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Darwin in trouble?

Proposed laws threaten teaching of evolution in public schools

On the eve of the 203rd anniversary of Charles Darwin's birthday, lawmakers in at least four states are taking steps to hinder the teaching of evolution in public schools, while other bills would do the same without naming evolution outright.

One of the bills, New Hampshire's House Bill 1148, not only singles out evolution, but would require teachers to discuss its proponents' "political and ideological viewpoints and their position on the concept of atheism." It is scheduled for a hearing in early February.

The author of the bill, Republican state Rep. Jerry Bergevin, has linked the teaching of evolution to the 1999 Columbine High School massacre and Hitler's atrocities and associates it with atheism.

"I want the full portrait of evolution and the people who came up with the ideas to be presented," Bergevin told the *Concord Monitor*. "It's a worldview and it's godless. Atheism has been tried in various societies, and they've been pretty criminal domestically and internationally. The Soviet Union, Cuba, the Nazis, China today: They don't respect human rights."

In many ways, the debate over evolution mirrors strategies adopted by opponents in the battle over abortion: If it can't be outlawed outright, critics will at least try to make it more difficult.

Several atheist organizations have called for the withdrawal of all the bills, but are keeping an especially close eye on Bergevin's. David Silverman, president of American Atheists, has called it "ignorant, infuriating bigotry."

Ahead of Darwin's birthday on Feb. 12, other current anti-evolution bills include:

► In the Indiana Senate, a bill would allow school districts to "require the teaching of various theories concerning the origin of life within the school corporation." That bill has already passed a statehouse committee and was scheduled for a vote on Jan. 31.



RNS photo

TELLING THE CREATION STORY — An animatronic sauropod stands in the main hall of the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky. The museum, part of Answers in Genesis, opened in 2007.

► The Missouri Standard Science Act would require the equal treatment of evolution and "intelligent design," an idea that the universe was created by an unnamed "designer." A second bill would require teachers to encourage students "to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about controversial issues, including biological and chemical evolution."

► A bill in the Oklahoma Senate

would require the state's board of education to help teachers promote "critical thinking, logical analysis, open and objective discussion of scientific theories including, but not limited to, evolution, the origin of life, global warming, and human cloning" if a local school district makes that request.

► A second bill in the New Hampshire House would require science teachers to instruct students that "proper scientific inquiry results from not committing to any one theory or hypothesis, no matter how

firmly it appears to be established."

► A bill in Virginia would make it illegal for state colleges to require a class that conflicts with a student's religious views. Critics say that would enable a student to receive a biology degree, for example, without studying evolution if he or she objected to it.

► A second bill in Indiana would require the state board of education to draft rules about the teaching of ideas in science class that cannot be proven by evidence — a clear door (See 'Bills,' page 5)

Alabama Baptists wrap large-scale DR effort

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers were once again among the top responders to help with cleanup following devastating tornadoes.

"We have had so many teams to respond that the damaged communities have given us numerous accolades for our ministry," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Hundreds of Alabama Baptists — both those trained in a specific disaster

relief skill and those ready to roll up their sleeves and help in whatever capacity needed — volunteered without hesitation to help following the Jan. 22–23 storms doing damage in eight counties.

Charles McGhee, disaster relief coordinator for District 4, oversaw feeding and chain saw operations the week of Jan. 29 in north and west Jefferson County. "Everyone has worked together well," he said.

Ty Corbin of Calhoun Baptist Association helped coordinate the work of 150 chain saw operators. "Our chain

saw crews have given 3,000 volunteer hours and made many ministry contacts," he said.

As of Feb. 1, 104 chain saw jobs had been completed and the remaining jobs were to be assigned to local Birmingham Baptist Association disaster relief teams.

John Hayes, disaster relief coordinator for District 11 (which includes the Birmingham area), explained that Center Point is an older community, thus trees in the area are huge. "We had a lot of wood to move," Hayes (See 'Churches,' page 16)

COMMENT

An Essential Part of the Church's Mission?

Is social justice an essential part of the mission of the church? That was the topic of a debate sponsored by Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., on Oct. 27, 2011. The two participants were billed as “evangelical heavyweights.” Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners, argued the affirmative position. Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., took the negative side.

In introducing the topic, Trinity officials observed that a renewed interest in social justice issues is “transforming the blueprint and vision of ecclesial ministry.” They also said the re-emergence of these issues is causing some evangelicals to conjure up “concerns about 20th century liberal Protestantism and a watering down of the gospel’s message of salvation” by grace.

The debate was another chapter in the conflict between two poles in evangelical life. One side, called indirect influence by one scholar, argues that the gospel only incidentally implies social justice concerns. This is the position espoused by Mohler. For him, the gospel is “an atonement only gospel.” Christians should act justly because it is part of the whole council of God, he declared, but social justice is an “implication” of the church’s mission, not an essential part.

Wallis represented what has been termed the direct influence understanding of the gospel. He argued that as a consequence of having a right relationship with God, individual Christians and the church as a whole are to bring other relationships and dimensions of life into alignment with God’s righteousness and care for humanity.

Both positions start with the confession that the gospel is designed to bring one by faith in Jesus Christ into a right relationship with God. Both Mohler and Wallis affirmed this in their statements.

A key moment in the debate was Mohler’s contention that the New Testament does not provide support for the church being programmatically involved in social justice issues. Because Baptists believe the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice, what it teaches about this question is the determining factor on how we approach social justice issues.

Of course, Baptists believe the whole Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. That is why it is important to consider a conclusion offered by the late Vernon C. Grounds in his essay *Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility*. Grounds wrote, “There we have the Old Testament stance from Genesis through Malachi. Religion di-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

vorced from social justice is a blasphemous mockery: true spirituality manifests itself in a concern for the needs and rights of people.”

He added, “Unquestionably, therefore, the Old Testament insists on social justice. Passionately it affirms that the evidence of a right relationship with God is a right relationship with one’s neighbor — and this implies a willingness to struggle for his (the neighbor’s) rights.”

Grounds, who served for more than 20 years as president of Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary and was a renowned writer and lecturer, observed that the New Testament does not negate the Old Testament demands for social justice. Rather it fulfills and intensifies the demands of the Hebrew revelation.

‘The Man-for-others’

This is seen most clearly in the nature of Jesus Christ, whom Grounds described as “God become Man, God who accordingly is for Man, the Man who accordingly is for God, the God-man who is entirely the Man-for-others.”

In Luke 4:18–19, Jesus described His ministry being “to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Of the good Samaritan story recorded in Luke 10, Grounds wrote, “The Man-for-others teaches that the next- and nearest-person-in-need whom a disciple meets is his neighbor and has a claim upon loving ministry, even if that ministry must overleap the barrier of racial prejudice and be carried on at the cost of danger and delay, to say nothing of money that will never be repaid.”

In Matthew 5:44–48, Jesus urged believers to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” Here, again, love for God results and is expressed in love for others.

In Matthew 22:37–39, Jesus tied Christian ethics to Christian belief when He said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

In Matthew 25:35–36, Jesus linked judgment to

ethics when He insisted that believers are to minister to the widow, the poor, the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned and the naked. This is putting love of God in action. When Christians care for “the least of these,” it is as if they are caring for Christ Himself.

The fullest expression of God’s love was the cross on which Jesus died. There God’s holy love satisfied His own demands with a self-giving that knew no limits. Romans 5:6 declares, “Christ died for the ungodly.” The apostle Paul then adds in verse 8, “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

From all of this and more, Grounds concluded, “In Jesus Christ, therefore, the New Testament discloses God’s character as well as man’s obligation and possibility. Hence the New Testament ethic is an imitation of Jesus Christ, an ethic of gratitude and faith and obedience, all grounded in love and issuing in love.” He added, “The imitation of Jesus Christ, Calvary-inspired and Spirit-enabled, means a life of service and sacrifice, a life of sensitive caring, a life of identification with the oppressed and disinherited and needy, a life of constructive” engagement against any political and religious forces that are frustrating to God’s will.

Grounds essay can be found in the book “Tough-Minded Christianity,” published by Broadman & Holman in 2008. There the author expands the New Testament case for direct involvement in issues commonly referred to as social justice far beyond what is reflected here.

Yet, from looking only at Jesus’ life, it seems to this writer that the New Testament does, in fact, continue and intensify the Old Testament teaching that genuine religion expresses itself in concern for social justice.

