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Extreme persecution

Coptic Christians in Egypt face worst violence in modern history

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

It's ugly for Christians in Cairo right now, deeply unsettling even to those who have weathered the ups and downs of the Arab Spring, Hal Greaves said.

Another church was burned by a mob. Coptic Christians, fed up with being targeted, announced a peaceful protest for religious freedom Oct. 9. The Egyptian military intervened, things escalated quickly and more than 20 were left dead, with hundreds more injured, international news outlets say.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing mangled bodies and body parts run over by military vehicles in the fray, but the Egyptian military denies driving into the crowds and opening fire on them, according to BBC News.

Sources differ on who's to blame. But many report this — it's the worst violence in Egypt since President Hosni Mubarak was ousted in February and possibly the worst violence toward Christians there in modern history.

"Needless to say, Egypt is still in development and even in crisis. The events of the Christian march [have] firmly put Egypt on the list of countries with poor religious freedom," said Ron Robinson, a Christian worker who has spent time in Egypt.

The unrest and violence have been growing over time as the nation's leadership remains unresolved, he said. Christians are tense, wondering who is behind the attacks and who will have power when all is said and done — a secular government or an Islamist one?

"We have been seeing probably some of the highest numbers of Copts and evangelicals leaving Egypt this year than any other year posted," Robinson said. "There is great fear of where this is heading for those of Christian background."

Coptic Christians — whose Christian ancestors lived in Egypt before the Islamic conquest of the seventh century — make up about 10 percent of Egypt's population. More than 100,000 Coptic Christians have already fled revolutionary Egypt this year, according to the Union of Eyp-



Reuters photo

UPRISING — Coptic Christians chant pro-Christian slogans at Abassaiya Cathedral in Cairo on Oct. 10 during the funeral for victims of sectarian clashes with soldiers and riot police at a protest against an attack on a church.

tian Human Rights Organizations (UEHRO). UEHRO officials predict an additional 250,000 may seek refuge elsewhere before year's end.

"The Christians I have talked to are afraid and want to leave," said Greaves, a Christian worker who has spent time in Egypt. "Even before this event, people [were] anxious about the uncertainty of the future. There is a lot of fear in the Christian community."

Generally Coptic Christians are "Christian" by tradition and birth rather than by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Robinson said. If your parents were Christian, then your ID card says you are, too.

"In Egypt, they make a distinction

that if you follow Jesus Christ, then you will hear Christians use the term 'believer,'" he said. "Many of the Coptic Orthodox church members have never made a profession of faith, and many never really go to church."

'We dare not ignore' them

Like with most denominations and religions, only some are truly Jesus' disciples among the crowd of nominal adherents, said Nik Ripken, who has served 25 years with the International Mission Board and is an expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts.

"But we dare not ignore historical or cultural Christians who are being slaughtered," Ripken said. "This is

the oft forgotten 'rule' of history, that when the bad guys come after true believers, they take everyone — especially the historical Christians."

And historical Christians dare not continue without embracing a real faith, he said.

"If one is going to face persecution, he or she should make it count by being true to Jesus and His teachings; otherwise persecution comes and we get little spiritual strength or we fight persecution with the wrong and ineffective tools," Ripken said.

Believers in Egypt are hoping for just that — for the Spirit to sweep through Egypt and for Copts and (See 'Egyptian,' page 3)

New budget set, NAMB relationships change

By Bob Terry
The Alabama Baptist

Members of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) voted to recommend a \$43 million Cooperative Program (CP) budget for 2012 during their Oct. 14 meeting in Montgomery. And while the projected income is the same as the 2011 budget, the way the dollars will be divided is different.

Members also learned of changes in the relationship between the Ala-

bama Baptist State Convention and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the appointment of a task force to develop a strategy to carry on ministries in Alabama formerly done in cooperation with NAMB.

The budget, which will be presented to messengers to the state convention's annual meeting in Mobile Nov. 15-16, calls for funds going to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes to increase by \$215,000. The extra funds will increase the SBC percentage of

Alabama Baptist CP receipts to 43 percent, up from 42.5 percent.

To increase the SBC allocation, funds for Samford University will be reduced \$105,000 below the amount it would have received under the formula that determines how CP funds are divided for Christian higher education. Reductions also will be made in allocations to Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama and the SBOM.

(See 'Future,' page 3)

COMMENT

When 1 Percent More Results in Less

Southern Baptists across the nation, including those in Alabama, are beginning to hear about the “1% Challenge.” It is an emphasis emanating from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee that attempts to enlist each of the 42 state Baptist convention executive directors in encouraging cooperating churches to increase giving to missions through the Cooperative Program (CP) by 1 percent.

Normally that sounds like a wonderful idea. Giving through the CP is the primary and preferred way Southern Baptists support all we do together in the state, nation and world.

SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page recently explained that 1 percent more in giving through the CP in 2010 would have meant an additional \$100 million for Baptist causes. Page pointed out that cooperating churches gave 5.8 percent of undesignated offerings through the CP in 2010. Had they given 6.8 percent, the total would have been nearly \$600 million.

But what happens when 1 percent more to missions through the CP results in fewer dollars than the year before? That is the position in which Alabama Baptists’ Executive Director Rick Lance now finds himself.

In 2010, Alabama Baptists increased their giving through the CP by a full 1 percent over 2009 totals. According to information provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), Alabama Baptists gave 7.4 percent of undesignated receipts through CP channels in 2010. That is 1.5 percent more than the SBC percentage and a full 1 percent more than the 2009 Alabama percentage. In essence, Alabama Baptists have already achieved the goal of the “1% Challenge.”

The bad part is that 2010 CP total gifts fell about \$1.4 million below what Alabama Baptists gave through the CP in 2009. The actual CP receipts were \$43,168,487.07 in 2009 and \$41,727,510.30 in 2010. So even though the percentage went up, the dollars went down.

One might ask how fewer dollars in 2010 turned out to be a higher percentage. Because giving is based on undesignated receipts received by churches and Alabama Baptist undesignated giving dropped almost \$118 million between 2009 and 2010. Percentagewise, CP giving did not drop as much as undesignated giving dropped, resulting in an increase in the CP percentage.

Again the figures. In 2009, cooperating churches in Alabama reported receiving \$680,697,725



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

in undesignated receipts. In 2010, that figure was \$562,650,164. That is a 17.4 percent drop in one year. However, total gifts received by Alabama Baptist churches barely declined at all, according to information reported on Annual Church Profiles. Total receipts fell from \$757 million in 2009 to \$751.9 million in 2010, a decline of just 0.7 percent.

Designated giving

If total gifts to Alabama Baptist churches remained almost constant and undesignated giving fell by 17.4 percent, then one would expect designated giving to traditional missions causes to have increased substantially, especially giving to special missions offerings. Unfortunately that did not happen.

According to SBOM information, special offerings also dropped between 2009 and 2010. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions fell from \$11.3 million to \$10.9 million. The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions fell from \$5.7 million to \$5.4 million. In all, SBOM officials distributed about \$1.3 million less in CP and designated offerings in 2010 than in 2009.

For reasons for which there are no complete explanations, Alabama Baptists experienced a major shift in their giving patterns in 2010. Designated giving increased by almost 150 percent, or \$113 million (from \$76,309,133 in 2009 to \$189,206,451 in 2010). But that increase was not reflected in gifts to special missions offerings or in direct gifts to missions agencies — either state or national.

It appears that much of the increase in designated giving was directed toward local projects. Those could have been paying expenses for church members to participate on a church-sponsored missions trip, fixing a leaky roof or helping a hungry family in the community.

SBOM officials say church finances usually lag from 18 months to two years behind the nation’s economy. Evidently when the full brunt of the nation’s sick economy hit in 2010, the decision of many Alabama Baptists was to spend their money on needed ministries and missions opportunities close at hand. It is easy to understand how local concerns become primary concerns.

Unfortunately the decision of some Alabama Baptists appeared to be to stop giving altogether.

Average undesignated giving per church dropped from \$209,059.50 in 2009 to \$174,303.02 in 2010. That is a drop of 17 percent in one year.

Add to that the statistic provided by SBOM officials that average giving by Alabama Baptists has dropped to 2.2 percent of income, and the seriousness of the problem facing Baptists in the church, the state convention and the national convention becomes obvious.

Baptists need to grow the total amount of funds available to support Baptist work. That means Baptists badly need an emphasis on stewardship education. As a denomination, we need to learn again and preach again what the Bible says about giving money as well as about giving other resources.

The “1% Challenge” is a good thing. It will call attention to the need for churches to give to missions beyond themselves through the CP. The challenge will help churches revisit the topic of how much the church gives through the CP. We commend that effort and will support it.

But a larger percentage of a shrinking total is not the answer. Alabama Baptists giving a higher percentage of undesignated receipts to the CP but fewer dollars is not a healthy model. Alabama Baptists and all Southern Baptists need to learn again the biblical concepts of giving through tithes and offerings.

Perhaps that can be the next emphasis promoted by the SBC.



