

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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Landmark decree

Turkey allows Christians, Jews to reclaim religious properties seized 75 years ago

The Turkish government made a historic U-turn in state policy recently, issuing an official decree inviting Turkey's Christian and Jewish communities to reclaim their long-confiscated religious properties.

The Aug. 27 decree comes 75 years after the Turkish government seized hundreds of lands and buildings owned by its Greek, Armenian, Syriac and Jewish communities.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the surprise decision Aug. 28 in Istanbul, addressing a large gathering of Istanbul's non-Muslim religious leaders representing 161 minority foundations. Invited as the honored guest for an iftar (breaking the fast) meal near the end of the Muslim month of Ramadan, Erdogan declared, "The times when citizens in our country were oppressed for their beliefs, their ethnic heritage or the way they dressed [are] over."

Acknowledging past injustices inflicted on those of different faith groups, he vowed, "Those days are over. In our country, no citizen is superior to another."

Seated next to the prime minister at the dinner, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Greek Orthodox Church told the press afterward that the new decree represented "the restoration of an injustice."

In a deliberate clarification the next day, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu emphasized that the government's formal decision was "not a gesture toward minorities but the return of the rights of legally equal citizens."

The landmark decree is a significant step toward eliminating decades of unfair practices imposed by the Turkish state against its non-Muslim citizens.

Within hours of the surprise announcement, the boards of Turkey's minority religious foundations in Istanbul were scrambling to review the status of their confiscated immovable properties. They must apply within the next 12 months to the General



Graphic by Lauren C. Grim
sxc.hu

Foundations Board to recover each individual property.

Their former holdings include schools, churches, cemeteries, stores, hospitals, orphanages, houses, apartment buildings and factories that were seized by the Turkish state and re-registered as public or foundation properties. A number were later sold to third parties.

Limited steps

Previous changes in Turkish legislation enacted in 2003 and again in 2008 took only limited steps to correct a 1936 declaration that had offi-

cially registered an incomplete list of minority properties. A further ruling in 1974 had prohibited non-Muslim communities from acquiring new property.

The new decree states that owners of properties sold by the state to third parties will be reimbursed at market value. According to *Radikal* newspaper, the Ministry of Finance will determine the amount of compensation for properties that had been sold to third parties, who will not be required to relinquish these lands or buildings back to their original owners.

The return of these extensive prop-

erties to their rightful owners has been a key demand of the European Union (EU), to which Turkey is applying for full membership.

Rising pressures

The unexpected government decree came after rising pressures from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which has slapped heavy fines on Turkey in recent years for failing to return these seized properties to their Christian and Jewish owners. Although the ECHR has declared the expropriations a viola-
(See 'Turkish,' page 11)

SBC disaster relief teams work in 11 states following Irene

In the wake of Hurricane Irene's 1,500-mile path of destruction from North Carolina to eastern Canada, Southern Baptist disaster relief leaders and volunteers were mobilized for an 11-state disaster response.

Coordinated by the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) disaster operations center in Alpharetta, Ga., Southern Baptists are deploying to respond up and down the East Coast — to North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont.

According to news accounts, Hurricane Irene resulted in at least 46

deaths, some 2.4 million Americans being evacuated from their homes and 4.5 million without electricity. Irene's damage estimates range from \$7 billion to \$20 billion.

Alabama Baptist disaster relief resources are not currently engaged in the effort, said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"Currently we have chain saw, cleanup and recovery and mud-out teams on alert," he said at press time. "But floodwaters must fully recede prior to these operations beginning. It is only then that assessment can be made and permission granted from property owners

so crews can begin their ministry.

"We are working in cooperation with the impacted state conventions and will follow their lead as the disaster relief incident command center issues callouts to teams," Johnson explained. "Once the need for Alabama teams is confirmed and as lodging, showers and other logistical issues are met, the teams will be placed on standby for deployment. They will then be activated in order of team skill set for location requirements and requests."

The American Red Cross has asked Southern Baptist disaster relief to generate the capacity to
(See 'Needs,' page 4)

COMMENT

Every Tongue and Tribe and Nation

Every week, Southern Baptist representatives serving around the globe are instrumental in the baptisms of about 7,000 new believers.

Every week, Southern Baptist representatives serving around the globe are instrumental in starting more than 550 new churches.

Every week, Southern Baptist representatives serving around the globe are instrumental in providing leadership training to more than 225,000 local church leaders.

Add up the weekly figures, and that means Southern Baptist representatives played a pivotal role in the lives of about 365,000 new baptized believers and helped almost 30,000 New Testament churches come into being in the last year for which information is available.

That does not mean Southern Baptist representatives baptized that many individuals or personally led them to make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. It means that Southern Baptist representatives had direct relationships with national Christians around the globe that contributed to the decisions reflected in the reported baptisms and church plants.

Yes, Southern Baptist representatives did lead some people to make professions of faith and baptize a few of the total number. But most Southern Baptist representatives work in collaborative relationships with national Christians by providing training, resources and leadership.

Two years ago, the International Mission Board (IMB) reported 595 people groups with a population of 100,000 or more that were unreached and unengaged with the gospel. At this writing, that number has fallen to 531, according to information on the IMB's Global Research website (<http://public.imb.org/globalresearch>). That means 64 major unreached and unengaged people groups now have evangelical representatives working among them with a church-planting strategy for sharing the gospel.

These figures do not include the people who become believers but are unable to follow the Lord in baptism. That number just adds to the growing number of people coming to know the Lord and contributes to the conclusion that Christianity is the fastest-growing religion in the world, according to demographic studies.

All of this is good news. Jesus commanded us to share the gospel with every person everywhere.

Sometimes that good news gets lost amid the emphasis on the work yet to be done. For example, it can be discouraging to hear that of the world's 11,591 people groups listed on the IMB's website, more than 6,000 are considered unreached.

It can be disheartening to read that 3,684 people groups are unreached and unengaged with the gospel. That means evangelical Christians constitute less than 2 percent of the people group's population and there have been no active church-planting efforts in the last two years.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

It can move one to tears to see the list of 1,915 people groups that are not engaged by anyone.

But the deeper one delves into the information, the more confusing the statistics become. For example, China has a higher percentage of Christians in its population than does Australia or Canada. But many unreached people groups on the list are Han Chinese, the group that makes up about 90 percent of the Chinese population.

Unreached people groups

An IMB representative explained that in China, more than 2 percent of Han Chinese are Christians and there are several church-planting movements. Some of these church-planting networks are larger than the Southern Baptist Convention. But pockets of Han Chinese living in other countries might be considered unreached people groups because there is no organized work among them.

With that insight, the list of unreached people groups can be more understandable in one way. It also can be more confusing.

About 500 Liberians living in Italy are listed as an unreached and unengaged people group on the IMB website. Yet Liberia has a strong Christian history and a high percentage of Christians among its population — far above the 2 percent threshold. But there is no work among the Liberians in Italy, and that makes them an unreached and unengaged people group.

I am reminded of my younger days when my family migrated from our Lawrence County, Ala., cotton farm to Michigan's factories. We were among hundreds of Alabama families who made such a move in search of economic opportunity. Did that move make us an unreached and unengaged people group according to IMB definitions?

Nigerians living in France, Greeks living in Albania or Han Chinese living in Italy are not what come to this writer's mind when the IMB speaks of an unreached people group. People groups whose total population is seven, eight or 32 are not what comes to mind either. Yet all of these fall within the current definitions and are reflected in IMB statistics.

Personally I find the definitions confusing, so confusing that they call into question the conclusions often reached when these numbers are tossed

around. For example, the June 2011 Global Status Report on Evangelical Christianity by the IMB indicates that only 0.4 percent of the world's population has no access to the gospel. That is not the impression often created. One could easily conclude that the 3,684 unreached and unengaged people groups frequently mentioned when Southern Baptists talk about world evangelism (almost half the world's population) have no access to the gospel.

Undoubtedly the Liberians living in Italy, Nigerians living in France and Greeks living in Albania need to hear the gospel, but are they unreached and unengaged people groups according to common understandings of the terms? Is it helpful to confuse groups like these with the 23 million souls who actually have no access to the gospel?

Last fall, the IMB announced it was changing its policy and reporting more focused numbers about its missionaries' work. As a result, the number of baptisms dropped about 200,000 in one year (almost 40 percent). But the new numbers were more reliable, and the new policy serves the IMB well.

As Tom Elliff, president of the IMB, leads Southern Baptists to focus on unreached people groups as we try to share the gospel with all people everywhere, perhaps the IMB would do well to revisit its definitions and what it means to be an unreached or unengaged people group. Perhaps there is a better way to communicate with Southern Baptists about the need to take the gospel to every tongue and tribe and nation.

And perhaps a new way of communicating the need for world evangelism will help us celebrate the victories the Lord provides such as 7,000 new baptized believers each week as a result of Southern Baptist representatives' work.

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Clergy excluded in New York's 9/11 ceremony

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's decision not to include clergy in the 10th anniversary remembrance of the 9/11 terrorist attacks has drawn objections from Christian leaders.

"This is a shameful example of anti-religious bigotry," Southern Baptist church-state specialist Richard Land said. "This once again betrays the secular bias against religion in certain liberal elements of our society whose epicenter is New York City."

Fernando Cabrera, a pastor and New York City Council member, said he was "utterly disappointed" and "shocked," according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Cabrera told CNN he contacted the mayor's office but was told there would be no prayers offered at the ceremony.

Bloomberg's office said the 10th anniversary ceremony would follow the pattern of previous observances on the date of the worst attack ever against Americans on their soil. Earlier anniversary events also have not included clergy, according to the mayor's office. The focus is to be on those who lost family members in the attacks.

Land noted first responders — police, firemen and emergency personnel — also are not invited to participate in the ceremony unless they are family members of victims.

'Secularist prejudice'

"Once again, on the original 9/11, first responders were not excluded, and I suspect that if, God forbid, there is another attack of similar severity in New York, neither religious leaders nor first responders will be excluded from that event either," Land said. "This just shows the mindless secularist prejudice of the political establishment on the East Coast."

A National Day of Prayer and Remembrance was held three days after the attacks. The Sept. 14 observance featured a service at Washington's National Cathedral at which President Bush and Billy Graham spoke. On Sept. 23, an interfaith memorial service was held at Yankee Stadium in New York City. (BP)

'Long-term impact'

9/11 sparks unprecedented ministry expansion for NYC church

In the days following Sept. 11, 2001, many Americans flocked to churches only to drop out within months.

But Taylor Field, a North American Mission Board missionary in New York City, had a much different experience. Ten years following America's deadliest terrorist attack, his church is still experiencing spiritual victories that stem from 9/11.

"The terrorists underestimated how God could use something that was intended for evil to bring so much good," said Field, pastor and director of East Seventh Baptist Church/Graffiti on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Located 20 blocks from ground zero, Graffiti is a church and community center committed to sharing the love of Jesus through an array of ministries including Bible studies, free meals, English and computer classes, a clothes closet and crisis counseling.

Following 9/11, Graffiti made a five-year commitment to help people impacted by the attack. The effort focused largely on assisting the thousands of service workers and manual laborers who lost their jobs because of 9/11 and counseling people with ongoing emotional trauma.

Exponential growth

In total, more than 5,000 people benefited from those ministries, and Graffiti experienced unprecedented ministry expansion. In 2001, the congregation met in a storefront and had about 20 ministries. Today it owns its own building, has helped start 14 additional churches in the city and has multiplied vastly its network of outreach ministries.

Each year, more than 10,000 people are affected by Graffiti's work.