That alone should make it an essential part of the church’s mission.

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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).

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Someone You Should Know

By Julie Payne, Correspondent, TAB

Madie Keck

Orchard Baptist Church, Mobile
Mobile Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: 2 Chronicles 7:14

FAVORITE HYMN: "Beulah Land"

HOBBIES: Sewing, cooking, tending flowers and studying the Old Testament

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 51 years of marriage to Albert; two children, James and Becky; and three grandchildren



KECK

Madie Keck, 95, has taught Sunday School for more than 50 years. She also served as church secretary for seven years.

Q: When did you come to know the Lord?

A: I made my profession of faith at a revival when I was 17.

Q: How were you led to serve as a Sunday School teacher?

A: I attended the Mid-South Bible College in Memphis, Tenn., and worshiped at the Presbyterian church there. I moved to Mobile in 1960 and began attending Orchard Baptist Church, where I have been a member ever since. I was asked to teach the ladies Sunday School class and have taught for 51 years.

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

A: I was a homemaker most of my life — with the exception of serving as church secretary — taking care of children and grandchildren as well as my parents until their death. Christ has always been the source of my strength. ... I have always encouraged my friends and family to trust in Christ and put their faith in Him.

Q: How do family members support you in your ministry?

A: When my husband became ill in 1989, my son and daughter came every Sunday so I could continue teaching my class. And since I gave up driving last year, my son has driven me to church every Sunday.

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

'I will go'

South African couple minister in Connecticut

No one understands doing whatever it takes to reach people for Christ better than Shaun Pillay. Born and raised in South Africa, he and his wife, Deshni, arrived in the United States in 2007 as newlyweds. Having sold their possessions to finance their move, they brought only two pieces of luggage, a Bible, their wedding album and a resolve to follow God's call wherever it led them.

"It was a jump, a crazy leap," Pillay explained. "Everything was so different here but Jesus remained the same and He saw us through. Every morning when we woke up we knew that this is where God wanted us to be."

Shaun and Deshni Pillay are among five North American Mission Board missionaries featured as part of the annual Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 4-11 and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The offering helps fund Pillay and other missionaries like him who are serving for Southern Baptists in North America. With a goal of \$70 million, this year's AAEO theme is "Whatever It Takes."

Pillay was called to missions at a missions conference in Birmingham, England. "I remember one speaker saying, 'We need you to come to Europe and America. Our churches are dying,'" Pillay said. He was surprised when he heard of the need for missionaries in the United States. Even more surprising was the fact that he knew God was calling him to be one of them.

"We hear of all that God is doing in Africa and other places like that, but it's sad to see what's going on in places like Europe and America with regards to church. When I heard about the need, I just felt God telling me, 'Shaun, you go.' And I said, 'Yes, Lord, I will go wherever you send.'"

God sent Pillay and his wife to the small



NAMB photo

FOLLOWING GOD'S CALL — North American Mission Board church planter Shaun Pillay (left) talks with Derrick Shelby, a local barber Pillay led to Christ.

town of Norwich, Conn., a far cry from the home they'd known in South Africa. With a population of 40,000, the city is full of history and diversity. Once marked by money and influence, it is now equally marked by economic struggle, homelessness and drug use.

"We looked at the homeless population, the drug problems in Norwich and just knew there needed to be a light in the city," Pillay said. "We had compassion as Jesus did, looking on the multitudes and seeing them just waiting like sheep without a shepherd."

Since their arrival, this has been the goal of Shaun and Deshni: to lead and love the people of the community just as Christ does. They started Cornerstone International Church in an effort to give the "sheep" in the community of Norwich a place to gather and grow in Christ. And it has been from the moment they opened the doors.

David Holland arrived at Cornerstone International Church as a carpet cleaner, hired to help spruce up the building before the church's launch on Easter 2007. Notoriously

known as a drug dealer and in trouble with the law in Norwich, Holland was worn and searching when he arrived to work at Cornerstone that day. Never one to pass up an opportunity to build relationship, Shaun stayed with Holland as he worked and spent the afternoon talking and sharing with him, ultimately inviting him to Cornerstone's launch that Sunday.

"David was in the congregation that Easter Sunday when we launched our church," Pillay said. "As we were wrapping up, he came forward and accepted Jesus Christ. It was a huge moment in his life and the life of our church."

Just last year Holland became the first deacon at Cornerstone and is working alongside Pillay to reach the city of Norwich for the name of Christ.

'Proclamation points'

The Pillays have set up "proclamation points" around the city — locations where they can share the gospel and study the Bible with Norwich residents. Shaun's most recent Bible study meets in a local barbershop owned by a former drug dealer. One by one, Pillay is transforming the city of Norwich.

"Whatever it takes to reach these people, whether it's leaving our homeland or going to a place where we don't know anybody ... that is what we're here to do." (NAMB)

Week of Prayer for NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS March 4-11, 2012



National goal:
\$70,000,000
Alabama goal:
\$6,100,000

Bill Gilmore named new advertising director at state Baptist paper

William "Bill" Gilmore has been named director of advertising for *The Alabama Baptist*.

Gilmore comes to the staff with more than 10 years experience in newspaper advertising sales and sales management. He has worked for *The Montgomery Advertiser* and *The Times Daily* in Florence. His most recent newspaper position was with *The Meridian Star* in Mississippi.

"Bill is an experienced professional in the newspaper world," said Bob Terry, editor and president of *The Alabama Baptist*. "He has a vast amount of experience from which to draw as he leads the state Baptist paper to better serve readers with appropriate advertising for products and services that can be helpful to them."

"He is an active Alabama Baptist and knows many parts of the state from having

worked in newspapers that reached Alabama readers in various parts of the state," Terry noted. "The Lord has blessed us with great people in the advertising department but no one brought with them the experience and knowledge in newspaper advertising that Bill brings. We look forward to working with him."

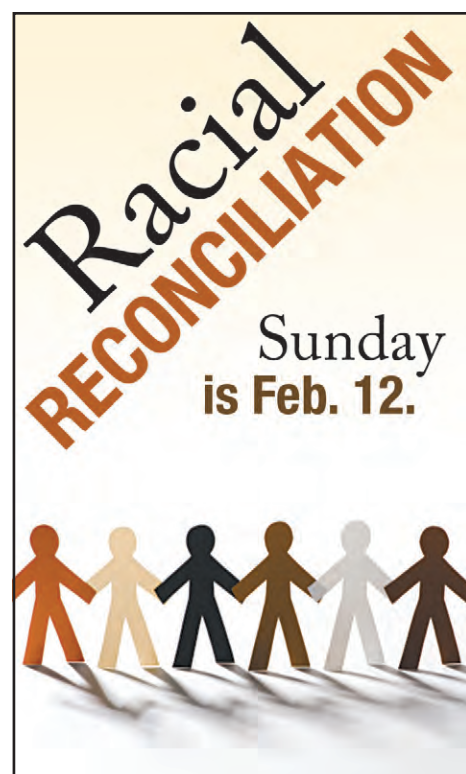
Gilmore, a member of Highland Baptist Church, Florence, said, "Joining *The Alabama Baptist* family is a tremendous blessing for me and my family."

"I'm looking forward to working with businesses located here in Alabama as well as outside the state to connect with our more than 200,000 weekly readers and help them grow their businesses."

Gilmore, who began his new position Feb. 1, fills the slot vacated by Brian Giles, who accepted a position in the office of student media at the University of Alabama. (TAB)



GILMORE



Bible Basics

series

PART 6 OF 8 ON SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY



A look at the Gospels bringing the good news

By Ken Roxburgh

Special to The Alabama Baptist

The New Testament begins with four accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, books that we call the "Gospels." Although they are printed at the beginning of our New Testament, they were all probably written after Paul's Epistles. They were never intended to be biographies of Jesus in the modern understanding of that word but four accounts that present a different, yet fairly comprehensive, understanding of His life and death.

Most scholars view the Gospels as written for particular Christian communities, rather than nonbelievers. However, it is also very possible that each author expected his work to circulate widely among the churches scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. Indeed it is very likely that when Matthew and Luke sat down to write their Gospels, they both possessed copies of Mark's Gospel, which they used as a common source for their books.

