

INSIDE



One of SBC's oldest representatives continues to serve at 78

◆ Page 4



New York church planters pray, plant seeds after 9/11; 80 church plants take root

◆ Page 7



American Character Builders releases new resource kits geared toward students

◆ Page 13

Reaching today's Gypsies

Southern Baptists in Macedonia work to give Roma people roots in Christ

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

The tattered blanket hanging loosely in the doorway of the cinder-block house does little to keep the shouting inside from drifting out into the dusty streets of Dame Gruev.

The set of lungs belongs to a grandmother who sits in the bare one-room house that only has one chair — the one in front of the computer.

She's video Skyping with family members elsewhere. Romania. England. Could be anywhere — they move a lot. A neighbor is courting a girl in Germany over the Internet — he's only met her via video but it's getting serious. She might move soon and marry him.

Welcome to Gypsy life in the technology age.

Abbey Hammond and Jessica Burke sit on cushions in the floor of the grandmother's house, sipping juice while she explains to the men on the video call why there are Americans in the background.

It's intriguing to them. Puzzling, even.

Roma — about 200,000 strong in Macedonia — tend to be a cast-off people in every European country they alight in. They're known here in the bustling capital city of Skopje for driving horse or pedal carts in traffic and rummaging through trash bins for plastic, metal and cardboard to sell.

But several times a week, Hammond, Burke and other Southern Baptist representatives walk the dirt roads of Dame Gruev and two other Roma neighborhoods in Skopje. They greet the people there by name, have coffee in their homes, talk about life and talk about Jesus.

"They are excited about having Americans in their home, so that's a great way to get to know them initially. But as I get to know them, I want them to get to the point where they see Jesus instead of me," Hammond said. "I think they know how much I love them, but I want them to see that it's not my love. It's God's love



IMB photo

BRINGING HOPE — Southern Baptist representative Abbey Hammond (right) talks with Roma gathered in the streets of the Dame Gruev neighborhood of Skopje, Macedonia.

for them that He lets me show them."

It's not easy — Roma in Macedonia are, for the most part, nominally Muslim. In other countries, the people group has sometimes lined up its identity with the predominant faith of the land — Catholicism and Orthodoxy to Islam and animism. But to be Roma in Macedonia is to be Muslim, even if their religion doesn't impact their lives at all.

"I'll eventually figure it out. I'll cover my head and go to the mosque and pray when I'm 40," one Roma woman told Hammond and Burke as they talked with her in her home.

She puffed on a cigarette and gave it a moment's thought. "No, when I'm 50. Forty is too soon."

Lack of religion

They may not know much about their religion, but they do know Jesus Christ isn't part of it. And they think that to turn to Jesus would make them Macedonian instead of Roma — Macedonian people are, for the most part, Eastern Orthodox.

But it happens sometimes.

In the summer when the small Roma homes get tight and sweltering, everyone congregates outside for

a breeze, and Burke's husband, B.T., said he can walk around and meet hundreds of people.

"Jesus is not something people are opposed to conversing about if you establish relationships with them, so I've tried to do that and have that conversation as much as I can," he said.

He's sat in their homes and visited them when family members were in the hospital, and once he labored alongside a Roma family to help build their house. "I tried to deepen and build relationships and gain respect in the community, and as soon as I found

(See 'Roma,' page 4)

State disaster relief teams mop up after recent storms

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

First Hurricane Irene dumped water along the East Coast, and then Tropical Storm Lee flooded parts of the Gulf Coast. So Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams are among the many Southern Baptist disaster relief teams mopping up (see story, page 3).

At press time, 11 disaster relief teams had been deployed to Vermont, North Carolina and parts of

Alabama. Other teams are on standby.

Tom Berry led a team from Mud Creek Baptist Association to Montpelier, Vt., to do mud-out and cleanup/recovery ministry. Along with three seasoned disaster relief veterans, Berry has a newly trained team member, Barbara Wise. Although Wise completed her training only two weeks ago, she was excited about the opportunity to go to Vermont.

"This is an adventure for me," Wise

said. "I hope to learn more, but even more important, I hope to lead someone to the Lord."

Ronald Bobo said he was "packed and ready to go" when the call came for his West Cullman Baptist Association team to deploy to Greenville, N.C. The team is doing mud-out and cleanup/recovery work for flood victims.

"We just want to help people," Bobo said.

(See 'Alabama,' page 3)

COMMENT

What Is a Cooperating Baptist Church?

Critics of Southern Baptists frequently assert that a church has to “buy” a seat at the table in order to participate in the life of an association, a state convention or the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). They are referring to the emphasis placed on missions giving through the Cooperative Program (CP) and special offerings. Southern Baptists have long advocated that churches give at least 10 percent of undesignated receipts to missions through the CP.

When the CP was first formed in 1925, the expectation was that churches would give 50 percent of undesignated receipts to missions causes, which would allow state conventions to forward 50 percent of their receipts to the SBC.

Critics charge this emphasis on giving proves that a church has to “buy” a seat at the table in order to participate in the corporate life of Southern Baptists.

That charge is false.

For the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC), any Baptist church “cooperating with the convention” is eligible to send messengers to the annual meeting. That has been the convention’s practice since its founding in 1823. The first constitution used the phrase “in good standing” to describe those eligible to send “delegates” (now known as messengers) to the annual meeting.

For the SBC, any Baptist church in “friendly cooperation” with the convention and “sympathetic with its purposes and work” is eligible to send messengers to the annual meeting. The SBC does require a church to be a “bona fide contributor” to the convention’s work but does not specify a minimum amount of giving or the channel for giving.

It also should be remembered that neither the state nor national convention ever votes on a church’s membership in its body. A church takes the initiative to send messengers. Challenges to seating messengers do occur from time to time, but they are as rare as hen’s teeth. Challenges usually relate to a church’s doctrinal beliefs and not its giving record.

A church cooperating with the ABSC may or may not belong to a local association. A church may or may not participate with the SBC. Likewise a church may participate with the SBC and not the state convention or may even belong to an association but not the state or national convention.

In Alabama, there are examples of all of the above scenarios.

Through the years, no one has ever defined what it means to “be in cooperation with the convention”



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

or “sympathetic with its purposes and work.” Basically it is left to the local church to determine if it considers itself in cooperation or sympathy with the state or national convention. That includes doctrinal teachings, the way churches work together (polity) and the emphases and programs the conventions promote.

Importance of giving

Still giving is important. The apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:18, “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” A church “in cooperation with the convention” and “sympathetic with its purposes and work” will want to support that work with giving. That is why both the SBC and the ABSC provide for expanded participation in annual meetings based on contributions to the work sponsored by the respective bodies.

In Alabama, a cooperating church is entitled to a second messenger if it contributes between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to Baptist causes. Additional messengers are earned at \$2,000 increments after that up to a maximum of 25 messengers.

The SBC still uses the dollar amount established in 1845 for additional messengers — \$250 for each messenger up to a maximum of 10 messengers. That means that over the years, the importance of financial support of Baptist causes has diminished in relationship to participation.

One study sets the value of an 1845 dollar at \$23.275 in today’s currency. If that study is correct, then to keep the same value, a church today would have to contribute \$5,818.75 to Baptist causes before earning a second messenger to the annual meeting.

Evidently the SBC’s founders were serious about including all cooperating churches in the convention’s fellowship and encouraging those churches to support the convention’s work financially. When one considers that all the work supported by the ABSC in 1845 drew contributions of only \$2,239.84, according to the treasurer’s report, one realizes the SBC’s expectation set a high bar.

In 2010, only about 1,000 of the 3,256 churches listed as cooperating with the ABSC gave at least \$5,818.75 to Baptist causes through the

CP. Fewer than 500 churches gave between that amount and \$3,500, and about 1,800 churches gave less than \$3,500.

More than 600 churches reported giving nothing financially to missions causes through the CP or giving information was not available.

Of the 1,800 churches giving less than \$3,500, more than 800 gave more to support Baptist work through designated offerings than they gave through the CP.

Again it is not CP giving that is used to determine additional messengers from a church. It is the total financial support of the cooperative work done by the respective conventions.

If the SBC today called for the same level of financial support sought in 1845, then participation and leadership in the convention might be much different than they are.

The question “What is a cooperating Baptist church?” remains unanswered, perhaps on purpose. Any answer involves doctrine, polity and program. Any answer keeps the initiative with the local church. And any answer calls for “bona fide” financial support of what Baptists do together. As John wrote, it is not enough to just say the right words. One’s words must be confirmed through actions.

A church that claims to “be in cooperation with the convention” and “sympathetic with its purposes and work” will want to back those words up with financial support. When that is done, there is no question about whether a church is a cooperating Baptist church.



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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. **Web site:** www.thealabamabaptist.org **E-mail:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and other locations.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairwoman Jane Bellew, Bobby Bright, Bobby J. “Bob” Forbus, George A. Foust, Craig Gault, Rosalie Hall Hunt, Helen W. Mayo, Allan Murphy, Jim Oakley, Larry Patterson, Wayne Randall, Bradley Rushing, Steve Scoggins, Paula Vick Stacey, Judy Stiefel, James “Jim” Warren, Rick Lance (ex-officio), Mike Shaw (ex-officio).

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY, EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash, Executive Editor

Neisha Fuson, News Writer Kathleen Penton, Copy Editor
Lauren C. Grim, Designer Wanda Bergeron, Local Editions
Linda Harrison, Financial Admin. Brian Giles, Advertising Director
Debbie Campbell, Director of Circulation and Public Relations

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

ADDRESS CHANGE: Send old and new addresses, and name of church to Circulation Department, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Allow two weeks.

Follow Bob Terry on

twitter

@drbobterry

Someone You Should Know

By Julie Payne, Correspondent, TAB

Jean Harrison

Dry Valley Baptist Church, Lincoln
Coosa River Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: John 14:6

FAVORITE HYMNS: "He Is So Precious to Me" and "Because He Lives"

HOBBIES: Reading and gardening

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Edward for 63 years; three children, Ava, Stephen and Phillip; seven grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter



HARRISON

Jean Harrison, 85, is retiring as the church treasurer for Dry Valley Baptist Church, Lincoln, after serving for 42 years. She also has taught Sunday School classes for senior adults and children grades 4-6. In addition, Harrison has worked with Girls in Action. "My greatest desire is to love people and see the church in unity and working together," she said.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: My mother was my Sunday School teacher when I was a junior. I realized I was lost and wanted to be saved and be a Christian. The day I was saved was during revival.

Q: What led you to serve in the church?

A: Because I was asked to. The treasurer that we had moved [away]. ... They asked me to be the treasurer and I have just continued.

Q: What has serving required of you?

A: When I first began 42 years ago, it was not as much work. We have a small country church. Through the years, it's grown. I have kept the records and ordered materials, just everything that comes with being church treasurer.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in ministry in the future?

A: As I'm led to and as the Lord leads me and the church asks me to do something, I'll do what I can. My health is not as good as it has been, but I still love to go to church.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

A: He has given me life — from death to life. Knowing that through Him, He gives us eternal life.

'Times of crisis'

No Labor Day holiday for Baptist volunteers responding to flooding, wildfires

Labor Day was no picnic or holiday for dozens of Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers and leaders involved in responses to flooding along the East Coast and in North Dakota and to raging wildfires across Texas.

And these Southern Baptist disaster relief responses to floods and fires were afoot even before Tropical Storm Lee dumped up to a foot of rain along the Gulf Coast areas of Louisiana and Mississippi and then moved northeast, where it spawned tornadoes in Alabama and Georgia — damaging dozens of homes and causing flashfloods in the Atlanta metro area. At least four people died and 16,000 people are without power as a result of Lee, according to The Associated Press.