"I think that 9/11 was a propulsion for some of that activity," Field said. "It put New York City on the hearts of many people, including New Yorkers. And pastorally, as I hear people talk about it, 9/11 for some people was a critical turning point in their lives."

The new building afforded unique ministry opportunities early in the decade as the congregation hired the unemployed to do construction work.

"There are still people that bring their children by our building," Field said. "And some people that had kind of a low self-concept or not a lot of confidence in what they've



RNS photo

SPIRITUAL VICTORIES — First responders stand at ground zero following the terrorist attacks that took place a decade ago. Ministries continue to grow as New Yorkers are now more open to faith since 9/11 occurred.

achieved say, 'I helped build this building,' and they want to show their children what they did because they did some part in it and we were able to give them a stipend or say thank you to them for what they did."

Part of the reason the congregation's min-

istries have been effective is that 9/11 made New Yorkers more open to faith, Field noted. It also helped them learn how to stick together in trials, he said.

During the New York power outages of 2003, for example, Field noticed how kindly people treated one another. In comparison, similar outages in the 1970s brought widespread looting and vandalism.

"I remember sitting with a group of people that were in pretty difficult situations and asking why they thought that didn't happen this time when it did the other time," Field recounted. "And people, to a person, said 9/11. We learned that when terrible things or difficult things happened, we could stick together rather than fighting each other."

Personally 9/11 shaped Field's approach to pastoral care. By working with victims in subsequent years, he learned that people often keep secret their deepest heartaches and need more compassion than is evident. That realization prompted him to have the entire Graffiti staff trained in counseling trauma victims so that they could help whenever a need arose.

"There was a big rush of impact right afterwards," Field said of 9/11. "People flocked to churches but they didn't see a long-term impact. But I feel like, looking at it over five or 10 years, I really do see a long-term impact." (BP)

New Yorkers more spiritual since 9/11; possible coincidence, survey shows

New York-area residents are more spiritually active since 9/11, a new survey shows, but the uptick in faith may be a matter of coincidence rather than a religious response to the terrorist attacks.

The Barna Group found that 46 percent of people living in or near New York City reported attending worship services in the previous week in 2010, up from 31 percent in 2000. However, the upward trend did not kick in until after 2004, said David Kinnaman, Barna's president.

"The research suggests that faith and religion took on new urgency for many New Yorkers after 9/11, but the impact was neither immediate nor long-lived," Kinnaman said. "While ... religion's importance did grow in the years after 9/11, church attendance and active faith measures did not really start increasing until after 2004."

Researchers found that more New Yorkers are spending time reading the Bible on their own, up from 29 percent in 1997-98 to 35 percent in 2009-10.

Nationwide personal Bible reading has remained essentially unchanged in the last decade.

The latest figures also show that 61 percent of New York-area residents agree strongly that religious faith is very important in their lives, compared to 72 percent of U.S. adults.

"Whatever the combination of causes, the residents of the New York City region are more spiritually active, more likely to be 'churched' and more committed to Christ than they were a decade ago," he said.

The findings are based on 3,406 interviews conducted in the New York City media market between 1997 and 2010. (RNS)

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

Is your church holding a special commemorative/memorial service on the 10th anniversary of 9/11?

Share information and photos from the event by emailing news@thealabamabaptist.org or posting it on our Facebook page.

Needs still being assessed in some states

(continued from page 1)

prepare and deliver 100,000 meals a day in North Carolina; 50,000 meals in Virginia; 15,000 meals in New England; and 5,000 meals in New York.

Deployments at press time included:

▶ In the Tar Heel State, feeding kitchens from state conventions in North Carolina, Mississippi and Florida have deployed to provide meals for victims, responders and volunteers.

▶ In hard-hit New England, conventions from New England, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky and Ohio will staff feeding units.

▶ New York and Mississippi conventions will provide feeding units in New York state.

▶ In Virginia, the Virginia Baptist Mission Board (VBMB) and Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) conventions will handle all feeding in the state. VBMB and South Carolina are providing five shower and laundry units for Virginia.

Because Hurricane Irene turned out to be more of a rain event than a wind event, Southern Baptist disaster relief mud-out teams are in heavy demand to assist victims whose homes were flooded in some areas where as much as 14 inches of rainfall were recorded.

North Carolina has requested 10 chain saw and 10 mud-out teams. Seven chain saw teams — four from

Mississippi and three from Arkansas — already are headed to North Carolina, with four more teams from the two states on standby. In all, North Carolina disaster relief leaders have requested 20 recovery teams.

VBMB is providing three shower and laundry units in Lawrenceville and Warsaw, Va., while the Maryland/Delaware convention has asked for four chain saw teams and two assessors to survey damage there.

Needs are still being assessed in New Jersey and Vermont, where massive flooding has caused entire towns to be stranded by overflowing creeks and rivers that washed out roads and bridges.

As if the Southern Baptist disaster relief response to Hurricane Irene wasn't challenging enough, work continues for the seventh week in Minot, N.D., where June floods ravaged that city of 40,000.

"We can't forget about the serious situation and the needs of flood victims in Minot," noted Mickey Caison, NAMB disaster relief team leader. A full complement of mud-out, feeding and shower/laundry volunteers currently are working in Minot, where Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers have worked 4,600 volunteer days to provide some 114,000 meals and complete 117 mud-out jobs.

But dozens of mud-out crews — representing many state disaster



BP photo

CHAIN SAW TEAM — A disaster relief volunteer prepares to cut a tree upended by Hurricane Irene in Greenville, N.C.



BP photo

FEEDING UNIT — Disaster relief volunteers in New Bern, N.C., prepare washing/sanitizing equipment needed for their mass feeding operation following Hurricane Irene.

relief teams over the past six weeks — have only been able to complete about a fourth of the total requests for mud-out by Minot homeowners. Caison said mud-out work in Minot must be completed before the end of September, when colder temperatures come to the North Dakota area.

Southern Baptist disaster relief assets encompass 82,000 trained volunteers, including chaplains, and some 1,550 mobile units for feeding, chain saw, mud-out, command, communication, child care, shower, laundry, water purification, repair/rebuild and power generation. Southern Baptist disaster relief is one of the largest mobilizers of trained, credentialed disaster relief volunteers in the United States, including the Red Cross and Salvation Army. (BP, TAB)



BP photo

HOT MEALS — A disaster relief volunteer, Walker Carriker (left), a member of Etowah Baptist Church in North Carolina, chats with storm survivors on the food line in New Bern, N.C.

Flooded roads, washed out bridges delay disaster relief efforts in Vermont

Flooded roads and washed out bridges are hampering relief efforts in Vermont, Baptist leaders reported Aug. 30.

After torrential rains from Hurricane Irene's remnants transformed mountain streams and rivers into raging floodwaters, The Associated Press reported that about 260 of Vermont's roadways and 30 highway bridges are closed, and National Guard helicopters have begun airlifting relief supplies to towns impacted by the deluge of water.

"There are whole towns that are cut off," Terry Dorsett, director of missions for Green Mountain Baptist Association, told Baptist Press (BP).

"There are little mountain villages where there's only one road or two roads in and out, and if the road's washed away or the bridge went out, then there's just no way to get in and out of them."

Southern Baptist disaster relief teams are en route to Vermont to assess the damage and determine the best ways to help.

"We're really working to get a very clear picture and some footprints of where we can stage activity," said Tim Buehner, assistant disaster relief coordinator for the Baptist Convention of New England (BCNE). "We

of course look to first and foremost aid our local churches and connect them through these services" as a point of ministry in their communities.

Southern Baptist disaster relief plans to set up an incident command center in southern Vermont, the hardest-hit area of the state, and an operations center farther north. Disaster relief efforts, which likely will entail teams from other states, will be centered around Capstone Baptist Church in Bennington and Mettowee Valley Church in West Pawlet. A BCNE mud-out team and trailer unit already has been mobilized to provide initial assistance.

Connecting local churches

Local Vermont churches, meanwhile, are taking the lead, Dorsett reported. When one Baptist mud-out unit became stranded due to the floods, Dorsett said volunteers began using shovels and their own trucks to clear waterlogged basements and help find drinking water.

A major issue is that many Vermont residents don't have flood insurance, and with winter six weeks away, flooded basement furnaces are out of commission.

In an email to BP, Dorsett told of two grandparents, the Bennetts, raising their grandchildren on Social Security. Water had flooded their basement up to the rafters, so the grandmother stomped on the floor in each room and prayed in Jesus' name that the water wouldn't flood the rest of the house.

"When [the water] was inches away, it began to recede even though the storm was still raging outside," Dorsett wrote. "But now they have no furnace, no hot water heater, no electrical panel, no well pump and no money. But they have a faith that can move mountains."

Dorsett said churches already are taking up offerings and seeking other ways to assist those like the Bennetts whose uninsured homes were damaged.

"Our churches have really done a great job of just stepping up to the plates," Dorsett wrote.

"Eventually the Southern Baptist relief organizations will get here, but until then, we can't just sit and wait. We have to do some stuff until reinforcements arrive."

Dorsett knows of three churches with water damage, but two of the cases were

relatively minor and have already been remedied. "We have some folks who are trained [to help], but most of our folks are just doing it," he said.

Jim Wideman, BCNE executive director, said no reports have come in from Maine, New Hampshire or Connecticut, and information from Rhode Island has been spotty.

Prayers for clarity, wisdom

"We're hearing from some people that there's extensive damage, but when we talk to some of our pastors in the area, they're saying, 'We don't see that much damage,'" Wideman said. Buehner, who also is BCNE's missions mobilization and ministry evangelism coordinator, requested prayers for clarity and wisdom for Southern Baptist disaster relief, that God will show them the best places to direct their efforts.

"This kind of work is Jesus Christ and love in action here to New Englanders, and it defines what servant Baptists are about," Buehner said. "And that's a really, really powerful and good image for us as we continue to plant churches and work in these communities to bring people to Christ."

(BP)



BAPTISTS RESPOND

to areas devastated by April tornadoes

We would like to show our appreciation to our community, family, friends and even complete strangers for the outpouring of support we received after our home on Mount Hebron Road in Eclectic was rendered unlivable by the April 27 tornado. We have been humbled by the grace God has shown us, and we are grateful for everyone He has placed in our lives to help us along the way. If ever we questioned just how loved we are, we were shown during the aftermath of such a trying time in our lives.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with those affected by the storm — especially the loved ones of those who were not as fortunate as we were to escape with our lives. And we wish well to those who continue to struggle to rebuild their lives and homes. We feel that we have a great start on the road to recovery in our lives, but we have decided not to move back into our home.

The property will just never look and feel the way it did prior to the storm. We have been thrust back into our previous home, and obviously this is just where we are meant to be. His plan may not always be evident to us, but we trust that He has led us to this bittersweet decision for purposes unbeknownst to us.

We truly are appreciative of all the support and love we were shown. It is a privilege and an honor to be part of each and every one of your lives.

Denny and Ruby Winn
Wetumpka, Ala.

One hundred backpacks filled with hygiene items, a towel, a washcloth, a copy of the New Testament and other goods, made their way to **Cottdendale Baptist Church** on Aug. 31.

Split into groups of 25, the backpacks were designed specifically for men, women, girls and boys.

Journey Home Fellowship, a small independent house church in Duluth, Minn., raised funds, gathered supplies and packed the backpacks.

Pastor Matthew Bordes said the church wanted to do a “people-to-people ministry” and was looking for ways to reach out to the South.

The church wanted to do something more than send money and “just wanted to respond to the need in love,” Bordes said.

