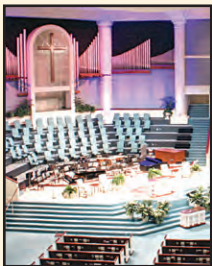




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Building a lasting faith

Parents, church leaders vital to college students staying in church

Millions of college freshmen are overwhelmed, trying to make new friends, adjusting to more rigorous schoolwork and learning to live away from home. Whether they also find time for church during their first two weeks on campus will set the mold for the rest of their college years, according to new research.

These findings come from a six-year study of approximately 500 Christian youth group members, conducted by Fuller Theological Seminary's Fuller Youth Institute in Pasadena, Calif.

The study's results were released Sept. 17 in "Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids."

The book examines why, according to a 2006 report by Christian research firm Barna Group, 61 percent of 20-somethings who regularly attended church as teenagers later left the pews.

The study implies that parents and church leaders need to do a better job preparing high school seniors to maintain their faith.

Only one out of every seven students surveyed said they were well equipped for college, and less than 50 percent of seniors with doubts talked about them with others, said Kara Powell, executive director of Fuller Youth Institute and co-author of "Sticky Faith."

What also hinders students is being too dependent on youth faith group worship.

Higher faith maturity

Nearly 60 percent of seniors surveyed attended intergenerational worship and possessed higher faith maturity in college, Powell said.

Nevertheless 40 percent of freshman said they had difficulty finding a church in college, and students' perception of faith made it all too easy for them to shove it aside.

"Students' view of faith was that it was like a jacket, something they can take on and off if they feel like it," Powell said.



Photo courtesy of Cottage Hill Baptist Church

DISCIPLESHIP — Brad Mills, associate pastor to college students at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, speaks to a group of students Sept. 28. He is currently preaching a 12-week series through 1 Thessalonians.

"One of the heartbreaking things, and why that two-week window is so influential, is that students feel guilty when they make mistakes and feel hypocritical and so full of remorse that they don't feel like they can then show up at church."

Powell suggested that parents share their own transitional experiences and discuss their mistakes and good choices, so their kids can trust to share their concerns and struggles with them.

Parents also should visit churches with their kids near their college campuses or visit new churches close to home to prepare them for finding a new place of worship.

Youth pastors also should nudge seniors to think about what they should look for in a new church and how they can be active Christians in college, said Jonathan Morrow, a youth-oriented equipping pastor at Fellowship Bible Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and author of the book "Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey."

(RNS)

College campuses 'important missions fields facing Alabama Baptist churches'

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's been a few years since Elizabeth Turnbull graduated from Auburn University, but there's one part of her education she looks back on especially frequently: what she learned at First Baptist Church, Opelika.

"I know that much of my understanding of who the Lord is and what He wants for me came from sitting in their pews and listening to an unfiltered proclamation of the gospel every week," Turnbull said. "My faith became much more deeply rooted while a part of this church body."

She doesn't really remember how she got involved at the Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association church

— it wasn't fancy ads or gimmicky events.

"I was just invited there, and the thing that kept me there was the Word being preached, relationships with families at the church, the friends that I made while there and the couples who generously opened their homes to college kids," Turnbull said.

That's exactly the sort of thing Trace Hamiter, minister to college students at First, Opelika, hopes for.

"There is no strategy. I don't do any advertising. We don't pass out fliers on campus," he said. "We just put the teaching of the Word and the discipleship of believers as a priority and students keep coming. They grow; they (See 'Churches,' page 12)

COMMENT

Living One's Last Days

The person's name is not mine to share. Many Baptist pastors would recognize it if told. The individual has been a major influence in my ministry and many others.

During a recent visit, this dear friend and mentor shared the results of a recent brain scan that showed flaking of certain brain tissue. The doctor said this is a certain sign of Alzheimer's disease. That word strikes fear into most of us. Sometimes it seems a fate worse than death, for the person one has always been can get lost in the dark maze of dementia and never re-emerge.

As my friend talked, his voice was not angry nor his words bitter. He simply described what appears to lie in front of him. My sadness at hearing the diagnosis seemed deeper than his. On our knees, we prayed for deliverance but this Christian warrior seemed to have a confidence and peace about him no matter what his outcome.

It was only later that I could ask myself the question of how I might react if given a terminal diagnosis or told I was headed toward long-term dementia like Alzheimer's. How would I change my life now while I still had my faculties?

Like you, I have a "bucket list." One is visit Antarctica so I could have been on all seven continents. But that list is not tied to last things. Each item is just something I would like to do.

The question is deeper than that. The question forces one to examine the character and quality of the life one leads today. Does one's life have value? Are one's activities worthwhile? Is one living in God's will today?

Years ago, a television show called "Run for Your Life" centered on an attorney who was told he had only a year to live. The show traced all the ways he tried to fill his last days with meaning.

Sometimes we are like that. We chase meaning in activity — even religious activity. We run to conferences, participate in all the church activities, even go on missions trips in order to find meaning and purpose for a life that otherwise seems less than fulfilling.

Perhaps that is why a terminal diagnosis or something like my friend faces often leads to anger and resentment of God and others. I know about anger and resentment. When my wife, Eleanor, died suddenly from injuries suffered in South Africa, there was a lot left undone, unsaid.

Anger and resentment are normal parts of grieving. But some people get stuck there. They can be-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

come neurotic. And some people facing the end of life or life as they have known it also can become neurotic — mired in sadness about what they are about to lose.

Might that be me? I hope not.

Another option is celebrating all the blessings God provides in the moment. Like you, I have visions of last days surrounded by children and grandchildren. But I was recently reminded that we educated our children and "they moved to San Diego." As a result, most of us are likely to spend our final days with our peers rather than our families.

Family and friends

Should that not cause us to joy in each precious moment we have with family and friends now? I know in my days of greatest need, it was family and friends who cared for me spiritually and emotionally as well as physically. I hope I will be able to give thanks for and with my loved ones up to my final breath.

An ancient story tells of one who searched the world over to find a treasure only to discover the object of his pursuit in his own back yard. Like that ancient traveler, some of us look for meaning and beauty in all the wrong places. We long for the exotic and look for the unusual. Maybe that is why our bucket lists contain things like visiting Antarctica.

Would it be better to bask in the beauty of the every day that surrounds us, to find the object of our pursuit in our own back yards? There is beauty in the every day, but often we miss it because it is familiar. Perhaps we are too afraid of missing something to appreciate what is around us. Perhaps we should be more afraid of failing to grasp the beauty of the every day with which God blesses us.

Sometimes a report like my friend received causes us to be so emotionally numb that we fail to recognize expressions of love from God as well as His people. Psalm 23 reminds us that "the Lord is my shepherd." He leads us beside still waters and green pastures. He restores our souls.

God has never provided a GPS for our walk with Him. We are assured of the final destination — life eternal in God's presence — but never are we told all the turns and troubles along the way.

Instead God promises to care for us and be with us — even through the valley of the shadow of death. For the Christian, that is enough. We are not alone — not in the dark maze of dementia nor the veil of death. God is with us and ultimately we will "dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

And when that is enough, we are able to recognize the expressions of God's love poured out through the Holy Spirit and God's people in life's daily, routine experiences.

Reflecting on the visit with my friend caused me some soul-searching. It caused some regrets to surface, caused me to acknowledge needed changes.

Reflecting also caused me to recognize that if the lifestyle one lives today is not the kind of life one would want to live during one's last days, then that lifestyle may not be worth living now, for none has the promise of tomorrow.

On the other hand, if one is living in God's will, then no result from a medical test or diagnosis from a doctor is enough to dramatically alter the values reflected in one's regular routine. Perhaps that is why my friend could sit in his living room and share his situation without evidence of anger or bitterness.

For you and me, I pray for such a daily walk with God.

Letters to the Editor


SBC BRAND NAME

Name change? Why? Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a brand like Coca-Cola. It indicates a known commodity. Changing the name of the SBC because it betrays a regional origin

makes about as much sense as changing the name of Coke because the drink originally contained cocaine!

Surveys have shown that "Southern" is not usually a negative factor in communities anywhere in the U.S. But if

"Southern" turns people off, I suspect "Baptist" would probably turn a bunch of them off, too. In fact, many of those offended by "Baptist" will probably also be offended by "church." But to (See 'Letters,' page 10)



THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

(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.

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NEWS SERVICES: Baptist Press (BP), Associated Baptist Press (ABP), Religion News Service (RNS), Compass Direct News (CDN), Evangelical Press (EP), Forum 18 (F18).
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.

Immigration law no longer threat to churches

Alabama now has the toughest immigration law in the nation, according to Gov. Robert Bentley. But churches no longer have to worry whether their ethnic ministries could be threatened — they are safe.

U.S. District Judge Sharon Lovelace Blackburn blocked the section of the law that would have allowed the state to prosecute those who harbor or transport illegal immigrants because it went further than a similar federal law.

Many church leaders were concerned that illegal immigrants found in a church service might be considered harboring and picking up illegal immigrant children for a Vacation Bible School might be considered transporting.

This concern was raised by a Hispanic Alabama Baptist pastor as well as on the editorial page of *The Alabama Baptist*. Leaders of the state's Episcopal, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches filed a lawsuit along these lines. It was combined with two other lawsuits, resulting in the current suit in which Blackburn ruled most of the original law legal Sept. 28.

Not targeting churches

Sponsors and supporters of the original legislation assured Alabama Baptist leaders early on that they were not trying to infringe upon freedom of worship in the state. They were not targeting churches with the legislation.

Attorney General Luther Strange argued previously that churches were always protected under existing law. The Alabama Religious Freedom Amendment provides significant protection to the exercise of religious rights, he said, noting the idea that one would not be able to engage in ministry, the sacraments and other things was not true.

Bill sponsor Rep. Micky Hammon, R-Decatur, agreed.

"This law is targeted at those knowingly partaking in illegal activity and human harboring. This has never been intended to interfere with religious activity."

Other sections of the law blocked by Blackburn:

- ▶ The state cannot prosecute those who conceal or rent to an illegal immigrant.

- ▶ The state cannot bar an illegal immigrant from seeking work.

- ▶ The state cannot stop businesses from deducting from state taxes the wages paid to illegal immigrants.

- ▶ The state cannot enforce a new law establishing a \$500 fine for stopping in a roadway to hire day laborers.

- ▶ Illegal immigrants cannot be barred from enrolling in state universities.

At press time, a group led by the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama said it would seek an emergency stay of Blackburn's order. And Bentley promised to fight to see the sections that were blocked take effect eventually.

(TAB)

'Family reunion'

State convention annual meeting in Mobile aims to give encouragement

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Mike Shaw hopes this year's state convention annual meeting "gives everyone a big dose of vitamin E — encouragement."

"The economy, storms, spiritual apathy in society, attacks on traditional morality, violence in so many places and health issues like cancer all tend to discourage, disillusion and depress all of us," said Shaw, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham. "I hope this convention will encourage every person who attends."

The theme for this year's convention meeting — set for Nov. 15–16 at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile — is "Great Commission Ministries ... Together."

What Alabama Baptists do for the Great Commission, they do together and to get together and share what God is doing will encourage everyone, said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"The Alabama Baptist State Convention is basically a family of churches, and our annual meeting is like a family reunion," he said. "We want to hear from each other as to how things are going in ministry across the state."

Host pastor Adam Dooley, senior pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist, said, "Hosting the Alabama Baptist Convention is a great honor and privilege. This year, we are particularly excited to hold the pastors conference in the same location so that pastors are not divided between two places. Monday through Wednesday will be inspiring and informative for all who attend."

Whether having informal conversations in the halls or hearing reports from entities at the pulpit, state Baptists encourage each other at the meeting through testimonies of how the Lord is blessing



Photo courtesy of Dauphin Way Baptist Church

'GREAT COMMISSION MINISTRIES ... TOGETHER' — Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, is the site of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15–16.

and using their ministries, Lance said.

"We work with each other in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 3:9. We are laborers together with God," he said. "We are in partnership with each other in reaching Alabama as a missions field. Yet those boundaries do not define us — we work together as partners to reach North America and around the world."

