

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Feb. 2, 2012  
Vol. 177, No. 5

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

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## 'Not again, Lord'

### Tornadoes hit 8 counties in central Alabama; DR teams move in quickly

By Neisha Fuson  
The Alabama Baptist

As 10 tornadoes raged through central Alabama on Jan. 23, Alabama Baptists let out a cohesive breath, "Not again, Lord."

The single supercell thunderstorm produced tornadoes that hit eight counties — Chilton, Talladega, Elmore, Jefferson, Perry, Sumter, St. Clair and Tuscaloosa — according to the National Weather Service. The strongest tornado was an EF3 in Jefferson County. Two separate tornadoes swept through Tuscaloosa and Jefferson counties, killing one person each. According to *The Birmingham News*, more than 100 people sustained injuries, an estimated \$15 million to \$30 million in damage was done and more than 500 homes were damaged or destroyed across the state.

Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams responded quickly, according to Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"Disaster relief volunteers moved right in to the hardest struck areas and went to work. They are doing a fantastic job," he said.

Associational disaster relief teams were on the ground within hours of the tornadoes and continue to work to help those in need. Alabama Baptists' on-site command center was set up at First Baptist Church, Center Point, with John Hayes, disaster relief coordinator for District 11 (which includes the Birmingham area), as on-site commander. Teams included chain saw, feeding and chaplaincy.

Johnson said 15 disaster relief chaplains were serving in the Center Point area at press time. Chaplains from Calhoun Baptist Association led two people to Christ on Jan. 24, he added.

"These folks have done a great job of providing spiritual support and witnessing," Johnson said.

Birmingham Baptist Association set up its feeding unit at First, Center Point, on Jan. 24 and has been making more than 1,800 meals a day with 25 trained volunteers, or "yellow shirts."

The American Red Cross also set



**YELLOW SHIRTS** — Disaster relief efforts are under way at FBC Center Point with the Birmingham Baptist Association feeding unit making more than 1,800 meals a day.

Photos by Neisha Fuson

up at the church in a building that has direct outside access, a kitchen and showers, making it easy to receive, register and feed tornado survivors on-site.

Yellow shirts and other volunteers helped prepare food while the Red Cross distributed meals to affected areas.

Disaster relief chain saw crews from Birmingham Association also

helped in the Center Point area. And more than 300 people were expected to volunteer over the Jan. 28-29 weekend, helping with debris cleanup.

For long-term response, the association will continue its Restoring Hope recovery plan, activated after the April 27, 2011, tornadoes, to help bring closure to each family's situation, including helping with insurance, funding and counseling.

"[Birmingham Association] wants the churches to be the front-line [contact]," said Mike McLemore, executive director of the association. "We want the communities to know that the churches are the ones helping them. Birmingham Association wants to be behind the scenes."

Several other associations also assisted in the cleanup and recovery ef-

(See 'Pulling,' page 3)

## Storms damage 4 Alabama Baptist churches

As morning dawned Jan. 23, light shone on four Alabama Baptist churches hit by tornadoes that ripped through their individual communities.

The church with the most damage was Ephesus Baptist, Sprott, in Cahaba Baptist Association.

"The roof looks like it just folded down into the church," said Pastor Henry LeVert, noting that while the sanctuary was destroyed, the fellowship hall remained intact. The 25-member congregation planned to gather for church in the fellowship hall the following Sunday.

Bill Wallace, director of missions (See 'We're,' page 3)



Photo by Doug Rogers

**'FOLDED DOWN'** — Ephesus Baptist Church, Sprott, in Cahaba Baptist Association suffered severe damage from a Jan. 23 tornado.

# COMMENT

## The Image of Southern Baptists

A survey released by LifeWay Research in December 2011 reportedly focused on Americans' reactions to the name Southern Baptist. However, the study's most important findings related to questions about the image of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), no matter what name we might use.

That point was most clearly illustrated when the more than 2,000 participants in the online survey responded to the question "When I see the name (fill in denominational affiliation) in the name of a church, I assume it is not for me." Participants were asked about Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Southern Baptist and community/nondenominational names. Fifty-seven percent of respondents agreed the name Southern Baptist was off-putting for them. That is not good.

What went almost unnoticed was that 51 percent of respondents said the name Methodist was off-putting and 50 percent said the same of the name Baptist. Fifty-three percent were put off by the name Catholic.

When 50 percent of respondents say they assume a church is not for them because it has the name Baptist in it, the problem is not the name Southern Baptist but the image of Baptists. Lumped in the "Baptist" category are such diverse groups as Southern Baptists, American Baptists, Cooperative Baptists, National Baptists, Regular Baptists and on through the more than 40 nationwide Baptist bodies in the United States. According to this finding, no matter what name Southern Baptists used, half the country would have problems with us as long as Baptist remained in our name. Why?

The difference between name and image also was illustrated by the regional response breakdown the study provided.

When SBC President Bryant Wright appointed the name change study committee, it was out of concern about the impact of the name Southern Baptist on new church starts in areas underserved by the denomination. Most of those areas are outside the South and Southwest, where Southern Baptists are most popular and best known.

Surprisingly the survey found a greater negative reaction to Southern Baptists in the South than in the Northeast or Midwest. In the South, 40 percent of respondents reported an unfavorable impression of Southern Baptists. In the Northeast, it was 34 percent and in the Midwest, 36 percent.

That was a finding few, if any, expected. In the region where the SBC was organized, is best known and is the primary religious body, 40 per-



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

cent of respondents reported an unfavorable impression of it. That is not good.

A larger percentage of people in the Midwest have a favorable impression of Southern Baptists (60 percent) than in the South (57 percent), and almost as high a percentage of those in the Northeast have a favorable impression of Southern Baptists (51 percent).

#### Further study needed

In the West, participants were about evenly divided, with 43 percent having a favorable impression of Southern Baptists and 44 percent having a negative impression.

Again the problem is not the name. Certainly the word "Southern" is not a problem in the South. Yet four out of 10 people in the South have an unfavorable impression of Southern Baptists and less than six out of 10 have a favorable impression, according to the survey. Obviously the problem that needs attention is the overall image of the SBC.

Without further study, there is no way of knowing the reasons behind the unfavorable impressions. Perhaps it is a growing negative reaction toward religion as a whole. While the numbers for each faith group studied were different, the trend lines were similar. Older respondents had more favorable reactions to the groups than younger respondents. The younger the respondents, the higher the percentage of unfavorable responses, with the youngest group (18-29) most likely to be unfamiliar with the various faith groups.

Part of the explanation may be the growing enmity toward any established denomination. Only community/nondenominational churches had less than half the respondents (35 percent) saying the name of the body was not off-putting. Perhaps that is why some historically Baptist churches change their names and omit reference to denominational identity (Baptist) in their new titles.

But according to the survey, the negative reaction is to the churches' character. Participants were asked, "If you were considering visiting or joining a church, would knowing that the church was Southern Baptist impact your decision positively, negatively or have no impact?" Forty-four percent said it would have a negative impact. Notice the question was about the church being a

Southern Baptist church, not about the name.

Part of the answer might be in Southern Baptists' insistence that Jesus provides the only way of salvation or that truth is revealed in Scripture and is not relative to individual judgments.

Part of the answer might be the debris left in the wake of more than two decades of denominational turmoil or the perceived political identity of several prominent SBC leaders. No one really knows.

Not all was negative, however. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated the SBC identity would either be positive or make no difference at all. That is more than had a negative reaction.

There are other encouraging findings in the survey. Among Protestants, the Southern Baptist identity was not a problem for 55 percent of respondents. Only 36 percent of Protestants had a problem with an SBC identity. Considering the difference between mainline Protestant bodies and evangelical groups, that may not be a bad number.

Also, among those who attend church on a weekly basis, 20 percent said the SBC identity was a positive trait. The less respondents attended church, the more objectionable Southern Baptists became. Of those who never attend church, 62 percent reacted negatively to Southern Baptist identity.

Like most everyone else, this writer has no knowledge of what the name change study committee will recommend when it reports through the SBC president to the SBC Executive Committee on Feb. 20. It is hard to see that the survey results provide many compelling reasons to recommend a name change for the SBC.

But the survey did identify the serious issue of how the SBC is perceived by others. We hope the December study was only the first of many studies that will probe the reasons that 40 percent of those living in the South — our neighbors, friends and co-workers — have an unfavorable impression of Southern Baptists. That is an important finding that demands additional information.

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

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

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

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

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

# 'Pulling together'

## Alabama Baptist disaster relief teams better prepared after April 27 tornadoes

(continued from page 1)

forts with disaster relief teams.

St. Clair Baptist Association deployed a team of 12 yellow shirts to Argo on Jan. 23 and Trussville the next day.

Glenn Pender, disaster relief coordinator for the association, said, "Our main ministry is not to remove trees. Our main ministry is to minister to people in crisis in the name of Christ."

Mud Creek Baptist Association disaster relief volunteers helped remove trees in the Oak Grove area, finishing Jan. 26. The association planned a cleanup day Jan. 28 and, at press time, anticipated several volunteers from associational churches to serve.

Bessemer Baptist Association volunteers also spent time in Oak Grove, "slinging sawdust like crazy," disaster relief coordinator Larry Harris said.

Selma Baptist Association sent out a team of 13 yellow shirts to complete three jobs in Maplesville on Jan. 23. It also sent nine yellow shirts to Clanton on Jan. 24, and they were able to complete all priority chain saw jobs by the end of the day. The teams worked closely with Chilton Baptist Association.

Larry Felkins, director of missions for Chilton Association, said, "So many people did so much so quickly that all you can say is that it was a great job done by the Chilton County community."

Disaster relief teams from Calhoun Association, Friendship Baptist Association, Etowah Baptist Association, Sand Mountain Baptist Association and Tennessee River

Baptist Association were deployed to work in the Clay and Center Point areas.

Along with associational disaster relief efforts, churches are assisting in various ways.

NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, is one church that was able to help almost immediately, because it is located near a neighborhood devastated by the tornadoes.

By Jan. 24, the church was fully operating as a relief center, where people donated supplies like tarps, plastic bins, water and Gatorade, Pastor Bill Wilks said.

"We don't wait. We get started right away, because people need help immediately," he said.

NorthPark Baptist and nearby Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville, are housing volunteer relief workers.

"It's beautiful to see so many volunteers, everybody pulling together," Wilks said. "It doesn't matter who they are or what church they go to; they are just pulling together to help people that are hurting."

At Clearview Baptist Church, Pinson, donated goods — from food to clothing — are housed and available to anyone affected by the storms. The church also has seven flatbed trucks that it repeatedly loaded up with goods and took to affected areas. By Jan. 25, more than 1,500 meals had been prepared and delivered by volunteers at the church.

First, Center Point, Pastor Bobby Earls said, "It's amazing how far we (all) have come (in organized relief efforts)."



