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Uncertain future

Hispanic congregations feel effects of Alabama's immigration law

By David Roach
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Declining church attendance. Stressed pastors. Uncertain futures. Such is life for Hispanic congregations in Alabama with the new immigration law. But the news isn't all bad.

"A lot of people left," Carlos Gomez, pastor of the Hispanic congregation at First Baptist Church, Center Point, said of his parishioners. "I called them back and some of them returned. But I know of another ministry that is close to me here in town that had around 120, and now it has about 40. It's beginning again."

Reports of decreased attendance in Hispanic congregations are common since the law took effect last fall. Among its provisions is a requirement that police investigate during routine stops the legal status of anyone suspected of being an illegal immigrant. It also imposes penalties for businesses that knowingly employ illegal immigrants. A federal court struck down several other provisions of the law, including a ban on knowingly transporting or harboring illegal immigrants.

Even some legal immigrants stopped attending church and left the state after the law took effect, Gomez said, because they were afraid of being harassed by police or having an undocumented family member arrested. Many Hispanics stay home as much as possible because driving increases the risk of being stopped by police, he said.

To counter that fear, Gomez has begun picking up some of his members in a church van and taking them to worship. Carlos Lemus, Hispanic missionary for Autauga and Chilton Baptist associations, said there have been no major problems among the Hispanic ministries in his area. But he changed the times of some Bible studies because he said police in certain regions tend to establish DUI checkpoints after dark and check the immigration documents of Hispanics who pass.

Lemus reported one church leader being arrested on his way home from visiting a family in his congregation



Alabama Baptists of **ALL** races
UNITED

"need to be more
... and see how we can help our brothers and sisters."

- Edwin Velez, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana, Albertville

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and a youth ministry in Chilton County with struggling attendance.

"We were having a very good attendance of young people on Sunday afternoons to play soccer, and then we shared the gospel with them," Lemus, who serves as president of the Alabama Hispanic Baptist Fellowship, said of the youth ministry. "But after this new law, parents are afraid to send their children to these kinds of activities because most of them don't have legal documents. Some of them are Americans, of course, but they are afraid that with this situation, they could be arrested."

Secure American borders

Still Gomez and Lemus agreed that secure American borders are essential, and Lemus saw at least one positive effect of the law. Police apparently could not mount enough evidence to arrest two notorious drug dealers in his area on narcotics charges. However, they arrested and deported one under the immigration law, and the other voluntarily left the country, he said.

"Secure borders is, I would say, the No. 1 task of the government right

now," Lemus said, "and then trying to help those who are already here and perhaps living a decent life and trying to be good citizens here."

Cary Hanks, catalytic missionary with the Central Alabama Baptists Hispanic Ministry Coalition and former Southern Baptist representative to Ecuador, said most Alabama Baptists do not understand how difficult Hispanic pastors' lives have become in light of the new law.

Frequently parents who are illegal immigrants but whose children are American citizens ask their pastors to become their children's legal guardians, Hanks said. That way if the parents are deported, then the children will not fall into state custody and can be sent back to their home country. Pastors routinely refuse to assume guardianship though, since they cannot perform that service for all church members, he said.

The United States should not grant amnesty to illegal immigrants, according to Hanks. But he said Alabama's new law has thrown Hispanic families and churches into a crisis.

"Somebody's got to stand in the gap with these families," Hanks said

of Hispanic pastors. "They've got to lead these churches. ... They understand the need to be here legally, but they also understand you can't just turn your back on families because they don't have documents. These are people and God loves these people."

Praising God

Edwin Velez, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana (First Hispanic Baptist Church), Albertville, said he praises God that despite widespread fear among Hispanics, attendance at his church remains the same as it was before the law was enacted. One positive effect of the law, according to Velez, is an increased number of Hispanic immigrants attempting to gain legal status in the United States.

"I know a lot of people who have made appointments to meet with immigration lawyers," he said.

One pressing need among Alabama Baptists is honest conversation about how to deal with the state's illegal immigration problems, Velez said.

"I think that we need to unite and talk about this more openly," he said. Alabama Baptists of all races "need to (See 'Churches,' page 6)

COMMENT

Paying for What Baptists Do Together

From a financial standpoint, 2011 closed with a thud for most Alabama Baptist ministries. Cooperative Program (CP) receipts totaled \$40,613,997, well short of the \$43 million goal and \$1,113,513 below what Alabama Baptists contributed to missions and ministry causes in 2010. It was the fourth consecutive year that CP receipts have declined. The high in CP giving occurred in 2007, when \$44,958,759 was contributed.

Because CP funds are distributed on a percentage basis, all cooperative ministries supported by the CP will receive 94.45 percent of what was originally anticipated in the 2011 budget.

Most of Alabama's 75 Baptist associations also ended the year with a financial thud. Reports indicate few received a December "bounce" in giving so they ended the year with giving below budget.

The situation for cooperative ministries is little different from that of local churches. Information from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) indicates undesignated giving to local churches has been stagnant for the past four years with some periods of decline.

Local churches have cut back on expenses, reduced ministries and taken other steps to adjust expenses to match the giving level of members. The four-year economic recession continues to take a heavy toll on Alabama Baptist families and missions and ministries. Unemployment in the state remains above the national average and has been above the national average for most of the past four years.

Still Alabama Baptists have been remarkably faithful financial stewards. Some comparisons illustrate that conclusion.

Alabama Baptists make up 6.51 percent of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) total membership, according to the 2011 SBC Annual. And even though state residents' average annual income is below the average for the Southern region, Alabama Baptists' percentage of total SBC undesignated giving is consistently about 6.50 percent. That means that even though their average income is not as high as their neighbors, Alabama Baptists give as many dollars through their churches as their better-off neighbors give on a per capita basis.

When it comes to supporting missions and ministries through the CP, Alabama Baptists are among the leaders. Again using figures reported in the 2011 SBC Annual, the average percentage of undesignated receipts given by all cooperating churches to missions and ministry causes through the CP was 5.62 percent in 2010. That same year, Alabama Baptists gave an average of 7.35 percent. Without Alabama Baptists' strong CP support, the SBC average would have been lower still.

In 2009, the average percentage of undesignated receipts given through the CP was 5.87 percent for all SBC churches. For Alabama Baptists, the percentage was 7.51 percent. And so it goes for the past decade.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

When it comes to supporting missions and ministries worldwide through the SBC, Alabama Baptists are again among the leaders.

For the 2010–11 budget year, CP contributions for all state conventions totaled \$186,386,036. Alabama's convention gave the most of any state convention — \$18,102,416. That means that Alabama Baptists gave 9.71 percent (almost \$1 of every \$10) of CP receipts given through state conventions. For the 2009–10 fiscal year, the picture was similar. That year, Alabama Baptists gave 9.76 percent of the total. Yet Alabama Baptists make up only 6.51 percent of SBC members and have an annual income below the regional average.

In 2012, Alabama Baptists' support of missions and ministries through the SBC will be even greater. During the 2011 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, a budget was adopted that increased giving to causes outside the state from 42.5 percent to 43 percent of the \$43 million budget goal and 50 percent of all receipts above the goal. Alabama Baptists certainly believe in supporting missions and ministries beyond the state.

Price of Commitment

That commitment has not come without a price. CP giving from churches has dropped more than \$4 million from its 2008 high of \$44,782,409, and it is unknown whether the downward trend has bottomed out. Obviously there has been a price to pay.

One place impacted by the drop in CP receipts is the SBOM. Since Executive Director Rick Lance assumed office, the full-time staff has been reduced from 119 people to 93 individuals, and more reductions are planned later this year. In addition, employees have had no salary adjustments or increase in benefits for the past four years.

Support for Christian higher education in Alabama has been reduced in order to send more money to SBC causes. Support for Baptist retirement centers has been cut, as has support for The Baptist Foundation of Alabama. Other ministries, like the state Baptist paper, have made cutbacks in various ways in order to live within shrinking budgets.

In 2013, demands on the state side of missions and ministry support will increase. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) will withdraw support for seven SBOM staff positions to which

it previously contributed. These are all in the areas of associational missions, evangelism and collegiate ministries. Lance has announced his commitment to keeping these positions because they are "mission critical." That means replacing funds that previously came from the SBC side of CP receipts with money from the state side.

In addition, NAMB has announced it will withdraw support for other NAMB-appointed missionaries serving in Alabama as well as several specific ministries to which it formerly contributed. NAMB says it needs the funds now used for ministry in the state to help support church starts in "underserved cities" in other parts of the nation.

A task force of state officials and representatives of the state's directors of missions is currently working to see what steps can be taken to maintain these various missions and ministries in Alabama once funding from the SBC is withdrawn.

Alabama Baptists find themselves in a problematic situation. Because of the lingering recession, CP funds from churches continue to decline. Because of changing strategy at NAMB, support for missions and ministries in Alabama is being significantly reduced. Because of a concern for underserved areas around the world, some want to increase CP support for SBC causes.

How all of this will impact vital missions and ministries in Alabama is yet to be determined. How will Alabama Baptists maintain a strong base of missions and ministries at home — in our churches, associations and state-sponsored ministries — while sharing the good news of God's grace around the world?

Please pray for Executive Director Rick Lance and all of those who must lead Alabama Baptists as we decide how to pay for the missions and ministries that Baptists do together.

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

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Someone You Should Know

By Judy A. Taylor, Special to TAB

Annie Ruth Cargile Drake

Glennwood Baptist Church, Morris
North Jefferson Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMNS: "In the Garden"
and "On the Wings of a Dove"

HOBBIES: Flower gardening and
browsing thrift stores, yard sales
and flea markets when able

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 59
years of marriage to Clyde; two
children, Charles and Becki; three
grandchildren; and four great-
grandchildren (one deceased)



DRAKE

Annie Ruth Cargile Drake will celebrate her 80th birthday this year. She has been involved in church ministry most of her life and has been a member of Glennwood Baptist Church, Morris, for 20 years.

Drake loves to go to church, but many times, health problems make that difficult. Still she looks for ways to serve.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: In a revival at the age of 12. My legs were shaking during the invitation, but I made it to the altar somehow. I realized all I had to do was ask to be saved.

Q: What church ministries have you been involved in?

A: In the past, I did everything — teaching Training Union, Sunday School (and) [Vacation Bible School] (and serving as) a [Girls in Action] leader (and in) children's church (and) nursery and more. My husband was a deacon, and we often worked side by side. Now my main effort is to be active in Sunday School and be involved in telephone ministry. Some folks call me a "prayer warrior," and I support the church financially as well as our food ministry, from making a dish or donation of canned goods. It makes me feel good to do what I can and not focus on what I can't do.

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

A: He has made it possible for me (to) face the hardships of life. It's tough sometimes but God is always there.

Q: What are some of your favorite things about church?

A: The whole idea about church inspires me. Just to see the church building is a blessing as I'm quickly reminded of the wonderful, friendly fellowship which takes place inside.