And how did the backpacks make their

way from Minnesota all the way to Alabama?

The church asked Halvor Lines Inc. if it would make a “charitable run” with the backpacks — and the trucking company agreed.

Stacy Burnside, a member of Cottdendale Baptist, was at the church to help receive and organize the backpacks when they arrived. Burnside said the backpacks will be handed out to the 30–40 families who arrive at the church’s food bank each week for food and household supplies.

Alabama Baptists are finding ways to minister to churches outside the convention that were damaged by the April 27 tornadoes, like **Mount Gilead Primitive Baptist Church in Eclectic**.

Mount Gilead Pastor John Wingard requested pews for his church through Penny Flowers, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions tornado volunteer relief ministry assistant, and within two days, **Victory Baptist Church, Bassfield, Miss.**, called to donate **19 pews**. She helped connect the two churches.

Wingard was planning to drive to Mississippi to pick up the 10-foot, teal-fabric covered wooden pews Sept. 6, just in time for his church’s first service in its restored building Sept. 11.

“It was just a God thing,” Flowers said about the timing of the transaction.



Photo courtesy of Forest Lake Baptist Church

The latest **mobile chapel** provided by Alabama Baptist disaster relief was placed Aug. 31 at **Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa**. The Tuscaloosa Baptist Association church received two units.

Bayou Sara church members go fishing to help Jasper area

By Kathy Dean
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Jack Gatlin loves to fish. Combine his passion with a chance to help people still feeling the effects of the April 27 tornadoes that raked across Alabama, and this fisherman is ready to jump aboard.

Gatlin had heard members of his church, Bayou Sara Baptist, Saraland, tell about traveling to New Prospect Baptist Church, Jasper, to help with tornado relief efforts.

“I knew from the people coming back to our church and giving testimony about what was going on up there that those people are still hurting,” he said. But “I’m retired on disability. [Bayou Sara members] kept going up there as a ministry to help and work and I couldn’t do that.”

Neither could many other church members who do shift work and couldn’t take off to help clean up debris and repair buildings, said John Blackwell, associate pastor and minister of music. So he and Pastor Dennis Dunn asked Gatlin to help the church host a benefit fishing tournament.

“I wanted to do something that I could do. And fishing is something I knew about,” he said.

But while Gatlin had fished in many tournaments, he had never actually put on one.

“I was a nervous wreck,” Gatlin said.

But word got out about the tournament, businesses in the community stepped up to help sponsor prizes and 30 boats carrying 60 participants put into the Mobile Delta on July 30.

“It was a good fellowship time, and it was a ministry to people,” Gatlin said.

Several church members invited unchurched friends, and many father/son teams used the opportunity to spend time fishing together. Most teams donated their winnings back to the benefit so it raised \$2,650. Combined with other donations, Bayou Sara sent more than \$5,000 to New Prospect Baptist.

Dwayne Norman, pastor of New Prospect, said the funds are being distributed to provide supplies to people in neighboring communities as they recover and rebuild and to help sponsor a couple who are uplifting communities through old-fashioned tent revivals in a ministry called TOP — Tornado of Praise.

The connection between the two churches isn’t new. Norman and Blackwell knew each other as students at the University of Mobile.

While a student, Norman served as a part-time youth minister at Bayou Sara and considers Dunn a mentor and friend.

When the tornadoes hit, New Prospect and the neighboring community “really dodged bullets,” Norman said. There was damage but nothing on the scale of what occurred in some other communities.

But many in Norman’s congregation had family and friends who were deeply impacted.

And the day after the storms, he received a call from his friend and mentor.

“I wanted to do something that I could do. And fishing is something I knew about.”

Jack Gatlin
Bayou Sara Baptist Church,
Saraland

“Brother Dunn said, ‘We want to help.’ A week later, they brought a trailer load of supplies for us to give out,” Norman said.

When New Prospect needed some experienced extra hands to help with raising trusses on a house it is building for a family of 11, it put in a call to Bayou Sara.

“We have such a bond with the people of that church,” Norman said. “Some of the young adults that came (on a relief team) were my youth when I was at Bayou Sara. It was really awesome to see how much they had grown, matured, and how they are on fire for God.”

“It’s pretty awesome to see what God is doing in the midst of this tragedy,” he added.

Serving in a new way

Blackwell said the tournament helped Bayou Sara members draw together and get to know each other in new ways. And it gave people an opportunity to serve in a new way.

Funny fishing videos featuring Gatlin and his fellow fishermen made the congregation laugh together and “created a different environment for our people to appreciate what mission work is,” Blackwell said.

With one successful tournament behind it, Bayou Sara is looking to use future events to raise funds for missions needs while strengthening fellowship and providing a way to draw in unchurched friends.

“We are even talking about starting a bass club at the church,” Gatlin said.

Interested in assisting with the Alabama rebuild effort? Visit www.sbdr.org to find areas of need.



Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **North Highlands Church, Hueytown**, will hold a community-wide special service to mark the 10th anniversary of 9/11 Sept. 11, 7:30–8:45 a.m. The honor guard from the fire department and police department will be present. Police Chief Chuck Hagler will speak. Fire Chief David Williams will honor all firemen who died. Mayor Delor Baumann will be the guest of honor and present the colors. The church also will hold Passion for Pups Dog Show Oct. 1, 10 a.m. Registration will be at 9 a.m. Classes include cutest, ugliest, toy group, largest, smallest, hound group, terrier group, most talented/best trick, working group, sporting group, best costume, non-sporting group, herding group, best mutt, most photogenic and best in show. Trophies and ribbons will be awarded in each class. There will be a cakewalk. For information call 205-491-7921. Joe W. Kitchens is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Rocky Hill Church, Uriah**, will hold revival Sept. 16–17, 6:30 p.m., with Cecil Taylor, dean of the school of Christian studies at the University of Mobile. The church also will celebrate homecoming Sept. 18, 11 a.m. Taylor will speak. Pete Dunn is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► The Women on Mission of **First Church, Birmingham**, will host Candace McIntosh, executive director of the Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, Sept. 13, 10:30 a.m., in the fellowship hall. Lunch will follow. For reservations call 205-870-3888. Stan Lewis is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Belleville Church** will celebrate homecoming and 193 years of service to the community Sept. 25, 10:30 a.m. There will be a mini-concert featuring members, former

members and friends of the church. Former Pastor Ed Steelman will speak. Lunch will follow. Hughie Denton is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Blue Eye Church, Lincoln**, will host a southern gospel jubilee at M&N Campground Sept. 25, 3:30–6:30 p.m., with featured group The Boys of Alabama, of Rainsville. There will be refreshments. Bring your lawn chair. For information call 256-268-7025. Jacky Morgan is pastor.

DALE

► **Merrell Henry** is the new bivocational student minister for **Camp Ground Church, Ozark**. A native of Arcadia, Fla., he has served several other Alabama churches. He and his wife, Jennifer, have one child. Al Sonanstone is pastor.



HENRY

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will host Big Daddy Weave Sept. 11, 9–11 a.m., as it remembers the 10th anniversary of 9/11. There will be testimonies, music, multimedia and praise and worship. For information call 256-729-1328 or visit www.clements baptist.org. Tim Anderson is pastor.

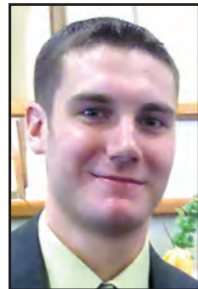
MONTGOMERY

► **First Church, Montgomery**, will hold the back-to-school event Team Night Sept. 11, 6:11 p.m., on the 10th anniversary of 9/11. Siran Stacy will share about losing his wife and four of five children in a car accident in 2007. Mike and Rebecca Ellis will share about losing their son, Cole, an eighth-grader at Trinity Presbyterian School in Montgomery, when he took his own

life in 2009. There will be a Friday night fever video by Jeff Shearer. Bring your team and wear your jersey or favorite school colors. For information call 334-834-6310 or visit www.montgomerybc.org. Jay Wolf is pastor.

MADISON

► **Chad Ortner** is the new children's minister for **Harvest Church**. He previously served as children's minister for Oak Park Church, Huntsville. He has served two other churches in Madison County. Ortner and his wife, Sarah, are Huntsville natives. Eric Fuller is pastor.



ORTNER

MORGAN

► **Central Park Church, Decatur**, will hold a special memorial/recognition service to remember those who died on 9/11 and to honor the men and women of Morgan County who serve as first responders and emergency aid workers Sept. 11, 10:30 a.m. There will be testimonies by a man who was in one of the Twin Towers at the time it was struck and by a man who was near the Pentagon at the time it was struck. Several emergency-related organizations will be represented, and the church will present plaques. Lunch will be served. Tickets to the upcoming movie "Courageous" will be given. For information call 256-355-4628. Jackie Kay is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Pickensville Church, Carrollton**, will hold its annual ladies' retreat Sept. 10, 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. The theme will be "Extravagant Love." Brunch will be provided. Kim Hagans will speak. Marnetta McDaniel will provide special music. To register call Charli Parker at 205-399-0277. Tim Jones is pastor.

SALEM-TROY

► **Salem Church, Brundidge**, will hold revival Sept. 11–14 with Mark Price, pastor of Church on the Eastern Shore, Fairhope. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 6:30. There will be a covered-dish lunch Sunday at noon. For information call 334-735-3409 or visit www.salembaptist.com.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Fairview West Church, Hanceville**, will hold revival Sept. 24–28 with Richard Bailey. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Trueman Davis is pastor.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Australian Baptist leaders oppose gay 'marriage'

MELBOURNE, Australia — Baptist leaders in Australia issued statements Aug. 24 opposing a proposal to change the current legal definition of marriage to include gay couples.

John Beasy, national president of Australian Baptist Ministries — formerly the Baptist Union of Australia — said members of Baptist churches in the nation "overwhelmingly support" the current definition of marriage as between a man and woman and oppose moves to change it.

Rod Benson, an ethicist and public-issues spokesperson for Australian Baptist Ministries, said there are "compelling cultural and heritage reasons" for rejecting the proposal, and for Baptists "there are also deeply held theological convictions about the nature and purpose of marriage which preclude widening the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples."

"A strong society needs a strong commitment to marriage and family," Benson said. "Marriage is best understood as the union of a man and a woman, and the law is best left as it is."

Benson said for 400 years, Baptists have used the Bible as their supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct, and the Bible teaches that the appropriate context for sexual relations is between a man and woman in marriage.

Australia's current 1961 Marriage Act defines marriage as "the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life." A same-sex marriage bill introduced in 2009 would have removed all discriminatory references based on sexual or gender identity from the 1961 law. The bill did not pass, but Parliament passed a motion asking all 226 members to consult with their constituents about whether gays should be allowed to marry.

Last November, Australian Baptist Ministries reaffirmed marriage as the union of one man and one woman and commended the government for "reflecting biblical teaching" in the national marriage law.

More than 50 church leaders representing Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant denominations recently wrote letters to Parliament members, kicking off a campaign supporting the current definition of marriage as between a man and woman.

Baptist leader known for promoting giving dies

GEORGETOWN, Texas — Cecil Ray, for many years a leading figure in efforts to convince Southern Baptists to give more money to religious causes, died Aug. 23.

Ray, 88, of Georgetown, Texas, worked from 1961 to 1975 with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, promoting the Cooperative Program and stewardship and encouraging Baptist Christians to be generous in their tithes and offerings and churches to share more of their offerings for missions.

