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IMB photo

CARRYING HOPE — Baptists reaching out to Syrian refugees near Lebanon's northern border have distributed boxes of food to more than 1,200 families and, with that, given more than 1,300 New Testaments. Many of the Syrian families who receive them have never heard the gospel until now.

'Our only chance'

Lebanese believers rush to meet Syrian refugees with gospel

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

Fadi knew how to answer the question of why he had come — he lifted his shirt, exposing the scars on his chest from bullet wounds.

"If there's someone I'm going to hate, it's you," he told the men of the house where he was delivering a box of food. The men were Syrian soldiers — soldiers from the army who had shot him when he served in the Lebanese army years ago.

"It was your friends and family that shot me. But because of Jesus' love, I love you with all my heart. That's why I've come to help you," Fadi said.

Back when Fadi was shot, Syrian soldiers were occupying Lebanon for

military reasons. But this time, the soldiers were there for a different reason — violent fighting is tearing Syria apart.

"People are running across the border into Lebanon, leaving everything behind, bringing only the clothes they are wearing," said Josef, pastor of the small Baptist church in northern Lebanon that Fadi attends. "Many are emotionally and psychologically injured. Some have seen their homes destroyed."

In the public eye, Syria seemed a little late jumping on the Arab Spring bandwagon. But when the nation came on the media scene in March with rebels hoping to oust President Bashar al-Assad, the situation accelerated rapidly into violence and bloodshed. And it's still gaining momentum even though most other countries' uprisings in Northern Africa and the Middle East have at least moderately calmed down.

The death toll stands at about 3,000, according to the United Nations human rights office. To escape the threat of violence, thousands of Syrian refu-

gees have poured across Lebanon's northern border — and into the welcoming arms of Josef's church.

"Our church has become enraptured with the Great Commission. We knew we needed to help them, to share the gospel with them. This could be our only chance," Josef said.

Many who fled are farmers who left

behind fields of crops. Some refugees work in Syria but sleep in Lebanon for fear of what might happen in the night. Nearly all are Sunni Muslim and have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, Josef said.

"We (the church) are small in number, but we had to find a way to help. (See 'Believers,' page 8)



IMB photo

OPEN ARMS — Many people living in the impoverished Akkar region in northern Lebanon have opened their homes to Syrian families fleeing the violent unrest in their country.

COMMENT

Mormonism, Christianity and Politics

The uneasy relationship between Mormonism and Christianity became front-page news a few weeks ago when Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, publicly endorsed one presidential candidate over another largely based on the candidate's religious affiliation. One was labeled an evangelical Christian, the other a member of the "Mormon cult."

Public reaction was swift and harsh. Jeffress was condemned by most, defended by some. And, as is usually the case, the evangelical commitment that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation was repeatedly ridiculed and belittled.

Unfortunately few people examined the important issues raised by the incident. Are Mormons Christians? Is Mormonism a cult? And finally what is the relationship of one's religious commitments to public office?

Generally speaking, Mormons are not recognized as Christians by evangelicals, mainline Protestants or Roman Catholics.

United Methodists, in their 2000 General Conference, approved a statement that read, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), by self-definition, does not fit within the bounds of the historic, apostolic tradition of Christian faith. ... As United Methodists, we agree with their assessment that the LDS church is not a part of the historic, apostolic tradition of the Christian faith."

In June 2001, Pope John Paul II rejected the argument that Mormon baptism was a valid Christian baptism in a paper released by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In response to the question "Are Mormons generally regarded as Christians?," the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod said, "Together with the vast majority of Christian denominations in the United States, [this denomination] does not regard the Mormon church as a Christian church."

The reason? "Because the official writings of Mormonism deny fundamental teachings of orthodox Christianity," the statement continued. Some of the differences relate to the nature of God, the nature of man, the Trinity, the saving work of Christ and the nature of the Bible.

An Interfaith Evangelism Belief Bulletin prepared by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention outlines several key areas of disagreement between Southern Baptists and Mormons that lead Southern Baptists to consider Mormons non-Christians.

Phil Roberts, former director of interfaith evangelism at NAMB and now president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., recently wrote, "Mormonism radically redefines and doctrinally reconstructs the Christian



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

faith. There is no major doctrine of faith, whether it be God, Jesus, salvation or inspiration of the Scriptures, that Mormonism has not severely and completely altered and changed from its original intent."

As far as the National Council of Churches (NCC) goes, a spokeswoman said it has held interfaith dialogues with the Mormon church. However, the LDS church is not eligible for membership in the NCC because of "major theological issues." She added that she knows of no Christian denomination that recognizes Mormons as Christians.

Almost unanimous answer

From the above material, it is clear that it is not evangelical Christians alone who have differences with Mormons. The almost unanimous answer of Christian bodies is that Mormonism lies outside the Christian faith.

Sociologists and theologians differ over the meaning of the word "cult," and that disagreement makes it hard to answer the second question with exactness. For many, cult is a negative word filled with images of brainwashing and mass suicide.

Sociologists often describe cults as places where people are put in physical or emotional distress, problems are reduced to one simple explanation, all authority is placed in a charismatic leader, group identity replaces individual personhood, isolation from family and friends occurs and access to information is severely controlled.

Theologians frequently use the term to mean "a religious movement which claims to be the only true expression of the Christian faith and yet has altered or changed one or more of the essential doctrines of the faith."

Sociologically Mormonism is not a cult. A more comfortable term for sociologists might be "a new religion."

Theologically many conclude that Mormonism is a cult.

Because of these differences, it behooves everyone to choose his or her words carefully when describing another religious group. In some parts of the world, it is the Christian faith that is branded a "cult" by political authorities. Unfortunately, in some historically Christian countries, Baptists are considered a cult.

From a legal standpoint, one's religious faith is not supposed to determine worthiness for public office. In 1789, Baptists were strong champions for Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, which declares, "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust." Baptists knew the pain of religious discrimination from states with established churches and were determined that such discrimination would have no place in their new nation.

George Washington, the first U.S. president, wrote to members of a church in Baltimore in 1793 that, "In this enlightened age ... it is our boast that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the laws nor deprive him of the right of attaining and holding the highest offices that are known in the United States."

Personal experience proves religious faith alone may not be a sufficient guide. In his autobiography, "Just As I Am," Billy Graham wrote, "Religious conviction alone was not the most reliable guide as to who would be the best or most effective leader." He referenced the 1976 presidential election when one of the two candidates was widely touted as a "born-again believer."

As some have quipped, this election is not about a "theologian and chief." It is about a "commander and chief."

Still there is no escaping the truth that most American voters want public officials to share their core values, worldviews and basic sense of fairness. For many, that is reflected in a common religious faith.

The debate about Mormons, Christians and the role of religion in politics will go on far beyond this election cycle. We hope the debate will reflect theological truth, not political correctness. We hope participants will communicate clearly and not resort to subjective, emotionally filled words that frequently miscommunicate. And we hope everyone will remember to treat those with whom he or she differs as he or she would want to be treated.

After all, that is what Jesus commanded. 



"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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Letters to the Editor

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Relief needs assessed in Turkey

Southern Baptist disaster relief specialists are assessing relief needs in the aftermath of a magnitude-7.3 earthquake that struck eastern Turkey the afternoon of Oct. 23.

The disaster killed at least 570 people and sent tens of thousands into the streets as apartment and office buildings cracked or collapsed. The Associated Press (AP) reported.

The hardest hit area was Ercis, an eastern city of 75,000 close to the Iranian border, which lies on one of Turkey's most earthquake-prone zones, the AP reported.

The provincial capital, Van, about 55 miles to the south, also sustained substantial damage.

More than 100 aftershocks were recorded within 10 hours of the quake, including one with a magnitude of 6.0.

The Baptist Global Response (BGR) disaster network is examining the best ways to respond to the earthquake.

Damage in areas outlying the quake's epicenter also is a concern and is being assessed as well, said Patrick J. Melancon, BGR's managing director of disaster response and training.

Estimates of loss of life are still pending as rescue teams attempt to find survivors in the rubble.

The area is primarily populated by Kurds with a total population of around 380,000, Melancon noted.

Residents in Van and Ercis lit campfires and spent the night outdoors, while the Red Crescent Movement, an international humanitarian movement, began setting up tents in a stadium, the AP noted. (BP)

'Humbly grateful'

Shaw reflects on past year as Alabama Baptist State Convention president

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Earlier this year, Mike Shaw watched something horrible happen to Alabama — the worst thing he'd ever seen here.

He watched live on his living room TV as a tornado hit Tuscaloosa and followed continued coverage of the full day of tornadoes devastating the state.

"Except for my three years in seminary in New Orleans, I've lived

in Alabama all my life, and April 27 was the low point of my time here," said Shaw, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham. "It was devastating watching that happen — literally watching people dying, watching homes and churches destroyed."

But from his viewpoint as Alabama Baptist State Convention president this year, he saw something else, too — something extraordinarily beautiful that happened in the disaster's aftermath.

Disaster relief response

"The response of Alabama Baptist churches and Southern Baptist disaster relief to the need was a high point for me," he said. "There were yellow shirts on the ground helping people before anyone else was there, and that was wonderful to see."

As far as Shaw is concerned, the spirit among state Baptists is better than it ever has been.

"Our people have almost always gotten along, but now it's even better than that — there's a feeling of brotherhood, of closeness among Alabama Baptists," he said.

During his year as president, he's been able to visit with every Alabama Baptist entity's board.

And with every visit, he's been more amazed.

"There is a great spirit in our convention and I'm thankful for that. I give God the glory, and I thank Dr. Rick Lance (executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions), our state and associational missionaries, churches, staff and members."

Shaw said he also gives God the glory for how state Baptists are fighting the downturn in Cooperative Program (CP) giving happening nationwide.

"Even though CP giving is down overall, Alabama is leading all the states in CP giving," he said.

Shaw said he's been grieved at the way Southern Baptists, espe-

cially those in younger generations, seem to be losing their allegiance to their primary channel of giving.

But Alabama Baptists still value the CP, he said. "We're certainly not the largest state and certainly not the richest state, but our people have given well over \$1 billion to the Cooperative Program and, since 2009, led all other states. That is a huge encouragement to me."

Getting to know Alabama Baptist ministries better this year has been

an experience Shaw said he is grateful for. He's learned a lot, he said, about the generosity of state Baptists and how they work together.

He had the honor of preaching at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham during its spring 2011 community worship service. "I will always cherish the experience,"

Shaw said, noting he lived in Divinity Hall (then known as Crawford Johnson Hall) in the spring of 1967.

Shaw also got the privilege of representing Alabama at the National Prayer Breakfast in February, along with his wife, Mary — an experience he said was "phenomenal." And Shaw has been able to experience the ups and downs of being in the public eye on issues every now and then.

"With the way Baptists are structured, I don't speak (to the media) for Alabama Baptists — only for myself, but sometimes that is tricky for those unfamiliar with Baptist life to understand," he said.

The year as president has been a good one, and Shaw said he is "humbly grateful" for the opportunity to serve Alabama Baptists. He said he hopes the state convention annual meeting, set for Nov. 15-16 at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, will "encourage every person sitting in the pews."

'I'm so thankful'

"I'm so thankful our churches are sharing the gospel, ministering in Jesus' name, giving to missions and doing missions," he said. "We have the gospel and a responsibility to share that. So many people have never heard the story of salvation."

Lance said Shaw is "a pastor with a big heart" who "loves people in an unconditional, Christlike fashion."

"I have known him for more than four decades, and I have never seen him in a situation where this loving spirit was not evident," Lance said.

"Alabama Baptists are the better for his leadership among us

"Mike is a man of prayer like few I know. ... He will be praying for you — that is for certain."

Rick Lance
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions



Photo courtesy of The Birmingham News/Bernard Troncale

'A BIG HEART' — Mike Shaw, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, served as this year's Alabama Baptist State Convention president.

Shaw expresses thanks, love to Alabama Baptists

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the privilege and honor of serving as president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. This has been a challenging and eventful year, and we have had many mountains to climb and many valleys to walk through.

