuals who were converted to Christianity largely through reading the book.

Paul wrote the book in preparation to visit Rome. Paul had never been to Rome but was planning on traveling to the Roman Empire's capital city, and he wanted to let the Roman church know who he was and what he believed.

Why We Tell (1-7)

Paul emphasized that he was an apostle, which revealed his credentials. Paul heard the Lord on the road to Damascus and understood his role as a servant of God. While many might consider the role of a servant to be demeaning, it is what Christians embrace. Being a servant of God is higher than any other calling a human can have. Paul then turned his attention to the gospel, which he specified was promised through the prophets and Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures to which Paul was referring is not the New Testament, as it had yet to be composed and compiled. Rather, for Paul and all the figures in the New Testament, the Scriptures refers to the Old Testament. It is very important to remember and emphasize that the gospel was not created by God in the New Testament. The promise of the gospel has existed since Genesis 3:15, when the first prophecy about Christ was given. Christians often make the mistake of thinking that the Old Testament is no longer useful, but the gospel is present throughout the entire Bible. The gospel is fulfilled in Christ, who was fully human but also fully divine. His resurrection from the dead authenticated His divinity. He was not merely considered a god, or like God, as some assert, but was truly God in human form. Furthermore this gospel that Paul declared was for all people, not just the Jews. This is still true today. The gospel is good news for all people, which is why we do not keep it to ourselves but tell others what God has done through Jesus Christ in our lives.

Whom We Tell (8-15)

Paul longed to see the believers in Rome and show how much he cares for them by praying for them, even though he had never met them. This is a good model for us to follow, as we can be praying for other believers all over the world. We need to especially remember our fellow believers who live in areas of the world where they are persecuted for the sake of the gospel. Paul then recounted how he would like to share some spiritual gift with the Roman believers so that they may be mutually encouraged. An important lesson here is demonstrated by Paul's affirmation that the believers would be an encouragement even though they came from different backgrounds and cultures. The gospel bonds believers together all over the world, overcoming cultural differences and language barriers.

Since Paul's conversion in Acts 9, he was obligated to preach the gospel to all people regardless of their cultural background, to both Jews and Gentiles, that is, non-Jews. We are commissioned to spread the gospel just as Paul was. (See the Great Commission in Matthew 28).

What We Tell (16-17)

Paul knew the gospel's power. The power that transformed his life from a legalistic Pharisee to a devoted follower of Jesus Christ is available to all who believe. This wonderful message of hope and freedom Paul preached all over the eastern Mediterranean. He was not ashamed. And the good news about the gospel is that it is a righteousness that comes by faith. Almost all other religions teach a salvation dependent upon what we can do. God doesn't operate this way. There is nothing we can give or do to appease God or get on His good side. How can we, sinful finite creatures, be made right before an all-powerful perfect being? On our own, we cannot. But this is the glory of the gospel. God has done this work through Jesus Christ on our behalf. Jesus Christ paid the price for us. He died the death we all have to die so that we do not need to face an eternity separated from God. Salvation is not achieved by works but by faith.

Bible Studies for Life

By Eric Mathis

Instructor of Church Music and Worship Leadership, School of the Arts, Samford University

CONNECT TO COMMUNITY

Psalm 133:1-3; 1 Corinthians 12:12-18, 21-26

As Christians, we are called to grow in faith. Though this seems easy enough, we often find ourselves in ruts. Some of us repeat the same spiritual exercises over and over only to become weary.

Our lessons this month will focus on four ways Christians can balance spiritual growth: connecting to God and the community, growing in a deeper understanding of Scripture, serving the church through ministry and going beyond church walls to participate in building God's Kingdom.

Community Is Vital (1 Cor. 12:12-18)

The touchstone for thinking about community is Paul's well-known words to the Corinthians. The Corinth community serves as a negative rather than positive example of communal living. This diverse community struggled with elitism, rivalry and individualism, and these traits were most problematic when the community gathered for worship. Paul chastised the community for its shortcomings in 1 Corinthians 11. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul attempted to help the Corinthians understand the gifts God had given them.

