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'Judgmental' churches driving young adults away

Why do young Christians leave the church? New research by the Barna Group finds they view churches as judgmental, overprotective, exclusive and unfriendly towards doubters.

They also consider congregations antagonistic to science and say their Christian experience has been shallow.

The findings, the result of a five-year study, are featured in "You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith," a new book by Barna president David Kinman.

The project included a study of 1,296 young adults who were current or former churchgoers.

Researchers found that almost three out of five young Christians (59 percent) leave church life either permanently or for an extended period of time after age 15.

One in four 18- to 29-year-olds said "Christians demonize everything outside of the church." One in three said "Church is boring."

Clashes between church expectations and youths' experience of sexuality have driven some away.

One in six young Christians said they "have made mistakes and feel judged in church because of them."

And 40 percent of 18- to 29-year-old Catholics said their church's doctrine on sexuality and birth control is "out of date."

Kinnaman called the problem of young dropouts from church "particularly urgent" since many churches are used to "traditional" young adults who leave home, get educated, find a job and start a family before age 30.

"Churches are not prepared to handle the 'new normal,'" said Kinnaman. "However, the world for young adults is changing in significant ways, such as their remarkable access to the world and worldviews via technology, their alienation from various institutions, and their skepticism toward external sources of authority, including Christianity and the Bible." (RNS)



'Ministerial exception'

Baptists sign on to significant religious freedom case

The rights of churches and other religious organizations to determine their leaders and teachers is protected from government interference by the U.S. Constitution, two Southern Baptist entities said in a brief for a case argued Oct. 5 before the Supreme Court.

The International Mission Board (IMB) and The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) signed onto a friend-of-the-court brief to support the argument of a Lutheran church in a case considered by observers as one of the most significant religious

freedom cases to reach the high court in decades.

The case involves a dispute between a former teacher and a Michigan church that called her to serve in its Christian school, but the far-reaching constitutional principle regards who will make the final determination in certain employment decisions by a religious group — the faith organization or the government.

Overturned opinion

The former teacher, Cheryl Perich, filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against a Michigan congregation that rescinded its call of her as a "commissioned minister" to teach at the church's school. Though a federal judge ruled in the church's favor after the EEOC filed suit, the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the opinion. The appeals court found Perich's job was unimportant to "the spiritual

and pastoral mission of the church."

The case's arrival at the Supreme Court elicited widespread unity from diverse groups defending religious liberty against government infringement. The debate focuses on what is known as the "ministerial exception," a long-standing principle devised by federal courts that bars the government from using job discrimination laws against the First Amendment rights of churches in their hiring and firing of ministers. The Department of Justice surprised even some advocates of strict separation of church and state in contending the "ministerial exception" should be totally rejected.

Some of the justices expressed sympathy for the argument of Hosanna-Tabor and religious liberty advocates that the government should not infringe on church decisions regarding its leadership.

"It's none of the business of the government," (See 'Church,' page 3)

COMMENT

Caring for Others Is a God Thing

The Sept. 22 editorial supporting the World Hunger Fund offering, sponsored annually by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), produced some interesting and, in some cases, surprising responses.

Some questioned why Southern Baptists even collect an offering since whatever condition one experiences is God's will for him or her. Help from Southern Baptists, the argument reasoned, is contrary to God's will for that person.

Others complained that providing help to the hungry destroys individual motivation for work. One writer observed that there is no difference between government programs to help the hungry and religiously motivated charity and that both are destructive.

Still another protested that the so-called "victims" of hunger, especially in the United States, are really "parasites" on society and deserve to be left behind.

Evidently the economic angst among God's people must be high because it seems anger and fear characterize our reactions rather than a rational understanding of His Holy Word. Unfortunately that happens frequently in times of great uncertainty. The sin of selfishness seems to be on parade in times like these.

To blindly accept every circumstance of life as God's will makes nonsense out of many of the Psalms. There one repeatedly finds David pleading with God for deliverance from circumstances in which he finds himself. There is no blind resignation to fate. Instead there is protest. There is self-defense. There is supplication for deliverance.

And there is praise. Sometimes Christians misread 1 Thessalonians 5:18, which says, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the Lord's will for you in Christ Jesus," to mean that every circumstance of life is God's will rather than understanding that in every circumstance of life, His will is that one gives thanks. That is the truth one sees over and over again in the Psalms and throughout Scripture.

That attempts to help people, whether through government-sponsored programs or church programs, sometimes have negative consequences cannot be denied. All of us know such stories. But do others' possible misdeeds negate Christians' responsibility to offer care to the hungry, aid to the sick, clothes to the naked or friendship to the lonely? Not as I read the Bible.

Jesus' story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 does not tell us what kind of reaction the



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

victim had to the good Samaritan's assistance. Instead Jesus focused on the rightness of providing aid to the one in need.

Indeed an attempt to reason away the responsibility to assist a needy person cannot help but remind of the priest and Levite who explained away their responsibility as they "passed by on the other side."

Make wise decisions

Obviously Christians must be wise when offering ministry. One should not give a drunk money for more alcohol, for example. Instead one may buy that person a meal. But what someone else might do never determines what Christians should do when faced with a ministry opportunity.

Thankfully all of us also know how God used a fellow believer's compassion to bless us and others. That is what God intended.

Those who call the hungry, poor or needy "parasites" have never listened to the words Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount, in which He declared, "Whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them — this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

The SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission has on its website (www.ERLC.com) a paper titled "The Bible Speaks on Hunger." While space does not permit a detailed account of the paper, the titles of the sections are informative. Section one is titled "God cares greatly about the poor and hungry as shown in both the Old and New Testaments." Section two is titled "God works through His people through the discipline of regular gleanings to provide for those in need."

Those sections are followed by such sections as "God calls His people to be actively involved in ministry to those in need," "Ministry to the poor is a service to God," "Ministry to the poor yields great joy," "Turning a deaf ear to those in need stifles the spiritual life," "Mistreatment and neglect of the poor results in God's judgment," "Caring for the poor leads to a change in the life of the giver" and "Ministry to those in need demonstrates the reality of being a follower of Jesus Christ."

There is no question about God's command to help the hungry, poor and needy. This has been a hallmark of the Christian church since its found-

ing, and only a gross and intentional misreading of God's Holy Word attempts to deny that fact.

The Christian faith has both a vertical and horizontal plane. Of the Ten Commandments, the first four deal with one's relationship to God (the vertical plane). The other six deal with one's relationship to his or her neighbor (the horizontal plane). As Christians, we have a relationship to God and one another. Perhaps that is why Jesus joined together two other commandments when responding to the question about the greatest commandment.

His answer was to love God and one's neighbor as one's self (Mark 12:28-34).

Love is expressed in individual action, to be sure. It also is expressed in corporate action as one works for a community where the welfare of others is valued. That may mean working for public policies that reflect God's love for the hungry, poor and needy as well as giving a donation to the SBC World Hunger Fund offering.

As pointed out in the Sept. 22 editorial on world hunger, a financial gift to the World Hunger Fund offering is needed to help with immediate needs. SBC representatives serving in the Horn of Africa also noted the need for system solutions that can help rectify long-term problems. Participating in finding those solutions (often through the political process) also can be a way of loving neighbor as one's self.

The conclusion of all of this is clear: Caring for the hungry, poor and needy is a God thing. It is a demonstration of God's love for us all.



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

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Alabama civil rights leader, Baptist pastor Fred Shuttlesworth dies

Fred Shuttlesworth, the last of the “Big Three” of the civil rights movement with Ralph Abernathy and Martin Luther King Jr., died Oct. 5. He was 89.

Shuttlesworth was the least well known of the co-founders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957, but few advanced its agenda of nonviolent resistance at greater risk. By his own count he was bombed twice, beaten into unconsciousness and jailed more than 35 times.



SHUTTLESWORTH

“Fred Shuttlesworth did not become a martyr, and it was not for lack of trying,” biographer Andrew Manis said in *The Birmingham News*.

Manis, a professor at Macon State College, first met Shuttlesworth in 1978. At the time a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Manis arranged to have Shuttlesworth speak at the seminary in Louisville, Ky., the first time many of the predominantly white ministerial students had ever heard of him.

Manis, who went on to earn his doctorate at Southern, interviewed Shuttlesworth and wrote the acclaimed biography, “A Fire You Can’t Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham’s Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth.”

Born March 18, 1922, in Montgomery County, Shuttlesworth moved to Birmingham at age 3.

He studied for the ministry at Selma University and by 1949 was preaching at Selma’s First Baptist Church for \$10 a week.

In 1953 he became pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Birmingham. He became an activist in the city, calling for the hiring of African-American police officers and joining voter registration efforts of the NAACP.

He became known as chief nemesis of Bull Connor, Birmingham’s police chief whose use of dogs and fire hoses on the Freedom Riders in 1962 helped build support for the civil rights movement and inspired similar campaigns.

President Obama, who once pushed Shuttlesworth’s wheelchair across the Edmund Pettus Bridge near Selma to commemorate a march for voter rights in 1965, voiced sadness at news of his death.

“As one of the founders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Reverend Shuttlesworth dedicated his life to advancing the cause of justice for all Americans,” Obama said. “He was a testament to the strength of the human spirit. And today we stand on his shoulders, and the shoulders of all those who marched and sat and lifted their voices to help perfect our union.”

(ABP)

Display of solidarity

Maryland Baptist volunteers help with disaster relief in Birmingham area

By Joseph Rhea
The Alabama Baptist

James Dixon’s home may be far from his Birmingham roots but his heart certainly isn’t.

On Sept. 26, Dixon, pastor of El-Bethel Baptist Church, Fort Washington, Md., and Darin Poullard, pastor of Fort Washington Baptist Church, arrived in the city with an 11-member team to take part in the continued tornado recovery work. Nine team members were from El-Bethel Baptist, and two were from Fort Washington Baptist.

The team connected with The Center at Central Park, a Birmingham Baptist Association ministry devoted to education and community development in Fairfield. It camped on the center’s linoleum floors, cleaned and painted several classrooms there and assisted in rebuilding a house in Pleasant Grove before returning home Sept. 30.

For Dixon, the decision to hop in a van and drive 13 hours through the night to do recovery work came after visiting Pratt City in the first weeks of May and seeing the work needed.

In July, he met with Sammy Campbell, director of the center and church-planting strategist with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, and asked if there was some way his church could help.

Poullard had wanted his church to participate in relief work from the beginning.

‘I wanted to ... help’

“Right after the tornadoes happened, I contacted [Dixon] ... and mentioned that I wanted to go down and help,” he said.

Fort Washington Baptist organized a fundraiser for the Adopt a Family program at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, and raised \$10,000 for disaster relief aid through August and September.

It had planned to travel down and deliver the money while doing relief work; however, Calvary Baptist had not been able to place it in a site.

Fortunately a week before El-Bethel’s group was to drive down, Dixon contacted Poullard to ask if his group wanted to join it.

“There were more [Fort Washington Baptist members] who wanted to come,” he said, “but arrangements had to be made more quickly [than we expected].”

Perhaps they will get another chance,



Photo courtesy of Sammy Campbell

ACROSS GEOGRAPHIC AND RACIAL LINES — Members of the Maryland team are shown appreciation by a homeowner needing assistance in Pleasant Grove. The team partnered with The Center at Central Park in tornado recovery efforts.

as Dixon and Poullard plan to return.

They hope to keep working with the center and homeowners in the area, though they do not yet have definite plans. One project Dixon is considering is building low-cost housing for those displaced by the tornadoes.

Poullard hopes more churches from the Maryland area will get involved next time.

Campbell praised El-Bethel and Fort Washington Baptist for their belief that “the Church has to always be on mission.” Their presence in the area was a display of solidarity among Southern Baptist churches across geographic and racial lines, he said.

Inspiring others

Darryl Fitch, an El-Bethel member, saw their work as an opportunity to inspire other believers to do ministry.

“I’ve loved seeing how everyone gives together, serves together, gets to know one another,” Fitch said. He was excited “to show others what we’ve done and encourage them in the work.”



Photo by Joseph Rhea

‘ON MISSION’ — A Maryland team member paints the interior of a room in the Center at Central Park.

Church decisions said to be ‘none’ of government’s business

(continued from page 1)

ernment to decide what the substantial interest of the church is,” Associate Justice Antonin Scalia said. “There, in black and white in the text of the Constitution, are special protections for religion.”

Despite the First Amendment protections for religious institutions against government interference, lawyers representing the EEOC’s position did not agree that churches and faith-based schools should be treated differently than secular institutions with employees.

Walter Dellinger, who argued for the EEOC stance, told the court the primary reason the 6th Circuit Court was correct in ruling Perich was not a minister “is she carries out such important secular functions in addition to her religious duties.” Chief Justice John Roberts

interrupted, telling Dellinger, “[T]hat can’t be the test. The Pope is a head of state carrying out secular functions, right? Those are important. So he is not a minister?”

In their brief, the IMB and ERLC — as well as three other religious groups that signed on — contended a “robust ‘ministerial exception’ is critical to religious liberty.” The “ministerial exception” is rooted in two aspects of the First Amendment, according to the brief: (1) The freedom to associate based on the right to assemble, and (2) the right to free exercise of religion.

“Religious groups have the right to choose, free from governmental interference, who will lead them and who will pass their faith onto the next generation,” according to the brief. “Congress has no authority to interfere. This

is the essence of the ministerial exception.”