“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 Baptist State Convention
Proposed 2012 Cooperative Program Budget
(To be considered Nov. 15, 2011)

	CP BASE BUDGET	STATE/SBC CAUSES BUDGET	TOTAL BASE/ CAUSES BUDGET	CHALLENGE BUDGET
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES	18,490,000	400,000	18,890,000	19,390,000
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES				
<i>EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP (38 full-time employees)</i>				
Evangelism	114,946	1,407	116,353	116,353
Sunday School and Discipleship	330,914	4,050	334,964	334,964
Collegiate and Student Ministries	103,647	1,158	104,805	104,805
Christian Ethics/Chaplaincy	57,212	700	57,912	57,912
Evangelism/Discipleship Salaries/Housing	2,171,473	26,579	2,198,052	2,198,052
Evangelism/Discipleship Travel/Field Services	243,011	2,974	245,985	245,985
<i>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (11 full-time employees)</i>				
LeaderCare/Church Administration	180,406	2,208	182,614	182,614
Leadership/Church Health	140,400	1,718	142,118	142,118
Worship Leadership/Church Music	92,590	1,133	93,723	93,723
Leadership Development Salaries/Housing	482,616	5,907	488,523	488,523
Leadership Development Travel/Field Services	59,633	730	60,363	60,363
<i>MISSIONS MOBILIZATION (14 full-time employees)</i>				
Associational Missions & Church Planting	838,092	10,258	848,350	848,350
Global Missions	196,319	2,513	198,832	198,832
Missions Mobilization Salaries/Housing	579,910	7,098	587,008	587,008
Missions Mobilization Travel/Field Services	65,034	796	65,830	65,830
<i>MISSIONS SUPPORT (31 full-time employees)</i>				
Executive Director				
A. Director's Office	32,146	393	32,539	32,539
B. Disaster relief	988	12	1,000	1,000
C. Supplemental Aid	988	12	1,000	1,000
D. Strategic Initiatives				262,514
E. Mission:Dignity (Formerly: Adopt an Annuitant)	8,890	110	9,000	9,000
F. Partnerships	988	12	1,000	1,000
Information/Facility Services				
Director's Office	465,550	5,711	471,261	471,261
Accounting	2,248,750	27,524	2,276,274	2,276,274
Church Compensation Services	15,651	179	15,830	15,830
Communications Services	171,176	2,095	173,271	173,271
Computer Services	149,891	1,835	151,726	151,726
Facility Services	1,558,506	19,076	1,577,582	1,577,582
Cooperative Program and Stewardship Development	88,559	1,084	89,643	89,643
Missions Support Salaries/Housing	1,566,090	19,169	1,585,259	1,585,259
Missions Support Travel/Field Services	107,935	1,321	109,256	109,256
TOTAL STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES	12,072,311	147,764	12,220,075	12,482,589
CHURCH RETIREMENT PLAN (CHRP)	796,128	9,745	805,873	805,873
STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES				
Christian Higher Education Ministries				
A. A. Earl Potts Scholarship	120,158	1,471	121,629	124,080
B. Board of Aid to Students	273,202	3,344	276,546	282,119
C. Samford Extension				
D. Judson College	1,002,704	12,273	1,014,977	1,035,432
E. Samford University	4,842,036	59,266	4,901,302	5,000,079
F. University of Mobile	2,569,149	31,446	2,600,595	2,653,005
Other Entities and Commissions Ministries				
A. Children's Home and Family Ministries	272,680	3,338	276,018	281,580
B. Shocco Springs	585,887	7,171	593,058	605,010
C. The Alabama Baptist	594,197	7,273	601,470	613,591
D. The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers	200,110	2,449	202,559	206,642
E. The Baptist Foundation of Alabama	400,220	4,899	405,119	413,283
F. The Christian Life Commission	26,314	322	26,637	27,173
G. The Education Commission	3,472	42	3,514	3,585
H. The Historical Commission	137,375	1,681	139,056	141,858
Auxiliaries and Other Ministries				
A. ALCAP	70,265	860	71,125	72,558
B. Woman's Missionary Union	543,792	6,656	550,448	561,541
TOTAL STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES	11,641,561	142,492	11,784,053	12,021,539
TOTAL BASE AND CHALLENGE BUDGET	43,000,000	700,000	43,700,000	44,700,000
SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS				
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	11,600,000			11,600,000
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering	6,100,000			6,100,000
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	2,600,000			2,600,000
World Hunger Offering	800,000			800,000
Disaster Relief Offering	200,000			200,000
TOTAL SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS	21,300,000			21,300,000
TOTAL BUDGET AND SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS	64,300,000			66,000,000

State Board of Missions

Future of Alabama ministries pondered

(continued from page 1)

Other Alabama Baptist entities will receive the same amount in 2012 as they did in 2011. SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance told SBOM members that he appreciates the cooperation of the three entities that agreed to take reductions in order to increase the funding for SBC causes.

An additional change calls for CP funds received above the \$43.7 million base/causes budget to be divided evenly between state and SBC causes. Previously funds were divided according to budget percentages.

SBOM members also learned that 2012 will mark the fourth consecutive year SBOM employees will not receive raises. "Most of our state missionaries come from local church staffs, so they understand the financial situation of our churches and our convention," Lance said.

Despite financial shortages at home, Alabama Baptists continue to lead the SBC in CP giving, Lance shared. A report from the SBC Executive Committee indicates Alabama Baptists gave \$18,102,416.14 to SBC missions causes through the CP during the last SBC fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30. That is almost \$800,000 more than the second highest convention gave.

"Once again, Alabama has led the way," Lance declared. About 10 percent of the SBC's annual CP receipts of \$186,386,063.42 came from Alabama Baptists.

"We are not the largest state convention, and we are not the wealthiest convention," he later said. "But Alabama Baptists continue to be faithful in their missions giving."

Lance also announced what he called a limited focus partnership between Alabama and NAMB, which will focus primarily on church planting. He said information received from NAMB indicates that between 50 and 80 percent of all missions funds received from NAMB will have to be used for church-planting activities in the years ahead.

At present, NAMB's definition of church planting is unclear, Lance continued. Indications are that attractional evangelism events currently used to help start churches will no longer be eligible for NAMB funding.

Seven SBOM positions are considered NAMB missionaries and are jointly funded by the state convention and NAMB. Funding for these positions will end Dec. 31, 2013, and will become the SBOM's sole responsibility, Lance explained. To keep these positions will require about \$166,000 in new money.

Across the state, 18 additional ministry positions are NAMB-appointed missionaries with joint funding by Alabama Baptists and

NAMB. About 50 other positions also receive some funds from NAMB. What will happen to these positions and ministries is uncertain, Lance added.

Five of the positions are primarily church-planting ministries and appear to meet NAMB's definition for future funding, he said. The other positions' future is in question since NAMB's focus will primarily be church planting by 2018.

NAMB-appointed missionaries include workers with Hispanics and Asians, African-American strategists, church and community ministers, a minister to the deaf and a campus minister working in a primarily African-American university.

"One of the questions I keep asking NAMB is do they want missionaries in Alabama who are not church planters," Lance said.

Another change initiated by NAMB is a reduction in its support of jointly funded endeavors. Currently the formula calls for Alabama Baptists to provide 52 percent of joint projects and NAMB to provide 48 percent. By 2018, the percentages must be 65 percent Alabama and 35 percent NAMB.

Lance announced that NAMB has agreed to keep its funding to Alabama steady through 2013. This will give opportunity to work through some of the necessary changes, he said.

Decreasing funds for Alabama

NAMB is committed to provide about \$750,000 for positions and ministries in 2012. That amount will decrease through 2017 with NAMB's new strategies being completely implemented in 2018.

Lance also announced the formation of the Future Missions Focus Partnership Task Force to examine issues raised for Alabama Baptists by the NAMB decisions. That task force will consider how the SBOM and associations can work together to carry on missions activities.

"Rumors can be hurtful," Lance explained. "We need to bring clarity to the confusion that exists."

He said the task force will be composed of SBOM staff, officers of the state directors of missions organization and three former presidents of that organization. Its assignment will be to develop a strategy for missions work in Alabama that can be implemented in 2013.

"Alabama Baptists are going to be good partners," Lance said. "We are going to be good partners with NAMB where we can and with our associations. We have to remember that we still have over 2 million lost people in our own state."

Egyptian believers ask for prayer

(continued from page 1)

Muslims alike to find true faith in Christ and "make it count." Before the violence took place, Egyptian believers were already planning a series of revivals all across the country for mid-October. "Pastors are reporting an openness to the gospel in their communities and a hopefulness that the Lord will foment another revolution, but this one in the hearts and souls of every Egyptian," said Marshall Jackson, a Christian worker who has lived in Egypt in the past.

Sarah Jenkins, a Christian worker who has spent time in Egypt, said believers have responded to the extreme tension by fasting and

praying that God would bring peace to Egypt.

"Please pray with us that God would answer this prayer and fulfill the promise of Isaiah 19 in bringing ultimate peace to Egypt through the person of Jesus Christ," she said.

Believers in Egypt also asked for Christians in the West to pray

- ▶ for Egypt's believers to stay in Egypt,
- ▶ for them to forgive as Jesus commands and
- ▶ for their main concern to be seeing their Muslim neighbors come to faith in Jesus.

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

90-year-old Big Hurricane Church member promotes 9th book

By Sammie Jo Barstow
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Many people dream about writing a book. Then time passes and they decide it's too late.

Aileen Kilgore Henderson isn't one of those people. Her first book was published when she was 74.

So did she ever think it was too late to fulfill her dream? "No, it never occurred to me," said Henderson, a member of Big Hurricane Baptist Church, Brookwood.

After she and husband Art, a National Park Service naturalist, retired in 1988, they returned to Brookwood, where they built a country home on family property. It was finally time to realize her dream of becoming a writer.

She wrote five short stories, which she submitted to children's magazines, but none was accepted for publication. "I couldn't see anything wrong with them, but I began to see how they all could be woven together into a novel," Henderson said.

She spent three years writing "The Summer of the Bonepile Monster," a young adult novel, on an old manual typewriter. After winning a cash award when the book won the Milkweed Prize for Children's Literature in 1995, she bought her first computer.

Since then, Henderson has written three other young adult novels and several nonfiction books, including "Stateside Soldier," a memoir of her service with the Women's Army Corps from 1944 to 1945.

Now 90, Henderson is busy with book signings and presentations promoting her ninth book, "Eugene Allen Smith's Alabama: How a Geologist Shaped a State."

She actually sees many benefits to beginning her writing career later in life. "It revitalizes one to meet editors, go to writing conferences and to help inspire other writers at workshops and signings. It brings people into your realm of friendship that never would have been there otherwise. It's all a great joy," Henderson said.

Encouraging struggling writers is a special privilege for her. "Young people with families and jobs have a difficult time finding time to write and contact editors. But I can be the inspiration for them," she said.



Photo by Carolyn Rhoads

'A GREAT JOY' — Aileen Kilgore Henderson, a member of Big Hurricane Baptist Church, Brookwood, signs a book for Bill Walker Jr. at the Houle Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama.