I think Mark was probably the first Gospel to be written. It likely was written to Christians in Rome between A.D. 65 and 73, around the time of the Jewish War with Rome, a period of difficulty, danger and persecution when the threat of literally "taking up your cross" and following Jesus was a very real possibility. Unlike Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, it omitted stories surrounding Jesus' birth, the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, the raising of Lazarus, the instruction to "love your enemies" and Jesus' resurrection appearance — at least in the most authentic and earliest manuscripts.

'Pastoral' purpose

Mark was a vivid storyteller, and his book might have been read or told in one sitting. He gave us a fairly tightly constructed plot in which characters interact with each other — a tale that, as one writer said, "is filled with mystery, conflict, irony and pathos." Ernest Best, late professor of divinity and biblical criticism at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, spoke of Mark's purpose as primarily "pastoral." He wrote this Gospel to build up his readers in faith and equip them to face persecution and resist the temptation of their culture to run away from faithfully following Jesus.

The Gospel begins in a dramatic way with the statement "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ," and the first section ends in verse 15 with the call of John the Baptist to "believe the good news." If the word "gospel" means "good news," then this book helps us to understand some of the basics about Christianity's message: It focuses on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Mark uses the term "gospel" to speak of Jesus and His message. The gospel brings salvation, the rule of God into the experience of this world, yet it is the news of the gruesome death of its

Ken Roxburgh

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



hero, who calls His followers to give up everything to follow Him. His coming brought restoration and forgiveness, yet His closest followers' response was failure to comprehend, running away, abandoning Him in His hour of deepest need.

Mark reminds us that the good news is not primarily about a set of beliefs and teachings but, first and foremost, a person. The Gospel that he wrote concerns "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Morna Hooker, professor emerita at the University of Cambridge in England, suggests that the "whole book is focused on the figure of Jesus." This is an important detail that we often overlook. It is why, within the Gospel, various titles are used for Jesus to describe not only who He is but also what He accomplished in living, dying and rising for us. He is the Son of God, Son of David, the Christ and, perhaps most important of all, the Son of Man. This latter "title" may be a reference to the fact that Jesus is genuinely human and His ministry was one of a servant, for He said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for all" (Mark 10:45). These titles are a sort of shorthand way of summarizing some important aspects of who He is.

One particular concern of Mark was to portray Jesus as a real human being. Indeed, when you compare Mark's account of Jesus with Matthew's, you discover that Matthew changed the way Mark described Him. Mark's stress on His humanity was lessened. Matthew dropped many references to His human emotions, such as pity (Mark 1:41), anger (Mark 3:5), grief (Mark 3:5) wonder (Mark 6:6), indignation (Mark 10:14) and even love (Mark 10:21). References to the disciples "worshiping Jesus" and calling Him "Lord" or "Son of God" were added to stories taken from Mark (cf Matt. 14:32–33 with Mark 6:51–52).

For Mark, Jesus was thoroughly human. He completely identifies with us in every

aspect of our humanity. Christian theology insists that the only way to fully know God is in and through an encounter with Jesus Christ. He is the image of the invisible God. This reminds us that God is willing to humble Himself, limit Himself, pour Himself out for the sake of others. It is so easy, even in Mark, to jump too quickly toward Calvary, because the cross occupies so much of Mark's depiction of Jesus' ministry that you forget that He was a real human being. Incarnation means God's full involvement with humanity as Jesus lived a full human life, immersing Himself in our world. As Swiss theologian Karl Barth once said, "There is no hidden God behind Christ." It was in His humanity, suffering and death that God supremely revealed Himself to be one with us and one of us, becoming vulnerable, risking everything for our sake. The Incarnation was a genuine entering into the possibility of all the experiences to which our bodies are exposed, including hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, seeing and hearing.

Secondly, within Mark's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry, it is clear that the good news is about the unconditional nature of God's grace and the forgiveness and acceptance He offers to all who come to Him. John the Baptist, prefiguring this message, proclaimed "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). In Mark 2, when Jesus healed a paralyzed man, He said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven" (5).

Mark also makes it clear that the good news of Jesus is liberating. Mark uses the term "the kingdom of God" to speak of the impact that Jesus' coming had on people's lives. The kingdom of God impacts the whole of life, spiritually, socially and physically. The term probably is better translated the "kingship of God," because the emphasis is on God's rule over every aspect of human life, rather than territory. Although there are verses that speak of the full experience of this reign of God being in the future, Mark implies that it can be entered and enjoyed here and now (10:14f; 12:34). His Gospel contains several incidents of healing and exorcisms, and we read, "He cured many who were sick of various diseases and cast out many demons" (Mark 1:34).

Relationship, not ritual

Sometimes it is difficult to read these stories without feeling cheated that we have not encountered such healing for ourselves. However, although the mystery of illness and death itself is often confusing to faith, these stories remind us at the very least of God's involvement in every aspect of our lives

and His concern to demonstrate His presence with us at the best and worst of times. Whenever people are in pain and suffering today, Jesus' healing message needs to be applied, identifying need and ministering to bring relief where it is needed.

The coming of His Kingdom also reminds us that the gospel is about relationships rather than ritual. One conflict Jesus encountered was with those who wanted to maintain religious rituals such as strict Sabbath-keeping and food laws. Jewish leaders criticized the disciples for wandering through the cornfields and plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath, which they considered forbidden. Jesus responded, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath was given as a gift for rest and refreshment, but many Jews had turned it into a ritual; their rigid requirements hindered the enjoyment of God's goodness. The same had happened with food laws, and some Jews were horrified that the disciples were "eating with defiled hands." Jesus told His disciples, "It is not what goes in that defiles but what comes out of our hearts"

(Mark 7:18–20). Sometimes it is easier to follow religious rules and regulations — even tithing, attending church, wearing respectable clothes, saying the right things — than seeking the inner transformation of the heart. Jesus is reminding us that the real problem in life arises from human motivation. Keeping rituals can be a means of covering over the cracks and not dealing with issues of attitudes that lead to real actions of integrity.

Mark shows us that there are two other instances of the way the good news that Jesus proclaims brings liberation and a sense of inclusion and equality to people. First of all, on two occasions in Chapters 9 and 10, Jesus took the example of children as illustrations of the coming of the Kingdom. Children felt at ease, safe in His presence. People were bringing little children to Him so that He might touch and bless them. The disciples "spoke sternly to them" (Mark 10:13), but Jesus "was indignant and said — let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ... And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:14–16). The child in antiquity was a nonperson. Children should have been with the women, not hanging around a teacher and His disciples. Jesus treated children, who were socially invisible and unimportant, as "first" and important. How we treat children is a good indication of our discipleship. Within the life of the church, we are called to view children as be-

"Wherever people are in pain and suffering today, Jesus' healing message needs to be applied."

Ken Roxburgh
Samford University

ing on a journey, within God's family, and we are called to nurture their faith development.

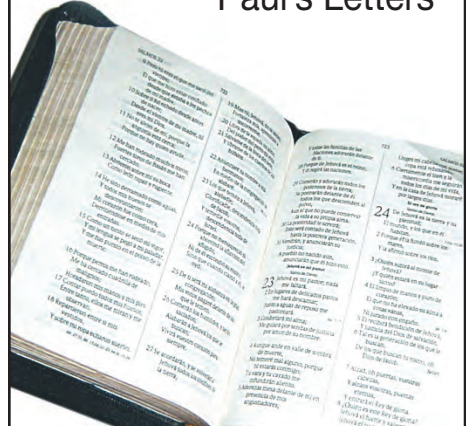
A final example of the way Jesus' message brought liberation in the face of oppression is the way He gave a prominent place to women. Women often figure in Mark's Gospel. This includes Peter's mother-in-law, Jairus' daughter, the hemorrhaging woman, the Syrophenician woman and her daughter, the poor widow and her child and the woman at Bethany who anointed Jesus. Then there is the instance of Mary Magdalene, Mary and Salome, who stood by the cross and visited the empty tomb. Mark drew a comparison between the disciples, who ran away, and the women, who demonstrated courage, showed faith and offered service. They exemplified the marks of true discipleship. It was the women who acted as witnesses to the events of the cross and the empty tomb, even if their testimony would not have been valued in a court of law. Jesus' ministry in life, death and resurrection empowers women and men to walk upright freed from oppression, enfranchising all people to experience liberation and wholeness in the midst of structural injustices.