The Constitution’s framers approved the First Amendment’s assembly clause to protect the right of Americans to associate in groups, including religious ones, said the brief endorsed by IMB and the ERLC. The Supreme Court also has protected “freedom of association” in many cases, according to the brief.

The brief also argued that conflicts over church leaders provided inspiration for the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment. The high court has long upheld such protection for religious groups in deciding on leadership, the brief said. The case is *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC*. The church, which is located in Redford, Mich., is affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

(BP)

Shelters for Souls rebuilds single mother's home

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

You could say that the church community where First Baptist Church, Gallant, is located is a musical community.

Every fifth Sunday for years, First, Gallant, and several other closely-knit churches of different denominations have united for a hymn singing, raising melodic voices to the heavens.

You also could say that music has played a vital role in binding this church community even closer together to help a family displaced by April's storms rebuild its home.

After a tornado barreled through Shoal Creek Valley in St. Clair County on April 27, Pastor Tom Brown learned of a particularly dire need from James Sampley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ashville. Sampley asked Brown if his church would partner with First, Ashville, to rebuild a single mother's home.

First, Gallant, came up with a name for the project — Shelters for Souls — and a church member developed a logo.

Fundraising events

The initial Shelters for Souls fundraising event Aug. 13 in the Gallant community incorporated music and lots of it.

Bluegrass and gospel tunes were performed at Ahava Springs under a large pavilion on the property.

Sampley informed attendees about the project's needs and the type of house the churches wanted to build for the family. The local volunteer fire department provided food and approximately \$4,000 was raised.

"It really has energized a lot of folks in our congregation," Brown said of Shelters for Souls.

Jana Mayo is one of those. The children's choir director at First, Gallant, asked herself what the children's choir and drama department could do to help the project. With about 25 children who love to sing and perform, Mayo decided to put on a performance of "Down by the Creek Bank." A special donation was taken at the recent two-night event with proceeds benefiting Shelters for Souls.

The production included a lot of fun music.

"Our church is a singing church," Mayo said. "Combining my [choir] kids' talents to help someone in need is the most rewarding thing."

Jana Mayo
FBC Gallant

Two First, Ashville, members have served as general contractors for the project.

Other volunteers from the church have helped maintain a clean work site.

Other churches and ministries have stepped up to help, too.

Volunteers from CrossPoint Baptist Church, Trussville, roofed the house with shingles from Calhoun Baptist Association. Local Churches of Christ furnished the appliances.

The initial goal was for the family to be in the new home by Christmas, but Sampley said that date has been advanced to late October, thanks to the eagerness of so many people willing to assist.

"It's been a combined effort," he said. "God has just provided."

"Combining my [choir] kids' talents to help someone in need is the most rewarding thing."

Jana Mayo
FBC Gallant

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with the Alabama
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Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving

Year to Date through September 30, 2011

SEPTEMBER

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,641,666
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$3,633,313
Under Goal for Month	\$8,353

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$32,774,994
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$31,332,954
Under Goal for Year	\$1,442,040



BAPTISTS RESPOND

to areas devastated by April tornadoes

Our church in Hackleburg — Emmanuel Baptist — was destroyed in the April tornadoes. We lost all of our Vacation Bible School music DVDs that our kids really enjoy singing with. If anyone has the following DVDs with performance tracks, we would be interested in purchasing them: "Big Apple Adventure," "Saddle Ridge Ranch," "Outrigger Island" and "Artic Edge." I can be contacted by email at wolfejimjudy@hotmail.com.

Tim Wolfe
Hackleburg, Ala.

May 15 was not a typical Sunday for members of Clairmont Springs Baptist Church, Talladega. Instead of attending the usual morning worship service, about 40 members of the Carey Baptist Association church — from 10-year-olds to senior adults — packed into vans and headed to Webster's Chapel, a community devastated by the April 27 tornadoes.

Pastor David W. Cornett initially heard of the destruction in that area through news from his daughter-in-law. After relaying the area's needs to his church, Cornett made arrangements to transport the congregation to Webster's Chapel to feed the community.

With grills, tents and a variety of food in tow — barbecue sandwiches, jambalaya and cakes, the church set up its food distribution area on what was left of the Webster's Chapel Fire Department property.

Cornett sent out several church members in two trucks to distribute food to residents who weren't leaving their homes. He said some residents had only sheds that remained standing on their property and others had set up tents to sleep in.

Church members served approximately 200 plates of food to residents and other volunteers.

Cornett said despite the trials these residents faced, they lifted his spirits and inspired his congregation with their positive outlook. "It was an eye-opening experience," he said.

For Ken and Judy Conaway, traveling and missions opportunities go hand in hand. Through their dedicated work with Campers on Mission (COM), this couple has covered a lot of territory in Alabama since the April 27 tornadoes hit the state.

COM, with more than 30 chapters nationwide, is "a fellowship of Christian campers who share their faith while they camp."

The Conaways, who are members of First Baptist Church, Wedowee, have been involved with COM since 2005.

Serving as part of the COM Alabama chapter — sponsored by the Adult Volunteer Mobilization unit of the North American Mission Board — the Conaways accept short-term volunteer assignments that typically send them on the road 20 weeks out of the year.

They have worked in several different ministry capacities throughout their COM experience but recent activity has been in aiding Baptist disaster relief and rebuilding teams. Deployed through Alabama's Baptist disaster relief effort, the Conaways drove their RV to Tuscaloosa a few days after the April 27 storms.

Once at Cottontale Baptist Church's disaster relief site, the couple delved into many administrative duties for Baptist chainsaw crews: managing a shower unit, locating lodging, handling logistics and tracking paperwork through completion. During their stay, the couple lived in their RV that was parked in Cottontale Baptist's parking lot. About 15 other COM workers also were assisting at the same site, while many others worked in Cullman, Hackleburg, Phil Campbell and Rainsville.

Most recently the Conaways were in Phil Campbell helping construct a home for the widow of a former Baptist pastor who lost her home April 27.

Now, "we're back in administration trying to keep things running and keep people out in the field working, and we're not actually out in the field doing the chainsaw work ourselves, but we're supporting the units," Ken Conaway said.

For more information about Alabama's COM chapter, visit <http://alabamacom.org>.

Venture Expeditions held the Hope Tour, a two-week cycling adventure to benefit Convoys of Hope's disaster recovery efforts in Joplin, Mo., Tuscaloosa and other disaster work. The Sept. 25-Oct. 9 tour had raised \$50,000 at press time.

Thirteen participating cyclists departed for the 766-mile journey through Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia from Joplin and Springfield, Mo., ending in Atlanta. Participants assisted tornado survivors and encouraged communities to continue to help their neighbors. In Alabama, some of the cyclists were at Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds.



Removing ROADBLOCKS

Alabama Baptists minister after earthquake in India

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Overcoming roadblocks — both figurative and literal — in north India became a common theme for an Alabama Baptist missions team from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, in late September.

After preparing for months for an evangelistic missions experience in the western section of Sikkim state Sept. 24–Oct. 2, the team learned only days before departing it would be needed in a remote mountain village to the north and east of the original location.

A magnitude-6.9 earthquake shook the mostly Nepalese area near the India-Nepal border Sept. 18 at 6:10 p.m.

The shock was felt even into Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and China.

At press time, India was reporting 93 deaths, China six deaths and Nepal six deaths.

But the reports will most likely remain inaccurate in India because of the Hindu caste system, which prevents members of the lowest caste from being mentioned in death tolls, and the fact that some villages are unreachable.

Some deaths were from the earthquake, while others were from the landslides that followed it. Roads were blocked in numerous places around the affected area.

Because of potential disaster relief and medical needs, the team was diverted to a relief camp set up near the most accessible mountain village impacted by the earthquake.

National partners suggested the camp, hosted by a village in a valley area, as a place that would benefit most from the team's time and the most easily accessible of the affected areas.

And so the team — an engineer, a paramedic, a law student, an agent at an accounting firm, a physical therapist and others under the leadership of Brook Hills member Casey Reeder — arrived in Delhi on Sept. 24 ready to tackle its new assignment.

Less than 10 hours later in a Jeep-like taxi, the team arrived in Mangan, where it had to obtain entry permits. Since the area has become highly dangerous after the earthquake and landslides, anyone who is not Lepcha (the people group in the area) must obtain a permit. Hours passed, along with countless prayers; the team waited, hoping to hear it had permission to enter.

Medical relief

The permits were obtained only because there was a physical therapist and paramedic on the team, allowing it to serve in medical relief. Permits in hand, the team mem-



Photo by Neisha Fuson

CLEARING THE PATH — A long arm excavator removes large boulders from the road leading to the relief camp where a team from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, provided medical relief to Lepcha and Nepalese.

bers became the only Americans to enter the area after the earthquake, passing over several landslides and shabby-looking bridges and through very tight squeezes along bumpy mountain roads to get there.

The timing of the team's arrival was perfectly precise because if it had arrived even one day earlier, then the roads would not have been cleared from the landslides and fallen rocks, said Adam Reese, a Southern Baptist representative working in north India.

Reese, the team members and national partners who served as translators stayed at a Buddhist school, sleeping on cloth mats on the cold, gray concrete floor.

While nongovernmental organizations and others wanting to help supplied the nearby camp with rice, potatoes and tea, the team

brought medical supplies, other food and water.

More than 100 Lepcha and Nepalese people sought refuge and food at the camp, located about a half-mile up the hillside from where the road was too dangerous to pass by car.

Opportunities to share

Russ Kinniburgh, the physical therapist on the team, saw an elderly woman making her way through the crowds.

Her feeble hands held a cane that was about a foot too long in the wrong hand and backward.

Kinniburgh cut the cane down and taught her how to use it properly. The next day, she hobbled by with a smile, cane properly in place.

The team cleaned some minor wounds and taught a few long-term care practices to those at the camp.

Team members also had time to visit with the people and look for opportunities to share something greater than a bottle of water or a Band-Aid — hope.

The people opened up to the team members.

They invited them into their homes; gave them tea, or “chiya;” and listened as the smiling white faces shared stories about a man named Jesus.

Team member Chance Walters said, “As we were struggling to get (to the camp), it became frustrating and discouraging (to all of us).”

But, he added, “I see now that even if just one person heard the gospel, then all the trou-

ble to get here was worth it.

“I won’t ever forget the spiritual battle that went on inside myself as I shared the Word. I thought, ‘Why isn’t it like this in Alabama?’ Well it’s because I don’t do anything in Alabama,” Walters said, half in jest and half serious.

“My spirit knows that progress is being made here for those who heard the gospel, but I felt like a used car salesman who couldn’t close a deal. But ultimately I feel

like the Spirit was just saying, ‘You just remember this. There’s a reason the enemy is on you now. You are preaching the gospel. You are sharing my Word.’”

The team shared the gospel with many at the camp and surrounding area, even as officials kept a close eye on its work.

After leaving the camp, the team

traveled to a larger town and prayer walked and shared the gospel in a nearby village, about a 30-minute walk away.

Several people welcomed the team into their homes and listened to Bible stories.

Uplifting joy

As the trip came to a close, the discouragement that sat heavy at the beginning of the week turned into an uplifting joy.

And team members recounted situation after situation that could only have happened because of the Lord’s hand.

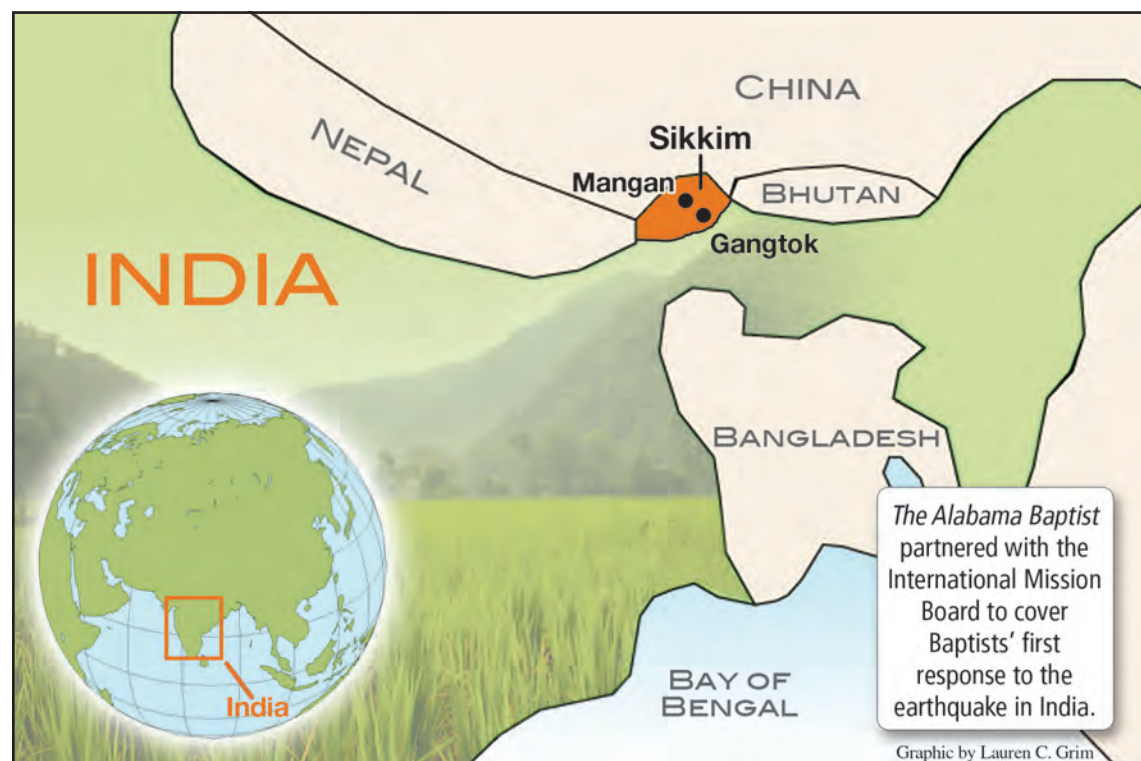
EDITOR’S NOTE — Some names changed for security reasons.