At this year's convention in Mobile, we will hear some great preaching the day before at the pastors conference on Monday. During the convention meeting, Fred Luter will speak on Tuesday night and we will hear Rick Evans on Wednesday morning. You will hear reports from all of our entities and vote on our Great Commission budget for 2012.

For many years now, I have made it a habit of walking up to our military in uniform and thanking them for their service to our country. On Tuesday morning, during the president's address, I will recognize all those who have served in disaster re-

lief this year and thank them in behalf of all Alabama Baptists. I encourage all those who have served to wear their disaster relief shirts to the convention that day. I also encourage all those who serve on the boards of our entities to wear shirts with their entity logos on Wednesday at the morning session so we can thank them for their service.

I know Rick Lance will be properly attired in his suit, French-cuff shirt, tie, pocket handkerchief and wingtip shoes, so that type of dress is also permissible. Many of our churches dress in casual clothes, so feel free to wear what you usually wear to your church. I hope every church will be represented in Mobile for the convention. May God bless all that you do for His Kingdom, and may He receive all the glory, for only He is worthy. I love you, I love you, I love you.

*Pastor Mike Shaw
First Baptist Church, Pelham*

this past year. I have appreciated his wisdom and his wit like never before. I am grateful Alabama Baptists chose him to be our president."

Lance asked state Baptists to pray for Shaw as he leads the convention meeting.

"He will do an excellent job, but all of us need to pray for each

other," Lance said. "Mike is a man of prayer like few I know. For Alabama Baptists to be praying for him will strengthen him that much more. He will be praying for you — that is for certain."

For more information about the state convention annual meeting, visit alsbom.org.



DON'T FORGET
to set
your clocks back
Nov. 6!

Across Alabama's Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► **Birmingham Association** will hold a singles Thanksgiving celebration Nov. 17, 6 p.m., at Hilldale Church, Center Point. A traditional Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings will be served. For reservations call 205-599-3245 by Nov. 15. Ron Pate is pastor of Hilldale. Mike McLemore is executive director of Birmingham Association.

COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will celebrate homecoming/harvest day Nov. 13, 10:30 a.m. Mark Anderson will speak. The Parrish Family will sing. Lunch will follow. Hosea Parker is pastor. ► **Smyrna Church, Dothan**, will celebrate homecoming Nov. 6. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. and worship at 10:45. Clayton Bath will speak. Pastor James Bell will provide special music.

DEKALB

► **Robert Reed** is the new director of music for **Nazareth Church, Rainsville**. He previously served as director of music for Brashers Chapel Church, Albertville. He also has served Happy Home Church, Henagar. Reed is bivocational and owns nVI-US Graphics, a graphic design firm. He and his wife, Mandi, have two children. Roger Graham is pastor. ► **Mountain View Church, Sylvania**, was voted into full membership of DeKalb Association Oct. 17. The church was under watch-care for the past year. It is one of the churches destroyed by the April 27 tornadoes. Brian Harris is pastor of Mountain View. Ken Clement is



REED

director of missions for DeKalb Association.

LIMESTONE

► **Elkton Road Church, Athens**, will host a Christian Life Convention Nov. 6-9 with Evangelist Don Graham of Don Graham Revival Ministries in Clanton. Services will be Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Toney Wales is pastor.

MARION

► **First Church, Winfield**, will present "Final Judgment 2011: I Never Knew You" Nov. 6-10. It will begin Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. The presentation was written by Joyce Ballew. For reservations call 205-487-2666. Charles A. Ballew is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Highland Gardens Church, Montgomery**, will celebrate its 71st homecoming Nov. 13, 10:30 a.m. Fred Bueto will speak. Richard Harrison will lead the music. Choir practice will be at 10 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Bring a side dish or dessert. For information call 334-263-0294 or email hgbc@knology.net. Earl Wise is pastor. ► **Hunter Station Church, Montgomery**, will hold an old-fashioned gospel singing Nov. 5, 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

► **John Steele** is the new music director for **Blue Springs Church, Somerville**. He also is a music teacher at West Decatur Elementary School. He previously served at New Center Church, Hartselle. He is married to Rae. Ralph McCollum is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Howard Thompson** resigned as pastor of **West Jefferson Church, Quinton**. He was pastor for 11 years. He is available for interim work by calling 205-686-9522. ► **Mickey Bell**, pastor of **Union Hill Church, Bessemer**, reported that the church has withdrawn as a member of Mud Creek Association. Ken Maddox is director of missions.

RUSSELL

► **Ladonia Church, Phenix City**, will host Another Day Closer to Heaven Ministry's Saturday night gospel sing Nov. 5, 6 p.m. EST, with gospel trio Trinity, of Reynolds, Ga., gospel singer/songwriter Denny Grimes and female gospel artist CJ. There will be giveaways from local businesses and eateries. David Howle is pastor.

SALEM-TROY

► **Averyt Walker** resigned as director of missions for **Salem-Troy Association** to be pastor of **St. John Church, Brundidge**. He also has served Shiloh Church, Banks. Walker holds a bachelor's degree from Troy University. He and his wife, Brenda, have two children and three grandchildren.



WALKER

ST. CLAIR

► **CrossPoint Church, Trussville**, hosted Miss Alabama 2011 Courtney Porter Oct. 23. She gave her testimony in the three worship celebrations. She is an active member of CrossPoint. Ryan Whitley is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Bellview Church, McCalla**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary Nov. 20, 11 a.m. There will be special speakers. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Royal Masters Quartet will sing in the afternoon. Johnye Horton is interim pastor. ► The Catching Kids Puppet Ministry of **Northridge Church, Northport**, will present a special Thanksgiving program called "Giving Thanks" Nov. 13, 6 p.m. For information call 205-758-5599 or visit www.northridgebaptistchurch.com. Brad Smith is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Winston Association** will hold an evangelism celebration Nov. 13, 5 p.m., at First Church, Arley. Mike Montgomery, of Bowling Green, Ky., will speak. There will be special music. Roger Houston is pastor of First, Arley. Al Hood is director of missions for Winston Association.



Decatur's Southside honors past, embraces future

Southside Baptist Church, Decatur, celebrated its 100th anniversary Oct. 23 with the theme "Remembering the Past: Embracing the Future."

According to Pastor Ben Hayes, the celebration recognized former staff members and reflected on the Morgan Baptist Association church's history.

A church member offered words of greeting, followed by a response from former Pastor John Ray's son, Mark. Hayes said Mark Ray presented "a great little segment" during which he talked about the church's history. "[It was] just an excellent way to bring everyone together, thinking about the past and present," Hayes remarked.

Former Music Director Mike Casey led the music. The 86 singers represented both current and former choir members.

Former Pastor Brooks Barkley preached on Joshua 4, delivering a challenge to the church to commit to the future.

Special recognition was given to church members who have attended Southside Baptist 50-plus years.

Two members in particular were recognized: one man who has been a member for 72 years and one woman who has been a member for 74 years.

Nancy Beasley of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque to commemorate the church's anniversary, and a representative from Congressman Robert Aderholt's office presented an American flag.

Following the service, an "old-fashioned" lunch was served both in the fellowship hall and under an outdoor tent.

"We truly have a great opportunity to reach our community and especially our neighborhood," Hayes said. "Our challenge is we want to reach all the people here."

Hayes added he believes Southside is poised to be a multigenerational church, reaching out to all age groups. "We really do have a great staff with great support from our lay leaders ... to truly reach out to our community," he said.

Birmingham's Southside marks 125 years

October 9 marked a doubly special occasion for Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham. Not only did the Centennial Celebration Sunday recognize the sanctuary's 100th anniversary but it also commemorated the Birmingham Baptist Association church's 125th anniversary.

The church invited former members and pastors to celebrate the milestones with a service featuring a history of the church, the rededication of the sanctuary and special music.

The gospel lesson reading was used when the sanctuary was first dedicated in 1911.

Pastor J. Stephen Jones delivered a special message titled "Looking Both Before and Beyond."

Following the service, a reception on church grounds allowed for further fellowship.

But the celebration didn't end there. "It's going to be a yearlong celebration of our presence in the community," Jones said, noting that several upcoming events and speakers are connected to the ongoing celebration.

Boaz's Red Apple celebrates 75th anniversary

Red Apple Baptist Church, Boaz, celebrated its 75th anniversary Aug. 21 with some of its former pastors.

One former pastor, Steve Eubanks, preached and spoke of the church's history, and several others were recognized. Randall Stoner, director of missions for Marshall Baptist Association, also spoke during the service, and the church choir provided special music.

A representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque to Red Apple Baptist to commemorate the special occasion.

After the service, the second part of the anniversary celebration began. "We had a dinner on the grounds, followed by a singing by (local gospel group) The Fishermen," church clerk Marjorie Monroe said.

Former Pastor Tony Holcomb also delivered a song to the crowd.

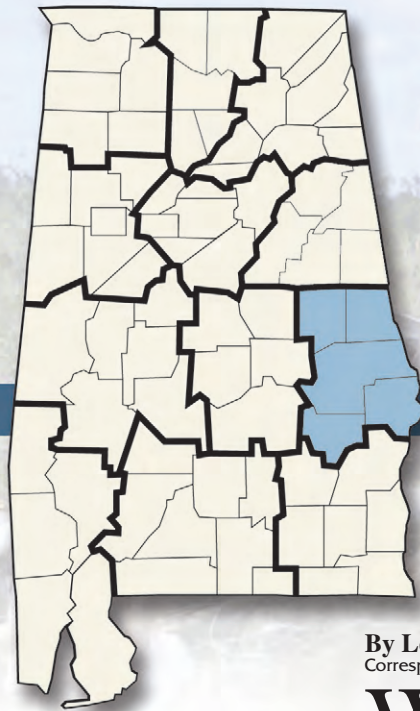
About 80 people gathered to celebrate during both events.



Photo courtesy of Christian Way Baptist Church

CHRISTIAN WAY DEDICATES NEW SANCTUARY

Christian Way Baptist Church, Camden, dedicated its new sanctuary Aug. 14, 10 years after dedicating its first building in 2001. Since then, it has started a Christian academy next to the church and a community outreach ministry downtown. Charles Autery is pastor.



Baptists RESPOND

to areas devastated by April tornadoes

Alabama Baptists continue to work in District 4

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Rick Ellison arrived in the Lake Martin area of Tallapoosa County shortly after the April 27 storms, damage was what he saw.

“There was a lot of devastation,” said Ellison, an associate in the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions’ (SBOM) office of leadership and church health.

In fact, he saw a man sitting on the foundation where his house had been just a few hours prior to that. The man’s house was in a field.

Ellison prayed with him.

That scene was not unique to Tallapoosa County. It was the case in county after county in the aftermath of tornadoes that wreaked havoc on two-thirds of Alabama and other parts of the Southeast.

More than 240 people were killed that day in Alabama.

In District 4 — which includes Bullock, Chambers, Lee, Macon, Russell and Tallapoosa counties — most of the damage was experienced by Tallapoosa County.

Though the damage there was not as severe as in Tuscaloosa County and some other areas of the state, it was still significant, Ellison said.

Six months have lapsed since those events changed the landscape, destroyed homes and disrupted normal life. In that time, some homes have been rebuilt or repaired and God’s people have responded in a tangible way to those who were hurting.

Tallapoosa Baptist Association

In Tallapoosa County, an evening storm centered its destructive forces around Lake Martin and Dadeville.

There was “a lot of damage close to Lake Martin Baptist (Church, Dadeville) in a subdivision” and in a subdivision along U.S. 280 East, said Barry Cosper, director of missions (DOM) for Tallapoosa Baptist Association.

At least one person died.

Melissa Poe, executive director of the Tallapoosa County chapter of the American Red Cross, said



Photos courtesy of Melissa Poe, executive director, American Red Cross, Tallapoosa County Chapter

DEVASTATION — Parts of Tallapoosa County suffered extensive damage during the April 27 tornadoes.

District 4

East Liberty Association

Tuskegee Lee Association

Russell Association

Bullock-Centennial Association

Tallapoosa Association

Explanation of districts

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

64 homes were destroyed and another 59 sustained major damage.