Paul approached his teaching on Christian community using the metaphor of the body. In other words, the community of Christians is like a body consisting of many parts. A succinct summary of verses 12-18 might be "unity through diversity." Paul emphasized that individual members of the body are united through their baptism and then brought together as a cohesive whole — the one body.

Paul equally recognized that diversity is absolutely necessary within the united body. If each individual performed the same task, then the body would not function properly. Just as all parts of the body perform different tasks yet work together, so should the church and its members strive for interdependence.

Community Cares for Its Own

(1 Cor. 12:21-26)

After establishing the importance of a

united yet diverse community, Paul added additional characteristics in verses 21-26. Paul stated that conflict among various members is unacceptable and comparison of individual members is not allowed. Each member is placed within the body for the common good, and all are necessary for the body to be complete. While Paul criticized dissension and prioritization within the body, he affirmed the unity of the body once again in verses 25-26. Members of the community are to function together, he claimed.

The vision Christian community outlined in 1 Corinthians 12 is really quite grand. The Christian community — and therefore, the church — is to function differently from other human organizations. While other groups may cooperate and make decisions toward a common goal, the church is a living entity. Members of the church are to do more than govern and promote civic cooperation; they are to share a common existence and life with one another.

Community Leads to the Lord's Blessing (Ps. 133:1-3)

Psalm 133 is a short psalm applauding the community that lives together as one. This psalm is a psalm of ascent, likely sung by families when they gathered together for pilgrimage. In fact, some translations use the words "kindred" or "kinfolk" in verse 1. These families would have hoped for harmony in the pilgrimage.

The reference to oil and dew in verses 2-3 can be confusing. Oil may refer to a sensuous element adorning an individual for a festive occasion, which means the community had something to celebrate together. Dew was an important part of harvesting crops. When there was no rain, dew helped crops mature, bringing new life just as God provides the blessing of new life when Christians are connected to a healthy community.

As we strive for balanced spiritual growth, may we remember the importance of Christian community. May we find ways to use our gifts in the body of Christ and celebrate others' gifts. May we continue to look to God.

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. I will raise unto David a righteous _____. (Jer. 23:5)

7. If any be a _____ of the word. (James 1:23)

13. An ocean-edge lake.

14. _____ for thy life. (Gen. 19:17)

15. Ivory and _____. (Ezek. 27:15)

16. Of _____ shall there be _____ like weight. (Ex. 30:34; 2 words)

17. That I might not _____ against thee. (Ps. 119:11)

18. Who walk in the _____ of the Lord. (Ps. 119:1)

21. Pay _____ view.

22. Temporary duty. (abbr.)

23. Could not drink of the waters of _____. (Ex. 15:23)

25. And I will walk _____ liberty. (Ps. 119:45)

27. Accompanied him into Asia _____ of Berea. (Acts 20:4)

29. Delayed not _____ keep thy commandments. (Ps. 119:60)

30. Thy law _____ my delight. (Ps. 119:77)

32. _____ Naomi's husband died. (Ruth 1:3)

34. And _____ them, and _____

36. Halah, and Habor, and _____. (1 Chron. 5:26)

37. _____ Jerusalem ... as a _____ doth gather. (Luke 13:34; 2 words)

38. And Peleg lived after he begat _____. (Gen. 11:19)

41. _____, and Shema, and Moladah. (Josh. 15:26)

42. Nickname for Edward.

43. _____ and feather.

44. They assigned _____ in the wilderness. (Josh. 20:8)

46. Three wise men of Christmas.

47. Hear _____ Israel: ... to _____ in ... shalt thou drive them out. (Deut. 9:1, 3; 3 words)

48. I shall keep _____ unto the end. (Ps. 119:33)

50. A little _____ in _____ cruse. (1 Kings 17:12; 2 words)

51. The region of _____; ... daughter of Solomon _____ wife. (1 Kings 4:11; 2 words)

52. They also do _____ iniquity. (Ps. 119:3)

53. And for our little _____. (Ezra 8:21)

them down with ease. (Judg. 20:43; 2 words)