"I always tell them, 'It's OK if you can't write as much as you want to now. You're storing up memories and information and writing material.' I tell them their time will come."

Henderson also enjoys her frequent opportunities to talk with school groups about writing. She urges them to start keeping a journal. "No matter what age, I think it's important to write down all your experiences and thoughts because, with time, you'll forget," she said.

As a lifelong journalist, Henderson has been able to pull stories and memories from her journals for many of her books, especially "Stateside Soldier."

Faith experiences

Returning home to Brookwood and Big Hurricane Baptist brought faith experiences full circle for Henderson. In the early 1930s, she and her sister were baptized together in Big Hurricane Creek. She re-

members wearing a robe her mother made from the most inexpensive fabric, called "unbleached domestic," and being told that snakes didn't bite under water.

Henderson's father served as a deacon and church treasurer, and her mother taught Sunday School. She started Girls in Action at the Pleasant Grove Baptist Association church in the early 1950s and worked in Vacation Bible School every summer.

Now Henderson is a member of the senior women's Sunday School class taught by Ruby Morrison. "We all love being together and sharing our lives," Henderson said.

According to Larry Holloway, chairman of the deacons at Big Hurricane Baptist, "Mrs. Henderson is a jewel, and we are very fortunate to have her as a member of our church family. Her roots run deep in Big Hurricane Baptist Church. Alabama has Harper Lee and Brookwood, Ala., has Aileen Henderson!"

Although Henderson's books are published by secular publishers, her faith is at the center of every writing project.

"I pray about all my writing. I want my writing to instruct and inspire and to lead the reader to hope," she said.

Most of Henderson's books are available on Amazon.com. For more information on scheduling book signings or presentations, email her at aileenkhenderson@aol.com.

"I pray about all my writing. I want my writing to instruct and inspire and to lead the reader to hope."

Aileen Kilgore Henderson
Big Hurricane Baptist Church

Former Alabama pastor Bowles dies

John L. Bowles, former senior pastor of Sixth Street Baptist Church, Alexander City, died Oct. 3. He was 65.

Bowles served as pastor of three Alabama churches, including Sixth Street Baptist from 1991 until 2002.

During his years of ministry,

he also served as pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church, Paris, Tenn., for six years and served churches in Waco, Texas, and Brevard, N.C.

Bowles is survived by his wife of 45 years, Georgia; four children; and 14 grandchildren.

(TAB)

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Man sentenced in Tenn. church embezzlement case

MORRISTOWN, Tenn. — A man convicted of conspiring with his mother to steal \$1.5 million from a Tennessee Baptist church was sentenced Oct. 4 to just over four years in prison.

Senior U.S. District Judge Leon Jordan sentenced Michael Dean Whitt, 44, to 51 months in federal prison, the maximum allowed by law, for conspiracy to commit bank fraud and money laundering.

Authorities say Whitt conspired with his mother, Barbara Whitt, to embezzle funds from First Baptist Church, Morristown, Tenn., over a period spanning nearly three years. As financial secretary at the church for 46 years, she confessed to writing more than 1,600 checks to herself to draw \$1,514,593 from the church's general checking account.

Whitt was not authorized to sign checks, so she made them out to "Cash" and then had them signed by claiming they were for legitimate expenses.

She then typed her name to make them payable to "Cash — Barbara Whitt" and cashed them at a nearby SunTrust bank on her lunch hour.

Responsible for receiving the bank statements and managing the checking account, she held other checks written for legitimate expenses to artificially inflate the balance.

The scheme worked until May 2010, when a church audit found \$500,000 was missing.

Prosecutors said she took the money at her son's "request and direction."

He used the cash to buy prepaid credit cards to purchase items including motor vehicles, accessories for his motorcycle and trucks, watches, consumer electronics and improvements to the house where they both lived.

He also used funds to buy drugs, especially Oxycodone and Xanax.

\$10M gift to Union University to fund new library

JACKSON, Tenn. — A \$10 million lead gift by the Bill and Carol Latimer Charitable Foundation is the largest cash gift in Union University's history and will provide funding for a new 60,000-square-foot library on the Union campus.

Union President David S. Dockery announced the gift Oct. 3.

"It is hard to describe the significance of this gift at this time in the life of the university," Dockery said. "Union's academic stature has never been greater. This gift, however, will enable the entire university and all of its programs to take another step forward because a library is the intellectual, cultural and academic center of the campus."

Dockery also announced a capital campaign to raise an additional \$10 million for the library toward the overall goal of \$20 million.

The gift from the Latimers, of Union City, Tenn., will match every dollar given up to \$10 million.

Dockery said Union has already raised \$4.4 million of that goal in gifts and pledges.

All gifts and pledges made by December 2012 and given before December 2014 will be matched by the Bill and Carol Latimer Foundation in support of the library project.

Dockery expressed gratitude for the Latimers, who were in attendance at the banquet, as were all of the foundation board members.

Dakota Baptists thank SBC disaster relief volunteers

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — The last of the disaster relief volunteers who responded to this summer's massive flooding in Minot, N.D., ended their work on the first day of the Dakota Baptist Convention's (DBC) annual meeting.

The DBC's opening session included a time of appreciation for the hundreds of disaster relief-trained feeding, mud-out, shower/laundry and chaplain volunteers from across the nation who showed through statewide media coverage the strength of Southern Baptists cooperating together.

"You prayed, you gave, you came — thank you," said Fred MacDonald, DBC disaster relief coordinator.

"Southern Baptists lived out Jesus' call to 'go and do the same.' We've been blessed by this, and encouraged, and strengthened for the work that remains," MacDonald said.

He also thanked the North American Mission Board for its partnership, saying, "They provided funds and sent leadership to coordinate the effort."

2011 PASTORS CONFERENCE PERSONALITIES



REAVIS



FRIZZELL



CATT



MARTIN



GRAHAM



PAULUS



DAVIS

PASTORS CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Morning Session
8:00 a.m.–Noon

- 8:30 Continental breakfast
- 8:50 Pre-service music
- 9:00 Welcome: John Copeland and Adam Dooley
- 9:05 Praise and worship: Josh Davis
- 9:15 Message: Herb Reavis
- 10:00 Praise and worship: Josh Davis
- 10:15 Prayer: Chris Baker
- 10:20 Message: Gregory Frizzell
- 12:00 Lunch break

Afternoon Session
1:20–4:30 p.m.

- 1:20 Pre-service music
- 1:30 Election of officers
- 1:40 Praise and worship: Josh Davis
- 1:50 Prayer: Phillip Elliott
- 1:55 Message: Michael Catt
- 2:40 Praise and worship: Josh Davis
- 2:45 Prayer: Kevin Holman
- 2:50 Message: Kyle Martin
- 3:20 Lindsay Lane Worship Team
- 3:35 Praise and worship: Josh Davis

- 3:40 Prayer: Lamar Lyons
- 3:45 Message: Don Graham
- 4:30 Dinner break

Evening Session
6:30–8:30 p.m.

- 6:30 Pre-service music
- 6:40 Welcome: John Copeland
- 6:45 Praise and worship: Josh Davis
- 7:00 Prayer: Don Graham
- 7:05 Message: Byron Paulus
- 8:30 Closing prayer

'Spiritual awakening'

Pastors Conference to focus on revival, recommitment to God

Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"

John Copeland hopes this question — found in Psalm 85:6 — will be the cry of pastors' hearts at this year's Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

"From the condition of our country and even of our churches, we're in need of a real move of God in the hearts of our people," said Copeland, pastor of First Baptist Church, Fulton, and president of the pastors conference. "We want revival. The preaching at the conference will take us in that direction — to see the pastors revived and recommitted to God and to take that back to their churches."

The pastors conference, held in conjunction with the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, is set for Nov. 14 at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. The daytime session starts at 9 a.m. (continental breakfast at 8:30), while the evening session kicks off at 7 p.m.

"The evening session will give rise to the hope nestled in all of our hearts as pastors and Christian leaders. Hope from the Scriptures. Hope from history," said Byron Paulus of Life Action Ministries in Buchanan, Mich., who will be leading that session. "Our country is in a state of national spiritual emergency. And the responsibility does not lie with those outside the Church but rather within the Church."

The great hope, Paulus said, is that true change — "the kind of change that captures the soul of an entire nation, transforming it from the core" — will start with authentic Christianity in the Church.

"There is no hope apart from revival. But there is also no hope like revival," he said.

Those present for the evening session also will hear firsthand reports of God's work at Candies Creek Baptist Church, Charles-

ton, Tenn., the movement that fueled the Resolution on Corporate Prayer and Repentance adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention at its meeting in June.

They will hear a report of "what God did in a six-week protracted time of divine visitation in revival at The Summit Church in (North) Little Rock, (Ark.)," Paulus said, as well as hearing about OneCry, an initiative launching in February 2012 calling for intercessors to stand in the gap for America.

Josh Davis of Proskuneo Ministries in Grayson, Ga., will lead music during the session.

Leading up to the evening session,

► Herb Reavis Jr., senior pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church in Florida, will open the morning session.

► Gregory Frizzell, the prayer and spiritual awakening specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, will follow Reavis and give a call for repentance and revival.

► Michael Catt, senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., will speak during the afternoon session. Catt's church is home to Sherwood Pictures, which has created "Courageous," "Fireproof," "Facing the Giants" and "Flywheel."

► Kyle Martin of the Texas-based radio show "Time to Revive" also will bring a message during the afternoon session. According to his ministry website, timetorevive.com, Martin "has a passion for reviving the sleepy, complacent and broken church in America."