Photo by Toni Wall

**GIVING BACK** — A disaster relief volunteer works at the Birmingham Baptist Association feeding unit.



Photo by Toni Wall

**OPPORTUNITY TO MINISTER** — Pastor Bobby Earls of FBC Center Point helps the Birmingham Baptist Association feeding unit set up at his church.

Not only are Alabama Baptist disaster relief workers better prepared after the April 27 tornado devastation in the state but also Alabamians in general, he said, noting the strong community effort of neighbors helping neighbors, restaurants donating food, car dealerships donating water, etc.

First, Center Point, met Jan. 25 for Wednesday evening services, despite many members' homes enduring damage from the storms. The congregation spent time in prayer for the community, and Earls said he has been focused on "opportunity."

"God has given [First, Center Point] the opportunity with our location and facilities where we can be of service," Earls said.

"We are very valuable right now.

... We want to take advantage of the opportunity to minister to this community and be a Christian witness to get the gospel to the community.

"What I did experience last year (after the April 27 tornadoes) has been of great value to me and for our disaster relief teams. [Alabama Baptists] have learned a lot in a short time in terms of how to be more effective and how to respond more rapidly to meet needs."

For more information on ways to help, visit [www.sbdr.org](http://www.sbdr.org).

(Gary Hardin contributed)



Photo by Doug Rogers

**RELIEF EFFORTS** — Bill Maddox, a disaster relief volunteer from FBC Clanton, cuts a fallen tree in Chilton County.



Photo by Doug Rogers

**GOD IS GOOD** — Rick Lance (left) provides encouragement and a financial gift from Alabama Baptists to Pastor Henry LeVert (center) of Ephesus Baptist Church, Spratt. Also pictured is Cahaba Baptist Association Director of Missions Bill Wallace.

## 'We're still there as a church'

(continued from page 1)

for Cahaba Association and a member of Ephesus, said many community volunteers helped remove most of the pews from the rubble, the only items that were salvageable.

Although the recovery process will be lengthy, Wallace said he is energized and ready to get moving. "I hope to see the site [cleaned up] quickly ... and go ahead and get started on rebuilding," he said.

LeVert said, "We lost a church building, but we didn't lose the church. We're still there (at the same place) as a church."

And "God is just using [people] in ways that you would never think

about," he said, noting the monetary donations from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and people in the community.

"[The church] can certainly testify to how good God's been and how good [people] have been (in helping the church)," LeVert said.

The other churches damaged by the storms were First Baptist, Center Point, in Birmingham Baptist Association; First Baptist, Clay, in North Jefferson Baptist Association; and Smithville Baptist, Bessemer, in Mud Creek Baptist Association.

First, Center Point, had minor roof damage, while First, Clay, had several windows blown out, a

porch to the fellowship hall torn away and an overhead walkway connecting the sanctuary to the children's church trailer destroyed. The children's playground also was destroyed, and a shed with tools and a lawn mower was lost.

Smithville had roof damage and the church sign was destroyed.

Even though their buildings were damaged, First, Clay; First, Center Point; and Smithville are serving the damaged communities around them (see story, page 1).

For information on how to help, visit [www.sbdr.org](http://www.sbdr.org). (TAB)

# Bible Basics

series

PART 5 OF 8 ON SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY

## A look at the Minor Prophets communicating God's word

By Ken Roxburgh  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

For many Bible students, the term “prophecy” has connotations of predictions of future events. Throughout the Christian church’s history, the Prophets have been read as sources of foretelling events concerning the Second Coming of Christ and the end times. Yet in the Old Testament, the term refers to women and men who presented to Israel’s people God’s message in their contemporary setting. Judaism saw the Prophets as teachers of Torah.

Frequently that message was linked to a social analysis, bringing a message that condemned contemporary practices of injustice and encouraged Israel to reform its attitudes and actions. To be prophetic was to stand for truth and justice and often against popular opinion.

The Prophets were often ordinary people from both the Northern (Israel) and Southern (Judah) kingdoms of Israel. They were from a variety of occupations, from shepherds (Amos) to priests (Ezekiel and Jeremiah). The Prophets who preached before the Exile regularly condemned the sin that would bring about God’s judgment (Amos, Micah and Hosea); the Prophets who proclaimed God’s message after the Exile brought a message of hope, the encouragement of a return to Jerusalem and the restoration of the Temple (Haggai and Zechariah). It is important to note that the order in which they appear in the Old Testament is not chronological.

The terms “major” and “minor” are often used to describe the Old Testament prophetic books, not in the sense of more or less important but regarding the books’ length. There are 12 Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. They are relatively brief compared to the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These “prophets” can be traced back to historical figures who functioned as God’s messengers in ancient Israel and whose words and deeds were collected and recorded by their followers. Hence emphasis is rightly placed upon identifying the proper cultural and historical context in which they functioned. Once a book’s context is determined, then it can be interpreted against its religious, cultural and historical background.

Four Prophets are dated from the middle to the end of the eighth century: Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. After Samaria, the Northern Kingdom’s capital, fell in 721 B.C. and prior to the fall of Judah and Jerusalem in 587 B.C., Prophets such as Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Ezekiel and perhaps Obadiah were active in ministry. After a generation, when Cyrus’ decree in 438 B.C. allowed the exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple, we have the books of Haggai and Zechariah. The century after that is

### Ken Roxburgh

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probably when the books of Malachi, Jonah and Joel were written.

While in a sense human compositions, the prophetic works were all inspired by the Holy Spirit. They contain more than just human efforts to explore a religious message. The Prophets were accurate observers of their historical circumstances and insightful as to the state of their society. But first and foremost, they were communicating God’s word to His people. The Prophets came at a significant period in the history of God’s people. When the nation had failed so disastrously to listen to God’s voice, they rose up with particular messages and ministries, interpreting the new contexts of exile and judgment to help people see the way forward. Sometimes the messages were condemnatory, but more often than not, they included hope.

### Exile and judgment

The 21st century has sometimes been called the century of the refugee, the “displaced person,” in reference to the way people have been displaced from their homes by war or genocide. The history of Israel and Judah is one of displacement as well. The first major exile took place under the Assyrians. We read in 2 Kings 15:29, “In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came and ... carried the people captive to Assyria.” Following the Assyrian Empire’s collapse, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. In 2 Kings 24:14, we read, “Judah was taken into exile out of its land.” The Prophets proclaimed God’s word before, during and after the experience of exile and judgment.

Paul House, professor of Old Testament at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, has identified three major themes that can be found in prophetic literature: sin, punishment and restoration. These are “the sin of Israel and the nations, the punishment of sin and the restoration of

both from that sin. These three emphases represent the heart of the content of the prophetic genre.”

Hosea and Amos are two examples that demonstrate the way the historical context of their times can help us to understand their message and hear God’s voice speaking into our lives in the 21st century.

Hosea is rooted in the life and experience of a Northern Kingdom prophet in the eighth century B.C. His message is clearly related to the rise and threat of the Assyrian empire, which would destroy the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. and threaten Jerusalem in 701 B.C. The book contains a series of “lawsuits” that indict Israel and warn it of coming judgment. In Chapter 4, we read, “The Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. ... There is no faithfulness or loyalty and no knowledge of God in the land” (1–2).

Hosea is best remembered, however, for his teaching on God’s love, especially his emphasis on how God identified with him in his pain and heartache over a failed marriage. The story of Hosea’s marriage and the sorrow he felt when his wife, Gomer, was unfaithful to him mirror the pain and suffering God experienced as Israel was unfaithful in its covenant relationship. Hosea made it clear that the nation had committed adultery against its husband by compromising its worship in following the Canaanite god Baal. God commanded Hosea to imitate the journey of suffering He had endured to make it clear to the nation that sin is an awful thing. Terence Fretheim, Elva B. Lovell professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., said, “The sufferings of the prophet and God are so interwoven that they cannot be meaningfully separated.”

God’s pain and suffering come to a climax in Chapter 11, in which we hear of the turmoil of His heart over Israel’s plight: “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender; I will not execute my fierce anger ... for I am God and not man” (5–9). As we read these verses as Christians, our minds jump forward to the climax of God’s suffering in the cross. God judged sin, punishing Christ, but also demonstrated the generosity of His grace. Hosea’s story must not be misunderstood to imply that God’s experience of pain does away with justice. Without treating sin seriously, love becomes mere sentimentality. Furthermore Hosea’s story is filled with a promise of hope and restoration if the people would only hear God’s word and

respond. In Chapter 14, we hear God say, “Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. ... I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them” (1, 4).

Amos was a contemporary of Hosea, although he prophesied in the Southern Kingdom. Taken in chronological rather than canonical order, Amos is the earliest Hebrew prophet with a book named after him. He prophesied sometime during the decade 760–750 B.C., a period of relative peace and prosperity for Israel. He spoke, for example, of those who had summer and winter houses, which were richly decorated (3:15). He was concerned that the rich were becoming wealthy at the expense of the poor and through an unjust use of the court system (5:10–12). He lived at a time when his culture’s class system was more concerned with luxury than justice (2:6–8; 8:4–6).

### Groupings of material

At first sight, the Book of Amos appears to be a collection of sayings with very little organization. But a close reading reveals that there are identifiable groupings of material. The book begins with a group of oracles directed against the nations (1:3–2:16), demonstrating the prophet’s conviction that God is king of all the earth and every nation is responsible for its actions. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 all begin with the same phrase, “Hear this word,” and Amos spells out in some detail the way God’s people had not only turned their backs on Him but also had a false sense of security that He would not judge them (4:4; 5:5, 21–24).

Amos is especially to be appreciated for his sensitivity to matters of social welfare in Israel. He spared no words in condemning Israel’s royalty and aristocracy, who abused the privileges of wealth and even used their authority to get richer at the expense of the poor.

In addition to castigating the rich, Amos was also critical of Israel’s centers of religious worship, where the people preferred the ritual action of worship rather than a real relationship with God. So we read in Chapter 5, “I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (21–24).

*“God’s word, delivered many centuries ago, continues to speak to our ... lives.”*

Ken Roxburgh  
Samford University

Amos took the religious concepts of justice and righteousness, which characterized how God deals with His people, and applied them to the way Israel's people treated each other. Amos believed that Israel was just going through the motions of worshipping God and observing rituals, thinking that this was the sum total of its obligation to Him.

In Chapter 7, Amos saw Yahweh with a plumb line in His hand. This is not necessarily an image of destruction. God was holding a measuring device against which Israel was being evaluated (7:8-9). A plumb line is a construction worker's tool consisting of a weight attached to a string. The weighted string provides a true standard by which doorposts can be built straight.

Judged against true vertical, Israel was tilted and misaligned. Consequently Amos warned the people that their worship centers would be destroyed, especially the "high places," which had Canaanite associations.

### Vertical relationship

Amos spelled out in detail the way false religion disrupts social relationships. Our vertical relationship with God inevitably impacts the way we treat other people. Amos was crystal-clear that the poor were being overlooked and oppressed in business and the law courts.

Merchants were using false weights to make money and defraud those who had little food to eat (8:4-6). Worst of all was the way justice within the legal system was being ignored.