Down

1. Hallowed.

2. Furious.

3. And being in an _____ he prayed. (Luke 22:44)

4. Prefix meaning "not."

5. Shy.

6. Head nurse. (abbr.)

7. And _____ heard me. (Ps. 120:1)

8. East-southeast. (abbr.)

9. Not a hat, but _____ baseball _____. (2 words)

10. The _____ is not to the swift. (Eccles. 9:11)

11. Caleb took unto him _____. (1 Chron. 2:19)

12. Rural Electrification Administration. (abbr.)

18. Deborah ... the wife of _____ (h). (Judg. 4:4)

19. Geshur, and _____, with _____ towns. (1 Chron. 2:23; 2 words)

20. And _____ the whole face of the ground. (Gen. 2:6)

23. The snail, and the _____. (Lev. 11:30)

24. Eliab the son of _____. (Num. 2:7)

26. _____ day.

27. Child's TV program.

28. Bright color.

30. Eli's grandson.

(1 Sam. 4:21)

31. Whither shall I cause my _____ to _____? (2 Sam. 13:13)

33. A _____ man had two sons. (Luke 15:11)

35. Not come _____ upon mine head. (Judg. 16:17; 2 words)

39. Doth the _____ mount up? (Job 39:27)

40. That had been the wife of _____. (Matt. 1:6)

45. Kanga's child.

46. Sound made by a cow.

48. Thy word have I had _____ my heart. (Ps. 119:11)

49. Make me _____ understand. (Ps. 119:27)

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Compiled from Wire Services



Muslims seize Christian burial sites in Tanzania

ZANZIBAR, Tanzania — Influential Muslims on the East African island of Tanzania have begun building what appears to be a hotel on a 100-year-old burial site owned by an Anglican church, Christian leaders said.

Church leaders with ownership papers for the land said they are disturbed that authorities have taken no action since they filed a police complaint in December about the seizure of the burial site nearly two miles from Zanzibar city's airport.

Pastor Canon Emmanuel John Masoud said he led church members from nearby Mbueni to the site to offer prayers Dec. 29, 2010, two days after the daughter of former Zanzibar President Amani Abeid Karume placed boundary markers and a metal storage container full of belongings on the land, indicating the takeover.

Wete's Anglican church purchased a burial site worth 1 million Tanzanian shillings (\$630) in 2007 in Finya village, nearly three miles from Wete, but in November 2010, Pastor Stephen Aaron Kamwendo received word that an unnamed Muslim forestry worker had begun planting trees on the site as a boundary marker and claim of ownership.

The forestry worker had unofficial backing from the island government, which supports opposition to Christian activity, Kamwendo said.

He said rumors were flying that the church — which had lost its property in Wete after local officials decided to build on it — was planning to relocate to the two-acre property in Finya, prompting the Muslims to plan the takeover.

Indonesian mayor won't reinstate church's permit

BOGOR, Indonesia — A mayor in West Java who disregarded a Supreme Court ruling to reinstate the building permit of a church in Bogor has now dismissed a recommendation by the National Ombudsman Institute to do so. Bogor Mayor Diani Budiarto rejected the recommendation to reinstate the permit for the Indonesian Christian Church called Yasmin Bogor Church in July, leaving the congregation to worship on a small strip of land as 15 to 20 Muslim demonstrators taunt it.

"The ombudsman's recommendation is only a suggestion," the mayor said. Church spokesman Bona Sigalingging said the mayor sent two letters to the church, one in May and one July 9, urging the congregation to cease services on the roadside strip.

In the letter, he claimed that the church created a general annoyance and suggested they worship at the Harmony Building some 500 meters from the sealed church building.

The congregation paid no heed to the letter, Sigalingging said, because the church's worship on the roadside is a result of the mayor's own doing.

The vice president of the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace, Bonar Tigor Naipospos, said there is suspicion that the Bogor city government intends to prevent the existence of the church by all possible means. Budiarto has staged an attack because he has clearly broken the law, he said. "The decision of the Supreme Court is final; why did he revoke the [church] building permit?" Naipospos said. "Similar problems are going to arise, if this is left [unresolved]."