In the wake of Hurricane Irene, Mike Flannery, state disaster relief director for the New York Baptist Convention and a director of missions in Buffalo, reported recovery work will be a crucial need in upstate New York and north New Jersey, where water levels are receding but are not yet low enough to insert mud-out units.

'Desperate for mud-out units'

"We are desperate for mud-out units," said Flannery, who cited a minimum need for six mud-out teams from other state Baptist conventions.

Flannery also is having to run an educational initiative to train inexperienced New York flood victims who do not know they must gut their homes down to the framing and do mold and mildew removal before reoccupying their houses.

Flannery is coordinating three feeding operations — two in Washingtonville, N.Y., run by New York and Mississippi Baptists, and a second at Trinity Baptist Church, in Schenectady, N.Y., run by 40 feeding volunteers from Kentucky. The Schenectady operation — currently preparing 6,500 daily meals — has the capacity to churn out 15,000 meals a day.

Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers from 25 of the 42 state conventions are assisting in many other disaster relief responses

in the 11 states pounded by Hurricane Irene.

In North Carolina — where 36 counties have been declared disaster areas — Southern Baptist disaster relief has fielded more than 1,200 job requests for mud-out and chain saw work and completed about 600, reported Gaylon Moss, state disaster relief director for the Baptist Convention of North Carolina.

"In North Carolina, four have accepted Jesus as Savior; more than 1,200 volunteer days have been recorded; and about 88,000 hot meals have been prepared," Moss said. Southern Baptist disaster relief units from seven state conventions have responded at 13 separate sites across North Carolina.

Mark Madison of the Baptist Convention of New England said the needs are widespread in that region.

"We really need 12 more mud-out teams as well as chaplain/assessment teams to make an impact," Madison said.

In all, after Hurricane Irene, 375 chain saw and mud-out jobs have been completed; 13 people have made decisions for Christ through 725 gospel presentations and ministry/chaplain contacts; and nearly 2,800 showers and laundry loads have been provided. To date, Southern Baptist disaster relief units have prepared nearly 268,000 meals for Irene's victims, volunteers and responders.

Bruce Poss, disaster relief coordinator for the North American Mission Board, supports Madison, Flannery and others in their desperate pleas for mud-out teams from other parts of the country.

"We have opportunities and needs for more volunteers in New York, New Jersey, Vermont, North Carolina and Texas," Poss said. "We appreciate the many states that have sent teams, but the needs are still there."

Poss said mud-out and feeding continue in Minot, N.D., where 66 salvations have been

documented and 123,000 meals delivered over the last eight weeks.

Not to be overshadowed by Hurricane Irene is an impending major disaster relief response by the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) and the Texas Baptist Men (TBM) in drought-plagued Texas, where 60 wildfires across 100,000 acres throughout the state have destroyed 1,000 homes.

"There are fires all over Texas — around Houston, Austin, Corsicana, Mineral Wells and other locations," said Jim Richardson, SBTC disaster relief director in Grapevine, Texas. "We've served some 5,000 meals to firefighters at Palo Pinto near Mineral Wells and are waiting on word on where to go next."

At least 5,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes in Bastrop County near Austin, and 400 are in emergency shelters. About 500 homes

were lost in Bastrop County alone, he said.

After feeding operations, Richardson said "ash-out" recovery operations will start in areas where homes have burned down.

24-hour-a-day feeding units

Dick Talley, executive director for TBM's disaster relief team in Dallas, said 50 of TBM's Tarrant County feeding volunteers are running a 24-hour-a-day feeding effort for firefighters in Bastrop and providing shower units at Bastrop High School.

"We didn't get a single drop of rain from last weekend's tropical storm (Lee)," Talley said.

Despite the wildfires in the Lone Star State, Talley said TBM is sending two more assessment teams to Vermont, teams to North Carolina and an incident commander to Vermont.

"Just because we have these fires in Texas, that doesn't stop us from serving all over the country," Talley said. (BP)

"We appreciate the many states that have sent teams, but the needs are still there."

Bruce Poss
North American Mission Board

Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams deployed to East Coast

(continued from page 1)



Photo by Gary Hardin

'TESTAMENT OF DEVOTION' — Etowah Baptist Association disaster relief volunteer Glenn Ford locks the trailer as his team prepared to drive to Belhaven, N.C.

A mud-out team from Baldwin Baptist Association and chain saw teams from Chilton and Tuskegee Lee Baptist associations were deployed to the Greenville area as well. Belhaven, N.C., was the site Etowah Baptist Association disaster relief volunteers headed for, while volunteers from Cleburne, Colbert-Lauderdale and Tennessee River Baptist associations traveled to Kinston, N.C.

"This ministry is fantastic," said Butch Hillis, disaster relief coordinator for Colbert-Lauderdale Association. "The rewards are great."

For Hillis, the biggest joy is to see the expression on a homeowner's face when the disaster relief trailer pulls up.

"To see the homeowner smiling lets us know we are in the right place," he said.

Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, called disaster relief "one of the crown jewels of ministry in Southern Baptist life."

"The eagerness of our disaster relief personnel to reach out to those affected by Hurricane Irene is a testament of their devotion to our Savior," Johnson said. "Even though many of our Alabama volunteers have been engaged in various communities throughout our state, as a result of the April 27 tornadoes, they could not refuse this opportunity to go and assist our neighbors in need on the East Coast."

At home, the Birmingham Baptist Association feeding unit was serving meals in Bessemer and a St. Clair Baptist Association team was ministering in Coal City in response to Tropical Storm Lee.

To help with disaster relief efforts, visit www.sldr.org.

One of SBC's oldest representatives continues to serve at 78

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

A few months after Gef Smock was born in Michigan in 1933, she spoke her first words — in the Macedonian language.

But it would be more than 70 years before she would see God use the language she learned from birth to share the gospel with Macedonian people.

"Sometimes I wonder why He waited until I was in my 70s to call me here, but it's His timing, not mine," she said.

Smock, one of the oldest Southern Baptist representatives at age 78, was born to a Macedonian couple living in the United States. Though she grew up fluent in both Macedonian and English, she was ashamed of her Macedonian heritage.

Macedonian roots

"Sometimes we would be out shopping, and my mother would slip into Macedonian, and I would get so embarrassed. I just wanted her to speak English," she said.

So when her mother suggested they take a trip to Macedonia when she was 30, she was less than thrilled. "Paris. London. Shakespeare country. I had all these places in Western Europe I wanted to go. Why would I want to visit Macedonia?"

But she did — and she fell in love with it.

"God completely changed my heart. They were so warm, they

greeted me with flowers and I loved their culture. Suddenly I was proud to be Macedonian," she said.

It would still be a long time before she made it back there to stay.

She married Donald Smock, a U.S. diplomat, and they lived all over the place — everywhere but Macedonia, it seemed. They adopted two children — one, a daughter, from Macedonia — but they never lived there with her. Smock was content in where the Lord took her family, but she always had a fondness for the country that God had led her to love.

Then in 2001, on the Smocks' 33rd wedding anniversary, he passed away. "My kids called thinking they were wishing us a happy anniversary, and I had to say, 'Your dad died,'" Smock said.

Smock still celebrates her wedding anniversary every year. "I go out with friends, do something special," she said.

She's not one to stop loving — or living. Within a year of her husband's passing, Smock had already answered the tug she'd known had been there for a long time — the call to do missions work overseas.

"Someone told me to go to a missions conference, that it would make me feel better," she said. "I listened to the missionaries tell stories, and I knew I needed to go. So when they gave the invitation, I walked down."

She was 70.

People asked, "Are you running away?"

"No," she said. "No, I wasn't. I



IMB photo

AT HOME — Gef Smock (center), one of the oldest Southern Baptist representatives, spends her days teaching literacy classes for the Roma people of Skopje, Macedonia.

knew this was exactly what I was supposed to be doing. All those years of traveling with my husband had prepared me for this, for what God was going to do with me at this age. I was going to go wherever the Lord led."

At first, that wasn't Macedonia. Smock spent three years serving as a high school English teacher for missionary kids in Thailand. And then, through what she said was "the obvious work of God's hand," she ended up in Macedonia.

Now she spends her days teaching literacy courses for the Roma

people of Skopje, Gypsies who live in poverty and sift through trash for recyclable materials to sell.

At night, Smock walks the dusty streets of their neighborhoods and talks with Roma families — families like Susana's.

'A daughter to me'

Susana and her family, like most Macedonian Roma, are nominally Muslim. Also like many Roma, Susana lacks basic education. She is not even able to read or write. As Smock sits and chats with Susana in her meager cinder-block home, she

confesses that she considers Smock a mother to her.

"And she's a daughter to me," Smock says.

Susana's teenage son walks in and sits down on the floor, half listening to the conversation.

"How's the fasting going?" Smock asks him in Macedonian. She knew he had begun fasting for the Muslim month of Ramadan.

"I quit already," he says with a grin. It was only five days into the fast. He doesn't really adhere to Islam, as most Roma don't, but he's not previously been willing to listen to Smock talk about Jesus either. That night, he sat and listened as she explained the gospel in perfect Macedonian for him and for Susana.

"They're very open now," Smock said.

"We're going to start in the Book of John, and I'm going to read the Bible to her and talk more about how to be saved. I think they are ready to hear."

It's these types of relationships Smock is going to have a hard time leaving when she retires in March.

"It has been six great years living among friends and relatives here," said Smock, who spent the first three years serving the Macedonian people and the last three serving the Roma. She will be resettling in Florida at 79, "starting all over," she said.

"I don't want to leave, but I know God is leading me back. He used me here in His timing. Macedonians are my heart." (IMB)

Representatives help hungry Gypsies, hope for entry point for gospel

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

A thin horse waits patiently strapped to a cart just off a busy thoroughfare in Skopje, Macedonia's capital city. As it stands with the imprint of its ribs showing through its skin, its owner pokes through a dumpster looking for plastic bottles, cardboard, metal — anything he can sell. It's what you do when you're poor and hungry.

Roma — about 200,000 strong in Macedonia — live in dusty neighborhoods of small cinder-block houses and sell trash for income. As a decentralized people group scattered across Europe, they are viewed as a cast-off

people in every nation they make their home in.

It's hard for them to see a way out. But Betty Easter is working to change that, a little at a time, with some food, education and the gospel. "Poverty is their life. Seeing human needs on a daily basis can be very trying — we can only do so much. But we are working to meet their immediate needs and share the gospel with them," said Easter, a Southern Baptist representative to the Roma people of south Europe. "It is hard ground but there has to be an era when the beginning work takes place."

That beginning work, for starters, has in-

cluded things like a box of food every week to every family in one Roma village, thanks to Baptist Global Response (BGR). It has also included ongoing education at Sumnal, a community center situated in Topana, a Roma neighborhood.

Education barriers

"For the most part, the Roma haven't had any education, so they can't read. But they also aren't oral learners, because they don't know their own history and haven't had stories to pass down through an oral tradition," Easter said.

"They have not learned how to learn. When new information comes their way ... they don't have an easy means to store and analyze that information. This has a huge impact when sharing the gospel with people who have never considered Jesus Christ."

And that's one reason relationship building is so important, she said — they have to trust the messenger so they have a chance to hear the message over and over.

"We're trying to help with the hopes of getting in," said Karen Blackburn, a Southern Baptist representative to the Roma.

Through the help of BGR and the work of Easter and Blackburn — a nurse by profession — the Roma have had the opportunity for dental care, clinics, health seminars and medicine. In the past, a BGR grant also fed Roma children two meals a day for a year at Sumnal. Southern Baptist representative Abbey Hammond works several days a week at the center writing grant requests,

and Gef Smock helps with English classes.

