

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Jan. 19, 2012
Vol. 177, No. 3

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

Toll free 1-800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

INSIDE



SBOM breaks ground for new disaster relief training, storage facility

◆ Page 3



Telling others about Jesus in Alabama

◆ Pages 5-7



Bible Basics series: A look at the men, women of faith in the Bible

◆ Page 10

Back to the witness stand

Public corruption retrial over 'bingo'-related vote-buying scheme to begin Jan. 30

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It may be months before defendants in Alabama's public corruption retrial know whether they will be convicted of a 2010 vote-buying scheme at the Statehouse. Still that has not stopped at least one of the state's largest casinos from planning to reopen with the same slot machine-style gambling devices at the heart of this trial once the court battle concludes.

The first trial began June 10, 2011, in Montgomery and ended two months later with no convictions for the original defendants. Country Crossing developer Ronnie Gilley and lobbyists Jarrod Massey and Jennifer Pouncy pleaded guilty prior to the trial.

Lobbyist Bob Geddie and Sen. Quinton T. Ross Jr., D-Montgomery, were acquitted of all charges, while VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor; Sen. Harri Anne Smith, I-Slocumb; former Sen. Jim Preuitt, R-Talladega; former Sen. Larry Means, D-Attalla; former legislative analyst Ray Crosby; lobbyist Tom Coker; and Country Crossing spokesman Jay Walker saw mistrials declared when the jury could not reach verdicts on many of the charges.

A retrial of the seven remaining defendants is set to begin Jan. 30, and at least one VictoryLand executive hopes it ends in acquittals.

When an interviewer for Big Jackpot Betting asked Jim Gartland, general manager of VictoryLand, how quickly the casino could reopen, he gave this response:

"Well, you know, we've lost a ton, ton of money and so forth during all this mess, so I think you'll see we'll try and get our machines, our electronic bingo and our casino end back open. It's going to take a little bit of time, and I'm just guessing Randy (interviewer), I can't say for certain, but I would think once we get all this behind us, it might be three months before we get some going. ... I'm just very optimistic it will happen again, and I think it will happen



Photos by The Alabama Baptist

NOT OVER YET — The Oasis hotel attached to Milton McGregor's VictoryLand gambling facility in Shorter never attracted the crowds officials there hoped, but the general manager says electronic 'bingo' may make it back to VictoryLand soon.

obviously before this year is out."

Eric Johnston, director of Citizens for a Better Alabama, believes his prediction.

Could bingo come back?

"If they get out of this (trial), they will definitely try to get back open," Johnston said.

"I would think it would be sooner, and then they would test (Attorney General) Luther Strange. ... They

could make a few million dollars in a few weeks."

After hearing Gartland's interview, Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), said, "We are counting on Attorney General Luther Strange to uphold the laws of Alabama, and we believe that these are illegal slot machines and should not be allowed to appear in Alabama again.

Also ALCAP supports Sen. Bryan Taylor's bill that he is introducing in this 2012 (legislative) session to increase the penalties associated with possession of these illegal slot machines."

Despite what casino operators plan to do in the future, Johnston encourages others not to lose sight of how the public corruption trial began.

"I believe that they (the defendants) (See 'Bob Riley,' page 11)

Thieves continue stealing copper from churches

By Joseph Rhea
The Alabama Baptist

In the past few weeks, several air conditioning units at Blount County churches have been vandalized or stolen.

The units are targeted for their copper, which can sell for upward of \$250 if processed properly.

Corinth Baptist Church, Hayden, in Blount Baptist Association had two units taken over Christmas.

"It's a shame somebody would steal something like that from the

church," deacon Charles Newsome said.

Since 2004, copper prices have more than tripled despite the recession, according to the World Bank's commodity price data index. The high value of copper and the relative lack of protection many individuals and churches provide for their air conditioning units make them a tempting target for thieves.

"We're taking precautions now," Newsome said. The church has pur- (See 'Copper,' page 3)



Photo by Lauren C. Grim

COMMENT

I Am in the Land of the Dying

John Newton, the composer of such great hymns as “Amazing Grace,” reportedly said, “I am in the land of the dying. I shall be in the land of the living soon.”

That cryptic statement reminds us all that “it is appointed unto man once to die” (Heb. 9:27). Death is a fate from which none of us can escape until our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ comes again in glory. Someone observed that not everyone will experience old age but physical death will come to all. Because of death’s inevitability, it is important to prepare for that experience.

As Christians, we have made the most important preparation. We have trusted Jesus Christ as personal Savior. That is why we can declare with the apostle Paul that “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54). That is why Christians face death with hope. We know that soon we will be “in the land of the living.”

On Calvary’s cross, Jesus declared, “Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.” Jesus was confident the promise of Psalm 49:15 would be fulfilled. There the psalmist wrote, “God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.”

Later Scripture declares, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep ... so in Christ, all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ the first fruits; then when He comes, those who belong to Him” (1 Cor. 15:20–23).

Those who trust in the Lord will live with Him forever in heaven, where He has gone to prepare a place for us as promised in John 14. That is the eternal land of the living.

It is also important to prepare for death in other ways. Proverbs 14:15 teaches that “a prudent man considers his steps.” That thought is echoed by 1 Corinthians 14:40, which says, “Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”

Just as one prepares for his or her children’s college education or retirement, the prudent person prepares for the issues related to his or her physical death. To do so is not a morbid experience. It is a way to avoid confusion and keep promises. It is a way to ensure that everything is done in a fitting and orderly way.

In his book “Nearing Home: Life, Faith and Finishing Well,” Billy Graham draws guidance from the story of Isaac and the blessing of his sons recorded in Genesis 27. Isaac’s intent was to prepare his sons, Esau and Jacob for his impending death. But, Graham wrote, “Isaac is too old to ensure his final wishes are executed prop-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

erly, and this causes turmoil within the family.”

You know the story. Isaac intended to pass along his blessing to his oldest son, Esau. But Rachel, Isaac’s wife, and Jacob, the younger son, tricked Isaac and stole what was intended for Esau.

Isaac was helpless to remedy the wrong done to his older son. And, according to Graham, Isaac was partly responsible for the situation because he waited too late before acting.

Moral of the story

The moral of that story could be repeated numerous times. Because people put off dealing with the practical issues related to death, promises go unkept and intentions go unfulfilled. Dreams are discarded because one waited too late to ensure that everything is done in a fitting and orderly way. There is no official document, no will or no updated will to reflect the desires of the one who has gone from the land of the dying to the land of the living.

As with Jacob and Esau, too often, the result of inaction is resentment, conflict, bitterness and confusion. That is a tragic final gift to leave a family.

In Alabama, when one dies without a will, the laws of the state decide how his or her estate will be divided. Wishes of family members have no standing in such situations. Such cases usually result in as much disappointment as Isaac had when he learned he had been deceived.

It would be much easier on everyone if time were taken now to decide who will benefit from one’s accumulated resources, who will serve as executor and how and when inheritance will be distributed — immediately or later in trusts.

These are serious decisions that sometimes necessitate professional advice. Even the most financially humble individual can profit from help with such decisions as he or she works out an appropriate plan to be followed at his or her death. The investment for professional counsel returns great dividends compared to the potential results of dying without having addressed these practical issues.

As Christians, there is another concern: How will we be faithful stewards of our resources? God is as concerned with faithfulness of possessions after one’s death as He is with what one does with

financial resources during life. King David said it well in his prayer recorded in 1 Chronicles 29. In verse 14, David confessed, “Everything comes from you and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” Since all that one has comes from God, he or she is responsible to God for how all of it is used. The principle of tithing (giving 10 percent to God through the church) is the starting point of financial faithfulness. God is also concerned about how the other 90 percent is used.

Possessions are not to be used selfishly or foolishly in life or death. Estate planning, like planning during one’s life, is to be done thoughtfully and prayerfully. The Baptist Foundation of Alabama is just one resource available to Alabama Baptists to help them work through the issues related to estate planning that honors God and accomplishes their personal goals.

Preparing spiritually for leaving the land of the dying and entering the land of the living is the most important issue one will ever face. There is no greater issue than one’s personal relationship to God through faith in Jesus Christ. But settling that issue does not remove the responsibility of handling the practical issues related to one’s death.

My prayer is that none of us are like Isaac and wait until we are unable to see that our final wishes are known and carried out before thinking about acting. None of our families deserve the fate of Jacob and Esau.



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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

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

Subscription Rates:
Church Budget — \$12.50 (plus tax)
Individual — \$20.95

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairwoman Jane Bellew, Stuart Calvert, Travis Coleman, Gary Fenton, George A. Foust, Craig Gault, Helen W. Mayo, Allan Murphy, Jim Oakley, Larry Patterson, Wayne Randall, Bradley Rushing, Steve Scoggins, William Melton, Amelia Pearson, Judy Stiefel, James “Jim” Warren, Rick Lance (ex-officio), Mike Shaw (ex-officio).

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY, EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash, Executive Editor
Neisha Fuson, News Writer Kathleen Penton, Copy Editor
Lauren C. Grim, Designer Wanda Bergeron, Local Editions
Linda Harrison, Financial Administrator
Debbie Campbell, Director of Circulation and Public Relations

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

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

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

Follow Bob Terry on

twitter

@drbobterry

Someone You Should Know

By Julie Payne, Correspondent, TAB

Kim Lewis

Elkdale Baptist Church, Selma
Selma Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES: Psalm 91:1
and Jeremiah 29:11

FAVORITE HYMN: "Amazing Grace"

HOBBIES: Thrifting and antiquing

FAMILY STATUS: Married 24 years to
Philip; two children, Kyle and
Sarah-Callin



LEWIS

Kim Lewis is the full-time minister to children and preschoolers at Elkdale Baptist Church, Selma. She has served in this position for six years and has been involved with children's ministry for 21 years.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: My dad was in the military; we had just moved back to Selma. I was in the sixth grade. A lady in the church had been talking about [the gospel with me]. ... One Sunday [at church], I was sitting beside my grandmother. ... My heart was beating out of my chest. I remember going down (the aisle). It was just a sweet time.

Q: What are some other ministries you have been involved in?

A: Children's missions — Mission Friends, GAs (Girls in Action) and RAs (Royal Ambassadors). Every year, I'm the VBS (Vacation Bible School) director and have been involved on the state team. [I've also been] associational VBS director for a couple years.

Q: How has your family supported you?

A: My children have been very helpful at times when I've had a project to do. They've spent a lot of time up at the church helping me. My husband [has been] understanding of my time at the church.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: The ministry has taught me a lot about "dying to self." Being in the ministry has taught me to take the focus off myself and that there's a much bigger picture.

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

A: It changes everything about a person's life. It changes their perspective on things. You look at a sunset differently. ... You look at the stars differently. [It's] cool to me to realize that He becomes the "Who," the "What," the "Why" and the "How" we do things. ☞



Photo by Doug Rogers

ABILITY TO RESPOND — The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions breaks ground for the Disaster Relief Resource Center in Prattville on Jan. 6. The resource center will house a variety of hardware and other resources related to disaster relief.

'Major component'

SBOM breaks ground for new disaster relief training, storage facility

By the time hurricane season rolls in, Alabama Baptists hope to have a new disaster relief training and storage facility.

On Jan. 6, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) broke ground for the Disaster Relief Resource Center in the Autauga Interstate Business Park in Prattville.

When finished, the resource center will house a variety of hardware and other resources related to disaster relief.

Partnership

It also will serve as a venue for events during which volunteers will be trained in general and specialized disaster relief skills.