He was general secretary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina from 1976 until 1983. Between 1984 and 1988 he was national director of Planned Growth in Giving, a 15-year challenge to Southern Baptists to dramatically increase their support for world missions. The idea was to raise funds for Bold Mission Thrust, a Southern Baptist Convention emphasis launched in 1979 aimed at sharing the gospel with every person in the world by the year 2000.

Ray was the author of several books, including "Living the Responsible Life" (1975), "Christian Family Money Management" (1969) and "Witnessing-Giving, These Go Together" (1988).

A native Texan, Ray was a graduate of Howard Payne University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained by Immanuel Baptist Church, San Angelo, Texas, and was pastor of churches in Llano, Rowena, Dublin, Sulphur Springs and Lubbock, Texas.

Alabama Ministries

The Foundry

The second Hot Strings — Birmingham's Blazin' Bluegrass Festival will be Oct. 9 at The Preserve's Village Green in Hoover. State Farm Insurance is sponsoring the event to benefit the programs and services of The Foundry Rescue Mission and Recovery Center, an interdenominational organization in the Bessemer area that reaches out to more than 300 men and women battling drug, alcohol and other addictions.

Blue Highway will headline the event, but many other

groups will perform such as two-time Grammy nominee Claire Lynch, The Newgrass Troubadours, Cottonmouth Creek, Judge Talford Band and The Herb Trotman Band.

Gates will open at 11 a.m., and the bands will perform from noon to 8 p.m.

Besides bluegrass music, the family friendly event will feature food from Golden Rule BBQ, a kids' area with inflatables and a fiddlin' contest and jam session.

For more information, visit www.hotstrings.org.

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OPINION

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- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible

'If I don't go, who will?'

Happy Valley Baptist member to race through 11 countries in 11 months carrying cross

By John Evans
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In a land still nursing the wounds of the April tornadoes, some people wonder why Amy Colley plans to travel the far reaches of the globe for missions.

"I'll have people that I admire and look up to say, 'Why are you going on this missions trip when you know your neighbor next door in Alabama is suffering from a tornado?'" Colley, a member of Happy Valley Baptist Church, Lanett, said.

She wrestles with this question in the deepest of ways; her best friend's parents and sister perished in the storms.

"I want to be here to help her build her house back, to help her do whatever I can to put her life back together," 23-year-old Colley said. "But then, at the same time, I know that if I don't go, who will? This is my calling. If I neglect that or ignore it, then I'm not doing my part for the will of God, no matter how hard it is."

Counting the cost

As she counts the cost of what she is leaving behind, she prepares to embark on The World Race, a missions journey that, starting in January 2012, will take her to 11 countries in 11 months. Conducted through the missions organization Adventures in Missions (AIM), the race will see teams of "racers" partner with local churches and ministries in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Ukraine, Romania, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania,

Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia.

Colley's connection to international missions began in earnest when Happy Valley Baptist's youth pastor left to serve as a journeyman with the International Mission Board in East Asia and she read his updates from the field.

Eternal things

A house fire in 2002, in which she lost most of her possessions, further jolted her perspective on life.

"These things that I accumulate in this life mean nothing," Colley said, reflecting on the lesson the fire taught her. "So after I had lost everything of my own, I began to look more to eternal things."

In 2007, she took her first international missions trip, serving in Belize with Praying Pelican Missions. The joy that overflowed in the people's hearts there amid their extreme poverty left a lasting impression on Colley.

"For me, that just opened my eyes to see that it's not about the things we have," she said. "It's not about how big and fancy we can be or how profound we can sound, and the Belizean people opened my eyes to see that."

Colley first learned about the race in 2005 but felt unprepared for such an enormous commitment. Her life moved on as she made her way through college at Jacksonville State University. As the end of 2010 approached, she was working on degrees in photography and international economics and thinking



Photo courtesy of Amy Colley

FINDING JOY — Amy Colley (left), a member of Happy Valley Baptist Church, Lanett, went to Belize on a missions trip in 2007 and leaves for 11 months on The World Race in January 2012.

about marriage to her boyfriend and had just received a scholarship to graduate school, where she hoped to study dentistry before serving as a medical missionary. Praying Pelican even contacted her about working in Haiti for two months.

But it all unraveled as Colley felt God strongly leading her back toward the race.

"I was like, 'Well, Lord, what's going on? What is your plan? I'm kind of confused, because I thought I had all this laid out,'" she recalled saying. "And then God kind of

brought me to the breaking point where He said, 'Remember what I have taught you. It's not about you. It's about me and my Kingdom.'"

Colley began to see the race as an opportunity to further learn about ministry in different cultures, so she embraced the challenge and completed AIM's thorough application process to join the race. She said some people can't understand why she would lay aside her planned-out, nice-looking future for a year on the missions field. They are not alone.

She faces her share of challenges as she attempts to raise \$15,500 to cover the trip's expenses. That involves foregoing Friday nights with friends to send out support letters, visiting churches, spending time in prayer and updating her World Race blog.

"It doesn't matter if people think I'm crazy or I'm a Bible-thumper or whatever," Colley said. "It is important for me to carry the cross and push through those struggles, because I know that my journey is just now beginning."

John Samanie, pastor of Happy Valley, believes other Christians can learn from Colley's decision to put aside her plans and follow God to the missions field, and he appreciates the dedication she has shown to the effort.

"Everybody wants to sign up for a missions trip, but not everybody wants to put in the work and the behind-the-scenes stuff that it takes to make that happen," Samanie said.

"Amy is finding out what it really takes to raise money and to get prayer support, and she's out there doing it."

For Colley, it's all part of following the continuing purpose God has for her life.

"All this time, I thought God had been preparing me with Praying Pelican for this huge, colossal event called The World Race, and now I'm steadily realizing that God is preparing me for something even greater than The World Race: a lifetime of missions."

For more information, contact Colley at 706-773-4442 or acolley@jsu.edu or visit her blog, <http://amycolley.theworldrace.org>.







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'Not about me'

"I don't understand it and I don't care about understanding it," Colley said. "Because it is hard to say, 'Oh well, I had a scholarship to grad school and now I had to turn it down.' I may not get that back. It would be a lot easier if I wasn't going on the race, for sure, just because of plans and family and everything else that follows in between. But like I said, it's not about me anymore."

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Photo by Charleen Hobbs

Chris Mills led a five-member missions team to Guatemala Aug. 20–27 as part of the partnership Alabama Baptists have with Guatemalan Baptists. The team worked with Patmos Baptist Church in Genova, Guatemala. This was not his first missions experience, but it was for half the team. Chris, an associate in communications services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and a member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, shares about the experience as well as how he has been changed. The other teams members (see stories, these pages) also share highlights from the trip.

Seven hours before our plane was to leave Montgomery, I was on the phone with my mom. She was in tears, as my stepdad's grandmother was breathing her last breath. This was to be my mom's first missions trip, and I couldn't have been more excited. She was finally excited about the trip after being concerned over all the details the last few months. And now, she was torn as to whether she should be there for her husband or go to Guatemala. After prayer and counsel, she decided she would stay. I was discouraged but determined not to let this stop what God had planned for our team. It didn't.

The remaining six of us set out for Genova, Guatemala. The team was made up of three first-timers — one of my best friends, a ministry assistant in my office and a retired Air Force colonel — two more experienced folks (who also happen to be close friends of mine) and me.

Seeing the first-timers, Kin Gibson, Charleen Hobbs and Ben Hulsey, step out of their comfort zone was a highlight for all of us veterans. Seeing the more experienced ones, Tanner Ethridge and Viki Brant, not only come alongside and encourage the first-timers but also get right back into their element of loving the people was a highlight for me. God stretched us all as we traveled four hours to Genova on rough roads (even for a seasoned traveler), endured very hot days and visited with many who live in extreme poverty. Even in the midst of the challenges, unity was evident.

"Boldness" was a key word for us. The verse we had been praying for our team was Acts 28:31: "Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV). We asked God to fill us with boldness like Paul's. Each team member shared his or her faith during the trip, and all of us walked

away with a sense of boldness and comfort in sharing our faith that we never had before. Many team members overcame public speaking anxiety as each shared his or her testimony and some even had the opportunity to preach in special church services held throughout the week.

We also saw God use us to reconnect folks to the church. Two families rededicated their lives to the Lord and acted on that recommitment by joining us for a church service that evening. We visited many whom we saw God at work in. One woman shared with us that she was living in adultery, while another man was a former witch doctor. Wendy, a young woman who worked in a party supply store filled with piñatas, made a profession of faith. I had the privilege of praying with her. We as-

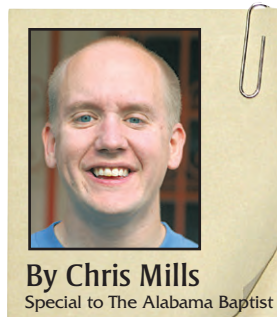
sured her that there was a bigger party going on in heaven at the celebration of her salvation than there could ever

be on earth — despite all the supplies in her shop!

Larry and Sarah Plyler, Southern Baptist representatives who spearhead Operation GO (Gospel Outreach) in Guatemala, were our contacts on the field. Any Alabama Baptist who has had the privilege of serving alongside the Plylers can attest to the fact they keep you laughing and encourage you with their heart for missions. Their knowledge of the people and passion for the lost and church growth challenged us in both our sharing with and praying for the people. They were an indispensable asset to the success and great experience we had.

God has blessed me with many opportunities to share His love with people all over the world. As you seek God's direction, it doesn't matter who the people are; He will break your heart for all nations. As a young minister, I've often thought this or that is the next step in my ministry. This missions trip was yet another affirmation that the next step is simply the next step of obedience. God's heart is for all nations. Our heart, as we seek Him, will be for all people. God broke my heart for the people of Guatemala. He broke every team member's heart for the people of Guatemala. My prayer and challenge to myself, my teammates and you is that we not neglect the fact that God is at work in our lives. May we be found faithful to His work in our lives. He revealed Himself in a special way to us in a little village about 25 miles from the Guatemala/Mexico border. He can do the same thing here.

Many times when I come back from a missions trip, I eventually go back to the same old routine. May that not be the case. May we be bold. May we be obedient to His desire for our lives — for His glory alone.



By Chris Mills
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Guatemala would not have been my choice for my first missions trip but it was God's. I had been told many things about the do's and don'ts, the culture, the people, but nothing prepared me for what I found.

I had come to Guatemala to share Christ with lost people and I did.

But what I did not realize was how much the Guatemalan believers of Patmos Baptist Church would impact my life. The love and passion they showed for their lost family members, friends and neighbors were so inspiring. They walked alongside us, the very young, teenagers and adults, some who had taken time off work.

We walked over trails that I would never in my wildest dreams believe I could go over. Together we shared God's love with a lot of hurting people — people who believed they were not good enough, people who were bitter, people who were lonely, people living deep in sin and people with open hearts waiting to hear the good news of Christ. People just like the ones we come in contact with daily.

The believers of Patmos Baptist taught me a lot about worship and what being on mission for God truly means, and I pray that I will never forget those lessons.