'Passion narrative'

Mark's Gospel has often been described as a "Passion narrative with an extended introduction." The key word in Christian discipleship is the cross; so each time Jesus makes one of His so-called "Passion predictions" (Chapters 8, 9 and 10), there immediately follows a scene in which we see what it means to be His disciple. We read that "if anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). Jesus' three statements concerning the cross intensify, and by Chapter 10, He tells His disciples, "They will condemn me to death; hand me over to the Gentiles; mock, spit upon ... flog ... and kill [me]" (33-34).

Mark's emphasis on the cross reminds us that Christian theology is an attempt to explore its meaning and implications for every area of life. To stand under the cross is to realize that our relationship with the crucified Christ involves pain, darkness and struggle as well as love, joy and peace. Like a great piece of architecture, such as a cathedral, the cross is something we are called to contemplate over and over again so that we capture the glory of this "wondrous cross" and discover that it provides an inexhaustible stream of spiritual life in which we can discern the "length, breadth, height and depth of the love of Christ ... that surpasses human knowledge" (Eph. 3:18-19). We look back to the events of Calvary not only as a historical memory but also as a source of life, nourishment, spiritual renewal.

Next week's topic ... Paul's Letters



Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Tannehill Valley Church, McCalla**, will hold its third annual Miles for Missions 5K and one-mile fun run March 24 at Tannehill Historical State Park in McCalla. Pre-registration packet pickup will be at the church March 23, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. On March 24, late registration and packet pickup will be from 6:30-7:30 a.m. The 5K will begin at 8 a.m. The fun run will begin at 8:15 a.m. The awards ceremony and door prizes will be at 9:30 a.m. Proceeds will go to the Casa Betania Orphanage (www.benedictbunch.com) in Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico. To pre-register, download a form at www.tannehill-valley.org or register online at www.imathlete.com/events/TVBCMilesformissions by Feb. 24. T-shirts are guaranteed for pre-registrations by March 1. For information call 205-477-6811. Jon Reaves is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **M-Power Ministries**, University of Alabama at Birmingham school of optometry and VSP Vision Care for Life will offer eye care services Feb. 16, 1-4:30 p.m., and Feb. 17-18, 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1-4:30 p.m., at **New Hope Church, Birmingham**. Services will include primary eye care, vision exams and provision of glasses, including fitting and selection of lenses. Glasses will be ready to pick up in 3-4 weeks from date of service. For information contact Sonya Bumpers at 205-595-5959, Ext. 204 or sonya.bumpers@mpowerministries.org. Gregory L. Clarke is pastor.

CAREY

► **Carey Association** will hold a wild game supper Feb. 20 at First Church, Ashland, in the Christian life center. Dinner will be at 6 p.m. Grand Ole Opry star and Christian country comedian Gary Claxton, The Mouth of the South, will speak at 7. Men and boys are invited to bring a dish made from their favorite wild game. For information call 256-354-5073. William Ross Kilpatrick is pastor of First, Ashland. Bruce

Bills open doors for religious discussion

(continued from page 1)

way for the teaching of creationism and intelligent design, critics say.

While all the bills have drawn the attention of several large atheist groups including the Center for Inquiry and the National Atheist Party, Bergevin's bill in New Hampshire has raised the most eyebrows.

"Evolution is not just for atheists and has been accepted as fact by many religious institutions, including the Catholic Church," Silverman said. "It is clearly an attempt to create religious discussion in science class and to somehow make science 'not for believers.'"

Even if the bill were to become law, some expect it to be short-lived.

Josh Rosenau, a programs and policy director at the National Center for Science Education, said, "Just on its face, I think a court would look askance at it. You can't say, 'On behalf of the state of New Hampshire I endorse theism over atheism.'"

(RNS)

Willis is director of missions for Carey Association.

COFFEE

► **Randy Kelley** is the new pastor of **Westview Church, Enterprise**. He previously served as pastor of Mill Creek Church, Andalusia. He also has served several other churches in Alabama and one in Mississippi. A graduate of The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, Kelley holds a master's degree from Troy University. He and his wife, Sherry, have four children and eight grandchildren. ► **Ben Posey** is the new pastor of **First Church, Kinston**. He has served as youth pastor of Thomasville Church and Highland Church, Gordo. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile and master of divinity in expository preaching from New Orleans Seminary. Posey and his wife, Torie, have one child and one due in August. They also are in the process of adopting from Ethiopia. ► **Westview Church, Enterprise**, will hold a gospel sing Feb. 25, 6 p.m., with The Original Florida Boys and The Dyess Family. Benefits will go to The Alabama Baptist Children's Homes Dothan campus. For information call 334-898-2814. Randy Kelley is pastor.



KELLEY



POSEY

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold a Sunday School spring training March 3, 8 a.m.-noon. Teachers will include Thom Rainer, Kim Capps, Jerry Vogel, Carlton McDaniel, Paul Turner, Dwight Moss and Todd Capps. To register call 256-729-1328 or visit www.clements baptist.org. Early bird registration deadline is Feb. 24. Tim Anderson is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► **Pine Barren Association** will hold a fantastic family fun festival March 10, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at the Camden Airport. There will be food, prizes, games, puppets and music groups. The community is invited. John Marks is director of missions.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Alberta Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold an evangelism training revival March 4-7 with Evangelist Daryl O'Barr of First Church, Woodstock, Ga., and founder of Drawing the Net Ministries. Services will be Sunday morning at 9 and nightly at 6. Alberta is temporarily meeting at Open Door Church, Tuscaloosa, due to tornado damage. Larry Corder is pastor. ► **Ridgecrest Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold a winter Bible conference on Ecclesiastes Feb. 19-22 with John Alexander. Sessions will be Sunday from 5-7 p.m. and weeknights from 6-7:30. Andrew and Heather Hester will sing Sunday, Christy Wyatt Monday, Patty Clark Tuesday and Angie Alexander Wednesday. Elementary activities and preschool care will be available for each session. For information call 205-553-9063. Jim Headley is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Wagarville Church** will hold a rummage sale Feb. 18, 8 a.m., to benefit the building fund and youth camp this summer. James Blair is pastor.

COLUMBIA

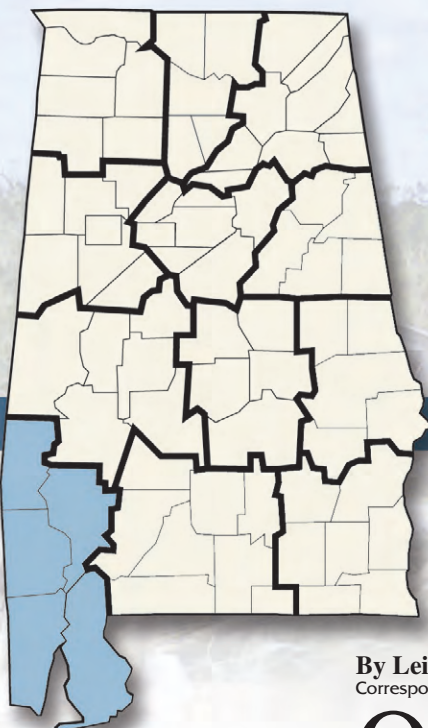
► **Jimmy Bolin** is the new pastor of **First Church, Cottonwood**. He and his wife, Carol, have two children.



Photo courtesy of Dauphin Way Baptist Church

DAUPHIN WAY BAPTIST CHURCH BURNS NOTE

Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, holds a note-burning ceremony after paying off its debt Jan. 22. Pictured are Pastor Adam B. Dooley (left) and Ann Clayman. After the ceremony, the church voted to begin a capital campaign for expansion to include a new family life center and children's and student worship spaces.



Baptists RESPOND

to areas devastated by April 27 tornadoes

Baptists in hurricane-prone District 7 repay kindness

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On April 27, more than 60 tornadoes traversed Alabama, leaving a trail of death, destruction and devastated hearts.

More than 240 people lost their lives. Thousands upon thousands were left homeless.

Most of Alabama Baptists' District 7 region — Baldwin, Choctaw, Clarke, Mobile and Washington counties — was spared, however.

So ministering to the hurting in other parts of the state quickly became the focus of the district's churches and associations.

"They responded very well, doing different kinds of ministry projects ... in remembrance of all that had been done in assistance to (hurricanes) Ivan and Katrina," said Reggie Quimby, director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) and one of the state missionaries assigned to District 7.

Baldwin Association

Baldwin Baptist Association's two shower trailers were dispatched to Phil Campbell and Tuscaloosa.