Relationship building

Shelby Crossings couple serve immigrant population of Paris

By Ava Thomas
Special to The Alabama Baptist

It was Christmas 2001 — just three months after the 9/11 attacks — when John McGuire got the call.

The university he and his wife, Pam, lived near in Alabama was closing for Christmas, and a Muslim student had nowhere to spend the holidays. So far, no one had responded to the need.

"I told him, by all means, come on, so we brought him to our house for Christmas," John McGuire said.

The student was devout; every day in the McGuires' Christmas-decorated home, he rolled out his carpet three times a day for prayer.

"I told [him], 'I'll make you a deal — you teach me how to be a Muslim, and I'll teach you how to be a Christian,'" John McGuire said.

He took the deal.

"[Our] friendship really took and lasted. That young man went with us for a long time to church without telling anyone that he wasn't a Christian," John McGuire said.

When the young man did start telling people there he was a Muslim, they loved him even so, John McGuire said.

And then, one day, he gave his life to Christ.

It wasn't long after that that John McGuire got another call, with another request that no one else had taken.

"It was a job (as a Southern Baptist representative) serving the immigrant population of Paris, and it had been on the books for three years," he said, noting that at that time, he and his wife were in the process of preparing for some sort of overseas work — they just didn't know what yet.

"Someone must have told the leader in Paris, 'Call that guy in Alabama; he'll do anything.'"

He did.

The McGuires, members of The Church at Shelby Crossings, Calera, have been serving among Paris' immigrant population for seven years now and don't have any intentions of turning back.



IMB photo

CAFÉ CONVERSATIONS — For the last seven years, John and Pam McGuire, members of The Church at Shelby Crossings, Calera, in Birmingham Baptist Association, have spent their days having coffee with immigrants living in Paris and talking about faith.

"Since we're older, we knew we were going to have to really work hard to learn the French language," Pam McGuire said.

The couple befriended some French students who spent time in their home and spoke French to them often.

It worked, John McGuire said.

"By the second year, we could speak better, and by the third year, we noticed we were understanding the conversations around us," he said.

Learning the language

Now the McGuires know it so well they sometimes can't think of the English words for things they can describe in French.

But the pace of language learning actually helped them with relationship building, John McGuire said.

"We began going to cultural centers and cafés to meet people and hear their opinions and beliefs firsthand, and by the time we had enough language ability to explain to them

that we were Christians, they already liked us," he said with a laugh.

Now the couple spend their time having coffee with folks from one particular people group and answering questions they have about the New Testament.

They are hard to find, John McGuire said, but God helps them discover where they are in the city and where the highest concentrations are.

"Many of these people, looking at events in history, believe that Christians don't like them. We are trying to break down those misconceptions through relationships and then share the gospel with them," he said. "It's tragic but we have heard many express the belief that Christians hate them."

Dispelling that notion is vital, Pam McGuire said. "Love is much more attractive than fear."

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

SBOM names Harris new associate in communications services

Brian Harris, communications director of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, has been elected as an associate in communications services by the executive committee of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

After joining the SBOM's staff Feb. 1, Harris will manage the SBOM's websites and social media strategies as well as assist with audiovisual projects and a variety of other communications initiatives.

"We're excited about the skills and abilities Brian will bring to this position," said Doug Rogers, co-

ordinator of communications services.

"His experience in both website management and audiovisual production will greatly enhance our capabilities in those areas and our ability to tell the State Board of Missions story."

Harris' media experience includes past employment with Alabama broadcasting companies, including WFRZ-TV (Frazer United Methodist Church in Montgomery), Crawford Broadcasting in Birmingham, WAKA CBS 8 in Montgomery and Faith Radio in Montgomery.

He also has worked in sales and customer



HARRIS

service for State Farm Insurance and Compass Bank.

"Brian will bring to our staff a skill set that is impressive and needed for communicating in the 21st century," said Rick Lance, SBOM executive director.

"I'm impressed with his positive, 'can-do' attitude and look forward to his service as a state missionary."

Harris is a 1995 graduate of Lee High School in Montgomery.

He has attended Jefferson State Community College, Auburn University at Montgomery and the University of Louisiana at Monroe and is in the process of completing a degree from Leavell College in New Orleans through distance learning. (SBOM)

Bible Basics

series

PART 4 OF 8 ON SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY



A look at the Psalms: A profile of biblical theology

By Ken Roxburgh
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The Book of Psalms has been a source of spiritual reflection for God's people down through the centuries. Protestant reformer Martin Luther spoke of it as "a Bible in miniature." It is representative of various literary genres, diverse historical periods and different theological themes. As a pastor, I turned to the Psalms when I read and prayed with people in their homes and the hospital. They have been used to encourage and comfort people in times of difficulty, give words to times of confession and provide opportunities to express delight and praise. They constitute a profile of biblical theology, with expressions of faith from various parts of the history of God's people.

British writer C.S. Lewis commented that the "Psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry." They are not generally the voice of God speaking to us but are rather the voice of human experience, gathered over a long period of time yet with an amazing amount of authenticity and contemporary significance. They help us see how the life of faith encounters all types of human experiences, enabling us to turn to God for help.

Many modern translations ascribe authorship to several Psalms. Seventy-three are thought to have been written by David. Indeed, in the first book of Psalms, all but four are attributed to him. It helps to see the context of the particular Psalm, sometimes related to a historical incident in the author's life. It is widely held that the Psalms had some sort of teaching purpose, with David's life being viewed as a model for a godly life. In the Psalms, he is viewed as living a life in fellowship with God, through changing circumstances and various emotional experiences.

The Psalter is conveniently divided into five sections. The Jewish midrash (rabbinical commentary) on the Psalms says, "As Moses gave five books of laws to Israel, so David gave five books of Psalms to Israel." Some suggest that the Psalms' fivefold pattern was deliberate, especially if the overall purpose (as revealed in Psalm 1) was to offer instruction. The Psalms, like the Pentateuch, were intended to give instruction to God's people.

Book I — David's experiences

The first book is dominated by Psalms of David, in which we see him beset with problems, most often from the hands of others who are determined to make his life miserable. The lesson is clear: God's purposes for His people do not come without considerable pain and adversity of mind as well as body. David testifies to the saving love and power of God, who supports His servant. This doesn't mean that he is never

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."



perplexed by what is happening in his life. In Psalm 13:1–2, he cries out, "How long?" on four occasions. If the book's testimony is an assurance that God is faithful to His word of promise, then the psalmist's response is to express confidence in Him and obedience to His will.

Book II — Tribulation and security of God's people

The general theme continues in the second book yet with a difference. David is not so dominant. Only 19 of 31 Psalms are attributed to him. In this section, the name for God is not Yahweh, as in the first section, but Elohim (the general Hebrew word for "God"). Many of these Psalms were written by Levites and speak of the difficulties of their life of faith.

Book III — Why? Why? Why?

The third book contains many Psalms of lament, in which the individual and the nation wrestle with events that challenge their view of God in light of evil existing in the world. If this book was compiled during the Babylonian exile, then it demonstrates how the people were struggling with doubts and fears. The psalmists are puzzled yet they do not run away from God but rather turn to Him for help and consolation.

Many of these Psalms are ascribed to Levites. In a time of exile, without a temple, they would have felt the pain of this even more than other Israelites. They were deeply downcast by the Temple's destruction. Sometimes their pain was almost too much to bear, as in Psalm 77: "Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable? Has His steadfast love ceased forever? Are His promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has His anger shut up His compassion?" (7–9).

Book IV — The King

The theme that dominates the Psalter's

fourth section is that of God as king. He is the God who is supreme over the nations, including Babylonia and Persia. If these Psalms were written during the rebuilding of the Temple, then the theme of God as king is equally important as the Israelites struggled with new circumstances that could have led to discouragement.

Psalm 90, at the opening of this book, stresses God's eternity in the midst of time's perplexities, "for a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past or like a watch in the night" (4). God's people often need a sense of the ongoing purpose of His timing. The times may appear to be long, but in God's purposes, His timing is perfect.

Psalms 93 and 95–100 are celebrations of that kingship over all nations. In this context, the statement is made that "the Lord will not forsake His people; He will not abandon His heritage" (94:14).

Book V — Pilgrimage, precepts and praise

The final section consists of groups of Psalms that stand together. Psalms 120–134 constitute an "almost unbroken song of reliance on Yahweh alone," in the words of Old Testament scholar G.H. Wilson. The Psalms of ascent were used in Israel in connection with the feasts of pilgrims going to Jerusalem. The final Psalms (146–150) are all praise Psalms. There is no lament or complaint in them. These final five Psalms were written to bring the whole Psalter to a climax and conclusion.

Christian approaches to the Psalms

The New Testament draws heavily upon the Psalter, more so than any other book in the Old Testament. Many Psalms look forward in time, anticipating God's intervention. This resonated with the early church's sense of the fulfillment of God's purposes being found in Christ's coming. The laments of Psalm 22, which are often linked with passages such as Isaiah 53, appear to be similar to Christ's experiences on the cross. For Christians, the Psalms draw us toward our faith in Christ and help us think about Him.

The Psalter's God

There is no sense of doubtful speculation within the Psalms about their knowledge of God. The picture we have of God within the Psalms is vibrant with life, rich with blessing for His people if they will but trust Him. Many names of God are used within the Psalter, although Yahweh occurs more than 600 times — nearly twice as often as Elohim. This should be no surprise, as this was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3. Yahweh is the distinctive, personal name of the God who enters into personal relationship with humankind. If Elohim speaks of God's awesome majesty,

then Yahweh reveals His gracious activity in our lives.

Many metaphors of God with which we have become familiar are found in the Psalms. Not all the pictures were unique to Israel, because they were the common stock of the people among whom Israel lived in the ancient Near East. They include God as redeemer, craftsman, father, king, judge and shepherd. The Psalter has a many-sided understanding of God and gives us a fuller picture of His nature.

Law

Three Psalms in particular focus attention on God's word: 1, 19 and 119. In Psalm 119, the Torah is central: The term itself is used 25 times, and various synonyms also are used to suggest the many-sided significance of the way the Torah works ("commands," "instructions," "decrees," "precepts," "statutes" and "ordinances"). All three Torah Psalms show great regard for the Law, even delighting in meditating on it and seeking to observe it. Through the Torah, the psalmist believes that God's people are taught His ways. The people's response should not merely be devotional but ethical.

Worship

When most people think of the Psalms, they view the book as a worship manual. This is how it was used within Judaism. The Christian church has made use of the Psalter in chants, hymns and contemporary songs. In the Psalms, there is a rich resource for personal and corporate worship.