Charleen Hobbs
Pinedale BC, Montgomery



HOBBS

Missions volunteers bring home deep memories

Prior to leaving on our journey to Guatemala, I began reading "Live Sent: You Are a Letter" by Jason Dukes. The book's message is quite challenging and prompted me to examine my daily life and ask, "Am I living sent?" God has sent a message of love to and through me, and I am called to deliver His message to others. This is confirmed in John 20:21b, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." ... I witnessed church members "living sent" as our team worked alongside members of Patmos Baptist Church while in Genova, Guatemala. Several of these faithful, God-loving individuals had taken three days off from their jobs to walk with us through the streets of Genova and the "Amazon-like" forests to visit disengaged church members, the sick and those known to be living a life of darkness. While many of the individuals we spoke to for hours at a time did not make decisions regarding their faith, most had visible signs that God was stirring their hearts. There is no doubt in my mind that the



BRANT

church members will not give up on these individuals just because the volunteers from Alabama are gone. These faithful followers will go out and "be the church" as God intends, and the seeds that we helped sow will be faithfully watered and one day harvested. ... As God is speaking to me and working through me, I desire to live a life that is more than just saved; I desire to be "saved and sent."

**Viki Brant
FBC Montgomery**

My first overseas missions trip was a great experience. Having promised myself to heed the command to "go and make disciples" after retiring from the U.S. Air Force, God opened the door for me to go to Guatemala. Upon our arrival at the Guatemala City air-



HULSEY

port, the huge number of family members greeting their loved ones with a hug and a kiss impressed me. As we traveled the countryside, I marveled at the sights and sounds — a man harvesting sugar cane with a machete, women carrying filled

baskets on their heads, colorful and overcrowded school buses with loud horns, cowboys herding cows and large fields of coffee, banana and rubber trees across the landscape. ... And Larry and Sarah Plyler's (our hosts) compassion for the villagers and heart for sharing the gospel was so impressive. Likewise the local church members ... were a great encouragement. ... I will never forget their passion for sharing His life-changing truths with other villagers.

Leaving the comforts of home is healthy for your Christian growth. ... Distractions back home such as work, bills and the stock market disappear when you are giving your testimony or sharing Scripture to a person suffering with physical or emotional pain.

I highly encourage you to go on a missions trip soon. God will bless your service, and you'll be looking for the opportunity for a return trip, just like me.

**Ben Hulsey
FBC Montgomery**

This trip to Guatemala was a first for me in many ways. It was my first overseas missions trip, my first time outside of the United States and my first time on an airplane. I had many fears but once we landed in Guatemala and began working with the wonderful people

of Guatemala, those fears were replaced with joy. I ... realized one thing: No matter who you are,



GIBSON

where you are from or how much money you have, God still loves you. The people of Patmos Baptist Church in Genova showed me what it means to truly love God. They worship our Lord as I have never seen. ... The major highlight of this trip was when a married couple rededicated their lives to Christ and to see them walk into the church service that same evening. God revealed Himself in many ways on this trip, and I learned so many things. The main thing I learned is to always trust God and that He is in control of everything. No matter what you fear, what you don't like about your life or if you're scared to leave your comfort zone, God has a plan. He will always provide what is needed.

**Kin Gibson
FBC Montgomery**

Our week with Larry and Sarah Plyler ... in Guatemala was

exciting, fun and challenging. We spent one day preparing to travel to our missions site. The next three days were spent attending church services and visiting homes in Genova, which is a small, remote town in the Quetzaltenango Department of Guatemala. ... It was incredible to hear these people's life stories and about their struggles and triumphs.

One man's story stood out to me. Santiago is about 50 years old. For 30 years, he was engaged in a lifestyle of sin. He also practiced witchcraft, but he recently became a Christian and had denounced his previous lifestyle. He even asked the church members to come and help him burn his witchcraft paraphernalia. ... Santiago completely repented from his old self and allowed Christ to completely transform his life.



ETHRIDGE

Everyone we came in contact with had a story, and those faces and stories will remain in my heart and mind forever.

**Tanner Ethridge
Bush Memorial BC, Troy**



Students from BCMs across Alabama join forces to participate in a disaster relief response.



One of the many ways your gifts through the Cooperative Program help support missions is by providing opportunities for college students in Baptist Campus Ministries around the state to serve others in missions settings. During the last school year, more than 1,700 Alabama college students participated in a missions experience in the state, across the nation or overseas.

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

Popular prime-time cable cartoons saturated with explicit, adult content

Children watching the most popular prime-time cable cartoons are exposed to a “shocking” amount of adult content, a new Parents Television Council (PTC) study says.

According to a PTC news release, the study, called “Cartoons Are No Laughing Matter,” tracked the animated prime-time programming that Nielsen data indicates children ages 12–17 most frequently watch on basic cable: Adult Swim, Cartoon Network, Disney Channel and Nick at Nite. The study found an abundance of sexual content, violence, drug references and depictions and profanity, mostly on Adult Swim.

“Adult content isn’t just creeping into the cartoons that kids today are watching the most; it has overtaken much of that animated programming,” PTC President Tim Winter said in the news release. “We’re not talking about cartoon characters slipping on banana peels and ramming into doors. Our data demonstrates that today’s norm is profanity-laden storylines involving everything from rape and cocaine to STDs and crystal meth.”

Winter warned that many parents don’t realize how popular Adult Swim is becoming among teens and preteens, or that it airs at 9 p.m. ET (8 p.m. CT) on the same channel

as kid-focused Cartoon Network. “Parents need to understand just how explicit these cartoons are so they can make better viewing decisions for their family,” he said.

PTC gave Disney Channel and Nick at Nite highly positive “A” ratings for their content, citing a near total absence of any adult content. By contrast, Adult Swim and Cartoon Network received “F” grades.

TV rating systems

The study singled out Adult Swim and Cartoon Network for failing to warn parents about adult content through TV rating systems. Winter said in the news release that profanity and graphic sexual depictions aired during the study period on programs rated TV-PG.

“Cartoon Network failed to use the ratings system to warn parents about sexual content, suggestive

dialogue and explicit language 100 percent of the time,” Winter said. “We also discovered the networks are directly marketing adult entertainment products to kids during TV-PG programming, including R-rated movies and TV-MA shows and DVDs.” According to the news release, PTC documented 1,487 incidents of drugs, sexual content and explicit language during the study period, adding that young viewers saw adult content an average of once every two minutes and 31 seconds.

Parents should be allowed to unsubscribe to explicit cable networks, Winter said, and that even then, there’s still a lot of work to be done.

“In addition to cable choice and more responsible programming decisions by the networks, the entire television content ratings system needs to be overhauled,” Winter said. (BP)

Each hour of TV cuts life by 22 minutes, study shows

Watching TV literally takes the life out of people, Australian researchers say.

The British newspaper *The Telegraph* reported on the results of a study indicating that every hour spent watching TV may reduce a person’s life by 22 minutes. Those who watch six hours of programming a day, for example, are at risk of perishing five years sooner than others who are less sedentary.

“TV viewing time may have adverse health consequences that rival those of lack of physical activity, obesity and smoking,” researchers from Australia’s University of Queensland stated.

The Telegraph reported that J. Lennert Veerman and colleagues examined Australian mortality figures along with a 1999–2000 survey of 11,247 Australians that asked how much time they watched TV. The researchers compared the life expectancy of adults who watch TV with that of adults who did not, concluding that every hour of TV reduced a person’s lifespan by 21.8 minutes. “Because TV viewing is a ubiquitous behavior that occupies significant portions of adults’ leisure time, its

effects are significant for overall population health,” wrote the researchers, whose work was published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

British health experts concurred. “Sedentary behavior such as vegging in front of the TV is practically a cultural institution these days and it’s good to relax for a while, but this study supports the view that too much of it can be bad for our health,” Maureen Talbot, senior cardiac nurse at the British Heart Foundation, told *The Telegraph*.

Conscious decision

“Many of us make a conscious decision not to smoke because we know it’s bad for us, and this study suggests that more of us should make the same kind of pledge about lounging around and watching lots of TV,” Talbot said. “Introducing more activity to our daily lives, whether it’s walking to the shops instead of taking the bus, using the stairs instead of the lift or taking up active hobbies like sports or gardening mean we won’t spend as much time in front of the TV where we’re likely to pile on the pounds.” (BP)

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About Alabama

Measuring School Performance

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

How well are the public schools in your community doing? Whether you are a student, teacher, parent or citizen, you have a stake in the answer to that question. Unfortunately the statistics usually are not presented in a way that is helpful for evaluating schools objectively.

I want to point you to a source of information on school performance that you might find interesting. It's an analysis of reading and math test results in every public school with students in grades 3-8, found on the website of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA). The spring 2011 data have just been posted at <http://parca.samford.edu/education/SystemsTestScores/Systems.html>.

Comparing results

Alabama's public school students take these tests each spring, and the results are published in August. PARCA compares a school's results with the state average for each grade, subject and socioeconomic group of students. We then color-code the comparisons so that you can see at a glance whether your school is beating the state average (green) or trailing it (red). The colors are two-tone to show schools that are well above or well below the average.

Because Alabama's grading scheme is lenient, we look at the percent of students who score at Level IV (in effect, make an

"A") on these tests. Statewide more than half the students in grades 3-5 scored at Level IV last spring, but results varied widely from school to school and system to system.

Celebrate success

We believe these data should be used to celebrate success and target improvement efforts, not label schools "good" or "bad." We find in our work that all kinds of schools and students can improve their performance with persistent effort. One striking example: George Hall Elementary School, an all-black, all-poverty school in Mobile. This past spring, more than 95 percent of George Hall Elementary students scored at Level IV on the math test. The results were virtually identical to those of Cherokee Bend Elementary School in Mountain Brook, which has an all-white, non-poverty student body. George Hall students have consistently produced such results in recent years, reflecting sustained commitment to quality.

I hope you'll look at your school's results and congratulate its staff for the successes you see, while encouraging them to overcome any pockets of red that may appear in their results.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Jim may be contacted at jwillia@samford.edu.

Turkish decree 'positive and conducive to the respect of freedom of religion in practice'

(continued from page 1)
tion of both local property rights and international law, Turkish nationalists blocked any legal changes for decades.

During July, both the EU and U.S. congressional leaders upped their rhetoric regarding the long unresolved issues of religious freedom for Turkey's non-Muslim citizens.

In a statement July 13, EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule cited a number of legislative issues on religious freedom that Turkey had not yet implemented: lack of legal personality, restrictions on the training of clergy, compulsory Islamic education, religious affiliation on identity cards and property ownership.

Perceived as a threat

"Missionaries are widely perceived as a threat to the integrity of the country and to the Muslim religion," Fule added, observing that the dialogue launched by the Turkish authorities with non-Muslim religious communities "has yet to produce tangible results."

That same month, Ankara reacted strongly to a measure passed by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives calling for Turkey to "return stolen Armenian and other Christian churches to their rightful owners."

Still pending approval by both the House and Senate, the amendment was attached to the State Department's Authorization Act for 2012.

In an EU statement Aug. 29, Fule called the decree "positive and conducive to the respect of freedom of religion in practice." He cautioned, however, that the European Commission would "monitor closely the implementation of the new legislation, in contact with both the Turkish authorities and the non-Muslim religious communities."

European Baptist Federation General Secretary Anthony "Tony" Peck also had reservations regarding the new decree. "Anything which helps the beleaguered Christian minority in Turkey — which has faced increased pressure and hostility in recent years — is welcome," Peck said.

"[But] the welcomed words from the prime minister need to be accompanied by a clearer condemnation from all sections of gov-

ernment and society and a more ambiguous commitment to full religious freedom for all," he added.

Peck also asked for prayer for Baptist and evangelical brothers and sisters in Turkey as this change takes place.

As for the properties to be returned, ironically the Istanbul offices of the secretariat general for EU affairs are situated in a former grade school building of the Greek Orthodox Ayios Fokas Church in Ortakoy. A case to reclaim this property, formerly owned by the church's Mektepler Foundation, is still before the ECHR.