Other meeting highlights:

- ▶ The Tuesday night session will feature preaching from Fred Luter Jr., pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, and first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). "He is the personification of inspiration and motivation," Lance said. "Having faced the challenges of (Hurricane) Katrina, he can assist

us in our post-tornado recovery endeavors."

VOICES of Mobile, a 16-member vocal ensemble from the University of Mobile, will lead in worship during that session.

- ▶ Business matters to be presented include a budget change designed to favor more funding to the SBC, Lance said. A new paradigm for global missions partnerships may be discussed, too. "This is something we have been giving much thought to in recent years," he said.

- ▶ Sermons will include theme interpretations by Dooley; Charles Carter, pastor emeritus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills; and Rob Jackson, senior pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur. Rick Evans, pastor of Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery, will preach the convention sermon.

For more information about the meeting, visit alsbom.org.



London focus of 2011 International Missions Study

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Snowflakes dance around the old stone church and dust the detailed crevices of its exterior like highlights.

Snow's not super common in England, but Lizzie's getting accustomed to seeing it blanket the neighborhood around her church a little more frequently than it used to.

Much as political correctness does.

"It's a postmodern society. To many people here, there is no truth. 'Whatever you believe, that's fine' — that's the pervasive thought," said Lizzie Baker, youth minister at Holy Trinity Church on the outskirts of London.

And the "whatever you believe" is becoming more and more diverse in London. Some 300 languages are spoken in the city of 8 million. Spend a little time on the street, and you'll see people of all nationalities and religions. "You really can reach any nation of the world right here," said Susan Goodman, a Southern Baptist representative in London. "We can work freely here among people groups we would have little

to no access to back in their homelands."

Walk around, she said, and "you'll quickly see Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindu — you can share with any faith you'd like to here."

Because of the great need for the gospel and the great opportunities to share, London is the focus of the International Missions Study (IMS) this year, set for Dec. 4–11.

'God is stirring hearts'

"On the surface, the city is dark but God is stirring hearts," said Donielle Yancey, a college leader with Shandon Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C., who visited London earlier this year. "People are open to having conversations."

Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, has spent time investing in a particular area of London, an area where it's been able to bump into a variety of nationalities and share the gospel with them.

"It's a huge city, probably considered the capital of the world in some ways," said Cliff Knight, associate pastor of family ministries at the Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association church.

Matt Fontenot, a Southern Baptist representative in London, asks that Christians in Alabama pray for his city, learn about it and engage it so that "the voices of the nations in London will begin echoing the whispers of the gospel."

The IMS, provided by national Woman's Missionary Union, goes hand in hand with the International Mission Board's Week of Prayer for International Missions and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Available resources include

- ▶ Adult, student and preschool study guides focusing on needs and missions work in London;

- ▶ "Kids Reaching Kids — London," a study for grades 1–6;

- ▶ A kit including a planning guide for the study, maps, posters, crafts, recipes and handouts; and

- ▶ Molly's Tour of London, a downloadable video tour of London narrated by a missionary kid living in England.

For IMS resources, call 1-800-968-7301 or visit wmu.com and click on "calendar" and then "International Missions Emphasis." ■

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host Southern Heritage Blue Grass Gospel in concert Oct. 7, 7:30 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Ramah Church, Burnt Corn**, will celebrate its 139th anniversary with homecoming Oct. 9, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. William Bodiford is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **John Cantelow III** is the new pastor of **Sixth Avenue Church, Birmingham**. ► **Katherwood Church, Birmingham**, will host the Praying On-Sight With Insight prayer walk for McDonald Chapel Oct. 8, 10-11 a.m. For information call David Henry at 205-307-8793. R. Dean Pesnell is pastor. ► **Springdale Church, Tarant**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16, 10 a.m. Former Pastor Porter K. Wallace will speak. A singing with former and current members and guests will follow. Lunch will follow the singing. Harold D. Fanning is interim pastor.

CAHABA

► **Scott Lee Hale Sr.** is the new pastor of **Uniontown Church**. He holds a bachelor's degree from Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green and master of divinity in Christian education from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He and his wife, Dennie, have one child.



HALE

CENTRAL

► **Second Church, Weogufka**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 9, 10 a.m. Lee Merck, pastor of Grove Hill Church, will speak. Ronnie Cottingham, of Lucedale, Miss., will provide special music. Lunch will follow. Brandon Baird is pastor.

CHILTON

► **Maplesville Church** will celebrate its 104th homecoming Oct. 16. Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. and the service at 10:30 a.m. Former Interim Pastor Doug West will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow. For information call 334-366-0004.

COFFEE

► **Whitewater Church, Elba**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary with an old-fashioned homecoming Oct. 9, 10:30 a.m. There will be special music by the choir, Foyel Brunson and others. Lunch will follow. Wearing old-timey clothes is welcome. For information call 334-

897-2452. Richard Collier is interim pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE

► **Grace Life Church of the Shoals, Muscle Shoals**, will hold fall outreach Oct. 9-12 with Jono Sims. Services will be Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 6:15 p.m. and weeknights at 7. There will be a Swamp John's supper and student pizza supper Wednesday from 5-6:30 p.m. Jeff Noblit is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Union Hill Church, Cottonwood**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary Oct. 9, 10 a.m. Bobby DuBois, associate executive director for the State Board of Missions, will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow. The Mount Gilead Quartet will sing. For information call 334-691-2401. Rob Lightsey is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Brooklyn Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 9, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. Jack Williamson is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **Grace Church, Valley**, will hold revival Oct. 9-12, 7 p.m. EST, with Bill King. There will be a special program Sunday night with Brother Billy Bob Bohannon. Mike Newman is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Oneonta**, will hold revival Oct. 9-12 with Ted Traylor. Rick Stone will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 10:15 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. There will be a special emphasis each night. Youth night will be Sunday, senior adult Monday, children Tuesday and entire church Wednesday. There will be a senior adult luncheon Monday at noon. There will be a pastors luncheon Tuesday at noon. Dinner will be served every night at 5:45. For lunch and dinner reservations call 205-625-3191. Larry Gipson is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Lindsay Lane Church, Athens**, will host its fifth Global Impact Celebration for missions Oct. 12-16. Johnny Hunt will speak Wednesday. The church will be doing LoveLoud projects Thursday-Saturday. There will be a soccer tournament Saturday at the Athens SportsPlex. For information visit www.lindsaylane.org. Dusty McLemore is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► The churches of **Lookout Mountain Association** will hold OutReach Saturday Oct. 15. Churches will meet at 10 a.m. with the goal of going to as many homes in the community as possible. Lay people are encouraged to assist pastors in challenging their congregation to participate, planning visi-

tation routes and following up with prospects. Lloyd Borden is director of missions.

MADISON

► **First Church, Huntsville**, will host The CenturyMen Oct. 12, 6 p.m. David Hull is pastor. ► **Mountain View Church, Huntsville**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary Oct. 15-16. There will be a fellowship in the Christian life center Saturday from 2-5 p.m. The Sunday service will be at 10:30 a.m. Rick Lance, executive director for the State Board of Missions, will speak. Lunch will follow. Jeff Pike is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Open Acres Church, Montgomery**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 9. Rex Godwin will speak at 10 a.m. The Dennis Family will sing at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. Ron Davis is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► Members of the former **Mount Moriah Fellowship Church**, located on Mount Moriah Drive on the Butler-Wilcox county line, will celebrate homecoming called Second Sunday Oct. 9, 11 a.m. J. Larry Yarborough Jr., pastor of First Church, Gallatin, Tenn., will speak. Lunch will follow (bring a covered dish and serving pieces marked with your name). The steering committee will meet in the sanctuary at 1:15 p.m. The JGD Trust Inc. meeting will be at 1:45 p.m. For information contact J. Donald Carmichael at 205-879-7849 or maryalice@carmichael1.com.

SHELBY

► **Community Church, Maylene**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 9, 8:30 and 11 a.m. Glenn Sandifer, pastor of Mount Pleasant Church, Gordo, will speak. Lunch will follow. Steve Hess and Southern Salvation will sing at 6 p.m. Bo Brown is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Keith Ray** is the new pastor of **Arbor Church, Pell City**. He holds a master of divinity from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Rebecca, have one child. ► **Greensport Church, Ashville**, celebrated its 160th anniversary Sept. 25. It also celebrated the renewal of the church after renovating and repairing following the April tornadoes. There was special music. Lunch followed and there was an afternoon service. Marlin Cox is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Circlewood Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host Phil Wickham in concert Oct. 21. Doors will open at 6 p.m. For tickets visit www.circlewood.org. Herb Thomas is pastor.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Catholics warn of 'national conflict' over gay 'marriage'

NEW YORK — The nation's top Catholic bishop issued a stern challenge to the Obama administration's decision not to support a federal ban on gay "marriage," and warned the president that his policies could "precipitate a national conflict between church and state of enormous proportions."

In a letter sent Sept. 20, Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, who heads the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he and other prelates have grown increasingly concerned since the administration announced last February that it would no longer defend the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in court.

The Obama administration says it believes the law that defines marriage as between one man and one woman is unconstitutional.

Dolan said the bishops are upset that the administration and opponents of DOMA are framing their argument as a civil rights issue, which he said equates "opposition to redefining marriage with either intentional or willfully ignorant racial discrimination." He also argued that traditional marriage is best for society and that treating gay "marriage" as a civil right would lead to discrimination against believers and against church agencies that could not, for example, accommodate gay couples as adoptive parents.

Religious freedom advocates seek to save Iranian pastor

WASHINGTON — Religious freedom advocates in the United States rallied Sept. 28 around an Iranian pastor who is facing execution because he has refused to recant his Christian faith in the overwhelmingly Muslim country.

The British-based group Christian Solidarity Worldwide has asked international supporters to urge Iranian officials to halt plans to execute Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani.

The pastor was found guilty of apostasy last year, and the conviction has been upheld by the Iranian Supreme Court. If carried out, the execution would mark the first time since 1990 that an Iranian pastor was killed for his Christian faith.

"Despite the finding that Mr. Nadarkhani did not convert to Christianity as an adult, the court continues to demand that he recant his faith or otherwise be executed," said Leonard Leo, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. "The most recent court proceedings are not only a sham, but are contrary to Iranian law and international human rights standards."

'Courageous' tops ticket sales among all movies in US

NASHVILLE — The church-made film "Courageous" is No. 1 in ticket sales among all movies according to a leading ticketing website — a significant feat considering it is an independent movie that will open in far fewer theaters than most big-time movies.

It opened Sept. 30. Made by the same church that filmed the 2008 hit "Fireproof" — the top independent film that year — "Courageous" will open in 1,126 theaters in the United States. By comparison, "The Lion King 3D" opened in 2,300 theaters and "Dolphin Tale 3D" opened in 3,500.

As of Sept. 29, "Courageous" had reached \$2 million in pre-sales, officials close to the film said. Despite the data, "Courageous" almost certainly won't finish No. 1 at the box office over the weekend. For starters, it is not opening in enough theaters. Its pre-release sales have been boosted by churches across the country buying out entire showings for the film and using it as a ministry tool, particularly to men. They then resell the tickets to members.

SPECIAL CONFERENCE RATES

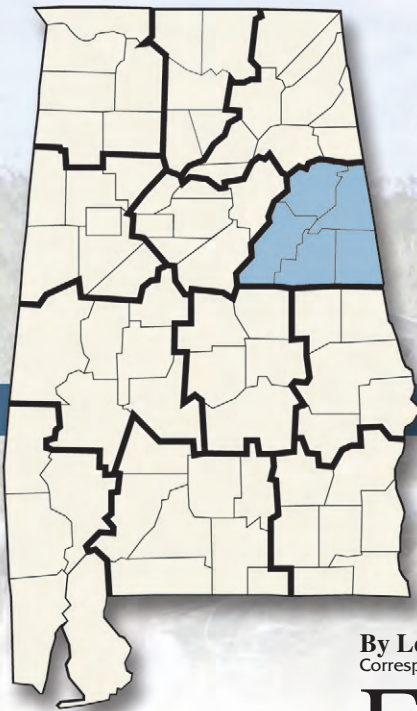
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Baptists RESPOND

to areas devastated by April tornadoes

Alabama Baptists continue to work in District 3

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For Alabamians and others in the Southeast, April 27 was a defining moment, a time marker in their lives.