Bribery and injustice were prevalent, and the disadvantaged had little recourse for compensation (5:12).

If we are ignorant of books such as Amos in our contemporary setting, then it is not surprising that issues of justice and concern for the poor are seen to be peripheral in modern-day Christianity.

Amos warned God's people that they would experience "exile" at the hand of a foreign nation.

On 13 occasions, the prophet spoke of exile in nine separate passages. This was the greatest punishment with which God threatened Israel when He made a covenant with it (Deut. 28:64-68). Amos made the threat of exile a prominent aspect of his message.

The books of Hosea and Amos are two striking examples of the way God's word, delivered many centuries ago, continues to speak to our personal and corporate lives, calling us to turn from sinful attitudes and actions and experience His grace that alone can change our lives.



Photo courtesy of FBC Winfield

**SHARING** — Members of FBC Winfield's student praise band prepare for Sunday morning services at Anchor's Aweigh R.V. Resort in Foley. The students ministered to residents lodging at the resort Jan. 13-16.

## Pancake, movie ministry

### FBC Winfield students minister in unique ways in Gulf Shores

By Darla Brantley  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**C**an God use pancakes, dogs and movies to draw people to Himself?

Ask the students of First Baptist Church, Winfield.

They employed all three to minister to snowbirds in the Gulf Shores area Jan. 13-16.

The 16 students — who were accompanied by five adults from the Marion Baptist Association church — worked with Nate Diehl, Baldwin Baptist Association's associate director of missions for resort and campus ministries who heads up Gulf Area Resort Ministries with wife Alicia.

Diehl organized several events at two locations for the missions team. Winter residents of Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores and Anchors Aweigh R.V. Resort in Foley were treated to pancake breakfasts, dog shows and viewings of the movie "Courageous."

The students also held worship services, which included a student-led praise band and dramatic skits.

"Honestly I believe that He uses those things just as much (as), if not more than, music, a service or an invitation," praise band member and Winfield City High School senior Eleshia Butler said of the pancakes, dogs and movie.

"I think that people are more likely to ask questions they have about Christ in a casual environment, with people who simply come to hang out with them, instead of in a sanctuary.

And the more likely they are to ask these questions, the more likely they are to accept Christ."

While their efforts were not met with immediate spiritual results, the students believe they saw the beginning of something life-changing.

"Several people in Gulf Shores asked me about our youth group," Butler said. "They seemed to be totally shocked by our ability to get along and work together so well. I believe that they truly saw the love of Christ through us, and although I did not see any solid results, I thoroughly believe that seeds were planted by our actions."

The church's high school and college students take a missions trip every few years, and if there's one thing participating in trips has taught Winfield City High senior Cole Richards, then it's patience.

"I have learned over the years of going on trips like these that God can work in any way that He chooses," Richards said. "Whether it is the next second or the next

year, God will provide. What we don't realize right away is that God's got this."

Jeff Brantley, minister of students and education at First, Winfield, hopes this trip gave the students a broader view of missions.

"I hope our students have learned that ministry and missions is to everybody: rich, poor, young, old and in between," he said, adding that missions involves just being with people and sharing common interests.

This was the first time the team members used interests like pets to reach out. Brantley said the dog shows were a great way to interact with people and tell them about the ongoing ministries at the parks.

Diehl appreciates the team's efforts and noted how helpful short-term missions teams are to ministry in the Gulf area.

"Having missions teams like [First, Winfield, allows] us a great opportunity to put many hands into service loving on people in the resort community and sharing Jesus with them in many different ways," he said.

*"Having missions teams like [First, Winfield, allows] us a great opportunity to put many hands into service."*

Nate Diehl  
Gulf Area Resort Ministries

### Next week's topic ...

A look at the Gospels



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Photo courtesy of Samford University

**LEGACY** — Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing students, faculty and staff members release balloons to recognize 'the graduates of yesteryear' and those of the future at its 90th anniversary Jan. 23.

## A vital part Samford's nursing school celebrates 90 years

Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing kicked off a year celebrating its 90th anniversary Jan. 23 with balloons, cake and a tribute to the legacy of the school and its namesake.

"The school of nursing is a living legacy of Ida V. Moffett and the standards she stood for," Dean Nena F. Sanders said, citing the late nurse educator's devotion to academic excellence, caring, compassion and service.

The nursing school had its beginning Jan. 22, 1922, after Birmingham Baptist Association purchased a hospital and nursing school from Birmingham surgeon William Christopher Gewin.

### Growing program

The program has grown from a small house on the west side of Birmingham to being a vital part of Samford's campus, Sanders said. The school joined Samford in 1973 following a merger agree-

ment with Birmingham Baptist Medical Centers.

The school, which now enrolls about 700 students, has developed from a baccalaureate program to one that offers nationally recognized master of science in nursing and doctor of nursing practice degrees. Its passing rate on the NCLEX nurse licensure exam is more than 90 percent, which is higher than the national average for nursing schools.

The kickoff celebration marked the beginning of a series of anniversary events in 2012. These include Moffett Nurse Network gatherings around the country and other events that will culminate with special programs during homecoming weekend Oct. 12-13. "Celebrating the Living Legacy: 90 Years of Caring" will be the theme throughout.

The students, faculty and staff members who gathered Jan. 23 on the plaza of Dwight and Lucille Beeson Center for the Healing Arts

released 90 red and silver balloons into a perfectly clear blue sky.

The balloons, Sanders said, recognize "the graduates of yesteryear" and those of the future.

### 'A great university'

Heather Richardson, a certified registered nurse anesthetist graduate student from Jackson, was among future alumni enjoying the occasion.

"It's great to be a part of Samford and to be a student during the nursing school's anniversary year. You can tell what a great university it is by the way everyone cares about each other," said Richardson, who said she is still learning about the legacy of Moffett. "I know that she cared about people. It is wonderful to be a part of her legacy and to care about people and take care of people like she did."

For more information, visit [www.samford.edu/nursing/90th-anniversary-overview.aspx](http://www.samford.edu/nursing/90th-anniversary-overview.aspx). (SU)

## Half of churchgoers say their lives not affected by church

Almost half of churchgoing Americans say their life has not changed a bit because of their time in the pews, a new survey shows.

Barna Group, an evangelical company based in California, found that 46 percent reported no change. About a quarter of Americans said their life was greatly affected by church attendance and another quarter said it was somewhat influential.

Two-thirds of respondents said they had felt "a real and personal

connection" with God while attending church.

Among weekly church attenders, 44 percent said they felt God's presence every week and 18 percent said they had that experience once a month. In a finding sure to disappoint pastors, three out of five church attenders said they could not recall an important new religious insight from their last church visit. Of those who attended in the previous week, 50 percent could not recall walking away with a significant new understanding.

David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, said the research shows that many churchgoers see the benefits of connecting with God and others in congregations.

"Yet the research results are also a reminder that faith leaders cannot take these things for granted," he said. "Millions of active participants find their church experiences to be lacking."

The survey results are based on a random sample of 1,022 adults and have a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points. (RNS)

## Alabama updates

### People, churches making news across the state

#### Hallmark retires after 50 years of 'dynamic' ministry

As a teenager, Gerald Hallmark knew God was calling him into the "gospel ministry." And after 50 years in ministry — 20 as senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Alexander City, in Tallapoosa Baptist Association — Hallmark knew it was "about time" to retire.

He earned his bachelor of arts from Samford University in Birmingham and later his master of theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and doctor of ministry from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Ga.

Hallmark served as pastor of several Alabama churches, including Eastmont Baptist Church, Birmingham; Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, Cropwell; and Mount Hebron Baptist Church, Elmore, as well as one church each in Tennessee and Mississippi.

Beyond leading churches from the pulpit, Hallmark was active on the associational level, serving as a moderator six times and chairman of six committees. He also served on the state level as vice moderator of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and on the boards of Judson College in Marion, the University of Mobile and Samford. He was nominated for Alabama Baptist State Convention president in 2002. He currently serves as a Samford trustee.

Barry Cosper, director of missions for Tallapoosa Association, had nothing but positive remarks to share about Hallmark. "I would describe him as a positive and dynamic leader that has made an impact as a pastor, in the association and in the state convention," Cosper said.

When Hallmark wasn't busy serving in Alabama, he was going on missions trips. "I've been able to travel the world and work with missionaries ... and it makes [missions] more alive to me," Hallmark said.

He and his wife of 47 years, Jerri Ann, plan to spend plenty of time with their six grandchildren after he retires April 30.

"I don't have any great profound statements to share," Hallmark said of his life in ministry. "I've just been serving the Lord for these years, and now I think it's time to pass the [job] over to the next man (the Lord has prepared)."

#### 'Courageous' film challenges Gardendale-area men

As 551 steaks were grilled Jan. 19, there was much more than dinner being prepared for the men attending the event at Gardendale First Baptist Church.

The message of "Courageous" was what Allen Oakley, minister of adult education and discipleship, wanted men to walk away with after their steak and movie night.

After the movie, Pastor Kevin Hamm gave a brief message and invitation. He asked for any man who had just accepted Christ to be "courageous" and stand up, drawing from a similar scene in the film that challenges men to draw closer to God.

Five men stood up.

But the challenge didn't stop when they left the building. Many men chose to participate in a four-week "Courageous" curriculum small group.

"I think it will make better men, better homes, better husbands," Oakley said.

## Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

### Baptist journalist, minister Jim Newton dies at 75

CLINTON, Miss. — Longtime Baptist journalist Jim Newton died Jan. 16 in Clinton, Miss., after a battle with leukemia.

Newton, 75, was born in Kingsville, Texas, into the third generation of a family of weekly newspaper editors. After graduating from Baylor University in 1958, he worked as associate editor of *The Bishop News* until he became press representative of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1959.

He was assistant director of Baptist Press in Nashville from 1965 to 1973. After that he worked eight years as editor of *World Mission Journal*, published by the SBC Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn. In 1980 he joined the staff of the Home Mission Board in Atlanta, retiring in 1992 as public relations director to accept a communications position with the U.S.-based office of World Vision International in California.

Newton was an ordained minister and deacon serving in various capacities in the local churches where he lived.

# One year later

## Christians in Egypt remain uncertain about future following revolution

By Ava Thomas  
International Mission Board

Lucy Hamilton said she can't really explain it — even on a normal day, the air just feels strange in Tahrir Square.

People bustle about the giant traffic circle in downtown Cairo, going to the Egyptian Museum, to McDonald's, to kebab shops. Most days, Tahrir doesn't look anything like the place the world saw on the news a year ago — a square filled with thousands of angry protesters, government soldiers and tanks.

"But there's always a feeling when I go through there that something's about to happen," said Hamilton, a Christian worker who has spent some time in Egypt.

The eerie feeling isn't eased by the fact that the burned-out government building of ousted President Hosni Mubarak sits on the circle or that the walls of the large mosque nearby are covered with graffiti about the revolution.

"It just feels volatile even when nothing is really going on," Hamilton said.