Mel Johnson, SBOM disaster relief strategist, pointed out the center's central location.

"The 12,000-square-foot resource center will be dead center between north and south Alabama, off Interstate 65," he said.

Jay Thompson, a member of the Autauga County Commission and one of several

community leaders present at the ground-breaking ceremony, said the county is glad to have Alabama Baptists as partners.

"We see the State Board of Missions as giving back to our community," he said.

Art Faulkner, director of emergency management for the state, affirmed Alabama Baptists' disaster relief ministries.

"Often we think of government as the solution to emergency situations. But actually it is the volunteers who make the real difference," he said.

"Partnering with the State Board of Missions gives our state the ability to respond well in times of disaster."

SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance noted that the center will be more economically feasible because the SBOM has been renting property to house equipment for this



Photo by Doug Rogers

CENTRAL LOCATION — Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, speaks at the ground-breaking ceremony for the new resource center Jan. 6.

"major component" of Alabama Baptists' ministry. "Disaster relief ministries allow us to give a cup of cold water in Jesus' name during times of crisis. The new facility will help our disaster relief volunteers be well-prepared," he said.

Community involvement

Tom Stackhouse, president of the Central Alabama Electric Cooperative, and his employees provided luncheon refreshments for the ground-breaking ceremony participants. (TAB)

Copper theft widespread; tips provided for protection

(continued from page 1)

chased two motion-activated spotlights to place near its units to illuminate anyone moving around them.

While Blount County has seen a recent rash of thefts and vandalisms among rural churches, the problem is widespread throughout Alabama.

Mount Zion Baptist Church, Birmingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association was vandalized twice in June and once in October, despite having motion-sensor security lighting and alarms, according to *The Birmingham News*.

Springhill Avenue Baptist Church, Mo-

bile, in Mobile Baptist Association had seven units vandalized Dec. 15 and another eight vandalized Dec. 18, said Jerry Dees, chairman of building and grounds and chairman of deacons.

Never been bothered

"We've never had anything bothered in our church's entire history," he said.

Springhill Avenue Baptist had a chain-link fence partway around some units, but now each remaining unit is outfitted with an alarm, Dees noted. It plans to secure the units either with steel cages or high fences topped with razor wire, he said.

Newsome wants steel cages for Corinth Baptist's units as well.

Thomas Russell, a senior risk control representative for Westfield Insurance, has posted on his company's website (www.westfieldinsurance.com) several tips for protecting an air conditioning unit, depending on one's budget and the unit's location:

- ▶ Install lighting to illuminate the unit.
- ▶ Hide the unit behind "hostile bushes" or a fence.
- ▶ Enclose the unit in a protective cage.
- ▶ Relocate the unit to a less accessible or visible area.
- ▶ Place an alarm on the unit.

Across Alabama's Associations

BALDWIN

► **Tony Higginbotham** is the new worship pastor for **Eastern Shore Church, Daphne**. He previously served as minister of music for First Church, Sylacauga, for 10 and a half years. He has also served First Church, Louisville, Miss., and



HIGGINBOTHAM

South Roebuck Church, Birmingham. Higginbotham holds a bachelor's degree in church music from the University of Mobile and master of music from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Carol, have two children. Stuart Davidson is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **NorthPark Church, Trussville**, more than doubled its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$10,000 with \$20,796.56 contributed during the 2011 Lottie Moon season. Bill Wilks is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Michael Woodham** is the new pastor of **First Church, Elba**. He served as pastor of Hodges-



WOODHAM

ville Church, Dothan, and youth pastor for Antioch Church, Ashford. He also has served churches in Georgia and Florida. Woodham and his wife, Amy Elizabeth,

have two children.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold its third annual men's conference Jan. 27. The theme will be "Building and Rebuilding Lives." The event will begin at 5 p.m. with dinner. Pastor Tim Anderson and Dusty McLemore will speak. Mike Weaver of Big Daddy Weave will sing. To register visit www.clements baptist.org or call 256-729-1328. The church also will show the movie "Courageous" Jan. 29, 5 p.m.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will host Gold City Quartet Feb. 5, 5 p.m. For information call 256-420-8172. Mike Clark is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Kim Conaway** is the new children's ministry director for

ville Church, Dothan, and youth pastor for Antioch Church, Ashford. He also has served churches in Georgia and Florida. Woodham and his wife, Amy Elizabeth,

TALLAPOOSA

► **James Hollis** is the new minister of youth and disciples for **Sixth Street Church, Alexander City**. He has served churches in Delaware, Kentucky and Alabama. He holds a master of divinity from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Hollis and his wife, Cynthia, have two children. Matt Haines is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Northport Church** will hold a retirement tea honoring Johnnie Hyche for 50 years of service as church organist Jan. 22, 2-4 p.m., in the sanctuary foyer. Friends of Hyche are invited to attend. John A. Nixon Jr. is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Winston Association** will hold a Vacation Bible School (VBS) early bird clinic for VBS directors, pastors and spouses Feb. 6, 6:30 p.m., at the associational office. James Blakeney, an associate in the office of Sunday School/discipleship for the State Board of Missions, will speak. Dinner will be served. For reservations call 205-489-5137 by Jan. 31. Emily Mims is associational VBS director. Al Hood is director of missions.

Letter: Gay 'marriage' threat to religious freedom

A coalition of nearly 40 religious leaders has published an open letter that seeks to recast the battle against same-sex "marriage" as a fight on behalf of religious freedom.

The religious leaders, predominantly from conservative Christian churches and Orthodox Judaism, say their concern is not that legalizing gay "marriage" will force their ministers to perform same-sex weddings; they say they doubt that will happen.

Rather they wrote Jan. 12, allowing same-sex couples to marry would wind up "forcing or pressuring both individuals and religious organizations — throughout their operations, well beyond religious ceremonies — to treat same-sex sexual conduct as the moral equivalent of marital sexual conduct."

"There is no doubt that the many people and groups whose moral and religious convictions forbid same-sex sexual conduct will resist the compulsion of the law, and church-state conflicts will result," they warn in the letter, titled "Marriage and Religious Freedom: Fundamental Goods That Stand or Fall Together."

The leaders include Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals; New York Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; and H. David Burton, presiding bishop of the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The signers note that religious adoption agencies already have been required to place children with same-sex couples and religious institutions are being told to provide insurance benefits to gay partners.

The signatories also argue that their opposition to same-sex "marriage" has "marked them and their members as bigots, subjecting them to the full arsenal of government punishments and pressures reserved for racists."

The thrust of the letter is to frame opposition to gay "marriage" in

terms of a battle for religious freedom, an argument that many religious groups believe has a possibility of gaining some traction with an American public, even as Americans increasingly — and perhaps inexorably — grow more accepting of same-sex relationships.

The letter also represents an effort by diverse religious bodies to present a united front in opposition to gay "marriage." Other signers include Pentecostal church officials and leaders of conservative Baptist, Lutheran and Anglican denominations. (RNS)

Teens charged in Patton Hill fire

A December church fire in Walker County first thought to be caused by faulty wiring is now being considered arson. Two arrests have been made.

Patton Hill Baptist Church's building, located near Oakman, burned to the ground Dec. 20. No one was hurt in the fire.

In early January, 18-year-old Brady Kilpatrick and a juvenile were charged with second-degree arson and third-degree burglary with bond set at \$45,000, according to Birmingham's ABC 33/40.

Mark Otts is currently serving as Patton Hill Baptist's interim pastor. "[Associational leaders] have

met with them, prayed with them, and we're pledged to be involved with them," Lucky Teague, director of missions for Walker Baptist Association, said following the fire. (TAB)

CORRECTION

In the article "Seminaries confer degrees on Alabamians" in the Jan. 12 issue, Bradley Jackson Cleveland's degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary was listed incorrectly. His degree is master of divinity in worship leadership.



Cottonwood's Union Hill marks 125 years of service

Union Hill Baptist Church, Cottonwood, recently celebrated 125 years with a special service marking its history.

According to Pastor Rob Lightsey, about 150 were in attendance for the day's festivities.

Lightsey served as master of ceremonies, and Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, delivered the main message.

Also featured was historian Scotty E. Kirkland's presentation titled "The Little Church on the Hill," profiling the Columbia Baptist Association church's history.

A 125th anniversary booklet of Kirkland's historical work was passed out to attendees.

A representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the congregation with a certificate commemorating the anniversary.

"The whole service from top to bottom was good, and God was honored in what we did that day, I believe," Lightsey said.

Following the service were a covered-dish dinner on the grounds and a special singing by The Mount Gilead Quartet.

"I believe that we're moving forward, we're moving in a good direction," Lightsey said of the church. "Our people our eager to serve. Our motto is 'Loving God, Loving People, Serving the World,' and that's what we're trying to hang on to." (TAB)

Crossbridge Community Church co-pastor Aldridge dies at 60

G. Morrell Aldridge, co-pastor of Crossbridge Community Church, Helena, died Dec. 29. He was 60.



ALDRIDGE

Aldridge received a bachelor of science in religion from Samford University in Birmingham in 1973 and master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1984.

He served as pastor of Southern Baptist churches in Alabama and Mississippi for 42 years and, through church-planting efforts, started two churches: Riverside Baptist, Helena, in 1996 and Cross-

bridge Community, Helena, in 2003. "His ministry hallmark has always been to reach the wounded and hurting and help them find the forgiveness and kindness of Jesus Christ," said Bruce Squires, co-pastor of Crossbridge. "Brother 'Mo' loved to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and had a very fruitful ministry here in Helena."

Aldridge is survived by his wife of 41 years, Deanna; one daughter; five grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter. (TAB)

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving

Year to Date through December 31, 2011

DECEMBER

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,641,666
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$3,819,534
Over Goal for Month	\$177,868

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$43,699,992
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$41,227,830
Under Goal for Year	\$2,472,162



Telling others about JESUS

God's Plan for Sharing emphasizes Reaching Across Alabama

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Everyone should be doing it. Evangelism, that is. Lyle Dorsett, Billy Graham professor of evangelism at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, said Christians need to stop relying on evangelists and pastors to do evangelism.

"We need to pray for workers, ordinary Christians, who go out and talk to people around them. Listen (to them), serve them and tell them about Jesus," Dorsett said.

After all, telling others about Jesus is the reason God leaves us here after we are saved, explained Roy Hill, pastor of First Baptist Church, Satsuma.

"We need to be sharing the gospel with people; we need to answer that call," he said.

"Anybody can do it and everybody should do it."

Dorsett said he knows the harvest is ready in Alabama because he doesn't see a crowd on the road when he goes to church on Sunday.

In fact, more than 2 million people in Alabama are considered unchurched or unreached, according to research collected by the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

"Alabama is a missions field," SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance wrote to pastors and churches in the Reaching Across Alabama 2012 preparation guide.

Reaching Across Alabama is the next emphasis of God's Plan for Sharing (GPS) — a "strategic effort on the part of Southern Baptists and Alabama Baptists to reach North America, specifically Alabama, with the gospel," Lance noted. A 10-year initiative, GPS covers the decade of 2010 to 2020.

"For the Baptist family, it is a decade to make a difference," Lance said.

But what exactly is GPS, and what does it mean for associations and churches in Alabama? Why does Alabama need GPS?

Great Commission

According to the GPS pastor/church preparation guide, GPS is meant to "fulfill the Great Commission in North America through every believer sharing, every person hearing by 2020."

In order to accomplish "every believer sharing" and "every person hearing," churches can participate in a two-part process:

► Churches intentionally align evangelism ministries and efforts by praying for lost people, equipping every believer to share, sowing the Word to every lost person and harvesting the results and celebrating every salvation response.