The minority properties expected to be returned in Istanbul include more than 50 large cemeteries; several properties of the Jewish community in Kandilli, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus; and a number of buildings owned by both the Surp Pirgic Armenian Hospital Foundation and the Balikli Greek Hospital Foundation. (CDN)

"Missionaries are widely perceived as a threat to the integrity of the country and to the Muslim religion."

Stefan Fule
European Union



Someone You Should Know

SARAH HICKS

Glennwood Baptist Church
North Jefferson Baptist Association



HICKS

FAVORITE VERSE: Psalm 121

HOBBIES: Playing piano and organ and singing

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 52 years

of marriage to Glen Sr.; three children, Glen Hicks Jr., Kimberly Crawford and Sherry Hannah; eight grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren

Sarah Hicks has taught various classes at Glennwood Baptist, including the senior adult Sunday School class. She sings in the choir, serves on the church's social committee and loves filling Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes.

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: I was born in Blount County, the oldest of seven children, and raised in Birmingham. ... Looking back, I feel blessed as we had good parents who cared for us. They inspired me with music.

Q: When and how did you come to know the Lord?

A: I moved to the Glennwood

community in August 1961 and was saved in October that year. Our pastor at that time was Wayne Cambell. His wife, Maureen, is the one that led me to the Lord.

Q: How did you get started with your music ministry?

A: During my grammar school years, I took piano lessons and did the same in high school. I started playing the piano at Glennwood Baptist in 1968. I have had the joy of being the volunteer pianist for 43 years. It has never been a chore for me.

Q: What motivates you to serve?

A: My faith in the Lord sees

me through each day. As I reflect over the years, I see God leading me to where I am today. I hope to be in this place of service until the Lord calls me home as I love my church family and they mean the world to me. I could not be happier doing what I do. Music has always been a big part of my life. I love to sing and play for Him!

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

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One bingo operation raided; another reopens

The last few days of August delivered a flurry of activity regarding the issue of electronic bingo in Alabama. One business was raided, another reopened and one of the lobbyists who pleaded guilty to corruption related to electronic bingo earlier this year was released from jail pending sentencing.

According to *The Birmingham News*, Lucky Duck Bingo located in the Midfield Plaza Shopping Center was raided Aug. 30.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's office said in an Aug. 30 press release that as many as 250 machines were being confiscated and investigators will seek to have the illegal gambling machines destroyed through the courts.

Lucky Duck recently reopened after it was put on notice by the city of Midfield that it was found to be an illegal gambling operation by the sheriff's office, the state attorney general's office and the Jefferson

County district attorney's office. Meanwhile Greenetrack, located in Greene County's Eutaw, restarted its operation of electronic bingo machines Aug. 31. This is after the facility has had machines confiscated twice in the last two years, according to *The News*.

According to the report, John Bolton, attorney for Greenetrack, said the track would again offer electronic bingo with 50 to 60 machines. He said Greenetrack has continued racing operations and live-call bingo since the latest raid.

A statement released from Attorney General Luther Strange's office said, "We trust that Greenetrack will abide by Alabama law, and if they do not, appropriate law enforcement action will be taken."

Joe Godfrey, executive director

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of Alabama Citizens Action Program, applauded local and state law enforcement officials who are working to "enforce the laws ... and ... punish offenders."

"People are always going to try to push the envelope," he said. "If we start legalizing everything just because people want to do it, our society will collapse."

"That's why law enforcement is so important," he said.

In other news, The Associated Press reported that Jarrod Massey, former casino lobbyist for Country Crossing, was released from jail Aug. 31 pending his sentencing for offering bribes to legislators to approve pro-gambling legislation.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson said Massey met the qualifications for release and was not seen as a flight risk. (TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Derbyshire Baptist Church (DBC) in western Henrico County, Va., is seeking a full-time, seminary-educated pastor. The candidate should have proven pastoral, preaching, Bible teaching, leadership and organizational skills with a strong presence in the pulpit. The candidate should also be effective, with proven results, in increasing active membership growth. DBC is a mission-minded church affiliated with BGAV, SBC and CBF. DBC has an active congregation focused on our core ministry values of missions, community, faith development, worship and music, outreach and evangelism and generosity along with traditional/blended Sunday services. Resumes may be submitted to: psc@dbcricmond.org or to: Pastor Search Committee, 8800 Derbyshire Road, Richmond, VA 23229.

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 resume to: randymccooy@bellsouth.net or Randy McCoy, 290 Tyler Willis Lane, Tupelo, MS 38804.

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

PASTOR: Central Heights Baptist Church in Florence, Ala., is now accepting resumes for pastor. All full-time and bivocational resumes are desired. Please mail all resumes 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 resume 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 mis-

sions work and missions support, its music ministry, youth ministry and its historic relationship with Campbellsville University. For more information or to submit a resume, 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 resume to: colinebaptist@bellsouth.net or P.O. Box 605, Warrior, AL 35180.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Caloosa Baptist of LaBelle, Fla., a growing, evangelistic church, seeks a versatile leader for our adult choir and other music ministries. The best candidates will be comfortable with traditional and contemporary music and competent in technology. Send resumes to: drkmorgan@gmail.com.

PART-TIME OR BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER: Ashby Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking someone to come and lead our worship. Experienced in contemporary and blended worship services. Please send resume to: Bob Hodges at eleinspector@yahoo.com, or P.O. Box 22, Brierfield AL 35035.

YOUTH PASTOR: Full-time. Duties include evangelizing middle school and high school age youth through a balanced program of ministry and recreation. Please send resume 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 resumes to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

PART-TIME/BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER: Montevallo First Baptist Church is seeking a part-time/bivocational youth minister. If interested please call Dr. Terry Sutton, pastor, at 205-665-2566.

CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time children's di-

rector to work with our 1st through 6th grade students. Please e-mail resumes to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Baptist Church at McAdory in McCalla is seeking a part-time children's minister. Send resume 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

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

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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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.

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Legacy

SEPTEMBER 2011

By Bob Dewhurst,
ABCH VP, Ministry Development

"But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

1 Timothy 5:8 (ESV)

This is one of the strongest condemnations in the Scriptures reserved for the individual who has not provided for those who are financially dependent upon him.

Minor children, aged parents, and our spouse are among those who are dependent upon us for financial support, and if we do not meet that obligation, we are subject to God's condemnation. This verse does not talk about prospering, it talks about providing for. And it is silent concerning those who have grown up and left the household. This is a dependency verse. Just because someone is not financially dependent upon us does not mean that we cannot give them everything we have. But we should also consider others who may be financially dependent on us: our church, missionaries and ministries serving the least of these.

But all our giving — whether present gifts, or future gifts in a will or estate plan — must also be done from a heart of love. John 3:16 "For God so loved . . . that He gave," sets the pattern for all of our giving.

There is another reason why people give, and that is tradition. For the Christian, I do not believe this is a valid reason. If giving is not made because of dependency or love, then we have probably missed God's plan of stewardship over what He has entrusted to us.

And if we have missed God's plan, what have we gained? Please take a minute to answer the following questions.

1. When you established your present will or estate plan, did you realize that God was the owner of all, and was your estate plan designed under the direction of the Holy Spirit? Yes No

2. Do you have a durable power of attorney to manage property in case of incompetency prior to death? Yes No

3. Has your will/estate plan been reviewed within the last three years? Yes No

4. Do you have a letter of instructions for the distribution of household goods and personal effects? Yes No

5. Have you considered the many advantages of a living trust? Yes No

6. Have there been substantial changes in people, property or plans since your estate plan was made? Yes No

7. Have you done everything possible to avoid future interpersonal conflicts among family members? Yes No

8. Is the ownership of your property coordinated with your estate documents? Yes No

9. Have you provided for guardianship and property management for minor children? Yes No

10. Are you totally comfortable with your existing will or estate plan? Yes No

If you answered "no" to any of the above questions, it's important that your will or estate plan be reviewed.

You can find resources to help you provide for those dependent upon you at www.alabamachild.org/resources, or by scanning the QR code on this page. You can also gain additional information by emailing me at bdewhurst@abchome.org or calling 1-888-720-8805.



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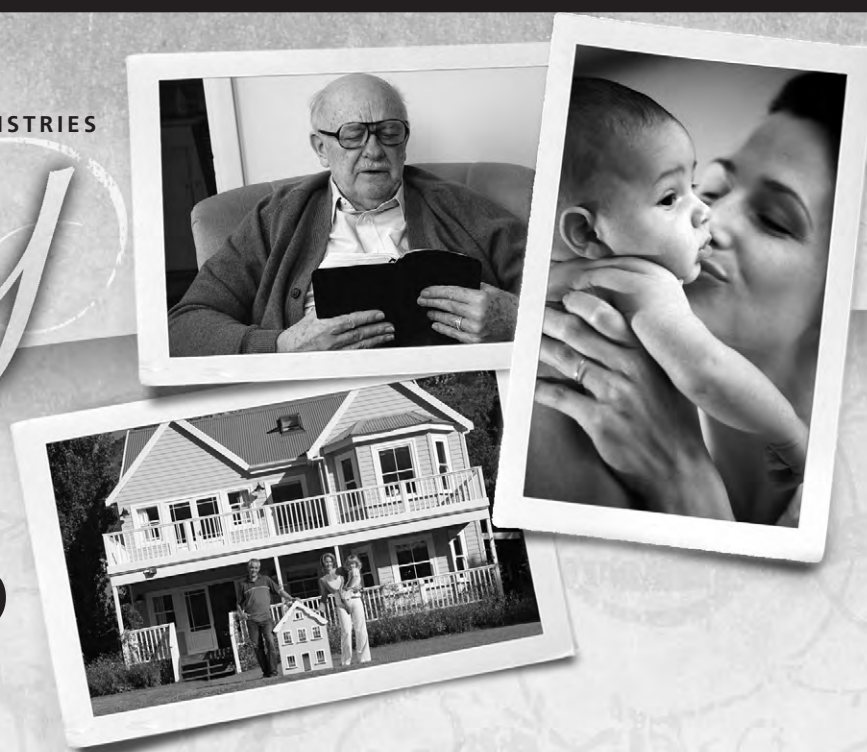
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 11

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen

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

GOOD NEWS TO HEAR Romans 2:1-11; 3:21-26

God Is Patient With Us (2:1-5)

In the end of Chapter 1, Paul established that God is going to judge all men who do wrong and there is no excuse. Even those who have never heard the gospel are condemned because Paul here pointed out that men are without excuse because everyone has some idea of what God desires (see Romans 1:19-20). However, Paul turned his attention to the Jews, who did have divine Scripture but still failed to live lives pleasing to God. Those who passed judgment on others were guilty of doing the same things that these Gentiles did. God doesn't like hypocritical judgment; Jesus Christ Himself stated this in Matthew 7:1-5. Often we are critical of those who are guilty of sinning in the same way that we sin. David's indignation at Nathan the prophet's story is a reminder of such a situation. David was angry over the same sin of which he was guilty. And if we agree, as Paul established in the end of Chapter 1, that such sinners are guilty, then we have to admit that we are guilty and face God's judgment. For the Jews, who had the special revelation from God in the Scriptures and yet did not turn to Him, revealed in Christ, God's wrath awaited just as it awaited the Gentiles who rejected the truth about Him and chose to live lives however they wanted, living for themselves instead of Him. Thankfully, for all of us, God is patient and anyone can turn to Him at anytime. It is never too late for anyone to accept Christ as Savior.