Insurgent blast ravages church building in Iraq

KIRKUK, Iraq — An insurgent blast left a church building in Kirkuk severely damaged Aug. 15 in a second round of attacks against the city's Christian community in two weeks.

The bombing of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Mar Afram was the only attack against Christian targets amid a wave of violence that swept across Iraq that day, hitting 17 cities and claiming about 70 lives, according to The Associated Press.

No Christians were killed in the attack on the church building. On Aug. 2, insurgents targeted three churches in the city. Abuna Gourgis Alyes, a priest at the Mar Afram church, said the Aug. 15 attack was the third and most devastating one against his church in the last five years.

A Protestant pastor who requested anonymity as he stood in the rubble of Mar Afram on a visit to the Orthodox priest's church said, "Now I am here and seeing it with my own eyes. They have to demolish the church and rebuild it."

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

10 Things Jesus Never Said and Why You Should Stop Believing Them

Will Davis Jr. *Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2011. 202 pp. (Paperback).*

In this deceptively simple-sounding book, author Will Davis has selected some of the more guilt-producing myths that people believe about Christianity and holds them up to a strong biblical light. The myths melt away under that scrutiny, offering freedom in the place of bondage.

Some of the lies exposed in the book include the following: "You missed My will for your life," "I'm so disappointed in you," "This wouldn't be happening if you were a better Christian" and perhaps the most controversial and most potentially healing, "You're disqualified because you're divorced."

Of course, few of us really believe that Jesus said those things, but many Christians live under a burden of guilt, acting as if we believed them. While he affirms the existence of sin and the Christian responsibility for right living, the author lovingly provides biblical truth and current stories to illustrate the reality of God's grace and forgiveness, pointing out that his purpose is to "replace the terrible failed theology of condemnation ... with the truth of how Jesus really feels about us."

Lovable Courageous Callie

Tommie Plier Mitchell. *Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2011. 164 pp. (Paperback).*

"Lovable Courageous Callie" is about the author's mother, who was widowed at a young age and left to raise seven children alone. The Pl-

ers lived in Chilton and Bibb counties, where Callie and her husband, then Callie alone, struggled to make a living by farming, selling butter and making quilts.

The family and friends of Callie and her children will certainly be overjoyed to have this family history written down in a form they can cherish. The self-published book is basically a series of memories of various family members accompanied by photos and copies of artifacts like a mortgage on the family property and an old driver's license. While it should be a keepsake for relatives and friends, "Lovable Courageous Callie" is in need of editing and organization and is too personal to be destined for commercial success.

The God Whom Moses Knew

J. Roger Nelson, M.D. *Bloomington, Ind.: WestBowPress, 2010. 280 pp. (Paperback).*

Have you ever read a passage from the Bible and wished more details were given? You probably have — maybe many times. If one of the characters you have longed to know better is Moses, this is the book for you.

"The God Whom Moses Knew" is a work of historical fiction that makes the story of Moses' life come alive through the addition of details — some fictionalized — that are not apparent in the biblical account. The author, a physician who practiced internal medicine for 40 years, explained that he took a "portion of the revered text and fleshed it out, all the while being careful not to alter the biblical text." The author draws from sources as old as the ancient historian Josephus and as new as Wikipedia to tell the story of the man who was called out by God

to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Although the book is categorized as fiction, don't expect it to be a quick beach read. The narrative is a bit heavy, even lumbering at times, and can bog the reader down in the details. Even so, the book is well written and a worthwhile read, especially for those who love the Old Testament stories.

The Monster in the Hollows

Andrew Peterson. *Nashville: Rabbit Room Press, 2011. 348 pp. (Paperback).*

How does an emphatic nonfantasy fan fairly review a fantasy book — especially one that runs 300-plus pages? The best place to start is usually the beginning, so ... on to Page 1, then Page 2, then Page 3 — until the story takes over, the reader is drawn in and the dreaded chore becomes an adventure.