"What we are doing at Sumnal has worked," Easter said. "With every action, we are sowing seeds that can have a spiritual impact." Blackburn agreed. "Slowly people are becoming more open to the gospel."

The Roma people of Macedonia are "sort of" religious — nominally Muslim, Easter said. In other nations of Europe, the Roma also hold loosely to whatever religion belongs to the area they inhabit — often Catholic or Orthodox.

"We have a series of eight Bible story DVDs we are distributing," Easter said. "Please pray that each person who receives the (first) DVD will play it over and over and request the second DVD in the series."

This, she said, will give her team an opportunity to follow up with those who are interested in hearing more. "These are all strategies with house churches as the end goal," Easter said. "If we spread the Word, God has promised the harvest — we know it will come."

Prayer requests

Easter also asked for Christians to pray:

► For those working among the impoverished to remain sensitive to needs and not grow weary of helping.

► For barriers that darken the hearts and minds of the people (like a lack of education) to be lifted so the gospel can take root.

► For the broad gospel seed sowing the team is doing through the DVD series, that hearts and minds will be open to the Word of God. (IMB)

Roma people 'bold in sharing their faith'

(continued from page 1)

someone interested in studying the Bible, I started a Bible study," he said.

Slowly it grew into a church of Roma believers in Jesus Christ.

"They are bold in sharing their faith, and now they can do the talking among their people," B.T. Burke said.

It surprises Roma when they meet Roma who are Christians — it doesn't add up with what they know.

But sometimes God is surprising like that, Hammond said.

Recently while visiting with a Roma family in their home, she gave them a Bi-

ble, but the father of the family made the women give it back to her.

"He said it was a bad book and they are Roma so they can't have it in their house," she said.

But when a family member was sick soon after, Hammond wrote a card to the wife saying she was praying for them and penned Scripture verses on the card.

"She was so touched she cried — she said it meant a lot to her and she kept it," Hammond said. "God got His Word into their home anyway, in a different way than I expected." (IMB)

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

SBC annuals dating back to 1845 now searchable online

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annuals dating to 1845 now are available online in a searchable PDF format following a joint digitization project by the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA) and Baylor University Central Libraries.

The 154 volumes represent a valuable resource for both scholarly research and personal information, said Bill Sumners, director of the SBHLA. “The SBC annual is a basic document for Southern Baptist history. All the major events that have happened within the convention are documented in the annuals,” Sumners said.

The annual publication records business actions taken during convention gatherings, including entity reports, pertinent statistics, state convention information, and lists of staff, trustees and committees, according to the SBHLA website. A minister list appearing at the end of certain annuals includes pastors, ministers of education, ministers of youth, associate ministers, missions pastors, ordained ministers, chaplains, and evangelists. The partnership project with Baylor began in June 2010, after the SBHLA concluded a two-year project of scanning archived Baptist Press articles dating between 1948 and 1996, Sumners said. The actual scanning of the annuals, funded by Baylor, started in August 2010. The Executive Committee provided funding to make the results searchable and to post them on the Internet in July 2011.

To access the files, visit www.sbhla.org and click on Collections to find “SBC Annuals” on the list. The archives can be searched using names, keywords or phrases.

The files are indexed through Google Search and can be located through that search utility as well.

Cooperative Program contributions below those of 2010

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are 2.1 percent below the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank Page. The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2010–11 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget. As of Aug. 31, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$174,475,554.89, or \$3,742,859.11 behind the \$178,218,414.00 received at the end of August 2010.

Monthly CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$14,377,245.81 while designated gifts received last month amounted to \$5,875,925.30.

Month-to-month swings reflect a number of factors, including the timing of receipts from state conventions. The end-of-month total represents money received by close of business on the last business day of each month. For the SBC CP Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$174,475,554.89 is 95.25 percent of the \$183,170,249.33 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1–Sept. 30 fiscal year.

BWA gives \$10,000 in relief assistance to Caribbean Baptists

WASHINGTON — The world relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance has pledged initial sums of \$10,000 to the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) for relief assistance to victims of Hurricane Irene.

The Atlantic storm, which had reached the level of a category 3 hurricane, affected islands in the Caribbean including Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic), Puerto Rico, the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos; and large sections of the eastern United States including the states of New Jersey, Vermont, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

At least 55 people have died as a result of the hurricane and damage has been estimated in the billions of dollars to businesses, homes, roads, bridges and other structures.

Everton Jackson, executive secretary/treasurer of the CBF, reported “some countries experienced greater levels of devastation than others.” The Turks and Caicos Islands “experienced more flooding than infrastructural damage” while “some Islands in the Bahamas were badly hit.” On Acklins Island in the Bahamas, 90 percent of structures have been damaged, and the local church was destroyed. “It is clear,” Jackson claimed, “that urgent help is needed for the affected areas and people. ... Their immediate needs are for water, tarpaulins, food, and building materials, among other things.”



Photo by Beth Spain

READING RUGS — Union University senior Elissa Weber (left) and sophomore Emily Maggard deliver large reading rugs to classrooms at the old Lloyd Wood Middle School in Northport.

A heart for disaster survivors

Union University volunteer team serves in Tuscaloosa

Knee-high grass surrounded an empty playground at Holt Elementary School outside Tuscaloosa. Though the beginning of the school year was only a few days away, the deserted school showed no indications of pending activity.

But in Northport, Lloyd Wood Middle School was a different story. Custodians were busy cleaning. Teachers were busy working on their classrooms.

And a team of students, faculty and staff from Union University in Jackson, Tenn., was there to help them.

The team of 10 traveled to Tuscaloosa Aug. 3–5 to help the city in its recovery efforts following the April 27 tornado.

“Union has a heart for people who have been through disasters,” said Hunter Baker, associate professor of political science, who was part of the Union group.

Union’s campus was hit by a tornado Feb. 5, 2008, which wiped out 70 percent of student housing and badly damaged six other buildings.

Baker and the rest of the team were assigned by the Tuscaloosa Area Volunteer Reception Center to work at Lloyd Wood Middle. The school building had been closed for a year and was scheduled for demolition.

But the school came to life again when the tornado caused significant damage to Holt Elementary, forcing its relocation. Holt finished out the

year at Lloyd Wood and was preparing for another school year in the same location.

Debbie Crawford, principal of Holt, said more than 500 people showed up the Saturday after the tornado to help the school move, completing the entire task in six hours.

But even with that amount of help from the community, much work remained at Lloyd Wood.

The Union team stripped layers of wax from the cafeteria floor, assembled tables and bookcases, delivered and connected computers and worked with teachers in getting their rooms prepared.

“I could not have made it without them,” Crawford said of the Union volunteers.

Struggling to get ready

“They came in at a time when we were in dire need of help.”

She said the head custodian had been out on sick leave and the school was struggling to get ready for the new academic year.

“They were just a shining star for us,” Crawford said. “That helped us to get our building ready for teachers to come in [Aug. 5] and students to come in [the next] week.”

Elissa Weber, a Union senior and member of City Fellowship Baptist Church, Jackson, Tenn., said the trip made her want to return to Tuscaloosa in the future to help even more.

“Since I’m going to be a teacher, it’s really inspiring to see the community and the church come around them and to help without getting anything in return,” Weber said.

“I admire that a lot in people, and to be a part of that is incredible.”

Northport Baptist Church provided lodging for the Union volunteers. Johnny Nixon, the church’s senior pastor, said the tornado

affected about 15 percent of Tuscaloosa and opened up a door for the church to minister and share the gospel.

He said the willingness of volunteers, like those from Union, to come and help the city in its rebuilding effort was a tremendous encouragement to the local residents.

“To know that you’re not alone, know that there are folks out there that still care, who express that and will come and do real dirty and hard work — and sometimes dangerous work — just to help others, has been remarkable,” Nixon said. (UU)

“I could not have made it without them. They came in at a time when we were in dire need of help.”

Debbie Crawford
Holt Elementary School

Across Alabama's Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► **Barry Bruce** is the new pastor of **First Church, Fultondale**. He has served churches in the greater Birmingham area for 30 years. For the past 20 years, he served as pastor of Philadelphia Church, Birmingham. He holds a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. Bruce also completed a clinical pastoral education residency at Veteran's Affairs Medical Center in Birmingham. A veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, he currently serves as chaplain and bereavement coordinator for Hospice Advantage and as a chaplain generalist for Trinity Medical Center. Bruce and his wife, Joy, have two children and three grandchildren. ► **Dean Shirley** is the new youth pastor for **The Church at Shelby Crossings, Calera**. He is the founder and director of StandOut Ministries and formerly served as youth pastor for Chelsea Bible Church. He holds a bachelor's degree in theology from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham. Shirley and his wife, Ali-



BRUCE

son, have three children. Ken Letson is pastor. ► **Liberty Park Church, Vestavia Hills**, will host the Dove Brothers Quartet along with Skylar Wallace Sept. 22, 6 p.m. Doors will open at 5 p.m. Scott Guffin is pastor. ► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 18. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. The worship service will be at 11 a.m. Jimmy Ray will speak. The Woodalls will sing. Lunch will follow at 12:15 p.m. The Woodalls also will sing at 1:30 p.m. Dale Creel is pastor. ► **First Church, Sandusky**, in Birmingham, will celebrate 125 years of ministry Sept. 18, 10 a.m. Former Pastor Ricky Thacker will speak. Herman Pair is pastor.

BULLOCK-CENTENNIAL

► The churches of **Bullock-Centennial Association** along with other churches in Bullock County will sponsor the Big God Across Bullock County Crusade Sept. 18-21, 7 p.m., at the Conecuh Springs Christian School football stadium. Chip Colee of First Church, Montgomery, will be the celebration choir director. Choir preparation will be at 6 p.m. each night. Dean, Gayna and Geoffrey Forrest of Forest Ministries will be present. Ken Freeman will be the evangelist. In case of rain, services will be at

the area vocational school. Gene Bridgman is director of missions. ► **Indian Creek Church, Banks**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 18, 11 a.m. Bubba Ledbetter is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Pilgrim's Rest West Church, Newton**, in the Wicksburg community, will hold revival Sept. 18-21 with Evangelist Tommy Fountain, of Winder, Ga. Jeff Hagans, of Palm Bay, Fla., will be the soloist and worship leader. Services will be Sunday at 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and weeknights at 6:30. Wendell Holmes is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Westview Church, Sylacauga**, will host a Fall 2011 Cruise-In for Classic Cars and Motorcycles Sept. 24, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. There will be a 50-50 drawing, door prizes, music and food. For information visit www.wherefriendsbecomefamily.com. Jimmie Roberts Jr. is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Robert Heard** is the new pastor of **Brooks Memorial Church, Atmore**. He previously served as administrative pastor for First Church, Pelham. He also has served other churches in Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia and North Carolina. Heard holds a bachelor's degree in religion with a minor in philosophy from Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) and master of divinity from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He and his wife, Kim, have three children. The church will hold an installation service Sept. 25, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow.



HEARD

MORGAN

► **Lebanon Church, Falkville**, will hold revival Sept. 18, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., with Mike Jackson, director of the office of leadership and church health for the State Board of Missions. Randy Ashley is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Northwood Hills Church, Northport**, will hold revival Sept. 18-21 with Scott McCullar. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 6:30. There will be special music each service. George Shaddix is pastor.

WALKER

► **Bill Yarber** has been named pastor emeritus of **Mount Vernon Church, Jasper**. A reception was held in his honor Sept. 4. John Gates is pastor.