They remember well where they were and what they were doing when the deadly tornadoes hit that day.

In Alabama alone, more than 240 people died. The storms touched almost 63 percent of the state's 67 counties, leaving some with extensive devastation.

Gary Swafford, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), who has visited almost all the affected areas, was "overwhelmed with the destruction" he saw.

In Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne, Randolph and Talladega counties — which constitute District 3 — the damage mainly was confined to Calhoun, Swafford said.

While much progress has been seen in the county, thanks to the response of Calhoun Baptist Association, local people, neighboring associations and others, the road to recovery may take years to complete.

Calhoun Baptist Association

On April 27, Calhoun Association's disaster relief volunteers worked all day to clean up in Calhoun County from the morning storms until they had to take shelter from an even bigger storm, Director of Missions (DOM) Sid Nichols said.

The path of destruction was extensive and significant.

Nichols said the area of damage was 30 miles long and five miles wide in some places. "And everything in that five miles was gone."

Deaths were reported in Ohatchee, Piedmont, Webster's Chapel and Wellington, at least nine in all.

One person was killed in the older church building of Mamre Baptist Church, Wellington, where nine individuals had taken shelter, Nichols said. The newer church building was destroyed.



Photos courtesy of Calhoun Baptist Association

ROAD TO RECOVERY — Disaster relief volunteers in Calhoun Baptist Association have done all types of work including distributing items and rebuilding homes following the April tornadoes.

First Baptist Church, Wellington, was hit as well, Nichols said.

He said First, Wellington, has received two mobile units, while Mamre Baptist is meeting at United Fellowship Baptist Church, Alexandria.

Curtis Simpson, executive director for United Way of East Central Alabama in Anniston, said 284 homes and buildings were destroyed. Another 120 sustained major damage, requiring them to be demolished. In addition, 229 had reparable damage and 80 more were termed "affected," meaning debris needed to be removed from them.

In all, more than 1,500 Calhoun County households completed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) registrations reporting storm damage, Simpson said.

Initially the county did not receive assistance because the destruction was so widespread in the state that disaster relief resources were stretched, Nichols said.

In the days after the storms,

"it was the good-hearted church people" of various denominations who took up the cause, providing food, necessities and first aid to those in need, he said.

The shower unit from Coosa River Baptist Association was deployed to Calhoun County, Nichols said.

In the county, 1,500–2,000 meals a day were being prepared for those affected by the storms, he added.

"It was a monumental thing" to prepare that number of meals, Nichols said. But he called it the closest thing to the Bible's meal (See 'Most,' pages 6–7)

District 3

Calhoun Association

Cleburne Association

Randolph Association

Clay Association

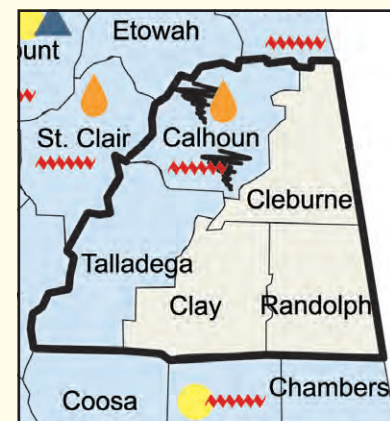
Carey Association

Coosa River Association

Explanation of districts

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

Highlights from District 3



State disaster relief efforts in the area

(shown by county)

1 of the 6 associations has Alabama Baptist disaster relief efforts focused on it.

1 shower unit was brought in during the first few weeks.

2 Alabama Baptist churches in the area were severely damaged.

Most associations spared storm damage, support others

(continued from page 5)

barrel story of Elijah and the widow because it was obvious that God was providing.

Nichols said Ten Island Baptist Church, Ohatchee, and Oak Grove Baptist Church, Glencoe, served as distribution centers and feeding sites.

Because looting was an issue, many property owners did not want to leave their belongings to go to a feeding site. So, in many cases, meals were taken to the people, Nichols explained.

Christians were meeting people's needs immediately and being "the church," he said. "If this is not ministry, I don't know what is."

Nichols said the people of the churches were working in their "Jerusalem" in very significant ways.

"All of our churches have done something," he said. "All of our churches did their part. Some of my small churches did big things."

For three weeks to a month after the storms, the focus was cleanup and food service. Then came a time of assessment to see which families could get back into their dwellings with a little assistance. Nichols estimated there were probably 30 such cases.

And Calhoun Association, along with in-state and out-of-state volunteers, has constructed 10 homes, he reported. "Still (there are) a number of homes that need to be built."

Nichols said another house has been started and construction on one may commence soon.

With volunteer help, discount lumber from a couple businesses and other resources, the association has been able to build 1,200-square-foot houses for about \$35,000, he said.

The "major source" of help in rebuilding Calhoun County has been donations, volunteers and Southern Baptist disaster relief in Alabama, Nichols said.

Almost constantly during the recovery and rebuilding phase, the county has had volunteer help, although the number did decrease some when school started.

Nichols noted that there have been "thousands" of volunteers to help in Calhoun County. "We're appreciative of every one of them."

It may take years for the county to get back to normal, Nichols said.

On the other hand, life may never be "normal" for the people directly affected by the storms.

"Even though you're helping them, they're still hurting," Nichols said. They have lost a great deal. "Those scars can never heal."

Five months after the storms, the task of identifying people who still need assistance is ongoing. Also continuing are the respon-

sibilities of acquiring resources and coordinating volunteers to build homes. Calhoun Association's people also continue to encourage and show love to those whose lives have been affected by the storms.

The ministry of Christians has resulted in some individuals accepting Christ as Savior. Others who may not have been attending church have renewed their connection with believers, Nichols said.

The churches have rallied around hurting people, sought to meet their needs, sent donations and volunteered, he continued.

"It has been an amazing process to observe," said Nichols, who has been out in the field nearly constantly since April 27.

Simpson observed that homes and lives in Calhoun County are being rebuilt as a result of the coordinated efforts of the association.

Carey Baptist Association

Clay County, where Carey Baptist Association is located, escaped damage April 27.

But "immediately churches in our association began contacting our office about where they could help," DOM Bruce Willis said.

Carey Association responded by making contacts in Calhoun and Tallapoosa counties to know where to send volunteers, Willis said.

That weekend, a large group of volunteers from Lineville Baptist Church went to Cullman County to work and returned again the weekend after that.

Volunteers from First Baptist Church, Ashland, and Barfield Baptist Church, Lineville, sorted food items in a Calhoun County warehouse, and Corinth Baptist Church, Cragford, sorted clothes in Tallapoosa County and, with the help of Wellborn Cabinet Inc., donated cabinets.

Other churches responded, too. Lineville Baptist; Barfield Baptist; Macedonia Baptist Church, Delta; and the youth of Mellow Valley Baptist Church, Ashland, assisted in cleanup. Clairmont Springs Baptist Church, Ashland, and Oak Chapel Baptist Church,

and the sacrificial spirit of our people." Donations to disaster relief to help those impacted by storms have been strong.

And Alabama continues to be a leader in the Southern Baptist Convention in contributions through the Cooperative Program, Swafford said.

"We praise the Lord" for the people's faithfulness, he said.

For more information, visit www.sbd.org. (TAB)



Photo by John Swain

BLESSED — The Sunday after April 27, Allen Murphy, pastor of Mamre Baptist Church, Gadsden, in Calhoun Baptist Association tells his congregation, 'we're blessed to have a roof over our heads.'

How to assist in relief efforts

"Pray, give and go" continues to be the call to arms in the rebuilding phase. Those working closely with rebuilding projects say funds will be a constant need for quite a while. So will volunteer assistance, especially from skilled individuals such as plumbers and electricians.

To help, contact Calhoun Baptist Association at 256-237-5171, other District 3

associations or the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

The SBOM's tornado rebuild assistant, Penny Flowers, is helping to connect volunteers with associations that need assistance. She can be reached at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 597.

For a list of needs across the state, visit www.sbd.org. (TAB)

Goodwater, served meals to volunteers.

Mount Zion Baptist Church and Lystra Baptist Church, both in Ashland, and Horn's Memorial Baptist Church, Talladega, gave funds as did others. All monetary donations were forwarded to the state disaster relief fund.

In fact, Mount Zion Baptist held a benefit yard sale in the association parking lot. The sale raised \$1,400 for those affected by the storms, Willis said.

Plus volunteers from Carey Association — along with others from High Pine Baptist Church, Roanoke, in Randolph Baptist Association — went to Cordova in August to roof a house, he said.

"I was really pleased with the responsiveness of the people to the Spirit of God moving in their hearts," Willis said.

Because so many areas are in the rebuilding phase now, he expects that more volunteers from the association will be serving.

Many skilled people will be needed for rebuilding a lot of homes, Willis said. "We're still keeping in contact with those in affected areas," as well as the SBOM.

Clay Baptist Association

The other association serving Clay County, Clay Baptist Association, is made up of seven rural churches with bivocational pastors and

congregations consisting mostly of retired people, many of whom are on fixed incomes.

Nonetheless "the people are loving and caring," said L.C. Harris, pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church North, Delta, and moderator of Clay Association. "They helped at or above their means."

The association and its churches collected \$13,000 to help people affected by the storms. The funds were sent to Calhoun, St. Clair, Walker, Marion, Birmingham, West Cullman and Tuscaloosa Baptist associations, said Fred Amason, chairman of Clay Association's executive committee.

"They knew more so what needed to be done with it," Harris said of the money.

However, he was quick to give credit for this outpouring where credit is due.

"It's about Him and His," Harris said. "Give Him the glory. He's the One who gave us the funds and put it on their hearts to give. The praise ought to go to Him."

Cleburne Baptist Association

When Cleburne County was spared storm damage, Cleburne Baptist Association swiftly assumed a "supportive" role, DOM Larry Riddle said.

Some volunteers were in Calhoun County the next day to give out food and supplies, he said.

Alabamians continue to give sacrificially to disaster relief

April's storms came at a time when the U.S. economy already was in a downturn.

Remarkably, though, giving to Alabama Baptist churches and disaster relief efforts has remained stable, said Gary Swafford, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"Our people are giving sacrificially," Swafford said.

"I am impressed with the faithfulness

as they rebuild

But Cleburne Association disaster relief volunteers — who are trained in chain saw, mud-out and chaplaincy — served in other places, too: Tuscaloosa, Henagar, Rainsville and Arab. Chaplains spent a week in Arab at the FEMA center. They also went house to house.

“The first couple of weeks, we had somebody out almost all the time,” Riddle said, adding that Calvary Baptist Church, Heflin; Heflin Baptist Church; and Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne, have particularly taken up the challenge to assist. In fact, he said people from Macedonia Baptist are working in Calhoun County almost every Saturday.

In July, the association helped build a home in Tuscaloosa. All churches in the association were involved in that, Riddle noted.

The weekend of Sept. 24, Cleburne Association partnered with Sand Mountain Baptist Association to help build a home. Others from Cleburne Association trained that weekend for future service in disaster relief with shower unit, laundry unit, food preparation and chain saw. Riddle said the April disaster has caused people to see the great need to be prepared for ministry.

He said the association will continue to work in Calhoun County and assist Sand Mountain Association whenever needed.

“We are not leaders in any of these things,” simply the helpers, Riddle said. “It has been quite an effort. We’ve got good folks in the county.”

Seeing the accomplishments in Calhoun County “has been a wonderful thing. It’s amazing how people help people.”

As a result of the storms, Riddle said he has witnessed “a drawing together” of churches as they experience the missions spirit by giving and going. He said he has seen “churches that can’t wait to help.”