This third book of a four-part series stands well on its own, with the necessary back story added seamlessly into the narrative. It is an allegory of sorts, the top layer chronicling the trials of the royal Wingfeather family from the shining isle of Anniera who have fled from invaders, while threads of hope, freedom from guilt and shame, redemption and unconditional love are skillfully woven throughout the story. The author has created a setting and characters that are, if not realistic — this is fantasy, remember — then at least believable.

The Wingfeather Saga series is targeted, according to the back of the book, to the young adult reading population. Young adults? How about older nonfantasy fans who are captivated by the story and the writing and can't wait for the fourth in the series to be released?

Political motive in church burnings?

Suspected Islamists were behind the burning of three homes used as churches on Sumatra Island's Riau province in August, though a political motive also may have played a role, Christian leaders said.

Muslim mobs burned the meeting places of a Batak Karo Protestant Church (BKPC) congregation and a Pentecostal Church in Indonesia (PCI) group Aug. 1, and that of a Methodist Church of Indonesia on Aug. 2, all in Kuantan Singingi district.

Provincial BKPC leader Sahat Tarigan reportedly said about 100 people on motorcycles arrived at the house church at 11 p.m. on Aug. 1, throwing stones, threatening church members with knives and ultimately pouring gasoline and setting it on fire.

A number of church members

were inside painting at the time of the attack, but there were no casualties, Tarigan said.

The same mob also set the PCI home on fire some three miles away, he said. Tarigan said area residents have never objected to any worship there, although a local Muslim reportedly said the site lacks a permit and that the singing bothers Muslims fasting by day for Ramadan. But the executive secretary of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, Jeirry Sumampow, said he suspected political motives.

An election in April in which all churches in the Kuantan Tengah subdistrict backed the winning regent may have played a role, he said. At press time, Riau Provincial Police had reportedly questioned 21 witnesses and arrested two suspects. (CDN)

Christians attacked in Egypt

A Coptic Christian was killed in Upper Egypt after Muslims on Aug. 7 attacked a predominantly Christian village, Nazlet Faragallah in Minya, south of Cairo.

The attackers raided several homes owned by Christian villagers and set eight on fire, area residents said.

The assailants killed Maher Nassif, 46, shooting him in the head and slitting his throat.

"They [spread a] rumor that 'the Christians burned the mosque and killed some Muslim people,' which isn't true," villager Melad Thabet said. (CDN)



Photo by Keely Scott

MEETING NEEDS — Tenth Avenue North band members (l to r) Jason Jamison, Ruben Juarez, Mike Donehey and Jeff Owen recently traveled to Honduras to visit children sponsored by Compassion International.

‘What matters most’

Tenth Avenue North use concerts to benefit missions

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Mike Donehey, lead singer for Tenth Avenue North, uses concerts to deliver a message to young people about living for what matters most, he speaks with the authority of one who knows firsthand how a near-death experience helps put things into perspective.

At age 18, Donehey broke his back in two places and needed more than 90 stitches after being thrown from a car in a near-fatal accident. Convinced God had spared him for a reason, he committed himself to being used for His glory.

During the two months Donehey spent at home recovering from his injuries, he asked his parents for a guitar and began practicing.

“It was the first time in my life that I actually slowed down and spent time reflecting on things,” Donehey said. “Anytime you have a near-death experience, it wakes you up to bigger things. This experience definitely made me take

inventory of my life and forced me to evaluate what was important and what was not.”

After he recovered, Donehey attended Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Fla., and started leading worship for youth and college ministries at local churches. During this time, he met drummer Jason Jamison and guitarist Jeff Owen.

Donehey and his friends began to play at local coffeehouses and other venues. Their group name is derived from a major road near their college campus. Bass player Ruben Juarez III recently joined the lineup.

As Tenth Avenue North began touring, band members committed themselves to sharing messages about God’s grace that would challenge young audi-

ences to a deeper walk of faith.

“As more people are hearing the songs, it provides greater opportunities to let them know about the grace and love offered to them through Jesus Christ,” Donehey said.



The band’s concerts benefit missions organizations such as Compassion International, a child-sponsorship organization dedicated to meeting the physical and spiritual needs of children living in poverty around the

world. As a result of Tenth Avenue North’s fall 2010 tour, Compassion International secured sponsors for 1,700 children.