Deeply theological, the Psalter is also deeply doxological. The Psalms do not speculate on God's character. They are deeply moved by God's being and His ways. The Psalter is "speech directed toward God," in the words of Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann. To go through the Psalms is to be led increasingly toward the praise of God. This is true theologically, because in praise, more than any other human act, God is glorified. It is also so in the life of spiritual pilgrimage, because praise more than any other act in the life of faith utters devotion to God and confidence in His nature. In praise, selfish ambitions are lost in awe.

There is an aspect of exuberance in praise and worship within the Psalms. Psalm 98:4 says, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises." Worship in the Psalter engages the whole person. True worship is the response of all that I am to all that God is.

Laments

Even a cursory examination and reading of the Psalms makes you aware of the fact that most of them deal with some sort of trouble or adversity. Indeed there are more Psalms of lament than praise in the Psalter. The Psalms speak about human experiences

that we do not offend the ears of those we want to impress, the Psalms do not indicate any desire to maintain a “stiff upper lip.” Human experience can be traumatic. We need the words of these Psalms to express our sense of feebleness, our anger, our disappointment in God’s seeming absence. The psalmists know that life is not all blue skies and red roses. They express their feelings in an open way that is sometimes disconcerting. Yet the Psalms of lament bring assurance into our hearts that when we pray, we do not need to censor our words.

There are some 40 individual laments in the first half of the Psalter. The complaints arise out of issues such as sickness or the activity of enemies. They generally make an appeal to God for help, describe the nature of the complaint, confess sin (if appropriate) and give reasons why He should intervene. They often conclude by offering a vow and expressing faith that God will act.

Sadly the notion of lament has largely disappeared from personal and corporate worship within the church. These Psalms remind us that faith is not stoic resignation and that even in our darkest moments, hope can shine through the shadows of doubt and despair.

Enemies

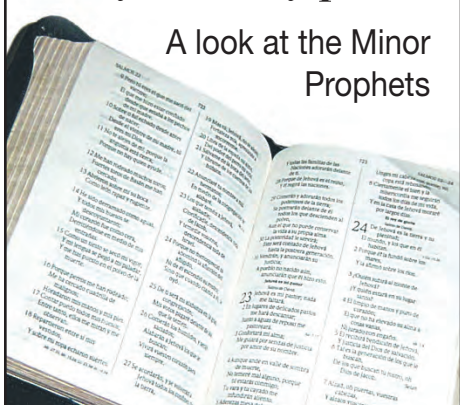
Like it or not, yearning for vengeance is in the Psalms. It is there without embarrassment, apology or censor. Either officially or unofficially, most Christians eliminate the offensive passages in the Psalms from their Bibles, either by not using them in the public worship, passing over the verses in private devotional reading without giving them any attention or spiritualizing them by making them refer to “spiritual enemies.” Protestant reformer John Calvin called the Psalms “an anatomy of all parts of the soul.” They tell us about ourselves. They also affirm and legitimate expressions of anger and even rage at sin and evil. It is important to notice, however, that the psalmists never take issues into their own hands. They leave things with God.

The laments of anger and vengeance are not inferior types of Psalm. However, they do not have the last word. Psalm 139 ends with these words: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (23–24).

The final Psalm is one of pure praise. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann was right when he commented, “Only those who willingly begin in Psalm 1 can honestly and gladly end in Psalm 150. Praise as glad exuberant yielding and self-abasement ... takes place only when one comes to terms emotionally, psychologically, dramatically and theologically with the demanding sovereign reality of God. Affirmation of this God becomes the reason, warrant, ground and substance of praise.”

Next week's topic ...

A look at the Minor Prophets



‘See ... what God is doing’

Lantern Vision captures, communicates stories of Christians worldwide

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For as long as he can remember, Nathan Troost has been a storyteller. As an elementary school student, he dreamed of becoming an author, and in a way, that aspiration has been realized. Rather than writing books, however, the 24-year-old is using a video camera to convey the stories of missionaries and others all over the world.

After identifying a passion for videography in high school, Troost pursued a journalism and mass communication major at Samford University in Birmingham and worked on honing his film skills. Thanks to a combination of course work, jobs, internships and freelance opportunities, he quickly built his resumé and became more certain of his love for video.

In 2011, Troost established a Birmingham-based nonprofit called Lantern Vision. With this organization, he was able to merge two of his great passions: missions and videography.

“In a nutshell, Lantern Vision is a nonprofit video production organization that seeks to capture and communicate the stories of Christians and ministries who are making a positive impact around the globe and to serve them by informing and inspiring others through visually compelling and innovative media production, ultimately glorifying God,” Troost said.

“The intent with Lantern Vision was to create a nonprofit organization so individuals, churches and corporations can contribute funds to help reduce the costs as much as possible for these ministries so that more people can see through these videos ... what God is doing around the world and be inspired to serve Christ locally and globally.”

Kacey Cole, who works in Samford’s residence life department, met Troost when he was an undergrad resident assistant. The two became fast friends, and Cole has enjoyed watching Troost’s hard work and passion transform into Lantern Vision.

At an event for Samford students last



Photo courtesy of Lantern Vision

STORYTELLING — Nathan Troost, founder of Lantern Vision, films a video during a missions trip to Kazakhstan about a group that does church planting in Russia.

year, Cole saw a promotional video Troost had put together to help spread the word about the mission of AVAIL, a nonprofit focused on acting as an advocate for Birmingham’s houseless community.

“Then later, guys from AVAIL came to Lantern Vision’s launch party and talked about how working with Nathan helped their ministry and [got] the word out,” Cole said. “Through his video, he really takes away the stereotype of the houseless and puts a face to the problem that is houselessness.”

Becoming a reality

Though Troost is a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, he said Stan Lewis, pastor of First Baptist Church, Birmingham, has been instrumental in helping his organization become a reality. The two met about two years ago when Troost — an undergrad tagging along with an older

friend — began attending a graduate student Bible study in Lewis’ home. Not long after, Troost went with Lewis on a missions trip to Kazakhstan, where he filmed a video about a group that does church planting in Russia.

The video aired on several Christian channels. (In fact, Lewis saw it on the Christian Television Network in early January.)

“Nathan’s ministry is telling the story of missionaries,” Lewis said.

“So many of them don’t have access to venues to share their stories, and this is a vehicle for people to use to get the word out about what God is doing all over the world. I’m thrilled at how God has been using him to tell these stories.”

In addition to his work with Lantern Vision, Troost holds a full-time position at Samford as a video producer, and most of the videos on the school’s website are his work. His Samford work helps him gain further experience with videography as he grows his nonprofit, and he has high hopes for it in the coming years.

“Over the next five years, I hope to expand the ministry more so that we need to hire more ‘missionographers’ to capture the stories of these missionaries and ministries,” Troost said.

“My dream with Lantern Vision is to create a new television show ... that would be picked up and aired on secular networks. I am currently working on a show concept I think would be attractive to secular networks, while, at the same time, weaving the story of the gospel into the show.”

Cole is happy to see her friend pursue his dreams in such an impactful manner and said she admires him for starting Lantern Vision.

“I think it’s one of those things a lot of us would want to do in life,” Cole said. “Pick a job we want and have talent in, and pair it with a passion. The majority of us aren’t brave enough to do that but Nathan is and it’s been neat to see this unfold.”

For more information, visit www.lanternvision.org.

Former Alabama pastor, DOM Robert Harold Jackson dies at 75

Robert Harold Jackson, a former Alabama Baptist pastor and director of missions (DOM), died Jan. 13. He was 75.

Jackson attended the University of Alabama (UA), where he was vice president of the Baptist Student Union both at UA and statewide.

He graduated with a bachelor of science from Samford University in Birmingham and earned his master of divinity and doc-

torate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Jackson served as pastor of churches in Alabama, Indiana, Mississippi and Kentucky.

His Alabama pastorates included Clio Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, Monroeville.

In addition, he served as associate pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, for

three years. Jackson was also DOM for Bethlehem and Pine Barren Baptist associations from 1988 until 1990.

He served as president of the Romanian-American Mission from its inception in 1996 until 2010, at which time he became executive director.

Jackson is survived by wife Abigail, one daughter, one son, three grandchildren and three stepgrandchildren. (TAB)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Hueytown Church** will celebrate its 40th anniversary during the month of February. On Feb. 5, former Pastor Billy Hatley will speak at 10 a.m. There will be a praise service at 6 p.m. with guest singers. On Feb. 12, Pastor Jerry Watts will speak at 10 a.m. There will be a time of encouragement and testimonies at 6 p.m. On Feb. 19, the homecoming service will be at 10 a.m. with Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions. A covered-dish lunch will follow. On Feb. 26, Lee Praytor will speak at 10 a.m. The Southern Salvation Quartet featuring Steve Hess and the singing group Charis, of Rainbow City, will sing at 6 p.m. ► **Pleasant Ridge Church, Hueytown**, will host the Hueytown Community Revival Feb. 19–22, nightly at 6:30 p.m. Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church, will speak Sunday. Speaker and author Dave Edwards, of Oklahoma City, Okla., will speak Monday. Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, will speak Tuesday. Wednesday will be First Priority Night. Kristian Stanfill, of Atlanta, will sing. Matt Wilson, executive director of First Priority of Greater Birmingham, will speak. For child care call 205-491-3771. Rick Patrick is pastor. ► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host Stanley and Company and The Mission Heirs Quartet in concert Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m. Dinner will be at 6:30 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Evergreen Church, Jackson**, will hold a women's prayer supper Jan. 27 with Kathy Clark. Dinner will be at 6:30 p.m. The church also will hold its third annual Going the Distance Men's Conference Feb. 4 with Rich Wingo, former lineback-

er for the University of Alabama and the Green Bay Packers. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. Lunch will be served. For information call Pastor Howard Gaston at 251-232-1940.

COFFEE

► **New Home Church, Enterprise; Mount Pleasant Church, Enterprise; and Union Grove Church, Chancellor**, will hold a three-church revival Feb. 5–8 at New Home. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. A combined choir will meet at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday and at 6:15 weeknights. Cliff Quincey is pastor of New Home, Steve Bruce is pastor of Mount Pleasant and Randall Pearson is pastor of Union Grove. ► **Mount Pleasant Church, Enterprise**, will host comedian Tim Lovelace Jan. 29, 6 p.m. Steve Bruce is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Blue Eye Church, Lincoln**, will hold a fifth Sunday singing Jan. 29, 6 p.m., with several area church choirs and soloists. There will be a time of fellowship following the singing. For information call 256-268-7025. Jacky Morgan is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **Barry Holcomb** resigned as pastor of **First Church, Russellville**. He can be reached at 256-460-8615.