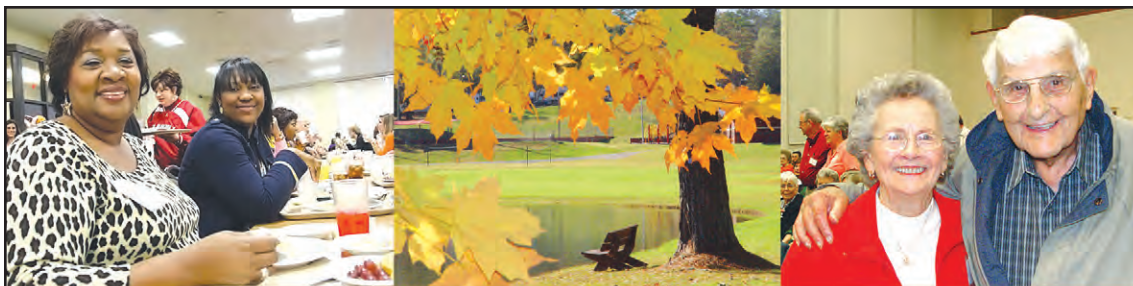
► Revivalist and evangelist Don Graham, of Clanton, will close the afternoon session.

"We are praying for it to be a great day of spiritual awakening," Copeland said.

For more information, call Copeland at 334-830-9600 or email him at drjccopeland@bellsouth.net. (TAB)

"From the condition of our country and even of our churches, we're in need of a real move of God in the hearts of our people."

John Copeland
Alabama Baptist Pastors
Conference



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Fall is in the air, and Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center will be the place for retreats, events, gatherings and other functions.

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- Email: tjackson@alsbom.org
- Visit website: www.alsbom.org

Across Alabama's Associations

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **Patsburg Church, Luverne**, will hold its fall festival Oct. 30, 2:30-4:30 p.m. All ages are welcome. Wayne Webber is interim pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Hueytown Church** will partner with area churches to host a special service of encouragement and evangelism Nov. 6, 6 p.m. Daniel Simmons, pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Church, Albany, Ga., will speak. Simmons appears in the movie "Courageous." Jerry Watts is pastor. ► **New Faith Church, Pleasant Grove**, will hold revival Oct. 23-26, 7 p.m., with Doug Moore. Frank Jones will lead the music with special guest Josh Smith. The church also will hold its fifth Sunday singing with Holy Destiny Oct. 30, 2 p.m. Snacks will follow. Ted Blalock is pastor.

BETHEL

► **Thomaston Church** will celebrate its 71st homecoming Oct. 30. Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. and worship at 10:30. Cecil Etheredge will speak. Mitzi Gates will lead and provide special music. A covered-dish lunch will follow in the Gertrude Harrell Fellowship Hall. For information call 334-627-3288. Brooks Barkley is interim pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **James Long** is the new minister of education and administration for **Deerfoot Church, Trussville**.



LONG

He previously served as minister of education and ministries for Meadow Brook Church, Gadsden, for six years. He also has served First Church, Trussville, and First Church, Prattville. Long holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University and master of religious education from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Shirley, have two children and seven grandchildren. Roger Willmore is pastor. ► **Hilldale Church, Center Point**, will hold its annual fall festival and trunk or treat Oct. 31, 6-8 p.m. There will be games, activities, inflatables and food. Trunk or treat will be for children through age 12. For information call 205-853-3000. Ron Pate is pastor. ► **Liberty Park Church, Vestavia Hills**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary Nov. 6, 8:30 and 11 a.m. Coach Bobby Bowden will speak. Former Minister of Music Craig Biondi will lead the music. Pastor Emeritus Jim Bruton will provide a review of the church's history. Child care will be available. There will be historical displays and memorabilia. T-shirts will

be for sale. For those attending the 8:30 a.m. service, lunch will be at 11. For those attending the 11 a.m. service, lunch will follow. For information call 205-969-1236 or visit www.libertypark.org. Scott Guffin is pastor. ► **Ridgecrest Church, Trussville**, will hold a fall festival Oct. 31, 6-8 p.m. There will be trunk-or-treat, game booths, candy, hayrides, a toddler area, festive photos, face painting, hair tinsels, bounce houses, a pumpkin decorating contest, a costume parade, hot dogs, chips and drinks. For information call 205-661-3722 or visit www.rbconline.net. Brian Branam is pastor. ► **Vestavia Hills Church** will observe Baptist Women World Day of Prayer Nov. 6, 2:30 p.m., in the chapel. For information call 205-979-5920. Gary Furr is pastor.

DALE

► **Morgan Church, Skipperville**, will dedicate its remodeled sanctuary and new additions, which include a baptistry, library, classrooms and multipurpose rooms, Oct. 30, 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Bill Weed is pastor.

EAST CULLMAN

► **First Church, Fairview**, will present a walk-through drama about life after death called "L.O.L. — Love or Lost" Oct. 26-27, 6-9 p.m., and Oct. 29, 6-10 p.m. For reservations for groups of 20 or more call 256-796-4611. David Chambers is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Daniel Lloyd** is the new minister of music for **El Bethel Church, Chancellor**. He previously served as student ministry intern and worship leader for Hillcrest Church, Enterprise. He is married to Heather. Barry Gordon is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will host the Secret Church simulcast Nov. 4, 6 p.m.-midnight. David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, will explore how the gospel uniquely affects our understanding of family, marriage, sex and a host of related (and controversial) issues. For reservations call 256-729-1328. For information visit www.clements baptist.org. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MADISON

► **Cave Spring Church, Owens Cross Roads**, and **Cove Church, Owens Cross Roads**, will hold an old-fashioned tent revival Nov. 7-11, 7 p.m., at the corner of Cave Spring Road and Highway 431. Bobby Cooper, of Meridianville, and Danny Bell, of Hernando, Miss., will speak. There will be special music each night including Claude Rigsby, I-IV-V Quartet, By Grace Trio and the Cave Spring praise and worship team. For information visit www.mycovebaptist.com or www.cavespringbaptist.org or email worship@cavespringbaptist.org or info@mycovebaptist.com. Kenny Treece is pastor of Cave Spring, and Doug Browner is pastor of Cove.

cavespringbaptist.org or email worship@cavespringbaptist.org or info@mycovebaptist.com. Kenny Treece is pastor of Cave Spring, and Doug Browner is pastor of Cove.

MONTGOMERY

► **Hunter Station Church, Montgomery**, will hold an old-fashion gospel singing Nov. 6, 6 p.m., featuring The Unity Quartet, of Scottsboro, and Perfect Peace, of Alex City. Food and fellowship will follow. For information call Billy Evans at 334-398-3650. Donald W. Goble is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Matt Brewer** is the new minister of children and youth for **Southside Church, Decatur**. He previously served as minister of students for Lost Mountain Church, Powder Springs, Ga. He also is a captain/chaplain in the Georgia National Guard and will transfer to the Army Reserve. Brewer holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, master of education from Tennessee State University in Nashville and master of divinity from Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He and his wife, Jennifer, have three children. Ben Hayes is pastor. ► **Southwest Church, Hartselle**, will hold its fifth Sunday night singing Oct. 30, 5 p.m., with New Ground. Dewitt Crowe is pastor.



BREWER

ST. CLAIR

► **Spring Valley Church, Springville**, will hold a 45-minute walk-through drama Oct. 22-23 and 29-30, 6-10 p.m. Reservations are preferred. Call 205-567-2567 or visit www.springvalleybaptist-church.org. Barry L. Britt is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Lake Martin Church, Dadeville**, will host Ele Gilliland in the fall concert Your Love Lifts Me Oct. 30, 7 p.m. There will be a pizza bash for youth at 6 p.m. Steve Poteat is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Frank Jones** recently announced his resignation as associate minister of worship/minister to 55+ adults from **Calvary Church, Tuscaloosa**. He will be in full-time ministry with Frank Jones Ministries beginning Jan. 1, 2012. Jones will be available for revivals, conferences, concerts, banquets and interim/music supply. To contact him call 205-393-7020, email fjm1117@gmail.com or visit www.frankjonesministries.org. Tim Lovett is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

NorthPark member writes about cancer experience

B. Davis Campbell has traveled a road he didn't want to go down. But now he uses his story as a conduit for ministry.

Campbell, a nurse practitioner and member of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, was shocked when he was diagnosed with Stage III bladder cancer in 2004 despite being healthy and possessing no major risk factors. At 43 years old, he underwent extensive surgery. His bladder was removed and a new bladder was created from a portion of his small intestine.

"I did a lot of soul-searching, trying to figure out why this had happened to me since I didn't have any of the risk factors," Campbell said. "So as a result, I learned everything that you would ever want to know about bladder cancer."

After discovering the subject had not been featured in nursing journals for several years, he decided to write about it.

His article, "Bladder Cancer: Revealing News About a Hidden Threat," was published in the April edition of *Nursing2006*. "That was really my first experience with writing," he said.

When cancer was later discovered in his lymph nodes, Campbell went through more than three months of aggressive chemotherapy. He was hospitalized five times, received seven units of blood because of anemia and developed side effects including peripheral neuropathy (damage to the peripheral nervous system, which transmits information from the brain and spinal cord to every other part of the body).

One day after church, Campbell decided he would write about his entire cancer experience. His resulting book, "A Place I Didn't Want to Go: My Victory Over Cancer," is titled after John 21:18, in which Jesus told Peter that one day, he'd be led to a place "you do not want to go."

"That verse gripped my heart," Campbell said. "That's what I was experiencing with cancer and its treatment. I was brought to a place I didn't want to go."

He hopes his story can help those facing cancer or other major illnesses. The book details facets of Campbell's journey — his diagnosis, treatment and remission — coupled with spiritual insight. "My relationship to Christ was invaluable during the whole cancer diagnosis," he said. "The Scriptures, the songs we sang at church ... the support of my church family — [I] never could've made it without the Lord."

The book is available on Amazon.com, and he is available to speak to church groups. Email him at daviscampbell@bellsouth.net.

FBC Mount Olive pastor celebrates 25 years in pulpit

First Baptist Church, Mount Olive, hosted more than 500 people Sept. 18 for a celebration of Pastor Doug Moore's 25 years of leadership.

Instead of the typical two-service morning, the church had one large worship service at 9:30 a.m., and there was "standing room only."

Evangelist Tom Whitsett gave a message to the church and Moore, encouraging them to keep the vision of evangelism: reaching the community and the world.