► Churches participate in evangelism campaigns every even year. The 2012

campaign is Reaching Across Alabama with attractional events during March and April (see story this page).

In the Reaching Across Alabama training DVD, Sammy Gilbreath, director of the SBOM office of evangelism, shares some startling statistics:

► Nearly 25 percent of Alabama Baptist churches baptized no one in 2010.

► More than 1,200 Alabama Baptist churches did no Annual Church Profile for the SBOM.

► Nine out of 10 Christians lead no one to Christ in their lifetime.

Gilbreath emphasizes the need for training in Alabama.

Directors of missions and pastors must be ready to train churches to share the gospel, build contact

lists and get to know individual church communities, he said.

Every association and church will be supplied with the GPS preparation guide, a training DVD and His Heart, Our Hands: A Ministry Evangelism Toolkit, a North

American Mission Board (NAMB) resource with practical start-to-finish

instructions on ministries for individual churches and a video with

testimonies and a panel discussion.

Gilbreath also urges Alabama Baptists to know their partners and work together with associational leadership, the SBOM and NAMB.

Phil Winningham, an associate in the SBOM office of evangelism, said there is one word that Alabama Baptists need to focus on in the coming years: intentional.

"[Reaching the entire state] is not just going to happen," Winningham said.

To be intentional, churches must specifically plan for their areas.

"Evangelism in Alabama is as different as the (more than) 3,200 Alabama (Baptist) churches," Gilbreath said. "Churches have individual needs."



NAMB and the SBOM are committed to helping each church find its strengths, passions and needs and cultivate strategies through GPS to reach its area, he said. But in order for them to do that, the church must send in an accurate Annual Church Profile each year.

The reports enable strategies to be built in such a way as to come alongside a church through the Cooperative Program, Gilbreath said.

Winningham pointed out that reporting is biblical.

"(In the Bible), the reason the shepherd knew the one sheep was missing was because he counted them. In Acts 2, we know 3,000 were saved because they counted them," he noted.

Lance encourages all churches to consider and pray through participating in Reaching Across Alabama. "I look forward to experiencing what our Lord is going to do in the GPS strategy and especially with Reaching Across Alabama," he said. "He is still God! People are still lost without Christ! The Great Commission is still our mission! GPS is a needed strategy for the coming days. Pray that we all will be found faithful."

For more information, visit www.gps2020.net.

Alabama Baptists asked to bring in lost with attractional events in 2012



Photo courtesy of FBC Satsuma

HORSE WHISPERER — Chance Hill, son of Roy Hill, pastor of FBC Satsuma, works with a never-before-saddled horse in a round pen at an equestrian ministry event held at the church.

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) wants churches to see their communities with "fresh, evangelistic eyes."

"We want to remind them of the things they used to do or use the things they do anyway and make these things more evangelistic, such as Vacation Bible School or fall festivals," said Thomas Hammond, NAMB's God's Plan for Sharing (GPS) team leader in evangelism.

The 2012 GPS emphasis on attractional events is how NAMB wants to teach churches to do this.

An attractional event is "a (well-planned) evangelistic event (used) as a relational door to your community that provides a great opportunity to reach lost people for Christ," according to the GPS pastor/church preparation guide.

But most Alabama Baptist churches are already doing these types of events, noted Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

So how will the 2012 emphasis make a difference?

Participation in the emphasis involves four steps:

► an eight-week media saturation campaign called "Hope. Find It Here;"

► planning and implementing a community-reaching event;

► prayer walking and distributing invitations to the event one or two weeks beforehand; and

► doing follow-up with those who attended the event.

So what event should each church host?

That depends. Gilbreath suggested that each church will have a unique need, passion or idea for an attractional event in its neighborhood.

Jason Dunlap, pastor of Sharon Heights Baptist Church, Brookside, agreed.

"[If you have members] who are passionate (about something), they take it and run with it," Dunlap said. "That's the key. I can organize a golf tournament because that's my passion, but I don't have a clue about an antique car show. But I have people in my church who are passionate about it. ... Let [the members] do what they're called to do."

The preparation guide includes a list of contact numbers for churches that have had skateboard ministries, horse whisperer events, fishing tournaments, marksmanship events, motorcycle rallies, basketball tournaments and other events to attract lost people and those who would typically never set foot in a church.

(See 'Churches,' page 7)

Bridging the gap

Hueytown's Living Faith Cathedral holds biker service

By June Mathews
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In an effort to bridge the gap between the church community and the leather and chrome community, Living Faith Baptist Cathedral, Hueytown, in

Bessemer Baptist Association hosted a biker service. Several biker clubs and city officials were invited to the Nov. 20 event, and according to Pastor Johnny M. Williams Sr., an unusually diverse audience attended.

"We wanted to bring the bikers together and let them know God loves them," he said.

"We had to move out of our comfort zone to share Jesus."

Plans for the service began soon after Williams felt the Lord impressing upon him the need to minister to bikers from all around the metro Birmingham area. And as it turned out, He couldn't have chosen a more willing servant.

"Evangelism is my heartbeat," said Williams, who, along with his wife, Ruth, moved to Birmingham five years ago from New Orleans.

"I'm not here by accident; I'm here on an assignment. God sent me here to make a difference, and that's what we're doing at Living Faith."

Highlights of the service included a devotional reading by

Big Train, chaplain of Birmingham's Iron Angels motorcycle club, followed by a devotional prayer by Charles Sunday, former pastor of Garywood Baptist Church, Hueytown.

Inspirational speakers included Hueytown Chief of Police C.M. Halgar and Denise Buyerback, of New Orleans, a former

drug addict who made a drastic change in lifestyle when she found the Lord. Harry Turner, also known as The Traveling Shoes Preacher, sang, and a memorial tribute commemorated the lives of several deceased bikers. Later in the service, Williams preached an evangelistic sermon.

Afterward 25 to 30 bikers came to Williams with tears in their eyes to let him know of decisions they'd made as a result of attending the event.

"We have a responsibility to bring people together like this and preach the gospel."

Pastor Johnny M. Williams Sr.
Living Faith Baptist Cathedral,
Hueytown



Photo courtesy of Living Faith Baptist Cathedral

REACHING OUT — Harry Turner, also known as The Traveling Shoes Preacher, sings to the crowd at Living Faith Baptist Cathedral, Hueytown, during the biker service last fall.

"I'm going back to church," many told him. Others rededicated their lives to Christ.

And those decisions only reinforced what Williams had already realized: Living Faith's biker service should become an annual event.

"We're planning to do this every year until the Lord tells us otherwise," he said. "We have a responsibility to bring people together like this and preach the gospel."

"It's really exciting. I'm waiting for the day the Lord is going to turn His city upside down."



Photo courtesy of Living Faith Baptist Cathedral

SERVANT — Pastor Johnny M. Williams Sr. of Living Faith Baptist Cathedral, Hueytown, preaches an evangelistic sermon at the biker service.

Churches of all sizes can do attractational events

(continued from page 5)

Once a church decides on an event, it should begin prayer, promotion and preparation for it in early February, according to the timeline in the preparation guide.

By mid-March, the church should begin the equipping phase with more prayer, prayer walking and training church members and staff for the event. During March, the church should be sowing the gospel and then harvesting with the community-reaching event.

Finally, in April, there's an assimilation phase including a five-week follow-up time with event attendees.

Pastor Tommy Strickland of Five Points Baptist Church, Sylacauga, said churches should always register attendees because the contact list can become a great follow-up tool.

Gilbreath and his team are asking local churches to commit to do four attractational events this year.

"Churches already do some of these, such as revivals, Vacation Bible Schools and fall festivals. So they only have to commit to do one more. They also have

to commit to make the four events intentionally evangelistic," he said.

Gilbreath believes the use of attractational events in 2012 will be even bigger than the successes of the 2010 emphasis on door-to-door evangelism because such events give churches and pastors the opportunity to train their people to share their faith. "Our office just does the planning and preparation and then we become cheerleaders. The churches have to make it happen," Gilbreath said.

In order to do that, Scotty Sanders, co-founder of ONE Focus Initiative (see story, page 6), said a commitment needs to be demonstrated by the pastor.

"If [the pastor] is not committed (to evangelism) at a high level, don't expect others to be more committed (than he is)," Sanders said. "Many times, churches look like their pastors."

Strickland added that it doesn't matter how big or small a church is; every church can do attractational events.

For more information, visit www.greatcommissiongps.com or call the SBOM at 1-800-264-1225.

(BP contributed)

EVANGELISM TIPS for pastors, churches and individuals

► Anytime you can find an initiative like [ONE Focus] that causes people to get out of their comfort zone and to mobilize to do the work God's called us to do, you're doing something right. (Steve Loggins, director of missions, North Jefferson Baptist Association)

► For events, always make them evangelistic. Regardless of why people came, they get to hear the gospel once they get there. (Roy Hill, pastor, First Baptist Church, Satsuma)

► The biggest thing is, no matter the size of your church, you can do attractational

events. We're small, only about 50 on a Sunday and not a huge budget, but you can do events and not break the bank. If you don't feel like you have enough people or resources, there are other churches that will be glad to help out. The Great Commission tells us to love God and love people, and that's not hard to do with an attractational event. (Tommy Strickland, pastor, Five Points Baptist Church, Sylacauga)

► Look for people you don't know in the sanctuary who are visiting, and look at who is sitting next to them. Ask your members if they met the visitors and know how to get in touch with them. (Jason Dunlap, pastor, Sharon Heights Baptist Church, Brookside)

► The old stuff (like going door to door and crusades) still works; we just don't do it anymore. (Dunlap)

► Offer all kinds of training (for your members), even if you only have five people show up. Offer a one-day training or a discipleship course — just give them the opportunity to come. Many people are scared to share their faith but they'll come and learn and the next thing you know, (those same people) are out sharing and God's blessing it. (Dunlap)

-Church Resource Guide-

Proven solutions for your Family Life Center

Maple Gym Floors
Multipurpose Gym Floors
Indoor Jogging Tracks
Indoor and Outdoor Sports Equipment
Artificial Turf for Football and Soccer
Polyurethane All-Weather Tracks



Covington Flooring Co, Inc.
www.covington.com 1.800.824.1229



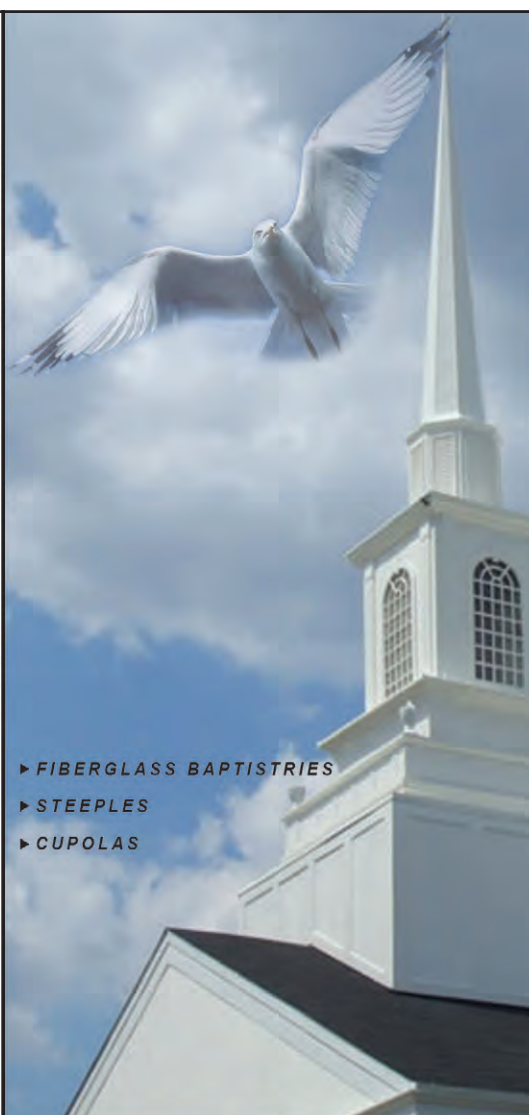
Steeple Etc.
#1 Source for Steeple, Baptistries, & Cupolas

No job too big or too small
Complete satisfaction is guaranteed

Toll-free:
1-888-980-6161

Local
1-205-936-9410

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



► FIBERGLASS BAPTISTRIES
► STEEPLES
► CUPOLAS

WWW.STEEPLESETC.COM

Lighthouse Gospel Productions presents...