“I see now that even if just one person heard the gospel, then all the trouble to get here was worth it.”

Chance Walters
The Church at Brook Hills

“My spirit knows that progress is being made here ... but I felt like a used car salesman who couldn’t close a deal.”

Chance Walters
The Church at Brook Hills



The Alabama Baptist partnered with the International Mission Board to cover Baptists’ first response to the earthquake in India.

Graphic by Lauren C. Grim



Photo by Neisha Fuson

RELIEF CAMP — Southern Baptist representative Adam Reese spends time with national partners at an earthquake relief camp.

More than an earthquake

Disaster brings new ministry mindset to Baptist representative

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Picture frames began to fall from the walls as Adam Reese was scooping another handful of rice and dal (lentil soup) into his mouth.

It was a magnitude-6.9 earthquake.

But for Reese and his family, Southern Baptist representatives working in north India, the Sept. 18 earthquake was not just another natural disaster — it was a ministry changer.

One week after the earthquake, he hosted a team from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, doing disaster relief in the affected areas. The team originally had planned to share Christ in another section of Sikkim state, but after the earthquake, the word “plan” took on a more fluid definition. Each day held uncertainty — where to find food, where to sleep, where to serve.

Reese led the team on a three-day journey to a relief camp set up in a small village nestled in the corner of a valley green with rice paddies. The team and several national partners obtained entry permits and endured numerous long and bumpy taxi rides and some intense hiking.

Reese, the team and the national partners slept in a Buddhist school a few hundred feet from the camp.

Medical care

Once the team settled in at the school, team members immediately started providing medical care. But the medical and relief work was not the greatest need at the camp. The Lepcha people, the people group of the area who sought refuge at the camp, really just needed to talk.

The “panchayat,” or supervisor of the camp, permitted the team to enter and stay at the school, and more than relief work, he wanted it to just visit with the people — in his mind,

a sure morale boost for the fearful and discouraged Lepcha.

Though on the outside things seemed to be running smoothly, Reese faced a “spiritual attack” at the camp. He was concerned about officials, who were rather curious why the team of Americans wanted to go help in such a remote location that the national army had already supplied with relief goods.

The team, the national partners and Reese had spent one night at the school, but he was hesitant to stay another night. The team was sharing the gospel boldly, and Reese said he felt as if they were on “a knife’s edge” with officials. He left the school and walked down to the campfire “really scared.” He needed to pray about the next step of the trip. He saw two of his national partners, their faces lit by the warm glow of the fire.

Timothy, a national partner who accompanied the team as a translator, stood to greet him. He looked him in the eye. It was a crucial moment for Reese.

“Brother,” Timothy said to Reese, “I can see you are worried, but you are doing a very good job.”

“I think we know each other well now. You are like my own brother and I love you.” He grabbed Reese’s arm. “I am with you.”

Reese strained to hold back the tears. “I thought to myself, ‘I have my first [Nepalese] friend.’”

With his brothers behind him and a reminder from the Lord of His sovereignty and protection, Reese, the team and the national partners stayed another night.

The next day, team members ventured up the mountainside into the rustic Lepcha homes.

“A woman that was 46 years old heard the gospel for the first time, and the gospel was presented in half a dozen homes where it had never gone,” Reese said.

“[The team] opened doors [at the camp] that I could have never done on my own.”

National partners also experienced getting to share Christ in a new place. They told Reese over and over, “It’s a privilege to be here and a blessing. If you come back here again, please bring me with you.”

Further work

The next morning, the team packed up to move on to the next relief location.

Reese was invited back by everyone at the camp, even the people he thought were the most suspicious of the team. And Reese plans to return for further work.

Contact was made with two national partners who could be developed to work in that area specifically, he said.

“[All these good things] happened kind of in the midst of, ‘What do we do? We can’t do medical [relief] here like we were planning. What do we do?’” Reese said.

By the end of the week, he had a new perspective on several aspects of ministry in north India, including short-term missions trips.

“For maybe 15 years, I’ve been utterly against short-term missions,” Reese admitted with a grin. “But I was wrong ... because this border would not have been pushed open if [the team] had not come.”

Shortly after his arrival in India nine months ago, if asked what God was doing in the area, he said he might have answered something like, “Lots of stuff.”

Today Reese can see the fine details.

“God came here to bring the Kingdom, and it’s going to happen [in this way]: by making disciples who make disciples.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons.

Alabama team member leads Hindu to Christ

Sarah Weber signed up for the September missions trip to India in May. It would be her first international experience.

She and the other members of the missions team from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, prepared spiritually and physically for the trip for months, but Weber said she never really expected to lead someone to Christ.

“I was planning on planting the seeds,” she said. But when the Hindu woman in her 70s wanted Weber to tell her how to become a Christian, she had to shift her thinking.

How to trust

“I didn’t know what to do (at first),” Weber confessed.

The woman had heard of Jesus since her childhood but did not understand how to trust in Him.

Weber told her, “It doesn’t matter where you come from, who you are, what you’ve done. God loves every person and wants to spend eternity with [every single person].”

The translator continued the conversation with the woman, and she decided she wanted to follow Jesus, even if it meant

rejection by her family and persecution by her neighbors.

And she wanted Weber to lead her in the prayer.

“That’s a woman that lived her life as a Hindu that’s going to sleep tonight as a Christian,” Weber said with a smile. “We have a new sister.”

“The Lord was working in her heart without us,” she added. “I know He can do that, but it was great to see.”

And one day, more Christians could emerge from the various mountain villages in Sikkim state just because this team was present to share the gospel in and around the earthquake relief camp (see story, this page).

One Lepcha woman heard the gospel for the first time as a group of team members shared tea in her home. A man who lost his wife in the earthquake also heard, as did numerous others living on the mountain, at the base of the mountain and even 30 miles away from the mountain.

Ryan Blackmon, the paramedic on the team, said it was eye-opening to see the faces, smiles and eyes of the unreached people groups he had always heard about. (TAB)



Photos by Neisha Fuson

CHRIST IN INDIA — Team members from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, share Christ in India through national partners serving as translators.

Removing ROADBLOCKS



Photos by Neisha Fuson

LEPCHA IN NORTH INDIA — Lepcha people in northeastern India live in the mountains as farmers of rice, corn and cucumbers. A young boy (left) sits outside his home while chickens feed at his feet. An older woman (right) carries a basket of relief goods she received at an earthquake relief camp near her home.

North India earthquake increases fear among Hindus, Buddhists

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Prabuu. Prabuu. Prabuu,” the Nepalese man chanted with force in his lungs as the walls began to crack and the earth beneath him shook violently.

He stood from where he knelt in a door frame when the shaking subsided, checked around his business to see if there was any damage and tried to contact his family. Even a week later, the man shuddered as he remembered that night.

September 18 brought 40 seconds of terror to people in Sikkim state in northeast India as a magnitude-6.9 earthquake hit at 6:10 p.m.

The Nepalese word “prabuu” means “god” or “lord.” The man screamed out — as many Nepalese did that night — to a generic god.

Most Nepalese are Hindu or Buddhist; Hinduism and Buddhism are works-based religions. The people of Sikkim think the gods were displeased with their worship and sent the earthquake as punishment.

Chase Tozer, a Southern Baptist representative working in north India, said most people

are still in shock. Several hundred people in the area are immigrants who work on road and construction projects that were hit by the earthquake or landslides that followed. The workers are leaving in droves to return to their hometowns.

Astrologers in Sikkim have told everyone another earthquake is coming, Tozer said.

According to Timothy, a national partner, people are generally living in fear, which has only intensified since the earthquake. He said, “Daar lagyo,” or “fear is striking,” all across Sikkim.

Spiritual barrier

Posted on several roads in the affected area are signs that read, “Post disaster precautions: 1. Don’t panic. 2. Don’t listen to rumors. 3. Drink only water, no alcohol,” as if the basic lessons would help to suspend or tame the fear and hopelessness that dwells inside people.

But instead of opening a door to reach Nepalese with the gospel, the fear may make it more difficult, Tozer said.

“[Nepalese] think they have to work harder

to please their gods (after the earthquake) and be more devoted,” he said.

It’s another spiritual barrier.

Joseph Silwal, a national pastor in Sikkim, said society or tradition also plays a major role in the rejection of the gospel.

“Some people know the name of Jesus,” Silwal said. “They know the gospel but the problem is their fear of society.”

For a Hindu or Buddhist, choosing to become a Christian is synonymous with choosing to abandon family, friends and culture. New Christians are often shunned, persecuted and left to fend for themselves.

Religious traditions have been on display as people try to deal with the earthquake’s aftermath.

At one village, Buddhist monks read, chanted and worshiped for 10 hours. A normal “puja,” or worship time, lasts only an hour.

People would like to cremate the dead but countless bodies buried beneath homes and mud are unrecoverable. Traditionally there is a special ceremony in which monks pray for the soul of the dead and then proceed with a

cremation service. If a body is never found and given a proper ceremony, then the soul is never “set free,” according to Nepalese beliefs.

But Tozer and national partners know how they can lead the hurting to comfort.

“[I want to share] about God’s eternity ... and His role as Shepherd in our lives,” Tozer said.

He and his family witnessed firsthand the Lord’s protection as they changed travel plans and arrived at their destination one day earlier than anticipated. If they had traveled as planned, then they would have driven on a road that was wiped away in the landslides.

Tozer hopes to share this testimony with people in the days to come.

“[God] will put us in the right place at the right time,” he said. “He knows what tomorrow brings. And He supplies our every need — all as our Shepherd.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons.

Nepalese believers reach out to their own people in north India

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

No rejection, persecution or humiliation can deter Jacob, a Nepalese believer who lives in northeastern India.

“I just share Christ,” he said. “No matter what.”

Jacob served as a translator for a missions team from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, Sept. 24–Oct. 2. The team switched its original plans to serve in the western portion of Sikkim state and headed to another area in the state after the Sept. 18 earthquake.

That’s when the team met Jacob and learned he moved from Nepal to India when he was 13. He accepted Christ when he was 14 after a Christian from Mongolia shared the gospel with him.

Six years later, Jacob can still share the exact date, time and moment when Christ entered his heart. Eager to share Christ, he went to a relief camp

and a small village outside the camp with the team. Anyone who met him could see the joy in his eyes and spirit.

Jacob hopes to one day return to Nepal and open a university ministry and eventually plant churches.

Team member Chance Walters became fast friends with him. After they shared the gospel at the relief camp together for the first time, it was as if they had been brothers their entire lives.

“It’s encouraging to see [Jacob] share his faith so boldly when [Christians] rarely share the gospel with the people they work with or see every day in America,” Walters said.

Another translator for the team, Mercy, also is a believer originally from Nepal.

After the earthquake, she shared with her friends and neighbors from Isaiah 54:10: “For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then, my

faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing will never be broken,” says the Lord, who has mercy on you.”

Team member Elena Collins said she frequently saw Mercy share the entire gospel with a local before the team even knew what was being discussed.

“[Mercy] just jumped right into it with no hesitation,” Collins said.

As team members shared their faith and God’s Word with the Nepalese people, they saw and felt things they never expected. They said they learned a heart lesson.

“Back home, I kind of see Christianity as American,” team member Brad Collins said. “I know it’s all peoples on paper, but coming here, hearing nationals pray in their native tongue, put faces to that. [The believers] are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Some names changed for security reasons.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

LOVING THE LOST — National believer Mercy (right) shares with Nepalese and Lepcha people in north India.

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Raimund Heights Church, Bessemer**, will hold revival Oct. 15-16 with Chip Coleman. Services will be Saturday at 6 p.m. and Sunday at 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. There will be special music each service. Tommy Chesser is pastor.

BETHEL

► **Carl Williams** is the new pastor of **First Church, Demopolis**.



WILLIAMS

He previously served as pastor of Pine Hill Church. He also has served as associate pastor and minister of music for Calvary Church, Vincent, and as student minister intern

for Westwood Church, Alabaster. Williams is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham. A native of Hamilton, he and his wife, Ashleigh, have three children.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Eastside Church, Birmingham**, will hold Celebrate the Harvest Oct. 15, 3-6 p.m. Empowered will sing. Gospel illusionist Capt. Carl Kelly will be present. The squash cooking champion will be crowned during Squashtoberfest. Doers of the Word puppet team will perform. There will be hot dogs, drinks, popcorn, snow cones, games, candy, inflatables and prizes. There also will be preschool games. No costumes. For information call 205-833-3463. Mark C. Smith is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. The King's Messengers Quartet, of Hartselle, will sing. There will be no evening service. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Faith Chapel Church, Mari-on**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 23, 11 a.m. William Earl Short will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow. The Summerfield Voices will sing following lunch. The church also will hold revival Oct. 24-26, 7 p.m., with Short. Lloyd Stockman is pastor.