MARSHALL

► **First Church, Albertville**, will hold an Advance 2020 missions conference Jan. 27–29. On Friday, there will be a missionary blessing day at 10 a.m., and a leadership banquet at 6 p.m. On Saturday, there will be world missions parties from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. On Sunday, there will be a missions challenge at 8:15 and 10:45 a.m., a

missions expo/Sunday School from 9:30–10:30 a.m. and an RA and GA missionary party at 5 p.m. There also will be a missions rally at 5 p.m. featuring fun interviews with missionaries and guest speaker Aaron Coe, vice president of mobilization for the North American Mission Board, and a missions expo and international food fair at 6 p.m. featuring samples of multi-cultural cuisines from across the world. For information call 256-878-2291 or visit www.albertvillefbc.org. Chris Johnson is pastor. ► **Second Church, Boaz**, will hold a red book singing from the church hymnal Feb. 18, 6 p.m. For information call Neil Vick at 256-593-4178. Jimmy Harrison is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will host John Darin Rowsey, Dove award-winning singer, songwriter and former member of Karen Peck & New River, in concert Jan. 29, 11 a.m. For information call Minister of Music Tom Snowden at 334-285-5112. Stanley G. Holt is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Southwest Church, Hartsville**, will host Fellowship Quartet Jan. 29, 4 p.m. For information call 256-773-5994. Dewitt Crowe is pastor.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Pelham**, exceeded its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$46,700 with \$47,956 contributed during the 2011 Lottie Moon season. Mike Shaw is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Gene Taylor** is the new pastor of **Steele Church**.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

BGCT elects Hardage as executive director

DALLAS — The Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) Executive Board elected David Hardage as executive director, effective Feb. 1.

Hardage — a veteran Texas Baptist pastor, associational leader and seminary development officer — succeeds Randel Everett.

Hardage has served as director of development for Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary since 2007. He was director of Waco Regional Baptist Association from 2004 to 2007.

He served 13 years as pastor of First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs. Previous pastorates included First Baptist Church, Holliday; First Baptist Church, Blum; and First Baptist Church, Weatherford, Okla.

Hardage has served as chairman of the BGCT State Missions Commission, chairman of the BGCT Missions Funding Committee and trustee at East Texas Baptist University and Latham Springs Camp and Retreat Center. He is a graduate of Baylor University and earned a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctorate from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., in 1993.

Baptist school, orphanage officially open in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — A building housing a school for 200 preschool, kindergarten and primary students and an orphanage for 50 children were officially opened and dedicated in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Jan. 7. Facilities are being put in place for conductive education and development for 10 to 20 disabled children. In addition, there will be vocational training for 100 young people in information technology, culinary arts and cooking, sewing and tailoring and English language. There is also a chapel and conference center.

The complex, named Source of Light, cost approximately \$1.5 million to construct. The majority of the funds were provided by the Baptist World Alliance through its relief-and-development arm, Baptist World Aid (BWAid). Other contributions came from the Virginia Baptist Mission Board. Hungarian Baptist Aid supervised the construction in association with the Haiti Baptist Convention, which owns the complex. "This was the fulfillment of a dream that brought about many years of prayer and planning," BWAid Director Paul Montacute said.

New Hope books available through Nook apps

BIRMINGHAM — Dozens of titles from New Hope Publishers are now available for the Nook. With free Nook apps from New Hope, its books can be read on Android, iPhone, iPad, Mac or PC devices. Among New Hope's 130-plus titles are "Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care," "Not in My Town: Exposing and Ending Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery" and "Live a Praying Life." New Hope, which represents 80-plus authors, is the trade publishing imprint for Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham. For more information, visit www.NewHopeDigital.com.

FBC Spanish Fort provides clean water

Providing clean water became a nearly year-long goal for First Baptist Church, Spanish Fort, in 2011.

In honor of the Baldwin Baptist Association church's 100th anniversary in October, the women's ministry launched a centennial missions project, Water for Life, in April.

It concluded the project with the start of the new year by sending a \$10,068.24 check to Samaritan's Purse.

The money will be used to purchase a water filtration system to provide clean water for hundreds of families in impoverished areas.

The women challenged the entire church to get involved, and members of all ages participated in fundraising.

The women gathered recipes and published and sold a cookbook; the children donated their Vacation Bible School missions offering; the youth held a spaghetti dinner; one member donated the proceeds from the sale of 45 dolls; and many individual members made contributions.

Franklin Kirksey serves as pastor. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of FBC Spanish Fort

HELPING OTHERS — Abby Lassiter of FBC Spanish Fort donates her Vacation Bible School missions offering to the church's centennial missions project, Water for Life.

Churches leave legal issues to government, focus on ministry

(continued from page 1)

be more united ... and see how we can help our brothers and sisters."

Ben Hale, minister of evangelism and missions at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, said the new law has not affected the number of attendees in his church's Hispanic congregation. But he cited fear and uncertainty as common reactions among Hispanic believers.

"We have begun the process of thinking about how our church and how our Hispanic congregation will help and assist families if, in fact, the full law stays in ef-

fect," Hale said. "In other words, how might we consider ministering to families that are separated (if some family members are deported)?"

While the government focuses on enforcing the law, he said Christians should reflect God's grace to the community around them, including illegal immigrants. "We don't necessarily feel like it is our responsibility to become enforcers of immigration law," Hale said. "So we're just going to serve and minister to whoever comes to our church or comes to one of our ministries."

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



ONE Mission

news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (800) 264-1225 □ www.alsbom.org

The Caleb Spirit for 2012

Recently, as leader of your State Board of Missions staff, I shared this email with my colleagues as together we seek to serve our Lord and Alabama Baptists during the new year ahead.

The words "Happy New Year" may have already grown old sounding as we have entered 2012. However, I wanted to offer my expressions of affirmation and desire to see this as your best year ever in the service of our Lord!

As all of us know, the past several years have tested our mettle in terms of economic conditions in our country. I hope the new year will bring improvements on this front. Whether or not that is the case, we cannot know. We have to be faithful despite the circumstances.

My reason for writing you is to say thank you for your faithful service through the State Board of Missions. I could not have asked for more cooperation in the overall sense of the word. You have set good examples for others to follow.

Now, as we look to the new year, I want to encourage you to continue this legacy of

steadfastness in service to our Lord. I want to stand with you during this next year and face any challenges which may come our way.

Let me call upon you to do a personal inventory in your life. All of us can improve our effectiveness in ministry, and this year will afford us ample opportunities to see where we can make these improvements.

As most of you know, I choose a verse or passage for the new year, which is featured on my emails and personal notes I send to others. My verse for 2012 was chosen back last spring, when we faced the unprecedented tornado outbreak in our state.

During a brief devotional period, in the midst of this crisis and chaos, I reflected upon Numbers 14:24, which focuses upon the lesser known Old Testament figure of Caleb. "But my servant Caleb has a different spirit and has followed Me completely; I will bring him into the land where he has gone, and his descendants will inherit it."

In my mind, Caleb is the Barnabas of the Old Testament.

When others seemed to lose hope, he offered encouragement to them. He set the example for the children of Israel when they were facing a critical moment in time.

By Rick Lance
State Missionary
Executive Director-Treasurer



This little verse offers us a biblical template for Christian living in 2012 and beyond. The scripture describes him as one who has a "different spirit." His spirit was one of hope and trust in a time when things were uncertain for the whole family of faith. That is the kind of spirit I want to embody, too.

Caleb was steadfast in that he followed the Lord completely. He did not live in a halfway house of faith. He was sold out to the Lord, come what may. His sold-out kind of spirit is needed so much today as well. May we be like him in this new year!

One thing we need also to see in this verse is the promise. Caleb was promised the

Promised Land. Years later, he entered that precious place with his descendants and others. In many ways, our descendants in faith depend on our example of faithfulness in the present.

Forgive my preaching a bit, but this verse has been ringing in my heart of hearts like a trumpet call to duty.

Our names are not Caleb, but his sold-out spirit which set the example of steadfastness so long ago remains a path for us to follow in 2012.

May those who come behind us find us faithful!

Numbers 14:24

Connect with Rick Lance online by visiting
www.facebook.com/rlance or
www.twitter.com/ricklance.

Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



BY JIM COOLEY

A number of years ago, a young man who grew up in our church heard God's call to missionary service. He answered that call and, in the course of time, he and his family found themselves serving as International Mission Board missionaries in a rural area in a part of the world that is primarily committed to the Islamic faith.

For years, they served faithfully, providing assistance through animal husbandry and agricultural training, using these efforts to plant the true seeds of the Gospel in a very difficult environment.

During much of that time they were faithful with little evidence of evangelistic progress. Were it not for the support of the Cooperative Program, they could not have remained in that area or been faithful to God's call on their lives. If they had to prove their cost effectiveness, they would have been forced to relocate to other easier areas to evangelize.

However, because they were able to stay, in the past year they have literally seen the fruitful result of being the laborers in the fields that Christ called them to be. Scores of new believers have come to Christ and been baptized in recent months, and meet secretly in churches that are scattered about the region. God is truly at work through the ministry of this missionary family.

I believe in the Cooperative Program, because I believe that in heaven we will meet uncounted people from lands all over the globe who would never have heard the Gospel unless Southern Baptists had joined together to accomplish in unity what no church could ever accomplish alone.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because we see the evidence of God working through our own state

missionaries who strive to empower and equip Alabama Baptist churches to reach those who are lost within our own borders. As they assist established churches and new work congregations, they multiply the effect of each of the dollars we invest together in Alabama Baptist work.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because I believe it is a God-inspired system for Southern Baptists to be about Kingdom business. I have been blessed throughout my ministry to serve churches who have believed in a sacrificial commitment to missions giving through the Cooperative Program. My prayer is that we will always keep our missions vision keen through the lens of Cooperative Program giving.

Jim Cooley is pastor of First Baptist Church, Haleyville.



Great Commission Prayer Conference

AWAKEN

A Prayer Experience

Northwest Alabama Prayer Event: A Time of Prayer & Spiritual Awakening

Friday and Saturday, March 9-10, 2012

Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals

Begins at 6 p.m. Friday, ends at noon Saturday

Jointly sponsored by churches in six associations in northwest Alabama and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Featured Speaker: Henry Blackaby

Cost: \$10

For more information, please contact State Missionary Mike Jackson, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 210, mjackson@alsbom.org.



Henry Blackaby

ROYAL AMBASSADOR CONGRESS

March 16-17, 2012
Camp Hobbs, Boy Scout Camp
 (18 miles north of Montgomery, off County Road 40)

Begins at 5 p.m.
Friday with
registration,
concludes at 1 p.m.
Saturday.

From I-65 exit 186 (US 31-Pine Level): Go north on U.S. 31 for 2.2 miles. Turn left on County Road 40 and go 3.3 miles. The entrance to Camp Hobbs is on the right.

Cost: \$5 admission/use fee, \$4 per meal (breakfast, lunch), \$5 cabins (138 beds available), \$2 camping fee (per person)

Congress Events:
 Campouts, Missionaries, Conferences, More Than 20 Field Events, Pinewood Derby, Missions Fair, Soapbox Derby, Outstanding Royal Ambassadors.

For other information, please contact State Missionary Gayle Burlingame at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, gburlingame@alsbom.org.