God Is Impartial Toward Us (2:6-11)

Paul, having established that God will judge, now showed how He will judge. God is going to judge based upon what each person has done. Paul was not changing his mind about how people are saved; he's not teaching that salvation is by works, overturning what he had already clearly stated in Romans 1:16-17. Even later in Romans 3:20, Paul asserted that righteousness does not come by observing the law. Rather what Paul was stating here is that God will judge people by whether they have followed His will, which is living according

to faith and performing works in accordance with faith. How does one live this way? By doing works such as helping the poor, feeding the hungry, taking care of the sick, etc. These are all clearly laid out by Jesus in the Gospels as well as the prophets in the Old Testament. True faith will be lived out. One cannot claim to have faith and yet have no works that demonstrate as much. God does not show partiality. Many people compare themselves to others and think that God will judge them based upon some sort of curve, as if not being as bad as someone else is a basis for going to heaven. But we are all sinful and separated from God, so He judges us all the same, by whether we have accepted Christ as Savior.

God Offers to Forgive Us (3:21-26)

Leading up to these verses, Paul established that no one is righteous. Both Jews and Gentiles alike were guilty of sin. Paul even asserted that obedience to the law does not make one righteous. If this is the case, then what hope is there for mankind? Paul avowed that righteousness from God has been revealed by Him, prophesied by the prophets of old; this righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. This is the good news of the gospel; everyone has sinned and therefore deserves condemnation. But when we put our confidence in Christ to forgive our sins, this makes us right before God.

Previously God had passed over the sins of others, but this was only a temporary action. God is just. He will not allow any sins to go unpunished. It is obvious in the Old Testament, just as it is for us today, that often wicked people prosper. This does not mean that God is not going to judge them. He is just and punishes sin. Those who died before Christ will be judged as well. Those faithful God-fearers of the Old Testament who looked forward to the coming of Christ will be rewarded, and those wicked individuals who rejected God and were disobedient will be punished.

Christ's death is the demonstration of God's justice. Christ died for the sins of mankind, but the salvation that this brings is applied only to those who believe in and place their trust in Him.

Bible Studies for Life By Eric Mathis

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

GROW IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY 2 Timothy 3:1-17

Last week, we reflected on the importance of community, emphasizing that community is vital, cares for its own and leads to God's blessing. In this week's study, we turn our thoughts from communal growth to individual growth by considering the ways each person can grow in spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity is a process rather than a product. This concept may be difficult to grasp, as our culture of mass production and consumption frequently seeks maximum results with minimal efforts. We would do well to remember that spiritual maturity is acquired over a period of time. It comes as the cumulative result of practicing the Christian life with consistency and repetition.

Make Good Choices (1-9)

Second Timothy 3:1-17 reminds us of three Christian practices that will foster our spiritual maturity: exercising discernment, following good examples and studying God's Word. This chapter's first verses provide a list of vices (2-8) that stand in direct contrast to more respectable virtues provided in the previous chapter. By providing a list of vices, the writer described the immoral behavior Timothy should avoid. Individuals whose lives are defined by such vices will not make progress; their lives will become as foolish as Jannes and Jambres, Egyptian magicians who tried to recreate the miracles of Moses and Aaron.

This list of vices is to be compared to the list of virtues given at the end of Chapter 2 (vv. 24-26). There Paul said the Lord's servant must be kind to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, gentle toward opponents and repentant. Such virtuous behavior imitates God's ways and marks the life of an individual seeking to follow Christ's ways while living in the world. Christians are to make good choices, and the first step in choosing wisely is recognizing and avoiding unwise choices and patterns of living.

Follow Good Examples (10-13)

After warning against immoral behavior, Paul began his final admonishment to Timo-

thy and all those who suffer for the gospel. Timothy observed multiple aspects of Paul's life: his teaching, conduct, faith, patience, love and steadfastness. These characteristics are to be followed as a resource for Christian living and remind us that learning about other Christians' lives and stories can be a resource for spiritual maturity.

Unfortunately the example of Paul's life reminds us that pursuing a virtuous life does not come without hardship. Just as Paul suffered in his work, so might we encounter trials and persecution when pursuing a godly life in Christ. However, Paul reminded Timothy that God rescued him from every persecution. This was sure to provide Timothy and us with an assurance that God can and will provide a way out of hardship for His people.

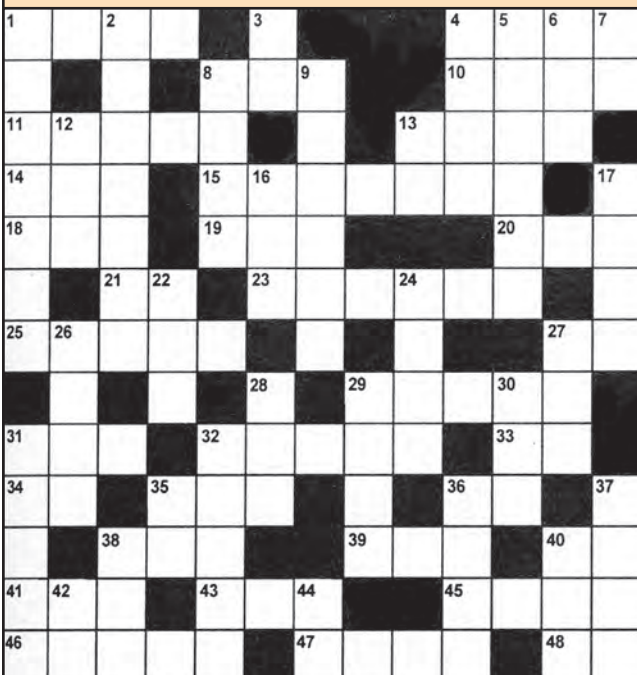
Study Scripture (14-17)

Beyond discernment and people, a final source for spiritual maturity is the study of Scripture. Paul reminded Timothy that he had Scripture's guidance since his youth and it has instructed him in the ways of salvation. Paul's primary emphasis in this passage was the utilitarian nature of Scripture, which provides all of God's people with the resources they need to pursue His work in the world. This includes teaching, reproof, correction and training so Christians can grow in faith and respond appropriately to those who oppose Christian doctrine. Because the God who continues to live and move within us inspired Scripture, we should be prepared for increased knowledge as we read, study and proclaim His Word. Ultimately this will lead to our continued transformation as we seek to mature spiritually.

In closing this week's lesson, we would all do well to remember last week's lesson once more — community is vital. Though we are each in different stages of spiritual maturity and must accrue virtues of the Christian life individually, the broader Christian community can provide us with fellow travelers for accountability and encouragement. May we find ourselves maturing together and consistently growing in the God who works tirelessly to complete and equip us for every good work.

Christian Crossword

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Across

- To carry something.
- Call thy land ___ ah. (Isa. 62:4)
- Shish___ob.
- Seen his star in the _____. (Matt. 2:2)
- Him only shalt thou _____. (Matt. 4:10)
- To go on a ____.
- Also.
- Thy word ... I will ____ it. (Ps. 119:105-106)
- Anna. (var.)
- Just a little bit.
- Samuel ran unto _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)
- Printer's measure.
- That my joy might ____ in you. (John 15:11)
- Gives medicine to.
- In the country of _____. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Praises.
- A little while, and ye shall not ____ me. (John 16:16)
- To tie a rope off.
- As he ____ pure.

- (1 John 3:3)
- Not B.C.
- They ____ the ship aground. (Acts 27:41)
- To exist.
- Give ____, all ye inhabitants. (Joel 1:2)
- Parent Teacher Association. (abbr.)
- A two year college degree.
- Medical specialty. (abbr.)
- To rest.
- Better ... he were ____ into the sea. (Mark 9:42)
- Or the ____, be not darkened. (Eccles. 12:2)
- I have fed you with _____. (1 Cor. 3:2)
- Professional engineer. (abbr.)
- Thou shalt not ____ false witness. (Ex. 20:16)
- What cannibals do.
- Teach Judah the ____ of the bow. (2 Sam. 1:18)
- Light. (abbr.)
- When I ____ silence. (Ps. 32:3)
- Or touch the _____. (Ex. 19:12)
- Length of time.
- To perform something.
- Cut off his right _____. (Luke 22:50)
- Lord of lords, and ____ of kings. (Rev. 17:14)
- Cast the ____ on the right side of the ship. (John 21:6)
- When fowls came Abram drove them _____. (Gen. 15:11)
- Ephlal begat _____. (1 Chron. 2:37)
- Office of Strategic Services. (abbr.)
- ____ men that were lepers. (Luke 17:12)
- Thy word is a ____ unto my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
- That we may ____ with him. (John 11:16)
- Jesus ____.
- So shall thy ____ be filled. (Prov. 3:10)
- Egyptian sun god.
- Rolled ____ the stone. (Matt. 28:2)
- Jesus also suffered without the _____. (Heb. 13:12)
- Estimated Time of Arrival. (abbr.)
- Snake.
- New Testament. (abbr.)
- Not a.m.



Service-learning tradition

Judson's Rose Sunday focuses on showing Christ's love

Participants in Judson College's 96th annual Rose Sunday service Aug. 29 were happy to find a clear morning, though very warm, as they walked the few blocks from the college to Siloam Baptist Church, Marion.

Students donned white gloves and many wore hats for the traditional procession and worship service marking the commencement of the new academic year that began Aug. 24.

Rose Sunday was first observed on Sept. 19, 1915, but has its origins much earlier in a practice begun by the founder and first college president, Milo P. Jewett. Jewett underscored the value of worship by walking with students to Siloam Baptist every Sunday.

Judson seniors began the day, appropriately in front of Jewett Hall, by passing through a woven ivy chain, crafted and held by the underclassmen in their honor — another long-standing tradition at the college. Each senior wore her academic regalia and a single red rose — the college's signature flower.

David Potts, Judson president, then lead the procession to the church for worship.

Members of Siloam Baptist met earlier in the day in order to accom-



Photo by Bill Mathews

NEW YEAR — Senior Miriam Hart (left), of Tallassee, is pinned with a red rose by Faith Williams, of Crossville, before students processed to Siloam Baptist Church.

modate the Judson students, faculty and staff at the traditional late morning worship time.

As has been his custom in his presidential address, Potts brought laughter from the crowd by reading some "general regulations" from early college catalogues.

Students were allowed to spend no more than 50 cents per month from their "pocket money." Letters were subject to inspection unless written to parents or guardians, and two offenses merited expulsion:

dipping snuff and "communicating with unmarried gentlemen."

Potts then turned to the purpose of the day, noting that the college's founders "sat where you sit today."

"They were people who understood service and humility," Potts said. "The founders created organizations that made important differences in the minds, hearts and souls of the people around them. We would do well to follow their examples in our time."

Potts noted that surveys find today's young people less inclined to evangelical faith because, in their view, Christians are loud and judgmental. He urged students to adopt a lifestyle of humility and service, and to do so in the imitation of Christ.

"Humility is the antidote for hypocrisy, for being judgmental," Potts said.

Potts praised the service-learning tradition of the college and urged students to continue to reach out to their community.

"Service demonstrates Christ's love in our 'me-first' culture," he said. "Let us remind those around us that as Christ followers we 'come not to be served, but to serve.' Let us apply our minds and hearts to edifying and lifting the spirits of those lost in a dark and dying world." (JC)



Barry Cosper, director of missions for Tallapoosa Baptist Association, led a team of 12 to Australia July 4-18.

Team members assisted in leading the first Vacation Bible School in the history of Hawkesbury Valley Baptist Church in Sydney. They also held evangelism-training courses in other local churches.