CHEROKEE

► **Cherokee Association** will hold a pastors' and wives' banquet Oct. 25, 6 p.m., with Christian humorist/musician Brother Billy Bob Bohannon at Sageberry Restaurant in Centre. Wendell Dutton is director of missions.

COFFEE

► **Damascus Church, Elba**, will host an Alabama hunter safety

course Oct. 15, 4-9:30 p.m. There will be a fried fish dinner. Participants must be at least 10 years old to attend. Men's ministry leaders, youth and older Royal Ambassadors are encouraged to attend. For information call Jason Windham at 334-806-6923. Hubert McWaters is pastor. ► **Eanon Church, Jack**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16, 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. For information call 334-565-3523. Mark Ward is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Evergreen Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16. Sunday School will be at 9:45 and worship at 11 a.m. Former member Keith Pugh, pastor of Open Door Church, Tuscaloosa, will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow in the activities building. For information call 251-578-1162. Harrell Cushing is interim pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Munford Church** drama ministry will present "The Awakening" Oct. 16-19, 6:30 p.m. Some scenes are not intended for young children. Parental discretion is advised. Tim Thomas is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **Chris Miller** is the new youth director for **Fairview Church, Valley**. He previously served as youth minister for Argo Christian Fellowship for four years. He has also served as youth intern and youth worship leader for Bush Memorial Church, Troy. Miller and his wife, Lacy, have one child and are expecting their second in February. Timothy Bass is pastor.



MILLER

ESCAMBIA

► **Calvary Church, Atmore**, will celebrate its 34th homecoming Oct. 16. Lookin' Up quartet, of Pensacola, Fla., will sing at 10:30 a.m. Pastor Emeritus C.L. Langford will speak. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. For information call 251-368-1767. Rich Gartman is pastor. ► **Sardis Church, Atmore**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16. The Master's Men will sing at 10 a.m. Johnny Fox will speak at 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Earle Greene is interim pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Lookout Mountain** will hold its annual benefit concert for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries Oct. 29, 6 p.m., at Mount Bethel Church, Lyerly, in the Broomtown Community. Award-winning and Grammy-nominated

Christian bluegrass group Canaan's Crossing will be special guests. Andy Kellett is pastor of Mount Bethel. Lloyd Borden is director of missions.

MADISON

► **Hillwood Church, Huntsville**, will host Ivan Parker in concert Oct. 28, 7 p.m. Doors will open at 6 p.m. For advanced tickets call 256-883-0485 or go by the church office. Tickets also will be sold at the door. Charles Freeman is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Union Church, Grand Bay**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16, 10 a.m. John Montalvo will speak. Lunch will follow. For information call 251-865-6284. David Walley is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Shiloh Church, Somerville**, will present "The Judgment Seat" Oct. 31-Nov. 3, 6-10 p.m. This is the church's 20th installment of the presentation. The eight-scene, walk-through drama is recommended for ages 10 and up. Reservations for groups of 10 or more are recommended by calling Michael Walters at 256-286-0509. For information email walters963@me.com or visit www.thejudgmentseat.net. Charles Owens is pastor. ► **Southside Church, Decatur**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary Oct. 23, 10:30 a.m. Former Pastor Brooks Barkley will speak. Former Music Director Mike Casey will lead the music. Lunch will follow. Ben Hayes is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Mount Pisgah Church, Graysville**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. The Singing Commodores, of Blountsville, will sing at 1:30 p.m. Gene Shelton is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Ethelsville Church** will hold its annual youth rally Rock Fest 2011 Nov. 2, 6-8:30 p.m. Preston Rushing will speak. Hope Community Praise Band will sing. There will be light refreshments at 6 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Praise and worship will begin at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Area youth groups are invited. For information call Annette Howton at 662-242-3060. Mel Howton is pastor.

SHELBY

► The children's ministry team of **Community Church, Maylene**, will hold Fallapalooza for children of all ages Oct. 30, 5-7 p.m. Bo Brown is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Gilgal Church, Duncanville**, celebrated its 183rd anniversary Sept. 25. Harper Shannon spoke. Bart Latner is pastor.

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Police tell British cafe owner not to show Bible DVD

BLACKPOOL, England — Religious liberty took another hit in Great Britain when a Christian restaurant owner was threatened with arrest for playing a Bible DVD that included passages critical of homosexuality. The incident, reported in the *Daily Mail* newspaper, is but the latest example of what U.K. conservatives say is an abuse of the country's Public Order Act, which prohibits the use of "insulting" words that can cause "harassment, alarm or distress."

The restaurant, called the Salt and Light Coffee House, for years has played a DVD version of the New Testament on an overhead TV, with the sound turned down and the words of the Bible appearing on screen. Called "The WatchWORD Bible," the entire DVD series spans about 26 hours. Police entered the restaurant Sept. 19 after getting a complaint. Restaurant owner Jamie Murray said he suspects the complaint came after the passage from Romans 1:26-27 was displayed on screen. The restaurant is located in Blackpool.

The two police officers conducted an "aggressive inquisition," Murray said. "I told them that all that appeared on the screen were the words of the New Testament," Murray told the newspaper. "There is no sound, just the words on the screen and simple images in the background of sheep grazing or candles burning. I thought there might be some mix-up, but they said they were here to explain the law to me and how I had broken it."

"I said, 'Are you really telling me that I am facing arrest for playing the Bible?'" and the [officer] fixed me with a stare and said, 'If you broadcast material that causes offense under the Public Order Act, then we will have to take matters further. You cannot break the law.'" Murray says he is not going to back down. The Christian Institute, a British-based organization that fights for religious liberty, is representing him. "I have now checked on my rights and I am not going to be bullied by the police and the [politically correct] lobby out of playing the Bible silently in my cafe," he said.

A police spokesman told the *Daily Mail* that the force is "respectful of all religious views."

Christian identity outpaces church attendance in UK

LONDON — A major new survey by Britain's Office for National Statistics shows that despite growing immigration and competition from other faiths, nearly seven in 10 Britons still describe themselves as Christian.

That doesn't mean, however, that U.K. Christians actually attend church. In a nation of 60 million people, weekly attendance at Church of England parishes had slumped to 1.14 million as recently as 2008.

Nevertheless the new study by the Office for National Statistics showed 69 percent of men and women in Britain professed to be Christian, even if they never or rarely saw the inside of a church.

The survey showed that 4.4 percent of respondents identified themselves as Muslim, 1.3 percent as Hindu, 0.7 percent as Sikh, 0.4 percent as Buddhist, 0.4 percent as Jewish and 1.1 percent as followers of other religions.

Spiritual heritage luncheon for pastors to be held at Montevallo's American Village

Calling all pastors with an appetite for history. This luncheon is for you.

The Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association (SDEA) and the Alabama Policy Institute (API) will host a pastors luncheon — A Pastor's Look at Reclaiming Our Spiritual Heritage — Oct. 25 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at the American Village in Montevallo.

The keynote speaker will be David Barton, founder and president of WallBuilders, a national pro-family organiza-

tion dedicated to presenting America's forgotten history and heroes with an emphasis on the moral, religious and constitutional foundation on which the country was built.

Scott Dawson, founder of SDEA, and Gary Palmer, co-founder of API, also will speak.

Each pastor may bring one pastoral staff member with him.

To register, visit <http://tiny.cc/yetmkn> or call Billy Hatley at SDEA at 1-800-869-8738.

(TAB)

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION PROGRAM

'Great Commission Ministries ... Together'
Nov. 15–16, 2011 ♦ Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile

TUESDAY MORNING 8:30–11:55

PIANIST Frank Jones
WORSHIP LEADER Glenn Eubanks
8:30 Pre-session Music Glenn Eubanks
8:45 Call to Order Mike Shaw
GREETINGS
Mobile Baptist Association Thomas Wright
Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile Adam Dooley
Congregational Music Glenn Eubanks
Invocation Robert Heard
8:55 Enrollment of Messengers Mary Sue Bennett
9:00 Committee on Order of Business Mike Miller
9:05 Committee Appointments Mike Shaw
9:10 Memorial Service Allen Winn
9:20 Alabama Baptist Ministers Benefit Society Paul Moore
9:25 Introduction of Resolutions Rob Jackson
9:30 Congregational Music Glenn Eubanks
9:35 Miscellaneous Business
9:50 **RECOGNITIONS**
Recognition of Former Convention Presidents .. Rick Lance
Recognition of New Pastors and New Church Staff
Members W. Robert DuBois
WORSHIP
Congregational Music Glenn Eubanks
Special Music Glenn and Sherri Eubanks
10:05 Theme Interpretation Adam Dooley
REPORTS ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION
10:30 Education Commission Melba Brown
10:40 Board of Aid for Students
in Church-related Vocations Bill Goodwin
10:50 Judson College David Potts
11:00 University of Mobile Mark Foley
11:10 Samford University Andrew Westmoreland
11:20 Presentation of Convention President Rick Lance
11:25 Special Music Mary Shaw

11:30 President's Address Mike Shaw
11:55 Benediction Brad Bakane

TUESDAY AFTERNOON 1:30–4:40

PIANIST Frank Jones
WORSHIP LEADER Mickey Henderson
WORSHIP
1:30 Pre-session Music Alabama Singing Men and Women
1:45 Congregational Music Mickey Henderson
Invocation Bobby Earls
1:50 Special Music Alabama Singing Men and Women
1:55 Theme Interpretation Charles Carter
REPORT OF STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS
2:15 Report of Executive Director Rick Lance
2:30 State Board of Missions Lawrence Phipps
Cooperative Program Recognitions Jim Swedenburg
Report of Inter-Baptist Fellowship Committee .. Edwin Velez
Recognition of Volunteer of the Year Reggie Quimby
3:30 Miscellaneous Business
3:40 ALCAP Report Joe Godfrey
REPORTS OF CONVENTION COMMITTEES
3:50 Audit Committee Melissa Sahagun
3:55 Insurance Committee Charles Ed White
4:00 Resolutions Committee Rob Jackson
4:10 Committee on Boards and Commissions Jim Cooley
4:20 Committee on Committees Steve Scoggins
4:30 Committee on Time, Place and Preacher John Nicholson
4:40 Benediction Mike Ingram

TUESDAY EVENING 6:40–8:15

WORSHIP
6:40 Pre-session Music Voices, University of Mobile
6:45 Invocation Greg Hyche
Special Music Voices, University of Mobile
Message Fred Luter

WEDNESDAY MORNING 8:30–11:55

PIANIST Frank Jones
WORSHIP LEADER Keith Hibbs
8:30 Pre-session Music Michael Evans
8:45 Congregational Music Keith Hibbs
Invocation Carey Hanks
REPORTS OF CONVENTION ENTITIES — PART I
8:50 The Baptist Foundation of Alabama Barry Bledsoe
9:00 Ala. Baptist Christian Life Commission Mitzi Holladay
9:10 Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center Buster Taylor
9:20 Woman's Missionary Union, Auxiliary ... Candace McIntosh
9:30 Theme Interpretation Rob Jackson
9:50 Election of Officers
REPORTS OF CONVENTION ENTITIES — PART II
10:05 Alabama Baptist Historical Commission Lonette Berg
10:15 *The Alabama Baptist* Bob Terry
10:25 Alabama Baptist Children's Homes
& Family Ministries Paul Miller
10:35 Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers William H. Austin
10:45 Resolutions Committee Report Rob Jackson
10:55 Previously Scheduled Business/Election of Officers
(if needed)
WORSHIP
11:05 Congregational Music Keith Hibbs
11:10 Introduction of Convention Preacher Mike Shaw
Special Music Michael Evans
Scripture Zach Richards
11:25 Convention Sermon Rick Evans
11:50 Introduction of Convention Officers Rick Lance
11:55 Benediction — Adjournment Jeff Griffiths

To request messenger cards

► Call Traci Jackson: 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 266
► Email: tjackson@alsbom.org
► Visit website: www.alsbom.org

Someone You Should Know

DORIS HUDSON

By Joseph Rhea
The Alabama Baptist

Saragossa Baptist Church, Nauvoo
Walker Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Philippians 4:13
FAVORITE HYMN: "How Great Thou Art"
HOBBIES: Sewing, quilting, gardening
and reading

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 62
years of marriage to James; three
daughters, Sandra, Brenda and
Donna; five grandchildren; and one
great-grandchild



HUDSON

Doris Hudson's husband was a pastor for 42 years, and she did whatever she could to help his church. She has taught Sunday School classes, helped with Woman's Missionary Union and worked with a women's prayer group.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was brought up in a Christian home. When I was 13, a neighbor of mine talked to me about being a Christian — actually committing my life to God — and that very night, I made a decision to follow Him.

Q: What does ministry demand?

A: Of course, it took very much of our time, but we were glad to do it. We tried to make God the center of our lives, so it never felt like a sacrifice. We tried to support all phases of God's work and tried to encourage our membership to stay committed to God.

Q: How has ministry been a blessing over the years?

A: We've seen many people come to know the Lord over these years; I feel we've been overly blessed with meeting some peo-

ple who were encouraging to us.

Q: How do you plan to stay involved in ministry in the future?

A: I plan to be involved in all the things I'm able to do. I substitute teach for Sunday School; I'm involved in the ladies' prayer group; I sing in the choir still.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

A: He's just made all the difference in the world; even as a teenager, I had a desire to live for Him and to serve Him.