JEFF SLAUGHTER IN CONCERT



NO CHARGE

TWO LOCATIONS IN ALABAMA!

SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 19, 2:30 P.M.
DECATUR BAPTIST CHURCH
2527 DANVILLE ROAD SW
DECATUR

TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY 21, 7 P.M.
VAUGHN FOREST CHURCH
8660 VAUGHN ROAD
MONTGOMERY

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE
CONTACT STATE MISSIONARY JAMES
BLAKENEY AT 1-800-264-1225, EXT. 286,
jblakeney@alsbom.org.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS
FEBRUARY 3

2012 Collegiate
Evangelism
Conference

Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery
February 10-11
ONE MESSAGE: The Gospel



Shane & Shane
Worship

Great worship, testimonies and breakout sessions all designed to equip, motivate and challenge **college students** and **high school seniors** for personal evangelism on your campus!



Mike Satterfield
Speaker

Cost: \$20 per person
(includes conference registration
and Saturday Chick-fil-A lunch)

For schedule, hotel and
registration info go to:

www.thestudenthub.org
or call **1.800.264.1225**, ext. 262.



Michael Kelley
Speaker

This conference is sponsored by the Office of Collegiate & Student Ministries of the Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions and made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Conference

50TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Sunday through Wednesday, March 4-7, 2012
Shocco Springs

Theme: "Celebrate Your Calling"

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Join us as we celebrate our 50th year of AABS! Whether you have never been to one of our conferences, have not attended in a while or are a member of AABS, now is the perfect time to make plans to be at Shocco. Secretaries and ministry assistants are a vital part in all Baptist churches, associations and other Baptist organizations. Often we lose contact with the reality that our job is an essential ministry. Let's come together and "Celebrate Your Calling"!

General Conference Leader: RoseAnne Coleman, Brentwood, Tennessee

Devotional Leader: Nathan Carroll

Worship Leader: Wason Carroll

Sample of Breakout Sessions Being Offered: PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION MODULES: God's Call and My Character; Are We Different or What?; The Potter's Wheel; Finances and Taxes; Media Shout; Publisher; Excel; Photoshop; ACS, the Essentials; Making Time for Prayer and Devotion; All Things Work to Good; The Different Hats We Wear; After the Storm; Postal Regulations; Hospitality; Social Media and Facebook Etiquette; Website Design; Proofreading; Essentials: Phone Etiquette, Filing; Jewelry Making; Let's Get Together and Share Ideas; and much more!

www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com

Look us up on Facebook.

For more information, please contact
Martha Herring, AABS President,
(334) 684-9910 or (334) 464-2016,
m.herring@fbcgeneva.org



WORSHIP & MUSIC EVENTS

**CHILDREN'S CHOIR
SUMMIT
LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE**
Shocco Springs,
July 6-7, 2012



"Hidden Treasures"

Cost:

- Early Bird Deadline (best rate!): February 28. \$78 per person (based on 3 or more per room)
- Next Best Rate: February 29 - June 1, \$88 per person
- After June 1: \$98 per person

A training conference for children's choir directors, workers, ministry assistants, coordinators, music ministers or "wanna be's". An interactive learning experience with many perks to get your choirs ready for the new year! This year's theme of "Hidden Treasures" reflects the importance of how music helps our children to hide God's word in their hearts. Come join us!

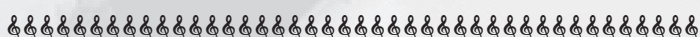
For more information, please contact 1-800-264-1225: Music Specialist Karen Gosselin, ext. 318, kgosselin@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Susan Corley, ext. 279, scorley@alsbom.org.

**ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HONOR
CHOIR TOUR**
March 2-4, 2012

165-voice auditioned choir is composed of 4th- through 6th-grade boys and girls from all over Alabama. Their repertoire of music is enhanced by a variety of instruments, sign language and movement. Their concert schedule includes:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| March 3 3:45 p.m. | afternoon concert, location TBA |
| March 3 7 p.m. | Mount Zion Baptist Church,
Huntsville |
| March 4 10:30 a.m. | First Baptist Church, Athens
morning worship service |

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: Music Specialist Karen Gosselin, ext. 318, kgosselin@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish, ext. 230, cparrish@alsbom.org.

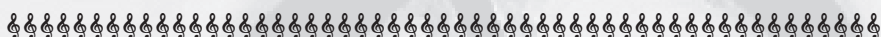


ONEVOICE TOUR
April 20-22, 2012

Auditioned choir, students in 9th-12th grades.

DEADLINE FOR AUDITION FORMS AND CDS:
Monday, March 12!

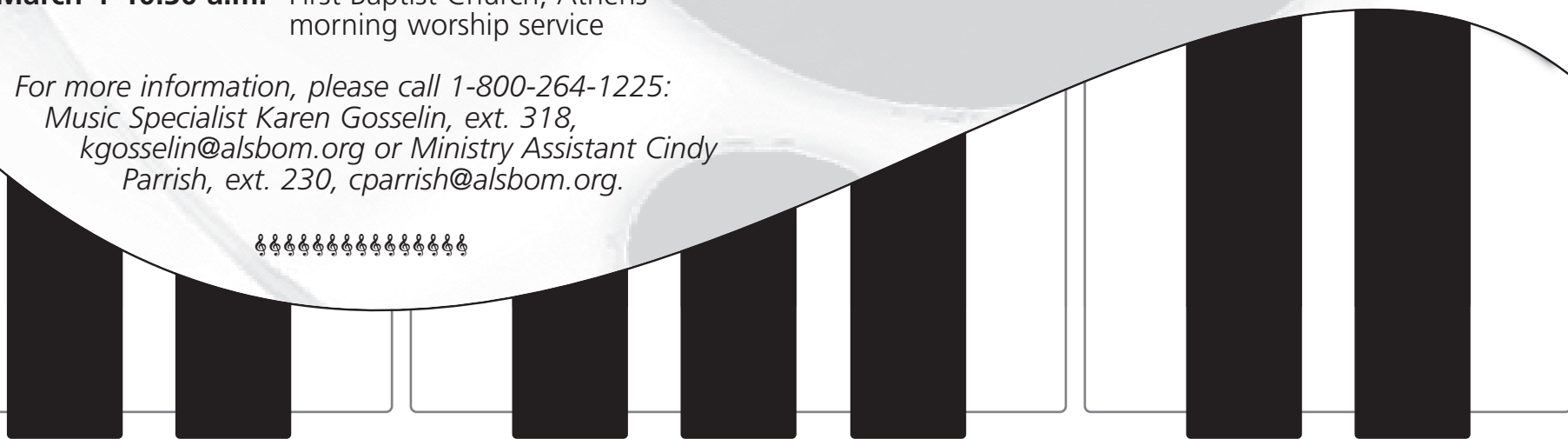
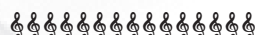
For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Keith Hibbs, ext. 217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Susan Corley, ext. 279, scorley@alsbom.org.



MIX456/REMIX: Worship Arts Camp
Shocco Springs, Monday-Friday, July 9-13, 2012

Cost: \$265 per person

What is Mix456 and ReMix? A hands-on, fun-filled worship arts camp experience that includes music, student-led worship, discipleship, awesome recreation including aqua jump, adventure recreation activities, bazooka ball and paintball. These camps have it all! Make your plans NOW to attend this year!!



FOCUS on One Mission

a gathering for girls in grades 7 through 12

complete

March 9-10, 2012
Eastmont Baptist Church
Montgomery, Alabama
Deadline to register:
Feb. 24, 2012
\$35 per person



Bible Study Sarah
with Ott



Worship Heather
with Williams

all you
need is
Love

This awesome, girls-only weekend includes:

- Dynamic Bible study
- Unforgettable worship experiences
- Practical life conferences
- Meaningful missions/ministry conferences
- and motivating missionary testimonies

For more info, contact Erin Bishop at
ebishop@alsbom.org or 800.264.1225 ext. 224
or visit www.alabamawmu.org/students

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

Victorious!

1 John 5:4



Worship Leader
Melissa Greene



Bible Study Leader
Lisa McKay

Registration deadline:
Monday, February 13, 2012

Experience connection and the community of friends, be challenged to expand your worldview, and take part in hands-on missions and prayer experiences. Worship with Dove award-winning recording artist Melissa Greene, Bible study with author Lisa McKay.

For more information and registration, visit www.alabamawmu.org, or contact Pat Ingram at pigram@alsbom.org or 800.264.1225 ext 292.

Renew

a day away with friends for women of all ages

February 25, 2012
Westwood Baptist, Alabaster
9:00 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.
\$35 per person (includes lunch)





Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

Sharing
Christ in Crisis

Save the Date!
April 13-14, 2012
State Disaster Relief
Training Shocco Springs

The
Cry Heard

www.SBDR.org
Your Connection to
Disaster Relief

Response
Assured



Disaster Relief Training is made
possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists
through the **Cooperative Program**.



SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 9 – 11, 2012
Shocco Springs

Speakers include:

- Rick Lance, State Missionary
- Ronnie McCarron, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile
- Scotty Goldman, State Missionary

What are you doing this spring? Why not join us at Shocco Springs to hear great speakers and share a time of enrichment, encouragement and challenge for senior adults? Register by contacting Shocco at 1-800-280-1105. The cost per person is based upon choice of lodging. To learn more about the cost, please contact Shocco.

For other information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, emitchell@alsbom.org. Also please visit www.alsbom.org/sundayschool for updates concerning this retreat.

April 22, 2012

*A Time to Remember:
2011 Tornadoes.*

Resources will be available to help your church or association observe this occasion in a significant way.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Matt C. Brady
Carolina Baptist Church, Andalusia

My son, Ethan, came to me one night asking for help with his math homework. It was sixth-grade math word problems. After staring at the problems for several minutes, I told him to go ask his mother. Thirty-six years have passed since sixth grade. I haven't worried too much about those problems until now.

So go our understanding of and personal relationship with God. Time slips by without attention to fellowship with God through His Word. Before we know it, the true-ness of knowing God has become diminished simply because we chose not to spend the time needed to experience a close understanding of our heavenly Father.

Now we are faced with presenting what we know about God to a lost world. Many Christians make futile attempts to explain God to others honestly because they have forgotten who He really is. Though math grows more complicated with each step, we must understand that the act of salvation is simple and complete. But the act of growing in the knowledge and instruction of the Lord is an ongoing process that must be practiced.

How do we Christians explain to an agnostic who God is? How do we evangelize the next generation if we have failed to know God ourselves? We have been called to go with the greatest knowledge ever exposed to man, the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, God's Son.

God's Word teaches us: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). Our hope is still Jesus Christ and Him alone! We can change our church's name, entertain or completely overhaul our format for worship. But if we do not truly know the hope that only Christ can give, then we are giving others false hope.