Volunteers from churches including First Baptist, Robertsdale; First Baptist, Fairhope; and Pleasant View Baptist, Foley, went to DeKalb County, the Birmingham area and Phil Campbell. They fed volunteers and people affected by the storms, helped construct homes and churches

and conducted Vacation Bible School and block parties. Over the course of four or five months, numerous groups transported supplies and canned goods to people in impacted areas.

And efforts are continuing, Director of Missions (DOM) Rick Barnhart said. "We will be going to Phil Campbell to help at Mountain View Baptist" probably in July, Barnhart noted.

Interestingly Baldwin Association assisted at Mountain View Baptist Church, Sylvania, last summer. It also learned that one church on which it worked — Grace Chapel Baptist Church at Town Creek in Rainsville (see story, next week) — has decided to join the Southern Baptist family, Barnhart said.

"Easily over 300" people from 20 of the association's 61 churches have been involved in relief efforts since April 27, he reported.

"We are so very blessed with disaster relief teams" and equipment, Barnhart said. The association has about 120 volunteers from more than 20 churches, he said.

As Barnhart recounted stories of people coming to know Christ through the work of Baldwin Association volunteers after April 27 and

being on the receiving end of kindness following Hurricane Ivan in 2004, he felt emotion welling.

"It's amazing how talking about it brings it all up," Barnhart said.

Choctaw Association

Choctaw County took a direct hit from the April 27 storms and saw significant damage.

"We were kind of on the south end of all of it," said Franklin McLelland, DOM of Choctaw Baptist Association. In fact, he said, some outside sources did not realize for a while that the county had been hit.

McLelland said the tornado mostly followed County Road 32 in the northern part of Choctaw County. Reports indicate that 20 to 25 homes were destroyed, 120 were damaged and another 60 to 65 received severe damage.

Scores of volunteers from the association helped clean up debris, serve food to workers and people affected by the storm and repair and rebuild homes, McLelland said.

According to McLelland and Quimby, Bethel and Selma Baptist associations, as well as volunteers from Mississippi, assisted in the county. Quimby said some SBOM disaster



Photo courtesy of Mike Cook

RESPONSE — A volunteer from Mobile Baptist Association works in Hueytown.

District 7

Choctaw Association

Clarke Association

Baldwin Association

Mobile Association

Washington Association

Explanation of districts

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

FBC Robertsdale meets needs through Project Care ministry

In 2005, First Baptist Church, Robertsdale, began a ministry to care for people impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

The Baldwin Baptist Association church shipped goods to affected people and sheltered individuals who had fled to Alabama to get away from the hurricane. This was a commitment that lasted about nine months, Senior Pastor Jeff Copeland said.

The ministry was called Project Kare (Katrina Aftermath Response Effort).

But when that need subsided, the church decided to continue the ministry under the name Project Care (Catastrophic Aftermath Response Effort). Mostly the church's team of relief volunteers addresses needs in its area of the state, assisting after fires, natural disasters and similar

events. However, the April 27 tornadoes gave the volunteers the opportunity to help people elsewhere in Alabama, Associate Pastor Richard Hebert said.

About 30 people transported water, personal items and a cooking trailer and ministered through Ider Baptist Church in Sand Mountain Baptist Association soon after the tornadoes.

Volunteers also assisted in Tallapoosa and Tuscaloosa counties, Copeland added.

Project Care, though, is not confined to meeting immediate needs after a disaster.

It has grown into a daily ministry, Copeland said.

The ministry has several facets: a thrift store that generates funds for purchasing food to give to people in need and a center that offers counseling, tutoring and job placement assistance,

among other things. "In fact, we see 300 to 400 a month for food, clothing, shelter, utilities," Copeland said. Baldwin County residents in need, travelers and homeless people are among those who are helped through Project Care, he said.

First, Robertsdale, houses the ministry in its former church building. The church's new building is about a mile away, Hebert said.

"The Lord just put that on us, put it before us," Copeland said about the beginnings of the ministry. "We've kind of been following ever since."

As a result, First, Robertsdale, has seen the ministry grow beyond what was first anticipated, he said. "It has changed us completely as a church," Copeland said of the ministry. "People (are) doing the church and being the church instead of just talking about the church." (TAB)

relief funds also were sent to the area.

Plus Choctaw Association's men's ministry has devoted funds to a relief project, McLelland said.

Even though their county was in the path of the storms, volunteers from the association — such as the pastors of Cullomburg Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, Silas; and Gilbertown Baptist Church — assisted in the hard-hit areas of Phil Campbell and Hackleburg, he said.

Since the storms, Bethel, Choctaw and Pine Barren associations have partnered to care for one another's needs in future crises, McLelland said.

Clarke Association

During the three months after April 27, Clarke Baptist Association sent missions teams to the Sand Mountain area. DOM Chris Baker estimated that the association sent 15 to 18 teams in all — about 200 people representing perhaps a dozen churches.

Soon after the tornadoes, the teams began providing food, water, supplies and clothing, as well as assistance with cleanup, recovery, distribution and repairs, Baker said.

Clarke Association's churches were able to build on a "natural connection" that Jamie Lay, pastor of Stave Creek Baptist Church, Jackson, possessed.

Because of that connection, "(Lay) already knew people," Baker said. And the people knew and trusted Lay. "That was a unique situation."

The association also assisted Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic — which was heavily damaged in the storms — financially and has a building team slated to work in the summer.

Clarke Association has a reputation for assembling a construction team of 80 to 100 people who can get a church from slab to the dried-in stage in four days. It has been doing this every summer for at least 27 years.

As the association's churches helped others after the tornadoes, they developed a greater sense of unity among themselves, Baker observed. This time of assistance also brought to light the need to be prepared to respond in a disaster. The people who wanted to assist saw that it is necessary to have proper credentials in order to gain entrance into an impacted area.

Since the storms, many people in Clarke Association have trained in disaster relief. Though the association does not have a disaster relief team, Baker said the volunteers could attach to other units being deployed.

Mobile Association

In Mobile Baptist Association, Executive DOM C. Thomas Wright said, "Many churches in the affected region

responded to damage we received during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. So many of our folks were eager to return the favor."

As a result, "we had over two dozen churches send cleanup and repair teams to the damaged region," Wright explained. "Many other churches collected and sent requested supplies. [Mobile Association] became a partner for one of the damaged regions in the Birmingham Association."

Through that partnership, Mobile Association assisted with cleanup, repair and construction projects.

Wright estimated that more than 75 of the association's 110 churches "either sent a team or provided requested supplies" to areas hit by the storms.

Mobile Association also became one of many locations that hosted disaster relief training in the days following April 27. "Disaster relief training becomes a priority to folks when they see the immediate need," Wright observed.

The association "has training scheduled and will provide additional training on demand," he noted.

"Churches and church members who wish to respond to disaster situations need to receive training in SBC (Southern Baptist Convention) disaster relief," he continued. "There are a wide range of skills needed, including communications, mud-out, chain saw, feeding, child care and assessment. Training is available periodically in each Alabama association. And training can be offered on demand with as few as 10 people."

Washington Association

On April 27, the area encompassed by Washington Baptist Association experienced no damage. But earlier that month, a tornado claimed three lives, DOM Michael Olewski reported.

The community took care of the cleanup related to the earlier storm system, Olewski said.

Like some other associations in the state, Washington Association does not have a disaster relief team. However, six individuals have the necessary credentials and can dispatch with teams from other associations, Olewski said. Two volunteers did just that following the late April disaster.

Since then, about 30 individuals have expressed interest in being trained, Olewski said.

The association of 34 churches hopes to have a disaster relief team in the future, he said.

Through direct experience with the deadly April storms, Olewski said the people of Washington Association have seen that "no one is immune from those kinds of things."

(June Mathews contributed)

How to assist in relief efforts

For help in finding associations in need of construction projects, call the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at 1-800-264-1225.

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

For other ways to get involved, call

► Baldwin Baptist As-

sociation at 251-945-5112,

► Choctaw Baptist Association at 205-459-4549,

► Clarke Baptist Association at 251-275-3065,

► Mobile Baptist Association at 251-661-7111 or

► Washington Baptist Association at 251-847-2753.

(TAB)

Choctaw Assoc. churches help rebuild

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, TAB

After a tornado struck Choctaw County on April 27, Pastor Mike Rowell and some members of Morgan Chapel Baptist Church, Toxey, went into a small community along County Road 32 to help clean up.