Coosa River Baptist Association

The April 27 storms inflicted minor damage in the Childersburg area of Talladega County, said Randy Hagan, DOM for Coosa River Association.

Because there was no significant damage in the county, the association turned its attention to other locales.

“We’ve put all our efforts into Calhoun County,” Hagan said, noting Coosa River Association volunteers have assisted in Webster’s Chapel and Ohatchee.

But he added that they also have ministered in Birmingham, Cullman and Tuscaloosa.

Almost every weekend since April 27, volunteers from the association have worked in Calhoun County. Also Coosa River Association has directed some disaster relief funds to Calhoun Association, Hagan said.

“Our churches really rose to the occasion,” providing meals for 500–600 at a time soon after the storms, he said. “We invited state troopers, police, utility workers.”

The association also has helped build three homes in Ohatchee and Webster’s Chapel.

About a week after the storms, Hagan learned that a truckload of supplies was en route from Arizona.

It was one example of how God worked out details, he said.

Hagan said he found through this experience that whenever there was a specific need, he would discover that God already had the solution on the way.

Monetary contributions, donations, volunteer labor go into building homes

What does it take to build a home for a family who lost its dwelling in the April 27 storms?

Gary Swafford, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), noted that Calhoun Baptist Association is constructing homes in two sizes.

With monetary contributions, some donated materials and volunteer labor, the association is building the larger homes for \$35,000 and the smaller ones for \$25,000, Swafford said.

Putting the project needs into perspective, Penny Flowers, SBOM tornado rebuild assistant, noted that dry wall and other materials for a small home cost between \$1,000 and \$3,000. (TAB)

Coosa River Association’s people are glad to be helpers, Hagan said. “We just try to stand by and wait for the next opportunity. We just try to be as available as we can be.”

Hagan estimated that 300–400 individuals from churches in his association have volunteered in some way.

“Our churches have done magnificent,” he said.

Through the work of Christian volunteers, people are seeing that their neighbors love them, Hagan said.

Also Coosa River Association’s resources have helped many others.

“Our shower trailer has been on the ground steadily since the tornadoes came through,” Hagan said.

At the time he spoke, the trailer was in Holt, where it was expected to remain until Christmas.

Of course, rebuilding will be a long process, and Hagan’s goal is to keep the matter before the people of his association, encouraging them to pray, give and go.

Randolph Baptist Association

“For whatever reason, we were missed,” Clayton Scott said of the wrath of the April 27 storms. “We (Randolph County) had no damage.”

About 35 miles in any direction, though, there was, he said.

Nonetheless the people of Randolph Baptist Association have tried to help their neighbors in need.

Scott, pastor of Rocky Branch Baptist Church, Woodland, and chairman of trustees for the association, estimated that volunteers from at least five churches have worked in storm-damaged areas. Some churches also have given funds for disaster relief purposes.

Seven truckloads of clothes and cleaning supplies were sent from the county to Tuscaloosa and Hackleburg, among other locations. Scott, a member of the New Hope Volunteer Fire Department, said this effort was coordinated by Randolph County’s 18 volunteer fire departments.

Through the relief efforts of Randolph Association’s churches, he believes that many volunteers have learned about and seen firsthand the impact of cooperative missions. ☞

“We ... try to be as available as we can be.”

DOM Randy Hagan
Coosa River Association

FBC Williams rebuilds area homes debt-free

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

First Baptist Church, Williams, immediately leapt into action after the devastating April 27 tornadoes, and the congregation’s devotion continues with ongoing efforts to rebuild area homes destroyed by the storms.

According to Pastor Mike Oliver, the areas of Ohatchee and Pleasant Valley were both hit hard.

So the church opened its doors to those affected by the storms, offering everything from child care and tetanus shots to counseling and prayer. The gym was transformed into a clothes distribution center, bustling with endless volunteer activity.

Oliver said the church was serving 400 per meal on average.

After that initial phase of providing relief, First, Williams, dove into a recovery phase by helping rural residents obtain temporary housing.

Oliver heard about one particular family who had lost its home. The church began to ask what it could do to help, and he thought about how wonderful it would be if someone stepped up to donate a mobile home to the family. Soon after he began the process of seeking donors, three mobile homes appeared.

Shifting focus

Once those mobile homes were given away, First, Williams, shifted its focus to building new homes for those whose homes were destroyed by the storms.

With six builders in the congregation, funds from donations and grants and volunteers, the church assessed the costs involved in construction and began building — along with the help of other churches and volunteer groups and a contractor overseeing each project — \$50,000 homes that span about 1,400 square feet.

The houses are debt-free — and fully

decorated thanks to a group of women who help furnish them.

And with the assistance of volunteers from universities like Belmont in Nashville and churches of different denominations and in different states, Oliver said that houses are built in as little as two months.

After construction is complete, each new home is dedicated in a ceremony with singing and celebration. A quilting guild gives the family a quilt. In addition, the family is given a Bible and a crocheted cross made by a member of First, Williams.

Building relationships

Not only has First, Williams, been able to help families get back into homes but Oliver said the church also has built many meaningful relationships with churches and missions teams through the experience.

He cited one example when a church team from Macon, Ga., arrived a few weeks ago to help with construction. A senior adult from the group pulled him aside one day and told him she had always been homesick but just loved being there to help. “I’m definitely coming back,” Oliver recalled her saying.

So far, six homes have been completed: three mobile homes and three built from the ground up.

Oliver said as long as funding continues, the house-building mission will continue.

“It’s important to not forget these rural areas,” he noted.

Oliver added that one of the greatest lessons he has learned from this endeavor is that helping others has renewed their sense of hope, as well as their belief that the Church is relevant.

“This has led into a brand-new area of ministry for our church,” Oliver said.

For more information, contact the church at 256-435-5020. ☞

Lineville Baptist aids FBC Fairview

C.J. Andrews, associate pastor of Lineville Baptist Church, is all too familiar with the destructive fury of the April 27 tornadoes. His father and several other family members had homes destroyed or badly damaged by the storms in Fairview in Cullman County.

The day after the storms hit, Andrews asked some men from the Carey Baptist Association church if they would accompany him to Fairview to assess the damage.

“Before we even got back (from the assessments) that afternoon, they were already putting plans together to take a larger group up the next day,” he recalled.

About 45 volunteers, many from Lineville Baptist, assembled to aid First Baptist Church, Fairview, Andrews’ home church.

Twenty of the volunteers spent most of the day cutting down trees and limbs and clearing debris from Andrews’ family members’ yards. Others helped clean up a nearby park so that the community’s summer baseball program could start on time.

According to Andrews, Carey Associa-

tion does not have an organized disaster relief team. He said while not having that structure somewhat limits what groups can do without the Southern Baptist disaster relief “yellow hats and the orange vests,” the association is quick to unite and send small groups out to help in places that need it.

Still Andrews was surprised and touched by the large showing of people who banded together to help his family members after the storms.

“I was expecting 10 or 15 people,” he said, adding, “It was just an amazing day, an emotional day.”

The next weekend, another crew from Lineville Baptist traveled to Fairview to do more work. Andrews said the experience built a “great relationship” between the church family he grew up with and the church family he currently serves.

As for him, God revealed a bigger picture of the Church in this tragic situation.

“It’s not about First Baptist, Fairview, or [Lineville Baptist]; it’s the community of God helping where we can,” Andrews said. (TAB)

Age segregation

Churches cancel Sunday School, put parents in charge of spiritual training

Don't look for children's Sunday School classes at Ridgewood Church in Port Arthur, Texas. And forget about scavenger hunts and water park trips: The youth ministry is no more.

Sound like a dying church?

No, it's a family-integrated congregation, whose leaders wanted parents — rather than Sunday School teachers and youth ministers — to spiritually train their children. Driven by statistics about youth leaving church after high school, it's turned to the Bible as its sole educational text and shunned age-segregated structures.

"Nobody disagrees that there's a problem," said Ridgewood's Pastor Dustin Guidry, whose church started the transition seven years ago.

"What do we do about it? It's just going back to the basics, relying upon the sufficiency of Scripture."

Guidry later learned other congregations were doing the same thing: shuttering classrooms, demanding that parents — especially fathers — take on more of a spiritual leadership role and sometimes even canceling Sunday Schools.

In "Divided," a controversial video circulating online, and a related book called "A Weed in the Church," the movement's leaders warn that "unbiblical" age-segregated activities can lead youth away from the church.

Pastor Scott Brown, director of the North Carolina-based National Center for Family-Integrated Churches and author of the book, said many of its close to 800 affiliated churches have either stopped or reduced traditional Sunday School classes.

"When Jesus gathers people together, He gathers the generations," Brown said. "He doesn't segregate people by age. He's famous for saying, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me,' because His disciples wanted to banish the children. Jesus wasn't that way."

Pastor Paul Thompson of East-side Southern Baptist Church, Twin Falls, Idaho, was influenced by

Brown's book when he presented a resolution to his church in April calling it to "repent and cease" its past age segregation, acknowledging that "few in our city, state, region or nation may understand."

Brown and Thompson said the disappearance of youth from their pews was a catalyst for change.

"Probably the hard, hard questions were 'Where are the students and the children who have grown up in this church?'" Thompson said. "A lot of them live still here in Twin Falls, and they don't go to church at all, and they don't live what we taught them when they were children."

Pastor Josue Raimundo of Iglesia Biblica de la Gracia (Grace Bible Church) of Arlington, Va., agrees with the principle that Brown's

movement espouses but thinks churches can apply it differently. There's still Sunday School at his church, but youth and parents sit around a big table together, taking turns reading and discussing the Bible.

"The issue is for the parents to have the charge of instructing their children," he said.

The family-centered movement is part of a broader trend of churches struggling to respond to statistics

that claim a youth attrition rate of 40 to 88 percent. Christian Smith, director of the National Study of Youth and Religion, said there is cause for concern but those statistics are sometimes wildly exaggerated.

Increasing numbers

Smith has found that 14 percent of youth ages 13-17 identified as "not religious." That number nearly doubles five years later. And he noted that those numbers could change as these young adults marry and have children.

Yet he doesn't consider Brown and others' age-integrated approach extreme. While it's not the "silver bullet," it fits his findings about the key role parents play in influencing children's lives.

"Parents are so crucial that if you



RNS photo

FAMILY-INTEGRATED CHURCH — Maggie Hazleton, 5, follows along in her children's Bible on Sept. 4 at Ridgewood Church in Port Arthur, Texas, with her father, Jeff Hazleton, 39, of Nederland, Texas.

just split them up from their kids and the parents think that some ministry professional is taking care of it, that's not going to be very effective," he said.

A range of ministries is responding to the research with books, lessons and conferences.

The third conference of D6, a movement that explores how churches can encourage parents to spiritually train their youth, met Sept. 21-23 in Dallas. More than 2,000 people from about 700 churches were expected to attend. It's named for the sixth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, which also is cited by the family-centered movement for its admonition to teach children God's commandments.

"I do believe there is an overbalance of age-segregated programming and that overbalance must be corrected," said Richard Ross, a D6 presenter and professor of student ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "But it is throwing out the baby with the bath to suggest that those groupings should never happen."

Daniel Edmonds, director of the office of Sunday School and discipleship for the Alabama Baptist

State Board of Missions, agreed with Ross that although teaching among families should improve, age-group meetings aren't entirely useless.

'Not the place'

"I do believe we need to strengthen the role of parents teaching their children the Bible. I don't think Sunday School is the place to do it," he said. "Sunday School is a great place to, like Jesus, mobilize groups of people for evangelism and discipleship."

Also, he said, it is a great place to teach children the Bible at age-appropriate learning lev-

els and thus bring them to Jesus.

Edmonds said he and his staff advocate churches including children in worship services but they also see great value in separating the age groups for teaching during Sunday School.

"It is true that Jesus taught the masses with potentially all age groups present, but it is also true that Jesus led a small group on a clear mission of evangelism and discipleship," he said. "Clearly the Bible gives examples of the older teaching the younger, men teaching women, women teaching women ... and there is great benefit to groups of this nature." (RNS, TAB)



RNS photo

TOGETHER — Michelle Higgins, 37, of Vidor, Texas, and her daughter, Lily, 10, worship Sept. 4 at Ridgewood Church in Port Arthur, Texas.