Fulton Bridge marks 100 years, welcomes new pastor

Fulton Bridge Baptist Church, Hamilton, commemorated its 100th anniversary Aug. 14 with a thoughtful and thoroughly organized event approximately two years in the making. The day provided not only a time to celebrate the church's history but also a time to recognize its new pastor, Michael Stancil.

Pastor Daniel Duncan recently retired and officially handed over the reins to Stancil at the event.

According to Stancil, closing out Fulton Bridge Baptist's first century with a retiring pastor and beginning the second century with a new pastor was a symbolic gesture.

He said the event was an exciting time to remember all the things the church accomplished in the last 100 years. "It was a time to remember, but it was also a time to call the church ... to fight the good fight of faith," Stancil remarked.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, served as the guest speaker with a message from Psalms. Mark Gallups, director of missions for Marion Baptist Association, also delivered a message to the crowd of approximately 350 current and former church members and visitors from the community.

"[It was] just a good mixture of all of them," said Clyde "Sonny" Nix, deacon and chairman of the centennial celebration committee.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to the church, and Shannon Knight provided the day's music.

The church's history was given as part of the program. In addition, a video — developed especially for the day — featured photos dating back to Fulton Bridge Baptist's beginnings in 1911.

After the video presentation, attendees made their way to the educational facility for lunch, fellowship and more videos.

Following lunch, everyone was dismissed to visit the centennial celebration's special exhibits. These exhibits included documents dating back to the church's origins, as well as photos of the old church building and the current building, constructed in 1975. One member even created a model of the community as it was in the 1900s.

Hand-held paper fans with "Fulton Bridge Baptist Centennial, 1911-2011" written on them and pictures of the church buildings were distributed as mementos. Each family in attendance also was given a book that included the church's history.

Maytown Church celebrates 100th anniversary

Although it may be known as an "old country church" in its community, Maytown Baptist Church may surprise many with its use of modern technology.

The Bessemer Baptist Association church celebrated its 100th anniversary Aug. 14 with a standing room-only sanctuary and two full overflow rooms with the service streaming over Skype (a software application that allows users to make voice and video calls over the Internet).

A combined choir, including the church's Joyful Singers (senior adult choir), led worship with hymns like "Shoutin' Time in Heaven." Gov. Robert Bentley shared a message on godly leadership in the coming years, drawing from 1 Chronicles 16:8.

Minister of Music and Education Lee Majors said it was an "uplifting service."

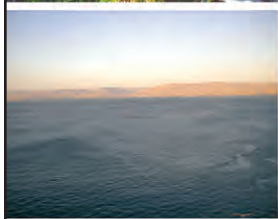
Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Bill Mathews presented Maytown Baptist with a certificate, and the church presented attendees with printed pictures of the first pastor, M.T. Huey.

The 50-year members were honored as well as the descendants of the first members and of Huey.

Pastor John Killian's challenge to "the old country church" for the next 100 years? "Remain faithful as in the past."

Pastors Appreciation Month

Is this an appropriate gift?



Holy Land Spiritual Pilgrimage

March 16-25, 2012

Join Dr. Bob Terry,
editor of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper,
on a spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Tour holy places, meet national Christians
and visit Baptist representatives.

For information, write to:
Holy Land Tour, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham AL 35209;
e-mail: HolyLand@TheAlabamaBaptist.org;
or call 1-800-803-5201, Ext. 103.

Are you on
facebook

Become a fan of
The Alabama Baptist
newspaper.

A decade of answered prayer

New York church planters, Alabama Baptists see 80 church plants take root after 9/11

At 8:45 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001, Tom Fortner sat down for a quick breakfast. Only five miles from where Fortner blessed his meal, a Boeing 767 commercial airliner navigated by terrorists slammed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

Too far from the twin towers to hear the crash, a co-worker told Fortner and others about the mysterious crash.

In those next few minutes Fortner got his first opportunity to tell a New Yorker about Jesus.

"I plant the seeds and it's God's job to make them grow," said the bivocational pastor and computer network engineer.

That day — and in the days following — a variety of New Yorkers listened as Fortner told them about Jesus.

Prayer for the future

As Fortner walked back that night from a sparsely attended prayer meeting, he prayed as he walked. New Yorkers showed unprecedented openness as they began to recognize their vulnerability. Yet Fortner, who would soon be returning to his home in Dallas, felt small and helpless to meet the city's staggering spiritual needs.

"Send someone else to pick up where I left off," Fortner prayed.

God has spent the last decade answering that prayer.

According to a study by the Values Research Institute and reported on the new www.nycreligion.info web magazine covering religion in the city, 40 percent of Manhattan evangelical churches started after 2000. That's about 80 churches. During a two-month period in 2009, at least one new Manhat-

tan church started every Sunday. The seeds of Fortner's answered prayer were already in the city on Sept. 14, when the frazzled pastor/engineer drove his rental car back to Texas.

Two days after Fortner left, on the first Sunday after the 9/11 attacks, Southern Baptist church planter Nelson Searcy held two memorial services in a Manhattan hotel. 90 people showed up.

In the spring, Searcy teamed up with another young church planter, Kerrick Thomas, who had been planning a new church in the East Village. The two would combine their efforts and start one church with multiple campuses. Nearly a decade after The Journey's official launch on Easter 2002, the church has 1,000 people in attendance each weekend on four campuses around the city (and another 250 people in its Boca Raton, Fla., campus, launched by Searcy in February 2011).

Look deeper and it is clear that God started answering Fortner's prayer long before 9/11: more than a decade earlier, in fact. For example, in his 2002 book "The Power of a City at Prayer," Mac Pier documents a prayer movement in the years leading up to 9/11. Tim Keller had arrived in New York City in 1989 and founded Redeemer Presbyterian Church, which has started 75 churches in the city in the past two decades. And the number of evangelical Christians had already started climbing before 9/11. According to the Values Research Institute, the percentage of people in center-city Manhattan who identify themselves as evangelicals has more than tripled (from less than 1 percent to 3 percent) since 1990.



Photo by Christopher Capozziello

TIME FOR PRAYER — Baptist volunteers Justin Goodwin (third from right) and Jason Moring (right) from Southside Baptist Church, Dothan, join volunteers from around the nation in a prayerwalk in New York City.

"When you have a concentrated church planting focus, you're able to push back darkness," said Aaron Coe, who started Gallery Church in Manhattan in 2006 and now serves as a vice president for the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

So was 9/11 the catalyst for the church planting boom in Manhattan?

A catalyst?

Yes and no, say Southern Baptists in the city today. Most say that 9/11 brought New Yorkers back to the faith and traditions of their past. For most, that wasn't born-again Christianity.

In fact, despite now being one of the largest churches in Manhattan, Thomas said The Journey's growth was slow in the months and years directly following the tragedy. The church had 110 people in attendance for its launch, but the number dropped in half the next Sunday and to 35 by the summer.

Slowly over the next few years, people did show up — first 100, then 300, then 500. In its first nine years, the church baptized 1,000 new believers.

In 2003, NAMB named New York City a Strategic Focus City, a four-year emphasis that brought church planters and much-needed resources to Southern Baptists in the city. During the "New Hope New York" campaign, Southern Baptists started around 45 churches.

"When you see how evangelical adherence has grown in the city and you see how 40 percent of the churches in Manhattan have been started since [2000], we can thank God that Southern Baptists had a part in that," said Steve Allen,

NAMB's lead catalyst for the New York City Tri-State Church Planting Team.

Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, for example, got involved in New York City near the beginning of "New Hope New York" and has remained consistently involved in church planting in New York City for most of the past decade.

Danny Wood, Shades Mountain's pastor, is turning the church's involvement into a broader effort to engage Southern Baptists in church planting in New York City.

"We're all part of this incredible Southern Baptist Convention," Wood said as he urged other Southern Baptist pastors to involve their churches in the New York City work. "Knowing we've been blessed with a number of resources in our churches, we need to go to those other areas and help them in the resource department. Our role [as established churches elsewhere] is to get boots on the ground to help some of these churches get started." (BP)



Photo courtesy of Woodridge Baptist Church

WOODRIDGE CHURCH DEDICATES NEW BUILDING

Woodridge Baptist Church, Mobile, completed its new education building — a 25,000 square foot, two story structure — for adult and youth small group Bible studies. The first floor provides pre-school space and the second floor features a state of the art area for youth. Mack Morris is pastor.

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving

Year to Date through August 31, 2011

AUGUST

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,641,666
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$3,760,139
Over Goal for Month	\$118,473

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$29,133,328
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$27,699,640
Under Goal for Year	\$1,433,688

A monthly advertising supplement — September 2011

Church Resource Guide

Be Confident. Be Independent.

Do you worry about falling every time you step into the bathtub?

For many senior adults and those with mobility challenges, bathing can be a worrisome task. Alabama Safety Bath owner Charlie Thornton has a solution to help you. With safety showers and walk-in tubs, Charlie can meet any need you may have. He and his family are longtime members of Camellia Baptist Church in Prattville. He loves working with our seniors across the state and guarantees affordability and value to all our seniors, because they deserve it most. Don't wait another minute. Call today for your free, no-obligation estimate on converting your bathroom into a safe environment instead of a danger zone.

\$ Ask about our no money down, no interest 12 months same as cash program*

2 free grab bars installed or 1 free seat cushion with walk-in tub

*Approved credit through Enter Bank Corp.



Alabama Safety Bath

334-312-1825 • 1-855-849-5048 (toll-free)
www.alabamasafetybath.com

Thompson Sound, Inc.

Installing Excellence in
SOUND • LIGHTING • VIDEO

256.974.SOUND (7686)
www.thompsonsound.com

Our goal in business and in life is to glorify Jesus Christ and spread the good news of His grace.

More Than Just A Play

44TH YEAR

THE NEW GREAT PASSION PLAY
MORE THAN JUST A PLAY™

Christ of the Ozarks

More than 250 actors and live animals recreate the Passion of Christ in one of the most epic performances you'll experience. The New Great Passion Play is also home to exciting on-site attractions, including the Living Bible Tour and Christian Comedy Dinner Theater, right in Eureka Springs, just 48 miles south of Branson.

Order tickets now for your last chance to see it this season.

800-882-7529
greatpassionplay.com

Steeple Etc.

#1 Source for Steeples, Baptistries, & Cupolas

No job too big or too small
Complete satisfaction is guaranteed

► FIBERGLASS BAPTISTRIES
► STEEPLES
► CUPOLAS

Toll-free:
1-888-980-6161

Local
1-205-936-9410

Toll-free fax:
1-800-521-8349

WWW.STEEPLESETC.COM

DUMAS 

Makers of Solid Wood Church Furniture Since 1928

Pews • Pulpits • Pulpit Chairs • Choir Chairs
Communion Tables • LECTERNS • Hymn Boards

ROGER ROBERTS, FACTORY REPRESENTATIVE

 Grove Hill, Alabama

800-633-6896 (phone)
251-605-0774 (mobile)
www.dumaspews.com
rogerdumas@tds.net

Bessemer Association churches reach out to neighboring Hueytown High School

North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown, got a new neighbor this year. Hueytown High School's brand new building is located next to the church's campus, and the church couldn't be more thrilled.

"We've been partnering with the local schools for several years, but we're very blessed because now we're right near [one] school," Youth Minister Michael Wallace said.

"We view our building as a tool, and they're always welcome to use it."

And the high school has already taken the church up on its offer. Since the marching band's practice field isn't quite finished, the band has been using a field behind the church as a practice space. There are also plans for an ongoing Movies in the Park event to take place in the church's yard.

And North Highlands Baptist hasn't been the only church to reach out to Hueytown High during its recent transition.