Alabama Baptist history highlighted in conjunction with Smithsonian event

Perry County is significant in Baptist history, and this history is being highlighted as part of the Perry County Pathways emphasis this fall.

The Perry County Chamber of Commerce is hosting Journey Stories, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street and the Alabama Humanities Foundation. The Old Marion Train Depot, host to the exhibit, is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. until Nov. 10. Alabama Baptist Beginnings will be one of three events offered in conjunction with the Smithsonian event, and exhibits and photographs will be on display in the Bowling Library on the Judson College campus in Marion Oct. 10–Nov. 10.

Southern delegates met at Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, in 1844 and adopted the Alabama Resolutions that resulted in the separation of Southern and Northern Baptists in 1845. This was the beginning of the Southern Baptist Conven-

tion (SBC). The Board of Domestic Missions (now the North American Mission Board) of the SBC held its organizational meeting in 1845 at Siloam Baptist. Members of Siloam founded Judson in 1838 and Howard College (now Samford University) in 1841. *The Alabama Baptist* was founded in Marion in 1843 and was published in the city from 1843 to 1852 and again from 1873 to 1877.

Other planned emphases on the Judson campus include lectures about Native American migration in the middle Alabama region Oct. 19 and the local civil rights movement Nov. 10.

For more information, contact Beth Poole in the Judson development office at 334-683-5154. (JC)

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BHS Leads the Way with Compassion & Technology

By Susan P. Moore

When a woman receives a diagnosis of breast cancer, her life is changed. But for women treated at one of Baptist Health System's (BHS) hospitals, the journey along this difficult path is met with quality care, compassion and a comprehensive approach.

The expert staff offering cancer services at Princeton, Shelby, Citizens and Walker Baptist Medical Centers and the Baptist Imaging Center at BHC Hoover knows having the tools and protocols in place to detect and diagnose breast cancer as early as possible is critical to a successful outcome. By each woman's side are members of the specially trained team who are attuned to the unique needs of cancer care patients.

From digital mammography to sophisticated MRI technology, BHS hospitals strive to offer the best technology they can.

A good example of the array of high

tech equipment is the Faxitron, purchased for Princeton Baptist with the help of proceeds from the 2010 Alabama Charity Clays Shoot sponsored by the Baptist Health Foundation. This new mobile, digital radiography system provides on-the-spot images for surgeons removing tumors in breast cancer patients. It allows physicians to ensure the entire tumor has been removed and can reduce the amount of time a patient is under anesthesia.



Proceeds from this year's Alabama Charity Clays event will again be used to support breast care by upgrading stereotactic

equipment that will provide great advantages for patients undergoing a biopsy at Princeton Baptist. The event will be held October 27-28 at Selwood Farm in Alpine, Alabama. For more information about the event, call 205-715-5431.

But Baptist offers more than high tech; there's comfort and caring. Ergonomically designed diagnostic equipment offers patients greater comfort and reduced stress, while the use of the MammoPad® also adds to a patient's comfort for a softer, warmer mammogram.

And, while technology is critical to helping patients, the comprehensive approach to breast care at BHS hospitals goes a step further. There is a full network of support services not only for patients during this difficult time, but for families as well.

At BHS, comprehensive care for women with breast cancer is not just a once a year campaign. It's a year-round commitment that begins with early detection, treatment and caring to save lives every day.

Baptist Health System Celebrates Breast Cancer Awareness Month

During October, the four BHS hospitals will hold a variety of events in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Their goal? To underline the importance of early detection when the disease is in its earliest, most treatable stages. For more information, call the numbers listed below or dial toll free 1-877-222-7847.

Citizens Baptist Medical Center (Talladega)

Mammo Mondays

Every Monday in October, Citizens Baptist Medical Center will offer screening mammograms for only \$100. A physician referral is not needed, but appointments are required. For more information or to schedule your appointment, call 256-761-4618.

Fight Like a Girl!

Every woman who has a mammogram at Citizens Baptist during October will receive a pink "Fight Like a Girl" tote bag (while supply lasts) as a gift from the Citizens Volunteer Auxiliary. For more information or to make an appointment, call 256-761-4618.

Breast Cancer: New Guidelines

Wednesday, October 19, 8 a.m.

Citizens Baptist Banquet Room

This seminar is open to the community free of charge. Guest speaker will be Dr. Hector A. Caceres, an obstetrician/gynecologist at Citizens Baptist Medical Center.

Princeton Baptist Medical Center (Birmingham)

Mammos & Makeovers

Thursday, October 13, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Princeton Breast Care Center

Princeton Baptist's Breast Care Center has partnered with Xcell Beauty Academy to offer free beauty services to women who have a mammogram at Princeton.

Mammos & Massage

Tuesday, October 18, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Thursday, October 20, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Breast Care Center at Princeton

A licensed therapist from the Birmingham School of Massage Therapy will provide free neck and shoulder massages for women who have a mammogram at Princeton.

Lunch & Learn: Breast Cancer

Friday, November 4

Haynes Auditorium

Princeton Baptist Medical Center

Space is limited. To make a reservation or for more information, call 205-783-7458.

Walker Baptist Medical Center (Jasper)

Mammo Mondays

Every Monday in October, Walker Baptist Medical Center is offering screening mammograms for only \$100. A physician referral is required. For information, call the Walker Breast Center at 205-387-4750.

Baptist Imaging Center at BHC Hoover (Hoover)

Mammos & Makeovers

Thursday, October 13, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

5295 Preserve Parkway, Suite 110

Baptist Imaging Center at BHC Hoover has partnered with Xcell Academy of Beauty to offer free beauty services to women who have a mammogram at Princeton.

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Jasper business reaches community through 'Courageous'

Thanks to Central States Manufacturing Inc., Jasper residents have the chance to see the latest Sherwood Pictures film, "Courageous," at their local theater.

Central States, which manufactures and distributes metal building products, started a Giving Back program a couple of years ago, and according to program coordinator Debby Corwin, it is "a push to choose one community where we live and go deeper."

The film, which focuses on a group of police officers and its discovery of the importance of fatherhood, has a message that company thought was worth spreading, both among its Jasper employees and residents.

Central States worked with the theater to generate 10,000 vouchers and gave them to the leaders of local organizations — including First Baptist Church, Jasper — to distribute.

"Central States needs to be commended," said Dennis Culbreth, senior pastor of First, Jasper. "They saw the need to invest in their employees and do something that can impact them in positive ways. The fact that they would do this in the community



'COURAGEOUS'
has been shown in **1,126 theaters**
nationwide and had earned
\$11.2 million in ticket sales at press
time. For more information, visit
www.courageousthemovie.com.

speaks highly of that organization."

And, Corwin said, "Courageous" is just the start of the company's outreach to the community.

"In the next couple of weeks, the president [of Central States] and I plan to visit Jasper and meet with Dennis Culbreth and other members of the community," she said. "We'll talk with people from the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club and Kiwanis Club to see what needs we can help meet in Jasper."



For Dale Gilliland, operations general manager at Central States in Jasper, this outreach is very much in character with the company's philosophy, since many lead-

ers and employees are Christians.

"We've had employees who have been taking vouchers and handing them out, and there are just a handful left," said Gilliland, who attends First, Jasper. "They've been excited and it's a big thing for the community."

And there was a full house for the movie's premiere Sept. 30, he noted.

Culbreth planned to be at the theater a few times during the showings, as he and other Jasper-area ministers wanted to be sure there was at least one pastor on hand at each showing for anyone interested in talking following the movie. (TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Bridgeport is now receiving applications for a pastor. Please send resumes to: FBC of Bridgeport, ATTN: Pastor Search Team, P.O. Box 277, Bridgeport, AL 35740. Deadline for receiving resumes is Nov. 30.

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 resume to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 616, Red Bay, AL 35582, or email: firstbaptistc110@bellsouth.net.

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

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 resume 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 resume 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/SHIP LEADER: FBC Ashland. Blended worship. For more information: Pastor Ross Kilpatrick, 334-402-0028, or Mike Coleman, 256-276-0081. Submit resume: wrosskilpatrick@yahoo.com.

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

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF WORSHIP/FAMILY MINISTRIES: Ridgecrest Baptist Church is currently accepting resumes for a full-time minister of worship/family ministries. Submit resumes 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 resumes for this full-time position. Mail resumes to: Central Park Baptist Church Search Committee, 2020 Westmeade Street SW, Decatur, AL 35601.

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 resume to: Student Minister Search Committee, Southside Baptist Church, 1213 W. By-pass, Andalusia, AL 36420, 334-222-4300.

CHILDREN/STUDENT MINISTER: Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, Ala., seeking full-time children/student minister. Send resume to: Pastor, Meadowbrook Baptist Church, 1125 Mead-

owbrook Court, Oxford, AL 36203. 256-831-1811.

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

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association is now accepting resumes. Please mail resumes to: Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association, c/o DOM Search Committee, 4300 Highway 69 North, Northport, AL 35473. Deadline for resumes: Nov. 21.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Shawn S. Merithew
Morningview Baptist Church, Montgomery

God wants to ruin your life. I know it's an unusual message but it's true. And here's the kicker: The reason He wants to ruin your life is ... love.

Isaiah was a prophet who actually got to go to God's throne room. When he got there, he didn't start asking all the questions he had saved up or looking up dead relatives. When Isaiah saw God, he cried out in despair, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!" That's what coming face to face with a holy God does to you — it ruins you.

What does it mean to say God is "holy"? It means that He is perfectly good, true and just. On top of that, He is the creator and ruler of all things, including you and I. He made us for His glory, creating us in His image as an act of divine love. And He gave us His law to reveal His righteousness and define for us the boundaries of what is good.

But unlike God, you and I are not holy. In fact, we have offended His infinite holiness. Rather than respecting His law and loving Him, we have broken His law and lived selfishly. Consider the Ten Commandments — we have put other things before Him, which is idolatry; we have lied, coveted, stolen, lusted and murdered people in our hearts by being angry. We have sinned innumerable times. We all stand guilty and His judgment is that we be "ruined" forever in a literal place of torment called hell.

There is, however, a way to be forgiven and reconciled to Him. As the ultimate act of love, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to do what we could not. He perfectly obeyed God's law, the law we all broke. Then He died on the cross as our substitute, bearing the punishment we deserved. Then He rose from the grave, conquering death, which is the penalty of sin.

By God's grace, all of Christ's work can be counted as yours, but you must first be "ruined" in another way. Agree with God that you are a sinner who deserves His wrath and then forsake the ruin of your old life. Turn completely from your old life of sin, and believe in Christ alone to be forgiven of your sin and receive new life in Him. God's love requires your ruin. Repent, believe and live.

About Alabama

Alabama's Sales Taxes

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

In broad terms, governments levy three types of taxes to raise revenue. They tax

- ▶ what we own (property taxes),
- ▶ what we earn (income taxes) and
- ▶ what we spend (sales taxes).

Property taxes are the oldest of the three types. Increasingly unpopular, they remain a mainstay of public finances in many states.

According to the Census Bureau, property taxes still account for 30 percent of state and local tax revenue in the United States.

However, in Alabama, where the property tax is disliked more than in any other state, it represents only 16 percent of state and local tax revenue — about half the national average. The gap has been filled with sales taxes of various types, which account for almost half of all state and local tax revenue (compared to one-third nationally).

Revenue source

Mississippi was the first state to enact a “general” sales tax that applied to purchases of most commodities and some services. This occurred during the Depression, and in the years that followed, most other states also turned to this revenue source. Today general sales taxes are present in 46 of

the 50 states. Only Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire and Oregon have no state or local sales taxes at all.

The Tax Foundation, a national research organization, recently compiled figures on sales tax rates in each state. Its report gives us the ability to see how Alabama's sales taxes compare to those of our neighboring states and the rest of the country.

Highs and lows

Alabama's sales tax rate for the state government is 4 percent. Only Colorado has a lower statewide rate (2.9 percent). However, the average sales tax rate for local governments in Alabama is 4.64 percent, which ranks second highest among all states; Louisiana is first at 4.84 percent.

Adding the state and local sales tax rates together, we find that Alabama's combined sales tax rate of 8.64 percent is the sixth highest in the nation. Tennessee ranks first with a very high combined sales tax rate of 9.43 percent.

Our other neighbors are all substantially lower: Mississippi at 7 percent, Georgia at 6.87 percent and Florida at 6.65 percent.

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

Americans still believe economic gain sign of divine blessing on their lives

Back in 1905, Max Weber's landmark treatise “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” argued that a Calvinist belief in God's plan for the saved was crucial to the rise of capitalism because it inspired individuals to work hard and earn money as a sign of divine blessing on their lives.

More than a century later, new research shows that whatever its merits, the Protestant ethic is thriving among American believers.

That's especially true among evangelicals who are driving today's economic conservatism, and the idea goes a long way toward explaining the political disputes that are dividing the country and shaping the presidential campaign.

According to the Baylor Religion Survey released Sept. 20, nearly three-quarters of Americans believe that God has a plan for their lives and those who hold strongly to those beliefs — about four in 10 — are much more likely to embrace the sort of conservative economic philosophy that would make Tea Party activists proud.

In fact, believers who say God is directly guiding our lives and endowing the United States with divine blessings are much more likely than other Americans to agree that “the government does too much” and that “able-bodied people who are out of work shouldn't receive unemployment checks.”

What's more, they are more than twice as likely as all other Americans to say that success “is achieved by ability rather than luck.”