Gulf Coast Quartet Convention

A Blast at the Beach!! • February 2-4, 2012
Conference Center at the Wharf
Orange Beach, Alabama 36561

FEATURING:

The Hoppers, Jeff & Sheri Easter, Phil Cross, Tim Lovelace, HisSong, Mark209, Fourtwelve and many more!!!

GULF COAST GOSPEL SHOWCASE
coming **MARCH 1-3**
featuring ...



Gold City



The Chuck Wagon Gang



The LeFevre Quartet



Phil Cross



HisSong



Tim Lovelace



Jeff & Sheri Easter



Mark209



The Hoppers

★ **NOTE:** Seafood and Barbecue Restaurants will have food stands in the Conference Center.

★ **NOTE:** Discount housing and ticket packages available.

Lighthousegospelproductions.com

For more information, contact:
Paul Smith • 251-981-8960
Paul@romarbeach.org

THURSDAY, February 2

2-5 p.m. Gospel Showcase, M.C.s: Phil Cross, Tim Lovelace, Paul Smith
Break
5-6 p.m. Gospel Showcase
6-7 p.m. Gospel Showcase
7-10 p.m. Concerts featuring: Phil Cross, HisSong, Mark209, Tim Lovelace, Fourtwelve
10-?? Night Owl Showcase, M.C.s: Jym Howe and Nathaniel Justice

FRIDAY, February 3

1-4 p.m. Phil Cross Writers Lab, Fellowship Hall, Romar Beach Baptist Church, 23370 Perdido Beach Blvd., Orange Beach, AL
2-5 p.m. Gospel Showcase, M.C.s: Tim Lovelace, Paul Smith, Rose Gilley
Break
5-6 p.m. Gospel Showcase
6-7 p.m. Gospel Showcase
7-10 p.m. Concerts featuring Jeff & Sheri Easter
10-?? Night Owl Showcase, M.C.s: Jym Howe and Nathaniel Justice

SATURDAY, February 4

1-4 p.m. Phil Cross Writers Lab, Fellowship Hall, Romar Beach Baptist Church
1-2 p.m. Tim Lovelace Comedy Hour
2-5 p.m. Gospel Showcase, M.C.s: Tim Lovelace, Jym Howe, Nathaniel Justice
Break
5-6 p.m. Gospel Showcase
6-7 p.m. Gospel Showcase
7-10 p.m. Concerts featuring The Hoppers
10-?? Grand Finale — All Singers

Church Resource Guide

SUPERIOR
Church Furnishings

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

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

Reliable
SIGN SERVICES INC.

**Professional
SIGNS**

"We enjoyed our time working with Reliable Sign Services' staff and with Danny Williams. Danny and Reliable addressed all our concerns. Danny came and did a presentation to our church and answered all our questions and addressed all our concerns. Our expectations were certainly met above and beyond what we anticipated. We are very, very pleased with our sign and excited how our new sign is going to enhance our ministry here at Tanner."

— Keith Turberville, associate pastor
First Baptist Church, Tanner

ReliableSigns.com • 205.664.0955



For information
about advertising in the
Church Resource Guide,
contact Pam Holt at
205-870-4720, Ext. 113
or pholt@
thealabamabaptist.org.

*Is your church planning to build or remodel? Does your church need to redecorate?
Do you want to make better use of your facilities? Do you need financial
counsel to accomplish these goals? Are you interested in exploring any of the above subjects?*

If so, then our annual CHURCH BUILDING CONFERENCE is for you!

January 31, 2012, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
The Baptist Building
2001 East South Boulevard, Montgomery, AL 36116

• A panel of experts will address all the topics above and many others.

• You will take home a very helpful conference booklet that you can use as a reference during your building conference.

• The conference fee includes lunch, snacks and all conference materials!

COST: \$10 PER PERSON

If you have questions, contact State Missionary Otis Corbitt at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 332 or ocorbitt@alsbom.org.

To register, call Brenda Niblett at
1-800-264-1225, Ext. 244.

"Would anyone build without counting the cost?"

Obviously, no! Come, let us count the cost then build for kingdom growth.

This conference is provided by the State Board of Missions in partnership with LifeWay Christian Resources.



NEW YEAR SPECIALS



If you've been in the market for a walk-in tub or tub lift seat, there has never been a better time to buy!



Hydro therapy walk-in tub

- \$7,900 complete installation — normally \$8,500
- Compare to competitors' price of \$14,000-15,000 with Premiere, Safety Tub and Zon walk-in tubs
- Lifetime warranty
- Never offered at this price



Power tub lift seat

- Unbelievable \$100 off regular price
- Five-year warranty

Call CHARLIE today and see how ALABAMA SAFETY BATH can change how you feel.

Ask about our no money down, no interest 12 months same as cash program on walk-in tubs*
*Approved credit through Enter Bank Corp.

ALABAMA SAFETY BATH

334-312-1825 • 1-855-849-5048 (toll-free)

www.alabamasafetybath.com • www.dreambathsalabama.com

DUMAS

Makers of Solid Wood Church Furniture Since 1928

**Pews • Pulpits • Pulpit Chairs • Choir Chairs
Communion Tables • Lecterns • Hymn Boards**

ROGER ROBERTS, FACTORY REPRESENTATIVE



Grove Hill, Alabama

800-633-6896 (phone)

251-605-0774 (mobile)

www.dumaspews.com

rogerdumas@tds.net

Singing in the Rain *Surviving Life's Storms*



WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Keynote Speaker

Vicki Courtney

February 17-18, 2012
at Mount Zion Baptist Church,
Huntsville, AL

For info: www.mzbc.net / (256) 837-2665

Thompson Sound, Inc.

Installing Excellence in
SOUND • LIGHTING • VIDEO

256.974.SOUND (7686)
www.thompsonsound.com

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

Bible Basics

series

PART 3 OF 8 ON SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY



A look at the men, women of faith in the Bible

By Ken Roxburgh
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The Bible begins with the Book of Genesis, which tells the stories of individual women and men of faith. It reminds us of what we noted last week: The Bible is made up primarily of stories. Sarah, Rachel, Isaac, Abraham and Joseph occupy the vast majority of the Bible's first book. Indeed Joseph's story takes 13 chapters to tell.

These stories come at the beginning of the Old Testament. Genesis to Kings is one part of the biblical narrative that tells the history of Israel from creation to exile. Traditionally, within Judaism, these books are subdivided into two sections: Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy) and the Former Prophets (Joshua to Kings). These two sections make up about one-third of the entire biblical corpus, forming a continuous narrative that describes events from creation to the sixth century B.C. The narrative links together the theme of the covenant promises of God to Abraham and the deliverance of one aspect of that promise: the gift of the land for God's people and the coming of the Messiah.

God's promise

In Genesis, God promises Abraham that he will be the father of a great nation in the land of Canaan. This promise is renewed to Isaac and Jacob. The Book of Exodus deals with the way the family becomes a nation and is brought out of Egypt to the borders of Canaan; Leviticus deals with the regulations given to Israel with regard to its identity as the people of God, a holy nation. Numbers recounts many incidents of Israel's history when God's judgment was experienced.

Deuteronomy, a book that stands by itself, describes the renewing of the covenant, this time "in the desert east of the Jordan" (Deut. 1:1). Here Israel stands, at a new stage in its history, on the threshold of the promises being fulfilled. Obligations are given in Deuteronomy, set out in several speeches by Moses. Joshua shows the partial conquest of the land, whereas Judges gives a vivid contrast, indicating the way in which Israel's sins hinder the smooth occupation of the land as it loses ground to its enemies.

This pattern of events continues in Samuel, a failure that climaxes with the Ark of the Covenant, the special symbol of God's presence with His people, being captured by Israel's enemies, the Philistines. However, when the Ark is brought into the presence of the Philistine god Dagon, the statue to him collapses. This appears to be a sign to Israel that God is still more powerful.

First Samuel focuses on kingship — Saul's and David's. In 2 Samuel, David establishes his capital in Jerusalem. In Kings,

Ken Roxburgh

is chair of the religion department and S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong professor of religion at Samford University in Birmingham. He earned his bachelor's degree from the London School of Theology, master's degree from Aberdeen University in Scotland and doctorate from Edinburgh University in Scotland. He has written numerous articles for scholarly journals and books, as well as a book, "Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church in 18th-century Scotland."



attention shifts to Solomon, who builds the Temple and extends the kingdom's boundaries. It appears that the ancient promises are now fulfilled. Yet the end of Solomon's reign is one of further slippage. Solomon's many wives lead him to idolatry; following his death, the kingdom divides into "Judah," around Jerusalem, and "Israel," which becomes known as the Northern Kingdom.

The fortunes of these two kingdoms take up the rest of 1 and 2 Kings. Eventually Israel's sin leads to its downfall in 721 B.C. at the hands of the Assyrians, and then a similar fate befalls Judah with the invasion of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. With that event, the Temple is destroyed and the city is laid bare. The promises appear to have been forgotten. Although the books of Genesis to Kings reflect on past events, they are written from the perspective of the future — they remind the people of their history and give a sense, not of despair but, of hope for the future.

New beginnings

Deuteronomy is a key book in the Old Testament. It was formed, in all likelihood, as part of a process from the eighth to the sixth century — from the time of the divided monarchy to the exile. The many connections between the book and the reform movement under King Josiah (640–609 B.C.) in 2 Kings suggest that the times of Josiah and the theology of Deuteronomy are similar. Deeply moved by the disparity between the book's contents and Israel's religious practices, Josiah intensifies his reform efforts (2 Kings 22–24).

Deuteronomy came together at a crucial time of new beginnings for Israel. Just as the times depicted in the book related to Israel, standing at the threshold of Canaan, so the exile was a time of hope for new beginnings. Although it appears that the book was written for Israel at the time of Moses, it is more likely that the book was

edited during a later era. The people were back in the wilderness, on the other side of Canaan, and had to learn, once again, lessons of grace, gratitude and responsibility. The book is full of applied theology. It was meant to stir the hearts and actions of God's people. Its theological emphasis sets the tone for how Israel must live in the land it will inherit from the God who has chosen it.

One aspect of its contribution to biblical theology as a whole is the emphasis in places on God's generosity, His grace. Much of the book appears to indicate that despite Israel's innate sinfulness, God loves it. Deuteronomy 7:7 is a core theological theme: "I have loved you because I have loved you." No other explanation is deemed necessary.

Deuteronomy is also a book of words. Little action takes place in the book. Most of it consists of four major speeches by Moses. There is also a focus upon the 10 "words": the Ten Commandments. Israel must take these words seriously to become, once again, a people under God's blessing.