Hueytown Baptist Church also has been a partner, and both Bessemer Baptist Association churches teamed up to act as traffic directors during the first few days of school.

"When we needed help with showing everyone where to park at the new building, I called about 30 churches for help and those two stepped up," said Jacglen Poole, president of the Hueytown High PTA.

"I knew I wouldn't have to worry about it and that they'd get the job done."

According to Hueytown Baptist Pastor Jerry Watts, this is exactly the kind of thing his church wants to be a part of.

"We like partnering with people in our community to glorify God,"

Watts said. "We feel like reaching out like this gives them practical help."

In addition to the help with parking, members of North Highlands also helped unpack the school's library one Sunday afternoon. The school was completed only two weeks prior to the start of the fall semester, so there was much preparation to be done.

For Poole, a parent of two Hueytown High students, contributions like that do not go unnoticed.

"Parents around here really notice when people care about our schools," she said. "I just think the more the school involves the church, the more they're able to let the community know our needs and help meet those needs." (TAB)

"I just think the more the school involves the church, the more they're able to let the community know our needs."

Jacglen Poole
Hueytown High School PTA

 Birmingham Baptist Association

The Gathering

An annual gathering of all BBA churches to celebrate our work together.



October 2, 2011 at 6:00 pm

Lakeside Baptist Church
 2865 Old Rocky Ridge Road
 Birmingham, AL 35243

 With Special Guest Speaker
Dr. Andrew Westmoreland,
President of Samford University

Music by the Lakeside Choir
 & Orchestra
 featuring music artist,
Adam King

 **Leeds Stained Glass**
 Where Art and Love of God Intersect

Why purchase stained glass windows?

- To share the vision of your church
- To beautify your church sanctuary
- To honor parents and family members
- To provide a lasting tribute to your love of God, church, and family

For over 30 years . . .
 Leeds Stained Glass has provided southeast churches with a variety of beautiful and professionally crafted stained glass windows.

Best regards,
 Terry Barnes, Owner

E-mail or call for a FREE, NO-OBLIGATION consultation on designs and pricing.

info@LeedsStainedGlass.com • 1-888-699-9679
www.LeedsStainedGlass.com

FOLLOW US ON

 @AlabamaBaptist

 **SUPERIOR**
 Church Furnishings

Steeple • Pews • Baptisries
 Portable Baptisries • Cushions
 Pew Refinishing & Upholstering

P.O. Box 1334 • Dublin, GA 31040
1-800-975-2129
www.superiorchurch.com

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

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY'S

The Truth project

Interested in small-group discipleship? Interested in Christian worldview studies?

Trainings offered in Memphis and Chattanooga, Tenn., this fall.

To register or learn more, e-mail: david.shelley@factn.org or call 615-957-1146.
www.TheTruthProject.org

205.664.0955
 800.729.6844 (toll free)

 **Reliable**
 SIGN SERVICES INC.

"Professional Signs for a Professional Look"

 **Reliable Sign Services:**

- Located in Shelby County
- Designs and manufactures
- Installs in a 250-mile radius
- Ships all over the U.S.
- Is UL listed for quality

"I was very impressed with Danny Williams and his caliber as an honest and straightforward businessman. He even calls us from time-to-time just to check in and make sure everything is running smoothly ... and it always is."
 — Rev. David Lee

'Truly great blessing'

Sardis' Pleasant Hill honors pastor for 30 years of service

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Members and friends of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Sardis, surprised Pastor David B. Thomas and his wife, Donna, with an Aug. 3 celebration commemorating their 30 years of ministry at the Selma Baptist Association church.

"That celebration was not only a shock in the most pleasant sense but it was one of the truly great blessings of our lives," Thomas said. The celebration also recognized the couple's 50th wedding anniversary this December.

The surprise was engineered largely by Charles T. Carter, pastor emeritus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, who served as Pleasant Hill Baptist's recent revival speaker. Carter worked closely with the deacons to plan the celebration, which was held after the concluding revival service.

In a July 12 letter he addressed to friends of the church alerting them of the event, Carter noted, "Very few pastors in any denomination stay in one church this long — and we have all been blessed by this extended ministry."

In addition to surprising the Thomases with a celebration, the organizers surprised them with a large 3-foot-by-6-foot check comprised of monetary gifts totaling \$6,600 from church members and friends.

David Thomas quipped, "We were so surprised that one of the church members said to me following the service ... 'You looked like a deer in headlights!'"

"As I've said to Dr. Carter, to the congregation and to others who were affiliated with the whole effort, there's no way that Donna and I could adequately express the appreciation that we have felt," he added.

Overwhelming response

"The response was just overwhelming," chairman of deacons Teddy Pouncey said of the contributions that poured in.

Thomas initially began serving at Pleasant Hill in late 1981 and was eventually called as pastor.

Before attending seminary in 1965, he was a social worker for the state of Alabama and was drawn to the field of counseling. While in seminary, Thomas took all the counseling electives he could take.

Thomas went on to become director of adult outpatient service for Selma Community Mental Health Center, which served Dallas, Perry and Wilcox counties, and for several years, he also served as director of emergency services. He remained in that role until retiring in 1998.

All the while, he maintained



Photo by Cullie Pouncey

CELEBRATION — David B. Thomas, pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Sardis, and his wife, Donna, were surprised with a 3-foot-by-6-foot check for \$6,600, comprised of monetary gifts from church members and friends.

both his bivocational pastoral role at Pleasant Hill and a limited solo practice in counseling and consultation.

Thomas holds the titles of licensed professional counselor, national certified counselor, certified clinical mental health counselor and diplomate of the National Board for Certified Clinical Hypnotherapists.

He said being a bivocational pastor is a privilege and credited both the support of his congregation and encouragement of his wife with his ability to successfully balance his career as a pastor and counselor.

"The understanding and support and patience of the church congregation has been a major factor," Thomas explained.

Alaska Cruise & Canadian Rockies Vacation

Hosted by Mississippi Baptist
Minister Billy Williams

15 Days Departs July 12, 2012 from **\$2398***

Visit the last of the wilderness-like areas in North America, all from the comfort of your deluxe motor coach and cruise ship. Fly into Calgary starting your scenic six-day motor coach tour to Vancouver, B.C. You'll visit Calgary, Banff National Park, Lake Louise, take a "SnoCoach" ride over the Columbia Ice Fields, visit Jasper National Park, and Vancouver, B.C., where you'll board your 5-STAR cruise ship for your seven-day Holland America Line cruise. Travel through a wondrous maze of forested-island and glacier-carved fjords, past charming coastal villages, migrating whales and calving glaciers through the inside passage visiting spectacular ports and glaciers including Juneau, Skagway, Glacier Bay and Ketchikan. Your Chaplain is Rev. Billy Williams, taking his ninth trip with YMT as a Baptist Chaplain. *Price per pers., dbl. occ.; includes taxes. Based on inside category M stateroom, and subject to availability; space is limited and cabins are confirmed on a first received basis with deposits. Airfare is extra.



For details, itinerary, reservations and letter from your chaplain with his phone number call 7 days a week:

1-800-736-7300

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Texas sonogram law blocked by U.S. judge

AUSTIN, Texas — A federal district judge has blocked enforcement of a Texas law passed in May requiring women seeking abortions to undergo a sonogram at least 24 hours prior to the procedure and to hear the baby's heartbeat and a description from the abortion provider of the baby's physical features.

U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks of Austin, in an Aug. 30 injunction, said the law, which was to go into effect Sept. 1, "compels physicians to advance an ideological agenda with which they may not agree, regardless of any medical necessity, and irrespective of whether the pregnant women wish to listen."

Elaborating on his ruling, Sparks wrote that the law's requirements expand beyond medically necessary information and "are unconstitutional violations of the First Amendment right to be free from compelled speech." Specifically Sparks argued that the First Amendment rights of doctors and patients are violated in the law's requirements that doctors show the patient an ultrasound of the baby, make the heartbeat audible and give a verbal description of the child.

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott filed a notice of appeal in the case shortly after the decision was announced.

Under the Texas law, a woman must be aware of the option to see her unborn baby via sonogram. It requires the person performing the sonogram — a physician or certified sonographer — to describe the dimensions of the baby and the existence of the baby's arms, legs and internal organs, including a heartbeat.

Women living in Texas counties of fewer than 60,000 people or beyond 100 miles of an abortion facility and those in a life-threatening medical emergency are exempted from the 24-hour waiting period. Rural women would instead have to wait only two hours. Also, in cases of rape, incest or fetal abnormality, women could refuse hearing the verbal description from the sonogram.

In January, Gov. Perry placed the bill on emergency status at the start of the legislative session, which gave it priority consideration over other bills.

S.D. abortion law's relationship section upheld

ST. LOUIS — A pregnant woman considering abortion in South Dakota must be informed she "has an existing relationship with that unborn human being," a federal appeals court has ruled.

In its opinion, the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis overturned a federal judge's decision that had struck down the "relationship advisories" section of South Dakota's 2005 informed consent law. The law's supporters, however, fell short of a complete victory in the opinion by the three-judge panel. In a 2-1 split decision, the judges upheld the lower court's invalidation of a section requiring women to be informed of the risk of suicide from abortion. The dissenting judge said he would have upheld the entire law, including that requirement.

The 8th Circuit's Sept. 2 ruling in support of a state's right to inform a woman she has a relationship with the child living in her womb was a victory for pro-life advocates not only in providing full information for pregnant women but also in establishing protection for unborn children.

Carpenter Bus Sales

going the extra mile since 1953

Lowest Payments Ever!!

Capacity	2 Years	4 Years	6 Years
15 (#11161)	\$776	\$647	\$608
26 (#10316)	\$851	\$709	\$667
33 (#11074)	\$1,540	\$1,283	\$1,207
44 (#11076)	\$1,997	\$1,664	\$1,565

- (1) Over 150 New & Used Buses in Stock
- (2) Nation's #1 Church Bus Dealer
- (3) Local Warranty Program

*True at signing includes first payment, \$150 (acceptance fee with no security deposit). Tax, tags and insurance are extra. \$15,000 first miles per year per bus. Customer is responsible for excessive wear and excess mileage at \$.30 per mile in excess of the 15,000 yearly free miles. Customer pick-up and return location is Franklin, TN. No value tax included. All stock units are subject to prior sale. End of lease return has to be Carpenter Bus Sales or purchase at fair-market value. Subject to credit approval by TCP Equipment Finance.



800-370-6180 • www.CarpenterBus.com

'So faithful'

18-year-old Shades Mountain member follows passion for missions to Zambia

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Like most of her peers, recent high school graduate Kelsey Weeks went off to live away from home for the first time this fall. But the 18-year-old wasn't headed for a dorm room. Instead Weeks chose to take a gap year to focus on missions in Zambia before starting the college journey.

She had been to the South African country twice before with a missions organization called e3 Partners, and during her senior year at Briarwood Christian School in Birmingham, Weeks said she felt called to forgo college for a year and return to Zambia.

"As we were going through the college search, I just had always had it in the back of my mind, 'What if Kelsey doesn't go to college yet?'" said Emily Neill, a fellow member

of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, who has been Weeks' friend since they were 3.

It turns out Weeks' parents also had the feeling their eldest child might take a nontraditional path. Her mother, Becky, said she was prepared for the announcement.

"We felt this was something she might do, so we were preparing for that in our own hearts," she said. "We started praying with her about it."

This passion for missions was nothing new, Weeks said. For her, the seed had been planted years earlier, during a trip to Peru when she was 9.

"I went to Ethiopia when I was 14, and that's when I knew for sure God had called me to serve overseas," Weeks said.