Cosper and his wife, Cathy, served as disaster relief chaplains, working alongside the Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Right after the storm, Lake Martin Baptist opened its fellowship hall to feed displaced people and disaster relief volunteers 24 hours a day. The church did this for two weeks with the help of many people, some from other churches.

A team from First Baptist Church, Robertsdale, in Baldwin Baptist Association arrived quickly with a disaster relief team, Cosper said.

Ellison added that a crew from First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association responded swiftly as well.

Volunteers from many churches in Tallapoosa Association assisted with cleanup and helped those affected by the storms.

Calvary Heights Baptist Church and Sixth Street Baptist Church, both in Alexander City, became

distribution centers where displaced people could get necessities and supplies.

Other churches assisting displaced people were Calvary Baptist; First Baptist, Eagle Creek; and Beulah Baptist, all of Dadeville; Camp Hill Baptist; First Baptist, Alexander City; Mountain Springs

Baptist, Wadley; New Salem Baptist, New Site; and Daviston Baptist.

Poe, a member of First, Alexander City, said people all over the United States provided assistance for the county’s affected residents. However, the people of Tallapoosa (See ‘Associations,’ page 6)

Highlights from District 4

State disaster relief efforts in the area
(shown by county)

⚡ 1 of the 5 associations has Alabama Baptist disaster relief efforts focused on it.

● 1 feeding unit was brought in during the first few weeks.

Associations, churches meet needs, rebuild

(continued from page 5)

County and Alabama really blew her away because their outpouring of care was “overwhelming.”

“It was fantastic how the community and state stepped in,” she said. “It was like being on a missions trip at home.”

So great was the response that the Red Cross had to open a warehouse to handle all the donations, Poe said.

“There were people from all over who came in,” Cosper said of the help that arrived. Some brought tarps; some brought food; some came to make repairs.

Tallapoosa Association received an abundance of food and was able to give some to assist displaced people in Tuscaloosa and Birmingham.

Now the association’s focus is helping people rebuild, repair and take care of other needs, Cosper said.

Poe estimated that 24 houses either are in some phase of construction or have been completed. Some homeowners, she said, are still navigating insurance issues.

Of course, construction projects will continue for a while.

“It’s a long process,” Poe said. “It takes quite awhile to rebuild your life.”

Cosper said some out-of-state teams — from North Carolina and Texas, for example — have indicated a willingness to help rebuild homes in Tallapoosa County.

Through the response of Christian people, there is an “awareness (in the community) that the body of Christ is still alive and well,” he said.

The people of the association also have been made aware of how essential it is to be prepared to respond in a disaster. Cosper said 14 additional chaplains were trained in August to work with the association’s disaster relief team. In the spring, more people will be trained in food preparation and cleanup.

In addition, Cosper said the association is investigating the possibility of setting up an equipment trailer.

Bullock-Centennial Baptist Association

“Our association came out OK,” with practically no damage, said Gene Bridgman, DOM for Bullock-Centennial Baptist Association and pastor of Eastside Baptist Church, Union Springs.

Nonetheless the members of the association’s nine churches and Hispanic mission were determined to assist those in need and went into action immediately.

The churches, as well as the association itself, sent money to the SBOM’s disaster relief fund.

Also volunteers went to Eclectic in Elmore County to help people affected by the storms.

Six months removed from the April 27 tragedy, “the shock of the disaster is over,” Bridgman stated. It is time to persevere — to keep reaching out for as long as it takes to rebuild, he said.

Bridgman said volunteers from the association are likely to team with First, Montgomery, for missions trips to rebuild storm-damaged areas of the state.

Like so many other Alabama Baptist associations, Bullock-Centennial Association wants to be better prepared next time.



Photos courtesy of Melissa Poe, executive director, American Red Cross, Tallapoosa County Chapter

‘LONG PROCESS’ — Homes are being rebuilt in the Lake Martin area of Tallapoosa County six months after the April 27 tornadoes hit the area.

Already the association has some volunteers trained in cleanup, feeding unit and mud-out, said Bridgman, who is working to become a disaster relief chaplain. Now the association is looking at the feasibility of establishing a shower or laundry unit and just elected a disaster relief coordinator, he said.

East Liberty Baptist Association

Chambers County, where East Liberty Baptist Association is based, did not escape harm April 27.

A few properties sustained significant damage and one house was rendered uninhabitable, DOM Dale Wood said.

The county Emergency Management Agency (EMA) gave the association’s pastors the names of people affected by the storm so that the churches could follow up and provide needed assistance.

To help elsewhere, volunteers from the association took supplies to Hackleburg in Marion County and teamed with Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association on disaster relief projects in Tuscaloosa, Cottondale and Cullman.

Also churches went into other areas to serve: LaFayette Heights Baptist Church helped in Ashville in St. Clair County, and First Baptist Church, Lanett; First Baptist Church, LaFayette; and First Baptist Church, West End Baptist Church and Blanton Baptist Church, all in Valley, worked in chain saw, cleanup/recovery and food service in Hackleburg or provided equipment.

“It was fantastic how the community and state stepped in. It was like being on a missions trip at home.”

— Melissa Poe
American Red Cross

How to assist in relief efforts

To help rebuild, call Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions’ tornado rebuild assistant Penny Flowers, who connects volunteers with associations that need assistance, at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 597.

For a list of needs across the state, visit www.sbdr.org.

For other ways to get involved, call

- ▶ Bullock-Centennial Baptist Association at 334-738-3323,
- ▶ East Liberty Baptist Association at 334-864-7522,
- ▶ Russell Baptist Association at 334-298-8495,
- ▶ Tallapoosa Baptist Association at 256-825-4441 or
- ▶ Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association at 334-745-0588. (TAB)

Moreover the association teamed with Alpha and Omega Processing in Daphne to assemble backpacks for students in Hackleburg.

A Bible and a letter of encouragement from students in Fairhope in Baldwin County were included in each backpack.

This effort was given a boost by a Michigan group that assembled backpacks for junior and senior high students in Hackleburg.

The effort was such a success that excess backpacks went to students in Phil Campbell in Franklin County and other places, Wood said.

For the next year, the association has “adopted” Hackleburg and will help to rebuild there, he continued.

Through the storm and recovery, “I’ve witnessed folk caring for one another,” Wood said.

Some people have drawn closer to God because of the care they received from church members.

There have been reports of professions of faith, Wood said.

With an eye on future readiness, the association is creating a disaster relief unit trained in mud-out, chain saw and cleanup/recovery.

“We are not going to be caught off-guard again,” Wood stated.

The association has purchased a 16-foot trailer for its supplies. West End Baptist has been instrumental in getting the trailer equipped, Wood said.

That church, along with Blanton Baptist, held a benefit singing to obtain funds for equipping the trailer.

Recently five people were certified in disaster relief, joining the three others in the association who already were deployable. This month, the association will see six people finish chaplaincy courses.

Wood said it is the desire of the association and volunteers to become a “first call” unit in a disaster.

“We want to be capable of immediate response,” he said.

The association also will be involved as the local EMA strives to create a Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster unit to coordinate

homes, lives

volunteer efforts during a disaster. Wood said he is scheduled to speak at a meeting for that this month.

Russell Baptist Association

Russell County was about 70 miles away from the storms' paths, putting Russell Baptist Association in the position to help those who took a direct hit.

"We're working with St. Clair (Baptist) Association and have been ever since the storm," DOM Wayne Burns said.

"We've been up there repairing roofs, helping clean up on Shoal Creek Road," among other things, Burns said.

Most Russell Association churches have assisted in some way, either by collecting needed items or monetary donations or giving their time.

The association also has secured portable storage units, called PODS, for families who were able to salvage some things. "That has been a joy and a blessing to see that happen," Burns said.

A number of times, volunteers from the association have made trips to St. Clair County to deliver supplies. Some volunteered with the District 4 feeding unit in Birmingham and St. Clair County.

Russell Association has committed to partner with St. Clair Association for a year to help rebuild homes and lives and meet needs.

"A lot of things have been done," Burns stated.

For example, some families have progressed to the point that they no longer need PODS.

Yet much is still to be accomplished. "That's going to be the continuing thing," Burns said.

Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association

Macon County sustained no damage, so Tuskegee Lee Association's disaster relief efforts have been focused on one of its other counties, Lee County.

"We've been very much involved in the recovery effort," DOM Bill King said.

The association has dispatched chain saw and feeding unit volunteers, as well as chaplains.

Twice, volunteers from the association have been to DeKalb and Sand Mountain Baptist associations for rebuilding endeavors, King said. On one trip the work concentrated on Mountain View Baptist Church, Sylvania. The other trip's focus was homes in the High Point community and others near Henagar Baptist Church, which provided lodging for the volunteers.

Workers from Tuskegee Lee Association also have been to Tuscaloosa twice, Cullman and Dadeville, King said. In addition, they served with a feeding unit in Bessemer in Jefferson County and Ragland in St. Clair County.

King said disaster relief personnel from the association were on the ground for almost two months following the storms.

Each time a disaster relief team has completed its task in an area, team members could look back at that effort and see that individuals had been helped, he said. But they also could see that much more was needed.

"It's encouraging and discouraging at the same time," King observed. "It's going to take a long time to recover," possibly two years for the Sand Mountain area.

It is his concern that as time passes, people will forget the needs of those affected by the storms.

"We don't need to do that," he said.

Tuskegee Lee Association disaster relief coordinator considers work 'blessing'

It's been a fast-paced few months for William Letlow. As the disaster relief coordinator for Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association, Letlow has worked to assemble disaster relief teams and deploy them to areas in need.

He has sent a number of disaster relief volunteers statewide since the April 27 tornadoes. Volunteers have gone to Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Cullman, Ragland and Dadeville.

But Alabama isn't the only state that has benefitted from their efforts.

Shortly after Hurricane Irene wreaked havoc on the East Coast in late August, Letlow and a team traveled to Greenville, N.C.

Letlow's personal journey in disaster re-

lief work began in 2004 when he accepted an invitation to attend a meeting about the subject. "It sparked my interest," he said.

He went through his first training session at the association's office in 2006. But it wasn't until this year that Letlow said his work really began.

When Bill King, director of missions for Tuskegee Lee Association, asked him if he would serve as disaster relief coordinator, he said he was a bit hesitant at first but soon accepted the task.

Shortly after assuming the role, Ron Warren, state coordinator of cleanup, recovery and chain saw,

asked Letlow if he could assemble a team to serve in a tornado-ravaged area of Mississippi.

When the April 27 tornadoes hit Alabama,



LETLLOW

East Alabama Carpenters for Christ rebuilds Mountain View

Visitors to the East Alabama Carpenters for Christ website (eastalcfc.wordpress.com) will view two vastly contrasting photographs under the heading "Before and After Photos from Sylvania Mission."

The first photo, an aerial shot, shows a vacant lot where Mountain View Baptist Church, Sylvania, stood before it was destroyed by one of the April 27 tornadoes. Visible debris is strewn throughout the property. The second photo shows a completely different scene. A large church building with a towering white steeple appears. And what makes this "after" photo of the new church structure even more profound is that it is labeled "June 8."

Within this short timespan, East Alabama Carpenters for Christ, based in Chambers County, traveled to Sylvania and built

Mountain View Baptist's new structure, with the assistance of volunteers ready to roll up their sleeves.

According to Billy Farmer, chief cook for East Alabama Carpenters for Christ and a member of Fairview Baptist Church, Valley, this timespan is typical for the team.

Farmer said when they arrived at the site in late May, the church had the slab already poured. The team built the walls, put up the trusses and put on metal roofing. The whole process was completed in about a week and a half. "It was ready to finish," Farmer said, adding they had services in an area of the new building the second Sunday in June.

East Alabama Carpenters for Christ has about 60-70 members and usually does one project a year. According to its website, it is an "organization of laymen which gives men an opportunity to use their time and talents in

constructing church buildings to the glory of God."

Farmer said the group identifies potential construction projects through the North American Mission Board's online resource, The Bridge. Once a project is identified, the group begins a process of contacting the project coordinator and passing the project idea through a committee.