That sentiment sums up most of Northern Africa and the Middle East ever since the Arab Spring began in Tunisia in December 2010, found its momentum in Egypt in January 2011 and spread across the region, experts say.

"In Egypt at least, there's a revolution attitude of 'I can do what I want' because people are disillusioned, desperate and the police force is unable to keep up with petty crime problems," Hamilton said.

Protests and violence still break out from time to time, with little if any warning. And international news sources report one after the other that the Egyptian people don't feel as if they have gotten the jobs, economic improvement, new opportunities or respect for which they passionately protested.

"Last year's revolution was not the revolution that activists ... had been dreaming of," reported the BBC's Robin Lustig in Egypt. "The winners, at least for now, were not the socialist and communist activists of Egypt's labor movement but ... the Muslim Brotherhood and the ultra-conservative Salafi al-Nour party, who espouse



BP photo

**IN NEED OF CHRIST** — A year after Egyptians flooded Cairo's Tahrir Square, the change they demanded is still in limbo. The post-Mubarak parliament has met, but some people fear their new leadership.

an even stricter form of Islam."

The new Egyptian parliament met Jan. 23 for the first time since Mubarak was pushed out and arrested, with Islamic political parties holding 73 percent of the parliament's seats, according to the BBC.

### 'What have we done?'

"Many people are still optimistic but by far not all. One man I talked with said Egypt isn't ready for a democracy," said Beth Judson, a Christian worker who visits Egypt from time to time. "[A] woman I spoke with is terrified of the new government. She became visibly upset talking about it and thinks things will be much worse. When we talked about how the people voted, she said, 'What have we done?'"

The changes in Egypt haven't been as deep as many expected,

but they have still made a region-wide impact, said Nik Ripken, who has served 25 years with the International Mission Board and is an expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts.

"I believe that the Arab Spring and what has happened in Egypt has begun to redefine the Arab, if not the entire Muslim world," Ripken said. "What has happened to Mubarak has so terrified the leaders of countries like Yemen and Syria — and, of course, we saw what played out in Libya — that no dictator or leader is now willing to participate in a peaceful transition to a more democratic or less corrupt form of government."

It seems to those leaders that the only option is to die or go to jail, he said.

The people seem to want something as different as possible from the leadership they had — and that may mean a more Islamic form of government, Ripken said.

Citizens of these revolutionary countries may have viewed their leaders as "something less than true, practicing Muslims" because of their dictatorlike rule and ties with the West, Ripken said. "So what I would expect of these countries, if they do actually experience something nearing an Arab Spring, is that the population in general will turn to Islam more now than before."

But with this, much like Tahrir

Square on its peaceful days, things may not be exactly as they appear, he said.

"This is not necessarily a bad thing from a believer's point of view, because having conversations concerning faith and religion are more important for us than conversations about government and corruption," Ripken said. "Often it is in the most conservative of Muslim hearts that we are finding God appearing to them in dreams and visions and sending them on a spiritual pilgrimage that can last for years, where they secretly read the Bible many times and have quiet discussions with followers of Jesus Christ."

### 'Revolutionizing hearts'

Hamilton said a sense of hopelessness in the government can bring them to Christ, too.

"We hear that many are turning to the One whose Kingdom is just and merciful and has no end," she said. "The church in Egypt also seems to be waking up as never before. It is great to watch Him use His church in the work of revolutionizing hearts."

In light of this, prayers for the Arab world could look different from what believers in the West might normally pray, Ripken said. "If you were talking to many Western Christians and we asked ourselves how to pray for places like Egypt, we might pray for stable

government, government that is not corrupted, for government that is representative. But those are often very Western prayers," he said.

"We want to pray that we will take every opportunity we can to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give that cold cup of water in Jesus' name. We must pray for the absence of fear for both (national) believers ... and those from the West who are seeking to meet the needs of both the body and soul inside these countries."

In many countries in revolution, the violence is so dramatic and unpredictable that access to the gospel is "almost impossible," Ripken said. A sound prayer, he said, would be to ask for people to have access to the gospel through any means possible.

Another, he said, would be that believers would begin to learn the languages and cultures of unstable areas now so that they would be ready at a moment's notice should doors open to take the gospel there.

"One mistake that believers in persecution have taught us that we often make is that we prepare for open doors once they are open," Ripken said. "Yet now we have time to prepare the next generation for going to people groups and countries that have experienced massive change."

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Names have been changed. (IMB)



**M**ay He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. May we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God.

Psalm 20:4-5

# 'Message of hope'

## Churches can minister to returning veterans, families as they readjust to everyday life

Sitting around the kitchen table, the Rivers family are a picture of the quintessential American family. Over a freshly prepared meal, they share stories of the day's events. The room is filled with the warmth of smiles, laughter and genuine compassion for each other.

But it wasn't that long ago one significant piece of this portrait — the family's patriarch, Ray Rivers — was absent, as he served tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq as a Baptist-endorsed chaplain. His deployment in 2008 and 2009 forced the family to adjust.

When he returned from duty, the Rivers family needed to adjust again. A father was back. A husband had returned. Deployment was stressful but reconfiguring roles within the family after Rivers returned also proved to be a trying time.

"It's stressful when they get home," his wife, Paula, said. "He came home and said to me, 'What happened to my wife?' Because I changed. I had to. I was forced to change. I was forced to become more self-confident, more bold, more militant, more whatever just to make things work."

The Rivers family faced and overcame challenges typical of a military family looking at, dealing with or readjusting in the wake of a deployment, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey that marked the 10th anniversary of the war in Afghanistan. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq make up the longest period of sustained military engagement in U.S. history, and the nation has carried out these campaigns with a voluntary force, leaving 0.5 percent of the nation's population to shoulder the brunt of the effort.

The theater of war is only the beginning of where post-Sept. 11 veterans sense issues, according to the report. More than four in 10 said adjustment to civilian life has been difficult, up from the 25 percent of pre-Sept. 11 veterans.

Thirty-seven percent of post-Sept. 11 veterans reported suffering post-traumatic stress. That number escalates to 49 percent when dealing with veterans who served in a combat zone.

Nearly half of married post-Sept. 11 veterans reported their deploy-

ments had a negative impact on their relationship with their spouse. Thirty-four percent of pre-Sept. 11 veterans said the same thing.

Brad Riza, associate director of chaplaincy relations for the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) and a Vietnam veteran who has dealt with his own post-traumatic stress issues for about 40 years, said improvements in medicine have helped soldiers on the battlefield but left more veterans to work through the scars of war. Modern medicine saves the lives of people who would have died in combat during previous wars. However, with more wounded soldiers living, there are more people trying to make sense of what they experienced.

"Because the care is better, they get treated better and survive," Riza said. "Because of that, we're dealing with more emotional scars."

Military personnel often are haunted by the images they saw and a sense of leaving friends and fellow soldiers behind as well as wondering why their lives were spared, Riza said. Military personnel are taught never to leave a fellow soldier behind. Yet some of them struggle with the reality that they did.

The military offers a variety of options to help active personnel deal with their wartime experiences, Riza said. But beyond the official channels, military personnel have a "band of brothers" around them who have gone through similar experiences in the form of their unit.

"You have a platform of support," Riza said. "The military does a good job with that."

### Combination of factors

After military personnel have finished their service, they can go to a Veterans Affairs hospital for help, but there may not be one close to where the veteran lives. While the hospitals' reputations are improving, some veterans choose not to go there, believing their doctors and local hospitals provide better care, Riza said.

The combination of these factors leaves some veterans without a viable avenue through which they can find help for their post-traumatic stress issues, including flashbacks, flashes of anger, feelings of regret and lack of closure, Riza noted.

Emotional and psychological issues are compounded when com-



ABP photo

**CHALLENGES** — Chaplain Ray Rivers (right) leads a Bible study for Marines at Camp Lejeune, N.C. When Rivers returned from tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq, he and his family had to adjust.

bined with the current economy, said BGCT-endorsed Chaplain Mike Mackrell, who serves in the U.S. National Guard in Austin, Texas. Many service people are struggling to find work after serving their nation. "The transition of going from one, two, three deployments and coming back to have your employer keep your job or find another job is tough," Mackrell said.

This gap in places where soldiers and veterans can find solace would seem like a natural place where churches could minister, Riza noted. But doing so is difficult. Many veterans struggle to find a path through which they can express what they're going through and often can't find that avenue in churches.

Where are veterans supposed to turn when they are reliving experiences of significant injuries or watching close friends die? Where can they discuss performing duties such as picking up and identifying body parts after an improvised explosive device is detonated? Civilians don't understand those experiences and lack the necessary counseling skills to have those conversations, Riza said.

"They can't talk about that with their pastor," Riza said. "They can't talk about that with their Sunday School class."

Churches realize the need for ministering to military personnel and their families and have tried different approaches to serving. Many congregations recognize veterans during services near July Fourth, Memorial Day and Veterans Day. A significant number post pictures of church members and relatives of church members who are serving in combat. Churches thank veterans for their service and pray during worship for those who are deployed.

Other churches are less formal about the way they seek to minister to military families. They rely on the church body to reach out to military members and their families as they would any other person in the community. Sunday School classes, Woman's Missionary Union groups and others within the congregation

routinely pray for specific needs.

To make a more direct impact, churches can contact their local bases, armories or chaplains, Mackrell said. The military holds Christmas celebrations and donation drives to gather personal items for specific soldiers. Chaplains often can provide specific points of need churches can fill. Recently Mackrell connected a church with a soldier who returned from deployment only to see his home had burned. The church provided supplies for the soldier and his wife.

### Reaching out

First Baptist Church, San Antonio, provides meals periodically for military personnel and their families through the Fisher Houses, located at military medical centers to provide a free place for military families to stay while their loved ones receive care, and the Warrior and Family Support Center at San Antonio Military Medical Center.

The meals are a way for First, San Antonio, to show servicemen and women that the congregation cares about them, said Charlotte Anderson, who coordinates the effort and volunteers to help the chaplain at Brooke Army Medical Center. People are in the houses for short periods of time at crucial moments, and the meals give families one less task they have to worry about.

Church members prepare and serve the meals. They often have an opportunity to visit with some of the people who come to eat as well.

In serving military members and their families, as well as working with the chaplain, Anderson seeks to help however she can. When First, San Antonio, members discover ways they can help military personnel, they are eager to get in-

involved. One ministry opportunity often leads to another.

"We just kind of keep our eyes and ears open and try to meet needs," Anderson said.

Otis Corbitt, an associate in the office of associational missions and church planting at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and a National Guard chaplain, believes the best way for the church to help returning veterans is simply to be the church to them. A veteran's reintegration into civilian life can take a year or more, he said, and "the number of challenges [to reintegration] is as big as the aspects of people's everyday lives."

Because there is no way to know if or how a soldier will struggle to reintegrate, "the best thing for the churches to do is simply to love the families ... and to be patient with them," Corbitt said. If an issue arises, then church members can go to that person as a friend and gently ask him or her about it, he said.