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

As I write this article I'm getting ready to visit some of you. Next week I have three appointments in and around Dothan. I plan to leave there and take an application for a reverse mortgage just outside of Andalusia. As I make my way back home, there's a lady and her son in Evergreen who want to sit down and discuss their options. She may or may not apply for a reverse, but at least they will know how the reverse works, and they'll be able to make an educated decision.

I've had folks tell me they did not want to waste my time by asking me to come share information. I respond by saying I benefit each time someone understands how a reverse mortgage works, because you may not need it, but more than likely you know someone who does.

My customers have various needs. Most want to get rid of

their monthly mortgage payments. If there is enough equity in the property, we can accomplish that, and they can use their money elsewhere.

Others want to have money so they can buy both meat and medicine. Just last week we closed on a reverse because a lady's children approached me. They said their mom needed sitters to assist them. People have all kinds of needs, so if you or someone you know could benefit from some extra cash, don't hesitate to call me.

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy Dixon covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director and a deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free brochure or quote, call 205-567-4800 or email jdixon@mcgowinking.net.



Jimmy Dixon

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Couple with Ala. ties introduce Central Asian city to Christ

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

James and Mandy Baker are the only Christ followers they know of in a city of 500,000 people.

People there don't even know what a Christian is supposed to look like, said James Baker, who, along with his wife, attended college and a Baptist church in Alabama.

"There are no known believers here, but we continue to share the good news with our neighbors, friends and anyone else we come into contact with on a daily basis," he said.

"So far, we have spent most of our time dispelling preconceived ideas that [our people] have of Americans and Christians alike. Most think that we believe in three gods — the Trinity."

Mandy Baker said it's challenging — all the time.

"It's hard, the reality that we live in a place where there are no known believers, no churches, no fellowship, no hope and then to know we can't change that — we are at the mercy of the Holy Spirit to turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, to make blind eyes see and deaf ears hear," she said. "It is hard to stare into those faces who are striving to please God and yet know nothing of the true God."

But the Bakers have faith that



IMB photo

'AT THE MERCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT' — James and Mandy Baker, who attended college and a Baptist church in Alabama, share the gospel in a city where there are no known believers or churches.

God is going to do big things in their Central Asian city among a people who don't know who He is.

So much faith, in fact, that they moved there with their three small children in 2010 after planning for 11 years to move to another part of the world.

"We had planned to go out on our own (to the other location). Even now, we are trailblazers but we

will not be on our own for long," Mandy Baker said. "Praise God, because our local church went to great lengths to train us and others around us to go out in teams."

A couple from the Bakers' church will be joining them soon.

"It makes no sense for longevity for a soldier to fight a war on their own," Mandy Baker said. "The Spirit worked in our hearts ... to go where a local body of hundreds

have been burdened to pray for, to labor in and see a work of God done there."

And the work is starting.

"The Father continues to surprise us in this place," James Baker said.

God has been faithful to bring them to a city where people are willing to listen even when they don't yet have the vocabulary to articulate the gospel fully, he said.

"Daily we have multiple conver-

sations about the good news," he said.

He asked that Christians in Alabama pray

▶ That their marriage and family would remain strong and centered on the Father.

▶ That their children would transition well into the local national school and be a part of the family's ministry in the Central Asian city.

▶ That they would continue to be bold in the opportunities God gives them to share the gospel.

▶ That they would grow abundantly in language learning. "We are working on the first of at least two (languages) that need to be learned here," he said.

Mandy Baker also asked that believers would pray for their hearts' desire: to see their city come to faith in Jesus Christ.

There is "an all-powerful, all-consuming, beautiful, glorious God who wants many to know Him, to scream His name at the top of their joyful lungs from the rooftops as they see His hand all around them," she said.

And that's why they moved there, she said — to follow His call to make disciples and see the nations come to Him.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

'Creating Home' for Older Adults Spans 50 Years

It all began on a hot stormy afternoon, Aug. 17, 1960. What had been planned to be an outdoor groundbreaking ceremony for a new "home for the aging" on 40 acres of property on Montclair Road quickly had to be moved across the street to Grace Methodist Church as torrential rains flooded the area of the groundbreaking. Methodists from the Alabama and West Florida conferences had raised funds to build a 160-bed domiciliary, now known as assisted living. Over five years of planning and fundraising efforts, spearheaded by Bishop Clare Purcell, led to the opening of Fair Haven on Friday, Oct. 13, 1961, some 13 months after the groundbreaking. The first resident was an 85-year-old gentleman who moved into Fair Haven along with his 65-year-old parrot. Throughout the written articles about the planning and opening of Fair Haven, a continual theme of "creating home" was mentioned repeatedly. Dr. W. Nelson Guthrie Sr. served as secretary in charge of the building campaign. He said, "The Methodist church plans in every sense to make this a real home though it belongs in the institutional class." Further, Dr. Guthrie was quoted as having said, "We want our senior citizens to feel that they have come to Fair Haven, the name by which the home will be known, to live rather than to die."

As the years went by, Fair Haven grew and changed. With each addition, the leadership of Fair Haven, the Methodist Homes Corporation, led the way in innovative care for older adults. Additional buildings were built,

numbers of residents and staff grew and soon Fair Haven became the largest retirement community in the state of Alabama. Throughout the years, the concept of creating home at Fair Haven continued.

And so it is 50 years later now, that through an innovative management style and revolutionary approach to care, called Culture Change, Fair Haven continues creating home for older adults. Bill Thomas, M.D., a noted author, writes that there are three plagues to old age ... "loneliness, helplessness and boredom." This journey called Culture Change is an effort to end these plagues in retirement living. This journey is not short or easy, but Fair Haven is committed to providing a true home for older adults.

In celebration of 50 years of service to God's older children, Fair Haven will host a weekend of activities beginning Oct. 13 through Oct. 16. Beginning with the Fall Frolic luncheon on Thursday and culminating with an anniversary tea on Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. A huge birthday party will be held for all residents and staff on Friday. The Fall Frolic is a fundraising luncheon, sponsored by the Fair Haven Auxiliary. It will feature a delicious lunch, a special video tribute to Fair Haven as well as special entertainment. Tickets may be purchased for this event. It will be a day of celebration of the past and the present and the beginning of another 50 years of service to God's older children. For more information, please contact Mary Bess Price, marketing director at 205-956-4150.



Fair Haven



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T H E G O L D S T A N D A R D



Photo courtesy of Janet Estis

SELFLESS — Four-year-old Levi Estis mans a lemonade stand at his grandparents' home in Millport. He gave all the sales and donations to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund.

Helping Africa

Four-year-old donates money from lemonade stand to world hunger

Relemonade stand at the home of his grandparents, Al and Linda Broadbent, of Millport.

Levi wanted to do something to help the children and families in Somalia and the Horn of Africa

who were suffering from the famine there. Total money raised from lemonade sales and donations that were received was \$145.

World Hunger Sunday is Oct. 9.

The money was contributed to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund and designated for relief ef-

forts in Somalia and neighboring countries. Levi hopes to have another lemonade stand soon.

He attends Mineral Springs Baptist Church near Reform along with his parents, Lee and Janet Estis, and little brother, Luke.

Levi participates in Mission Friends activities at home with his mom and brother. (TAB)

Letters

(continued from page 2)
take all those markers off your congregation or denomination to get people into your churches who otherwise would not come is to mimic the kind of deception cults use. "Let's get them in before we reveal who we really are ... in our case, a church, a Baptist church, in fact, a Southern Baptist church!"

Cecil Taylor
Satsuma, Ala.

RENAMING THE SBC

Recent media reports (including the Sept. 29 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*) about the effort to rename the Southern Baptist Convention, removing "Southern," are troubling but not surprising.

In observing our fellow Baptists and reading Southern Baptist literature and publications, it has been

obvious for a long time that our organization is leaning or moving toward a politically correct, bland image — perhaps liberal is a better word.

Some of our leadership refers to this as "moderation" or "a more middle of the road" position.

James W. Anderson
Talladega, Ala.

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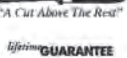
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Madison Association DOM Harold Sellers dies at 74

Harold Lamar Sellers, executive director of missions for Madison Baptist Association, died Sept. 23. He was 74.

It is the second loss of a director of missions (DOM) that Madison Association has experienced in less than three years. Sellers became interim DOM in March 2009, after DOM John Long's sudden death. The association's executive board unanimously elected Sellers executive DOM in May 2009, according to a *Huntsville Times* report.

"While we were shocked by his death, we reflect on his few years in Alabama," Gary Swafford, direc-

strong leader, a leader that had integrity. He loved serving. He was somebody that loved people and loved preaching. He was a great example to folks," Lynch said. "He was a dear friend, someone we enjoyed working with. He will be missed."

Sellers' ministry spanned more than 50 years, with pastorates in Alabama and Texas. He had a heart for police officers, serving as chaplain to police departments in Huntsville, Ala., and Rosenberg, Texas.



SELLERS

Postings to the *Times'* online funeral notice "guest book" give evidence of his ministry's impact and expanse. The book holds comments of individuals from Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and Georgia.

Notice of Sellers' death also appears on the home page of Colorado Baptist Association in Wharton, Texas. The site notes that he was associate director of Coastal Plains Baptist Area (a partnership of Colorado Association and San Felipe Baptist Association in Rosenberg, Texas) from 1984 to 1986. Sellers was its director from 1987 until his retirement at the end of 2004.

He earned his college degree from Houston Baptist University. Sellers was a member of First Baptist Church, Meridianville. He previously served as interim pastor of Bethany Baptist Church, Huntsville.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Margaret; two children; seven grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. (TAB)

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SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

- Remember to:
- Include your name and address
 - Focus on issues, not people
 - Be as concise as possible

Want to know God?

By Pastor Jamey Williams
Rock Springs Baptist Church, Jacksons Gap

Romans 3:23 says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That means that whoever you are you are a sinner in need of salvation.

A preacher was walking down the road one day when he saw a group of young boys surrounding a dog. "What are you boys doing with that dog?" he asked. Well whoever told the biggest lie would win the dog. "When I was your age, I never told a lie," the preacher said. There were a few moments of silence and then one boy said, "Here, mister, you win the dog."

Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A woman was walking down a residential street and noticed a little old man rocking in a chair on his porch. She called to him, "Hello there! I couldn't help but notice how happy you look. What's your secret for a long, happy life?" "I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day," he said. "I also drink a case of whiskey a week, eat nothing but fast food and never exercise." "Wow!" the woman said. "How old are you?" "Twenty-six," he replied.

Romans 10:9 says if we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, then we will be saved. That sounds simple enough, right? Then why don't more people do it? The answer is that the passage is often misunderstood and misquoted to mean that we just make confession with our mouths and then we are saved. But we must not leave out the "believe in our hearts" part.

A huge crowd was watching the famous tightrope walker Blondin cross Niagara Falls one day in 1860. He crossed it many times — a 1,100-foot trip, 160 feet above the raging waters. He asked if the crowd believed he could take someone across with him. The people clapped and said yes. Then he approached one man and asked him to get on his back and go with him. The man refused.

You see you have to do more than just say, "I believe." You must take it in your heart. If you don't know Jesus as Savior, then please ask Him to come into your heart and forgive you of your sins and then stand on that and begin living the life He intends for you to live.

Focus on people rather than tasks in life

My mother passed away several years ago. I remember the flowers and the songs we sang at her funeral. In the order of worship, on the left-hand side, there was an obituary where her accomplishments were listed. Some of those accomplishments I was not even aware of until I read them.

What I remember the most about that day is the people who attended. Though I was in my late 20s and we all lived in another state from where I grew up, people from my high school and college days drove into the state for the funeral.

It was great to see them, but they were not there to support me. They came because my mother had made a significant difference in their lives. They came to share how she touched them.