The women began to go door to door, giving out hygiene and other items in the impacted area, said Rowell, who now lives in Grand Bay and serves as an evangelist with his own ministry. As they did so, they came across a family whose home was significantly damaged by the storm.

After visiting with the family, Rowell said he felt the Lord leading him to rebuild its home.

Rowell then met with some pastors in the area to tell them about the need. Quickly Jeremy Sorrells, pastor of First Baptist Church, Butler, said his congregation would get involved.

So the two Choctaw Association churches, other churches and people in the community partnered to complete the building project.

To get support for the project, Rowell used YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to spread the word about the need.

First, Butler, contributed \$10,000 and Morgan Chapel Baptist, which has about 75 in Sunday worship, gave close to \$7,000.

In a matter of a couple of weeks, there was enough money to construct the 1,208-square-



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Sorrells

'A HOUSE THAT LOVE BUILT' — Volunteers from Morgan Chapel Baptist Church, Toxey, and FBC Butler help rebuild a home that was significantly damaged by the April 27 tornadoes.

foot home, with three bedrooms and one and a half bathrooms, one of which has the handicap features a family member needed.

In all, almost \$37,000 was given to build the home, Rowell reported.

Sorrells said the family also received some federal assistance and disaster relief funding for rebuilding. When companies learned of the construction project, they offered materials at cost, Rowell said. "We had a lot of stuff donated to us."

In addition, individuals gave household goods to help the family, Sorrells said.

On May 16, construction began. In six days, the home was "blackened in," and the structure was finished by July.

People from both churches — as well as Cullomburg Baptist Church and Eureka Baptist Church, Lisman — helped build the home. Skilled workers from those churches and Bethel Baptist Church, Canton, N.C., gave their time, the men said.

"It was a miracle," Sorrells said. "It was definitely a house that love built."

At the Oct. 23 dedication, about 200 people from the churches involved were present, he said.

But the story does not end there. Through this outpouring of the community and God's people, three family members came to know Christ as Savior, Rowell said.

FBC North Mobile focuses on tree removal

After a disaster strikes, people just seem to yearn to help those in need.

They have the means and strength; they want to better the situation for someone who is hurting.

Two teams of men from First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland did that. On two consecutive weekends right after the April 27 storms, the teams traveled with their tractors and chain saws to the Birmingham area.

"We had tractors with front-end loaders and backhoes. (We) wanted to use what the Lord had blessed us with to help others," said Mike Cook, former pastor of administration at the Mobile Baptist Association church.

The teams focused on helping individuals who did not have insurance to pay for tree removal.

"We had the equipment and we had the resources," Cook said.

So team members took vacation time or off days and stayed at North Highlands Baptist

Church, Hueytown, in Bessemer Baptist Association.

The men of First, North Mobile, have a servant spirit and enjoy helping others, Cook observed.

But getting to serve this time came with frustration.

Disaster relief training

Team members did possess equipment and a willingness to help. They also had plenty of practice in cleaning up from disasters because they live in a hurricane-prone region.

Nonetheless they did not have one essential — credentials as disaster relief volunteers. This inhibited their admittance to the disaster area, Cook said.

It took awhile to locate someone who would allow them to enter, he said.

Since that time, Cook and 11 of the 14 team members have become trained in Southern Baptist disaster relief. They have trained in chain saw, mud-out and mold-mildew removal.

In fact, their church even hosted the training session.

"We wanted it to hurry and happen," Cook said.

An estimated 25 people from the area went through the training, he noted.

Now, with the equipment, the willingness and the necessary credentials, the team is completely ready to assist in the future, Cook said.

"We're here; we're trained; we've got equipment," he said. "[We'll] get a crew together; we'll saddle up and go!" (TAB)

Free Faceted Glass

Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, is beginning the process of demolition after its facilities were destroyed by the April 27 tornadoes. Anyone interested in removing the four undamaged stained glass windows may have them. For information, call 205-553-6520.

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

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



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

An 'interrogating' education

Judson's president shares importance of Christian colleges today

By David E. Potts
President, Judson College

Alabama Baptists have an extraordinary record of establishing and keeping Christian higher education. Undaunted by a failed effort to establish the Manual Labor School in Greensboro in 1834, Alabama Baptists in rapid succession founded the Judson Female Institute (now Judson College) in Marion in 1838 and Howard College in Marion (now Samford University in Birmingham) in 1841. They were among the first 300 colleges established in America. The 20th century brought the establishment of Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) through Alabama Baptists in 1961.

These institutions were called into existence in a culture that valued education and Christian faith.

Culture change

In 2012, Baptist schools find themselves in a very different setting with more than 4,000 colleges and universities across America and a society that seems to have relegated religion to the sidelines and marginalized serious discussions about faith, especially the Christian faith.

But before drawing any conclusions, let's take a quiz.

What do 14 of the first 40 Protestant missionaries to China in the 19th century have in common? What do the first and 100th Baptist missionaries to Japan have in com-

mon with the North American Mission Board's first appointee, and what do they have in common with the woman who established the first shelter for battered women in Alabama? What do these missionaries have in common with the woman who holds the record for the highest score ever made on the obstetrical-gynecological written examination (and has delivered more than 4,000 babies) or the first woman to head the U.S. Air Force's smart weapons lab or the woman who led the discovery of a new hemophilia drug that dramatically improves the life of children with the disorder or a Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award-winning, best-selling author or a former Miss Ohio and internationally acclaimed opera star or the first woman to sit on the Alabama Supreme Court?

The answer to the aforementioned quiz is Judson College!

That's right. A small Baptist women's college in Alabama's Black Belt has had an extraordinary impact at home and around the world. One could assert that Judson has had a disproportionate influence for the Kingdom in its almost 175 years of Christian higher education.

Without a doubt, graduates of Samford University and the University of Mobile share this remarkable heritage of bringing light to dark places!

Contemplating Christian higher educa-

"[Christian] schools find themselves in ... a society that seems to have relegated religion to the sidelines and marginalized serious discussions about faith."

David E. Potts
Judson College



In the autobiographical section of his book "Harbingers of Hope," William E. Hull stated his view that "at their best, education is good for religion and religion is good for education."

Reflecting further on the Christian college, Hull spoke on Judson's campus not long ago and suggested that our faith and learning are not so much about "integration" as "interrogation." He suggested that in our learning across

the academic disciplines, Christian higher education should challenge students to ask first the important questions of our faith. How should one study, live and work as he or she follows Christ, who "brings good news to the poor, liberation to the captive, sight to the blind, release to the oppressed and proclamation of the Kingdom?" What are the implications of decisions made in a profession or a home when those decisions are at first Kingdom questions?

Our friends at Samford University Press, in collaboration with Paul Corts, president of the CCCU and brother to the late Samford President Thomas E. Corts, do a great service for all who hold dear the ideals of Christian higher education.

The recently published book "Thinking Christianly: Christian Higher Education and a Vigorous Life of the Mind" collected essays in Tom Corts' memory. The essayists are a (See 'Christian,' page 12)

tion's purpose, a colleague in the Council of Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU), V. James Mannoia Jr., wrote, "Christian institutions of higher education, and especially Christian liberal arts colleges, must assess their distinctive mission in the light of the call to follow Christ. ... First does the Christian liberal arts college actually teach its graduates to become more like Christ? Second, insofar as Christ's mission was to humble Himself and become a servant, does the Christian college ... teach its graduates to humble themselves and serve others?"

Following Christ

We deeply believe, and the record supports, that Christian faith and learning are always greater than the sum of their respective parts.