East Alabama Carpenters for Christ has traveled to a number of states for projects: Missouri, Virginia and Illinois, to name a few.

"If you go one time [on a project], you'll go again," Farmer remarked. "You're hooked." He said a fellow team member once commented to him on how amazing it was that the group worked so well together. "You've really got to live it to see it," Farmer explained. (TAB)

Russell Association's Carrell 'salt, light in community'

It's all about ministry," Joycelyn Carrell said. For the past 35 years, she has lived out this statement as a devoted worker for Russell Baptist Association.

Carrell, who attends Auburn Heights Baptist Church, Phenix City, was just a teenager when she first felt called to missionary service. She said that calling includes helping people put their faith into action.

As Russell Association's church and community ministries director, Carrell does just that. One of her main roles is serving as director of the association's Baptist Center in Phenix City, which offers a number of outreaches to the community. She is also

responsible for associationwide events for senior adults, including the annual "singspiration" music event in the spring. She also works with Alabama Raceway Ministries, passing out tracts to campers at the Talladega Superspeedway and inviting them to activities on-site.

In the realm of disaster relief, Carrell also has offered her service. She has kept track of disaster relief volunteers aiding in the aftermath of the April 27 tornadoes, making chain saw team, feeding team, temporary child care team and shower unit volunteers aware of call-ups and pinpointing which ones were available to send out.

While eight volunteers traveled to Birming-

ham in May to cook meals for a week, volunteers have visited St. Clair County three times to aid in rebuilding efforts and re-roof houses. Russell Association has partnered with St. Clair Baptist Association to assist with recovery efforts.

According to Wayne Burns, director of missions for Russell Association, Carrell has aided in this partnership. "She is an excellent worker," he said. Whether rolling up her sleeves for disaster relief efforts or teaching English as a second language, being "salt and light in the community" is important to Carrell, and she plans to keep ministering to people where they are. (TAB)

West End leads effort in purchasing trailer for East Liberty Association

Dale Wood, director of missions for East Liberty Baptist Association, recognized a real need in his association after Alabama's deadly April 27 tornadoes. There was not an established chain saw disaster relief trailer to deploy to disaster zones.

Don Downs, pastor of West End Baptist Church, Valley, was also aware of this need, so he and his church began to spearhead an effort to raise funds to purchase a trailer.

In addition to establishing a special offering to raise money for the trailer, West End Baptist put on a special benefit concert June 4.

The concert was hosted by West End Worship Pastor Truett Pirkle's gospel group, Southern Vision. It raised one-third of the trailer's cost.

The trailer has since been purchased, and East Liberty Association churches have begun outfitting it with chain saws and other equipment.

"We're in the process now of getting everything put into the trailer and getting it the way we want it so we can be prepared for disaster relief [efforts]," Downs reported.

He added that it was his church's desire to really "step up to the plate" and make a difference. "If this trailer could help just one family, it's well worth it to us," he said.

Downs is aware of 11 volunteers within the association who have recently attended chain saw training. (TAB)

Believers in Lebanon ask for prayer as they share with Syrian refugees

(continued from page 1)

We had no excuse," he said. With the help of the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund, the church loaded up boxes of food and other necessities and headed north, where it found scores of hurting refugees with great needs.

"We saw people having to use plastic bags and newspaper for diapers," Josef said. "It broke our hearts."

The boxes have helped more than 1,200 families — Syrians and the Lebanese near the border who have taken the refugees into their homes.

"The Akkar region of Lebanon (near the Syrian border) is the poorest region of the country, and people living in extreme poverty there are taking in Syrian families they can't afford to feed," Josef said.

So the boxes are a welcome blessing, but Josef, Fadi and others from their church find the Syrians are hungrier for the gospel than the food.

"You would think they would listen to our message just to be able to get the box but they don't. Sometimes they say, 'We don't need the box but we want a Bible. We've been waiting for someone to give us a Bible,'" Josef said.

The church members have returned often to the border villages to check on the people there, and when they do, people greet them by kissing their Bibles and touching them to their foreheads.

"They haven't burned or torn them, which is common," Josef said. "They tell us, 'We want to

Food gifts prevent 'host fatigue'

The Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD) continues to monitor the need for food among Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the Lebanese families hosting the refugees, said Nabil Costa, executive director of LSESD.

"Almost one-third of the LSESD distributions (food and hygiene kits to 863 families) have been for host families ...

particularly as the level of poverty in the region is quite high and the education and employment rates are extremely low," he said. "Supporting the host families decreases 'host fatigue' and the need to move refugees into tented camps or communal living options."

LSESD is working with Rahbeh Baptist Church in north Lebanon and the global Baptist family, Costa noted. (TAB)

study the Bible with you.' We have been teaching them how to live as disciples of Christ."

The church has distributed more than 1,300 New Testaments in the area since the summer.

Sam Lawson said it's incredible the way God has thrown open the door.

Beginning of a movement

"You can't share the gospel freely in Syria, so these people have never heard it before," said Lawson, a Christian worker in the Middle East. "In a short period of time, we've been able to share with the same number of Syrians that it would take us months and months to share with in Syria."

The number of refugees in Lebanon is waning, and the church prays continuously that God will follow up with the Syrians when they

return to their homes, Josef said. Fadi said it could be the beginning of a movement.

"I feel sorry for what happened to the refugees, losing their homes and having hardships," he said. "But it might have been the only way for them to hear the gospel."

Believers in Lebanon asked for prayer that

- ▶ the church will know how, when and where to disciple people;
- ▶ believers will use their time wisely and be led by the Spirit;
- ▶ God will grow these new believers into strong leaders; and
- ▶ hundreds of reproducing churches will spring up across northern Lebanon and throughout Syria.

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

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- Psalm 85:6

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WORSHIP LEADER

 DON GRAHAM Revivalist and evangelist, Clanton, Ala.	 BYRON PAULUS Life Action Ministries Buchanan, Mich.	 JOSH DAVIS Proskuneo Ministries Grayson, Ga.
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For more information, call 334-636-5305.

Miller retiring after 39 years at Children's Homes

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On the battlefield in Vietnam, Paul Miller surrendered.

To Christian child work.

"I had already felt the Lord moving me that direction, but while I was in Vietnam, I knew He was calling me and I told Him I would do it," Miller said. "And I knew I needed a seminary degree for that so I applied from there."

One week, he was in Vietnam, and the next, he was in a classroom at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

And he never looked back on his decision.

Now Miller is looking at the first major vocational change he's had since finishing up a joint degree at Southwestern Seminary and the University of Alabama. After 39 years, he's retiring from the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), the only place he's ever worked.

Providing for children

"I've had the privilege of living out here in Alabama what I feel was a distinct call to Christian child care," said Miller, ABCH president and CEO. "Serving here, you feel like you are able to be a part of making life better for children who have known a great deal of pain and disappointment, to help them know the love of God and develop their potential."

He never gave ABCH a resumé — he came on as an intern and never left. He didn't apply for the president job either — the search committee approached him.

Miller sees the whole thing as a humbling experience.

"I appreciate the fact that God chose to call me, and I appreciate Alabama Baptists giving me an opportunity to live out that call," he said.

Rick Lance, executive director of

the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said he has long respected Miller for his humble leadership and commitment to Christ.

"I have met few people who equal his commitment to meeting the needs of others in Jesus' name," Lance said. "Paul walks the walk of being a prayer warrior. His ministry of prayer has been a strong foundation on which to do ministry for Christ. And he is a positive change agent for Christ."

Miller has indeed been able to see a lot of change since his first day of work on ABCH's Troy campus as a social worker nearly four decades ago.

That day, he carried his briefcase to work on a bike.

"I was practicing conservation before it was popular," Miller said with a laugh.

In the time since, he's seen ABCH grow to include a Mobile campus, where he worked for 15 years as superintendent after his stint in Troy. Then he saw the organization move its headquarters from Troy to Birmingham, where he now serves as entity head.

And through the years, ABCH also added multiple other ministries, including foster care programs in Birmingham, Decatur, Dothan and Oxford.

"Paul Miller helped to shepherd the enormous transitions through the years as the leader of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries," Lance said. "I can attest to the effective leadership Paul has offered to the ministries for which he is responsible. I will miss Paul, the friendly partner I have had in ministry in Alabama Baptist life for these many years."

As his Jan. 31, 2012, retirement date approaches, Miller said he's looking forward to an active life of involvement with his church — First Baptist Church, Pell City — and going on missions trips.

He's also ready to spend more



Photo by Neisha Fuson

HUMBLE LEADERSHIP — Paul Miller, president and CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, is pictured with children at the Birmingham campus. Miller is retiring after 39 years of service.

time with his wife, three children and seven grandchildren.

"I'm so grateful for my family — my supportive, loving children and spouse. She has ministered and been with me all those years," Miller said of Diane, his wife of 44 years. "I'm looking forward to what God's got in store for me and my family."

High hopes

He's got high hopes for ABCH's future, too.

"I would love to see our family ministries strengthened to the point that there wasn't even a need for foster care homes," Miller said. "I know that's idealistic and we could never have it happen for all but for as many as we could — to keep them in their families or re-

unite them with their families."

He said he is excited to watch how the ministry will grow in the coming years.

"I hope we always respond to the greatest need and the greatest potential to respond, doing that in a way that would honor Christ always," Miller said. "I'm very grateful and I'm going to continue to pray for this ministry and support it."


He said he can't imagine a life more meaningful than the one he's been privileged to spend looking after orphans, engaging in what the Book of James calls "true religion."

"I believe the Word and I believe we are to live that out. I haven't always done that, but it's always been the desire of my heart," Miller said. "I'm grateful for the children

I had the opportunity to watch grow along the way. You have disappointment at times, and you wish sometimes they would make different choices, but so many have responded to the love of Christ."

He said he got an email just the other day from a young woman whom he had known on the Troy campus years ago at the beginning of his work.

"She was just writing to say, 'You and Mrs. Miller made a difference in my life. I know you cared for me and truly loved me,'" he said. "Every day, when I've come to work, I've known that it mattered to someone. Being able to be a part of that has been such a blessing."

For more information about his ministry at ABCH, visit www.alabamachild.org. 

Samford hosts 21st Lilly Fellows Program annual meeting



Photo by Caroline Summers

SINGING THE STORY — Rosephanye Dunn-Powell, a vocal studies professor at Auburn University, leads a plenary session on African-American spirituals at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, during the national Lilly Fellows Program conference hosted by Samford University Oct. 21–23.

Historian and religious studies professor Charles Marsh told educators at a national conference of church-related institutions at Samford University that German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer embraced the idea of social ministries while studying in the United States during 1930–31.

Speaking at the opening plenary session of the 21st annual meeting of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts, Marsh noted that Bonhoeffer arrived as a "straight-arrow academic" with little respect for American intellectual and religious life, and "left with a transformed perspective on social engagement, faith and historical responsibility."

Almost 200 educators and administrators from the 96 universities that are part of the Lilly National Program attended the Oct. 21–23 event.

Marsh, director of The Project on Lived Theology at the University of Virginia, said Bonhoeffer learned "to see the great events of world history from below ... in short from the perspective of the suffering" after taking a course in

"Church and Community" at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Upon his return to Germany, Bonhoeffer became involved in social ministries in Berlin, said Marsh. He began opposing the Nazi regime during the 1930s, and ultimately was arrested by the Nazis in 1943 and executed in 1945.

The Lilly Conference theme of "Reconciliation in History, Literature, and Music" examined aspects of the Civil Rights Movement and social action. Marsh is the author of several books on Civil Rights history and two on Bonhoeffer.

Also leading plenary sessions were literature and folklore scholar Trudier Harris, the J. Carlyle Sitterson Professor of English Emerita at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who spoke on "The Terrible Pangs of Compromise: Racial Reconciliation in African American Literature," and vocal studies professor Rosephanye Dunn-Powell of Auburn University, who provided visiting educators with an introduction to African-American church music at Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. (SU)



Photo by Chris Mills

MISSIONS-MINDED — A group from FBC Montgomery prays for the ministry of Reach the Nations near Atlanta. The church has helped North American Mission Board missionary Bill Johnson, who serves as church planter, for the past two years.