In that moment, I thought, "I want that to be my legacy. I want my legacy to be more about the

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



people I touch than the tasks I accomplish."

We talk so often about God's will for our lives. When we do so, we often think in terms of tasks and accomplishments such as what we will study in school, what career we will have and what leadership roles to take on. What if God's will is not so much about the tasks of the journey but about whom we meet on the journey?

Think about it. When we read about Christ's life, His time seems

consumed with the people He meets on the journey and how He touches their lives.

The list of the tasks He accomplished prior to Calvary is fairly small compared with the list of lives He touched.

Is it possible He was modeling for us a life that focused on whom we meet as opposed to what we accomplish? Is it possible His stern words to the teachers of the Law were because they became consumed with accomplishing tasks instead of loving those around them?

Here is my question: How does this change how you interact with those around you? How does this change your leadership in the places you serve? Are you a person who is consumed with tasks or those around you?

I do not believe it is a choice between tasks and people. You can do both. The difference is which is

the main focus in your work and your life. Do you sacrifice people in order to accomplish the task, or do you recognize the task as simply another way to affect people?

Truthfully speaking, very few people remember what my mother accomplished in her life. However, many people remember how God worked through her to shape their lives.

A Takeaway Value . . .

God's will for my life and leadership may be more about whom I meet on this journey than what I accomplish.

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

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Red Bay, Ala., is seeking a full-time senior pastor. We are a conservative, evangelistic, mission-minded congregation of about 600 members with an average attendance of over 200. Send resumé to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 616, Red Bay, AL 35582, or email: firstbaptistc110@bellsouth.net.

PASTOR: Larkinsville Baptist Church, Scottsboro, Ala., is now accepting resúmes for a pastor. All full-time and bivocational resúmes are desired. Please mail resúmes to: Larkinsville Baptist Church, c/o Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 517, Scottsboro, AL 35768.

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

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR: Lakeland Baptist Church is seeking a full-time church administrator. Lakeland is located in the heart of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Those considered will have a strong, successful background in finance, leadership, property management and staff relations. Seminary degree is preferred but not required. Please email resumé to: Dr. Ron Osborne, rosborne@lakelandbaptist.org.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & DISCIPLESHIP: First Baptist Church, Cuthbert, Ga., is seeking an individual passionately pursuing God for the position of full-time minister of music and discipleship. First Baptist has an average worship attendance of 120 and is located in rural southwest Georgia. Worship services are musically multi-generational. This individual must be competent in music and in actively developing our recently adopted vision strategy of "proclaiming Jesus to all in order to bring every person to maturity in Christ." Send resúmes to: Cuthbert First Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 274, Cuthbert, GA 39840, or email: fbc-cuth@windstream.net. Website: www.fbccuthbert.org.

FULL-TIME MUSIC MINISTER/WORSHIP LEADER: FBC Ashland. Blended worship. For more information: Pastor Ross Kilpatrick, 334-402-0028, or Mike Coleman, 256-276-0081. Submit resumé: wrosskilpatrick@yahoo.com.

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

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF WORSHIP/FAMILY MINISTRIES: Ridgecrest Baptist Church is currently accepting resúmes for a full-time minister of worship/family ministries. Submit resúmes to: Worship Search Team, 5260 Vaughn Road, Montgomery, AL 36116, or email: Michael@rbcmontgomery.com.

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTER: Central Park Baptist Church is accepting resúmes for this full-time position. Mail resúmes to: Central Park Baptist Church Search Committee, 2020 Westmeade Street SW, Decatur, AL 35601.

CHILDREN/STUDENT MINISTER: Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, Ala., seeking full-time children/student minister. Send resumé to: Pastor, Meadowbrook Baptist Church, 1125 Meadowbrook Court, Oxford, AL 36203. 256-831-1811.

STUDENT MINISTER: Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, Ala., is currently seeking a full-time student minister to work with 6th grade through college age students. Please send resumé to: Student Minister Search Committee, Southside Baptist Church, 1213 W. Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420, 334-222-4300.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Grades 7-12 for Hillwood Baptist Church. Send resúmes to: Personnel, Hillwood Baptist Church, 305 Kohler Road, Huntsville, AL 35803, or to: hbcpersonnel@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL OR PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER: For Baptist church in Eclectic. Seminary degree or academic degree of childhood development nature is desired. Submit resúmes to: dmcghee@neptunetg.com or call 334-799-2034.

OTHER POSITIONS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Madison Baptist Association is receiving resúmes for the position of executive director of missions. If interested, send resúmes to: Whitesburg Baptist Church, 6806 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802, or email to: terry.

herald@wbccares.org.

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.

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Churches connect with students through community groups, missions trips, BCM

(continued from page 1)

catch a vision for missions, evangelism and discipleship; and they go out and do it on campus.”

Hamiter said the most crucial thing is that the whole church loves college students and wants to reach them. “Our senior pastor (Steve Scoggins) and everyone else is passionate about reaching out to and welcoming college students into our church and to serve alongside us out in the community,” he said. “The whole church is in on it.”

And Hamiter said college students aren’t treated like high schoolers. “We treat them like adults — adults that are hungry and want to be stretched,” he said.

Brad Mills, associate pastor to college students at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, in Mobile Baptist Association, agreed that students crave being stretched.

Lack of understanding

“I’ve found that many of our students lack a basic understanding of the basic biblical narrative and essential Christian doctrines,” Mills said. “So I preach systematic, expository sermons through books of the Bible.”

This fall, he’s preaching a 12-week series through 1 Thessalonians that will last until Christmas break.

“This has been a huge boost to our attendance and has driven the

spiritual growth in the students’ lives,” Mills said.

And the college ministry fosters that growth through student-led community groups that meet on campus, at Starbucks or in homes.

“We’ve seen the largest growth in our ministry from students bringing their friends to their community group,” Mills said. “And it has been really cool to see students from different colleges become friends and expand their view of what happens in our city.”

The college ministry puts a big emphasis on getting them involved in the city, he said.

“We really stress that students should be serving in our city at least once a month,” Mills said. “At times, I feel like the transient nature of college life gets mixed in with the way they view church. So by having them serve with us and in our city, we believe it expands their view of their purpose in Mobile and connects them to people outside of the campus ‘bubble.’”

College students also take missions trips in the United States and abroad to broaden their perspective and build relationships by working together, he said.

A lot of these things are organized via Facebook, Mills said. “It’s a big tool for us in staying connected. I don’t know how college pastors did ministry without it.”

Another helpful tool for Cottage

Hill Baptist has been the Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) at local universities. “They have reached out to the churches in Mobile and have included us in a lot of the events they do for incoming freshmen,” Mills said. “This has been our main way of reaching out to students.”

Reaching and discipling

Mike Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said connecting with BCMs can be huge for churches wanting to reach out to college students. And BCMs can help partner churches — especially small ones — with other churches in reaching and discipling students.

“The college or university campus is one of the most important missions fields facing Alabama Baptist churches today,” Nuss said. “The urgency of reaching students with the gospel compels every church to be on mission on campus. Big or small, every church has something to offer.”

Often, he said, churches think collegiate ministry is only for larger churches situated near a campus.

“My challenge would be to think beyond membership size or geography and find ways you can uniquely minister to college students,” Nuss said.

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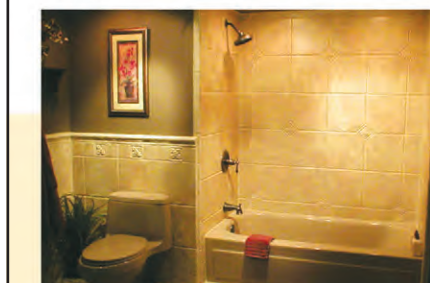
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Q. I want to make sure I help my child succeed in school this year. Do you have any advice as to how I can best help him?

A. As the new school year starts up, this is on the mind of all parents. We want to see our kids succeed in school and find learning to be fun. Learning is the basis of all future knowledge. But for some kids, learning can be a real struggle. And, for some parents, helping your child to learn can be a real headache or battle.

One of the best things you can do for your child is to determine his or her learning style. Wikipedia defines learning as "the acquisition of knowledge or skills through experience, practice or study or by being taught." Each of us learns in one of three ways: Visual, Auditory, or Kinesthetic/Manipulative. Most school-age children will be visual learners, but almost all will learn something from all three learning styles.

You can take a free, online quiz to determine your son's learning style at <http://www.edutopia.org/mi-quiz>.

So what is your child's learning style? Read through this list and see into which category your child falls. Also read through the list of the things he can do to best help him learn.

Visual learners process information by reading, looking at graphics, or watching a demonstration. They may grow very impatient with listening to an oral explanation. They can do very well with studying a chart or graph though.

Help him learn:

- Use flashcards
- Draw out illustrations
- Use a color coding system
- Take notes and review with him later

Auditory learners prefer to listen to explanations over reading them. They may like to study by reciting out loud.

Help him learn:

- Talk it out with a partner
- Teach it to someone else
- Listen to books on tape
- Set the information to a song

Kinesthetic or manipulative learners learn better by touching objects or taking a hands-on approach. They will have trouble sitting still to study. They may also need to write the information down or do a hands-on activity to really grasp the subject.

Help him learn:

- Write the information over and over
- Highlight or underline in a text
- Have them move around while they are looking at information
- Encourage frequent breaks

It is important to note that learning styles can actually change over time for your child. As they grow they learn new ways to grasp information and their styles evolve. It is also important to practice other ways of learning with your child. Those who can learn in different ways can process and absorb more information than those who are reliant on only one way of learning.

Do you want to help your child branch out of his learning style? Try this example: When helping your son with math homework, first have him complete a worksheet or do practice problems (visual learning). Then you can have your son do the problems out loud with you by reciting times tables or addition problems (auditory learning). Finally you can play a game with your son where he actually uses objects or snacks to show how the math is done (kinesthetic/manipulative).

By tailoring homework and other activities to your son's learning style, you will help him succeed this year. Good luck and we wish your child the best.

Some information take from: www.schoolfamily.com

If you have a question you would like to ask, EMAIL US: askanne@abchome.org or leave a comment. We would love to answer one of your questions.

**This column is not intended to substitute for an actual session with a licensed counselor.*



For more articles like this check out this week's Ask Anne Column at <http://www.bit.ly/AskAnne>. Or scan the QR Code below with your smart phone.



2011 ANNUAL OFFERING



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


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

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.

>>> Sign up now to Ride for ABCH!

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

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

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Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen

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

IT'S ALL ABOUT VICTORY Romans 7:7-25

We Know What Sin Is (7-12)

Paul has established that we are free from sin. But if this is the case, then what becomes of the Law? Furthermore, if we are free from sin, then why do we still struggle with sin? Regarding the Law, it is not sin. For example, if you are driving on an interstate and see a speed limit sign that indicates the speed limit is 55 and you are going 65, then it is not the sign's fault that you are speeding. It is just pointing out the law. If there were no speed limit signs, then we wouldn't realize we were breaking the law. But once we see the sign, it is then that we realize we are speeding. Likewise the Mosaic law teaches us what sin is. Paul said he would not have known what coveting was unless the Law had told him. And once it told him, he found that he had the desire to covet. Many times, people are enticed by what is forbidden. Adam and Eve sinned by eating the only forbidden fruit. They had the entire garden to enjoy but chose to disobey the one command they were given. If you see a sign that says, "Do not look out this window," how many of us would then be enticed to actually look out of a window that otherwise we would have likely ignored? Sin deceives us. When we are angry with someone, it is easy for us to feel justified in our anger. If we refuse to forgive another person, then it is easy for sin to convince us that this is what is right. It is easy for us to think that small lies are really harmless. This is what Satan excels at; he is the father of lies and lies to us trying to make us sin and feel that our sin is of no consequence or really no sin at all.

Does the Law only exist then to convict us? No, this is not its only purpose. The Law teaches us about God — that He is holy and expects His followers to strive to live holy lives that accurately represent Him. Ethically the Law is still in effect as Christ demonstrated in the Sermon on the Mount. Also the Law teaches us that we cannot achieve righteousness on our own. If no one is righte-

ous, then there is no room for boasting or self-righteousness.