The Baylor study, based on interviews with more than 1,700 adults last fall, shows that black Protestants are most likely to espouse these God-driven ideas (71 percent), followed by evangelicals at 55 percent. Catholics and mainline Protestants are well behind, at about 42 percent, trailed by unaffiliated believers and Jews, who come in at around 3 percent.

Baylor sociologist Paul Froese noted that today's economic Prot-

estantism seems to channel the free-market ideas of Adam Smith, the famous 18th-century moral philosopher who developed the theory of an “invisible hand” of competition, and the more recent libertarian views of the late University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman.

One major caveat emerges, however: Froese noted that American

For example, 41 percent of respondents said they “strongly believe” God has a plan for them, but just 17 percent of respondents with incomes of more than \$100,000 held those beliefs.

That kind of populist optimism, in spite of today's deepening economic misery, was also demonstrated by a recent Associated Press-CNBC survey that found that

two in 10 Americans think they will be millionaires in the next decade. That conviction increases the further one moves down the economic ladder — and thus the lower one's actual chances of achieving such financial nirvana.

Critics view these attitudes as a kind of magical thinking that opens

the most financially vulnerable people to the pitches of “prosperity gospel” preachers who use cable television pulpits to solicit donations that they say will bring their viewers economic blessings.

But the popularity of this “gospel of wealth” could also play out in the budget showdown in Washington as President Obama tries to win re-election on a platform of economic “fairness” (read: higher taxes on the wealthy along with budget cuts).

Republicans, on the other hand, are raising the red flag of “class warfare” in opposing the president's plans — in effect defending the wealthy at a time of near-recession and growing economic inequality.

That message could yet work for the GOP if enough middle- and working-class Americans believe that they, too, will be in that upper-income echelon sooner rather than later, and that God will help them get there — as long as Washington doesn't get in the way. (RNS)

“For many Americans, the invisible hand of Adam Smith has become God's hand.”

Paul Froese
Baylor University

This kind of economic theology is being trumpeted most effectively by the Republican Party, especially GOP presidential hopefuls Rick Perry and Michele Bachmann.

“Political candidates can promote economic conservatism and a lack of government regulation merely by referring to an engaged God,” Froese said. “It works because many rank-and-file voters believe that a lack of government regulation and lower taxes is part of God's plan.”

Political approach

This approach also works politically because, contrary to what one might expect, Americans with lower incomes and less education are more likely to believe that God has a plan for their lives, and that when it comes to the economy, the best government is that which governs least. (African-American Protestants are an exception to the trend, believing in both God's guiding hand and a strong role for government.)

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'Blessed brothers'

Twin pastors serve churches in same community

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ben Clements is two minutes older than twin brother Brett. But Brett doesn't mind.

"That makes me the baby. I get the preferential treatment," he joked.

As young boys, the Clements twins felt the stirring of God in their hearts.

"Both of us would stack books, stand on them and preach," Ben said. "We have always admired preachers."

And while the twins were both called to ministry as teenagers, Brett sensed God's call first at the age of 13. Ben had "a strong sense of a call to ministry" when he was 15, but he still beat Brett to the pulpit, preaching his first sermon at 18. Brett didn't actually make his call public until he was 21.

"I guess I resisted God's tug in my heart for quite a while," he said.

Today Ben and Brett are known as "the twin preachers of Cherokee Baptist Association."

Ben is interim pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Centre, while Brett is pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church, Centre.

Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Association, said, "Brett and Ben are warm, friendly pastors. Surprisingly the two churches they serve are less than eight miles apart."

Brett's call to New Bethel Baptist came about because Ben was



Photo by Gary Hardin

EDIFYING EACH OTHER — Ben (right) and Brett Clements, known as 'the twin preachers of Cherokee Baptist Association,' serve as interim pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Centre, and pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church, Centre, respectively.

to preach there at a community Thanksgiving service seven years ago. But on the day of the service, one of Ben's children had to have emergency surgery, so he asked Brett to preach for him.

Both bivocational

Shortly afterward, New Bethel's pastor resigned, and the church asked Brett to serve as pastor. He also works for a cabinetmaker in Rome, Ga. And Ben is a bivocational pastor, too, working at a hydraulics company in Rome.

The twins are also voracious readers. "With both of us being preachers, we have lots of theolog-

ical discussions, and believe it or not, they aren't heated," Ben said.

"Our conversations with each other are either humorous or edifying," Brett said. "We enjoy listening to the same preachers, and we enjoy reading the same books."

He added, "We are the most blessed brothers in the world."

But did growing up as twins present a problem for Brett and Ben?

"I had some early identity crises," Brett confessed. "Everything was 'the twins.'"

Ben said, "Every time Brett got into a scuffle, I thought I had to back him up."



Shades Mountain celebrates its legacy; marks 100 years

"Living the Legacy" was the theme of the 100th anniversary celebration at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills.

Kim Hancock, director of member development for the Birmingham Baptist Association church, explained the theme was developed, in part, to commemorate the people who sacrificed so that their children and community would know about Christ. The goal was to remind the church of where it has been and look forward to the future, Hancock said.

Prior to the centennial service Sept. 18, a come and go event was held Sept. 15 for Shades Mountain Baptist to say thank you to its senior adults and leaders for all they have done.

The centennial service featured a video montage of the church's history. Former Pastor Charles Carter spoke to the crowd about the importance of God's Word, and current Pastor Danny Wood delivered a message about laying the groundwork for the future.

Wood also recognized Ken Flowers, who has taught preteen Sunday School for more than 30 years.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, delivered a presentation and plaque to commemorate Shades Mountain Baptist's 100th year.

"It was just a true celebration service," Hancock said.

A unique element included a late afternoon reunion of New Wind, the church's youth group that began 30-plus years ago.

And that wasn't all. That evening, A Century of Song highlighted 100 years of Shades Mountain Baptist music. "It was just an incredible spiritual experience," Hancock said.

Afterward everyone enjoyed dessert during 100 Cakes for 100 Years.

"We've had an amazing past. ... We've really been blessed," Wood said of Shades Mountain Baptist.

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'Special advantages' of CP giving still true today

Southern Baptists in World Service," a booklet written by E.P. Alldredge for the Sunday School Board in 1936, aptly captured the essence of the Cooperative Program (CP) started by Southern Baptists in 1925.

It stated simply, "[It's] the beginning of a new day in Southern Baptist life and work."

The foresight and wisdom of Southern Baptist Convention leaders to establish a coordinated giving plan for all churches have resulted in literally millions of lost souls around

the world professing Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior since 1925, and its impact continues to resonate greatly.

In 2004, revivalist Henry Blackaby captured the sentiments of many when he expressed that the CP was much more than just a great idea, saying, "The Cooperative Program is not something men designed but something God put together."

When a church gives a portion of its receipts through the CP, its gospel reach expands exponentially.

M.E. Dodd, considered the father of the CP, wrote about it in a tract titled "Why I Like the Baptist Cooperative Program." He listed seven "special advantages" of the unified giving plan that are still true today:

► It enables me to carry out my part of Christ's program of service.

► The Cooperative Program enables me to have a part in all that is being done.

► The Cooperative Program enables me to have some part in the whole work of Christ each

and every week of the year.

► This Cooperative Program enables me to do all that needs to be done because it includes every sort of service to every sort of somebody that any sort of anybody may wish to render.

► This Cooperative Program enables me to carry out God's financial program for His Kingdom.

► This Baptist Cooperative Program fixes the support of Christ's causes as a permanent principle in life and does not leave them to temporary emotional appeal.

► The Cooperative Program does not leave the causes of Christ to become the victims of temporary weather conditions, depressions in business or other hindered causes.

The CP has shaped for all eternity generations of Southern Baptists who have been called into service with the charge to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to their communities, state and country and throughout the entire world.

"The Cooperative Program is a conduit, a channel of giving, where we as a family of faith join together in making a difference in today's world," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). "Our spiritual ancestors were wise

in developing and nurturing this sense of cooperation."

Jim Swedenburg, director of the SBOM office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development, added that by creating a team of churches, convention agencies and missions personnel, the CP does what no other system has ever done.

"The Cooperative Program is, of course, a budget distribution system based on a working relationship between each state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. It permits churches making an undesignated gift to help support all the causes supported by their state convention and by the SBC. The system may not sound exciting, but

what it does is exciting," he said.

Just ask Olan Burcham, outgoing moderator for and retired pastor in Franklin Baptist Association.

He said the CP became hands and feet for him following the April 27 tornado that devastated his property and that of many of his neighbors in Phil Campbell.

"People came from four different areas to help us," he said. "I couldn't have done what needed to be done without them."

One visual that continues to stand out in Burcham's mind is the Alabama Baptist disaster relief trailer on his property.

"The Cooperative Program is real to me. I watched it in action." (BP, TAB)

October
is
**COOPERATIVE
PROGRAM**
month.

SBC CP sees first increase since 2007

The Cooperative Program (CP) allocation budget ended its fiscal year with its first increase since 2007, a moment that Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President and CEO Frank Page said was a "cause for joy" in light of economic hard times.

The CP allocation budget finished its Oct. 1–Sept. 30 fiscal year with receipts up 0.06 percent and combined CP and designated giving for the year up 0.17 percent, although total receipts were 3.98 percent below budget, according to Page.

He applauded the increase in light of the badly depressed economic conditions churches are facing.

The CP allocation budget was down 4 percent last year.

A total of \$191,878,645.16 in CP gifts was received by the Southern Baptist Convention during the fiscal year from Oct. 1, 2010, through Sept. 30, 2011 — up by \$115,492.29 (0.06 percent) from the previous fiscal year's \$191,763,152.87.

During the 2010–11 fiscal year,

an additional \$191,878,065.75 in designated gifts brought the fiscal year's overall giving for national and international missions and ministry to spread the gospel to \$383,756,710.91, or 0.17 percent above the previous year's \$383,087,678.95 combined figure.

Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund and other special gifts. (BP)



Nathan Tubbs leads worship at Cornerstone Church at Bay Ridge in Brooklyn.

COOPERATION

Behind every church planter is a large, often unseen group of people working together. In the case of Alabama natives and church planters Nathan and Lesley Tubbs, churches, associations and state conventions in Alabama and New York, along with the North American Mission Board, all cooperated to help launch a church in Brooklyn this year. As your church gives through the Cooperative Program, you, too, help plant churches in Alabama, New York and beyond.

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



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Entry fees: Pre-registration — Adults: \$15, Children (16 and under): \$12
Day of race — Adults: \$20, Children (16 and under): \$15
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Alternative sentencing plan gives choice of jail or church for inmates under review

An alternative sentencing plan that would give inmates the choice between time in jail or a year in church will be delayed while lawyers review it to make sure there are no legal issues.

Operation Restore Our Community (Operation ROC) was launched on Sept. 20 in Bay Minette. On Sept. 26, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Alabama sent a letter to city leaders demanding an immediate end to the program, which it says "flagrantly" violates the separation of church and state.

The letter also requested public records on the program's development and creation.

"It's good to hear they are delaying implementation," said Alabama ACLU executive director Olivia Turner.

The faith-based Operation ROC program, the brainchild of area church leaders, offers first-time, nonviolent offenders the option of attending the house of worship of their choice each week for a year instead of receiving jail time or other punishments.

"Operation ROC resulted from meetings with church leaders," Bay Minette Police Chief Mike Rowland said. "It was agreed by all the pastors that at the core of the crime problem was the erosion of family values and morals. We have children raising children and parents not instilling values in young people."

Rowland does not think that pressure from groups like the ACLU will stop the program.

"We are just simply running it back through for final legal review and a final stamp of approval by the city attorney," said Rowland. "If he gives us that, then we're going to move forward with it on the next court day, which will be Oct. 11. And I believe that's going to happen."

Under the program, offenders would choose a church and attend

it for one year, reporting their attendance to the pastor. Pastors would report weekly to the police chief, and offenders would bring a signed sheet to prove they attended church.

Offenders would also have to answer some questions about the services, Rowland said. Those who voluntarily choose church over jail get to pick the churches they attend. If they complete a year's attendance, Rowland said, their criminal case would be dismissed.

Rowland said because no one will be forced to take part in the program, he believes

there is no violation of church-state separation, and is confident it can be begin next month.

Rowland said input from the ACLU, the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation and other agencies has been helpful.

"We appreciate them coming forward with it because it gives us the opportunity to see their side of it and to address the issues that they have concern with," he said. "I believe we've already addressed the issues."

The alternative program will not be offered to all defendants and will be offered at a judge's discretion. Offenders who try the program and find it's not working for them can go back before the judge for a different sentence.

Rowland credited area churches for envisioning the program.

"This is their idea," he said. "I just put it together and pitched it."

So far, 56 churches have agreed to help monitor offenders, and 40 congregations have submitted inventories of their community resources, such as parenting, counseling and educational programs.

Rowland said the Bay Minette ROC project is the only one of its kind in the country, but online searches show others have been tried.

A similar program in London, Ky., drew headlines in 2004, and before that a judge in Lake Charles, La., was eventually suspended for ethics violations stemming from sentencing defendants to church, according to a Louisiana Supreme Court ruling in 1994.

Rowland said the public has expressed "overwhelming" support for the program.

"It kind of starts to show there's a change in the nation as far as their philosophy about what we need to do about people who commit crimes," he said. (RNS)

"It was agreed by all the pastors that at the core of the crime problem was the erosion of family values and morals."