Theologically Judaism was not primarily a religion of works but of grace. Deuteronomy emphasizes the grace of God's love for Israel, although His grace demands a response. Israel is reminded that it could have taken 11 days to come from Egypt to Kadesh Barnea (1:2) but it took 40 years. However, even rebellion and rejection are met with grace, and God moves His people into the future (2:2). Chapter after chapter presents a theology of grace seeking obedience to God's commands. This is why Torah became vital in Jewish thought, and this is portrayed in the story of Josiah finding the book of the law in the Temple during Jeremiah's ministry.

Deuteronomy brings a retelling of the Ten Commandments at a later stage of Israel's history from that of Exodus 20. One of the slight changes in the account in Deuteronomy is the reason given as to why Israel should keep the commands, especially the command relating to keeping the Sabbath. In Exodus, the emphasis appears to be the creation ordinance, whereas the stress in Deuteronomy is on the exodus experience. The overall reason given for the law is "so that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land" (Deut. 4:40). Fundamental to this whole section is the fact that Israel must display total allegiance to God but always in dependence on His grace.

Throughout the book, Moses stresses the truth that God's covenant is personal, understandable and accessible (29:9–15;

30:11–14). Attaining the goals set out is not beyond Israel's reach. The people are encouraged, as well as warned, to keep the law. This keeping of the law is not a religion of merit but is based upon grace; this is stressed again and again within Deuteronomy.

Old Testament scholar Gerhard Von Rad spoke of how "all the commandments are simply a grand explanation of the command to love Yahweh and to cling to Him alone. And this love is Israel's return of the divine love bestowed upon her. The many imperatives in Deuteronomy are therefore appeals, sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit, for gratitude to be shown in action, and Deuteronomy regards them as easy to fulfill." Obligations flow from God's love. Obligations do not create God's love toward us.

'Turn away from evil'

I suspect that Deuteronomy is not often read by Baptists in the 21st century. This is unfortunate because, as author and Presbyterian minister Elizabeth Achtemeier commented, "There is no book of more importance in the Old Testament and no Old Testament book more basic for understanding the New Testament than Deuteronomy." It is, after Genesis, the Psalms and Isaiah, the most cited book in the New Testament, and Jesus refers to it on several occasions during His experience of temptation in Matthew 4. It raises issues surrounding the

value of God's law in the world. It shows how God's grace impacts generation after generation. The prominence of ethical and moral issues manifests a concern for a just social order in God's world.

One way in which Deuteronomy's message was, and continues to be, misunderstood is the connection made between obedience and blessing and disobedience and judgment. The Israelites discovered that disobedience can sometimes

go unpunished and obedience is not always rewarded with blessing. Psalm 69 tells the story of the person who says, "It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. When I humbled my soul with fasting, they insulted me for doing so. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me" (9–11).

The Book of Job is the classic text that reminds us that someone who "fears the Lord and turns away from evil" can still encounter pain and suffering in his or her life.

"Obligations flow from God's love. Obligations do not create God's love toward us."

Ken Roxburgh
Samford University

This leads God's people, as in Psalm 74, to pray, "O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture? ... Why do you hold back your hand?" (1, 11).

Author and theologian Frederick Buechner counsels us to "Listen to your life. ... See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and the pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness, touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis, all moments are key moments and life itself is a grace."

The New Testament also lives with this tension of faith and fear, certainty and discouragement. The juxtaposition of Good Friday and Easter must never be separated. Good Friday includes the darkness of Golgotha, despair and even doubt as Jesus cries, "Why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). The joy of Easter does not mean that we cannot also experience Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

The stories of these early Old Testament books make it clear that God alone is the One who delivers and leads His people. Yet the role of human agency in the stories is also very real. Abraham, Joseph and Moses are central to what occurs within the story of God's actions in their lives. It is their faith that Hebrews 11 encourages us to emulate. God does not act alone in the events of the Bible. God enters into a partnership with certain individuals to deliver His people. This is why we read, "I have come to deliver them ... so come and I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:8, 10). The roles of Moses and others in this story alert us to the fact that passively waiting for God's action alone to oppose oppression and injustice in society is not right. The Egyptian midwives, Moses' family and Pharaoh's daughter work with God to act on Moses' behalf, and Moses does the same thing for the people in Egypt. Participation in God's process of working is vital for His purposes to be fulfilled. God works with and through humankind's frailty to thwart human oppression.

Still relevant

The Old Testament's stories are not just relics of the past. They remain relevant in the 21st century. They are stories that we retell, remember and live out for ourselves in our own particular context. In these stories, we rejoice in God's grace and goodness, and we seek to be obedient to Him here and now, no matter what the cost may be.

'Quantum leap'

Boone's Chapel sees 'excitement for ministry,' breaks ground after tornado

By Courtney Searcy
The Alabama Baptist

Out with the old and in with the new" became more than just an old saying for Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, when a tornado toppled its sanctuary April 15, 2011.

The Autauga Baptist Association church broke ground Jan. 8 for a new facility to stand where its sanctuary once did.

But the vision for the new building began long before the tornado hit. When Mike Johnson became pastor more than a year ago, he formed a committee to survey the church and formulate a vision.

The survey assessed community needs and how Boone's Chapel Baptist could meet them, as well as needs in discipleship and maturity. The church then implemented a long-term course of action.

It wasn't expecting what happened April 15. Despite having a ruined sanctuary, Johnson said the church's first response was to minister to the devastation and loss within its community.

Boone's Chapel members lost family members as Willard Hollon and his two adult children, Steve and Cheryl, were killed in the tornado. Their mobile home, located near the church, was picked up and tossed over the sanctuary.

Because of its recovery efforts and press coverage, "the church took a quantum leap following the storm," Johnson said.

Since the storm, the church has seen increased attendance and has even begun to hold two worship services.

"There is a great deal of excitement for ministry in the community," Johnson said, noting that a recent Sunday night showing of the film "Courageous" drew in hundreds from the community.

This excitement for ministry is reflected in the plans for the new building. Rather than rebuilding the sanctuary, the church has elected to continue meeting in the gymnasium that remained intact following the storm and to build a center to accommodate its growing children's ministry.



Photo by Carol Fowler

MINISTRY IN THE COMMUNITY — Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, in Autauga Baptist Association, breaks ground Jan. 8 for its new facility where the sanctuary stood before a tornado hit the building April 15, 2011.

"It's going to be an outreach ministry to the youth and accommodate their needs — that's what it's all about," said David Silas, a Boone's Chapel member and building contractor.

Community safe room

The 17,000-square-foot facility will contain classrooms for preschoolers, children and youth, as well as a large multipurpose recreation room. In addition to administrative offices, it will have a safe room available to the community when severe weather strikes.

"We realized there were 8,300 homes within five miles of the church, and ... they don't have any public buildings to go to," Johnson said.

Silas said the safe room will hold around 150 people and will be surrounded by 12-inch concrete walls and a 10-inch concrete ceiling.

The new facility should be complete within nine to 11 months.

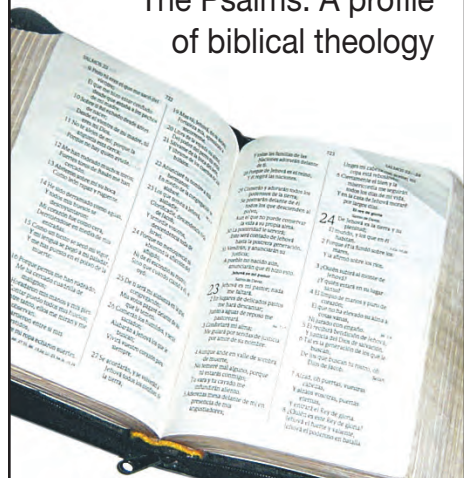
Attendees at the ground-breaking ceremony included about 350 church members and leaders as well as community leaders such as Art Faulkner, Alabama Emergency Management Agency director; Sen. Bryan Taylor of Prattville; Alfred Booth, Autauga County probate judge; Joy Booth, Autauga County district judge; Paul Beckman, Rep. of Autauga and Elmore; and Bill Gillespie, mayor of Prattville.

During the ceremony, Johnson shared a message titled "A Time to Tear Down, a Time to Rebuild" from Ecclesiastes 3. While the church has come through its own season of tearing down and building up, there is a parallel to the Christian's spiritual life.

"It's necessary to tear down the old in order to have an ending of the old way, in order to move into the new. God refers to our lives as buildings — we have to condemn the old," Johnson said.

Next week's topic ...

The Psalms: A profile of biblical theology



Bob Riley to testify in public corruption retrial

(continued from page 1)

dants) are guilty as charged," he said. "(Former Gov.) Bob Riley's Task Force (on Illegal Gambling) was putting them out of business. They had operated for years and expanded their gambling for years. ... They had to get a law passed. ... They were desperate. Their backs were against the wall, and they thought they had to do whatever it [took] to change the law."

Johnston said the bill they were proposing would have created a gambling monopoly in the state without any legal parameters.

"Nothing they would do could be illegal," he noted.

"They would have been exempted from the Alabama Constitution's anti-gambling provision, from all criminal laws and all Alabama Supreme Court opinions."

Already U.S. District Judge Myron

Thompson has refused to grant acquittals to the remaining defendants before the retrial or divide the case into three separate trials, which federal prosecutors said would speed up the case and help jurors deal with potentially lengthy and confusing information, according to *The Birmingham News*.

Riley and his public safety director, Chris Murphy, have been subpoenaed in the retrial, according to the *News*.

"We certainly want to see justice done," Godfrey said. "We hope that the judge and jury and everybody involved will listen to the arguments and make a fair and just decision. In the first trial, there was no question substantial amounts of money had changed hands and pressure was indeed applied to senators to vote in favor of the gambling bill, and that is something that must never be forgotten."

VOICE YOUR OPINION

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

Remember to:

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

Samford's online nursing program ranks among best

The graduate programs of Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing earned recognition in three categories of *U.S. News & World Report's* first Top Online Education Program rankings, released Jan. 10.

The Samford nursing school was ranked 31st in Faculty Credentials and Training, 36th in Student Engagement and Accreditation and 56th in Student Services and Technology among the nation's graduate nursing programs.

The Faculty Credentials and Training category includes such factors as a school's percentage of faculty with a Ph.D. or terminal degree, the percentage with greater than two years of experience and the amount of faculty training required in online teaching practices. The Student Engagement and Accreditation Ranking considers a program's national accreditation, whether students are required to work collaboratively and maximum and average class size. The Student Services and Technology category looks at the technol-

ogy available to a school's students, student services and whether it has a digitized library.

Samford's online nursing programs include all master of science in nursing degree programs except nurse anesthesia, and also includes the doctor of nursing practice degree program. Approximately 350 students from 28 states are enrolled in Samford's online nursing programs.

To be considered for the rankings, online degree programs needed to have at least 80 percent of their course content available online. The Samford program was one of only three Alabama nursing programs ranked; the others were Troy University and the University of South Alabama.

Samford's online nursing programs have produced a variety of success stories:

► Students have completed Samford's family nurse practitioner program and are providing primary care services to vulnerable and underserved populations of patients.

Alumni work on Indian reservations and in federally-funded migrant health centers as well as in remote areas such as Barrow, Alaska.

► Five doctor of nursing practice (DNP) graduates are serving as deans of nursing schools across the country, and other DNP graduates are chief nursing officers at large health care systems.

► Graduates of master of sci-

ence in nursing and DNP programs are teaching in a majority of Alabama community colleges.