We Struggle With Sin (13-20)

This is a passage that every Christian can relate to. Paul was frustrated by his inability to live a perfectly godly life. He said he wanted to do the good he knew he ought to do yet he found that instead he sinned. God has called us to live holy lives, and we are no longer slaves to sin. Then why is living a holy life a struggle? Being a Christian does not mean that we no longer have a sin nature. Every day, we are tempted to sin; we will continue to sin until we die or Christ returns. However, if we walk with Christ daily, then our strength to deny sin increases. This is the process of sanctification — becoming more and more like Christ each day.

It is important to note, however, that this does not give us a license to sin nor does it excuse our sin. Just because we have a sin nature, we are not free to sin. The Holy Spirit gives us power over sin, and as Paul said in Chapter 6, we are no longer slaves to sin.

We Have Victory Over Sin (21-25)

Just because we know what sin is because of the Law, this does not mean that we should despise the Law. Just as a speed limit sign is there for our own protection and to protect others from driving too fast and causing accidents, the Law exists for our own good. If we obey the Law (living by faith and obedience to God — not following the elements of the Law that have been fulfilled in Christ), then not only do we show our love of God by our obedience but we also show wisdom, as evidenced, for example, by Psalm 119.

Because of the presence of sin in our lives, Paul correctly asked how we could be saved from our sinful bodies. The answer, of course, is through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is every Christian's jubilant cry. We will always be sinners while on earth, but Christ has saved us so that we do not have to feel the eternal punishment for our sins. So while we struggle with our sinful natures, the war has already been won by Christ, and this is the Christian's joy.

Bible Studies for Life By Eric Mathis

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

FORGIVENESS OFFERED Luke 5:17-26, 29-32

Our studies this month are focusing on Jesus Christ's miracles, what they reveal about the promised Messiah and the hope they offer us in our pursuit of God's Kingdom. Last week, we examined the wedding at Cana as a demonstration of the glory revealed in the promised Messiah. This week, our attention turns to Christ's healing of the paralyzed man.

Jesus Honors Faith (17-20)

The healing of the paralyzed man was the first in a series of five encounters Jesus had with the Pharisees. In these encounters, Jesus consistently met resistance from these religious authorities whose primary concern was teaching and observing the Law of Moses. Luke described a broad audience of critics throughout this story (17, 21) yet was careful to show that the critics' negative accounts did not seem to phase Christ's healing power (22-23). From the beginning of the story, Luke was careful to emphasize that power was with Christ to heal. Jesus was teaching in a house, surrounded by a crowd of people who made it impossible for the men carrying the paralyzed man to pass. Acting on their faith, the men went to the housetop, removed ceiling tiles on what must have been an affluent home and lowered the paralyzed man through the roof. Because they were persistent and believed deeply in Christ's healing power, the men were able to get their sick friend to Him.

Though the men hoped for immediate healing, Christ granted forgiveness of sins based on their faith. The forgiveness Christ offered was likely a response to a prevailing cultural view of the time that held that physical pain was punishment for sin. However, Christ's statement of forgiveness assured this was not so. Jesus did not treat sin as the cause of the man's paralysis. Rather He used the moment to assert His authority to forgive sin, reminding us that the One who heals is also the One who forgives.

Jesus Forgives Sin (21-26)

The Pharisees, confounded by Christ's assertion of power, immediately cast doubt and

asked a series of questions (21). In their eyes, Christ had been blasphemous for claiming to have power they believed belonged to God. Christ perceived their thoughts and questioned them in return (22), highlighting the tension between the acts of forgiving sins and healing the sick (23). Christ emphasized that the higher of the two is forgiveness of sins (24) and subsequently commanded the paralyzed man to take his bed and go home (25). More importantly, Christ identified Himself as the Son of Man (24), a title He used frequently to identify both His humanity and His deity. The remainder of the story confirms the healing and shows the crowd's response.

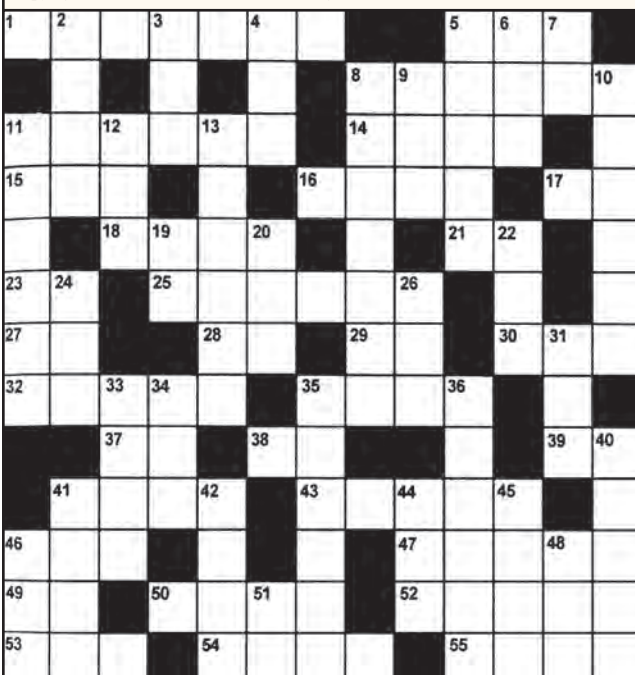
This story shows us that faith is not tied to a particular theological or denominational tradition but in the deep belief that Christ is the mediator of God's power. Faith was not found in a group of religious officials but in four friends — unnamed neighbors. Hence we are reminded that Jesus came to free us from all that cripples, binds and enslaves and challenged to avoid obstacles that may hinder our sharing His work with our neighbors.

Jesus Seeks Sinners (29-32)

Following the healing and forgiving of the paralyzed man, Jesus called Levi to discipleship (27-28). Upon Levi's invitation, Jesus dined with a crowd of tax collectors and sinners to the dismay of the Pharisees and their scribes. Once again, Christ responded to their concerns with the statement that the sick are in need of a physician and sinners in need of repentance. This story is significant for it describes Christ's call upon every person — not just Levi. Here Jesus calls for a style of discipleship that is predicated on association with society's outcasts and not separation from them. This startling truth forces all of us to examine our discipleship methods. Like Jesus, are we willing to associate with social and religious outcasts to reach all people for Christ? Are we willing to put our faith into action so that we, as well as others, can find freedom in Christ's healing and forgiveness? These stories challenge us to do just this, and Christ's work in our lives will give us the model and courage we need.

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Jonathan ____ up upon his hands. (1 Sam. 14:13)
- Automobile.
- The Philistines took the ark ... to ____.
- (1 Sam. 5:1)
- Belonging to the son of Jephunneh. (Num. 13:6)
- Lizard, snail, and ____ are unclean. (Lev. 11:30)
- Much ____ about nothing.
- He is up ____ good.
- (2 words)
- Printer's measure.
- Sea bird.
- Prefix meaning into.
- Mother.
- Thou hast followed ____.
- (1 Kings 18:18)
- For example.
- Duty every soldier hates.
- Take thy neighbor's raiment ____ pledge.
- (Ex. 22:26)
- National Football League. (abbr.)
- Good ____ are not everything.

- Bela the son of ____.
- (Gen. 36:32)
- Hello.
- Fe, ____, Fo, Fum.
- To exist.
- The strong hold of ____.
- (2 Sam. 24:7)
- To offer a sacrifice unto ____ their god.
- (Judg. 16:23)
- What holds up a golf ball.
- To surprise someone.
- I am. (contr.)
- There was a marriage in ____ of Galilee. (John 2:1)
- He killed Goliath.
- A meat offering baken in a ____.
- (Lev. 2:5)
- Ancient wisdom.
- Rulers of ____.
- (Ex. 18:21)
- house of ____.
- (1 Cor. 1:11)
- A sweetened fruit drink.
- Rosemary. (abbr.)
- Thy father was an ____.
- (Ezek. 16:3)
- This is my beloved ____.
- (Matt. 3:17)
- Spoken of by ____ the prophet. (Matt. 24:15)
- The excellency of ____ and Sharon. (Isa. 35:2)
- ____ sat in the gate of Sodom. (Gen. 19:1)
- Belonging to the son of Abinoam. (Judg. 4:6)
- Ebenezer. (abbr.)
- Just a little rest.
- Prefix meaning *not*.
- Lost three days ____.
- (1 Sam. 9:20)
- What a cow says.
- Fabulous.
- ____ of little faith.
- (Matt. 6:3; 2 words, var.)
- The king carried the people captive to ____.
- (2 Kings 16:9)
- Said Jehu to ____ his captain. (2 Kings 9:25)

- Joseph and Mary looked for a ____ an inn.
- (2 words)
- Belonging to Gaal's father. (Judg. 9:30)
- Son of Ishmael.
- (Gen. 25:13, 15)
- Joshua built an altar in mount ____.
- (Josh. 8:30)
- Moses gave unto ...
- ____ the kingdom of Sihon. (Num. 32:33)
- Part of a cathedral.
- Given for good service.
- Ye rebelled ... in the desert of ____.
- (Num. 27:14)
- Not yes.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



More than 100 killed in attacks on Nigerian villages

VWANG KOGOT, Nigeria — A rash of attacks by armed Muslim extremists on villages in Nigeria's Plateau state have left more than 100 Christians dead, including the elimination of entire families, sources said. In a guerilla-type "hit and run" attack on the Christian community of Vwang Kogot, Muslim attackers killed 14 Christians, including a pregnant woman, at about 8 p.m. Sept. 9.

Survivors of the attack said the assailants raided the village with the aid of men in military uniforms of the Nigerian Army. Gyang Badung survived the attack, but his wife, four children, mother, grandmother and a nephew did not, he said. Vou Mallam, another survivor of the attack, was with her husband and children when the raiders broke into their house. She escaped death when she found a hiding place in one of the rooms. Her husband, only son and grandchildren were killed. She said she heard the assailants speaking the Fulani language.

Ethnic Fulani are primarily Muslim nomads in Nigeria whom militant Muslims appear to be enlisting to attack Christian communities due to the Fulanis' expert understanding of the terrain of rural communities, area Christians said.

On Sept. 10, Muslim extremists stormed Vwang Fwil village at about 3 a.m. and killed 13 Christians.

On Sept. 8, Muslim extremists attacked Tshon Foron village, killing 10 Christians, all members of the family of Danjuma Gyang Tsok. Emmanuel Dachollom Loman, chairman of the Barkin Ladi Local Government Council, said he has repeatedly reported attacks to security agencies and the Nigerian government, but nothing has been done to protect his people.

"This is becoming too much to bear," he said. "The government should help us before Muslims come and wipe all of us out one day."

Messianic Jews singled out for ridicule in Israel

JERUSALEM — Messianic Jews in a suburb west of Jerusalem continue to be harassed for following their faith, this time by someone anonymously placing fliers in public areas singling out members of Messianic congregations. The fliers began appearing in early September in the town of Mevasseret Zion.

Asher Intrater, leader of the Ahavat Yeshua Congregation, said he thinks the fliers are "an effort to drive us out of the neighborhood." The fliers posted the addresses and phone numbers of the Messianic Jews and, in some cases, included their photographs. This is the second time in three months that a group has singled out Messianic Jews in Mevasseret Zion for ridicule.

On June 26, members of Yad L'Achim, an ultra-Orthodox, anti-Christian group, protested outside the home of Serge and Naama Kogen, a Messianic couple. It is unclear who actually posted the fliers and Intrater declined to speculate.

But according to a classified communiqué issued by the U.S. State Department in May 2008 and leaked Aug. 30 by Internet activist group WikiLeaks, "'Outing' Messianic Jews and evangelical Christians through the publication of names, photos and addresses alongside fliers with hysterical allegations about 'soul stealing' and 'brainwashing' is a favorite tactic of Yad L'Achim branches throughout the country."