Right now, she is living in the town of Ndola but will move to

Lusaka soon and be based there until she comes home in July 2012. When Weeks returns, she plans to attend Mississippi State University in Starkville.

While in Zambia, her various roles include working at an orphanage called The House of Moses, planning logistics for a three-week e3 backpacking trip during the summer of 2012, working alongside Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru) with a food drop program and participating in Jesus Film productions.

Weeks is working with Cru employees Abel and Meyer Zulu. Abel Zulu is the e3 country coordinator, so he trains and disciples leaders in church planting and heads up the church-planting teams.

She hopes to eventually work with Wes and Laurie Wilcox, Baptist representatives who have been on furlough, as well.



Photo courtesy of Becky Weeks

'COMPLETE SURRENDER' — Kelsey Weeks takes time to minister to Zambian children during her yearlong stay in the South African country.

So far, even though Weeks knows she's fulfilling God's calling in her life, being in Zambia has been a difficult transition.

"I think before I came, I had this romantic idea of going to Africa and being surrounded by these starving kids and coming in and making them smile and sharing the good news with them," Weeks said. "But it's hard realizing that's not

how it is. The hardest part, though, has been complete surrender to the Lord and what He has planned for me."

But that complete surrender to God's calling has been her greatest strength, according to Neill.

"She talks about how sometimes it's hard, but the way she's been so faithful in following this calling has been amazing," Neill said.

KINGDOM

STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

A ministry of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama

Let us help you build an Estate Stewardship Ministry within your church!

The Stewarding Your "Stuff" workshop includes a review of Biblical stewardship along with practical information concerning wills, trusts, healthcare powers of attorney and more.

The workshop is lead by a representative from The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.



Barry Bledsoe



Bill McCrary



Rodney Bledsoe



Nathan McCarthy



- ☐ I would like more information on planning a Stewarding Your "Stuff" workshop at my church.
- ☐ I would like information on how my church can implement LegacyLinc or FoundationLinc on our church website.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Church: _____

Approx. # of Members: _____

Any information given is private and confidential.

MAIL TO:

The Baptist Foundation of Alabama
P.O. Box 241227 • Montgomery, AL 36124
(334) 394-2000
www.tbfa.org • tbfa@tbfa.org





UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile Hosts Sporting Clay Shoot to Benefit Baseball Program:** The 2011 Sporting Clay Shoot, benefiting the University of Mobile baseball program, will be held Sept. 23 at Taylor Creek Shooting Preserve in Theodore.

The deadline to register for the tournament is Sept. 19. Fees include 100 sporting clay targets, a T-shirt and lunch. Registration will begin at 8 a.m., and the tournament will begin at 8:30 a.m. Lunch will be provided at 11:30 a.m., with an awards program at 12:30 p.m. Opportunities for sponsorship are also available.

To become an event sponsor or register, call Tonya Gomien at 251-802-5789 or visit <http://giving.umobile.edu>.

► **UMobile Presents Joanie Brittingham in Recital:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Center for Performing Arts will present Joanie Brittingham, soprano, in recital Sept. 25 at 4 p.m. in Moorer

Auditorium on the university campus. She will be accompanied by Sharon Hudson, adjunct instructor of piano at UMobile.

For more information, call 251-442-2420 or visit www.umobile.edu.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Honors Faculty, Staff:** Samford University presented awards to outstanding faculty and staff Aug. 30.

Samford exercise science and sports medicine professor Alan Jung received Samford's John H. Buchanan Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching.

Samford associate registrar Nancy Miller received the President's Award as a staff member who offers exemplary service to all segments of the Samford community.

Three employees received Meritorious Service Awards: Tracy Luke, program assistant, Cumberland School of Law; Sherry

Baldone, director of Enterprise Applications Group, technology services; and Jan Paine, director of undergraduate student services, Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing.

► **Beeson's Lay Academy of Theology Offers Courses That Explore Faith:** Samford University's Beeson Divinity School will offer special study opportunities through its Lay Academy of Theology.

The noncredit evening course topics, leaders and dates are Romans: The Gospel Proclaimed and Applied, Frank Thielman, beginning

Sept. 26; Micah's Major Minor Prophecy, Mark Gignilliat, beginning Sept. 27; and The Story of Joseph, Allen P. Ross, beginning Sept. 29.

All three six-week courses begin at 6 p.m. and meet for two hours.

In early 2012, Beeson research professor Gerald Bray will lead a weeklong daytime course, The Reformation in England and Scotland. It will meet daily Jan. 30-Feb. 3, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

For more information, visit www.beesondivinity.com or call 205-726-2731.

Fund Raising



Your Church, Youth Group, Club, School or Team will work directly with the manufacturer to make **40% profit**. Our proven Fund Raising system guarantees your success.

Request your **FREE** catalog and information packet!

1-800-311-9691

or www.RadaCutlery.com

NOTE: Dept **A11ABA**

RADA CUTLERY

"A Cut Above The Rest"

Lifetime **GUARANTEE**

Find out why our Fund Raisers say that "Rada knives sell themselves!"

Made in the **USA**

MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR E-MAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

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@dbcrcrmond.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: randymccoy@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 missions-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.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER: Southcrest Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational worship leader with a passion for worship. Send resumes to: 4317 South Shades Crest Road, Bessemer, AL 35022, or office@southcrestchurch.net.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Spring Hill Avenue Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a bivocational minister of music. Send your resume to: shabapt@bellsouth.net, or mail to: Spring Hill Avenue Baptist Church, 2651 Spring Hill Avenue, Mobile, AL 36607.

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.

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 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 email at oakbowerybaptist@att.net.

BUSINESS

WEB SITE DESIGN/GRAPHIC DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION: Web site design and implementation, T-shirts, graphic design services. Coordinated campaigns such as Christmas events. Churches, youth groups, child care ministries, missions teams and business. EmpoweredGraphics.com.

BAILEY BROTHERS MUSIC COMPANY: Serving Alabama for 25 years. Audio, video and lighting integration systems installed, serviced and repaired. Insured and bonded contractor. We provide solutions for small or large houses of worship. Call Montgomery at 334-262-7827 or Birmingham 205-271-7827.

ELECTRONIC GIVING OPTION: egive-usa.com — Good stewardship made easy. Please call or email us for a free brochure. 1-866-303-6623 or brad@egive-usa.com.

CONSTRUCTION

CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS: Let

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

TRAVEL/VACATION

ALASKA TOUR: Alaska 31-day tour by super-deluxe tour coach departing from Georgia and return. Aug. 15-Sept. 14, 2012. Fifteen years Alaska tour experience. Tour already half-filled. For full details, call 1-800-982-2478 or visit www.GeriGadderTours.com.

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

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS: Gulf Shores and Orange Beach. Rent direct-Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Fall special: 4 nights efficiency unit (2 adults and kids) \$365 includes everything (1, 2, 3 bedroom units also available). Even lower prices for those in the ministry. 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231, www.gulfshorescondos.com.

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

FOR RENT/SALE

RESORT CONDO: For rent: Resort condo near Disney World. Can arrange other condos in major resort areas. For sale: Timeshare at a great price. Call 334-413-8433 for more information.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Greg Hyche
Brent Baptist Church

Recently I attended a pastors conference.

While there, I was challenged to see "the greatness of our calling and the greatness of the lost in need of Jesus." The challenge gripped my soul to think that God would use someone like me to tell others about His saving grace. I left the conference moved and encouraged in my ministry. As I boarded my flight home, my heart was full, my body was tired and I was looking forward to a restful journey. However, God had one more conference session that He wanted me to attend.

Seated across the aisle from me was a soldier. He was full of energy and dressed for battle. I sat there studying his uniform, his mannerisms, his boots, and then I studied his face. We engaged in conversation and the more we talked, the more the joy of the Lord exuded from his body.

He began to quote Scriptures from memory and tell me about Jesus. Verse by verse, he poured into me about how vast, wide and deep God's love is for me — even as a pastor. It was evident he knew God because he knew His Word. It was not just quoted from memory; it was written upon his heart. He encouraged me to preach the gospel, and in "that great calling God put upon my life," I was reminded to tell others over and over "that if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). As my new friend sat there prepared for battle, I could see that he had taken up the full armor of God because he had the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

So friend, with all exuberance, I ask you today do you want to know God? I implore you to read Romans 10:9 and simply "confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead."

I then encourage you to write God's Word upon your heart by memorizing and meditating upon it. His Word is filled with awesome promises. Lastly I encourage you to share with someone how God has changed your heart.

GuideStone Funds adds new fund to lineup

GuideStone Funds announced Sept. 1 the addition of the Defensive Market Strategies Fund to its lineup.

The new fund is intended to serve GuideStone participants by offering an investment that seeks to achieve long-term returns consistent with the equity (stock) market but with less fluctuation when compared to the overall market.

The fund will be part of two GuideStone Asset Allocation Funds: the Conservative Allocation Fund and the Balanced Allocation Fund. It also will be part of the MyDestination Funds, which become more conservative as the target date approaches. At its launch, the fund will be part of the MyDestination 2005, 2015 and 2025 funds. It is also available for direct

investment. Participants who want to determine if the fund is an appropriate part of their retirement investment portfolio can access GuideStone's free financial advice tool, GPS: Guided Planning Services. Participants can access it by logging in to their accounts at www.MyGuideStone.org or by setting up an appointment by calling 1-888-98-GUIDE (1-888-984-8433).

"GuideStone is privileged to once again enhance our fund selection for the benefit of our valued participants," said John Jones, chief operating officer of GuideStone Financial Resources and president of GuideStone Funds.

Investors can review the Fund Fact Sheet at www.GuideStone-Funds.org/Funds. (GuideStone)

American Character Builders releases new resource kits geared toward students

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Preventing bullying. Raising awareness of alcohol and tobacco. Saying no to meth, marijuana and cocaine. These topics are addressed in new resource kits produced by American Character Builders (ACB).

ACB, an educational program designed to help students and adults learn how to make wise choices, made the kits available to order Sept. 7.

Intended for students in grades 5-12, the kits are the product of more than two and a half years of design efforts, production work and fundraising.

The organization recognized a need for the kits as presenters for its school programs became more difficult to come by and schools became more difficult for outside speakers to get in to, said Joe Godfrey, executive director for ACB and Alabama Citizens Action Program.

So the most popular programs were transformed into four kits:

- ▶ The Bully Issue
- ▶ Alcohol — It's a Killer!
- ▶ Tobacco Awareness
- ▶ Saying NO to Meth, Marijuana and Cocaine!

"Bullying is becoming a huge problem," Godfrey said. "Every day, we're reading about a child who takes his or her life because of bullying in school and they just can't take it anymore."

ACB's program shows schools how they can become safe places for kids and help



Photo courtesy of ACB

deal with bullying, he added. But schools aren't the only entities that can benefit from the kits.

"If a student pastor wants to teach this material on a Wednesday night Bible study for his young people

... he could just actually go through and, on each of the slides or key points throughout the presentation, insert biblical references," Godfrey said. "It's very versatile, very flexible, and can be used in a variety of different and great ways to reach young people."

Each kit contains a teacher's guide, a CD with a PowerPoint presentation and additional resource material and 30 student booklets. Extra student booklets can be ordered.

"You can add personal stories or comments and turn the program into your own program and utilize it anyway you want to utilize it," Godfrey said.

The student booklets include a listening guide with blanks that

correspond to highlighted words in the PowerPoint presentation.

ACB hopes to have Bible studies available soon that will serve as optional companion pieces to the kits.

The organization is also developing additional kits. Topics include character, skills for a good life (featuring health-related subjects like exercise and eating right), conflict management, pornography and gambling.