‘A God ... for all nations’

FBC Montgomery international ministry reaches refugees near Atlanta

By Chris Mills
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The nations are here.” That’s been a common thought among missions-minded evangelicals for the past several years. And it’s a reality for Bill Johnson, a North American Mission Board missionary who serves as church planter with Reach the Nations near Atlanta.

“There are 52 languages spoken in a five-mile radius and 112 within a 10-mile radius — many of them refugees,” Johnson said.

His ministry to these people depends a great deal on partnerships with churches throughout the Southeast that send groups to do things like prayer walking, visiting homes and hosting backyard Bible clubs. Several groups from First Baptist Church, Montgomery, have worked with him the past two years. And recently a group who can relate

to the refugees perhaps more than anyone else went to assist Johnson — the international ministry of First, Montgomery.

“Before coming to America, I was a Buddhist monk in Laos. I also lived in a refugee camp in Thailand for three months,” said Victor Phakonekham, a member of the Montgomery Baptist Association church who has lived in Montgomery for more than 20 years.

“They looked a lot like me when I first came to the United States,” he said of the refugees with whom the international group worked. “I understand how they felt, because I have felt like them. They need to know about Jesus.”

So telling them about Jesus was what the group set out to do.

“I [wanted] to tell them that Jesus Christ loves everybody. He died for us. He’s a God for everybody, for all nations,” church mem-

ber Rattana Vongphachanh said.

But communicating that to the refugees wasn’t necessarily easy.

“I spoke with some of them in Thai,” Vongphachanh said.

Phakonekham’s wife, Vanna, wanted the refugees to have peace.

“Before I came to know God, I didn’t have any peace,” she said. “Now that I know Him, I have peace. I want them to have that peace.”

Johnson praised the group. “Their love for the refugee community is evident,” he said.

Of course, Vongphachanh said the group members were simply obeying God’s command.

“We went to share with them because God says to love Him first and to love your neighbor.”

For more information, visit www.rtnatlanta.com.

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

I’ve noticed during the last several months more of you have chosen to communicate through email and some of you have found me online. Since so many of us are using computers these days I thought I’d let you know we have a web site. You may either Google it or go directly to McGowinKing.net. For those of you who would rather talk directly to a person, my phone still works — most of the time.



Jimmy Dixon

Last month I was in a home in a rural part of Alabama when someone called. I usually have my phone on vibrate mode, but that day I left the ringer on. I excused myself and answered by saying, “I’m sorry, but I’m with someone if you’ll give me your number, I’ll call you right back.” The person on the phone gave me their number, but before I could write it down my phone dropped the call. Oops, I told

someone I’d call them back, but I only had part of their number. That reminded me of software I purchased to keep unwanted emails from coming through. I had it for a year until I realized it threw some potential customers in a junk mail. By the time I called them, they had done business with someone else.

All this to say, I apologize if you tried to get me and had trouble. I hope you’ll call or email again and hopefully, we’ll get connected.

We’re still helping folks pay off mortgages and get some extra income from the equity in their homes and we’ll be glad to help you.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Jerry Hood
Mount Enon Baptist Church, Dothan

The Bible, written over a period of 1,500 years by 40 different authors, is the only true written authoritative source to know God.

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning, God created.” After God created the earth and all that is, He created Adam. He breathed into Adam’s body, which He had created from the dust of the earth, and Adam became a living soul. Then God created Eve to be Adam’s helpmate. They rebelled, breaking their relationship with God. Through Adam’s sin, sin entered every human soul and caused us to be separated from God.

Because of sin, the body will die but the soul will exist forever in heaven or hell. God so loved mankind that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the price of sin on the cross so that we can be forgiven and brought back into right relationship with God. God has provided a Savior, but we must take action to receive God’s gracious gift of salvation.

We must agree with God that we are sinners as Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” We must repent, turn away from sin and ask God to forgive us because Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” We must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and commit our life to Him, because Romans 10:9 says, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

We must pray something like this, meaning every word from the depth of our heart: Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I know that you died and rose again to save me. I turn away from my sin and ask you now to forgive my sins and save my soul. I want you to save me and be the Lord of my life. Amen!

Then you need to follow Christ in baptism and join a Bible-teaching, -preaching and -worshiping church.



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'This will be for all'

Iraqi Kurdistan's governor provides 2 acres of land for Baptist facilities

By **Joni B. Hannigan**
Florida Baptist Witness

Just as the sun was rising in the West on Sept. 29, a new day dawned in Iraq's Kurdistan region as Gov. Tamar Ramadhan gave Baptists two acres of land worth \$2 million for the Grace Baptist Cultural Center — a multiphase project including a medical clinic, school, athletic facility, church building and seminary in the town of Simele. The first phase of the facility, slated for completion in 2012, is a clinic for women and children, who traditionally have limited health care options in the Middle East.

Standing in for Ramadhan, Gurgis Shlaymun, the deputy governor of Kurdistan's regional government in Dohuk, joined a team from Hillcrest Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla., along with Iraqi, Jordanian and Brazilian Baptists and other evangelical Christians, at an hourlong ceremony prior to cementing the top on an engraved marble cornerstone marking the new property.

'Children of Iraq'

Shlaymun, an Assyrian Christian first elected to his post in the Muslim-majority government in 2005, delivered remarks at a community center near the undeveloped property in the growing village of Simele. In the Dohuk province of Kurdistan, Simele is on the main road of an agricultural plain about 10 miles from the Turkish border.

This city has a tragic history concerning Assyrian Christians. In 1800, Christian inhabitants of Simele were forced from their homes and massacred by local radicals. In 1933, after Assyrians and Chaldeans again found refuge and settled in the fertile valley, an estimated 3,000 were slaughtered by the Iraqi government following the withdrawal of British troops from the region in light of a treaty granting Iraq's independence in 1930.

Under a banner bearing a colorful map of Iraq's regions marked with a cross and open hands at the spot of the new facilities in Simele, Shlaymun smiled at the gathering of about 100 local officials and Christians and extended a special greeting for those from afar.

"The people of Dohuk love their guests," Shlaymun said. "Today you are the children of Iraq."

Noting the involvement of Baptist groups from various nations, Shlaymun praised each for serving the people of Dohuk by taking interest in "each family, in each sickness" so future generations will be well served. "This is our duty to introduce the land for this project," he said.

Recognizing Iraqi Baptist pastor Farouk Hammo, a project leader who shares a personal history with Ramadhan, Shlaymun said, "Our purpose and your purpose is to make a good generation."

Shlaymun, a deacon in the Assyrian Church of the East, spoke open-



Photo by Joni B. Hannigan

DEDICATION — Iraqi Kurdistan Deputy Gov. Gurgis Shlaymun (left) watches as Florida pastor Jim Locke spreads cement in a dedication ceremony of the Grace Baptist Cultural Center in Simele.

ly about the spiritual dimension of the center.

"Jesus said your light will be shined through the people to see your works and glorify your Father in the heaven," Shlaymun said. "That is what Jesus Christ said in the Bible. And this Jesus did not speak specifically about man but for all the world. This will be for all."

Shlaymun pledged his support for

the project and thanked the leaders. "You understand this project is from God," he said, urging continued unity.

Ruba Abbassi, director of Arab Woman Today Ministries, is looking forward to the unique opportunity this project presents to serve Iraqi women directly on their land and hopes to advance Christian women's leadership role in Iraq by focusing on women in ministry and pastors' wives.

"Arab Woman Today considers this project a turning point in our impact in the region because it allows us to work with all kinds of women and ... approaches: social, emotional, spiritual and educational," Abbassi said. "Iraq will be the first country who provides us full freedom to implement this project."

Her husband, Nabeeh, immediate past president of the Jordan Baptist Convention and pastor of West Amman Baptist Church, brought greetings from Baptists worldwide on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance and the European Baptist Federation of which the Baptist churches in Iraq are a part.

"We stand with you on the roots of a shared civilization and history," Nabeeh Abbassi said. "We are genuinely rooted; our evangelical churches are part of the whole. We are a small slice or number within you but large within its allegiance and dreams.

"The history of the Baptist church of Iraq is still being written," he said.

Nabeeh Abbassi, who is also the provost at Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary in Amman, said he is thankful to God for the "unique Kurdish leadership" for providing security and comfort. Because of the leadership, people from all backgrounds, in spite of their dif-

ferences and political parties or religious beliefs, "live with tolerance," he said.

Brian Barlow, missions pastor of Hillcrest Baptist and a former Southern Baptist representative in the Middle East, said in his remarks that the educators at the new school will have the responsibility to teach "the universal principles of kindness, respect, compassion, human rights, charity, dignity, equality and peaceful coexistence among every Kurd, Assyrian, Arab, Chaldean, Turkmen, [Syrian] and Armenian."

A former superintendent of the Baptist School in Amman, known as one of the crown jewels of the Middle East, Barlow said the community should welcome every "Muslim, Christian and Yezidi" because the center has as its main focus the role "to educate the children of Kurdistan, of Iraq — to see all others as neighbors and to learn to love their neighbors as they love themselves and their own families."

'We cared'

Acknowledging informed people throughout the world know Kurdistan has become a refuge for thousands fleeing violence in other parts of Iraq and in countries nearby, Barlow said developing the project is "a way to say to those who come in the future, 'We cared.'"

Noting the people of Kurdistan, through their elected government officials, made a major contribution by donating the land for the center, Barlow said he is thankful for the partnership.

"This is a great example of how a good democratic government, freely elected, can bring about positive, progressive change and make life better for the entire community," he said. (TAB contributed)

Someone You Should Know

HELEN SANDERS BLANKENSHIP

*By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist*

FAVORITE VERSES: Luke 11:2-4
FAVORITE HYMNS: "I Know Whom I Have Believed" and "He Is So Precious to Me"
HOBBIES: Volunteering at a local nursing home once a month, quilting, sewing, baking and

BLANKENSHIP

Red Hat Society
FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 60 years of marriage to Milford; two children, Charles and Elaine; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and four step-great-grandchildren

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?
A: When I accepted the Lord, it [was] in a tent revival. I was about 17 years old.

Q: What church minis-

Q: How do you see yourself

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?
A: I can't tell you how good God is to me. I couldn't live a whole day without Him. ... He's just so good. He's an awesome God, I'll tell you what. I think the older you get, the closer you get to Him.

Q: How do you see yourself

Q: How do you see yourself

Q: How do you see yourself

Q: How do you see yourself

Q: How do you see yourself

Helen Sanders Blankenship will celebrate her 90th birthday this month. She is a charter member of Calvary Baptist Church, Lanett, and recalls the early days of meeting under a tent and later in a one-room building with curtains to separate Sunday School classes.

Q: How do you see yourself

A: For years and years, I've been Sunday School secretary. I sing in the choir.

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?

A: I can't tell you how good God is to me. I couldn't live a whole day without Him. ... He's just so good. He's an awesome God, I'll tell you what. I think the older you get, the closer you get to Him.

Q: How do you see yourself

A: Our pastor told the church one Sunday [that] we never get too old. I'd hate to give it up.

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

Goodbyes hard but important

I'm not good at goodbyes." But how many of us really are? Some of us want to avoid them, while others cannot stop saying goodbye. Still others feel so awkward that they withdraw and become almost unresponsive.

Goodbyes and endings are painful. They are uncomfortable. Whether you are saying goodbye to a child, a friend, a church, a particular leadership role or an organization, it is difficult. So we avoid goodbyes or handle them with little focus.

Are there any goodbyes you would like to repeat? Are there any you thought about later and wished you had said something more or something different?

It is ironic that we are not good at goodbyes, because they are so important.

I read one time that all the good work you do in a role can be wiped out completely by the nature of your goodbye. Take the woman who served faithfully and well in a leadership role, but when it came time to leave, she could not walk away. She became defensive and controlling, and after leaving, she continued to call to try to find out what was happening. Though she accomplished a lot, her legacy was the controlling, busybody nature of how she left.