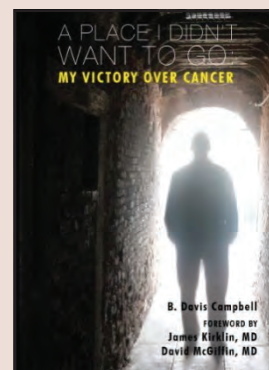
First, Mount Olive, presented Moore with a commemorative watch and a scrapbook full of letters and notes from church members; Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions; and Evangelist Junior Hill. A slideshow of pictures was shown, and Steve Loggins, director of missions for North Jefferson Baptist Association, also shared some uplifting words about Moore.

A church member, whom Moore had led to the Lord several years prior, sang a special solo.

Minister of Music Ed Helveston was glad to be a part of the celebration for his pastor whom he said is "a model example and just cares for everybody."

As for Moore, he's cherished his 25 years in the pulpit.

"It's one of the greatest callings God ever gave — to be a preacher," Moore said. "It's not easy but I wouldn't change my life for anything. ... [Being a pastor] is the greatest honor God has ever given me."



Life-changing

Churches worldwide reach communities with 'judgment' presentations

By Lindsey Robinson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It was the biggest house in the Brazilian neighborhood and the perfect place for Judgement House workers to set up a makeshift heaven.

There was just one problem — the house belonged to a notorious drug dealer.

Usually the walk-through presentation featuring a life-changing decision and a representation of heaven

and hell is done in a church building. But the church in Brazil didn't have the eight rooms necessary to set up the presentation, so workers went house to house to set up each scene.

"Can you imagine going to a house and saying, 'Hey, can we put hell in your living room?'" asked Tom Hudgins, who founded Judgement House while serving as a student minister in Alabama. The nonprofit now provides materials to churches in 35 states and 10 countries.

The drug dealer not only agreed to provide his house for the heaven scene but also attended the presentation and made a decision to give up his lifestyle, Hudgins added.

He remembers the spine-tingling trip as one of Judgement House's most incredible moments since its beginning in 1983.

While the nonprofit is now based

in Clearwater, Fla., it began at Bethel Baptist Church, Moody.

The youth were spending their Halloween blowing up mailboxes and throwing eggs on the interstate, Hudgins said. So the 24-year-old student minister suggested a more wholesome church-based activity. The youth wanted a haunted house, but Hudgins took that idea and organized the first Judgement House.

So why "Judgement House" and not "Judgment House"?

Simply put, Hudgins liked it better that way — plus it set his ministry apart from other similarly named programs.

The Alabama church's impromptu Halloween play has since become an international ministry that provides scripts, logo rights, DVDs and

training to churches, called covenant partners.

Executive Director Sandi Hubbard said each covenant partner pays \$599 to use Judgement House material for one year, including training materials and program scripts. The ministry is in the process of amping up its website, www.judgementhouse.org, moving away from snail mail and toward downloadable scripts.

Writers often pull scripts from headlines, but Hubbard said they stay away from politically charged

"The intent is not to scare anybody. It's to present the gospel with love."

Sandi Hubbard
Judgement House



Photo courtesy of Shiloh Baptist Church

ETERNITY — Shiloh Baptist Church, Somerville, presents The Judgment Seat in 2010. The program is an eight-room walk-through presentation that includes life-changing choices and eternal consequences.

messages or stories written solely to spark controversy. One of the most timely scripts features a student plagued by bullying.

Because of its strong message and sometimes graphic content, Judgement House is not recommended for kids under 10 years old, Hubbard said. Despite the age limit and haunted house theme, the presentation is designed for evangelism, not shock value. "The intent is not to scare anybody. It's to present the gospel with love," Hubbard said.

One of the eight churches in Alabama that has embraced Judgement House's message is First Baptist Church, Ardmore.

This year, First, Ardmore, which usually has about 400 people in the pews on Sunday, will probably see between 1,000 and 1,300 people pass through Judgement House,

Program Director Tracie Slayton said. It is the largest event at the church. "It gives someone an opportunity to invite a friend to go through it, and the story is a witness in itself," Slayton said.

Rave reviews

Shiloh Baptist Church, Somerville, was one of the first churches to host Judgement House to rave reviews. However, several years ago, Shiloh Baptist formed its own agency to avoid legal infringement issues and created The Judgment Seat. Like Judgement House, it is an eight-room walk-through presen-

tation that includes life-changing choices and eternal consequences.

This year's script features a divided family and tackles topics such as domestic violence, self-harm and gambling, said Michael Walters, minister of education and students who serves as director of the presentation.

"The choices this mother and father are making are affecting their children for eternity," he added. Walters expects about 2,000 people traveling from as far as Mississippi to The Judgment Seat this year. The presentation nets about 100 professions of faith every year, he added. ☛

Statewide judgment presentations

Judgement House

Where: First Baptist Church, Ardmore

When: Oct. 19, 6:30–8:30 p.m.; Oct. 22, 6–11 p.m.; Oct. 23, 5–9 p.m.; Oct. 26, 6:30–8:30 p.m.; Oct. 29, 6–11 p.m.; Oct. 30, 5–9 p.m.

Contact: Tracie Slayton, 256-423-2000

Where: New Harmony Baptist Church, Albertville

When: Oct. 19, 22, 23, 26 and 29

Contact: Kelly Armstrong, 256-738-0752

Where: Carrville Baptist Church, Tallassee

When: Oct. 22, 23, 26, 29, 30 and 31, 6–9 p.m.

Contact: Donna McGarity, 334-283-2221

Where: Locust Fork Baptist Church

When: Oct. 22, 4–8 p.m.; Oct. 23, 4–8 p.m. (3:30 p.m. special hand-

icapped time); Oct. 26, 6–9 p.m.; Oct. 29, 4–8 p.m.

Contact: Randy Cater, 205-681-2254

Where: Southside Baptist Church, Opp

When: Oct. 26, 27 and 29, 6–9 p.m.

Contact: Nitaya Stanley, 334-493-6340

Where: First Baptist Church, Scottsboro

When: Oct. 28–31

Contact: Greg Hart, 256-574-3308

Where: Eastwood Baptist Church, Monroeville

When: Oct. 29, 6 p.m.; Oct. 30, 4 p.m. (reservation only); Oct. 31, 6:30 p.m.

Contact: Sandy Padgett, 251-575-3843

The Judgment Seat

Where: Shiloh Baptist Church, Somerville

When: Oct. 31–Nov. 3, 6 p.m.

Contact: Michael Walters, 256-286-0509



Photo courtesy of Malvern Baptist Church

MALVERN BAPTIST CHURCH HOLDS NOTE-BURNING CEREMONY

Malvern Baptist Church in Columbia Baptist Association burns a note July 24 to celebrate the final payment on its new sanctuary. Pictured are building committee members (l to r) Rickey Tucker, Mike Ashworth, David McKnight, Phyllis Peel, Jean Hawkins, Tommy Roland and Pastor Hosea Parker.

A monthly advertising supplement — October 2011

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Christian scholars question putting cremated human remains in bullets

When he dies, Clem Parnell expects his soul to ascend heavenward. He wants his ashes to be loaded into a shotgun shell and blasted at a turkey.

"I will rest in peace knowing that the last thing that turkey will see is me screaming at him at about 900 feet per second," Parnell, 59, said.

Parnell and his business partner, fellow Alabama state game warden Thad Holmes, believe other hunters have similar hankerings. This July,

they launched Holy Smoke LLC, which offers to load the cremains of customers into shotgun shells, rifle cartridges and bullets.

For about \$850, a customer will receive 250 shotgun shells, 100 rifle cartridges or 250 pistol cartridges packed with the deceased's ashes. Discounts are available for the military, police and firemen.

After most funeral rites, scattered remains become trodden dirt; gravesites go unvisited; and ash-filled urns sit unnoticed, Holmes,

56, said. Loading up a loved one for one final duck hunt would be a more fitting send-off, he said, especially for avid outdoorsmen.

"We want to give people an alternative to celebrate a person's life," Holmes said.

Holy Smoke insists that remains are handled reverently by a team of five ATF-trained loaders. There is no commingling of ashes, and unused cremains are returned. Parnell, a Southern Baptist, said all seven Holy Smoke employees are "good Christians, with good moral values."

"Just because you're getting shot out of a gun doesn't make it irreverent," Holmes said.

But some Christian scholars say Holy Smoke is firing spiritual blanks. "It's a terrible idea," said David W. Jones, a professor of Christian ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

"This idea of putting grandpa in a rifle shell or scattering his ashes on a baseball field goes against Christianity. We're supposed to show respect for ashes, not throw them to the wind," said Jones, who has written about cremation in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.

Funeral industry experts say Holy Smoke is unique, but not unusual.

Cremation accounted for 37 percent of all final dispositions in 2009, according to the National Funeral Directors Association, and is expected to cross the 50 percent threshold this decade. (RNS)

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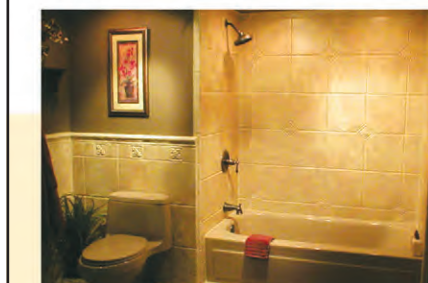
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10 gift ideas to show your pastor appreciation

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. This is the month when many churches will take some time to show their appreciation to their pastor for his love and ministry over the past year. Some churches will take up a love offering for their pastor. Many will put a basket in the vestibule for members to place cards in with kind sentiments they want to share with their pastor. A few churches may even have a dinner or a reception — a nice time to get together to express their feelings for their pastor.

Here are 10 gifts to give your pastor, not just during Pastor Appreciation Month, but the other 11 months of the year as well.

► Your prayers. This is the greatest gift you can give your pastor.

► Your love. A pastor who really shepherds his people will expend a great amount of love. His heart will be stretched and often broken.

► Your unconditional support. Researchers say that other than

being the president of the United States, the most stressful “job” is that of being the pastor of a local church. “The pastor is not always perfect ... but he is always the pastor.”

► A little grace. The next time you start to get upset with your pastor, take a minute, breathe and consider that he is just human, too. He has good days and bad days. You never know what burden he might be carrying, what issue he’s having to deal with.