Corbitt also warned that people who have not seen a combat zone do not necessarily know how to sympathize with those who have. Any Christian ministering to a veteran should keep that in mind, he said, and resist saying things like "I know how you feel."

No matter how congregations approach ministry to veterans, Riza believes it's vital. People such as veterans who have seen some of the darker aspects of life need to hear a word of encouragement and have the opportunity to ground their lives in the love of Christ, he said. Without Christ, their postwar struggles are much more difficult to survive.

"Church can give a message of hope," Riza said. "That's the one piece of advice I would give."

(ABP, TAB)



ABP photo

**MINISTRY** — A wounded veteran arrives for a meal at FBC San Antonio.

*"[T]he best thing for the churches to do is simply to love the families."*

Otis Corbitt  
National Guard chaplain and  
associate with Alabama Baptist  
State Board of Missions

# Southern Baptists help bring hope to disabled Nepali

Uraj experiments awkwardly with the hand-propelled tricycle.

"His grip is good. He'll be sore tomorrow but he'll get the hang of this," said Bruce Burk, a Christian worker in Nepal who designed the trike after seeing how difficult it was for Uraj and other physically disabled individuals to travel in their villages.

Uraj survived polio but was left with withered legs and a limited future. Though the tricycle will take some getting used to, it will offer him an independence he's never known. Instead of crawling along the ground or moving awkwardly with the aid of others, he'll ride comfortably upright along the rough roads of his village.

Burk and his wife, Sherri, want to help the disabled find dignity and independence. With a grant from Baptist Global Response, the Burks ran a welding shop called Hope Haven in Dharan, Nepal. Hope Haven built tricycles especially designed for those who do not have use of their legs.

Even those who are not disabled find it difficult to travel rural Nepali roads while dodging water buffalo. Navigating the congested city streets, where buses, trucks, motorcycles and rickshaws compete for progress, can be nearly impossible for the more than 300,000 physically disabled in Nepal.

The tricycles are sturdy enough to withstand the rough roads, plus big enough to protect their rider and carry packages. Burk's design makes it possible for people to get to school, work, church and the



IMB photo

**READY TO ROLL** — Hope Haven in Dharan, Nepal, builds hand-powered tricycles suitable for rough roads. Those who receive the tricycles often experience a new life of mobility and independence.

market on their own — opening new roads of hope and opportunity. The trikes are lighter than similar models and blend in with the rickshaws that crowd the roads.

Each tricycle cost around 15,000 Nepali rupees (around \$200) to build, but Hope Haven sold them for only 1,500 (about \$20). Burk explained that he charged people and their families because he wanted them to feel ownership.

"If they pay for it, they respect

it. But 1,500 rupees will take them four to six weeks of begging among their families to even come up with that much. To come up with 15,000 would take years, if they ever could."

## Changing lives

Southern Baptists made it possible for Hope Haven to build and distribute the trikes, even though Hope Haven lost money on every sale. The changed lives and

resultant hope were worth it.

Gangaram is a skilled worker with small electronics, but he had to wait for customers to bring him an item to repair. His lack of mobility made it difficult for him to make enough money to support himself and his family. When he received his tricycle, he said, "Now I can go where the work is on my own. Everyone in my family will be helped."

A father told how his tricycle is allowing him to take his children to school. Now his children have the opportunity for an education, and

he has the joy of being a part of their lives.

A young boy was getting too big for his mother to carry. She was afraid he would become confined to his home like many other disabled. With his tricycle, he has the freedom to move around outside, leaving behind a life trapped within the walls of his house.

A young man called the Burks to say, "I just took my school tests and passed! I never could have done this without the tricycle."

Tricycle recipients weren't the only ones to benefit from Hope Haven. Burk hired only people who are disabled or are advocates for the disabled. "It's not about me training up workers for my production; it's about building up people," Burk said.

"We have had three deaf workers, two polio survivors and two who were advocates for disabled ministries. None of them had any fabrication or welding skills when they started. The confidence gained from the training has allowed some to choose other types of work," he said. One deaf worker saved his money and opened his own shop after Burk taught him to weld.

Another worker, Dundaa, "quickly learned the fabrication and welding skills. Yet he watched as I would custom fit the units to the individual," Burk said.

"One day, he asked if he could do the custom fit. He did an excellent job of evaluating the individual and then made the correct adjustments. Because of his ability, I was able to turn the entire production over to the workers."

In Nepal, hope comes to some on three wheels, and Southern Baptists have helped bring it. (BGR)

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# Bower Memorial launches hospice ministry

By Brian Blackwell  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Jim Griffin knows firsthand the important role Christian compassion can play in the lives of families whose loved ones are placed on hospice.

Griffin witnessed the concern that hospice staff showed for his mother when she was placed on hospice a few years ago before passing away a few days after entering the program. So when he learned of a hospice ministry in the state, he thought the time had come to implement a similar ministry at Bower Memorial Baptist Church, Evergreen.

"During the brief time my mom was on hospice, the staff were such a big help to my family, who really needed assistance to help us get through this tough ordeal," said Griffin, pastor of the Conecuh Baptist Association church for the past three years. "While our men's ministry was already meeting together each month, I felt like we could become even more involved in local missions. With our emotional con-

nections with hospice, this seemed like a natural fit."

"This" is Hearts In Hands, a Shelby County-based ministry started by Frank Burder in 2008 to provide assistance to hospice patients and their families through yard work, home repair and other ministry efforts. In 2011, Burder, a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, and others from Hearts In Hands traveled to the church to share more details about the ministry.

Once the presentation concluded, Griffin and other church leaders were convinced they needed to pursue this ministry opportunity further.

Their efforts soon led to the construction of a movable wheelchair ramp for a woman in the area on hospice. Church member Rodger Carroll helped design the ramp, which can now be reassembled for another hospice patient in the area.

Carroll, whose stepdaughter was on hospice at one time, said helping to design the ramp was his way of giving back to those who showed

love at a time when his family needed it. "I see this as another way to reach out to people outside the walls of the church," he said. "This new ministry is a way for people to know we are here to serve them in the love of Christ."

## Training sessions

He and Griffin were among eight men who, in the fall of 2011, participated in several training sessions required to minister alongside hospice patients. The sessions included an overview of hospice, CPR training and how to relate to hospice

patients and their families. Another session is planned for sometime later this year.

Of course, this ministry is just one of many Bower Memorial Baptist missions efforts.

"Our mandate is to go and make disciples," Griffin said. "Missions can be going off to a foreign country, but it's also spreading the gospel right here. That's what we're trying to do with Hearts In Hands, and we hope that it will continue to grow so we can continue helping those hospice patients in need both physically and spiritually."



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### CHURCH POSITIONS

**PASTOR:** Central Heights Baptist Church in Florence, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumes to: Central Heights Baptist Church, c/o Pastor Search Committee, 10090 Co. Rd. 15, Florence, AL 35633.

**BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Evergreen Baptist Church, Vance, Ala., is seeking a bivocational minister of music to lead worship during all services and oversee all aspects of the music ministry. Evergreen averages 300+ during morning worship services with a contemporary blend of worship. Please email resumes to: [saltshaker02@aol.com](mailto:saltshaker02@aol.com).

**BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER:** Grace Baptist Church in Montevallo is seeking a bivocational music minister to lead our congregation and choir in worship. Please contact Justin at 205-602-3847 or email us at [gracebaptistmontevallo@gmail.com](mailto:gracebaptistmontevallo@gmail.com).

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

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

**MINISTER OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & COLLEGE/CAREER:** Malvern Baptist

Church is seeking a full-time minister of children, youth and college/career. Send resumes to: Malvern Baptist Search Committee, P.O. Box 97, Malvern, AL 36349.

**BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER:** Old Town Creek Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational youth minister to work with grades 7-college. Send resume to: Old Town Creek Baptist Church, 5808 Co. Rd. 460, Moulton, AL 35650, email: [barry.cater@gmail.com](mailto:barry.cater@gmail.com).

**PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER:** Northridge Baptist Church in Northport is currently accepting resumes for a part-time children's minister. Mail resume and letter of interest to: Northridge Baptist Church, Children's Minister Search Committee, 4115 Watermelon Road, Northport, AL 35473.

### BUSINESS

**USED PEWS:** We buy and sell. Cathedral Interiors, 1-800-868-9511, Atlanta, Ga. Since 1988.

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### ART

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY MURALS:** Call toll free 1-800-925-3084 and learn how to receive 50 percent discount on a mural. Offer AB-1. [www.biblestorymurals.com](http://www.biblestorymurals.com).

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### TRAVEL/VACATION

**PIGEON FORGE CABIN:** A mountain paradise is awaiting you. Check out our photos, rates and availability at [www.vrbo.com/232252](http://www.vrbo.com/232252). 2 BRs, 2 BAs, pool table, hot tub, jacuzzi, sleeps 6.

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31 days, Aug. 13-Sept. 12. 15 years of experience. Great references. 36 already signed up. Only 8 spaces left. For information: [www.GeriGadderTours.com](http://www.GeriGadderTours.com) or call 1-800-982-2478.

**2-BR GULF-FRONT CONDO ON OKALOOSA ISLAND:** For rent gulf-front condominium near Destin, Fla. Affordable rates by owner. Beautiful two bedroom. Lots of amenities with gated security. Call Lucy, 770-831-3651, e-mail: [Lucyclark9@aol.com](mailto:Lucyclark9@aol.com).

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### FOR SALE

**PEWS:** Fultondale First Baptist has for sale nine 18-foot long padded pews and two 9-foot long pews that are not padded. Please make offer. John McGuirk, 205-563-4685.

### MISCELLANEOUS

**HANDBELLS WANTED:** Wanted to buy 3 octave set of handbells with everything. Call Anniston's FBC Monday through Friday 8-4 at 256-847-0230. Email Pastor Nelson at [bnelson@AnnistonFBC.com](mailto:bnelson@AnnistonFBC.com).

## 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 truthness 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.

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

## Oh, no, here she comes ... run

People, especially positive people, energize me. I love interacting with Alabama Baptists across the state, and making new friends makes me happy. And while I'm naturally drawn to positive people, I don't avoid negative people. In fact, I love to bring a smile or positive comment out of a negative person. That makes me happy, too.

But it's the harshly critical people who are never pleased, no matter what, who perplex me. I've yet to figure out how to have a real two-way conversation with this type of person, because he or she tends to always have an agenda or a soapbox issue at hand. The entire conversation is about the issue on his or her mind and it is always pushy.

There is one woman I run into from time to time who fits the mold. Even though I have had numerous conversations with her and am trying really hard to like her, I'm still waiting to have a conversation that is calm and demonstrates she is interested in me for me rather than looking for someone — anyone — who can advance her cause. I wonder if she is capable of truly communicating with another person and allowing both people's opinions and information to matter. My experience so far demonstrates she prefers dominating the conversation in order to push her agenda down the other person's throat.

Do you have or have you ever had one of these people in your life? One who makes you run the other way when you see him or her coming?