May we learn more about Him. May we truly know the God of creation, redemption and eternal satisfaction.

Oh and by the way, with a little time and effort, I was able to help my son with his math! Makes me wonder what I could do with a little more effort toward helping others to know my God.

Sardis DOM says 'we never get too old to learn'

By Jan White
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

I grow old ever learning many things," an ancient sage once said. He could have been describing James Preachers, director of missions (DOM) for Sardis Baptist Association, who received his doctor of ministry degree three years ago at age 72.

But after more than 40 years in the ministry, why did he decide to go back to school?

"I am an avid reader, and I have an insatiable desire to learn. Being in the ministry, I knew that I needed to prepare myself to the best of my ability so that I would be able to communicate the gospel and minister well-pleasing to God," Preachers said. So he enrolled at Covington Theological Seminary in Fort

Oglethorpe, Ga., and graduated in 2008. "Although it was challenging, I have never regretted the decision (to pursue my doctorate)," Preachers said. "My wife and children have been my greatest encouragers. Without their encouragement, support and prayers, I could not have done it."

And he isn't the only learned member of the family. His wife of 53 years, Jo, has earned several certificates from the Samford extension division at Coffee Baptist Center. His son, Jimmy, is a graduate of the University of Mobile and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and his daughter, Judy, is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham.

Preachers is putting his latest degree — he also has a bachelor's

from Troy State University (now Troy University) and master's from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary — to good use as DOM and pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Coffee Springs.

"I have been privileged to serve several rural churches during my ministry. God has been good to me," Preachers said.

"Dr. Preachers is a gracious, humble, dedicated, faithful minister of the gospel," said Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. "[He] has a servant's heart and is always looking for ways to better serve his Lord, Sardis Association, his church and his com-

munity. He teaches all of us by example that throughout our lives, we should work to develop our witness, our service and our willingness to learn and grow."

In addition to his ministry career, Preachers also worked at Fort Rucker in supply for 30 years with five maintenance contractors (Hayes International Corp., Page Aircraft Maintenance Corp., Northrop, Sikorsky and DynCorp) and in quality control as a quality deficiency reporter for 15 years. He described his career there as "a very rewarding experience."

So what has all this experience taught him? "Someone once said, 'The man who is too old to learn was always too old to learn.' We never get too old to learn," Preachers said. "There is no age limitation. If you are considering furthering your education, go for it."

(Julie Payne contributed)



PREACHERS

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Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

50 Years Ago January 1962

A First?: About two years ago, Indian Creek Baptist Church, Banks, called Frank W. Elliott, a pilot and owner of a small plane, as its pastor. Elliott lives in Columbus, Ga., about 60 miles from the church, where he and his wife operate a small business. He uses his plane to go back and forth to his church on Sunday and Wednesday nights. The church has provided a landing strip nearby and has prospered and gone full time under the leadership of its commuting pastor. A.H. Reid, executive secretary of the Alabama Baptist Executive Board, stated, "Insofar as I know, this is the first pastor in Alabama who uses his own plane to travel to and from his church field."

40 Years Ago January 1972

An Overwhelming Success: The desire of a pastor and his wife to bring joy into the lives of people with a unique need, especially at Christmastime, resulted in an overwhelming success. John Hogan, pastor of Boyles Baptist Church, Tarrant, and Mrs. Hogan discovered there are 65 widows in the church and sponsored a widow's tea at their home. Despite the bad weather and some being out of town, 39 attended the tea. The oldest widow, Mrs. H.P. Thomason, is 89 and the youngest, Mrs. Maxine Hicks, is 38. It was obvious, Hogan said, "that a need was met and all enjoyed the event immensely." He encourages other churches to find and meet the unique needs of their congregations.

30 Years Ago January 1982

Performers at the World's Fair: Three Alabamians were among 20 college and seminary students selected to constitute PowerSource, a musical drama group that will perform 10 times daily at the South-

ern Baptist pavilion at the 1982 World's Fair. Chosen to direct the group were Keith and LeeAnn Martin, of Decatur. They are 1980 graduates of Samford University in Birmingham and are now enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Ginny McLemore, a soprano from Montgomery and a 1981 Samford graduate, also was selected to perform with the group. The 20 students were selected from among more than 115 who auditioned.

20 Years Ago January 1992

New Public Relations Associate: David E. Reid has been named associate for public relations for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Reid has served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Gallant, for almost four years. Prior to that, he was a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., (1985-1987) and a reporter and religion editor for *The Birmingham News* (1981-1985). Reid's home church is First Baptist Church, Tarrant.

10 Years Ago January 2002

Fourth Largest IMB Appointment Service: Amid an array of colorful flags representing countries around the world, 63 Southern Baptist representatives — 12 of whom have Alabama ties — were commissioned Jan. 22 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. Although a cold rain fell outdoors, the weather did not dampen the enthusiastic spirit of the nearly 3,000 attendees as they experienced the fourth largest appointment service in International Mission Board (IMB) history. The two-hour celebration included inspirational music by Shades Mountain Baptist's choir, orchestra and soloists; words of encouragement from IMB President Jerry Rankin; and prayers for

safe harbor by two IMB trustees from Alabama: Bill Hudgins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hokes Bluff, and Laurelle Stoudenmire, a member of Thomasville Baptist Church.

Want to see your news in *The Alabama Baptist*?

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IN THEATERS FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Tim Tebow's 316 yards leads to gospel, Internet salvations

When outspoken Christian quarterback Tim Tebow threw for 316 yards to help Denver upset favored Pittsburgh in the playoffs, millions flocked to the Internet to search for John 3:16 — so much so that the day after the game, that Bible verse was the No. 1 search on Google. As it turns out, some of those Google searches were of eternal significance.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) reports that more than 150 people have made a decision to accept Christ as their Savior as a result of searching for "John 3:16" in Google and then clicking on an advertisement for the BGEA's PeacewithGod.net website. BGEA can track that data

because it began advertising on Google on Monday so that people who searched for "John 3:16" saw an ad for PeacewithGod.net. All total, 8,000 people searching for the verse clicked on PeacewithGod.net. BGEA often uses Google ads to advertise its website. Some examples include searches for "What happens when I die?" and "Does God exist?" The website has tallied more than 1 million visitors since it launched in May.

"We can respond to exactly what people are searching for at that moment — and it's often a very simple next-step to the gospel," John Cass, BGEA's director of Internet evangelism, was quoted as saying in a BGEA article. (BP)

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For more information call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 245, or email Stephanie McClelland at smcclelland@alsbom.org.

For a full schedule, visit www.alsbom.org/sec or find us on [facebook.com/AlaBaptistEvangelismOffice](https://www.facebook.com/AlaBaptistEvangelismOffice).



This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 29

Explore the Bible

By Dale Younce

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

BE PASSIONATE
Deuteronomy 6:4-14; 7:6-9

Many of today's adults grew up in families that encouraged and expected self-reliance. Such an approach to life has definite benefits, including building a person's strength of character and self-confidence. Some adults, however, become so self-reliant and successful they fail to realize that the Lord is their source of life and well-being. Too many of these adults are Christians who know better and need to be reminded that everything they are and have — including their salvation — comes from the Lord. This week's lesson features Moses exhorting the Israelites to love the Lord wholeheartedly and to never forget that He gave them all they have. The Scripture encourages us to passionately affirm the Lord as our source of life and well-being.

Love That Shows Priority (6:4-9)

These verses are the celebrated Shema (from the Hebrew word meaning "to hear"), which became the Jewish confession of faith. It is recited each morning and evening by devout Jews worldwide. Originally the Shema consisted of verse 4 alone, but it was later expanded to include verses 5-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41. The most likely translation of verse 4 is "Hear, O Israel, the Lord (Yahweh = Jehovah) is our God (Elohim), the Lord is one." The statement stresses Yahweh's uniqueness. In contrast to the pagan gods and goddesses in the ancient Middle East, Yahweh is totally unique; there is only one true God (Elohim) and Yahweh alone is God. The only God who really exists is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and His name is Yahweh.

For Christians, this confession of monotheism does not exclude the concept of the Trinity. Elohim is plural, perhaps implying the Trinity, and the Hebrew word translated "one" may suggest a unity of people in Elohim, as the word does in Genesis 2:24 in which husband and wife are said to be "one" flesh.

Yahweh's uniqueness shuts out any other worship and demands an unreserved, wholehearted commitment, expressed in loving Him. Loving God is not an emotion or some

exotic feeling. To love God means to choose Him for an intimate, personal relationship in which we worship and obey Him. Love is an act of the will, and our wholehearted response to God pervades the totality of our inner person. To love God and worship and serve Him are our highest privilege. Consequently, when the Lord commands us to love, He is inviting us to that which is best. This total devotion to the Lord was highlighted by Jesus when He labeled Deuteronomy 6:5 as the first and greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36-37).

The Israelites were to continuously meditate on and be directed by God's word. It was to be the subject of conversation, inside and outside the home, from the first of the day to bedtime. Later in Jewish history, verse 8 was misunderstood; people tied little leather boxes containing these verses to their foreheads and left arms. They also attached a small container of Scripture, called a mezuzah, to every door in their house. As each person entered the house, he or she would reverently touch the mezuzah. However, without being insincere or showy, believers today can demonstrate, by means of their words, actions and attitudes, that the Lord has top priority in their lives.

Devotion That Never Forgets (6:10-14)

In this section and the next, Moses was looking ahead to challenges the Israelites would face after entering the promised land. He urged the Israelites never to forget that the Lord had brought them out of slavery and into a land of plenty in order that they might fear and worship Him alone. Believers today can show that their devotion is to the Lord alone by recalling what He has done for them whether in tough or prosperous times.

Grace That's Undeserved (7:6-9)

Moses urged the Israelites to realize that the Lord delivered them from slavery and chose them as His holy people not because they were numerous but because of His covenant faithfulness and love. Believers today are right to be passionate in their relationship with the Lord because He has acted graciously to redeem them even though they did not deserve it.

Bible Studies for Life

By Joseph F. Scrivner

Assistant Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

GIVING IN A GREEDY CULTURE
Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 24:10-15, 17-18

God cares very deeply about those who are unable to protect themselves, particularly the poor, the orphan and the widow. We see this clearly in one Psalm, where God commands: "Provide justice for the needy and the fatherless; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. Rescue the poor and needy; save them from the hand of the wicked" (Ps. 82:3-4). Another psalmist describes God as one who executes justice for the exploited, gives food to the hungry and lifts up the oppressed (Ps. 146:6-8). Likewise God demands defense of immigrants in the Mosaic law: "You must not oppress a foreign resident; you yourselves know how it feels to be a foreigner because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 23:9).

Share Generously (15:7-11)

In the laws concerning the release of debt, God calls on the Israelites to lend to the needy when it may be the most costly. Specifically, since the law requires relief from debt in the seventh year, some may have avoided lending as that year approached. Yet this is precisely when God calls for the most generosity. God even describes any hesitancy about such sacrificial generosity as "hardhearted," "tightfisted," "wicked" and "stingy" (7, 9-10).