► A “good word” to your pastor. The average pastor hears a lot of things he’s done wrong. Share something that he’s done right.

► A “good word” for your pastor. If your pastor is a gifted Bible preacher, a visionary leader, or a caring pastor, tell your friends. Make sure everybody knows just how great you think your pastor is.

► Your faithfulness. Your faithfulness to the ministry of your church says volumes about how much you really love and appreci-

ate your pastor. Don’t just say it or give it, show it.

► Time with his family. He won’t be any good to your family if he’s not any good to his family. No pastor minds taking a call or making a visit if there is a real need, but make sure it is a real need before your call in the evening or on the weekend when he’s with his family.

► Time by himself. The demands of being a pastor today are exponentially greater than they were just 25 or 30 years ago. Let your pastor get

away to a good conference where he can refresh. Send him on a hunting or fishing or golf trip. Allow him to recharge his batteries so that he can come back energized for the ministry the Lord has for him there.

► A financial gift. Most pastors don’t become pastors to get rich or have a lot of money. They do it because of the call of God on their life. Consider giving a gift card for a nice meal. Or, even better, a little extra money to do whatever they want to do with it. (BP)

Gifts for pastors

1. Your prayers
2. Your love
3. Your unconditional support
4. A little grace
5. A “good word” to your pastor
6. A “good word” for your pastor
7. Your faithfulness
8. Time with his family
9. Time by himself
10. A financial gift

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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.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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

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

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

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

borne, 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 resumé 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.

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Box 457, Carrollton, AL 35447, call/fax 205-367-8577 or email: cbc01@centurytel.net.

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

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

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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

by Jennifer Davis Rash • executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Do we really listen when God speaks?

In the last Rashional Thoughts column, I outlined four conversations that led to misunderstandings because one or both parties weren't communicating with context in mind. If you missed that column, then you can find it at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com or www.thealabamabaptist.org under opinion/Rashional Thoughts.

As I processed the four conversations and thought about how the misunderstandings happened, I realized how often we do this to God when we claim to be seeking Him and His wisdom in His Word.

We may indeed do the literal act of reading the Bible but are we listening? Do we understand? Can we walk away with an accurate interpretation of what is written and know how to apply it to our lives today?

New Testament scholar and Bible professor George H. Guthrie said in his Bible study workbook "Read the Bible for Life: Listen. Understand. Respond." that we should do more than just read the Bible — we should read it well so we can truly listen, understand and respond.

Reading in context

"We need to read it so that we hear what God wants to say to us in a way that is life-changing," he said.

But we should also read it in context.

"God gave us His Word at specific times in specific places and ways. We respect God's choices and purposes in these matters when we take context seriously," Guthrie said.

"Conversely, when we ignore context, we risk misunderstanding."



ing what He intended to communicate."

If we don't read the Word in context, then we automatically force our own context into the words and make them fit what we understand in relation to our lives and experiences instead of what God was saying in the context in which it was written that could then be applied to our lives now.

For those of us who grew up in church, we've heard the main Bible stories numerous times, and we pretty much have them memorized. Or at least we think we do.

Telling others

Have you ever gone back and checked yourself on some of the basic Bible stories? You might be surprised how much we add to or take away from Scripture when we retell these well-known parts of the Bible. I don't think any of us mean to do it, but when we read in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 that we are not to add to or take away from Scripture, we might want to double-check our memories and interpretations.

Innocently, we could be sharing parts of the Bible incorrectly because we misinterpreted one part of the story or weren't focused on listening when we heard the story.

To truly understand the Bible and how it applies to our lives, we have to do more than just hear the story or read the words. We have to listen, truly listen. We can't impose our own ideas or prejudices on it. We can't come into our time in the Word with a preconceived outcome that we are going to force the words to match. We can't pick and choose the parts we like and ignore the other parts because they aren't comfortable or we don't want to hear them for whatever reason. We must listen with a focused mind and clean heart, both clear and ready to be filled with new insights and direction from God.

I am always amazed at how even reading a familiar verse, chapter or book of the Bible brings a fresh application to what I need that day — at least when I'm truly listening.

Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

A friend said to me in passing the same week as all the conversations I mentioned in the September Rashional Thoughts — "We never have time to do things right the first time, but we always have time to do them over."

— Jennifer

Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for all your prayers, notes, emails and support as we continue along the cancer journey with Belle. While we are South Carolina Baptists, we feel as if we have been adopted by Alabama Baptists and appreciate you so much. To continue following Belle, visit www.caringbridge.org/visit/bellemitchell or just ask Jennifer (aka Aunt Jen Jen) for an update.

Kelley Mitchell
FBC Rock Hill, S.C.

Jennifer, I read your article on health in the Aug. 25 edition. The best diet I know of is the 'Hallelujah Diet' at www.hacres.com.

It's not just a diet but a way of life. You can get a free subscription and free emails. And they have tons of articles on health. The other person to follow on health is any book by Don Colbert.

Mark Cruce
Graysville, Ala.

"I love your column. The title is EXCELLENT."

David George
WMU Foundation
Birmingham, Ala.

From the Twitterverse ...

@FBCGeraldine
Aug. 8, 2011 7:05 p.m.

87 in attendance on 1st night of "Body 4 Believers" learning to be better stewards of the temple (our bodies — 1 Cor. 6:19)

Living out Romans 8:28

Three-year-old Jacob DuBois has leukemia. His parents are Lyle and Holly DuBois. His grandparents are Bobby and Connie DuBois and Larry and Mary Wallace. Bobby DuBois serves as associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Larry Wallace serves as minister of music for Piney Grove Baptist Church, Ardmore. Connie DuBois shared the following during September, which was National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month:

One phone call and three words change our lives — Jacob has leukemia.

These are three words we never thought we would hear but we did.

Jacob was diagnosed in June. By July 25, he was in complete remission. While we celebrate and are grateful to God for the remission, the journey is still long.

This is a roller coaster ride filled with highs and lows.

We have learned a lot of things in the past three months. Some things we didn't really want to know such as medical terms, what counts means, what it is like to go to clinic every week and so much more.

We also have learned that without faith in God, none of us could get through this.

We continue to be amazed at God's goodness and His charge



over Jacob's life. And then there are the friends and family members who continue to pray for us, comfort us and support us.

There is no way to thank everyone for each kindness from food to cards to phone calls to posts on social sites, but it is the prayers of the faithful that continue to mean so much to us.

We believe that God hears all of our prayers and has answered them.

The most important thing we have learned is that our faith has been strengthened.

Our walk with God is closer. We have asked, "Why Jacob?," and the answer is, "Why not, Jacob?"

God can take any situation and use it for good. We have seen that

already, and we look forward to seeing what else God has in store for us.

So we wear our orange "Pray for Jacob" bracelets. Our friends and family wear them.

It not only reminds us to pray for him but it also gives us the opportunity to share God's message with others who ask about the bracelet.



JACOB

UPCOMING TOPICS
include psalms and songs. Send us your experiences with and suggestions on this topic. Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com.

Gender-selective abortions could increase with blood test to determine sex at 7 weeks

A blood test recently proven to be capable of accurately determining the sex of an unborn child as early as seven weeks' gestation could result in an increase in gender-selective abortions in the United States.

Observers have expressed concern in the wake of a study published online in August in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that documented the precision of a test that can be performed much earlier than an ultrasound. It is much less invasive than amniocentesis or chorionic villus

sampling. It also is much more reliable than tests that require a urine sample.

In addition, it is convenient and is performed privately in a doctor's office.

'Ethical corruption'

The test can be utilized for such harmless purposes as determining blood type or relieving anxious curiosity, but the ease by which it is conducted can lead to ethical corruption, said bioethicist Arthur Caplan of the University of Pennsylvania.

Though many Americans believe sex-selection abortion exists only in foreign countries, there are indications the practice is gaining a hold among some groups in the United States. Chinese and Indian cultures place emphatic pressure on women to give birth to boys. While the United States does not have a coercive, one-child policy like China and its citizens are not normally concerned with producing a male heir, it appears some immigrants from such Asian countries as India and China have adopted the practice in the United States.

A study published in the June issue of *Prenatal Diagnosis* discovered that in some Asian-American third pregnancies, more boys than girls are born in ratios that suggest prenatal sex selection.

In addition, although sex-selection abortion by Americans is a rare occurrence, some upper-middle-class women have expressed desires to give birth to children of a certain gender by means of in vitro fertilization. They have given multiple reasons as justification, from balancing the family to a love for everything pink and girly, wrote Sunita Puri, a resident physician at San Francisco General Hospital, in an article for the online magazine *Slate*. (BP)

Human resources workshop for churches to be held in Hoover

A workshop at Green Valley Baptist Church, Hoover, may help pastors, administrators and lay leaders who possess supervisory responsibilities.

The Human Resources — Your Church's Valued Assets workshop will be held at the Birmingham Baptist Association church Oct. 20 from 9 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Topics of discussion will be compensation planning, hiring/firing, staff development and legal and tax issues.

Birmingham-area professionals in these fields will speak during the four-session workshop, and a deli lunch is included in the cost.

Registration forms are available at www.NACBA.net.

Click on the National Church Administration Day banner, scroll down to Hoover, Alabama and click the Central Alabama Chapter link.

For more information, email Pat Ray at pray@huffmanbaptist.org. (TAB)

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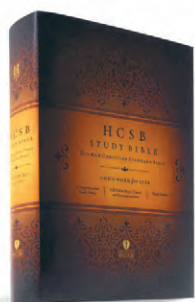
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Majority of pastors say Mormons not Christians, survey shows

Most pastors feel strongly that Mormons are not Christians, according to a survey by LifeWay Research.

The survey polled 1,000 American Protestant pastors and asked them to respond to the statement: "I personally consider Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) to be Christians."

Three-quarters (75 percent) disagree with the statement, including 60 percent who strongly disagree and 15 percent who somewhat disagree. Just 11 percent somewhat agree, 6 percent strongly agree and 9 percent do not know.