We also can look at the leader who knew her time in leadership was coming to a close. Rather than embrace it and prepare for the tran-

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



sition, she chose to procrastinate and ignore the approaching end of her time. So, when she left, no one was prepared to step in and lead. No one knew what to do. As a result, the ministry suffered and was unable to continue. Her goodbye left a lot of anger and hurt.

So if goodbyes are so important, then why are they so hard?

Perhaps we need to change how we think of them. Instead of a dreadful moment to get through, a goodbye needs to be a microcosm of what we accomplished and what the relationship means to us. Our

leaving a role or organization has to solidify all the good that has taken place. It needs our utmost focus.

When we are leaving, it is important to have a plan for the timing and the transition. We need to speak with honesty and avoid the anger and conflict that so often accompany transitions. It must be handled with professionalism and care, because it is the moment that solidifies the work that has been accomplished.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Consider the roles you are leaving in the next year. Plan for the transition as though your legacy depends on it, because it does.

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

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PASTOR: Travis Road Baptist of Mobile prayerfully seeking God's leadership for a pastor. Submit resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 1046, Theodore, AL 36590-1046.

PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Centre is now accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. We are a conservative, evangelistic, missions-minded congregation of about 900 members with an average attendance of 350, with a contemporary and traditional worship service. Send resumés to: 300 East Bypass, Centre, AL 35960, or email to: fbc_centre@yahoo.com. Our website is www.fbc-centre.org.

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: New Elkhatchee Baptist Church is now receiving resumés for bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Mary Shockley, 448 Newman Road, Alexander City, AL 35010, or mshockley@russellmedcenter.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Southside Baptist Church of Montevallo, Ala., is seeking a bivocational pastor. Submit inquiries and resumés to: sbcmontevallo@charter.net, or mail to: P.O. Box 654, Montevallo, AL 35115.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Cahaba View Baptist Church, Leeds, is seeking a bivocational minister of music and choir director. Send resumés to: nbruce88@att.net, or call the church office at 205-956-9114.

YOUTH PASTOR: FBC Opelika is receiving resumés for full-time youth pastor. The ideal candidate will have at least five years experience in youth ministry, seminary experience and possess a heart and passion to love and disciple students in grades 7-12. Resumés may be sent to: FBC Opelika, ATTN: Executive Pastor, P.O. Box 329, Opelika, AL 36803.

YOUTH PASTOR: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time youth pastor to work with our 7th through 12th grade students. Please email resumés to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time children's director to work with our 1st through 6th grade students. Please email resumés to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

OTHER POSITIONS
DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Salem-Troy Baptist Association is accepting resumés for a full-time director of missions. Mail resumé to: Salem-Troy Baptist Association, P.O. Box 242, Troy, AL 36081. Deadline: Jan. 20, 2012.

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

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Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Texas Baptists push to eliminate border violence

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — While drug cartels brandish guns and other weapons, Baptists are seeking to end the violence through prayer and the spirit of God, said Daniel Rangel, director of Texas Baptists' River Ministry.

Texas Baptists are encouraging Christians to pray for the border and are training residents to have a positive impact on others in their communities.

"It takes a brave person to do what is right," Rangel said. "It takes a brave person to stand up for someone else. It takes a brave person to be kind, to be helpful, to seek out what is right. They are challenged to be an agent of peace, a person of peace."

Texas Baptists are working in partnership with No Mas Violencia — No More Violence. The joint effort, made possible by gifts to Texas from worldwide missions initiatives, partnerships through the Cooperative Program and the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions, customizes the No Mas Violencia curriculum first used in Argentina to quell violence before, during and after soccer games.

Since then, it has been used throughout South America to end violence in various situations.

"The first principle they teach is you're important and I'm important because we're both made in the image of God," Rangel said. The No Mas Violencia initiative is in direct response to a Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting motion to take action regarding violence along the border.

Kentucky association deems church too Calvinistic

OWENSBORO, Ky. — A Kentucky Baptist association denied membership to a church after a credentials committee found its confessional statement too Calvinistic, according to a report in the *Western Recorder*. Daviess-McLean Baptist Association (DMBA) voted 104-9 to deny membership to Pleasant Valley Community Church in Owensboro during its annual meeting held Oct. 17-18, the Kentucky Baptist Convention news journal reported in its Oct. 25 issue.

"Our concern in the initial stages of our investigation revolved around the fact that Pleasant Valley Community Church's confessional statement is one that (is) Calvinistic in nature," the newspaper quoted from a recommendation by the association's credentials committee. "While we know the doctrine is not heresy, we do recognize that it is vastly different than the majority of churches within the DMBA," the statement noted.

Frank Page, head of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, recently identified the growing influence of Calvinism as one of the biggest challenges facing the SBC.

According to a 2007 study by LifeWay Research, about one in 10 Southern Baptist pastors considered themselves to be five-point Calvinists. Page, a former SBC president elected as the Executive Committee's CEO last year, said he hears often from churches struggling with the divide between Calvinist and non-Calvinist theology.

Faith No. 1 reason for teenage abstinence, CDC study shows

The most frequent reason teenagers give for abstaining from sex is that the behavior is against their religion or morals, according to a study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Oct. 12.

Among the 57 percent of girls and 58 percent of boys ages 15-19 who said they had never had sex, 41 percent of girls and 31 percent of boys chose "against religion or morals" as their main reason for not having had sex. Teenagers were least likely to choose "don't want to get a sexually transmitted disease" as the reason for not having had sex, the CDC said.

"Adults have to decide whether teenagers are like barnyard animals, incapable of moral decision-making and at the mercy of primal urges," Richard Ross, co-founder of the True Love Waits abstinence movement, said. "Adults who tend to believe that assume all we can do is try to prevent some of the conse-

quences of their amoral behavior."

Early True Love Waits leaders stood in opposition to that sentiment and instead told teenagers, "We have great respect for you. In the power of the Spirit, we believe you are perfectly capable of choosing

values, making promises and keeping those promises," Ross said.

"That was a completely different message than they were hearing in school, and they rose up in historic numbers to embrace what they were hearing," Ross told Baptist Press. "Then, here we are, 17 years later, and the government asks the teenagers not having sex

why they live that way. And by a wide margin the students tell us it is all about their faith and not so much about their biological fears."

The response choices for the in-person interviews of more than 4,600 teenagers were: "against religion or morals," "don't want to get pregnant/get a female pregnant," "don't want to get a sexually transmitted disease," "haven't found the right person yet," "in a relationship, but waiting for the right time" and "other."

Researchers also found that the rate of teenagers having sex has declined slightly from the last report, which was released in 2002. But the

report said that from 1988 to 2006-2010, the percentage of sexually experienced teen females declined significantly, from 51 percent to 43 percent.

If teenagers had been raised by both parents, the study found, they were less likely to have sex.

For example, 35 percent of girls who lived with both parents were sexually experienced, compared with 54 percent among those who lived in any other parental arrangement.

"Our leaders in Washington need to talk to each other. With the support of the White House, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service now says abstinence education does not work and is 'an unallowable activity' when groups seek grants to fund sex-education in the schools," Ross, a student ministry professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said.

Drop in rates

"At the same time, the government's own Centers for Disease Control reports annually that rates of teenage sexual activity have dropped every year since True Love Waits and the broader abstinence movement came on the scene. Perhaps the Administration is making decisions based more on an ideology than on research."

Valerie Huber, executive director of the National Abstinence Education Association, said the study shows the sexual risk avoidance message is "not only resonating but also making a difference in the lives of youth." (BP)

"[CDC] reports annually ... rates of teenage sexual activity have dropped ... since True Love Waits ... came on the scene."

Richard Ross
True Love Waits



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Letters to the Editor

ARE YOU ON FACEBOOK?

The Oct. 6 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* noting that Internet giants are guilty of religious discrimination seems all the more reason to question the involvement of Christians with these social networks. *The Alabama Baptist* and many of our local churches have succumbed to these media companies.

Judy G. Norris
Hartselle, Ala.

IMMIGRATION BILL

Many of our powerful legislators who wrote the immigration bill are Christians, some even Baptists. I would like to beseech them to practice the most difficult part of our faith — true forgiveness — and to write a bill that makes a path to residency for people whose only crime is to find a better life for their families, to encourage their children to study and who themselves have struggled to master the English language and have proven their worth as part of our communities. A law based on forgiveness would show

the world that we Christians in Alabama truly follow Christ.

Mary Dale Venegas
Haleyville, Ala.

YOUNG ADULTS

On the front page of the Oct. 13 edition was an article titled "'Judgmental' churches driving young adults away." Should pastors quit using the Old Testament and preaching about sin and just teach about social issues? I always thought pastors were supposed to make people think about their relationship with God. Young adults are worth saving, too.

Thomas Yeager
Mobile, Ala.

VOICE YOUR OPINION

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

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

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 6

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen

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

CAN YOU BE COUNTED ON? Romans 13:1-14

As a Citizen (1-7)

Being a Christian is more than just a label; it involves a complete way of life. Within the last few years, *Newsweek* reported that America is no longer a Christian nation. Many Christians seemed alarmed and wanted to fight this decree. However, it should really come as no surprise. The question for Christians in America now is how they ought to live within a culture that is increasingly hostile toward Christianity.

Paul said Christians are to submit to the government because God has established all governments in the world. The Old Testament states how God used nations such as Babylon to carry out His will. God is the One who raises up emperors, presidents and dictators. For the most part, obeying a government does not lead Christians to disobey any of God's commands. It is possible to live in many countries with laws that do not force Christians to break any of God's commands. However, what are Christians to do when a governing body tries to force them to do something that is clearly unbiblical? For example, what should Christians do when a government says Bibles are illegal to read? Or that it is illegal to witness to others? In cases like these, the Bible lays out clear precedence. In Acts 5:29, the disciples chose to disobey the commands of the Sanhedrin, which told them that they were not permitted to teach others about Jesus. They replied, "We must obey God rather than men." It is also evident in the Old Testament when the Hebrew midwives refused to kill the Hebrew baby boys as demanded by Pharaoh. So the decree to obey the government has its limits. If the government tries to force Christians to sin or do something unbiblical, then they are to refuse.

When it comes to paying taxes, Paul said Christians are to do it. This mimics Jesus' commands as well. A Christian might wonder if it is OK to pay taxes if the taxes are going to support something ungodly. While this may seem rational, one must consider that in Jesus'

day, taxes went to support the Roman Empire, which would use this money for things such as gladiatorial games and even persecution of Christians. So to argue that Christians should refuse to pay taxes based on ungodly use does not seem justifiable. Not only are Christians supposed to support the government with taxes but they are also to give government officials respect and honor. Christians need to be praying for government officials.

As a Neighbor (8-10)

Christians are not supposed to be in debt beyond what they can repay. Paul was not suggesting that Christians should not borrow money from the bank to pay for a car or home. Paul was suggesting that Christians need to be responsible with their money. They should not borrow beyond what they can repay. However, Christians owe each other and their neighbors love. Jesus insinuated a neighbor is anybody a Christian comes in contact with. The parable of the good Samaritan makes it clear that Christians are to care for anybody in need, even their enemies. How a Christian's love to his or her neighbors manifests itself depends upon the neighbors, in particular, and his or her gifts. Christians ought to do what they can to show love to their neighbors.

As Times Require (11-14)

Paul assured his readers that Christ's return is nearer than ever before. And certainly this is even more applicable to us now. It becomes even more important for us to live as Christians, as true followers of Christ. Putting on the armor of light means putting on Christ. If we live in Christ, keeping God's Word in our hearts and remembering that we represent Christ and have the Holy Spirit living within us, then we are equipped to resist sin and sinful actions. This means that we are to reject the behavior of this world. Notice in the list of activities to avoid, Paul mentioned something as seemingly mild as jealousy. However, jealousy leads to dissension and fighting, breaking the unity of the body of Christ, one of the marks of followers of Christ. If Christians behave no differently than the world, then the world does not see what Christ has to offer. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By Eric Mathis

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

ACCEPT THE CALL

Exodus 3:1-6, 10-15; 4:10-12

This month's Bible study, titled "Make Your Life Count," is a four-week study centered in the Old Testament story of Moses. We will find perspective on how to make a difference in the world around us. Moses' life will challenge us to accept the call God has placed on our life, stand for the Lord in all circumstances, respond to difficult situations and adopt the right perspective on the world around us.