► One DNP alumnus took a faculty position in psychiatric nursing at a state institution that had a vacancy in the position for five years.

► Another DNP graduate was awarded the nurse of the year award by the March of Dimes for her work in palliative care. (SU)

MSAudio, LLC

Integrators of Professional Audio, Video, and Lighting

1259B Springridge Road • Clinton, MS 39056

Office: 601-923-9947
Fax: 601-924-2880
www.msaudiollc.com



Trooper Hales
Cell: 601-720-4932
Trooper@msaudiollc.com

Carpenter Bus Sales

going the extra mile since 1953

Lowest Payments Ever!!

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

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

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

LifeWay
CHURCH BUS SALES
Biblical Solutions for Life
A Service of LifeWay Christian Stores

800-370-6180 • www.CarpenterBus.com

EXPLORE CHRISTIANITY BEFORE DENOMINATIONS EXISTED



"Memoirs of the Thirteenth Disciple"

—by Cedric Phillips

This fictional work is a great adventure of Christianity as it provides a view of religion that existed before denominations were cultivated, before the books of the New Testament were written and it explains how Christianity is woven into Judaism.

Available for purchase at www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, www.xulonpress.com/bookstore and on Kindle.

MARKET PLACE

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Vacancy for a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 611, Forest Avenue Baptist Church, Jackson, AL 36545, or email: fabc7637@att.net.

PART-TIME OR BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Prayerfully searching for part-time or bivocational pastor at Hopewell Baptist Church. Send resumé to: rhester@regarrison.com or HBC, 416 Hopewell Road, Danville, AL 35619. "We Go Where The Spirit Leads."

MINISTER OF MUSIC/EDUCATION: Calvary Baptist of Scottsboro, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music/education. Send resumé to: Kenneth Wells, 1003 Byron Road, Scottsboro, AL 35769 or calvary2012@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: First Baptist Church, Tullahoma, Tenn., a conservative Southern Baptist church, is seeking a full-time minister of music to serve alongside four full-time ministers. Sunday morning worship services include one contemporary service and one traditional service. Contact Pastor Herb Hester at 108 E. Grundy Street, Tullahoma, TN 37388 or hester.herb@fbctullahoma.org.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Grace Baptist Church in Montevallo is seeking a bivocational music minister to lead our congregation and choir in worship. Please contact Justin at 205-602-3847 or email us at gracebaptist-

montevallo@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & YOUTH: Carrollton Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ala., is now accepting resúmes for a minister of music and youth. Please submit resúmes to: Carrollton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 457, Carrollton, AL 35447, call/fax 205-367-8577 or email: cbc01@centurytel.net.

MINISTER OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION & FAMILIES: Metro Atlanta Baptist church seeking minister of spiritual formation and families. Please send resúmes to ATTN: Mrs. Susan Lewis at 561 Veterans Memorial Hwy SE, Mableton, GA 30126, or via email at susan@mtharmony.org.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & COLLEGE/CAREER: Malvern Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of children, youth and college/career. Send resúmes to: Malvern Baptist Search Committee, P.O. Box 97, Malvern, AL 36349.

MIDDLE SCHOOL/WEELNESS PASTOR: To direct middle school ministry of 40+ students and implement/direct a wellness/activity/recreation ministry using existing family ministry center. College or seminary degree in either area or three years experience in similar situation. Send resúmes to: R. King, Mountain Park FBC, 5485 Five Forks Trickum Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30087 or rking@mpfbc.net.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER: Eldridge Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational youth minister to work with grades 7-12. Send resumé to: Eldridge Baptist Church, 85 Maxwell Lane, Eldridge, AL 35554, or email: couring-tonbk@att.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

EXECUTIVE & PROGRAM DIRECTORS: A Christian discipleship center ministering to women with life-controlling addictions is seeking a mature couple as executive and program directors with Bible knowledge and a passion to help these women. No fundraising required. Send resumé to: BTH, P.O. Box 720672, Byram, MS 39272.

BUSINESS

CHRISTIAN VALUES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY: Christian Values Technology Company seeks mature business professionals for high-income opportunity. Home-based office. Hands-on support and apprenticeship-style training. For complete information, call Paul at 888-710-6994.

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

FOR SALE NEW & USED: Lift chairs, stairlifts, car lifts, scooters and walk-in

tubs. \$500 and up and power wheelchairs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

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

CHURCH LOANS & CONSTRUCTION

CHURCH LOANS: Church loans at 3.0-4.5%. Perfect refinancing option. Also available for construction and purchase. Call H.R. Ellis at AG Commercial Capital, 334-549-3408 or 1-800-792-0922, Ext. 2222.

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

TRAVEL/VACATION

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

ORLANDO VACATION HOME: 4 BRs, 2 1/2 BAs and pool. 10 minutes to Disney. 20 minutes to Universal and Sea World. \$125/night. www.orlandovaca.com. 303-808-2978. Robert.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Franklin L. Kirksey
First Baptist Church, Spanish Fort

Jesus gives the gist of eternal life in John 17:3: "That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

Tracing the word translated "eternal" in the Book of Hebrews yields a five-pointed truth. Initially we discover eternal salvation in Hebrews 5:9: "And having been perfected, [Jesus] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

Fearfully we encounter the teaching of eternal retribution in Hebrews 6:2b. This verse closes with the words "eternal judgment." Of course, this refers to hell. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this, the judgment" (9:27).

Faithfully we read about eternal redemption in Hebrews 9:12. Within the context of this passage, we read about "the eternal Spirit" (v. 14) and "the eternal inheritance" (v. 15). Jesus Christ's blood (Heb. 9:22-28) is our only hope of redemption.

Expectantly we look for a word about eternal reward. In Hebrews 11:6 and 24-26, we read, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. ... By faith, Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."

Gratefully we find the principle of eternal security many times in the Bible. For example, we read from Hebrews 12:2 and 13:5b, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ... For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" Corrie ten Boom, who helped many Jews escape the Holocaust, stated, "In God's faithfulness lies eternal security."

Will you have eternal rejoicing or eternal regret? Allow me to encourage you to repent and place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life.

'Victory for religious freedom'

Supreme Court sides with churches in 'ministerial exception' employment case

In a landmark decision for churches, the U.S. Supreme Court has for the first time ruled that a "ministerial exception" allows congregations and religious groups to hire and fire ministers free of federal employment discrimination laws.

The unanimous ruling Jan. 11 in a case closely watched by religious liberty organizations involved a teacher who had been fired from an Evangelical Lutheran Church school in Michigan. The teacher,

the equivalent of a minister in the school's employee classification, sued the school after she was fired, and the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in her favor.

Constitutional principle

Although the case only involved one employee at a Christian school, the constitutional principle in the case could have impacted churches. Observers considered it one of the most significant religious freedom cases to reach the high court in

decades. The 6th Circuit's decision worried religious groups who feared that a ruling against them would strike a blow to their hiring freedoms. The Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and International Mission Board signed a brief urging the high court to side with the Lutheran school.

The Supreme Court, with no dissenters, said the First Amendment is clear in preventing government interference.

"The Establishment Clause prevents the Government from appointing ministers, and the Free Exercise Clause prevents it from interfering with the freedom of religious groups to select their own," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court.

The two clauses are found in the section of the First Amendment pertaining to religious liberty: "The Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Although lower courts had sided with the ministerial exception, the Supreme Court had never ruled on the matter.

"We agree that there is such a ministerial exception," Roberts wrote. "... Requiring a church to accept or retain an unwanted minister, or punishing a church for failing to do so, intrudes upon more than a mere employment decision. Such action interferes with the internal governance of the church, depriving the church of control over the selection of those who will personify its beliefs. By imposing an unwanted minister, the state infringes the Free Exercise Clause, which protects a religious group's right to shape its own faith and mission through its appointments."

Roberts added: "According to the state the power to determine which

individuals will minister to the faithful also violates the Establishment Clause, which prohibits government involvement in such ecclesiastical decisions."

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty represented the Lutheran school.

"The message of today's opinion is clear: The government can't tell a church who should be teaching its religious message," said Luke Goodrich, deputy national litigation director at the Becket Fund. "This is a huge victory for religious freedom and a rebuke to the government, which was trying to regulate how churches select their ministers."

Two categories

The Lutheran school in question divides teachers into two categories: "called" and "lay." Called teachers have to satisfy several requirements in order to fit into that category, including taking theological study courses and obtaining the endorsement of the local synod. Lay teachers work on one-year contracts and don't have to meet those requirements, and are hired only when there aren't enough "called" teachers. The teacher in question, Cheryl Perich, was a "called" teacher.

The case was *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*. (BP)

Start the New Year with more income

If you are like many people, you have seen your income go down in the last year. With money market funds and CDs producing dismal returns, now is the time to take action to increase your income now and for the future.

Did you know that you can multiply your annual income by exchanging your lower performing CD for a charitable gift annuity? With a gift annuity, your **INCOME IS FIXED FOR LIFE** and paid at a rate based on your age.

The benefits of a charitable gift annuity add up. When you transfer your CD, stock or even cash to us in exchange for a charitable gift annuity, you receive a charitable deduction to offset this year's taxes. Better yet, a portion of your income may even be tax free.

If you would like to learn more about the benefits of creating a charitable gift annuity in the new year, please contact us. We would be happy to provide you with a free personalized illustration that shows your potential income and charitable deduction.



I'm Ready!

One of the services offered by The Baptist Foundation of Alabama is the Charitable Gift Annuity. The Charitable Gift Annuity allows you to create a good income stream during life and create a future "Kingdom" gift to support your local church or any Baptist ministry of your choosing. Payments may be set up for you alone or for you and your spouse.



☐ I would like a FREE personalized proposal and information on a gift annuity.

First Person - Name & Date of Birth

If Two Lives - Name & Date of Birth

Amount to Illustrate: \$ _____

Please send my FREE proposal to the following mailing address:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Any information given is private and confidential.

CLIP AND MAIL TO:

THE BAPTIST FOUNDATION OF ALABAMA, P.O. BOX 241227, MONTGOMERY, AL 36124-1227
PHONE: (334) 394-2000 / FAX: (334) 394-2039 / www.tbfa.org

Retired Hale Association DOM Denny Goodwin dies at 69

James Denton "Denny" Goodwin, retired director of missions (DOM) for Hale Baptist Association, died Jan. 6. He was 69.

Goodwin received a bachelor of

arts from Mississippi College in Clinton; master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. While a student at Southwestern Seminary, he served as language coordinator at the Southern Baptist Convention Radio and Television Commission.

The Alabama churches Goodwin led as pastor were Greensboro Baptist Church in Hale Association, Aliceville Baptist Church in Pickens Baptist Association and First Baptist Church, Demopolis, in Bethel Baptist Association. He served Hale Association as DOM from 2000 until 2007.

Goodwin is survived by his wife of 46 years, Barbara Davis Goodwin; two children; and four grandchildren. (TAB)

CD or IRA About to Roll Over and Play Dead?

Learn the Safe and Secure Way to Earn Stock Market Linked Returns Without Market Risk to Your Principal.

Call now for a FREE copy of the book *Growth Without Risk*

O'Mire Financial

Services

1.800.844.3254

FOLLOW US ON
Twitter
@AlabamaBaptist

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 22

Explore the Bible

By Dale Younce

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

BE EXCLUSIVE

Deuteronomy 4:5-10, 15-19, 39-40

We live in a constantly changing world. Some changes are for the better and are rightly embraced. Other changes may be unwelcome, but must be accepted anyway. Constant change can foster a lack of commitment in our lives so that we are just waiting for the next new thing to come along. Changing circumstances in life can lead us to question our basic values and spiritual devotion. God expects His people to maintain an exclusive devotion to Him, whatever their circumstances.