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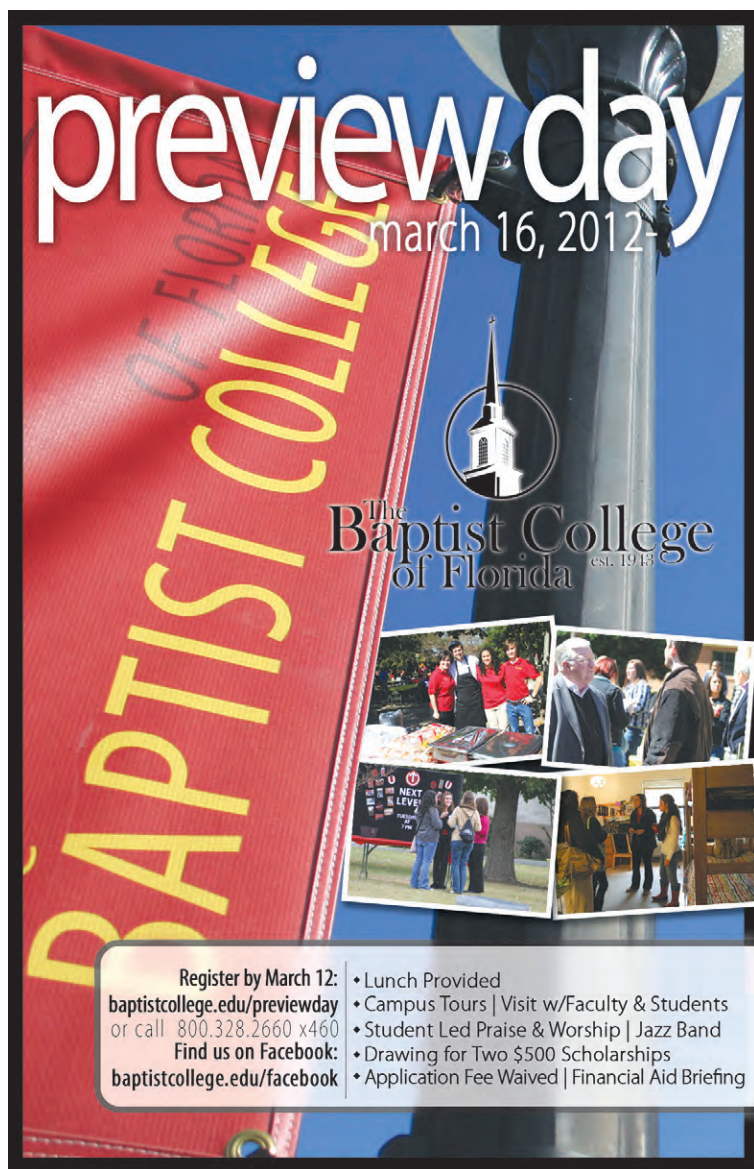
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Christian colleges, universities see increase

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Numbers indicate that receiving a college education at a religious institution continues to be an attractive option for many college-bound students.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, institutions affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities — "an international association of intentionally Christ-centered colleges and universities" — saw a 12.56 percent increase in enrollment from 2003 to 2009. In 2003, there were 201,796 full-time students, and by 2009, there were 230,784.

The Master's College in Santa Clarita, Calif., is one institution that has been casting its nets wider and hauling in more students than ever before. At the start of the 2011-12 academic year, the college reported 1,017 18-24-year-old students in attendance, a 15 percent jump in enrollment in just two years.

School officials say one contributing factor is that their inquiry base — the number of prospective students they communicate with — has increased. According to Director of Admissions Hollie Gorsh, in fall 2008, the inquiry pool was about 11,000. This past fall, it was 17,000.

Some Baptist colleges and univer-



Photo courtesy of Samford University/Rebecca Long

ATTRACTING STUDENTS — Samford University students enjoy time together outdoors on the school's campus.

sities are seeing not only increases but also record-breaking numbers.

The International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities reported fall 2009 enrollment of 113,261 undergraduate students for 51 schools and fall 2011 enrollment of 122,883. While the list of schools varied slightly from 2009 to 2011, more than half the colleges appeared to show at least a slight increase in their undergraduate numbers.

Union University in Jackson, Tenn., has experienced more than a slight increase in recent years. Fall 2011 enrollment hit a record high of 4,205 students, a 113 percent increase from fall 1996. It also marked the first time undergraduate enrollment topped 3,000 with 3,025 students.

Rich Grimm, Union's senior vice president for enrollment services, attributes the continued growth to

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ase in enrollment nationwide

several factors including: "a campus-wide commitment to the core values and mission of the institution ... unapologetic Christian commitment ... a talented and dedicated team of faculty and staff ... and widespread support from a network of alumni, pastors and high school counselors."

For Samford University in Birmingham, breaking records has become an annual event. Fall 2011 was the third consecutive year it reported record enrollment with 4,758 students, including 1,808 graduate students.

"There are many factors that have a positive impact on our enrollment, including the diligent efforts of our faculty and staff to providing rigorous academic and co-curricular programs that attract students who are interested in a comprehensive, nationally ranked university like Samford," said R. Phil Kimrey, vice president of student affairs and enrollment management.

A new program is attracting new students to Judson College in Marion.

"Judson's enrollment has increased over 10 percent since last year largely due to interest in our new associate degree in nursing (ADN) program," Vice President for Admissions Charlotte Clements said. "Judson has a stellar record (of) providing a first-rate educa-

tion in the sciences. In fact, of those who enrolled in graduate programs within one year of graduation, 25 percent enrolled in medical schools. The new ADN program will build off our success in the science division."

According to the Judson registrar's office, enrollment numbers rose between fall 2010 (312 students) and fall 2011 (348 students).

4 percent increase

The University of Mobile's (UMobile) enrollment rose for the fourth year in a row. UMobile reported 1,798 students — 1,303 undergraduate students, 197 graduate students and 298 in the Center for Adult Programs — enrolled for the fall 2011 semester, almost a 4 percent increase from 2010.

UMobile President Mark Foley said relevant and challenging academic programs integrating faith, learning and leadership are attracting students to the school, as well as opportunities to incorporate knowledge and talents in service locally and abroad.

Those things have people talking, Vice President for Enrollment Services Kim Leousis said.

"Our growth is a reflection of our current students and graduates going out and telling people how satisfied they are with their college experience," Leousis said.



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Christian higher education points students to Christ

(continued from page 9)

remarkable collection of bright minds who speak plainly about the call of Christ to the stewardship of the mind. Gerald L. Bray, in Chapter 3, "The Challenge to the Mind in Christian Higher Education Today," recounts the church's extraordinary commitment to colleges and seminaries in earlier centuries. Today, for many people, the idea of a Christian university is an "oxymoron and an embarrassment." He effectively reminds us that Christianity "is not a Western religion but an expression of universal truth" and that "all human knowledge is finite and relative." Our secular society has created many myths, "even if it claims to be based on reason alone. Christian theology puts spiritual truth in the place of myth, bringing reason and order to the world beyond our sense perception and explaining how we are connected with it." Christian higher education informs and transforms students by call-

ing them to this universal truth. Christian higher education strives intentionally and without apology to point students to Christ, "the Way, the Truth and the Life."

At Judson, weekly chapel, student-led worship on Monday nights, faith-based service learning, Bible courses and studies, faithful teachers, missions assignments locally and internationally and a deep commitment to the stewardship of the mind coalesce to penetrate today's culture of secularism and the

myths of relativism to provide a transformational experience.

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David E. Potts
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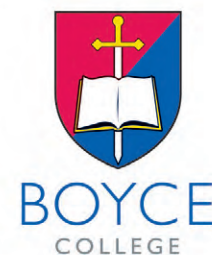
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UMobile student: Why I chose a Christian college

By George Kamel

Senior communication major, University of Mobile

I'm a dreamer. I always have been. Something else I've always been, since the age of 15, is a Christian.

Living in Boston for the first 20 years of my life, I had gone to church every Sunday and to public school every Monday through Friday. After graduating from high school, I chose a secular state university because of cost and proximity. Initially I thought this would be a great place for me to challenge my faith, cultivate my talents and develop a new community.

To my disappointment, after being enrolled for one year, I realized that this school did not have much to offer me. I wanted more out of life. I wanted to be in a place where my faith was firm and strengthened. I wanted more community, more challenges, more mentorship and more opportunities to succeed and grow. I wanted a school that had values, conviction and integrity.

A different world

I wasn't willing to settle for another three years, and I wasn't willing to compromise my faith to fit in, so I transferred to the University of Mobile (UMobile) in 2010. It was an entirely different world. The faith-based university provided an incredible atmosphere to grow within an encouraging environment. The smaller classes offered a more personal, engaging experience, and the close-knit community of students and faculty alike made me feel as if I was part of one big family.

I was also amazed to find that the same people teaching me in the classroom became my men-

tors, challenging me not just intellectually but spiritually as well. I was provided with opportunities to serve on a local, regional and international scale, whether it was a service project at a local shelter or a youth hostel missions trip to cities all over Europe.

It's vitally important to know what you believe and why you believe it. Christian colleges help you find that meaning and purpose in challenging ways.