This week we consider what it means to have a call from God. Too often, we mistakenly believe only "professional ministers" are called by God and see our vocational calling as insignificant. This week's lesson encourages us to hear that call upon our lives and depend on God's power to pursue the tasks He might be asking us to complete.

Encounter God's Presence (3:1-6)

Moses was the caretaker of his father-in-law's flock beyond Horeb (1). Though this seems ordinary, we quickly learn this passage's storyline is anything but ordinary. Moses is characterized as a simple human, but the passage quickly describes unusual things: the appearance of an angel, a bush that is on fire but does not burn and, finally, the voice of the Lord (2-4). These unusual happenings confirm that God's holiness is not to be taken too casually. When we encounter God's presence, significant events occur.

Moses' encounter with the Lord in this passage represents the first time God's presence is visible in Exodus. Here God's presence and voice are used to get Moses' attention. Interestingly God rather than Moses initiates this encounter, and this enforces that God does, in fact, initiate encounters with humanity. Moreover it is God who summons our attention. God calls Moses not once but twice, and Moses responds, "Here I am" (4). God then instructs Moses to be still and remove his shoes, presumably an act of submission to the transforming power of His holiness.

Finally God provides identification rooted in the Genesis narrative: The God talking to

Moses is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (6). Though God's personality is revealed, Moses cannot look at Him (6). Thus, when we encounter God's presence, we encounter His holiness, and each of these has the potential to transform our surroundings and lives.

Understand God's Name (3:10-15)

God grabs Moses' attention, describes the misery of the Israelites in Egypt and makes a promise to deliver them (7-9). After making the promise, God commands Moses to "Come" (some translations say, "Go"), indicating that His promise also includes human obligation (10). God will work to deliver, but Moses also has a responsibility in His work. However, Moses makes the first of five statements in Exodus 3-4 expressing his disbelief and doubt (11), and God responds, assuring Moses that he will not be alone (12).

While God promises deliverance, Moses expresses his doubt a second time (13). Again God responds, though this time, the response is longer and includes more details. God reveals an identity and tells Moses how to respond to questions from the Israelites (14). God then echoes the Genesis identity given in Exodus 3:6, though this time, it has a futuristic claim that His name will last forever throughout all generations (15).

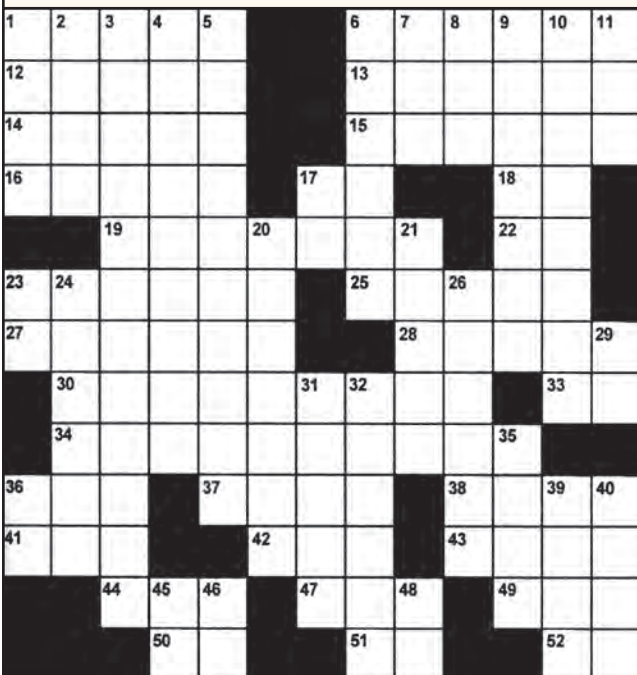
Depend on God's Power (4:10-12)

Moses does not readily trust God's identity, and we encounter yet another of his excuses. Moses protests that he cannot speak well, and the Lord responds with near agitation this time. Moses is commanded to "Go" in God's power with the assurance that his actions will actually be God's actions.

In spite of his petty excuses and lack of confidence, the identity God revealed eventually becomes enough for Moses to act on His behalf. God's identity should be enough for any of us to act. Once we understand who God is, we learn to trust that we can trust His presence when we serve in the Lord's name. More importantly, we are reminded that though we fear our limitations, God always works through our weaknesses to help us fulfill all we are called to do in the Lord's name. ☞

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Son of God.
- The book of the generation of Jesus _____. (Matt. 1:1)
- Nebuzar-____, captain of the guard, ____ servant. (2 Kings 25:8; 2 words)
- Thou mayest prosper and be in _____. (3 John 2)
- And flee into _____. (Matt. 2:13)
- Published throughout all his _____. (Esther 1:20)
- Behold, there came a _____. (Matt. 8:2)
- I have given ____ unto the children of Lot. (Deut. 2:9)
- Knockout. (abbr.)
- ____, the chamberlain of the city. (Rom. 16:23)
- Blessed are the pure ____ heart. (Matt. 5:8)
- ____ it is not _____. (Acts 22:22; 2 words)
- If ye then, ____ evil. (Matt. 7:11)
- Did ____ lightness? ... that with _____. (2 Cor. 1:17)
- Put off all these; _____, wrath. (Col. 3:8)
- Party after a wedding.
- Do, _____, Mi.

- In the very _____ Moses ... us, _____. (John 8:4,5; 3 words)
- The sons of Caleb, _____, Elah, and Naam. (1 Chron. 4:15)
- Day after Monday. (abbr.)
- By faith, _____, being warned of God. (Heb. 11:7)
- City that is _____ on a hill. (Matt. 5:14)
- And when the _____ heard it. (Matt. 20:24)
- Whosoever shall _____ me before men. (Matt. 10:33)
- They did all _____. (Matt. 14:20)
- As a _____ lappeth. (Judg. 7:5)
- The son of _____. (Luke 3:36)
- Let your light _____ shine. (Matt. 5:16)
- They may appear unto men _____ fast. (Matt. 6:16)
- Registered Nurse. (abbr.)
- But I _____ unto you ... use you, and _____ you. (Matt. 5:44; 2 words)
- My substance, yet being _____, (Ps. 139:16)
- And _____ upon it ... his _____ white as snow. (Matt. 28:2,3)
- Every _____ had two faces. (Ezek. 41:18)
- Touched the _____ of his garment. (Matt. 9:20)
- Hit sharply.
- _____ fear my lord ... your faces worse _____. (Dan. 1:10; 2 words)
- Weakness of God is _____ than men. (1 Cor. 1:25)
- Blessed are _____ merciful. (Matt. 5:7)
- Heaven is _____ hand. (Matt. 3:2)
- If my _____ hath turned _____ of the way. (Job 31:7; 2 words, reverse order)
- _____(h) Zidon: for the _____ hath spoken. (Isa. 23:4; reversed)
- Fe, _____, Fo, Fum.
- For _____ lamps _____ gone out. (Matt. 25:8; 2 words)
- Brought him to an _____, _____. (Luke 10:34; 2 words)

Down

- _____ went out to meet Sisera. (Judg. 4:18)
- Fall by the _____ of the sword. (Luke 21:24)

- Do, _____, Mi.
- Wool fabric.
- Growth of _____ own ... shalt _____ reap. (Lev. 25:5)
- As the _____ of the feet. (Dan. 2:42)
- Theirs _____ the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:3)
- _____, Eshcol, and Mamre. (Gen. 14:24)
- And when they had sung an _____. (Matt. 26:30)
- Ye shall be _____ gods. (Gen. 3:5)
- Think not that I am come _____ destroy the law. (Matt. 5:17)
- _____ and search diligently. (Matt. 2:8)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Iraqi Christian children face beatings, scorn from teachers

ERBIL, Iraq — Nuria and her family, whose names must be withheld for their safety, are Iraqi Arabs who converted from Islam to Christianity. Whereas Assyrian Iraqis are accepted as Christians by ethnic identity, Iraqi Muslims believe Arabs have no business becoming Christians; it is not possible, according to society and the constitution. If the children say they believe in Jesus, then they face beatings and scorn from their teachers.

Nuria's parents became Christians seven years ago. Her dad, a carpenter in Kirkuk, used to speak openly about his faith. These days he is not so brave; he has had to change jobs one too many times because his employers discovered his faith. In Erbil, a Kurdish convert to Christianity, Majeed Muhammed, is fighting for his children's right to not have "Muslim" written on their IDs. And a 9-year-old Iranian refugee to Iraq, Surush Bidookh, has been beaten and insulted for his faith. His family fled to Iraq from Iran for political reasons before he was born and came to faith in Christ in Iraq. Like other converts to Christianity, his father, Siyamand Bidookh, said persecution was tolerable until it affected his children.

When Surush started first grade in Erbil, a teacher beat him in front of the class and told him he was an (infidel) like his father. Bidookh's daughter, Sevda, came home from kindergarten last year and asked why her teacher said their family was going to "burn" for being Christians. After this she was too afraid and stopped attending school for the rest of the year. "When my kids go to school and say hello to the teachers, they don't respond," their mother said. "I say to them, 'What kind of an example are you setting for these kids?'"

Islamic extremists behead 17-year-old Somali Christian

DEYNILE, Somalia — Militants from the Islamic extremist al-Shabaab beheaded a 17-year-old Somali Christian near Mogadishu in September, a journalist in the Somali capital said. The militants, who have vowed to rid Somalia of Christianity, killed Guled Jama Muktar on Sept. 25 in his home near Deynile, about 12 miles from Mogadishu. The Islamic extremist group had been monitoring his family since the Christians arrived in Somalia from Kenya in 2008, said the source in Mogadishu, who requested anonymity.

The Islamic militants, who are fighting the transitional government for control of the country, knew from their observations of the family that they were Christians, the source said. "I personally know this family as Christians who used to have secret Bible meetings in their house," he said. Based on talks with the boy's parents and their neighbors, the source said al-Shabaab members arrived at Muktar's home at 6 a.m., when his parents, whose names are withheld for security reasons, were already at work at their retail space at the Hamarweyne market on the outskirts of Mogadishu. Neighbors informed the parents of the murder, and they hurriedly returned home and buried their son's body quickly, fearing the militants would kill them as well.

They then fled to an unknown destination, the source said. "When the incident happened, the parents called to tell me that their son had been killed and that they feared for their lives," the source said. "Since then, I have not heard from them."

Christian imprisoned in Central Asia reaches other inmates

CENTRAL ASIA — James, a believer in Central Asia, has been imprisoned more than three months now for his faith, but to him, that's not the milestone that matters. What matters to him is that 10 of his fellow prisoners have come to faith since he got there. "Many of those who have entered the Kingdom through James' faithfulness are talking in prison about the marvelous light they are now walking in," said a friend of James.

"Most of these men come from areas that neither we nor James could ever visit during regular circumstances. The Father used the seemingly adverse circumstances of confinement to release them from captivity." Two of the 10 were just released from prison and have returned to their homes in unreached areas.

"Please ask the Father that they would be strengthened in their new faith, that they would have access to the Word to continue to grow in Christ and that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit to share the good news among their neighbors and friends," James' friend said. She asked that believers also pray for James' family. "They are rejoicing at the displays of the Father's love but are understandably still quite sad and grieved living without their dad and husband."

Medical marijuana in California target of federal crackdown

California's medical marijuana dispensaries are the target of a recent crackdown by the Obama administration even as more Americans than ever support the drug's legalization and a major doctors' group wants to open it up to more research.

At the outset of his term, President Obama pledged to respect state laws on medical marijuana, but "suddenly and with no logical explanation," as the Marijuana Policy Project said, Obama has become "arguably the worst president in U.S. history regarding medical marijuana."

In early October, federal prosecutors announced a crackdown on medical marijuana dispensaries in California, even if they are operating legally under the state's 15-year-old medical marijuana law.

National supply

"California's marijuana industry supplies the nation," U.S. Attorney Benjamin Wagner said Oct. 7, citing a federal study that found 72 percent of marijuana plants confiscated nationwide were grown in California. "Huge amounts of marijuana grown here in this state [are] flowing east to other states, and huge amounts of money are flowing back in the opposite direction."