"There's so much opportunity here to help young people to grow and to learn to make healthy choices in life and to become productive citizens," Godfrey said. "And ultimately, we would like to see — as a Christian-based ministry — their lives turned over to the Lord, because ... He is the ultimate character builder."

In addition, ACB dreams of one day repackaging some existing programs and directing them toward businesses in order to train employees how to be pre-emptive instead of reactionary when dealing with problems in the workplace.

For more information, visit www.americancharacterbuilders.org.

ALCAP
Sunday
is
Nov. 13.

Marching to Zion

The Annual Samford Hymn Sing
Sunday, October 2, at 2 p.m.
Reid Chapel | Samford University

an afternoon of congregational singing
great hymns and gospel songs selected
by the congregation

free and open to the public

with special guests

Gary Furr and Shades Mountain Air
Dianne Norton and Lynda Little,
organ and piano



Samford University is an Equal Opportunity
Educational Institution/Employer.

Training session to focus on reaching neighbors

Ready to reach your "Jerusalem" for Christ?

Neighborhood Missions Ministry (NMM), a Tuscaloosa Baptist Association outreach, is holding a training session to help you do just that Sept. 19 at Northridge Baptist Church, Northport, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The session will focus on five

essential elements for neighborhood evangelism and answer the following questions:

- ▶ What is NMM?
- ▶ Why should I want to be a neighborhood missionary?
- ▶ Why would I want to share the gospel with my neighbor?

NMM "teaches Christians how to know their neighbor, pray for

their neighbor, love their neighbor, serve their neighbor and, as the Holy Spirit leads, share the gospel with their neighbor" (see "Tuscaloosa Association launches Neighborhood Missions Ministry" in the March 3 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*).

"The ultimate goal is to share Jesus Christ (with neighbors)," Tim Fields, pastor of Big Sandy Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, and a member of the NMM committee that leads the training sessions, said in an interview with *The Alabama Baptist*.

By 2015, the committee hopes to see 1,000 missionaries working in their neighborhoods for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission.

For more information, visit www.neighborhoodmissions.org or call Neil Hobson at 205-242-9055. (TAB)

Hey, are y'all
Goin' Down To Mama's?

<http://www.goindowntomamas.com>

For heaven's sake, bring a casserole.

A blog about family, faith, and food by
former *Southern Living* writer Valerie Fraser Luesse

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 18

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen

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

GOOD NEWS TO BELIEVE
Romans 3:28-4:5, 16-25

It's Through Faith (3:28-31)

Verse 28 is one of the clearest statements in the Bible that salvation does not hinge upon what man is able to do or actually does. In fact, Paul asserted that the law does not save but rather faith is what saves. Almost every religion on the planet teaches that man must do something to be saved or get right with God. Christianity is not like that. The Bible states that no one can get to God based on his or her own righteousness. God demands perfection and since every man has sinned (see Romans 3:23), every man deserves eternal death, which is separation from God. The only way for man to be saved is by faith — faith that Jesus Christ paid the price for his sins; He died in his place. Those who believe this are the ones who are saved.

Most Jews believed that they were saved based on their lineage, but Paul asked if God is only the God of the Jews. Obviously, since there is only one God, He must be God of the Gentiles, too. This means that salvation is not an exclusive commodity belonging to the Jews. But if this is true, then what happens to the law God gave the Jews? What becomes of the law if salvation can be attained by the Gentiles as well? Paul said the law is not nullified but rather the law now can be followed through faith in Jesus. Jesus summed up the law as loving God and neighbor. Only through the strength given to us by Jesus and through the Holy Spirit are we able to actually do this.

It's a Gift (4:1-5)

To show that salvation is dependent upon faith, Paul brought Abraham into the discussion. Abraham is the father of the Jews, but he did not have the law. The law was not given by God until generations after Abraham. The Bible states in Genesis that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. This is a righteousness based upon belief, not works. This still applies to people today. Salvation is a gift from God, not something that can be bought or earned. It is sad to see so many people in America think that

their salvation is dependent upon their parents' faith, their church attendance or the fact that they were baptized. None of these brings salvation, since salvation is based on grace through faith.

It's by Grace (4:16-19)

When looking back at Abraham, you will recall that God blessed him and said he would be the father of many nations, despite the fact that he and his wife, Sarah, were well beyond childbearing years. But Abraham never lost sight of God's promise and did not doubt that He would fulfill it. Many Jews had missed this point. In the years leading up to Jesus' birth, the Jews had become very nationalistic and believed that salvation was for them alone instead of using their special status to go and spread the message of salvation to the nations. You merely need to look at the prophet Jonah to see how Israel viewed the surrounding nations. The other nations were viewed with contempt. However, Paul stated that Abraham's offspring are not those who are Jews by birth but rather those who believe by faith as he did. The salvation of God is by grace through faith, not birth or race. God is the One who gives salvation, and because it is by grace, it is free. If one could earn salvation, then it would no longer be free, thus nullifying grace.

It's Assured (4:20-25)

Abraham believed God had the power to do what He promised, which is true faith. Faith for us also is believing in God's promises, even when circumstances might suggest otherwise. It is not irrational for us as Christians to believe in God's promises. We can look at all of history and see God working in our lives as well as the lives of those who came before us, to know that He fulfills His promises. The Israelites always recounted the stories of God saving and protecting them, passing these stories on to their children to strengthen their faith and show that He is faithful. And today, despite our circumstances, we can hold firm to God's promises because He is still faithful and we can be assured that He will forgive our sins.

Bible Studies for Life

By Eric Mathis

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

FIND YOUR PLACE OF SERVICE
Romans 12:3-15

In the past two weeks, we have reflected on the importance of community and individual ways to grow in spiritual maturity. We now move from reflection on our place in the community to action on behalf of the community. Indeed the call upon today's Christian is no different from Paul's exhortation to the community in Romans 12: "Renew your minds and get to work!"

Romans 12:3-15 is the focal passage for this week's study, though to fully understand this passage, we must pay attention to what Paul had written previously. In earlier chapters of Romans, Paul explained that God's righteousness comes through faith in Christ, apart from the Law (1:18-5:11). He explained that righteous living is a component of God's righteousness (5:12-8:39) and God will give mercy to all ancient people as He has to the Gentiles (9:1-11:36). However, one question remained for Paul and the Romans: How were these principles to work in a diverse community of faith? The answer to this question is the topic of Romans 12.

Serve in the Body (3-5)

The first verse in Romans 12 states that God's mercies call Christians to serve Him, though the condition for this statement is that the Christian way is aligned with God's way rather than the world's way (Rom. 12:2). Paul moved forward to describe the transformed person's behavior in community. Unsurprisingly community life was the critical issue for Paul in the remainder of this chapter (and arguably the remainder of Romans).

Christians are to evaluate themselves, their role and their contribution to the community carefully. Overestimating our place in the body of Christ is problematic but so, too, is underestimating our potential contributions to the community. Once again, Paul applied the analogy of the body to community life, yet he made this analogy specific to his readers. Communal living functions most efficiently as people understand their individual gifts and combine them with others' contributions.

Serve Through Giftedness (6-8)

Although not necessarily an exhaustive list, Paul provided examples of seven ways people might serve the community. The first four gifts relate to the community at worship: prophecy, ministry, teaching and exhortation. The final three describe caretakers in the community: the giver, the leader and the compassionate. These gifts are described as "charismata." This emphasis reminds us that salvation is a gift of God through Christ but spiritual gifts are from God brought into the community by the Holy Spirit's work.

As we search for opportunities to serve our communities, we can take our cue from Paul's list or observe the actions of those around us. We are to identify the diversity of spiritual gifts God has given and ask the Holy Spirit to empower us for service in the body of Christ.

Serve With Godly Attitudes (9-15)

After emphasizing actions (Rom. 12:6-8), Paul emphasized attitudes. In a series of pairs and triplets, Paul spoke directly to the virtues necessary for life together in Christ's service. Christians are to love one another, hate what is evil and hold fast to what is good (9). They are to love one another and outdo one another in showing honor (10). They are to serve the community and be zealous in spirit serving the Lord (11). They are to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering and persevere in prayer (12). They are to help those within and outside of the community (13). They are to bless rather than curse those who persecute (14) and rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (15), and so the list of virtues continues through the remainder of the chapter.

"Renew your minds and get to work!" Indeed this was Paul's mantra in Romans 12, and we would do well to make it our mantra as we pursue spiritual growth. This week, reflect on the ways you have been transformed through life in Christ. Then take stock of your spiritual gifts, evaluating how you might use them in the church and the world. Remember that your action is to be bathed in the love of God — the One from whom all good gifts come.

Christian Crossword

Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

Across

1. Hannah's son. (1 Sam. 1:20)

5. For _____ persecuted they the prophets. (Matt. 5:12)

7. Spirit of the Lord came up _____ David. (1 Sam. 16:13)

8. John also was baptizing in _____ near to Salim. (John 3:23)

10. The promise is ... to all that are _____ off. (Acts 2:39)

12. An explosive.

13. The _____ of God. (Ps. 46:4)

15. A great _____ dragon. (Rev. 12:3)

17. Whose son is _____? (Matt. 22:42)

18. How long is it _____ since this came unto him? (Mark 9:21)

19. Either/_____.

21. Hated.

23. A little bear.

25. _____ it not written? (Mark 11:17)

27. I have never _____ any thing common. (Acts 10:14)

30. That they might have life more _____. (John 10:10)

34. To be a certain place.

35. The director _____ the play.

36. A carnivore _____ meat.

39. Printer's measure.

41. Call for the elders of the _____. (James 5:14)

45. A torn-up piece of material.

48. The Thin Man's wife. (Nick and _____)

50. In _____ was there a voice heard. (Matt. 2:18)

51. Poetic for "before."

52. Walked.

53. I am (contraction).

54. _____ them that love us in the faith. (Titus 3:15)

Down

1. Belonging to Adam's son.

2. English princess.

3. A witty saying.

4. United Nations. (abbr.)

5. Take no thought ... what ye shall _____. (Luke 12:11)

6. A man _____ God.

7. Metal from mining.

9. He that is _____ days old. (Gen. 17:12)

11. To capture a lawbreaker.

13. A yellow car in New York City.

14. Also.

16. Authority to _____ these things. (Mark 11:28)

19. Firstlings of thy herds _____ of thy flock. (Deut. 12:17)

20. _____ not a servant unto his master. (Prov. 30:10)

21. Now _____ faith, hope, charity. (1 Cor. 13:13)

22. A spool of film.

24. Industrious insects.

26. He was _____ at that saying. (Mark 10:22)

28. Yes. (nautical)

29. Sat down to _____ and to drink. (Ex. 32:6)

30. Slight variation in speech patterns.

31. Sheep's sound.

32. New Testament. (abbr.)

33. _____ have and _____ hold.

37. _____ with thine adversary quickly. (Matt. 5:25)

38. Type of train.

40. Neither/_____.

41. A heel.

42. Bezaleel the son of _____. (Ex. 38:22)

43. 900 in Roman numerals.

44. A witch is an old _____.

46. He is, they _____.

47. And so _____ them up out of the land. (Ex. 1:10)

49. Rosemary. (nickname)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By Rick Sharp and Adam Borden

JASON GRAY

A Way to See in the Dark
Centricity Music

Jason Gray's first Centricity release, "A Way to See in the Dark," is a simple, sparsely-arranged collection of mostly acoustic songs. Gray's baritone voice is a strong instrument, the perfect compliment to the uncluttered arrangements. The album has an open and honest feel, perhaps a result of Gray's openness in sharing his own weaknesses. A chronic stutterer, Gray bares it all when chatting with his audience between songs. As Gray says, "When I'm willing to work out of my weakness, there are more chances for God to show up and for the unexpected to happen. My strengths — which are really quite modest — are limited to me but with my weaknesses, the possibilities are boundless."