Paul expresses a similar sentiment in his request to the Corinthians. He asks the Gentile believers to provide financial support for poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-29; Gal. 2:9-10). He instructs them to set aside money each week (1 Cor. 16:1-4). They should do so willingly, not out of necessity. In fact, such giving makes sure there is some equality among fellow believers: "It is not that there may be relief for others and hardship for you, but it is a question of equality — at the present time, your surplus is available for their need, so that their abundance may also become available for your need, that there may be equality" (2 Cor. 8:13-14).

Treat With Dignity (24:10-15)

When asked which commandment was the greatest, Jesus said loving God is the most

important commandment. Then He named a second similar commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. These two commandments summarize the Law and the prophets (Matt. 22:34-40). In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus goes further by expanding our definition of "neighbor" (Luke 10:25-37). Indeed Jesus teaches us that concern for the needy should not be limited to those closest to us.

The earlier laws regarding treatment of the poor illustrate Jesus' point. In particular, Moses prohibits the exploitation of the less fortunate when loans are extended to them. The loan should not force the poor to go without necessities (10-13). Exploitation also is prohibited in the laws on wages for hired labor, whether the worker is a fellow Israelite or an immigrant (14). These workers should be paid daily since their lives depend on it. Failure to do so would incur guilt before God (15).

Protect With Mercy (24:17-18)

Moses' laws against exploitation continue by requiring justice for the immigrant and the widow. Obedience to these commands demonstrates empathy: You are able to see the other person as you see yourself. Of course, this is the principle of Leviticus 19:18: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Since these commands represent a form of government regulations in ancient Israel, how does that affect a Christian's view of modern government and societal welfare? What does Paul mean when he says God has instituted human government for good? He commands payment of taxes and calls government God's "public servant" (Rom. 13:1-7).

Modern believers have debated these questions since at least the Industrial Revolution. Whatever one's views on any particular issue, we should never forget how terrible working conditions were for the poor before some basic government regulations were enforced. We should ask ourselves what positions our congregations and denomination took in defense of the poor in the past and then prayerfully discern an appropriate position in the present.

Christian Crossword

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Across

2. Are not two ____ sold for a farthing? (Matt. 10:29)

9. Thou couldst have no power ____ all. (John 19:11)

11. New Testament. (abbr.)

13. To give off.

14. God ____ loved the world. (John 3:16)

15. They have ____ rest day nor night. (Rev. 14:11)

16. Sun, ____ or stars. (Eccles. 12:2)

18. They shall beat their ____ into plowshares. (Isa. 2:4)

20. A long period of time.

21. Fellow. (British)

22. The centurion's servant was ready ____ die. (Luke 7:2)

23. Mother.

24. "When I go to the mall, ____." (2 words)

27. ____ ... in the field. (Luke 2:8)

31. It ____ not for you to know the times. (Acts 1:7)

33. ____ the furnace. (Dan. 3:19)

34. Samuel ran to _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)

35. Isn't. (ungrammatical but

popular)

36. God said to Adam, Where ____ thou? (Gen. 3:9)

37. A person from the British Isles is sometimes called this.

38. Took counsel ____ slay the apostles. (Acts 5:33)

39. Recreational Vehicle. (abbr.)

40. Render therefore to all their ____; tribute. (Rom. 13:7)

41. Electrical Engineer. (abbr.)

42. Take thou unto thee an iron _____. (Ezek. 4:3)

44. As the morning ____ upon the mountains. (Joel 2:2)

46. Compass direction.

47. I make thy ____s thy footstool. (Acts 2:35)

50. I will ... build again the ____ of David. (Acts 15:16)

53. A fall-blooming flower.

54. As my beloved ____ I warn you. (1 Cor. 4:14)

Down

1. Needs that are unsatisfied are ____.

3. I will not with ink and ____ write to thee.

(3 John 13)

4. When I am weak, then ____ I strong. (2 Cor. 12:10)

5. He was very sorrowful: for he was very _____. (Luke 18:23)

6. Right. (abbr.)

7. Compass direction.

8. Thou shalt have no more ____s. (Mic. 5:12)

9. Surely goodness ____ mercy shall follow me. (Ps. 23:6)

10. He will ... turn and ____ thee like a ball. (Isa. 22:18)

12. Also.

17. I meditate ____ all thy works. (Ps. 143:5)

18. Jesus was led up of the _____. (Matt. 4:1)

19. Shortened form of the word kangaroo.

21. A small hat.

23. Abigail ____ David and his men. (1 Sam. 25:20)

25. South Dakota. (abbr.)

26. A liquid measure.

27. On my ____ I will pour out of my Spirit. (Acts 2:18)

28. Fedora, Stetson, or derby.

29. It is good for us to be _____. (Matt. 17:4)

30. Belonging to Samuel's

teacher.

32. Jesus ____ to read in the synagogue. (Luke 4:16; 2 words)

33. Praise the Lord with _____. (Ps. 33:2)

37. An item placed between other items to keep them apart.

41. Several film ____ have been made from the Bible.

43. ____ and clean.

45. Doth not ____ nature itself teach you? (1 Cor. 11:14)

48. Either/_____.

49. Prefix meaning "inner."

51. To ____ or not to be.

52. And ____, the heavens were opened. (Matt. 3:16)

S	N	O	S	T	H	E	R	I	S	A
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PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

Muslim extremists target Christians in East African isles

ZANZIBAR, Tanzania — Far from the world media's gaze in remote islands off the eastern coast of Africa, church buildings are razed and Christians are ostracized and imprisoned for their faith. On Tanzania's island of Zanzibar, in one weeklong stretch in December, Muslim extremists destroyed two church buildings, Christian leaders said.

The extremists torched the building of the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa in Mtufani Mwera, on Dec. 3, Pastor Julius Makoho said.

The previous week in Kianga, a throng of Islamic extremists demolished Siloam Church's building. Pastor Boniface Kaliabukama said more than 100 Muslim extremists arrived at the church compound Nov. 26 chanting "Allahu Akbar (God is greater)."

Further south, in Comoros a convert from Islam is suffering from a skin disease contracted in prison after his family threw him out. The ordeal of Musta Kim began in March 2010 when, returning from an overnight prayer meeting, he found someone had broken into his house in Mdjwayezi village.

While investigating, police stumbled onto Christian materials — a Bible and film — which changed the course of inquiry from pursuing thieves to asking why Kim was practicing a forbidden faith. With his health deteriorating, he made an appeal in the high court regarding his eight months of incarceration without trial and he was released Feb. 29, 2011. His family, however, rejected him. "I cannot sleep at night — the whole body is itching and hurting," he said.

Burmese man killed, church property destroyed by army

LOIJE, Burma — Attacks on Christians in Burma continued into the Christmas season in Kachin state as Burmese army troops killed a civilian and destroyed church property despite President Thein Sein's order to stop the war against insurgents.

A Baptist church in Loiye, Bhamo district, held a funeral Dec. 27 for 47-year-old Maran Zau Ja, who was shot dead without provocation by the Burmese army's Light Infantry Battalion No. 321 on Christmas Day, a Kachin source said.

Zau Ja was a farmer who was returning from his sugarcane field with a friend when troops sprayed bullets at them. His friend survived the gunshots. The two were not armed insurgents of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the armed wing of the Kachin Independence Organization that has fought for autonomy in the Christian-majority state since the early 1960s.

About 90 percent of the roughly 56 million people in Burma, also known as Myanmar, are Buddhist, mostly from the Burman ethnic group. Burmese soldiers see "all Kachin civilians as the enemy," the Kachin News Group recently quoted a Kachin village elder as saying. On Dec. 16, troops of Light Infantry Battalion No. 142 burned a building housing the kitchen of a Baptist church in Dingga village, also in Bhamo district, the source added. KIA men and local villagers managed to save the church building, but the fire engulfed five homes. Earlier, on Nov. 30, Burmese soldiers killed a woman and injured six villagers as they fired mortar shells targeting civilians in Tarlawgyi area in Waingmaw Township.

Church leaders in Sudan now subject to stricter rules

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Sudan's Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowments has threatened to arrest church leaders if they carry out evangelistic activities and do not comply with an order for churches to provide their names and contact information, Christian sources said. The warning in a Jan. 3 letter to church leaders of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) arrived a few days after Sudan President Omar al-Bashir told cheering crowds that following the secession of largely non-Islamic south Sudan last July, the country's constitution will be more deeply entrenched in Shariah (Islamic law).

"We will take legal procedures against pastors who are involved in preaching or evangelistic activities," Hamid Yousif Adam, under-secretary of the Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowment, wrote to the church leaders. "We have all legal rights to take them to court." Sources said the order was aimed at oppressing Christians amid growing hostilities toward Christianity.

"This is a critical situation faced by our church in Sudan," said Yousif Matar, secretary general of the SPEC.

CAMPUS News

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► UMobile to Host Visit Day:

The University of Mobile (UMobile) invites prospective students to attend Visit Day on Feb. 10. The event begins at 8:30 a.m. and includes a campus tour, messages from the faculty and campus activities with current students. An optional overnight stay in the residence halls is available.

A \$2,000 visit scholarship is also available for participants. This scholarship is awarded to new traditional undergraduate students who register for and attend this event, apply for admission and enroll at UMobile. This scholarship awards \$250 per semester up to eight consecutive semesters attended. Only one UMobile Visit Scholarship is available per person.

To attend Visit Day, register online at www.umobile.edu/visit or call 251-442-2222 or 1-800-WINRAMS (946-7267). Additional visit days are also available, and students also may schedule a campus visit at a time that fits their schedule.

► **'Influence' Lecture Series to Feature Jon Acuff:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) will host renowned author and blogger Jon Acuff as part of its "Influence" Lecture Series on March 13 at 9 p.m. in Ram Hall on the university campus.

Seating will be first-come, first-served for UMobile students.

Called "hilarious and insightful" by *Group Magazine* and featured as a regular contributor on CNN.com, Acuff is the author of three books and a world-renowned blog. His presentation will focus on developing influence to positively impact the world.

Acuff will be the second installment of the lecture series, which featured former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in the fall.

For more information, contact the office of campus life at 251-442-2563.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Dutch A Cappella Ensemble to Sing at Judson:** The Dutch a cappella ensemble Quink will perform in the Alumnae Auditorium at Judson College on Feb. 2 at 7 p.m. as part of the college's concert and lecture series for 2011-12.

Quink is a group of five singers with a repertoire that includes music from the early Renaissance to our own time.

The group is regularly invited to acclaimed music festivals worldwide.

For more information, contact concert and lecture chair Jamie Adams at 334-683-5251 or jadams1@judson.edu.