"Although a great deal of what he (Cosper) spoke about was not new to us here in Australia, it was the extraordinary enthusiasm and methodology he outlined that made his presentation to us all now think of how we do the Lord's work here," said Tony Harvey, who attended a session at Glosodia Community Anglican Church in Sydney.

Cosper said the team was focused on walking alongside the churches and helping them in any way possible.

"I wanted to make sure that we connected with them and that their week was positive and productive and God just blessed it," he said.

Richard Parker, minister of youth and education for First Baptist Church, Russellville, led

a team of 30 students and 11 adults to Rochester, N.Y., July 9-15 to work with Partners in Community Development, a nonprofit organization that provides on-site activities and services to apartment communities.

This was the 21st consecutive year a team from the Franklin Baptist Association church traveled to the area.

The team worked in The Pines of Perinton, a multihousing area in Fairport with about 1,000 residents. It hosted a day camp and a night camp with a hot dog supper for 120 participants. Two children accepted Christ.

About 15 children have parents who participated in the day camp when it first started, Parker said.

Plans for a team to return next year are already under way.

First Baptist Church, Pell City, in St. Clair Baptist Association sent a team of nine to Nicaragua to host medical clinics and backyard Bible clubs and serve meals in several communities July 24-31.

The team also held women's Bible studies and passed out

Bibles donated by the Gideon's.

"The most important thing we can do is share the gospel. Even if [people] can't experience material blessing, they can have hope in heaven," Myra Courtney said, reflecting on the trip.

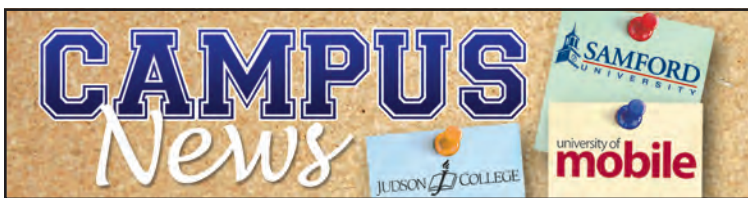
A team of seven from First Baptist Church, Pell City, in St. Clair Baptist Association traveled to Kenya July 16-24. It worked with pastors at several church plants and hosted medical clinics.

While the clinics were held, those who were not a part of the medical team shared the gospel with the people who flocked to the clinics.

"If we're faithful to sow the Word of God, He'll be faithful to reap the harvest," said Frank Hopson, who led the team.

Hopson said the team focused on teaching basic truths and stories from the Bible, as many of the Kenyans they encountered tend to integrate teachings from various religions.

Another team will go to Kenya in October to focus on church-planting efforts.



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Music Fraternity Receives National Honors:** The Judson College Delta Psi chapter of the Delta Omicron International Music Fraternity was recently awarded highest honors by the parent organization. International President Jennifer A. Klafeta issued certificates to the Judson chapter recognizing "excellence" and "highest efficiency." According to its website, Delta Omicron was founded in 1909 and seeks to promote and support excellence in music and musicianship. Music professor Betty Campbell is faculty advisor for the Judson chapter.

► **Judson Students Take to the Streets for Marion Matters:** On Aug. 26, Judson College students participated in the seventh annual Marion Matters, a communitywide service blitz that culminated the college's Welcome Week for its 174th academic session.

Twenty-three teams of students traveled throughout the area for three hours of volunteer work. "The main purpose of Marion Matters is to encourage the new students to get involved in the community and to set the tone for service-learning," said Susan Jones, Judson's director of faith-based service-learning. Jones said the incoming freshmen get a new interaction that they don't get inside a classroom and the community is helped. Judson President David Potts thanked the students for their work at the wrap-up session at the Marion Depot.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Visit Day Set at UMobile:** University of Mobile invites prospective students to attend Visit Day on Sept. 23. Visit Day begins at 8:30 a.m. and includes a campus tour, messages from the faculty and campus activities with current students. A \$2,000 Visit Scholarship is also available for participants. This scholarship is awarded to current high school seniors who register and attend this event, apply for admission and enroll for the Spring 2012 semester. This scholarship awards \$250 per semester up to eight consecutive semesters attended. Only one UMobile Visit Scholarship is available per person. For more information or to register, visit www.umobile.edu/visit or call 251-442-2222.

► **'Bionic Devices' Art Exhibit Held at UMobile:** The work of artist Crystal Wagner will be displayed in an exhibition titled "Bionic Devices" in the University of Mobile's Martin Hall Gallery until Sept. 30. The gallery is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

A special artist talk will be held Sept. 22 at 1:30 p.m. with a reception following at 2:30 p.m. in Martin Hall Gallery.

As combinations of drawing, printmaking, collage and sculpture, the works "reference schematic illustrations or scientific diagrams and speak to the functionality of singularity in this context: one part lending substance to another, one operation fueling another, one piece building another," Wagner said.

For more information, call Phillip Counselman, assistant professor of art and director of Martin Hall Gallery, at 251-442-2283 or e-mail pcounsel@umobile.edu.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Appoints New Associate Dean in School of Business:** Chad Carson has been appointed as associate dean of the Samford University Brock School of Business. Carson will serve as the chief operating officer, handling the day-to-day operations of the school. He will oversee the budget and will work closely with faculty and staff on how to continuously improve the school. Carson has been a faculty member with the school since 2004 and has taught a variety of classes. He also consults with businesses on human resources management issues, training issues and leadership transition issues.

► **Preview Day Set at Samford:** Samford University will hold the first of three fall Preview Days for prospective students Sept. 17. The event will offer a glimpse of the campus experience and provide information on the admission process, scholarships and financial aid, academic offerings and activities. Campus tours will be given. Registration check in will begin at 8 a.m. in the Wright Center, with the program starting at 8:30 a.m. Events will conclude with a noon lunch on the quadrangle.

Other Preview Days are scheduled for Oct. 15 and Nov. 5.

For information and online registration, visit admission.samford.edu or call the office of admission at 205-726-3673.



Photo courtesy of Provident Label Group

MAKING A DIFFERENCE — Third Day band members (l to r) Mark Lee, Mac Powell, David Carr and Tai Anderson hope their songs remind believers to reflect Christ through their words and actions.

Call to action

Third Day hopes to connect people to Christ with its music

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For the Christian rock band Third Day, “Move” is more than just the title of its latest CD. It’s a call to action — to be Christ’s hands and feet, extend kindness and make a difference.

“I would love for believers to listen to these songs and be inspired to do greater things for the Kingdom,” lead singer Mac Powell said.

“As people are listening to these songs, I hope it reminds believers to reflect Christ through their words and actions. We definitely want our songs to uplift people, but we also wanted to make believers ponder, reflect and pray.

“So we addressed topics that non-Christians probably ask themselves a lot. We tackled subjects like ‘What do non-Christians see when they look inside church

walls? Are we effectively living out the gospel and ministering outside the church walls?”

“It’s our desire that the songs on this album will encourage people to be who God’s called them to be while sharing His love with those in need.”

For more than a decade, the band has reached audiences with songs filled with messages of God’s glory and redemption.

Along the way, it has garnered multiple honors, including an American Music Award, four Grammy Awards, 24 Dove Awards from the Gospel Music Association and 27 No. 1 hits. Third Day has sold more than 7 million albums.

It has been featured on “The Tonight Show,” “60 Minutes” and “Nightline;” covered in *USA Today* and *The New York Times*; and on the cover of *Billboard Magazine*.



Despite the accolades, the band keeps the spotlight shining on Christ.

Its concerts have benefited missions organizations and relief efforts, such as Habitat for Humanity, Blood:Water Mission and World Vision.

“Our purpose is to connect people to Christ,” Powell said.

“One of our new songs, ‘Children of God,’ was inspired by 1 John 3, which focuses on God’s great love for His children.

“That’s a message we really want to share with audiences — no matter who you are, where you are from or what you’ve done in life, you can still be called a child of God.

“We want to emphasize to audiences that all they have to do is accept the free gift of salvation and God’s great love is waiting to welcome them with arms wide open.

“As we look back on the history of Third Day and all the accomplishments that we’ve been blessed to earn and receive, the best thing is knowing that thousands of lives have been changed for the better and with the assurance of salvation.”

For more information, visit www.thirdday.com.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Sudanese Christian girl tortured, traumatized

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Hiba Abdelfadil Anglo, 16, has escaped from a gang of Muslims who kidnapped her last year, but it may be a long time before she recovers from the trauma.

As she told how the kidnapers beat, raped and tried to force her to convert from Christianity to Islam, she broke into tears for nearly half an hour. Abducted June 17, 2010, she was reunited with her family July 10.

“Several times, I was warned that if I do not convert to Islam, then I risk losing my life,” she said. “The man who put me in his house on several occasions tortured me and threatened to kill me. He did not allow me to pray Christian prayers. He even insulted my family as a family of infidels.”

Hiba said after a year of captivity, she had given the unidentified man who housed her enough of an impression that she had converted to Islam and accepted her fate that he left her unguarded. She was able to leave the house in the Soba Al Aradi area south of Khartoum and beg a motorist to take her to her home two hours away, she said.

Her widowed mother, Ikhlas Omer Anglo, said the kidnapers targeted them because they are Christians, members of Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Khartoum. She was initially locked in a room and beaten until she was unconscious. The leader of the group raped her, and she is still suffering pain in her right eye from a blow he recently dealt her, she said.

“Apart from abusing me sexually, he tried to force me to change my faith and kept reminding me to prepare for Ramadan,” she said. “I ask believers to pray for me for inner healing.”

Blast near Syrian Catholic church in Iraq injures 13

KIRKUK, Iraq — An Aug. 2 car blast outside a Syrian Catholic church in Kirkuk left 13 wounded as police located and disarmed two more car bombs targeting churches in the city, according to area sources.

Online video images of the attack against the Holy Family Church showed one of its walls blasted open and all its surfaces covered with broken glass, rubble and dust from the entrance, where the explosion took place, to the sanctuary at the far end of the building.

The blast occurred on the second day of the monthlong Muslim fasting period of Ramadan. Nearby houses in one of Kirkuk’s oldest quarters were seriously damaged, and cars on the street were left in twisted piles of metal. All but one of the wounded residents in the church’s neighborhood — an elderly man who was seriously injured — reportedly had been released from the hospital by Aug. 4. No terrorist or extremist group has taken responsibility for the attack, and local church leaders said it seems Christians in Iraq are trapped in a senseless game of power and intimidation.

“Sometimes we feel there is some pressure over the Christians all over Iraq to make them leave their cities and go to the northern part of Iraq, to Kurdistan,” said a pastor on condition of anonymity, “but who knows? I can’t say those who did this want us to leave our city.”

Authorities also located two other cars full of explosives in the area.

Uzbek Christians endure fines, Bible destruction

FERGANA, Uzbekistan — Police who raided a Protestant family’s private home in Fergana assaulted the husband and confiscated religious literature, local Protestants said.

The religious books are being checked, and officials are preparing an administrative case against the husband and wife and a family friend. When the police inspector who led the raid was asked what literature found in their home was banned, he identified the Bible and the New Testament.

Courts in the capital Tashkent and eastern Syrdarya region have handed down fines of up to 100 times the minimum monthly wage to 10 Protestants to punish them for unregistered activity. In both cases, the courts ordered that confiscated Christian literature — including Bibles and New Testaments — be destroyed. Officials of the state Religious Affairs Committee refused to explain why peaceful religious activity continues to be punished and why courts order the destruction of religious literature.

“I am no expert in those matters, and you called the wrong department,” said Zulhaydar Sultanov, head of the International Relations Department.

**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.