A Southern Baptist ethicist was encouraged by the Obama administration's decision to enforce fed-

eral law regarding marijuana merchants.

"I sympathize with those who simply want to make sure people have every possible means available to them to alleviate their suffering," Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research at The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said. "Despite the good intentions of millions of people, reality has set in. Marijuana cannot be adequately regulated to prevent its widespread abuse."

Some have called medical marijuana "the new California gold rush," and The Associated Press highlighted an Orange County strip mall where eight of the 11 second-floor suites are occupied by dispensaries and doctors' offices where healthy people can receive medical marijuana prescriptions.

"The intention regarding medical marijuana under California state law was to allow marijuana to be supplied to seriously ill people on a nonprofit basis," U.S. Attorney Melinda Haag said. "What we are finding, however, is that California's laws have been hijacked by people who are in this to get rich and don't care at all about sick people."

Marijuana is legal in 16 states for people with doctors' recommendations, but it remains illegal under federal law. U.S. prosecutors are focusing their efforts on dispensaries that have large operations or

are close to areas with children such as schools and sports fields. Letters were sent to those dispensaries and to landlords, ordering them to shut down or face criminal charges and confiscation of property.

Deceiving drug

"Quite frankly, marijuana is more enticing and lucrative as a recreational drug than as a medicine," Duke said. "Compared to its destructive capacity, its true medicinal value is practically nonexistent. It is a mind-altering gateway drug to much more destructive drugs. It must remain illegal for the sake of millions of people, especially teenagers, who would otherwise be deceived into thinking that it is safe to use."

Kevin Sabet, a former White House drug adviser, said if marijuana has a medical purpose it should be approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in pharmaceuticals.

"You synthesize and deliver it in the way we deliver medicines in this country, through pharmacies — not dispensaries with 300-pound bouncers, bars on the window and neon lights," Sabet said, according to MSNBC.com.

The aggressive enforcement of federal law in this case should send a strong warning signal to states considering similar legalization efforts, Sabet added. (BP)

MLK memorial fulfills dream of black churches

In a ceremony that blended worship and a call to action, tens of thousands gathered Oct. 16 for the official dedication of a national memorial to Martin Luther King Jr.

"In this place, he will stand for all time, among monuments to those who fathered this nation and those who defended it; a black preacher with no official rank or title who somehow gave voice to our deepest dreams and our most lasting ideals," President Obama said.

Obama spoke in the shadow of the 30-foot sculpture of King's likeness called the "Stone of Hope," which emerges from a "Mountain of Despair," both images taken from King's iconic 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech.

The throngs of people were smaller than the crowds anticipated for the memorial's original dedication date on Aug. 28, the 48th anniversary of the March on Washington and King's most famous speech.

Weeks after Hurricane Irene disrupted the original dedication festivities, those who made it to the rescheduled ceremony said the delay had not dampened their respect for King's legacy as a religious and civil rights leader.

Held during the traditional Sunday morning worship time, the cer-

emony featured choirs, gospel artists Mary Mary and Aretha Franklin singing one of King's favorite hymns, "Precious Lord."

King family members, civil rights veterans and celebrities said King's message should not remain solely like the monument, set in stone, but rather be continually put into practice.

Support from churches

The memorial was supported by a wide array of houses of worship, particularly black churches, that had contributed large and small sums to make it a reality on the edge of the Tidal Basin. Harry Johnson, president of the memorial's foundation, said more than 200 churches con-

tributed \$1.8 million to the \$120 million memorial, for which \$117 million has been raised.

And though not as many as originally planned, church members drove, bused and flew to Washington for Sunday's dedication. More than 100 members of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King once served as co-pastor, made the trip. Its pastor, Raphael Warnock, said the black church, in particular, sees in King not only a national leader but also one of their own.

"Martin Luther King Jr. is, without a doubt, the black church's most beloved son and celebrated saint," said Warnock, who gave the benediction and whose choir sang at the ceremony. (RNS)

Sudanese church faces hostility

Emboldened by government calls for a Sudan based on Islamic law since the secession of South Sudan, Muslims have attacked Christians trying to finish constructing a church building near Khartoum, sources said.

The Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC) congregation in Omdurman West has continued to meet for Sunday worship in a building without a roof.

Muslims in the Hay al Sawra, Block 29 area of Omdurman West on Aug. 5 attacked SCOC members who were constructing the church building, the sources said.

The church had filed a complaint with the Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowments, which in September informed the SCOC that officials will investigate the matter, though it gave no time frame. (CDN)

'True calling'

World Series umpires see Christ change lives

He was on the field for every game, right in the middle of the action, but he didn't throw a pitch or take a swing.

Ted Barrett felt the pressure nonetheless. He knew the stakes were high in the World Series between the Texas Rangers and the St. Louis Cardinals. But while the players all did their utmost to leave their mark on the Fall Classic, Barrett and five other guys hoped that nobody even knew they were there.

"All eyes are on the game," said Barrett, one of the umpires who worked the Series. "The biggest fear is for something to happen where you become the story."

That means no mistakes for Barrett and his crewmates. It means no controversial calls that have haunted umpires like Don Denkinger (who missed a crucial call at first base in the 1985 World Series) or Jim Joyce (whose blown call cost Detroit Tigers pitcher Armando Galarraga a perfect game in 2010).

Such is life for major league umpires. When they do their job perfectly, they get no accolades and no praise. When they mess up, they get unending ridicule, scorn and maybe even death threats from legions of fans.

But his job on the field isn't the only place where Barrett likes to deflect attention. As a Christian and one of the founders of the ministry Calling for Christ (CFC), Barrett ultimately hopes that his actions point to Jesus. "My sole purpose is to glorify God," Barrett said. "Whatever happens, if I can walk off the field and glorify God, then I'm in."

Barrett and fellow major league umpire Rob Drake began CFC a few years ago as a ministry to umpires in both the major and minor leagues. Their primary method of outreach was a yearly retreat held at the Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center in Oklahoma.

Drake and Barrett enlisted the help of Dean Esskew, who was pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, El Reno, Okla., at the time, to organize the event. Twelve umpires showed up the first year; by last year, that number had grown to about 70.

Esskew has since left his church and is working full time as the CFC pastor. He has baptized 27 umpires who have come to faith in Christ as a result of the CFC ministry, in addition to five umpires' wives.

"Guys used to hide their walk with God," Esskew said about the umpires. "It was something you didn't talk about. You didn't bring God into the locker room or on the field. Now they'll pray before this year's World Series



BP photo

GLORIFYING GOD — Ted Barrett, a founder of the ministry Calling for Christ, was one of six umpires who worked this year's World Series between the Texas Rangers and the St. Louis Cardinals.

before they walk out on the field. "It's so exciting to see God change the lives of these men."

Two of the umpires Esskew baptized are Alfonso Marquez and Gary Cederstrom, who also were on this year's World Series crew.

"God put this person in my life — back in 1993 was when I met Teddy (Barrett)," Marquez said. "Now here we are and we're going to work the World Series together. We're going to share the moment and live it the way God wants us to."

Marquez grew up Roman Catholic, was faithful to the church and prayed every day but said it was more out of routine than out of conviction. He strayed from the Lord after he made it into the major leagues as an umpire. He and his wife divorced and he began drinking heavily. But he attended the CFC retreat one year, where he heard the gospel and understood that Christ's death on the cross paid for his sins. Esskew later baptized him.

"How I didn't lose my job or end

up dead is by the grace of God," Marquez said. "Thankfully God put people like Ted in my life since day one. He planted that little seed a long time ago."

Barrett is encouraged by the results he's seen from the CFC ministry. In addition to the growing interest in the annual retreat, several major league umpires take part in a regular prayer conference call during the season. With crews scattered all over the country, Barrett started scheduling times when they could pray together over the phone.

"It started out where I would lead it and I would pray," Barrett said. "But I encouraged the guys, 'Hey, this is not the Ted Barrett call. This is the major league umpire call.' After a few weeks, guys said, 'OK, I'll lead.'"

Growth of Christians

Esskew has seen God's work not only in those who have come to faith but also in the growth of Christians like Barrett.

"He's become more confident," Esskew said of Barrett. "When I first met Ted, he was confident in his ability to umpire but he had no confidence any other way. But he knows his true calling now is not to be an umpire. It's to be a minister." (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Catholics moving to more individual decisions

WASHINGTON — American Catholics have by and large remained loyal to the core teachings and sacraments of their faith but increasingly tune out the hierarchy on issues of sexual morality, according to a new study released Oct. 24.

The sweeping survey shows that over the last quarter-century, U.S. Catholics have become increasingly likely to say that individuals, not church leaders, have the final say on abortion, homosexuality, and divorce and remarriage.

That trend holds true across generational and ideological divides, and even applies to weekly Mass attenders, according to the survey, which has been conducted every six years since 1987.

"It's the core creedal sacramental issues that really matter to American Catholics, more than the external trappings of church authority," said Michele Dillon, a sociologist at the University of New Hampshire and a co-author of the report, in releasing the report at the National Press Club. The report identified two-thirds of U.S. Catholics as "moderately committed," a group that inched up in size as the share of "highly committed" has shrunk from 27 percent in 1987 to 19 percent this year. More than half (56 percent) say they would "never leave" the Catholic Church, and one in three say it is unlikely they would leave. Three-quarters of respondents said, "being Catholic is a very important part of who I am."

Across the board, Catholics tend to agree on four key markers — the resurrection of Jesus (73 percent), helping the poor (67 percent), devotion to the Virgin Mary (64 percent) and the centrality of the sacraments (63 percent) — as core to their Catholicism.

Opposition to abortion (40 percent) and to same-sex "marriage" (35 percent), and the authority of the Vatican (30 percent) and support for a celibate, all-male clergy (21 percent) were further down the list.

Arizona abortions drop by 1/3 after law takes effect

PHOENIX — Abortions in Arizona dropped by nearly one-third in September after a pro-life law went into effect.

The state reported there were 729 abortions in Arizona during September — a decline of almost 31 percent from September 2010, nearly 32 percent from August of this year and 39 percent from the monthly average for the last year, The Associated Press reported Oct. 12. The decrease in abortions came after the Arizona Court of Appeals unanimously upheld in August a 2009 state law that places limitations on abortion services. The Abortion Consent Act mandates only doctors perform abortions; requires women to receive full information 24 hours beforehand on abortion, including its risks, fetal development and alternatives to the procedure; mandates parental consent for minors and protects freedom of conscience for pro-life, health-care workers.

Even a strong advocate for the new law was surprised by the difference in the number of abortions.

"I don't know that I ever expected abortion numbers to drop, so I kind of feel like, 'O ye of little faith,'" said Cathi Herrod, executive director of the Center for Arizona Policy, according to CitizenLink.com. She said her organization is "very encouraged."

After the court's ruling, the Arizona affiliate of Planned Parenthood announced its clinics in Flagstaff, Prescott Valley and Yuma would stop providing abortions by means of the drug RU-486. The clinics did not perform surgical abortions.

Gays can change sexual orientation, study shows

NASHVILLE — A major seven-year study published in a mainstream journal is challenging the secular notion that gays and lesbians cannot change their sexual orientation.

The longitudinal study followed 61 subjects for between six and seven years and found that 23 percent of them reported successful conversion to heterosexual orientation and function and another 30 percent reported stable behavioral chastity with a significant dis-identification with gay orientation. Twenty percent of the subjects had given up and embraced a gay identity. It is believed to be the first study of its kind — that is, one that followed people over a series of years and monitored success or failure. The study followed subjects who voluntarily were taking part in Christian ministries affiliated with Exodus International, the nation's largest ministry devoted exclusively to reaching out to homosexuals.

Partial results of the study were released in 2007 and 2009 but now are being published in a peer-reviewed journal, which its authors hope gives it more credibility to those who had criticized it. The study is published in the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, Volume 37.

"[Barrett] knows his true calling now is not to be an umpire. It's to be a minister."

Dean Esskew
Calling for Christ