► **First Nursing Class Meets for Orientation:** After receiving

provisional approval from the Alabama Board of Nursing in November, Judson College's nursing program held orientation for its first class of 30 students Jan. 4. Kandace Shoults is director of the program.

► Mississippi Professor Brings Bible Characters to Modern Stage:

Judson College normally has a college or seminary professor do special lectures during its annual Christian Emphasis Week, but this year, students heard from John the Baptist, St. Peter and Joseph, the father of Jesus.

These biblical heroes are among a bevy of characters in the repertoire of John Maxwell, drama professor at Belhaven University in Jackson, Miss.

Maxwell's St. Peter entered the Judson chapel in a baseball cap and jeans to talk about his friendship with Jesus.

"I believe when you put costumes on performers and they use stilted language, there's a barrier between them and the audience," Maxwell said. "Dressing casually and using common language brings empathy from the audience to my characters."

Judson sophomore Carli Ludlow, of Thomasville, said she was shocked when John the Baptist walked in unannounced Jan. 10.

"I guess I've thought of biblical characters as unapproachable," she said. "But there he was talking to me. It was a new experience and very moving."

Fighting culture war comparable to resisting Hitler?

A Baptist historian compared today's battle for the sanctity of life, traditional marriage and religious freedom to courageous heroes who resisted the Nazis in Germany.

Timothy George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, told a group of ministers Jan. 17 that "The Manhattan Declaration," a document he wrote in 2009 with Charles Colson of Princeton Fellowship and Robert George of Princeton University, was inspired by the Barmen Declaration of 1934.

At a seminar co-sponsored by Judson College and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, Timothy George handed out copies of his 4,700-word manifesto that includes a pledge to civil disobedience of laws that would compel religious institutions to perform abortions or same-sex marriages.

"This document isn't a political one, but a moral one," Timothy George said. "It's an example of the church taking a stand on issues and reaching across dividing lines to find support from people

of various political and religious persuasions. I think this is what the church can and should do."

Timothy George said in an article in the Spring 2011 issue of the *Beeson Magazine* that the Manhattan Declaration was written on the 75th anniversary of the Barmen Declaration, a statement of the "Confessing Church" done in response to the strongly nationalistic and anti-Semitic "German Christian" movement that supported Adolf Hitler.

God's sovereignty

Timothy George said like Barmen, the Manhattan statement is not "political" in the sense of being tied to a particular party or ideology. Democrats, Republicans and independents have all signed on.

"Some say today that the church should take a sabbatical from speaking to the culture at large," Timothy George said. "Hitler himself was happy (at least for a while) to leave the Christians alone so long as they stayed within the four walls of their church buildings and refrained from 'meddling' in mat-

ters related to public policy and the common life of the German people. But both Barmen and Manhattan refuse to say that there are areas of life which do not belong to Jesus Christ. Both affirm the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ."

Finally Timothy George said, both documents recognize "the cost of discipleship."

"Both call for the kind of conscientious courage that dares to count the cost of following Jesus Christ along the way that leads finally to the cross," he wrote.

At the Alabama gathering, Timothy George said nearly 500,000 people have signed the Manhattan Declaration. He said the document, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman, has been widely misunderstood as espousing intolerance toward gays.

"Some have accused us of being hateful, but there's not a word of condemnation in the document against the gay community. What we argue for is 'the common good' that enriches society," Timothy George said. (ABP)

Perfect plan

Sacramento Kings forward trusts Christ with moves

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

John Salmons' career crisscrossing the country in the NBA has never left him in a state of confusion. There is purpose in every place.

"Wherever I am, I try to find out why God actually has me in that place and try to go from there. He knows the reason this is where He wants me to be at this time. I am trying to keep the faith and trust in God that His plan is perfect. He won't put me in a situation that I can't handle," said Salmons, a forward with the Sacramento Kings. "No matter what team I am playing for or what city I'm living in, God is in control."

Salmons, 32, has been on four teams since his 26th overall selection in the 2002 NBA draft. He is with Sacramento for a second time.

Early in the lockout-shortened season, Salmons has averaged 9.4 points per game, 2.6 rebounds and 1.6 assists. With the Milwaukee Bucks in 2010 and 2011, he averaged 19.9 points and 14 points, respectively. In 2009, he led the Chicago Bulls to the playoffs with an 18-point average. Drafted out of the University of Miami (Fla.), he began his career with his hometown Philadelphia 76ers in 2002 and was with the team until 2006.

Andre Iguodala, Philadelphia forward, said following the NBA's bouncing ball when trade decisions are made requires adjustments.

"We are all professionals. We have to understand it comes with the territory. He (Salmons) did a good job handling it," Iguodala said.

Philadelphia forward Thaddeus Young said of Salmons, "He is a guy that can make the team better every way possible."

Salmons does that with an explosive first step, intelligence and "slashing-type moves" that Young said score "easy baskets." He is consistent on defense and offense.

"We ask him to fill in a lot of gaps offensively because he is so versatile. He is a very integral part of our team. We think highly of John," former Sacramento coach Paul Westphal said.

'Leads by example'

"Everybody respects him around here," Sacramento rookie Jimmer Fredette said. "He leads by example."

Whether he is taking a shot or defending a play, Salmons relies on God.

"I can't play without Christ. I don't trust in myself. I trust in God. I am at the point in my life where I know I can't do anything without God. I try to play for Him," he said.

Salmons' actions speak louder than his words, Westphal noted.

"He is very quiet but, at the same time, you know you are going to



NBAE/Getty Images photo

'GOD IS IN CONTROL' — John Salmons, who plays for the Sacramento Kings, found God's purpose in each of the four teams he played for since his selection in the 2002 NBA draft.

get an honest day's work from John Salmons," Westphal said. "He plays hard every night. He makes very few mistakes."

With a desire to stay on "that narrow road" to "finish the race," Salmons reaches for the Bible, along with a GPS.

"The Bible is full of great verses. It always depends on the situation and whatever you are going through at the time or if days are good or days are bad, verses just stand out. I try to stay consistent with reading Scripture," said Salmons, whose favorite chapter is Romans 8.

Prayer is a pillar for him. "Prayer is my communication with Christ. Just being able to have a dialogue about whatever is on my mind, I know He hears me and is with me," Salmons said. "Every day, you learn about yourself, through ups and downs. The biggest thing is I've got to learn how to live as a Christian in the good times and know how to live as a Christian in the bad times."

He became a Christian when he was 12 and was baptized at Triumph Baptist Church in Philadelphia. Even before then, Salmons sensed God's presence in his life. He grew in understanding when he went to college, and Miami team chaplain Steve Debarlaben helped him focus on Christ.

"We are still good friends, and anytime I am going through anything, I can call him to talk about spiritual issues," Salmons said.

He wants to be a man who leads his family spiritually. He and his wife, Taniesha, have two children, Josiah and Sarai.

A platform

Salmons considers the NBA to be a platform, as young people often look up to NBA players.

"Seeing a Christian in the NBA, I hope gives them motivation to be a Christian, to live the right way," he said.

"I feel like [God] uses basketball to grow me to become a better person, to become the man He wants me to be," Salmons said.

Transitions from team to team have brought different experiences and people into his life.

"Every team I played on, I met people who are still significant in my life," he said.

Memphis Grizzlies forward Josh Davis, a former teammate at Philadelphia, called Salmons an "upstanding person" who was "always nice to everybody. He was a fun guy to be a teammate with."

"I know that there is a purpose to all this. Whatever the reason, I have to learn and grow from it and move on to the next journey," Salmons said.

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Episcopal Church wins battle for parish property

FAIRFAX, Va. — Seven congregations that broke with the Episcopal Church in 2006 over its liberal policies on homosexuality are not entitled to keep parish property estimated to be worth millions, a Virginia judge ruled Jan. 10.

The ruling by Fairfax County Judge Randy Bellows reverses a decision he made in 2008 and hands a major victory to the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Virginia, which had fought hard to keep the property.

One of the churches, The Falls Church, traces its roots to Colonial times and has counted among its members a former CIA director, a former White House speechwriter, congressmen and numerous media mavens. Several of the congregations sit on valuable real estate in Washington's booming Northern Virginia suburbs.

Bellows said the property must now be returned to the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Virginia. In a statement, the congregations said they will consider appealing the decision. Since leaving the Episcopal Church, the seven congregations have joined the Anglican Church in North America, which is seeking recognition as an official branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

In 2010, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that Bellows misapplied a state law that allows some breakaway congregations to keep parish property and sent the case back for his reconsideration.

On Jan. 10, Bellows wrote that the parishes had the right to break from the Episcopal Church, but "had no right to take these seven Episcopal churches with them."

Under Episcopal Church law, property owned by any member congregation, parish or mission is held in trust for the national denomination. Citing that provision, secular courts have generally ruled against the dozens of breakaway parishes that have split from the Episcopal Church since it elected an openly gay bishop in 2003.

Planned Parenthood sees decline in lethal procedures

NASHVILLE — Planned Parenthood finally saw a decline in the number of lethal procedures its affiliates performed in a year, according to its latest annual report.

The new report showed Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) clinics did 329,445 abortions in 2010, which marked a drop of more than 2,000 from the 2009 total of 331,796. Previously, Planned Parenthood's abortion total had increased for 15 consecutive years, according to the National Right to Life Committee.

The PPFA report, which was released Dec. 29, showed other declines that provide hope to pro-life advocates:

▶ Total revenue for the 2009–10 fiscal year fell to \$1.05 billion from \$1.1 billion the previous year.

▶ The number of "emergency contraception" kits distributed declined to 1.46 million in 2010 from 1.54 million. Also known as the "morning-after" pill, "emergency contraception" works to restrict ovulation in a woman, but it also can act after conception, thereby causing an abortion.

PPFA continued to maintain a downward path on adoption referrals to other agencies from 4,912 in 2007. Planned Parenthood's affiliates reported only 841 referrals in 2010. Adoption referrals totaled 977 in 2009.

The organization also amassed a large portion of its revenue from taxpayers. Government grants, contracts and reimbursements totaled \$487.4 million in 2009–10. That was 46 percent of the abortion giant's total revenue. PPFA reported \$363.2 million in government grants and contracts in 2008–09 but did not report the amount of Medicaid reimbursements in that total.

Okla. referendum on Islamic law 'unconstitutional'

DENVER — Oklahoma's referendum against state judges considering Islamic law is unconstitutional, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Jan. 10, upholding a lower court ruling that had blocked the measure.

The ruling could affect more than 20 other states where laws against Shariah are under consideration.

In a 37-page ruling, the 10th Circuit's three-judge panel dismissed assertions by lawyers for Oklahoma that the law did not discriminate against Muslims.

"That argument conflicts with the amendment's plain language, which mentions Shariah law in two places," wrote 10th Circuit Judge Scott Matheson.

The Denver-based judges said that courts should be wary of meddling in voter referendums, but that minorities' constitutional rights must be protected.