"Though pastors believe overwhelmingly that Mormonism is not Christianity, their opinions should not be [viewed as] personal scorn for Mormons," said Ed Stetzer, vice president of research and ministry

development at LifeWay Christian Resources. "A person can respect a religious group and even appreciate their commitment to traditional moral values without equating their beliefs with Christian orthodoxy."

Mormonism has come into the public eye in recent years with the rise of prominent adherents like Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, U.S. Senate majority leader Harry Reid and conservative talk show host Glenn Beck.

According to a 2009 study by the Pew Research Center, Mormons comprise 1.7 percent of the U.S. adult population and 58 percent of Utah's population — the state founded by early Mormon leaders. In comparison, evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics each make up about a quarter of the U.S. population (26 per-

cent and 24 percent respectively). Seventy-six percent of the U.S. Mormon population is concentrated in the West, with 35 percent in Utah, 13 percent in California and 7 percent in Idaho.

In the Pew study's measure of intensity of religious belief and practice, Mormons ranked higher than evangelical Protestants, Catholics and mainline Protestants. A full 83 percent of Mormons say religion is very important in their lives, compared with 56 percent of the general population. Three-quarters of Mormons (76 percent) attend church at least once a week, compared with 39 percent of the general population.

Self-identification

In the LifeWay Research survey, pastors' self-identification as either mainline or evangelical was a predictor of their opinions regarding Mormons. While two-thirds (67 percent) of evangelicals strongly disagree that Mormons are Christians, just 48 percent of mainline pastors feel the same way.

Mainline pastors are more likely than their evangelical counterparts both to strongly agree that Mormons are Christians (9 percent to 3 percent) and to somewhat agree (16 percent to 9 percent).

Age and education

Pastors 65 and older are the least likely age bracket to strongly disagree that Mormons are Christians, with 48 percent holding that opinion.

Pastors whose highest education level is not beyond a bachelor's degree are more likely to be unsure about Mormons than pastors who hold a graduate degree. While 16 percent of those with no more than a bachelor's degree are unsure whether Mormons are Christians, just 5 percent with a graduate degree are unsure.

"Individuals holding to the Mor-

mon faith are in the news in politics, entertainment and sports," Stetzer said. "It is inevitable that pastors will be approached with questions from their parishioners regarding the Mormon belief system. All ministers would do well to learn about Mormonism and have an answer ready for their congregations."

The phone survey, conducted Oct. 7-14, 2010, sampled randomly selected Protestant churches. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called and responses were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution of Protestant churches. The completed sample of 1,000 phone interviews provides a 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed ± 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups. (BP)

"Their opinions should not be [viewed as] personal scorn for Mormons."

Ed Stetzer
LifeWay Christian Resources

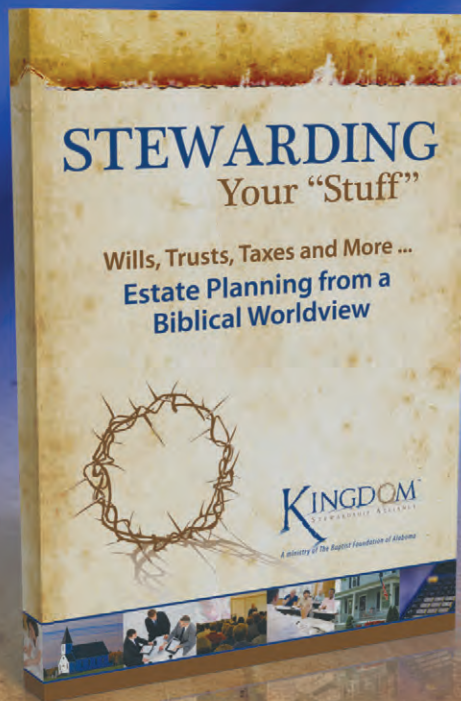
"All ministers would do well to learn about Mormonism and have an answer ready."

Ed Stetzer
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Curb Records

Mikeschairs has released its second full-length record, "A Beautiful Life," a collection of radio-friendly music that springboards from its four Dove Award nominations. This record may not move the art of Christian music forward very far, but it's good music, fun to listen to and it's hard to argue with their popularity.



The record's first single, "Someone Worth Dying For," explores our self-image, our struggle to understand God's love for us despite our shortcomings. A powerfully moving ballad, it perhaps sets the tone for the record and is easily one of the best on the CD. For me, "Pieces" showcases the band's ability to create Christian rock that can move us lyrically and musically.

We'll certainly hear more from Mikeschairs, and I look forward to the future growth and musical maturity that is promised in this album.

JONNY DIAZ

Jonny Diaz
Jonny Diaz Music

Jonny Diaz's new self-titled CD is another solid effort. Perhaps not the most sophisticated record you'll

hear this year, but a fun, well-recorded collection of worship songs that will have you tapping your toe and air-drumming along, just like with his other records. As always, beautifully layered arrangements are the rule, and exceptional guitar work is always lurking just behind the moving rhythms. This record is a joy to listen to.

"Break My Heart" is one of the best; smoky, bluesy, with inspired guitar work and a great message. "God Is Watching" rocks with the best Diaz has offered, and does it with touching vignettes that will have you rewinding to listen again. "Weeps for You" weaves a message of God's compassion into an intricate acoustic vehicle. The CD's first single, "Beauty of the Cross," will certainly make its way into our local praise teams' repertoire. Oh, and don't miss "The Chick-fil-A Song." Nashville pickin' and big fun!



SHANE & SHANE

The One You Need
Fair Trade Services

Acoustic duo Shane & Shane has released its first studio release in two years, "The One You Need." The pair, Shane Everett and Shane Barnard, who met in the late '90s in College Station, Texas, has released six records and have been a college-

circuit staple for much of the last 13 years.

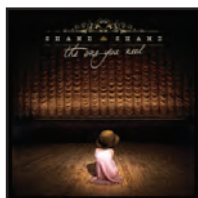
Completely self-written and self-produced, the record is an eclectic mix, with flashes of true brilliance. With the start of almost every song, I thought I knew where the song was headed, only to be surprised by the direction the lyrics and music forged. The opener, "Liberty," had me expecting (and hoping for) a raw '40s acoustic-blues number, and then morphed into an odd mix of Hammond B3 organ and banjo. Yep, B3 and banjo, then back into old-time acoustic slide and foot stomping. Whew! "Future Version" had me checking my music player to be sure some John Mayer hadn't somehow slipped in. Should Mayer ever move to Christian music, this is what it would sound like. The project's debut single and title track was written as a letter to Barnard's then-unborn daughter Lucy and is as poignant in its message as some other songs are schizoid in their development. Did I say eclectic?

This is one you should hear. Maybe not for the masses, but I'm sure glad I didn't miss it.

NO OTHER NAME

The Other Side
Curb Records

"The Other Side" already has



garnered a Gospel Music Association New Artist of the Year Dove Award nomination for Nashville-based trio No Other Name, as well as prompting the adoption of the song "Let It Start With Me" by the Southern Baptist Convention as its missions theme song. Not a bad start, and this is BEFORE its first record's release, which will be Oct. 25.



Why all this recognition? There

are a lot of reasons, but leading the way has to be the group's clean harmonies. Imagine old-time southern gospel harmonies over thoroughly modern music and you start to get a clue. Plus, these guys can sing! Pristine production from Bernie Herms with help from Jason Kyle and Blake Bollinger is another. Oh, and excellent songwriting — sometimes edgy, sometimes traditional, often with a nod to beloved old hymns, always with a strong faith-based message. I could go on, but you get the idea. There's something here for everybody. If you buy only one CD this year, consider this one.

Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **The Mercy** — Rose Trilogy Series #3, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
2. **Courageous**, paperback, Randy Alcorn, Alex Kendrick, Stephen Kendrick (Tyndale)
3. **The Healing** — Kentucky Brothers Series #2, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
4. **Learning** — Bailey Flanigan Series #2, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
5. **The Brotherhood** — Precinct 11 Series #1, Jerry B. Jenkins (Tyndale)
6. **Fatal Convictions**, Randy Singer (Tyndale)
7. **Deadly Pursuit** — Guardians of Justice Series #2, Irene Hannon (Baker)
8. **Code Triage** — Mercy Hospital Series #3, Candace Calvert (Tyndale)
9. **Leaving** — Bailey Flanigan Series #1, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
10. **Still House Pond** — Copper Brown Series #2, Jan Watson (Tyndale)

Nonfiction

1. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Weird**, Craig Groeschel (Zondervan)
3. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. **KJV Standard Lesson Commentary 2011-2012** (Standard)
5. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C Cook)
6. **Not a Fan**, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)
7. **KJV Standard Lesson Commentary 2011-2012 (Large Print)** (Standard)
8. **One Thousand Gifts**, Ann Voskamp (Zondervan)
9. **Radical**, David Platt (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
10. **The Well**, Mark Hall and Tim Luke (Zondervan)

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Brian Has Left the Building: The Brian Tribble Story

Bob Curlee. Odenville, Ala.: Jonah Publishers, 2011. 233 pp. (Paperback).

At age 36, Brian Tribble had a wife and four young children and a job he loved. In the early morning hours of Oct. 3, 1997, the music minister of Centercrest Baptist Church in Birmingham was preparing to leave for a Promise Keepers rally. Instead of boarding a bus for Washington, D.C., however, he was shot and killed inside the church by a would-be robber.

The book is the detailed story of Brian's life and death as told by his pastor. The author explains in the prologue that he is often asked questions about Brian's murder, a story that made national headlines. He wrote the book to tell that story,

but also to tell the story of Brian's widow, the church and the community, who "faithed the future" after Brian's tragic death, and the local sheriff's department, which solved the crime and arrested the suspect quickly. Although the story is a sad one, the book is positive and upbeat, a tribute to a life that made a positive impact on those Brian Tribble left behind.

The True Measure of a Man: How Perceptions of Success, Achievement and Recognition Fail Men in Difficult Times

Richard E. Simmons III. Mobile: Evergreen Press, 2011. 160 pp. (Hardback).

In these economic times, men who base their self-worth on material success are reeling. According to author Richard Simmons, the

two basic needs men have are security and significance. "What has happened is that this current economic crisis — particularly the severity of it — has converged in such a way that the ability to meet both of these psychological needs has been threatened."