I admit I sometimes want to duck to avoid this person, but so far, I've chosen not to do that. I just



take a deep breath, remember to love her anyway and try to learn something from what she is saying. Many times, she really does have a valid point or helpful information, but her communication style keeps many people from hearing her.

When I realized this, I wondered how many times all of us have said things harshly or in a pushy manner that prevented others from hearing what we really meant.

How many times have I not been sensitive in my communication, delivering a pointed message when it was on my mind rather than assessing the situation, thinking through the delivery and waiting for the proper time? How many times have I discouraged rather than encouraged people? And how many times has that person been carrying a heavy burden that few, if any, others knew about at the time?

I know there have been times I've been exhausted, discouraged and/or dealing with a difficult pain and another person's communication with me would either lift my spirits or stomp me further down.

In a Bible study years ago, I sat by one woman writhing in emotional pain as another participant made attacking and judgmental statements about people in a certain situation not realizing this particular woman was currently in that situation.

James 1:26 and 3:3–12 talk about taming our tongue and how we use our tongue to praise God in one breath and beat down human beings in the next breath.

As James said in 3:10, "This should not be." Our words and tone are powerful resources.

I am an advocate of honest and open communication. One of my favorite sayings is "I can deal with anything as long as I know the whole truth."

I also believe honest and open communication can take place in a gracious and calm environment. It doesn't have to be mean-spirited, badgering or difficult. We can share when we are disappointed, when we differ and even when we are angry, but we should always share with the proper respect and at an appropriate time.

# Rashional EXTRAS ...

*What topics are on your mind?*

*Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org*

## Thoughts on mentoring ...

By Terry D. Newberry

Excerpt from his blog (terrydnewberry.com)

Mentoring is critical in the life of a leader. From King Arthur, whose mentor was Merlin the magician, to Timothy, who grew into a strong leader under the mentoring of the apostle Paul, history is filled with story after story of mentors and protégés.

In fact, there are two key elements in the life of most successful people. The first is that they have a mentor. A mentor is someone who helps sort options and identifies opportunities. A mentor gives advice and perhaps most importantly — perspective.

The second key is to be a mentor. Every one of us can mentor someone. It doesn't take a lot of money or even time. It basically means that you meet with them periodically and discuss what is going on in their business or family or life and offer expertise, perspective and advice if asked.

I have the good fortune of having several mentors. I have the great fortune of having several friends that I also mentor. And you want to know a secret? I learn as much from those I am mentoring as I learn from those who mentor me!

There are several mentoring

models. Find the one that works for you.

**Traditional:** In this model, there is a mentor and someone being mentored. Don't have a mentor? Ask. You may be surprised to find that the person you most admire would be honored to work with you.

**Peer-to-Peer:** In this model, each participant is a co-mentor. They work together, each bringing their particular skill set to the process. An example of this might be a sales expert in a peer-to-peer mentorship with an IT person. Each is in a position to help the other.

**Group:** In this model, several people meet. One of the popular versions of this is the group-of-ten in which 10 people meet regularly to discuss current projects and issues and provide insight and advice.

Pick a model or try all three. The important thing to remember is that none of us are as smart as all of us. Investing in others is a great way to not only influence others, but we ourselves grow as a result.

**EDITOR'S NOTE — Terry D. Newberry is a motivational speaker, business consultant and personal coach. He is a member of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville.**

## Health tips from "40 Days to Better Living — Optimal Health"

By Dr. Scott Morris  
Church Health Center of Memphis  
www.churchhealthcenter.org

► Before starting a new wellness plan, make a list of medical concerns such as high blood pressure.

► When was your last physical by a medical doctor? If it has been over a year, call and make an appointment to get a checkup.

► Determine how you would like to improve your medical health.

► If you do not know how to find your pulse, today is the day to learn. Use your index and middle fingers to feel your pulse at your wrist. Count the beats that you feel in 15 seconds and multiply the number by four. That is your standing heart rate.

More tips to come in future columns.

## Sleep tips

For a better night's sleep, avoid eating or drinking these foods before bedtime:

- coffee or tea with caffeine
- large meals, digestion will slow down when you lie down and may make you feel uncomfortable
- chocolate, contains caffeine and theobromine, a natural stimulant
- spicy and chili foods, may cause stomach aches and may stimulate metabolism
- too much water, will make you have frequent bathroom visits

## Creative Ways to Encourage Others on Valentine's Day

By Roxanne Packham

Inspired Design  
www.InspiredDesignPublications.blogspot.com

A handwritten note with quotes, Scriptures and words of encouragement is a wonderful thing to find in the mailbox.

Leave a sticky note on your child/husband's pillow or be bold and write your note on the bathroom mirror or car window in red lipstick saying "I love you."

Even an email just to say "thank you for your hard work, you bless me" can make a person's day. A cute poem, Scripture or old photograph will remind them they are remembered.

If someone has lost a loved one, kind words of some way that loved one inspired you to do something better will let them know that their loved one's legacy is living on.

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

# Across Alabama's Associations

## BALDWIN

► **Eastern Shore Church, Daphne**, will host the singing group Truth on its 40th anniversary tour Feb. 5, 6 p.m. For information call 251-626-5550 or visit [www.my-esbc.net](http://www.my-esbc.net). Stuart Davidson is pastor.

## CENTRAL

► **Sardis Church, Rockford**, will hold a Valentine fellowship Feb. 19, 5 p.m., with Christian humorist Brother Billy Bob Bohannon. Jeff Hardy is pastor.

## COFFEE

► **Nathan Sims** is the new pastor of **First Church, New Brockton**. He previously served as interim pastor of Southside Church, Ozark. He also has served several other churches in Alabama and one in Louisiana. Sims holds a bachelor's degree in theology from Florida Baptist Theological College (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville, master of divinity and a master's degree in biblical studies from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Catherine.

**SIMS**

Sims holds a bachelor's degree in theology from Florida Baptist Theological College (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville, master of divinity and a master's degree in biblical studies from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Catherine.

## GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will

hold a luncheon meeting Feb. 14, 11 a.m., with Ron Stone, pastor of Pinckard Church. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by Feb. 7. Mike Shirah is pastor.

## MARSHALL

► **Bethsaida Church, Boaz**, will host Bill King Feb. 11-12. He will appear as Brother Billy Bob Bohannon for a Valentine's banquet Saturday at 6:30 p.m. and will speak Sunday at 11 a.m. Mike Springfield is pastor.

## NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Gordon Eads** is the new student pastor for **Sharon Heights Church, Birmingham**. He has served Pine Lake Church, Vancleave, Miss., and Edgewater Church, Birmingham. A graduate of the University of Mobile, he is currently attending the New Orleans Seminary Birmingham extension. Jason Dunlap is pastor. ► **Keith Funderburg** is the new children's pastor for **Highpoint Community Church, Empire**. He has served Huffman Church and CrossPoint Church, Trussville. Joey Hill is pastor. ► **Drew Hunt** is the new youth pastor for **New Beginnings Community Church, Graysville**. He attended the University of Mobile. Steven Knox is pastor.

## RANDOLPH

► Members of **Herren's Grove Church, Woodland**, honored Pastor Stephen Deman with a new suit for pastor appreciation month last October.

## TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Tennessee River Association** will host an association-wide missions banquet Feb. 13, 6:30 p.m., at Center Point Church, Scottsboro. Todd Lafferty, affinity group strategy leader for South Asian peoples for the International Mission Board, will speak. Lafferty works with those called to reach 1.5 billion unreached people in the most concentrated heart of darkness in the world. For dinner reservations, call 256-259-6135 by Feb. 6. David Moorman is pastor of Center Point. Dwight Everett is director of missions for Tennessee River Association.

## WINSTON

► **First Church, Addison**, will hold a men's conference about what God expects of men Feb. 10-11. The event will be Friday at 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m.-noon. Benjamin Smothers, Shan Lewis, Glenn Bridgman and Mackie Watts will speak. Lee Taylor is pastor. ► **Lynn Church** will hold an area-wide men's conference Feb. 25, 3 p.m., with guest speaker William McClellan. There will be special music. A meal will be served. Dress is casual. For information call 205-893-5640. Tim Box is pastor.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

## Centreville's Schultz Creek pastor Ewell Paul Davis dies at 57

Ewell Paul Davis, pastor of Schultz Creek Baptist Church, Centreville, died Dec. 2. He was 57.

An Elba native, Davis received a bachelor's degree from Livingston University (now the University of West Alabama) in 1976, a master's degree in secondary education from the University of Montevallo in 1982 and a master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993.

In addition to serving Schultz Creek Baptist, he was employed as a bus driver at an elemen-

tary school. Davis previously served Eastern Valley Baptist Church, Bessemer; Alexandria Baptist Church; Calvary Baptist Church, Wedowee; and a church in Georgia as pastor and taught history and coached at Fort Payne High School, Jess Lanier High School (now Bessemer City High School) in Bessemer, Parrish High School and Oxford High School.

He is survived by his wife, Pamela Moorer Davis; two sons; one daughter; and two grandchildren. (TAB)



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## Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

A reverse mortgage is a loan sponsored by the U.S. Government that enables senior homeowners (62 and older) to convert part of the equity in their homes into tax-free money or pay off an existing mortgage.

Increasingly, older homeowners are using reverse mortgages to supplement their retirement incomes, pay for health care, make home improvements and create cash reserves for emergencies.

The reverse mortgage is an excellent planning tool that has been used by homeowners from all walks of life to enhance their retirement years. The growing popularity of the product is evidence of its benefit in an array of financial circumstances.

To be eligible for a reverse mortgage you must be 62 years old and be a homeowner with some equity in your home. You

may qualify even if there is an existing mortgage on your home.

How much you can get depends on a few factors, including your age, the value of your home, the amount of equity in it and interest rates.

There are several options available for how you receive the money from a reverse mortgage. You can receive the money in an up-front lump sum, a line of credit, fixed monthly amounts or a combination of options.

For a free brochure or more information, call Jimmy Dixon at 205-567-4800 or email [jdixon@mcgowinking.net](mailto:jdixon@mcgowinking.net).

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state, helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director for Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown, as well as an active deacon.



Jimmy Dixon



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# Family Matters

## Honored to serve

By Erin Tunnell  
ABCH Communications Manager

**R**od Marshall knew from his first interview that working for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) wasn't going to be a typical job.

But it wasn't because of the work he'd be doing, it was because of the people. "My initial job interview was four hours long," Marshall recalled. "I found in Louise Green (Vice President, Special Programs) a kindred spirit. She is somebody who loves people, and somebody who, even in that initial interview, seemed to care about me."

In the 17 years since his first day in 1995, Marshall has guided the ministry's counseling ministry, now known as Pathways Professional Counseling, through tremendous growth. It grew from Marshall working part-time in a shared office suite to 35 counseling sites statewide served by a staff of 14 counselors. The focus of Pathways has also expanded from counseling children in the foster and residential care programs of ABCH to also serving children, families and individuals in the community. In the process Marshall's title also expanded, first to Director of Pathways, and then Vice President of Counseling.