Learn and Live by God's Ways (5-8)

These verses are a part of Moses' review of the Israelites' journey from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab. Moses was preparing them to enter the promised land. The Mosaic law had been given to Israel, not to burden them, but to make them unique among the nations of the earth.

From its beginning, Israel was to be a witness nation (Ex. 19:5-6). The Law was to make Israel unique among the surrounding polytheistic nations. Israel was not to be distinguished by its natural resources, wealth or military power. Israel was to be distinctive by its closeness to God, who is righteous, so that following His wisdom brought great blessing. If Israel obeyed the Law, then it would be the envy of all other nations.

The pagan peoples would see three things in Israel. First, Israel would know how to discern matters accurately. Second, it would be clear to the other nations that God had established an intimate relationship with Israel. Third, Israel's law reflected the moral, righteous character of Israel's God.

We demonstrate wisdom when we learn and live by God's ways in all circumstances.

Center Your Whole Family on God (9-10)

Repeatedly Moses stressed parents' responsibility to pass on to their children their experiences with God and the knowledge they had gained from Him. Moses instructed the Israelites to apply themselves diligently to learning

the Lord's ways and teaching those ways to their children and grandchildren. The spiritual instruction of the children from generation to generation would prevent forgetting the great events of revelation such as the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

This instruction also would result in the nation fearing God. Fearing God included genuine dread of disobeying Him. It also included responding positively to Him in trusting, obeying, worshiping and serving Him.

Today we Christians encourage an enduring devotion to God when we teach His ways through our families to future generations.

Let Nothing Else Have God's Place (15-19)

Israel was to remember how God revealed Himself at Mount Sinai. Although the mountain was covered with smoke, fire and thunder, God revealed His presence through His voice; the Israelites did not see any form of God to be copied and worshiped. God forbids any visible representation of Himself. He rules out the worship of anything created — humans, animals, birds, fish, sun, moon and stars, all of which were found as gods in the polytheistic nations. God warned the Israelites against making an idol of any form and against being tempted to worship the celestial bodies.

In harmony with this Mosaic teaching, we strengthen our devotion to God when we carefully avoid attributing divine power to anyone or anything other than God Himself.

Recognize God's Lordship Every Day (39-40)

Israel was a highly privileged nation. It had, by God's grace and power, been delivered from bondage with mighty miracles. As no other nation, Israel heard God speak at Mount Sinai and survived. All this God did to reveal to the nation that He alone is God. In light of such privilege, love and blessing, Moses called the Israelites to acknowledge that the Lord alone is God and to commit anew to keeping His commands.

We give exclusive devotion to God by acknowledging His lordship over our lives every day.

Bible Studies for Life

By Joseph F. Scrivner

Assistant Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

LOVING IN A DIVIDED CULTURE

Acts 10:9-15, 22-23, 28-29a, 34-36

God promised Abram that He would make his name great and that "all the peoples on earth [would] be blessed" through him (Gen. 12:3). Later in Israel's history, a prophet foresaw a time when "no foreigner who has converted to the Lord should say, 'The Lord will exclude me from His people'" (Isa. 56:3). As one continues through the Bible, however, it is often unclear when this day would come. In a famous "hard saying," Jesus even told a Canaanite woman that He had been sent "only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). Indeed understanding how the gospel of Jesus Christ leads to the inclusion of every racial and ethnic group only becomes clear as the Holy Spirit guides the apostles after Christ ascends into heaven (Acts 1:6-11).

Challenge Your Assumptions (9-15)

Before Jesus ascends, He tells His apostles that they will be witnesses for the gospel "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This is an early indication in the Book of Acts that God intends the gospel for every person in every region. We see the first manifestation of this on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles miraculously speak in the languages of the various peoples gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-13).

Unfortunately this miracle does not alleviate cultural tensions among the earliest believers in Jerusalem. The apostles then move out from Jerusalem, spreading the gospel to different areas, just as Jesus commissioned (Acts 8:1-40). Yet the gospel does not transcend Jewish parameters until God changes Peter's assumptions in a Gentile home (Acts 10:1-48).

God introduces Peter to a Roman military official named Cornelius through two miracles. First an angel appears to Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile, and instructs him to send for Peter (Acts 10:1-8). Second, the next day, Peter has a vision in which he sees unclean animals on a sheet (9-16). A voice directs him to kill and eat, but Peter refuses because of the Mosaic prohibitions against

eating unclean animals (12-14). Nevertheless the voice responds repeatedly with a surprising, yet ambiguous, declaration: "What God has made clean, you must not call common" (15-16).

Change Your Behavior (22-23, 28-29a)

After Peter arrives in Caesarea, he enters Cornelius' home and encounters a room full of Gentiles (Acts 10:24-27). Though it is unlawful for him to associate with Gentiles, Peter recalls God's command in the vision and opens himself to what God may be doing. As Peter shares the gospel with these Gentiles (Acts 10:34-43), the Holy Spirit miraculously falls on them, just as happened to the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 10:44-48).

Later, when word of this gets back to Jewish believers, they question Peter (Acts 11:1-3). He recounts the Holy Spirit's work and then asks, "Therefore, if God gave them the same gift that He also gave to us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?" (Acts 11:17). The controversy continues until it is finally resolved with additional witnesses and deliberation in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-41).

Clarify That Jesus Is Lord of All (34-36)

Yet Peter later demonstrates that even those who have experienced God in the most miraculous ways can fall into indefensible hypocrisy. Paul tells us that Peter and others give into social pressure and withdraw from fellowship with Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-21).

When relatives and friends perpetuate stereotypes about "those people," will we be Peter in Acts or Galatians? Will we protest when politicians engage in fear mongering for their own selfish benefit? Or will we go along to get along? Will we remember that "those people" are created in God's image? If we do not, then we "give false testimony" against our neighbor (Ex. 20:16). Moreover, when we make culturally convenient distinctions between "us" and "them," we disobey the spirit of Jesus' response when He was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:25-37).

Christian Crossword

Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

1

10

13

24

30

36

43

49

52

2

11

14

18

25

31

37

44

53

3

12

15

19

26

32

38

45

54

4

13

16

21

28

33

39

46

55

5

14

17

22

29

34

40

47

56

6

15

18

23

30

36

41

48

57

7

16

19

24

31

37

42

49

58

8

17

20

25

32

38

43

50

59

9

18

21

26

33

39

44

51

60

Across

2. Kilogram. (abbr.)

4. Not very often.

10. Computer communication.

12. Joshua ... left nothing _____. (Josh. 11:15)

13. _____ each his own.

14. Their cry came up un _____ God. (Ex. 2:23)

15. New Testament. (abbr.)

16. Egyptian sun god.

18. Royal Canadian. (abbr.)

20. Not A.D.

21. The ... that came out of Egypt ... died. (Josh. 5:4)

24. Live in _____. (2 Cor. 13:11)

27. _____ our eye hath seen it. (Ps. 32:51)

28. Deutsche mark. (abbr.)

29. The cup was found in Benjamin's _____. (Gen. 44:12)

30. Our _____ is near. (Lam. 4:18)

32. Shem, _____ and Japheth. (Gen. 5:32)

33. Saul ... fought against ... Moab and _____. (1 Sam. 14:47)

36. Takes care of a bill.

38. _____ la la la.

39. The _____ of that house was great. (Luke 6:49)

40. So be it.

42. Led us through a land ... of _____. (Jer. 2:6)

43. "Kukla, Fran, and _____."

46. Energy, vim, vigor.

47. Lung disease.

49. They _____ hands on the apostles. (Acts 4:3)

50. Behold ... the _____ and it shineth not. (Job 25:5)

51. As he thinketh in his heart, _____ is he. (Prov. 23:7)

52. A long period of time.

53. He saith among the trumpets, _____. (Job 39:25)

54. Heareth ... and _____ with joy receiveth it. (Matt. 13:20)

56. I am a _____ of the Gentiles. (1 Tim. 2:7)

57. As _____ that mourneth for his mother. (Ps. 35:14)

Down

1. Cornelius _____ him, and fell down. (Acts 10:25)

2. Baby fox.

3. The earth is a _____.

4. I saw an angel standing in the _____. (Rev. 19:17)

5. Inner, within. (prefix)

6. 450 in Roman numerals.

7. Who rejoice to _____ evil. (Prov. 2:14)

8. Cherubims stretch wings _____ high. (Ex. 25:20)

9. Being nothing more than.

11. Jacob loved Rachel _____ than Leah. (Gen. 29:30)

17. The cruel venom of _____. (Deut. 32:33)

19. A person who carries another's clubs.

21. _____ straight the way of the Lord. (John 1:23)

22. _____, thou that destroyest the temple. (Mark 15:29)

23. The arrangement of items.

24. Wizards that _____, and that mutter. (Isa. 8:19)

25. 900 in Roman numerals.

26. _____ sought to destroy all the Jews. (Esther 3:6)

29. Is the young man Absalom _____? (2 Sam. 18:29)

31. North America. (abbr.)

34. One drop of water.

35. Sprinkles lightly on something.

37. He hath _____ in his heart. (Ps. 10:6)

41. He dwelleth in _____. (John 6:56)

42. I will not with ink and _____ write unto thee. (3 John 13)

43. Bravo. (Span.)

44. Citizen of an Asian country.

45. Pieces of material shed during washing or drying.

46. Corn _____.

48. _____ of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. (Gen. 2:23)

50. Brand of computer. (abbr.)

53. Sound made when laughing.

55. Negative.

RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By Adam Borden and Rick Sharp

THE COLLINGSWORTH FAMILY

Part of the Family
StowTown Records

During the first week of September, Phil Collingsworth came to the Singing News/Solid Gospel offices for some radio interviews and handed me one of the first copies of The Collingsworth Family's StowTown Records release, "Part of the Family." So while Phil was visiting with others in the office, I listened to this CD.



Let me see if I can describe this in one word ... spiritual, emotional, scriptural, touching, exceptional, blessed, ministering! NOPE! One word just won't do it.

Let me be as transparent as I can be. This is one of my favorite recordings of all times. It has not left my CD changer in the minivan since September. When you hear family harmony done right, it can move you in a way that not many things can.

Let me go a little further: When the family singing are your brothers and sisters in the Lord, then the Comforter reminds us just how good it is to be part of the Family.

Now I am just one middle-aged Baptist preacher, but I am not alone in my evaluation. The Collingsworth Family has filled churches and auditoriums to capacity all over America in the last several years when they

come by for a concert. They have gained many loyal supporters who value their music.

Being part of the family called Collingsworth raises an expectation of excellence. Phil and Kim's kids are at a point of maturity where producer Wayne Haun can trust all of them with songs like "I Found It All" and "Just Another Rainy Day." Where Brooklyn and Courtney have both developed masterfully in years past, Phil Jr. and Olivia have stepped up on "Part of the Family." "Tell the Mountain" may become Phil Jr.'s signature song where "I Pray" may do the same for Olivia. Of course, Phil, Kim, Brooklyn and Courtney set the mark high with a perfect selection of songs that perfectly fit The Collingsworth Family personality. If you are not yet a fan, this record will seal it for you. Enjoy! (Borden)

BECKAH SHAE

Destiny
Shae Shoc Records

Urban artist Beckah Shae released her fifth album, "Destiny," on Aug. 16. Perhaps best described as club beats with life-affirming lyrics, Shae's music will be right at home with fans of such artists as Rihanna, Katy Perry and even Lady Gaga.