Police Chief Mike Rowland
 Bay Minette

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For October 16

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen

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

IT'S ALL ABOUT CERTAINTY

Romans 8:9-17, 26-32

We Have the Spirit's Presence (9-11)

Paul began Chapter 8 with a victorious account of our life in Christ, chiefly that there is no condemnation now for those who have put their faith in Him. Because there is no condemnation now for us, we can live a life of hope, knowing that our circumstances do not impact our eternal security.

In Chapter 7, Paul addressed the sin nature within humans. In Chapter 8, he was addressing how the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome our sin nature. At the moment we put our faith in Christ, God the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us. The Spirit does not come afterward through any other function such as baptism. Once the Spirit lives in us, He gives us the power to overcome our sinfulness. Having been freed from our slavery to sin, we are to live righteously. The Spirit living within us is the mark of a Christian and the guarantee that God is with us. Therefore God lives within us, and we are to honor Him by living in a way that is pleasing to Him, but furthermore the Holy Spirit's presence within us assures us of our resurrection since it is the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and is able to raise us from the dead and give us eternal life.

We Have the Spirit's Guidance

(12-17)

Because of what Christ has done for us — saving us from our sins and giving us eternal life — we have an obligation to live for God. But what happens if we sin? Isn't this obeying the flesh? It is true that all Christians will continue to sin until they die and go on to see the Lord. However, when we spend time in fellowship with the Lord through prayer and reading His Word, we do not feed our sinful desires. It is as if we are putting to death the deeds of the body. This is why it is so important for us to spend time with the Lord so that we are refreshed spiritually and strengthened to not give in to temptation.

One may infer from the passage that Paul was suggesting that it is possible to lose one's

salvation. However, it is more likely that Paul was saying that those who continually live to sin gratifying the sin nature are probably not saved in the first place. If we have the Holy Spirit in us, then He will convict us and remind us that we belong to God. However, if we find we continually gratify the sin nature and never seek God, then that might be an indication that we do not have a true relationship with Him through Christ and might mean we need to place our faith in Christ to save us from our sins.

We Have the Spirit's Prayers (26-27)

Another benefit of having the Holy Spirit indwell us is that He knows how to pray for us even when we don't know how to pray for ourselves. Sometimes when we don't know how to pray, we can just sit quietly, meditate on God and His Word and listen to what He has to tell us. Prayer is an important part of the Christian walk, and even when we don't know how to pray, we can be assured that the Holy Spirit is interceding for us.

We Have Assurance (28-32)

This passage is one of the most comforting in the entire Bible. Because of the Spirit dwelling within us, we know that God is working all things for good. This does not mean that good things happen to us if we define good by the world's standards. But it gives us assurance that even in the midst of trials, there is some divine good that will come out of them. People often think that suffering is incompatible with the idea of a good God, but the Bible indicates that believers will suffer, but we don't face suffering as the world does. Instead we realize that God is working things for good, even in the seemingly worst of times. We are able to face these trials with a confident joy. God has predestined believers to be conformed to the image of His Son, and the Son was not spared suffering, but He faced it with obedience. But we have an assurance that God is sanctifying us, making us more and more like Him. Furthermore the result of this is that we are justified, being declared righteous before God, and glorified, being made more and more like God.

Bible Studies for Life

By Eric Mathis

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

HOPE DISCOVERED

Luke 7:1-17

Our studies this month focus on Jesus Christ's miracles, what they reveal about the promised Messiah and the hope they offer in our pursuit of God's Kingdom. This week, our attention turns to two stories: the healing of the centurion's slave (Luke 7:1-10) and the raising of the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17).

Chapter 7 initiates a new section in Luke that identifies Jesus as the Messiah greater than a prophet (7:1-9:50). Luke illustrates that Jesus is like a prophet and fulfills prophecy. But Luke also shows that Jesus is much greater than a prophet. The two stories from Chapter 7 point to Jesus' authority over sickness and death and establish themes that will be developed throughout this section of Luke.

Jesus Has Authority (1-10)

The story about the healing of the centurion's slave begins upon Christ's return to Capernaum after teaching His disciples. Capernaum was a minor trade center near Galilee and home to the centurion, a government official responsible for soldiers. In this story, the centurion sent two separate groups of men with requests to Jesus. The first group consisted of Jewish elders, likely synagogue leaders, to request Jesus' presence and healing power. The leaders vouched for the centurion's character and contributions before making their diplomatic request.

As Jesus approached the house, the centurion sent another group — this time friends — to tell Him that he was unworthy of His presence in his midst. While the Jewish elders spoke highly of his character, his friends' words show that the centurion was also humble. They also acknowledge that the centurion was willing to admit it was unacceptable for Jesus, a Jew, to enter his home because he was a Gentile. The centurion compared his status to Jesus' status, highlighting his expectation that He could only speak a command and something would happen. This amazed Jesus and His affirmation of the centurion's faith becomes more important than the healing that occurred in this story.

Two events are significant in this story: The centurion came to Christ with great faith and humility, and Christ crossed racial and national barriers to demonstrate His love. Just as the centurion was willing to trust Christ and ask for help, so also was Christ willing to provide help with the power of His spoken word.

Jesus Shows Compassion (11-15)

The next scene in Luke 7 further raises the expectations upon and abilities of Christ. In this episode, Christ becomes more than a healer; He becomes the One who gives new life. It is difficult to read this story without considering its Old Testament parallel (1 Kings 17:10, 17-24), which forms the backdrop for Luke's account of raising the widow's son. Similar to 1 Kings 17, Luke tells the story of Christ's compassion for the death of a widow's son that parallels Elijah's compassion and response. Christ touched the coffin and told the boy to rise and he began to speak.

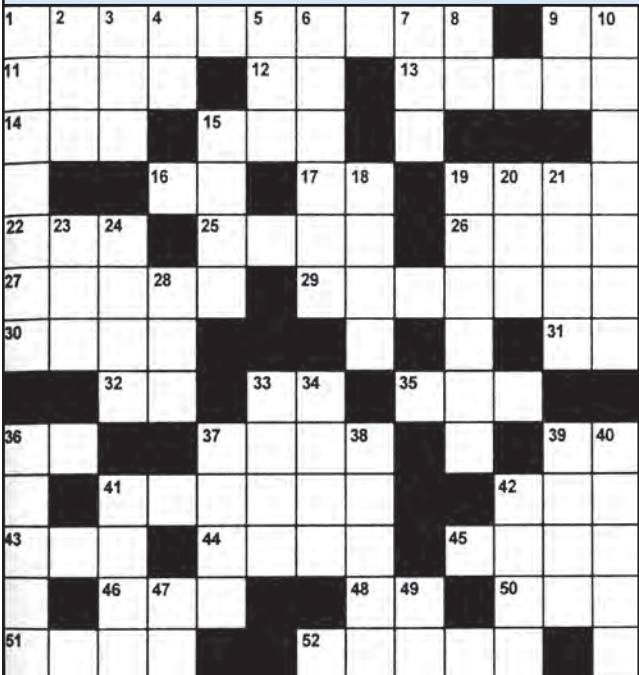
When confronted with a plague of the human condition — death, Christ had compassion for a woman who had lost her husband and only son. Furthermore Christ demonstrated deep care for this widow in a time of distress, confronting all Christians with the reality that we are to care for the widows among us. James 1:27 says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress." One scholar adds to this, "If religion has nothing to say to a grieving widow, it has nothing to say." In many ways, the hope of resurrection and new life is grounded in Christ's compassion that was the ultimate victory over death.

Jesus Deserves Praise (16-17)

The crowd's recognition of Christ's compassion is evident. In both 1 Kings and Luke, the people acknowledged the work of the prophet (Elijah and Christ) and more generally acknowledged the work of God. Jesus is a great prophet, but He is greater than all the prophets. Just as those who witnessed Jesus' raising of the widow's son recognized God's presence and glorified Him, so are we to do the same when He works in our lives.

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Having to do with the Bible.
9. There _____ none good but one. (Mark 10:18)
11. The _____ of March.
12. _____ the money.
13. To utilize.
14. 1,400 in Roman numerals.
15. To drift off to sleep.
16. Your children ... received _____ correction. (Jer. 2:30)
17. Old Testament. (abbr.)
19. Whom the Father will _____ in my name. (John 14:26)
22. They _____ go the man. (Judg. 1:25)
25. Art not thou a _____? (2 Sam. 15:27)
26. One of the Great Lakes.
27. They came to him from _____ quarter. (Mark 1:45)
29. Paul, a _____ of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 1:1)
30. To raise a child, or to _____ a child.
31. Sound of satisfaction.
32. Manuscript. (abbr.)
33. Dad.
35. The harvest is the _____ of the world. (Matt. 13:39)

36. _____ Abram departed. (Gen. 12:4)
37. The one who gets to the finish line first _____ the prize.
39. Alternating Current. (abbr.)
41. Israel assembled together at _____. (Josh. 18:1)
42. Policeman's Benevolent Association. (abbr.)
43. A tall, flightless bird.
44. Talk-show host.
45. I will come down and _____ with thee. (Num. 11:17)
46. Hear my _____, O God. (Ps. 61:1)
48. They filled them _____ to the brim. (John 2:7)
50. Ye shall not _____ me hence forth. (Matt. 23:39)
51. To _____ away our sins. (1 John 3:5)
52. A crown of twelve _____. (Rev. 12:1)

Down

1. Less complex.
2. Centers for Disease Control. (abbr.)
3. God led them by the way of the _____ sea. (Ex. 13:18)

4. God _____ a Spirit. (John 4:24)
5. Also.
6. Does, then _____.
7. I took the little book, and _____ it up. (Rev. 10:10)
8. And, _____, the heavens were opened. (Matt. 3:16)
9. God _____ my strength and power. (2 Sam. 22:33)
10. And _____ rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
15. Someone who can't mind his or her own business is _____.
18. "Star _____."
19. Fives, sixes, and _____.
20. Equal Rights Amendment. (abbr.)
21. _____, Pinta and Santa Maria.
23. Adam's wife.
24. Go, _____, go!
28. Railroads. (abbr.)
33. I will even make the _____ for fire great. (Ezek. 24:9)
34. Most-quoted author in the world.
36. He made the pure incense of _____ spices. (Ex. 37:29)

37. Clever coyote's name.
38. All the people shall _____. (Josh. 6:5)
39. For God is _____ to make him stand. (Rom. 14:4)
40. They baked unleavened _____ of the dough. (Ex. 12:39)
41. He made him to _____ honey out of the rock. (Deut. 32:13)
42. As the flower of the grass he shall _____ away. (James 1:10)
47. About. (abbr.)
49. Dad.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

Suicide bomber of Indonesia church identified

SOLO, Indonesia — On Sept. 27, Indonesian police identified the suicide bomber who detonated eight pipe bombs outside a church building in Solo, Central Java on Sept. 25. The bomber, Ahmad Yosepa Hayat, killed himself and wounded at least 20 church members. “The church never expected anything like this to happen; this (suicide bombing) is indeed the first in church history in Indonesia,” a local source who requested anonymity said.

Police had been searching for Pino Damayanto, who used the alias Ahmad Yosepa Hayat, in connection with a previous suicide bombing at a Cirebon, West Java mosque inside a police station in April. On Sept. 26, police found a similar bomb outside the Maranatha Church in Ambon city, on the island of Ambon.

A total of 600 to 700 people attended the two services at Bethel Full Gospel Church in Solo that Sunday, the same local source said. “The bomber went into the church just as everyone was singing the last song,” the source said. “As soon as the service was over and people started to move, he blew himself up by the glass doors leading out of the sanctuary.”

Most of the victims are doing well now, except for 18-year-old Deviana, who is still in the ICU ward with nails and other objects implanted in her head. She has had surgery and is responding well, he said. “The church members are not afraid and they believe God was there to protect them,” the source explained. “In fact, on the day of the bombing, the guest preacher spoke about the ever-present help of God and quoted from the story of Stephen the martyr. Church members say the fact that nobody died, other than the bomber, is proof of God’s care for them.”

Muslim extremists kill 13-year-old, four others

MADALA, Nigeria — Muslim extremists bent on ridding Nigeria’s volatile middle region of Christianity killed five Christians in Niger state Sept. 22 and three others the previous week in the north-central state of Kaduna, including a 13-year-old girl, sources said.

Suspected militants from the Boko Haram Islamic sect in the Niger state town of Madala went to shops owned by Christians at a market at about 8 p.m., ordering them to recite verses from the Quran, eyewitnesses said. If the Christian traders were unable to recite the verses, the gunmen shot and killed them, they said.

Richard Adamu Oguiche, a spokesman for the Niger state police command, said the attack was linked to members of the Boko Haram Islamic sect who have recently bombed Christian sites. Killed in the Madala market attacks were Sunday Emmanuel, John Kalu, Uche Nguweze and Oliver Ezemah.

The identity of the fifth Christian was not immediately known as witnesses could not identify him. In Kaduna state, suspected Muslim extremists killed three Christians in a Sept. 17 midnight attack on a Christian community in Ungwan Rana Bitaro village, sources said. About 15 gunmen stormed three houses in the village, wounding eight as well.

“Three houses were attacked by the attackers before they retreated into surrounding bushes,” a resident of the village said. “When the Muslims came, they brought out the members of these families and started shooting them and cutting some of them with machetes.” Killed were Monday Hassan, 55, his 13-year-old daughter, Godiya and his 35-year-old nephew, Istifanus Daniel.