That experience helped prepare him for this next role as President/CEO of ABCH, effective Feb. 1. Marshall said, "This has given me the opportunity to balance program growth with good stewardship and to practice good administrative skills and to hone my leadership skills." He also feels blessed to have served alongside the gifted Pathways staff. "I have really enjoyed being able to be an equipper and an encourager for them."

Marshall holds several licensures, including: Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor, Registered Play Therapist, Registered Play Therapist Supervisor, and Board Certified Professional Christian Counselor.

He is also Currently pursuing his doctorate at Regent University and holds degrees from Samford University, University of Alabama at Birmingham and Mississippi State University.

And while Marshall did not seek out the office of President/CEO – he did not submit a resumé to the search committee until they asked him for one – he participated in the selection process as an act of obedient faith. "I needed to be willing to serve if that was what God was calling me to do," Marshall said. "And the (search committee) felt like God was calling them to call me to be ABCH's next leader."

The committee let Marshall know they were nominating him via email, Tuesday morning, Oct. 17, 2011, a full seven months after asking for his resumé. "The process was very thorough, and it took a long time," Marshall said. But throughout the process he kept reminding himself, "If I'm not who God has called for this job, then I do not want it." Marshall was unanimously approved as President/CEO by the ministry's board of trustees during its Nov. 11, 2011, meeting.

Marshall said he was honored and humbled the committee selected him to lead the Children's Homes through its next chapter. "I have never doubted that God has called me to be where I am, but I am only willing to be here if this is where God wants me to be," he said.

Marshall is also thrilled to carry on a family tradition of serving Baptists. His paternal grandfather of 16 generations ago, Rev. Daniel Marshall, was the first Baptist pastor in Georgia. And Marshall's great-great uncle Rev. Robert Duncan (R.D.) Hawkins served two terms as the superintendent of the Georgia Baptist Asylum for Orphaned Children from 1905-1908 and 1912-1914. Marshall received his bachelor of arts from Samford University, and he and his family attend Shades Crest Baptist Church, Birmingham.

"To have the opportunity to serve Alabama Baptists seems fitting," Marshall said. "There are so many good things Alabama Baptists are involved in, and so many God-honoring things. I am honored to have the opportunity to be involved in one of them and to be a servant."

He noted that it is an incredible privilege to be able to lead a ministry that is doing much that is innovative and relevant. However, he sees the potential to do more than just staying the course. "We have the opportunity to build upon our 120-year heritage to move into the next chapter with creativity and confidence," Marshall said. "I think tradition and heritage are very important, but we need to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit to try to do things we have never done before or to do things in new ways. Our history is great, but perhaps the best is yet to come."



## Give your relationship a gift



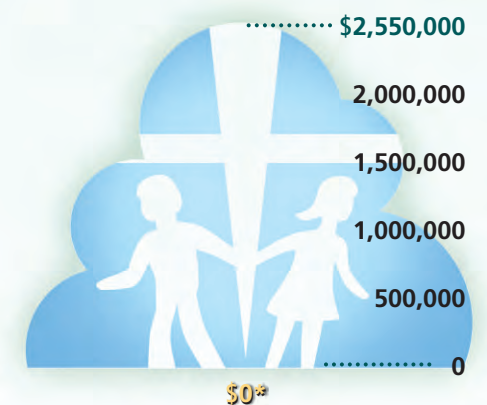
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## Special Note:

The Ann Street Baptist Church trust fund has been used to purchase food, clothes and school supplies for the Mobile campus.

## 2012 ANNUAL OFFERING



## Thank you!

Gifts from churches in 2011 exceeded our goal of \$2.55 million to protect, nurture and restore children and families. A total of \$2,651,315 million dollars was given to the Children's Homes by churches. Thank you for partnering with us to build hope and restore lives.

\* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Islamic law court threatens Christians in India

SRINAGAR, India — Christian workers are fleeing India's Kashmir Valley after a Shariah (Islamic law) court issued a "guilty" verdict against three Christian leaders, issued a fatwa against Christian schools and allegedly launched a door-to-door campaign to bring converts "back" to Islam.

The court, which has no legal authority, found Pastor Chander Mani Khanna of All Saints Church in Srinagar, Dutch Catholic missionary Jim Borst and Christian worker Gayoor Messah guilty of "luring the valley Muslims to Christianity," *The Times of India* reported Dec. 19. The three had already left the region apparently due to rising tensions. Headed by Kashmir Grand Mufti Bashir-ud-din Ahmad, the Shariah court also "directed" the state government to take over the management of all Christian schools in the region, the daily added.

"I fled with my wife and children, as I was not feeling safe in Srinagar," a Christian worker from Kashmir said on condition of anonymity. "A group of Muslims visited my house twice, threatening my parents with a social boycott if they failed to produce me."

Another source said some men had visited his family and those of his friends in Srinagar, warning that if they did not "reconvert" to Islam they would be ostracized.

The source added that those who have fled may not be able to return to their homes for at least a year. Besides the "guilty" verdict against Khanna, Borst and Messah, mufti deputy Nasir-ul-Islam reportedly said an investigation against Parvez Samuel Kaul, principal of a local Christian missionary school, was underway. The court also ordered all Christian schools to teach Islam and other faiths.

### Police beat, arrest church leader, evangelist in Sudan

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Police in January beat and arrested a church leader in Khartoum, sources said. Evangelist James Kat of the Evangelical Church of Sudan was arrested Jan. 17, with officers beating him as they took him to a North Division police station, the sources said.

He was released on bail the same day. Kat, who lives at the church site, was apparently arrested for using the place as his home. Another church leader was arrested Jan. 16 in a Sudanese Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) property dispute in which police and courts have been unjustly biased in favor of Muslims, Christian leaders said. Officers arrested SPEC worker Gabro Haile Selassie, as he lives on the church property that has been transferred to a Muslim businessman in a disputed agreement; he has refused to be evicted without police providing him an official document indicating the basis for the action.

Selassie, who was released on bail after a few hours, said he fears being arrested again; officers have already started demolishing the church compound fence, Selassie added. "They will definitely demolish my house," he said. Armed police were deployed Jan. 15 to the site to take the property by force, as authorities are supporting Muslim businessman Osman al Tayeb's efforts to take control of the plot as part of a planned confiscation of church property, church leaders said.

"The government is still trying to get involved in the affairs of the church by supporting people like Osman al Tayeb," said one church leader.

### Uzbek officer denies beating, threatening Christian

JARKURGAN, Uzbekistan — One of the police officers accused of beating local Protestant Shokir Rahmatullayev after a Jan. 3 raid on his home in Jarkurgan in Surkhandarya region has adamantly denied that any violence was used, but refused to discuss the case. Captain Ruzi Nazarov insisted that police did "not beat or threaten" Rahmatullayev.

Police Chief Bahrom Tursunov not only beat and threatened Rahmatullayev with a false murder charge, but threatened that his mother "could become Tursunov's concubine," sources said. Tursunov told Rahmatullayev that he, with his Christian activity, is "helping Russians to take over Uzbekistan." Another officer involved in the beatings told him, "I don't care about the law or your rights." Administrative charges have been lodged against Rahmatullayev and two other church members.

## CAMPUS News



### UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

#### ► Miss UM 2012 Pageant Set:

The University of Mobile will hold the Miss UM 2012 Pageant on Feb. 4 at 7 p.m. at Saraland High School's auditorium.

The theme for the pageant is "The Best in the World." Cierra Giles, Miss UM 2011, will crown her successor at the conclusion of the pageant.

Miss UM serves as an official ambassador for the university at a variety of events. Miss UM promotes a service platform of her choice in the community and competes for scholarships in June at the Miss Alabama Pageant, a preliminary to the Miss America Pageant.

The contestants of Miss UM will face five phases of competition: interview, swimsuit, talent, evening wear and an on-stage question.

The reigning Miss UM receives full tuition for one year; a wardrobe allowance of \$1,000; and prizes valued at more than \$2,500.

For ticket information, call 1-800-WIN-RAMS (946-7267).

#### ► Opera Theatre Presents 'Die Fledermaus' in English:

The University of Mobile (UMobile) Opera Theatre will present Johann Strauss' comic masterpiece "Die Fledermaus" (The Bat) on Feb. 16-17.

Set around a masked ball, "Die Fledermaus" is being transplanted from its origins in Vienna, Austria, to modern-day Mobile. Originally

written in German, this production will be performed in English featuring student singers and a mix of student and professional orchestra members led by Maestro Robert Seebacher, music director and conductor of the Johnson City Symphony Orchestra in Tennessee and the Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra. Stage direction is by Patrick Jacobs, associate professor of music in the UMobile Center for Performing Arts.

The operetta will be performed each night at 7:30 p.m. at the Chickasaw Civic Theatre in Chickasaw.

Tickets are available at the door, or call 251-442-2383 or 251-442-2554 for group rates and preferred seating.

### SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

#### ► Author Burpo Speaks:

Todd Burpo, author of "Heaven Is for Real," spoke at Samford University Legacy League's 2012 scholarship luncheon and an evening event on campus, both Jan. 26.

Both events benefited the Legacy League's scholarship fund for Samford students.

In "Heaven Is for Real," Burpo recounts the story of his son Colton's journey into heaven while undergoing surgery for a near-fatal illness in 2003. After he survived, the then 4-year-old astounded his parents with his description of heaven and details about deceased

family members he had not met.

Burpo is pastor of Crossroads Wesleyan Church in Imperial, Neb.

### JUDSON COLLEGE

#### ► Judson to Host IHSA Area Competition:

Judson College will host the 13th annual set of western Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) shows Feb. 18 at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. at the college's Equestrian Studies Center in Marion.

Riders will be judged by Caroline Smith, of Graceville, Fla., and Charles Crowe, of Jemison.

Judges will be looking for proper equitation skills, the rider's use of aids to showcase and communicate with the horse and riding technique as a whole.

For more information, contact Haley Striker at silverthornfarm@gmail.com.

#### ► Spring Preview, Scholarship Day to Be Held at Judson:

Judson College will host its spring Preview and Scholarship Day on Feb. 18.

High school students and transfer students are welcome to apply for academic scholarships or to try out for music and athletic scholarships.

Academic scholarships include one full-tuition scholarship; two \$10,000 scholarships; and three \$8,000 scholarships.

For more information, visit [www.judson.edu](http://www.judson.edu) or call the admissions office at 1-800-447-9472.

## Christian leaders: Obama trampling freedoms

Christian leaders are considering their legal options after the Obama administration announced that many religious-affiliated institutions will have to provide free birth control for employees.

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius offered a single concession, saying that nonprofit institutions like church-affiliated hospitals and colleges will have an additional year to comply with the requirement.

"I believe this proposal strikes the appropriate balance between respecting religious freedom and increasing access to important preventive services," Sebelius said in a statement.

Under the guideline, HHS said the controversial 2010 health-care reform law would require health plans and insurers to provide no-cost coverage of contraceptives, including those with abortion-inducing properties. Those FDA-endorsed contraceptives include ones that have the ability to cause abortions — emergency contraception,

such as Plan B; the intrauterine device (IUD), and "ella." Emergency contraception is also known as the "morning-after" pill.