The album's first released single, "Remind Me Who I Am," is one of the best songs on the record, reminding us that God seeks us out as

His beloved despite our feelings of failure and rejection. "No Thief Like Fear" highlights Gray's light rock sensibilities, sounding very much like a well-done eighties rock anthem. "Good to Be Alive" is another standout, a feel-good, lighthearted call to living life to its fullest.

This record is full of honest, simple, good music. Recommended. (Sharp)

STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN

re:creation

Sparrow Records/Chordant Music Group

"re:creation," the new CD by Steven Curtis Chapman, is primarily a remake of eight of his biggest hits, along with five new songs. The re-recorded songs have a bright, acoustic feel and are well recorded and produced. These were great songs the first time around and certainly they're not hurt by the re-recording. I struggle, however, to get past the feeling that the purpose of the record was to wring more profit from Chapman's popularity, much like the "Greatest Hits" compilations we grew up with. There's even a cover of the old song "Morning Has Bro-

ken," sung by son Caleb Chapman. While well done, it adds to the feel that everything lying around was thrown in.



"Do Everything," one of the new songs on the CD, is classic Chapman and perhaps the best song of the bunch. It's already getting a lot of air play, as it is the first single released from the record. "Meant to Be" is another good one, again classic Chapman, with airy acoustic guitars and soaring strings, with a strong purpose-based message.

If you're a fan of Chapman (and of course we ALL are), then you're going to like this record. I wish more new material had been included, but we can hope that Chapman's next release will be the blockbuster we've come to expect. (Sharp)

PRIMITIVE QUARTET

It's Wonderful

Mountain Heritage

Members of the Primitive Quartet are what I call "matter-of-fact" people — nothing is contrived or

cooked up. If you were to ask these guys why, after decades of travel with millions of miles behind them, they are still going strong, I believe the straightforward answer might be contained in the title of their new Mountain Heritage record, "It's Wonderful." Mike, Reagan, Larry, Norman, Randy and Jeff give us the standard bluegrass gospel sound they absorbed growing up in the mountains of North Carolina. "It's Wonderful" showcases the



unmistakable guitar playing of Mike Riddle. Norman Wilson keeps the upbeat in the rhythm with lead and harmony parts on "That's What I Want to Be." Jeff Tolbert is a one-man band; his banjo kicks the record off on "What a Time in Heaven," and then take note of his fiddle work and lead vocals on the title track, "It's Wonderful," and on "He's Holy." Reagan and Randy lend the perfect support of rhythm guitar and bass throughout the record.

A tip of the hat also goes to North Carolina all-star musicians David Johnson and Tony Creasman for their work on additional instruments. (Borden)

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.
and Grace Thornton

Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God

David Platt. *Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah Publishers, 2011. 176 pp. (Paperback).*

What would it look like if the body of believers worldwide put everything on the table and united around a gospel-centered purpose?

That's the question David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, asks in "Radical Together," a follow-up to his *New York Times* best seller "Radical." In "Radical," Platt challenged readers to "[take] back [their] faith from the American dream" and offer their lives and resources to God for the sake of spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

In his newest book, Platt continues that challenge by asking churches as a whole to come together and work through how they can change "business as usual" to give everything they have toward advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ. He tackles head-on the fact that sometimes "good" things and programs in the church — even missions-related

ones — are the very things that deceptively keep resources from being used to take the Word of God to unreached people groups. "I am convinced that Satan, in a sense, is just fine with missional churches in the West spending the overwhelming majority of our time, energy and money on trying to reach people right around us," Platt wrote. "Satan may actually delight in this, for while we spend our lives on the people we see in front of us, more than 6,000 people groups for generations have never even heard the gospel and remain in the dark."

The last quarter of the book is a six-session discussion guide for small groups to work through Scripture and questions together to determine how they can better unite around a gospel-centered purpose in their lives and churches. (Thornton)

The Invitation: The Not-so-simple Truth About Following Jesus

Greg Sidders. *Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2011. 160 pp. (Paperback).*

Greg Sidders became a Christian as a sophomore in college and dis-

covered that he hadn't bargained for all that Christianity demanded of him. Reading the words of Jesus — the ones in red in Sidders' Bible — shocked him. What a radical Jesus was! He compared his Bible to others, hoping that his was defective in some way. The other Bibles, to his dismay, said the same things. He decided to avoid the Gospels.

That didn't last long. Drawn back into what Sidders described as "the red zone," he set out to find answers to his questions about what Jesus really meant by His invitation to follow Him. This book is the result.

In an engaging conversational style, Sidders examines Jesus' teachings and what they mean to 21st-century Christians, looking at issues like whether discipleship is an option, what Christlike love looks like in the world today and how you plug in to real power. Sidders does not hold back, but challenges the reader with the question that caused him to embark on his quest: How can I call myself a Christian if I don't follow Christ?

Sidders, a former journalist, is currently senior pastor of a church in Maine. (Sharp)

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Learning — Bailey Flanigan Series #2,** Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **Courageous,** Randy Alcorn, Alex Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick (Tyndale)
3. **Leaving — Bailey Flanigan Series #1,** Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
4. **The Twelfth Imam,** Joel C. Rosenberg (Tyndale)
5. **Redeeming Love,** Francine Rivers (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
6. **A Lineage of Grace,** Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
7. **Love Finds a Home,** Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
8. **The Amish Nanny — Women of Lancaster County Series #2,** Mindy Starns-Clark and Leslie Gould (Harvest)
9. **Sons of Encouragement,** Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
10. **Water's Edge,** Robert Whitlow (Thomas Nelson)

Nonfiction

1. **Heaven Is for Real,** Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Jesus Calling,** Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. **KJV Standard Lesson Commentary 2011–2012 (Standard)**
4. **Crazy Love,** Francis Chan (David C Cook)
5. **KJV Standard Lesson Commentary 2011–2012 (Large Print) (Standard)**
6. **Erasing Hell,** Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle (David C Cook)
7. **Jesus Calling — Deluxe Edition,** Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Radical,** David Platt (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
9. **The 5 Love Languages,** Gary Chapman (Moody)
10. **Made to Crave,** Lysa TerKeurst (Zondervan)

Life after football

Auburn football team gets sneak preview of 'Courageous'

The Auburn football team took a break from practice and team meetings for a screening of "Courageous," the new movie from Sherwood Pictures, releasing Sept. 30.

"Courageous" sparked roaring laughter alongside serious reflection from players and moments of silence and sniffles from the coaches' wives over the story of four law enforcement officers forced by tragedy to confront their faith, their fears and their responsibility as fathers.

"Courageous" is the fourth movie produced by Sherwood Pictures, a ministry of Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Ga.

For junior running back Onterio McCalebb, the film hit home.

"It really meant a lot to me because I have a daughter," McCalebb said. "I actually just called to tell her that I love her. I think it was awesome. It touched a lot of players on our team."

"Courageous" also resonated with sophomore defensive end Nosa Eguae.

"It can really touch anyone, it doesn't matter what walk of life you come from," Eguae said.

"I really like the message that it brings about growing up and becoming a man. I would tell anyone whether they are fathers or not, that if they are looking for something inspirational, they should watch it."

Ken Bevel, who plays officer Nathan Hayes in "Courageous," spoke to the team after the mid-August screening.

"What I want to tell you is, the story is not over," Bevel said. "You've got a lot going for yourselves. You're on a great team. You're in a great family. This team is your family, but what are you going to do when the football is gone? Are you going to leave a legacy that will last a lifetime with your children?"

Head coach Gene Chizik called "Courageous" a "tremendous movie with a great message."

"I want this to hit you because it's got nothing to do with football," Chizik told the team. "It's about you being a man. That, long after all this is over, is the most



BP photo

INSPIRATIONAL — Auburn head coach Gene Chizik told his team the message of 'Courageous' is 'about you being a man. That, long after all this (football) is over, is the most important thing.'

important thing, and it's not even close."

Bevel said he was honored to watch the screening with the defending national champions.

"I hope the message they get from this is you have to be intentional about being a father," Bevel said. "I think what coach Chizik is doing here is great. He is trying to make sure they leave here not only as better football players but also as better men."

Michael Catt, the film's executive producer and pastor of Sherwood Baptist, also was on hand for the screening. (BP)



CHIZIK

COURAGEOUS

will be in theaters

Sept. 30

Visit www.courageousthemovie.com
to watch a trailer or to order tickets.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christians, Muslims cleared of 'hurting religious feelings'

DAMURHUDA, Bangladesh — A court in Bangladesh on Aug. 11 exonerated two Christians, along with four Muslim friends, accused of "hurting religious sensibility."

Nurul Islam, another Christian and their Muslim friends were cleared of the charge after police failed to provide documentation of any evidence against them, an attorney said.

In March, Christians under the direction of the Way of Peace movement had arranged a two-day health camp offering free treatment to poor villagers in Damurhuda area in Chuadanga district, some 126 miles northwest of Dhaka.

Two of the Christian organizers and their Muslim friends were arrested March 24 under Section 54 of the penal code, a special power granted to police to arrest anyone on any suspicion.

Police are required to submit a primary investigation report within 15 days of the beginning of prosecution, and when they failed to do so, the Christians were released at a hearing April 10.

Police again filed a case April 13, however, charging them with "hurting religious feelings" of area Muslims as a Japanese doctor had offered Bibles to patients at a health camp.

The Japanese volunteer doctor offered Christian leaflets and Bibles to the patients, telling them they were under no obligation to take the literature, one Christian said.

The foreign doctor was not named in either of the cases. Lawyer Aksijul Islam Ratan said police had harassed his clients from the beginning, saying officers rather than any known victim filed the case as plaintiff.

"The police harassed them from the very beginning and what the police did was excessive," he said. "Again police could not show relevant documents regarding their charge. So the honorable court did not take the charge into cognizance and discharged my clients."

Central Asian believer jailed, tortured for his faith

CENTRAL ASIA — James (not his real name), a believer in Central Asia, is being held imprisoned and tortured for his faith.

"He has been blindfolded, handcuffed and held in solitary confinement," a friend said after his family visited him recently in prison.

"During the day, he was confined to a room where there were three compressor units blowing hot air on him and he was not given any water or food.

At night, he was put in a very small jail cell and his hands were released just long enough to eat a small piece of bread and drink one liter of water."

But James didn't sleep — he stayed awake praying and singing praises, just as he did in the hot room during the daytime. He has lost nearly 50 pounds since being imprisoned.

Officials interrogated him, asking why he left his former religion — this is his third imprisonment for his faith. James replied, "I am on this way because of Jesus and what He has done for me." James' friend asks that Christians keep him and his family in their prayers.

"And next time you have the opportunity to share your faith and don't because you're scared, think about the freedom you have to do so," the friend said.

Russian citizen expelled for preaching in Kazakh church

ARKALYK, Kazakhstan — After legal residence in Kazakhstan for 15 years, marriage to a Kazakh citizen and a 2-year-old daughter, Russian citizen Leonid Pan was denied his application to renew his residence permit in mid-August because he volunteers to preach in his local Protestant church.

The local Internal Policy Department had already refused permission for him to become leader of the church. "How can the Migration Police, without having a court order, demand that Leonid leave the country?" church members asked. The secret police denied it was involved in the expulsion.

Meanwhile another Baptist in August was fined nearly five months' official minimum wage for holding an unregistered worship service.

State restrictions on religious communities are likely to increase with the new religion law amendments, due in Parliament this fall. ☞