‘New wave of persecution’ begins in Kazakhstan

SATPAEV, Kazakhstan — Unless Viktor Gutyar succeeds in his appeal, he expects the administrative fine of nearly 10 months’ minimum wage for leading an unregistered religious community to be docked from his wages as a coal miner.

He was not even present when his church in Satpaev in central Kazakhstan was raided Sept. 11. His was one of five Baptist congregations raided in Karaganda region in September, including a harvest festival in Zhezkazgan attended by 150 people raided by police and riot police Sept. 25.

“A new wave of persecution” is how one Baptist described it. “They refuse to register in accordance with our Religion Law, so it’s their problem,” said Mereke Myrzabekova of Zhezkazgan’s internal policy department. She said they would not have been raided had they been watching football or drinking vodka together “because that’s not religion.”

CAMPUS News

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Names New Equestrian Team:** The Judson College equestrian team is back in full swing and ready for action with a number of returning students and eight new team members. Four freshmen and four upperclassmen joined the college’s hunt seat and western teams.

The new teams are larger than in the past, and equine director Jennifer Hogg believes it will be a good show season for Judson.

► **Three on a String in Concert at Judson College:** The Judson College Concert and Lecture Series will present Three on a String, a Birmingham-based bluegrass band Oct. 13 at 7 p.m.

The band plays bluegrass standards, pop tunes from the ’70s and performs comedy skits. The event will be in Alumnae Auditorium.

For more information contact Jamie Adams at 334-683-5251 or jadams@judson.edu.

► **Preview and Scholarship Day:** Judson College will host Preview and Scholarship Day on Nov. 12. One full-tuition and five partial-tuition academic scholarships will be awarded as well as music scholarships in piano, voice and organ and athletic scholarships in soccer, basketball, softball, volleyball and tennis. Lunch will be provided. For reservations, contact the Judson College admissions office at 1-800-447-9472 or by e-mail at admissions@judson.edu. Judson’s website is <http://www.judson.edu>.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Beeson Appoints New Associate Dean:** David Hogg has joined the faculty of Beeson Divinity

School at Samford University as associate dean of academic affairs and associate professor of church history. Originally from Canada, Hogg holds degrees from the University of Toronto; Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pa.; and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He comes to Beeson from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., where he was also an associate pastor.

Hogg teaches church history and doctrine with a particular emphasis in medieval theology. He also travels annually to the Czech Republic to help train pastors and laymen at the Biblický Teologický Seminár.

► **Samford, St. Vincent’s Dedicate New Campus Clinic:** On Sept. 28, Samford University and St. Vincent’s Health System dedicated the school’s new on-campus health clinic, which administrators said is a dramatic improvement from the facility it replaces.

Under the new partnership with St. Vincent’s, the facility will be staffed daily by a physician assistant and three days a week by a doctor. The clinic includes three exam rooms and a treatment room and provides basic radiology and laboratory services.

The previous clinic included just three rooms and was lightly staffed. The new facility will be a selling point with parents of prospective students and likely will provide primary care for many students and university employees, said Andrew Westmoreland, president of Samford.

St. Vincent’s CEO John O’Neil said the clinic, called St. Vincent’s at Samford, is a logical step because of the school’s long-standing relationship with the health system. The system’s hospitals employ many nurses who graduated from Sam-

ford, which also has a leading pharmacy school.

► **Samford Play to Explore Family, Legacy of Slavery:** The Michael J. and Mary Anne Freeman Theatre and Dance Series at Samford University will present “The Piano Lesson” by August Wilson Oct. 20–22 at 7:30 p.m. and Oct. 23 at 2:30 p.m. in Samford’s Bolding Studio.

The Pulitzer Prizewinning play, set in the Great Depression, is the story of two siblings’ struggle to come to terms with their inheritance and the ghosts of their ancestors. Raising questions about family, remembrance and the legacy of slavery, “The Piano Lesson” promises a poignant evening of drama.

For ticket information, visit <http://arts.samford.edu> or call 205-726-2853.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Florida Racing Team Adopts UMobile’s Twelve23 Ministry:** 17-year-old Joseph Joiner, a North-west Florida racecar driver, has joined UMobile’s Twelve23 Movement. Joiner and his family have adopted the movement’s philosophy of specifically transforming the United States by spreading the gospel.

Joiner and his family committed to the Twelve23 vision after hearing UMobile president Mark Foley speak to Hickory Hammock Baptist Church, Milton, Fla.

Joiner and his parents share the gospel as they are able among athletes and fans, a group among whom “God’s Word is not heard much.”

The Twelve23 Movement is an outgrowth of the UMobile Center for Leadership.

For more information, visit www.twelve23.org or call 251-675-7551.

Most divorces in Bible Belt, report shows

Poor New Jersey — derided for “Jersey Shore,” aggressive driving and talking too fast. But when it comes to happily ever after, the Garden State is No. 1.

A recent U.S. Census report shows the Northeast — and New Jersey in particular — has the lowest divorce rate in America, trailed closely by New York.

The Bible Belt, meanwhile, home to Southern hospitality, church telethons and country music, has more “shotgun” weddings and the most divorces.

“People assume that people in the Northeast divorce easily because they’re less religious, but that’s not the case,” said Deborah Carr, a professor of sociology at Rutgers University.

In the Northeast, 7.2 per 1,000

men and 7.5 per 1,000 women got divorced. In the South, the rates were 10.2 for men and 11.1 for women. New Jersey’s rates were 6.1 for men and 6 for women, according to the 2009 American Community Survey, which released the data in August.

Reasons for more divorce

The South sees more divorce for several reasons, Carr said:

► First, Southerners tend to marry young, partly due to a lower rate of college attendance.

► Second, couples don’t usually move in together while unwed, a trend tied to religious beliefs. They often frown upon birth control, and are “more likely to have nonmarital pregnancies, which ... then trigger ‘shotgun’ marriages.”

► Third, there are simply more marriages in the South. New Jersey had the second-lowest marriage rates, just above Maine. The Census survey reported that, while New Jersey’s marriage rate is 14.8 for men and 13.3 for women, Georgia’s is 22.1 and 20.4, respectively.

Though the South’s marriage rate is 20.3, the West is highest, at 20.7. Wyoming was the single state with the highest marriage rates for both men (30.7) and women (28.7). And though it’s not a Southern state, Alaska ranks like one, with the highest divorce rate for women, at 16.2. (For men, it’s Arkansas at 13.5.)

The national median age for a woman’s first marriage is 26.5 and 28.4 for men. (RNS)

'Playing for Him'

Barons pitcher Edwards keeps strong faith on, off field

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Justin Edwards entered the world with question marks.

Born with spinal meningitis, an inflammation of the tissue around the spinal cord and brain caused by a bacterial or viral infection, Edwards was not expected to live.

"Every day is a gift," said Edwards, a 24-year-old left-handed pitcher for the Birmingham Barons.

He has received another gift from God, he said: the talent to play professional baseball.

"I am playing for Him. You know there is a higher power looking over you as you surrender your life to Christ."

Drafted out of Olympia High School in Orlando, Fla., in the 2006 first-year player draft, Edwards signed with the Chicago White Sox after being recruited by colleges with big-league programs.

"When I was playing in high school, I never thought I'd be recruited by top college teams [like] North Carolina, Georgia, Florida or pro teams. My junior and senior years, I pitched very well," he said.

A teenager, Edwards was teamed with 20-somethings. "It was a big transition, a young guy being thrown in with 24-year-olds."

With his journey beginning in Bristol, Tenn., in the rookie Appalachian League, he advanced to the single-A South Atlantic League (Kannapolis, N.C.) and the A+ Carolina League (Winston-Salem, N.C.) before arriving in Birmingham, the White Sox's double-A affiliate in the Southern League, in 2010.

Through 28 games (27 starts) this year, Edwards has a 4-8 record with a 4.89 ERA and 72 strikeouts.

"I have a deep love for the game. There is nothing that makes me happier than going out and playing ball. The people you meet in this business are extraordinary," he said.

Edwards also has a deep love for the Lord. He became a Christian on Dec. 4, 2008, in Dallas at a conference sponsored by Pro Athletes Outreach (PAO).

According to its website, the organization equips professional athletes, coaches and their families to "make a positive impact in the world for Jesus Christ" by conducting Christ-centered programs and conferences.

"It changed my life," Edwards said. "[Events] are held for professional athletes to worship the Lord in a way athletes understand. PAO



Photo courtesy of the Birmingham Barons

'EVERY DAY IS A GIFT' — Twenty-four-year-old Justin Edwards pitches during a game for the Birmingham Barons. Born with spinal meningitis, he was not expected to live.

understands what athletes are going through."

Through baseball chapel, he has found Christian fellowship with teammates, including Tyler Kuhn. Kuhn played five positions for Birmingham this season before being promoted to Chicago's triple-A affiliate in the International League.

Edwards and Barons' first baseman Seth Loman attend a team Bible study and are reading Bill Glass' book "Expect to Win."

Loman calls Edwards a "positive influence."

Edwards is learning how to control times not so positive.

"It's a very humbling game. The ability to take criticism is one of the biggest things. I've done that pretty well. I've matured through the years."

'[A]ll things through Christ'

"Whether you are up or down, whether you are playing good or bad, you know you are playing the game for Him. The toughest thing to do is to praise Him when things are not going so hot."

Edwards claims his favorite verse, Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

He said, "I am keeping a strong faith and keeping a good attitude."

Known as a finesse pitcher who has the ability to direct the ball where he wants with change-up speeds, Edwards has pitched shut-outs through seven and eight innings this season.

Recovering from Tommy John surgery in 2008 after being injured in spring training, he has more immediate goals than reaching the bigs. Edwards wants to decrease walks and the batting averages of left-handed hitters he faces.

Barons outfielder/first baseman Christian Marrero said Edwards "gives us 100 percent. That is all we could ask for. He is a hard worker."

Edwards said, "I care for my teammates. I want to help them out whenever I can."

His ability to care for others goes beyond the diamond. He has visited children in hospitals and inmates in prisons.

God has a timeline for him, Edwards said.

"Whether baseball is my career or not, I believe I am going to make a good family man. (He is going to be married Nov. 12). My parents instilled that in me to be a good husband and father."

During games, Edwards often "steps back" to have a "word" with God.

"I praise the Lord for what He's done. He's our heavenly Father and He died for our sins."

"I am thankful for the time He has given me and for being able to play something I love."

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Obama continues support of gay, lesbian community

WASHINGTON — Speaking at an Oct. 1 fundraiser for the nation's largest gay organization, President Obama touted his first-term achievements for the gay and lesbian community but also vowed to "continue to fight alongside you."

It was the second time Obama has spoken at a Human Rights Campaign (HRC) event, the last being in 2009. More than 3,000 people attended the latest event, HRC's 15th annual National Dinner.

"We are making change. We're making real and lasting change," Obama told an enthusiastic crowd of gays, lesbians and their supporters. "We can be proud of the progress we've already made. And I'm going to continue to fight alongside you."

He added later, "I'm confident we can continue to write another chapter together."

The president listed his accomplishments for the gay and lesbian community, from the repeal of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy to passage of a hate crimes bill that contains protections for homosexuals and transgender people.

Although Obama has yet to explicitly embrace gay "marriage" in public, he implicitly gave approval to New York's recently passed gay "marriage" law, labeling as "progress" what has taken place "in legislatures like New York." He also vowed to "keep up the fight against the so-called Defense of Marriage Act," which he called discriminatory. The 1996 law defines marriage in federal law as between a man and a woman and gives states the option of not recognizing another state's gay "marriages."

Most Bible readers oppose gender-neutral translations

NASHVILLE — American Bible readers overwhelmingly oppose gender-neutral translations of the Bible, according to a new study by LifeWay Research.

Eighty-two percent of participants in a study released Oct. 1 said verses in biblical Hebrew and Greek that use masculine words like "man" to describe people in general ought to be translated literally instead of with gender-inclusive terms like "humankind" or "person."

Just 12 percent preferred a gender-inclusive translation, and six percent were unsure.

Opposition rose to 89 percent when making gender-inclusive references to God. Two thirds (68 percent) said they strongly oppose translating references in Greek and Hebrew to God as "father" with gender-inclusive terms such as "parent."

The study found that readers in general prefer word-for-word Bible translations over those in which translators attempt to reproduce the intent of the original thought rather than translating the exact word.

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, noted that Bible sales do not necessarily follow those preferences. The best-selling Bible translation is the New International Version, which uses a method called "dynamic equivalence," where a word or phrase that literally says one thing but functionally means something else is translated to convey the original meaning to the modern reader.

New regulations set for Va. abortion clinics

RICHMOND, Va. — The Virginia Board of Health has voted 12-1 for emergency regulations requiring abortion clinics to meet hospital-type health-and-safety standards.

The regulations will govern abortion clinics for as long as 18 months before permanent rules are put into place.

The law giving rise to the regulations — the first in the nation to mandate such regulations for clinics performing first-trimester abortions — was enacted in March. Pro-choice advocates protested that 17 of the state's abortion clinics could be closed by the resultant regulations.

Among their stipulations, the rules adopted Sept. 15 permit unannounced inspections and require doctors to stay at clinics until women who have undergone abortions are discharged. They also include requirements for the size of hallways and rooms, improved sanitary conditions and the presence of emergency medical equipment.

VOICE YOUR OPINION

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