Indian pastor beaten during prayer meeting

MUDHOL, India — Police arrested a pastor Aug. 21 after Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal beat him in Mudhol, Bagalkot district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that Pastor Sangappa Hosamani Shadrak was conducting a prayer meeting when about 20 Bajrang Dal (youth wing of the World Hindu Council) stormed the gathering and beat him and desecrated the bread and wine used for Holy Communion.

The extremists punched the pastor on his face several times — resulting in the loss of his front teeth — dragged him out to the street, tied him to a tree and called police. Officers from Lokapura, including one identified only as Inspector Choudhary, arrived and took Shadrak and other Christians to the police station for questioning.

The pastor was charged with injuring or defiling a place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class under various parts of Section 295 of the Indian Penal Code. The pastor was sent to Jamkotai jail and was released on bail the next day after area Christian leaders intervened, reported the GCIC.

Internet giants guilty of religious discrimination, report says

Apple, Google and other Internet giants are participating in religious discrimination and restricting free speech, according to a new report by the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB).

"If Christian content and worldview programming are censored by new media platforms ... the good news of the gospel could become one more casualty of institutionalized religious discrimination," said Frank Wright, president of the NRB.

The report, released Sept. 15 in Washington, examined the policies and practices of Apple, Facebook, Google, Myspace and Twitter, as well as Internet service providers Comcast, AT&T and Verizon.

Twitter is the only corporation that did not show signs of religious discrimination, according to the report. Twitter refuses to monitor or remove content unless it interferes with the terms of service.

Ideal proposition

The ideal proposition for solving this problem, according to the NRB, is to persuade the individual companies to eradicate censorship voluntarily and abide by their obligation to protect free speech. If the suggestions are not taken into consideration, NRB said it is willing to respond with such actions as legislation, regulation or litigation.

NRB's report included the following examples of discrimination or potential censorship:

▶ Apple offers hundreds of thousands of iPhone applications, but removed two apps by ex-gay Christian ministry Exodus International. Consumers were denied access to these two apps because their Christian content was considered "offensive."

▶ Facebook's decision to partner with the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation could mean that "Christian content critical of homosexuality, same-sex 'marriage' or similar practices will be at risk of censorship."

▶ Google initially refused to allow the Christian Institute of England to purchase advertisement space because of its information about abortion law. After the institute sued Google under Britain's Equality Act, the Internet conglomerate revised its policy, requiring the information to be "factual."

These few giant corporations virtually rule the vast Internet world. The report, an effort of the NRB's John Milton Project, says corporate leaders hold the power to ban content when they alone determine

whether an application, website, article or viewpoint is considered "accurate" and "factual."

A recurring theme when dealing with online censorship is the question of whether the First Amendment should apply to these privately owned and operated corporations. The right to free speech only pertains to public utilities; however, the Internet is a resource that is used as a public forum for discussion on a daily basis.

The report emphasizes the Internet as an outlet through which individuals can address controversial issues to a "potentially unlimited audience." It also says the freedom to express those opinions through this continually improving technological channel must be defended.

"I hope these companies, the good companies that they are, get the message that they may be coloring outside the lines here," said Colby May, director of the Washington, D.C., offices of the American Center for Law and Justice. May spoke during a panel discussion after the release of the NRB report at the National Press Club. "Let's do the right thing here."

(BP)

"The good news of the gospel could become one more casualty."

Frank Wright
National Religious Broadcasters



SBC Representatives Around the World

The week of Sept. 19, we began a new school year and a one-year program of biblical studies from Genesis to Revelation at the Albanian Bible Institute (ABI). All our classes this year are being held at night so students who work in the daytime can attend.

This change is already paying off. Last year, we had only three full-time students in our residential program. On Sept. 19, 11 new students joined us for night classes. So far, no one has quit. These students leave their jobs at 4 or 4:30 in the afternoon and come to the school for two hours and 45 minutes of classes on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday nights. Our students are also high school students, factory workers, call center workers, English teachers, and there is even one army officer. All of them are involved in some ministry role in their churches, including people who serve as children and youth workers, deacons, church treasurers and worship leaders. Maybe with this biblical training that we are giving them, these lay people may hunger for more training and even feel a call to pastoral or missionary training

one day in the future. The need for pastors in our country is great, as many congregations have no trained or even any untrained leader. In many churches, pastors are overworked and overstretched, some nearly to the point of breaking. If they don't get help, what will happen to them? What will happen to their churches? The biblical teaching we are giving our students can lay the foundations for these people to rise up to the next level and to meet this critical need of more pastoral leadership.

Our change from teaching full-time students to teaching only part-time students is merely a change in methodology. Our mission of equipping Albanians for life, ministry and world impact is not changing at all. We respond to changing circumstances with different approaches and an unchanging commitment to biblical teaching. Thank you for making it possible for us to fulfill our mission. Please keep praying for all the staff and students of ABI. Pray that we will all bear fruit for the glory of God during this school year.

Lee Bradley
Dures, Albania

I was awakened Sept. 27 by the sound of strong winds buffeting my apartment building. I walked into my living room and saw the familiar darkness of typhoon weather.

Some of the rain had made its way through the sliding door in the living room. Rain and wind from a certain angle can cause leaking issues at my place. Fortunately this doesn't happen often, but Typhoon Pedring turned out to be the "perfect" strength and direction to ruin my day. My power went out and I spent most of the morning cleaning up rainwater as it flowed into my home. Pedring was a nuisance but my property wasn't seriously damaged.

The winds weakened by early afternoon. I decided to go over to the mall to get something to eat. I was surprised at the level of flooding I saw outside.

I guess I didn't realize just how much rain had been dumped on the city streets.

I took a few videos/pictures and posted them on my Facebook "fan" page, Facebook.com/KuyaKevin.

Kevin Sanders
Manila, Philippines



BP photo

SHARING SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE — Pastor Feng Tan (front, center) discusses Christian marriage with a group of South Asian believers. Tan and a few of his church members traveled from Southeast Asia to conduct leadership training for new Christians in three locations.

'Next big wave of missionaries'

Asian church being mobilized to spread message of Christ

A small group of believers in Asia watches as tears fill a woman's eyes. She stands before them in a tunic and baggy pants — their own traditional clothing — and her voice quavers as she speaks.

"You can pastor yourselves without foreigners," the woman tells the group. "You can evangelize."

The government of this country in southern Asia may deport the for-

foreign workers who have helped disciple the believers. They are worried what will happen when they are left alone.

Although Huan Tan resembles her listeners, she doesn't speak their language and must use an interpreter to encourage them in their spiritual growth. Through the voice of another, she tells the group they can mature in their faith and spread the gospel to their friends and families. Asians, she says, can sustain a successful church and spread the message of Christ themselves.

Tan knows it is possible because she has seen it happen.

She and her husband, Pastor Feng Tan, traveled across a swath of the Asian continent to share their spiritual knowledge with this tiny band of inexperienced Christians.

The Tans were accompanied by five other members of their church in Southeast Asia — a congregation full of believers of Chinese descent. The group encourages spiritual

growth by teaching leadership and discipleship at three locations in southern Asia, but this morning, Tan feels her country's Christian history might inspire her listeners more than her prepared lesson. She wants them to know how God matured her own family of Southeast Asian believers.

Thirty years ago, Tan says, the government in her country deported all the American missionaries who had disciplined them, leaving a leadership gap in congregations and seminaries. However, as time passed, the local believers appointed and trained their own pastors and carried on their own evangelism.

With God's help, the church flourished.

"We feel for you because we know you may face a situation where you may not have outside help," Tan tells her listeners. "You will be alone. Do not think God has abandoned you. He will be there for you because He has been there for [us]."

Passing the baton

Tan's story illustrates one of the reasons why American Christian worker Burt Gavin helped orchestrate the Tans' leadership training and their long journey from Southeast Asia. He recognized a connection between Asian peoples that foreigners cannot replicate. "In some ways, I think the baton is being passed to the Asian church," he

says. "China is going to [produce] the next big wave of missionaries. ... Not that Americans don't have a place anymore — we have training, we have experience — but part of that needs to be to mobilize [the Asian] church to go."

As the Tans conduct their leadership training, they realize that their audience has very little understanding of basic Christianity. The couple teaches rudimentary lessons dealing with Christian marriage and parenting as well as basic evangelism through Bible storytelling. The five other Chinese congregation members take turns giving their testimonies and demonstrating storytelling techniques.

Toward the end of the seminar, as the South Asian believers ask their final questions, the Chinese Christians speak to an issue all the believers face: persecution. In their world, following Jesus means being disowned by their families, so they understand the challenge like no Westerner could.

Tan makes sure her listeners know she prays for them. "I think that when a church or a people group is suffering," she says, "they need to know that others empathize with them — that there are other Christians in other parts of the world who have gone through it and understand."

That shared experience makes a difference to the South Asian believers. Although the Chinese team dresses differently and speaks a different language, at least one woman feels encouraged by their presence. After the training, she stops Gavin.

"Finally," she says to the Western worker, "you brought people who look like us." (BP)

World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

BBC drops B.C./A.D. dating method in broadcasts

LONDON — British Christians are incensed after the state-funded BBC decided to jettison the terms B.C. and A.D. in favor of B.C.E. and C.E. in historical date references.

The broadcaster has directed that the traditional B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini, or Year of the Lord) be replaced by B.C.E. (Before Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) in its television and radio broadcasts.

The BBC said in an official statement that since it is "committed to impartiality, it is appropriate that we use terms that do not offend or alienate non-Christians."

It described the terms B.C.E. and C.E. as "a religiously neutral alternative to B.C./A.D.," although critics quickly pointed out that the new terms, like the old, were anchored around the birth of Jesus Christ. The new edict drew immediate accusations that the network was guilty of political correctness run amok as the BBC's phone lines were jammed with irate listeners and readers.

Retired Anglican Bishop of Rochester Michael Nazir-Ali, a leading British evangelical, told journalists that "this amounts to the dumbing down of the Christian basis of our culture, language and history."

"These changes are unnecessary, and they don't actually achieve what the BBC wants them to achieve. Whether you use Common Era or Anno Domini, the date is still the same and the reference point is still the birth of Jesus Christ."

Pope seeks to combat secularism with Protestant allies

BERLIN — All faiths have to work together to stanch the tide of secularism sweeping the world, warned Pope Benedict XVI on Sept. 23 during the second day of a tour through his native Germany. Benedict focused on ecumenical meetings, including a service with Lutheran ministers in the city of Erfurt, where Protestant reformer Martin Luther began to harbor his first doubts about Catholicism.

"The most urgent thing for ecumenicalism is, namely, that we can't allow the push of secularism to force us, almost without noticing, to lose sight of the major similarities that make us Christians, and which remain a gift and a challenge for us," the pope said. The message in Germany, home to many Lutherans, was warmly received, though newspaper commentators said they had hoped for more concrete steps toward reconciliation rather than just an exchange of ideas. "The more the world moves away from God, the more clear it becomes that man, in the hubris of power, the void in his heart and in the longing for fulfillment and happiness, is losing ever more touch with his life," Benedict preached during the Erfurt service.

"That's why, during an ecumenical meeting, we shouldn't just be dismayed by the divisions and separation, but we should thank God for all He has done to retain our unity and what He continues to give us."

Five Dead Sea Scrolls available in digital form online

JERUSALEM — Five of the Dead Sea Scrolls that have been stored for decades in a climate-controlled exhibit at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem are now available in digital form to anyone with an Internet connection.

A website (<http://dss.collections.imj.org.il>) developed by the Israel Museum and Google allows online visitors to examine the scrolls in minute detail with the help of a magnifying feature.

Pages for each of the five scrolls — the Great Isaiah Scroll, the Community Rule Scroll, the Commentary on the Habakkuk Scroll, the Temple Scroll and the War Scroll — also contain brief videos and explanatory notes. According to the museum announcement, details invisible to the naked eye are made visible through ultra-high resolution digital photography at up to 1,200 megapixels each. Dating from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D., the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in 11 caves near the Dead Sea.

The region's arid environment helped ensure their survival. ☞

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