Shae's stated goal in "Destiny," and with her music generally, is to counteract the negative influences found in mainstream music, all



within a framework of listenable, danceable Top 40 beats.

"People are only listening to what's being handed to them," Shae says. "It's up to us to give them something more."

More is what she's given. Wrapped up in surprisingly good, utterly modern dance music are some of the most positive, uplifting lyrics I've heard in a long time. Here is truly something the club crowd can get into, and we should expect that the positive messages will seep in, with shifting outlooks, a new awareness of God's purpose and growing acceptance and love for others. (Sharp)

WILBURN & WILBURN

Family Ties
Daywind Records

Brothers and sisters. Parents and children. Kinfolk. There is no stronger human bond than that of family.

One of the most influential southern gospel music families of the 1990s was the Wilburns. In 2012, Jonathan Wilburn is introducing the next generation of singing Wilburns: his son, Jordan.

Traveling as Wilburn & Wilburn, this Daywind Records duo is showing audiences that whether it is blood relation or duet musical harmony, there is nothing as strong as family ties.

"Family Ties" has a different feel from other southern gospel records you will hear. Top-notch bluegrass/acoustic producer Ben Isaacs aptly melded the worlds of southern gospel and acoustic country to create a truly unique sound.

The drums and upright bass are able to retain their acoustic qualities without being over-processed and over-compressed.

This band of cross-genre master musicians puts its best fingers forward to operate as one cohesive unit for Wilburn & Wilburn.

As a duo, Jonathan and Jordan Wilburn split up the solos on this

wonderful group of songs. Jordan emerges as a powerful vocalist with the ability to communicate the message of a song whether it's on a ballad like "Jesus Will" or "A Cross Became My Saving Grace" or encouraging, upbeat songs such as "Devil Be Gone" or "I John" — and there is no denying that this is Jonathan's boy on "I Ain't Giving Up on Jesus."

And somewhere in Carthage, Tenn., you know that Elaine sheds a tear every time Jonathan, her baby boy, sings the heartfelt song, "Mama." (Borden)

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Longing, Bailey Flanigan Series #3**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **Courageous, paperback**, Randy Alcorn, Alex Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick (Tyndale)
3. **The Tehran Initiative**, Joel C. Rosenberg (Tyndale)
4. **A Log Cabin Christmas Collection**, Margaret Brownley, Wanda E. Brunstetter and Jane Kirkpatrick (Barbour)
5. **Learning, Bailey Flanigan Series #2**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
6. **The Wonder of Your Love, Land of Canaan Series #2**, Beth Wiseman (Thomas Nelson)
7. **Leaving, Bailey Flanigan Series #1**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
8. **A Lancaster County Christmas**, Suzanne Woods Fisher (Baker)
9. **The Mercy, Rose Trilogy Series #3**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
10. **The Christmas Shoppe**, Melody Carlson (Baker)

Nonfiction

1. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C Cook)
4. **Nearing Home**, Billy Graham (Thomas Nelson)
5. **Heaven Is for Real for Kids**, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Not a Fan**, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)
7. **Jesus Calling, Large-Print Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
9. **The Power of a Praying Wife**, Stormie Omartian (Harvest House)
10. **The Resolution for Men**, Stephen Kendrick, Alex Kendrick and Randy Alcorn (B&H)

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Even After That

Judith de Wilde. Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2010. 72 pp. (Large Paperback).

Judith de Wilde penned this book to capture the thoughts and feelings that followed the death of her husband. The several dozen beautifully evocative poems cover the gamut of emotions experienced by a widow — grief, despair, uncertainty, moments of hope and the ever-present loneliness that follows the death of a spouse. The author, a gifted photographer, illustrated the poems with her own work.

Although it may be difficult for one who has not experienced widowhood to relate, the author's heartfelt poems resonate with one who has. This small book would be a treasured gift for the newly

widowed person who would find comfort in knowing that she is not alone in her experience, and hope in knowing Who holds the future.

Wavelength: Tuning in to God's Voice in a World of Static

Jeff Petherick. Elk Lake, Mich.: Elk Lake Publishing, 2007. 257pp. (Paperback).

"The problem with the American dream is that it's never enough." That realization led successful businessman Jeff Petherick to look beyond his work in search for fulfillment. What he found was a relationship with Christ that changed everything. Petherick also discovered that God still speaks to His children; we don't hear Him, he contends, because

we have simply stopped listening.

"Wavelength" is an inspiring collection of Petherick's experiences with listening to and heeding God's voice. How does one hear and recognize the voice of God? The author likens hearing God's voice to a radio; we must be tuned in to the right frequency or all we get is static.

Included with the stories is guidance for the Christian who seeks to hear from God, distilled in what Petherick describes as "three critical truths:" shut up and listen, respond and obey and fully surrender. The author cautions that listening, responding and surrendering can be hazardous to your comfortable lifestyle and status quo. Another caution: reading "Wavelength" may cause you to listen, respond and surrender.

Risking it all

Southern Baptist shares gospel on dangerous streets of Rio

It weighs on his heart: One day, he will go out to share the gospel and not come back.

Southern Baptist representative Eric Reese serves on one of the most dangerous missions fields in South America — the gang-controlled favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

"I wrote a letter to my wife," Reese said. "I said, 'Honey, if I don't return, be strong. Let the girls know Dad's going to miss them. That God's got a plan for their lives, too.'"

Reese's passion is taking the gospel to drug dealers, gang members and prostitutes.

"I want to love and show those people that they're not a forgotten people group," he said. "They're not an unimportant people to Christ. Everybody has the same value at the foot of the Cross."

Reese and his wife, Ramona, have served in Brazil since 1999 and have raised their daughters Gloria, 13, and Alicia, 9, in Rio's megacity milieu. The Reeses are from Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Ga.

Ramona works with women in the favelas and other low-income women in Rio. In the past few years, God has shifted her outreach to include middle-class wives and mothers she meets at the gym and at her daughters' school and ballet practices.

Though Ramona rarely enters violent neighborhoods with her husband, his being there affects the whole family.

"I think I was really naïve and didn't really understand what was going on the first four years," she said. "But then you start seeing people die — people that you know. And you understand what's really going on."

That reality for Ramona hit home the night the police called Eric and asked him to serve as a mediator in a potential gunfight. He was the only person both sides trusted. She didn't want Eric to go, but she didn't ask him to stay. She told her husband to follow God's leading.

"I was so afraid. You know how



BP photo

A SYMBOL — The iconic Christ the Redeemer statue overlooks Rio de Janeiro from the Corcovado mountaintop.

when you're just so afraid, you can't do anything but pray?" Ramona said.

Looking back, the Reeses realize how Eric's decision to go that night opened doors to share about Christ.

"I don't find that Jesus said, 'If you've got people with guns in front of you, don't share the gospel,'" Reese said. "I'm not going to let men stop me from sharing the gospel. No matter what the obstacles are, you see, the gospel has got to get to these people."

When Reese first started minister-

ing in Rio, he shared openly with his family about what he experienced. But he soon realized the effect it was having on his wife and children.

"When we speak to the girls about the risk factor that their daddy has to go through, [Eric] kind of leads us in that," Ramona said. "If we just keep them safe and let them know the spiritual aspects of all of it, they'll be fine. But we can't tell them all the information, all the things that really, really happen. Then they'll get scared and get nervous."

"There are certain things that, I think he knows now, he can't tell me [either]," Ramona said.

The Reeses have been criticized for taking on such danger. But Ramona said such critics don't understand the way God works.

"I've learned to trust in the Lord and to trust my husband with the Lord. The Lord is the main person that's got to be in charge of keeping him safe in what he does. And I'm fully confident in that."

Reese said his family remains on the missions field because of everything Christ has done for them.

"When I think of what Jesus did for me — He was beaten and He was spat upon for something He didn't owe and something He didn't do," Reese reflected. "He died so that I could have a chance to be saved. ... I'm willing to risk it all, seeing that He gave it all."

(BP)



BP photo

PASSION FOR SHARING — Eric Reese (right), a Southern Baptist representative in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, visits the home of his friend Dona Lica (left) and her son, David.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

NYC bans church from meeting at housing project

NEW YORK — An evangelical Christian church has been told by New York City officials that it can no longer rent a community room in a federally funded housing project named after Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. An attorney representing the Bronx Bible Church said the congregation was notified that Christmas Day would be the last day they could worship at the housing project.

"It does present a very ugly picture of the state of religious liberties in New York City," said Jordan Lorence, senior counsel with the Alliance Defense Fund. "It's the height of irony that the housing authority would violate the First Amendment at a place named after a Supreme Court justice."

Lorence said the New York City Housing Authority based their decision on a recent court case that said New York City has a constitutional right to bar churches from renting schools during nonschool hours for worship services. The Supreme Court declined to review the case — meaning that dozens of Christian churches are being forced to find other places to hold their services.

A spokesperson for the NYC Housing Authority declined to comment but did offer the following statement: "The terms of this lease have expired and the New York City Housing Authority is reviewing the renewal of all of its leases."

However, Lorence told Fox News & Commentary there is no expiration date on the lease and when the pastor of Bronx Bible Church was contacted by the NYC Housing Authority there was no mention of the end of the year expiration of the lease.

American marriages hit record low at 51 percent

NASHVILLE — Only 51 percent of Americans age 18 and older are married, compared to 57 percent a decade ago, according to a new study. And while young adults aspire to marry, it's not a priority.

The median age when women first marry is at a new high of older than 26, and the corresponding age for men is almost 29, the Pew Research Center said. By comparison, in 1960, 72 percent of all adults were married in the United States. The median age for brides was barely 20 and grooms were just a couple of years older, *The Washington Post* noted Dec. 13.

In 2010, 7.5 million couples were living together without being married, representing a 13 percent increase in just one year. *The Post* said the economy is largely to blame, with dating couples struggling to support two households but not being willing to commit to marriage.

Sociologist Andrew Cherlin at Johns Hopkins University told *The Post* that in the 1950s marriage was mandatory but now it's "culturally optional." Just last year Pew found that more than four in 10 Americans under 30 consider marriage old-fashioned.

Texas sonogram law victorious in appeals court

AUSTIN, Texas — A Texas law requiring women seeking abortions to undergo a sonogram, and physicians to provide an audible heartbeat and physical description of the baby, is constitutional and may be enforced, a federal appeals court has ruled.

The decision by a three-judge panel of the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals Jan. 10 overturned a temporary injunction issued last summer against Texas House Bill (HB) 15, known as the Texas Sonogram Law. U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks of Austin had argued that the law placed the state in a position of advancing an "ideological agenda," was "unconstitutionally vague" and violated the free speech rights of physicians and women.

Meanwhile, the New York City-based Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), which filed a class action lawsuit against HB 15 on behalf of Texas abortion providers last June, vowed to fight the appeals court ruling.

Assemblies of God opens more than 1 church a day

SPRINGFIELD, Miss. — The Assemblies of God, one of the nation's largest Pentecostal denominations, opened more than a church a day last year. In all, 368 new churches opened in 2011, the denomination said. That total marks the second highest number of church starts since it began keeping reliable statistics in 1965.

Factoring in church closures, there are now 12,595 Assemblies of God congregations in the country, the highest ever recorded. Denominational officials reported that 230 churches closed in 2011. Wood said there were only two years in the last decade when the denomination saw fewer than 230 church closures. The denomination, which includes 3 million U.S. members, has a "Church Multiplication Network" that supports church planters with training and funding.