The decision has infuriated some Christian leaders who called the decision an outright attack on religious liberty.

"Generally, Christian colleges and organizations find the ruling to be outrageous," said David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

#### 'A real question'

"It puts us in a position of having to support something that we fundamentally oppose," Dockery said.

He said Obama's decision poses "a real question about the administration's commitment to religious freedom."

Mark Foley, president of the University of Mobile, said he had "a great deal of concern about it."

"It's another illustration of the intent of this administration to ignore the rights of the citizens," Foley told Fox News & Commentary.

"It will mean that when our health care plan provider approaches us with the adjustments that are now mandated, the university will be forced to cover employees with provisions that are contrary to our purpose and our underlying philosophical and theological position."

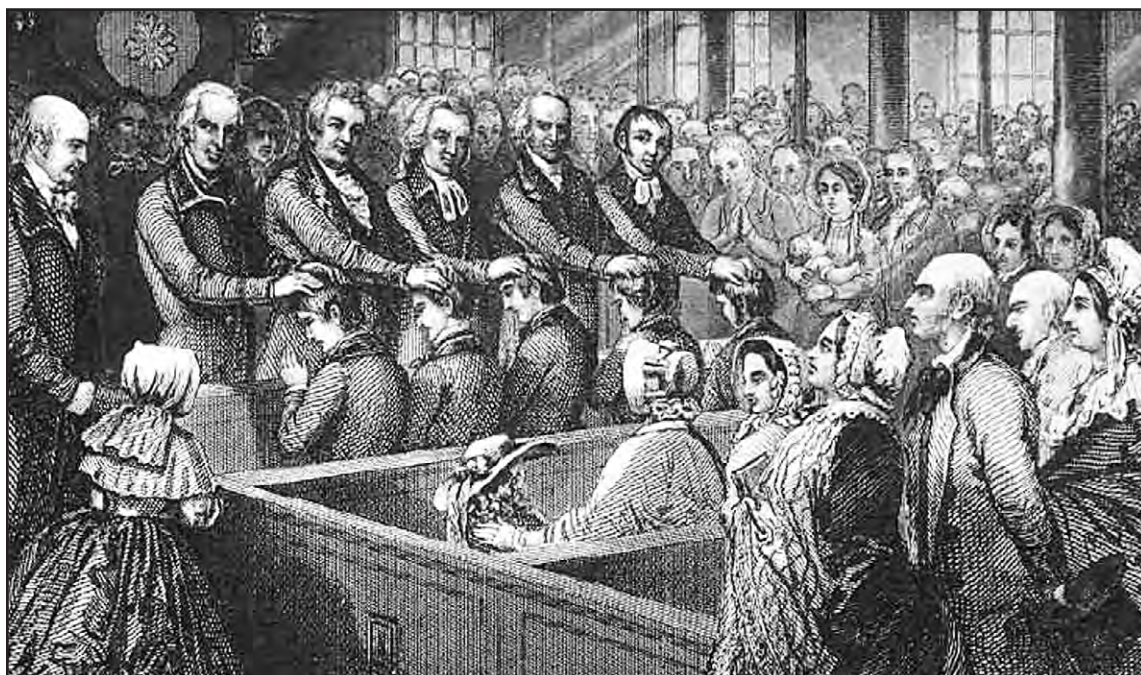
So what should Christians do?

"For now, the greatest opportunity is through the courts — to find remedy and to exercise my vote and to urge others to exercise their vote," Foley said. "Civil disobedience takes you to a plain of action for which I am not yet ready personally — but I wouldn't rule it out."

Dockery, too, said the ruling would give Christians cause for contemplation.

"I'm sure it would be a time for us to think very carefully — to realize that our Christian convictions have come in conflict with the ruling of the country — which would cause a huge issue for us and many others as well," Dockery said.

"It's overwhelming to think about this," he said. (BP)



RNS photo

**SPREADING THE FAITH** — Adoniram Judson and four others were commissioned as the first American missionaries at Tabernacle Congregational Church, Salem, Mass., in 1812.

# Judson 200

## First American missionaries remembered for impact on world

When America's first ordained missionaries sailed from here to India 200 years ago, they kicked off a movement to spread the faith and created America's most potent export: Christianity.

That's the message that will reverberate across nine Judson 200 commemorative events, running Feb. 5–20 in and around Salem. Speakers — evangelicals, mainline Protestants and scholars — will recall how the course of history changed with Adoniram Judson and four other missionaries.

Religious liberals and conservatives, who both lay claim to Judson's legacy, will hold separate events. One, on Feb. 6, will include the unveiling of a new name to reflect

the recent merger of two evangelical mission societies, CrossGlobal Link and The Mission Exchange, representing some 35,000 missionaries.

"The essential idea (in foreign missions) is that a person born in Pakistan is every bit as human and to be valued as much as a person born in North America or England," said Rodney Petersen, executive director of the Boston Theological Institute.

"That was the message carried around the world," Judson's 1812 departure with his wife, Ann Hasseltine, marked the start of a new era of American and Christian influence.

To support them, the first of many missionary-sending agencies was born: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).

Similar organizations soon took root, sending thousands of mission-

aries to all corners of the globe. By the mid-20th century, America was sending more missionaries than any other country.

America still sends the most: 127,000 of the 400,000 international missionaries sent in 2010 came from America, according to the Center for the Study of Global Christian at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, near Boston.

The Judsons left a giant mark. Denied admission to British India, they continued on to Burma, where they created a grammar system, translated the Bible into Burmese and won converts to the faith. Christian communities survive to this day in Myanmar; Judson Sunday is commemorated by Burmese churches every July.

Yet it was local Burmese, not missionaries, who most effectively spread Christianity among the villages, according to Todd Johnson, who directs the center at Gordon-Conwell. That history resonates today, he said, as mission agencies debate whether Western missionaries are still needed in developing nations.

### Supporting missionaries

"Some mission groups are saying there's no reason missionaries should ever go (abroad from America anymore)," Johnson said. "They say you can support hundreds of indigenous missionaries for the same price as a single Western missionary."

The Judsons started out as Congregationalists, but became Baptists en route to Asia. On Feb. 6, heads of the National Association of Evangelicals and the World Evangelical Alliance will be at Tabernacle.

American Baptists, including Burmese pastors, will also lead other services. Organizers plan to emphasize virtues associated with the early missionaries, such as courage and self-sacrifice for a higher purpose.

Attendees can expect to hear challenges to follow in the Judsons' footsteps, if not literally then at least spiritually.

Churches can begin by welcoming refugees and immigrant congregations, according to Maung Maung Htwe, pastor of Overseas Burmese Christian Fellowship, an American Baptist congregation in Allston, Mass.

"We're still reluctant to receive those people as our brothers and sisters," said Htwe, who will co-lead a worship service in Judson's hometown of Malden, Mass. "We're afraid our property will get damaged. (But) Judson gave us the example that without a sacrificial spirit, the gospel that we talk is nothing."

Scholars, meanwhile, are recalling missionaries' impact on American culture and foreign policy. Missionaries who went abroad to start schools and establish hospitals laid the groundwork for a modern America that sends billions abroad each year in U.S. foreign aid, Petersen said.

"It's part of the American character to go out and help people," said Clifford Putney, assistant professor of American religious history at Bentley University. "We go (out) saying we have all these great ideas and (people abroad) would be better off following them."

Judson 200 ends with a Feb. 20 re-enactment of the Judsons' launch from the port of Salem. Events marking the Judsons' 1813 arrival in Burma are scheduled for next year. (RNS)

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Conservative Presbyterians launch new denomination

ORLANDO, Fla. — Conservative Presbyterians launched a new denomination on Jan. 19, saying that the Presbyterian Church (USA) is too consumed by internal conflicts and bureaucracy to nurture healthy congregations.

"This 'new Reformed body' is intended to foster a new way of being the church, just as traditional, mainline denominations rose to serve in their day," wrote leaders of the new Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO) of Presbyterians.

More than 2,000 people attended the ECO's meeting in Orlando, Fla., but a straw poll indicated that most have not yet decided whether to leave the PC(USA), according to the *Presbyterian Outlook*, an independent magazine.

The creation of the ECO follows the PC(USA)'s churchwide vote last year to lift its longtime ban on gay clergy.

Though homosexuality is not mentioned in the ECO's founding documents, its stated commitment to conservative theology and the inerrancy of the Bible indicates that gay clergy will not be tolerated.

The ECO also hopes to distinguish itself by creating peer review systems for churches, promoting leadership training and instituting a less hierarchical form of government than the PC(USA), according to a statement.

Though still the largest Presbyterian denomination in the U.S., the PC(USA) lost more than 500,000 members between 1998 and 2009, according to church statistics, and now has about 2 million members.

### Poll: Americans know what John 3:16 references

NEW YORK — The popular Bible verse "John 3:16" is seen often at sporting events and throughout popular culture, but do Americans even know what it's referencing?

A new survey suggests they do.

The Barna Group poll conducted for the American Bible Society asked U.S. adults: "When you hear the phrase 'John three sixteen' in reference to the Bible, what does the 'three' mean?" All total, 68 percent of adults correctly said it was a chapter in John, with 6 percent saying it was a verse, 2 percent a book, and 17 percent saying they weren't sure.

Nationwide discussion of John 3:16 has skyrocketed in recent days after Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow — an outspoken Christian — passed for 316 yards in a first-round playoff victory. The day after the game, "John 3:16" was the No. 1 search topic on Google. A Wikipedia search for the verse saw a huge spike the two days after the game, with 183,000 people reading about it.

The next Saturday, an ad from Focus on the Family — showing young children citing the verse — ran during the Broncos' second-round game.

The Barna survey even found that 59 percent of people who are not Christians — including atheists and agnostics — understood what the "three" referenced.

The 2011 survey was based on phone interviews with 1,014 adults.

### Alaska Airlines suspends serving prayer cards

SEATTLE, Wash. — After causing a bit of turbulence with some passengers, Alaska Airlines will no longer serve prayer cards with in-flight meals, the company announced Jan. 25.

The cards, which take a line or two from the Book of Psalms, have been an Alaska Airlines trademark for 30 years, uplifting some flyers but annoying others.

"This difficult decision was not made lightly," wrote Alaska Air Group Chairman and CEO Bill Ayer and Alaska Airlines President Brad Tilden, in a letter to frequent flyers.

While some passengers appreciated the prayers, "we've heard from many of you who believe religion is inappropriate on an airplane, and some are offended when we hand out the cards."

"Religious beliefs are deeply personal and sharing them with others is an individual choice," the letter continued.

The prayers, printed over a dreamy depiction of a mountain range or sunset, were all taken from the Psalms, which is read by both Christians and Jews. One Alaska Airlines favorite came from Psalm 107:1: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever."

With the Alaska Airlines decision, no major U.S. carrier provides prayer cards.