The result? Simmons maintains that it is paralyzing fear.

This book takes the reader from the paralyzing fear to freedom — freedom to choose, freedom in courage and freedom in truth — then on to a life of contentment through trusting and living in harmony with God's plan.

Although a bit disjointed in places, the book is well written, quoting freely from the Bible as well as other authors, to lead the reader into the hope that is found in Christ. Simmons founded and is active in the Center for Executive Leadership in Birmingham.

Remarkable life

Billy Graham pens memoir, shares about growing older

For much of his 92 years, Billy Graham has had one main title: evangelist.

But in a new memoir set in the twilight of his remarkable life, Graham reveals a lesser-known side of himself: a grieving and ailing widower who has difficulty getting up from a chair or putting on his shoes.

"I can't truthfully say that I have liked growing older," Graham wrote in "Nearing Home: Life, Faith, and Finishing Well," which hits bookstores Oct. 18.

"At times, I wish I could still do everything I once did — but I can't."

To be sure, his book includes his signature focus on evangelism, asking non-Christian readers numerous times to come to Jesus before it is too late. But most of the book's 180 pages are filled with messages on growing old, or preparing younger readers for the reality of old age.

"All my life I was taught how to die as a Christian, but no one ever taught me how I ought to live in the years before I die," he wrote in the introduction.

"I wish they had because I am an old man now and believe me, it's not easy."

So, a month before he turns 93, Graham has become a teacher of sorts in *How to Grow Old* 101.

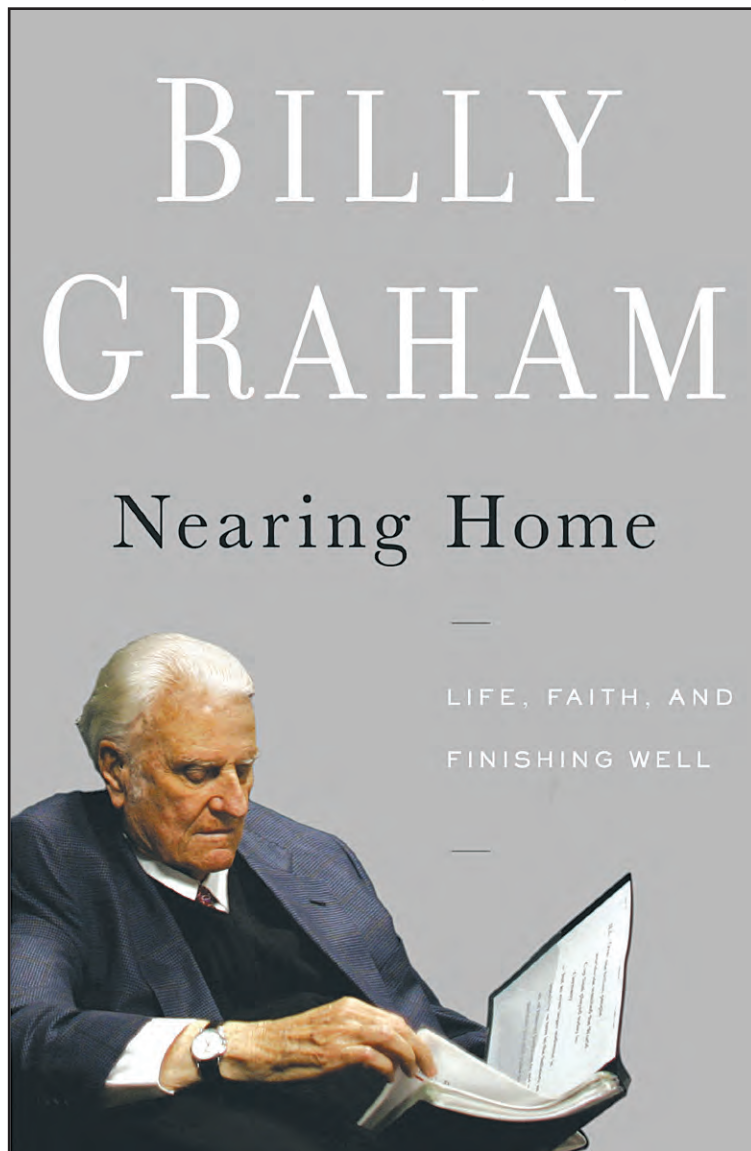
Stay involved, he recommends. And spend wisely. As the great-grandfather of 43, he warns against going into debt buying expensive gifts for grandchildren.

Prepare a will and medical directives to reduce family conflict after you're gone, he advises. And look out for the "hidden perils" of depression, anger and self-absorption.

"Sometimes I have to force my mind to turn away from whatever problem is absorbing me at the moment and make myself focus on the needs of others," he wrote.

Despite their limitations, he assures, the senior years can nevertheless be rewarding. He cites biblical examples, including Moses, who died at 120 after leading the Egyptians to the promised land, and Elizabeth, who gave birth to John the Baptist though "well along in years."

"Are you willing to be used by God regardless of being bound by physical ailments, financial constraint, or the loneliness of growing old?" asks the man who once crisscrossed the world but now seldom leaves his home in the North Carolina mountains.



RNS photo

He counsels on a range of possibilities: getting involved in church or other ministries, helping others who may be ill or grieving, and building a mature faith through books and Bible study.

"God forbid that we should ever retire from prayer, the sweetest work of the soul," he wrote.

"God forbid that we should ever retire from prayer, the sweetest work of the soul."

**Billy Graham
Evangelist**

Graham even manages to find humor in the gradual loss of senses that accompanies old age. Recalling hearing younger people screaming "Can you hear me?" into their cell phones, he said: "It's sometimes comical to hear the younger generation ask their peers to repeat themselves."

For years, news reports have chronicled Graham's physical decline: pneumonia, hearing and vision loss, even tripping over his dog.

His wheelchair, cane and walker now are close to his bed, and he dictated the book that took him several years to write.

"I often wonder if God, in His sovereignty, allows the eyesight of the aged to cast a dim view of the here and now so that we may focus our spiritual eyes on the ever after," he wrote.

Graham reserves his most poignant prose about grief for his beloved wife, Ruth, who died in 2007, two years after he held his last official crusade in New York. He always thought she would outlive him.

"Not a day passes that I don't imagine her walking through my study door or us sitting together on our porch as we did so often, holding hands as the sun set over the mountaintops," he wrote.

'Reunited in heaven'

In recent years, Graham has marked his Nov. 7 birthday with a media release about his hopes for a heavenly home. In the book, Graham wrote that he looks forward to death because he's eager to be reunited with his wife. In the meantime, he appreciates the "touches of Ruth" in each room of his house.

"Before long, Ruthe and I will be reunited in heaven," he wrote. "More than ever, I look forward to that day!" (RNS)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

World Vision cleared for Christian-only personnel

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld a lower-court ruling that the Christian humanitarian organization World Vision can fire employees over religious doctrine.

The high court declined without comment Oct. 3 to review an August 2010 ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals denying religious discrimination claims by three World Vision workers dismissed in 2006 for denying the divinity of Christ and disavowing the Trinity.

When they were hired, Silvia Spencer, Ted Youngberg and Vicki Huls all submitted required personal statements describing their "relationship with Jesus Christ" and acknowledged "agreement and compliance" with World Vision's statement of faith.

They lodged their complaint alleging discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The act exempts religious corporations. They tried to argue that because it carries out secular work like economic development and disaster relief, World Vision did not qualify for the exemption. A district court ruled against them, finding that the self-described "Christian humanitarian organization" has a "purpose and character that are primarily religious."

Based in Federal Way, Wash., World Vision employs more than 40,000 staff around the world. It hires only employees who agree with the organization's statement of faith and the Apostles' Creed.

The case was watched closely by other corporations with similar hiring practices.

"Today's action by the U.S. Supreme Court represents a major victory for the freedom of all religious organizations to hire employees who share the same faith — whether Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, or any other religion," World Vision U.S. president Richard Stearns said in a press release. "I am pleased, relieved and gratified with the court's action. After four years of litigation, we at World Vision U.S. may now put this matter behind us, and continue our policy of hiring Christians."

World Vision has received about \$650 million in federal funding over the past decade for its anti-poverty work. While campaigning in 2008, Barack Obama said that groups that get a federal grant should not be allowed to discriminate, but recently said religious organizations have "more leeway" to hire somebody of a particular faith. Fifty-six groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, signed a letter asking the president if he has changed his position on "government-funded religious discrimination."

Can students voice opposition to homosexuality?

FORT WORTH, Texas — A high school freshman in Texas was suspended for expressing a religious belief to a classmate while his teacher was allowed to force a disturbing personal viewpoint upon students.

During German class in a Fort Worth school, the teacher was leading a discussion about religious beliefs in Germany when the topic of homosexuality arose. Dakota Ary told one of his classmates, "I'm a Christian and, to me, being homosexual is wrong," according to Liberty Counsel, which is representing Ary.

The teacher overheard Ary, wrote an infraction charging him with "possible bullying" and sent him to the principal's office. The teacher indicated on the infraction, "It is wrong to make such a statement in public school." Ary was sentenced to in-school suspension and two days' suspension.

Meanwhile the teacher was allowed to display a picture of two men kissing on what he called a "world wall" in the classroom, and when students were offended, he told them that homosexuality is becoming more prevalent in the world and they should accept it, Liberty Counsel said.

Ary's mother, Holly Pope, told Fox News Radio Sept. 22 that her son is a well-grounded 14-year-old who is an honors student, plays on the school football team and is active in his church youth group.

"He's been in church his whole life, and he's been taught to stand up for what he believes," Pope said.

After a meeting with Pope and her attorney, the school rescinded the two-day suspension and allowed Ary to play in an upcoming football game.

"Just because you walk through the schoolhouse doors doesn't mean you shed your First Amendment rights," Matthew Krause of Liberty Counsel said. "Dakota wasn't disrupting class. He wasn't bullying or harassing anybody. He was just stating his personal opinion on a topic somebody else brought up and in a civil and respectful manner."

The teacher was placed on administrative leave.