Immediately following the tour, band members traveled to Honduras to witness the impact of these sponsorships. They enjoyed spending time getting to know the children, playing with them and hearing stories about their lives.

The band’s latest album, “The Light Meets the Dark,” focuses on how a relationship with Christ can help overcome personal struggles and obstacles.

“Our hope is that as people encounter the truth of the gospel through these songs, they would be moved and changed as they desire to live for Christ,” Donehey said. “Through our music and message, we want to lead people into the presence of the Lord and help people to know Christ as their Savior, Lord and Treasure.”

For more information, visit tenthavenuenorth.com.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Washington National Cathedral’s damage uninsured

WASHINGTON — The iconic Washington National Cathedral, already struggling with financial problems, faces millions of dollars in repair costs from the damage inflicted by the Aug. 23 East Coast earthquake. And nothing is covered by insurance, according to a church official.

Clergy and a team of architects and engineers spent the day after the magnitude 5.8 quake assessing the cathedral and found significant damage, including fallen carved angels on the church’s roof, cracks in flying buttresses and missing finials from the pinnacles of the central tower.

“We run a very tight budget here at the cathedral and we have had our financial challenges that we’ve worked through very well,” Samuel Lloyd, dean of the cathedral, said. “But there is nothing in our budget that would allow us to step up and do this,” he said.

Joe Alonso, the cathedral’s head stone mason, said it will take years to complete the repairs. “It’s going to be millions, no doubt about it. Millions,” he said. “As large as this structure is, it’s all hand made.”

Hit hard by the recession, the Episcopal cathedral in recent years has weathered several rounds of staff layoffs and been forced to cut programming.

The construction of the cathedral began in 1907 and was completed in 1990.

“It was built by people from across the country who believe having this space for the nation in the heart of the nation’s capital is a hugely important enterprise,” Lloyd said. A new feature on the cathedral’s website encourages donations.

The cathedral, the second largest in the nation, was closed through Aug. 27 as engineers assessed the damage. At press time, church officials hoped it would be open for Sunday services Aug. 28. Officially, the cathedral is the mother church of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington but bills itself as a “house of prayer for all people.”

The earthquake and the subsequent damage “has not been a jarring thing for our faith,” Lloyd said.

World Christian Encyclopedia editor Barrett dies

RICHMOND, Va. — David B. Barrett, founding editor of the World Christian Encyclopedia, a former research consultant with the then-Foreign Mission Board and a pioneer advocate for people groups still unreached with the gospel, died Aug. 4 in Richmond, Va., after a brief illness. He was 83.

Barrett spent more than 10 years compiling and serving as editor of the World Christian Encyclopedia, which was published in 1982. In 1985, Keith Parks, president of the Foreign (now International) Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, engaged Barrett as a research consultant on the global status of Christianity. When that relationship concluded in 1993, Barrett continued to conduct research on global Christianity through the World Evangelization Research Center, which he had founded in 1965, and its successor the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (established in 2003), according to the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary obituary.

David Garrison, IMB’s global strategist and author of the book “Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World,” worked closely with Barrett to present to Southern Baptists the challenge of reaching the world’s unreached people groups. Together they developed the new missionary role that came to be known as “strategy coordinator.”

“More than any other man, David Barrett showed us what the whole world looked like through the lens of the Great Commission,” Garrison said. “He showed us how God viewed the world, and particularly the unfinished task.”

Prison Fellowship lays off 72 because of economy

MERRIFIELD, Va. — Prison Fellowship, a prominent evangelical ministry to inmates, has laid off dozens of employees, citing the faltering economy.

A total of 72 staffers was let go as part of a restructuring that included new leaders as of July 18. Jim Liske, a former pastor in Michigan, began as CEO and Garland Hunt, a former Atlanta pastor, is now president. The ministry was founded in 1976 by ex-convict and Nixon aide Chuck Colson.

Prison Fellowship declined to disclose the current total number of staffers.

The ministry, which turned 35 in August, works with about 8,500 churches and 14,000 volunteers to support prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families.

Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

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