Colleges like UMobile understand that the most powerful and effective way to create great leaders is to combine faith and learning.

The problem with most of my generation is that we're wandering aimlessly for purpose and meaning and looking in all of the wrong places. We need proper guidance, a solid rock for our beliefs to stand on and mentors who sharpen our wisdom.

Every student of my generation wants a "great" college experience. We want to make friends, experience new challenges, explore our passions, develop our talents and, of course, get a diploma that helps us succeed in the real world.

At the same time, we're not looking simply for more information; we're looking for wisdom and discernment.

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KAMEL

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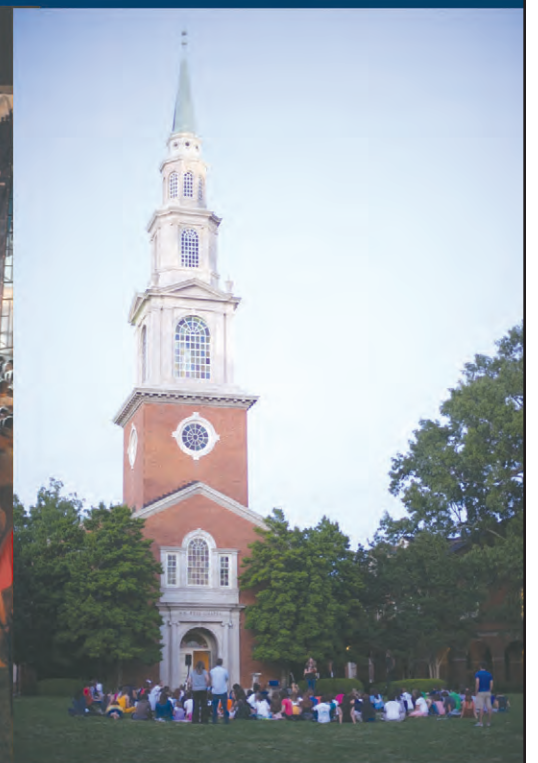
UMobile helps me accomplish

this in practical ways, providing me with a biblical worldview and skills I need in order to have an impact on my culture, my city and my world.

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Christians face growing pressures on state campuses

As the debate between non-discrimination policies and religious freedom continues on college campuses, Christian organizations in Alabama carry on, ever mindful of the changing national landscape.

"We cannot assume that we won't be under attack, and we must be proactive in protecting our religious liberties," said John Gibbons, Alabama director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), which has 450 active chapters in high schools and colleges in the state.

Groups like FCA are especially concerned about decisions like a recent one at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, where four Christian groups soon could be kicked off campus for violating a policy that prohibits student organizations from holding members or leaders to any standard of belief or behavior.

Officials at Vanderbilt began reviewing the constitutions of all official student groups last year when members of Christian fraternity Beta Upsilon Chi removed one of the group's leaders after he revealed he was gay and engaged in a sexual relationship. During the review, administrators found 11 groups with constitutions that violated the school's nondiscrimination policy.

Representatives from the four

Christian groups who remain in violation, Christian Legal Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Graduate Christian Fellowship and Beta Upsilon Chi, are negotiating with school officials in hopes of keeping an official on-campus presence. However, they refuse to strike clauses in their constitutions that require leaders to agree to statements of faith or participate in specific activities, like Bible studies — setting up a showdown with administrators who say official groups can no longer restrict their membership.

"In order to be a registered student organization — which means using the Vanderbilt name, having the opportunity to apply for funding from student activity fees and access to university resources — opportunities for membership and leadership must be accessible to all," said Beth Fortune, vice chancellor for public affairs.

When asked whether the school had any other option for the Christian groups as an alternative to revoking their official status, Fortune would only say that the administrators were still discussing that issue.

But Jim Lundgren, director of collegiate ministries for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, said they are preparing for the likelihood of becoming "third-class citizens" at

Vanderbilt: "We all see the handwriting on the wall."

InterVarsity tried working with the administration to resolve their differences, but when efforts at private negotiations failed, the group appealed to alumni and friends of the school's board of trustees. A similar strategy of public pressure worked well for InterVarsity at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Wash. School administrators reversed their decision to bar InterVarsity from campus after alumnae protested. In the Vanderbilt case, 23 congressmen sent a letter to Chancellor Nicholas Zeppos asking him not to discriminate against religious groups.

What's happening at Vanderbilt is part of a national trend. Last year, only two InterVarsity chapters faced challenges from university administrators over the groups' right to pick leaders, or remove them, based on their beliefs. This year, 15 chapters have run afoul of school nondiscrimination policies.

Faced with increasing opposition from school administrations, some Christian groups are preparing for what they fear is an inevitable break with the official university system. Unless the U.S. Supreme Court intervenes, religious organizations could soon be relegated to the fringes of college life.

Two cases, one decided at the high court last year and one that could end up there next year, are redefining discrimination and religious liberty on campus.

In CLS v. Martinez, which involved a chapter of the Christian Legal Society at Hastings Law School

in California, the justices upheld the school's right to adopt an "all-comers" policy that forces student organizations to abandon all membership restrictions.

In ADX v. Reed, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the California State University system, which does not have an "all-comers policy," could prohibit membership restrictions based only on certain criteria, including religious beliefs. The Alliance Defense Fund, which also argued CLS v. Martinez, plans to ask the high court to consider the California case. Its decision will determine whether religious organizations can maintain their autonomy and their status as official groups.

The Vanderbilt is just one of dozens of cases playing out on campuses all across the country, said David Cortman, senior counsel with the Alliance Defense Fund.

"The university is supposed to be the marketplace of ideas, but it ends up being the storefront of censorship," he said, noting the CLS v.

Martinez decision does not apply to private schools. Judson College, for example, outlines the school's expectations for the moral conduct of all students in an Honor Code.

Bill Mathews, vice president and general counsel at Judson, said college administrators follow court decisions and legislative efforts with both interest and concern.

Information provided in recruiting materials, on-site visits and Judson's website make the school's character and culture clear to potential students, he said. While he does not expect Judson's values or mission to change, he does have concerns about the future.

"We fear that some pending legislation may well infringe on the Constitutional right of Freedom of Religion for our school, our employees and our students," Mathews said.

Gibbons of Alabama FCA said the recent rulings "should serve a wakeup call for Christian to stay at the forefront of the battle for our religious freedoms." (BP, TAB)

"We cannot assume that we won't be under attack, and we must be proactive in protecting our religious liberties."

John Gibbons
Fellowship of Christian Athletes



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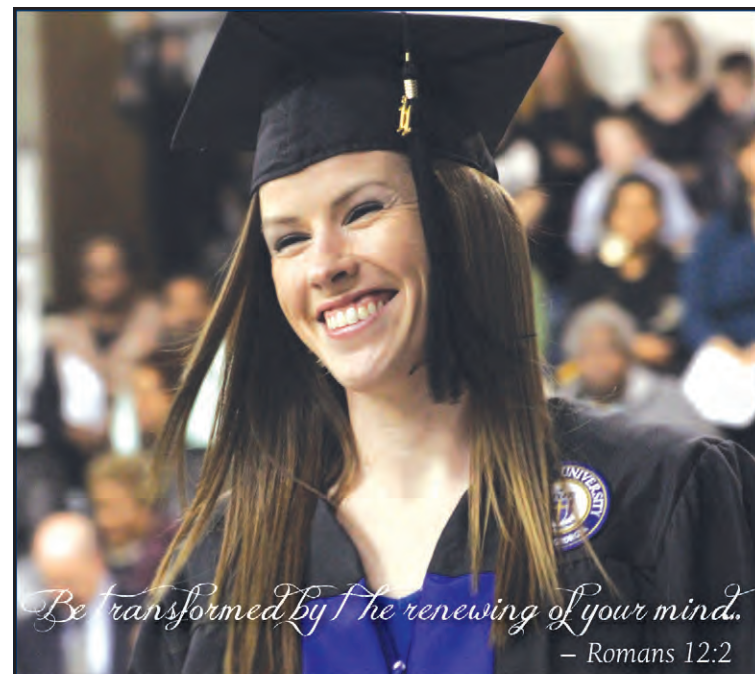


Whether it's through missions in another country or service in the local community, Judson College students are learning to love God and their neighbors in tangible ways. Weekly Chapel services, an 11:1 student/faculty ratio, and rich traditions of sisterhood create a small, supportive campus environment that encourages students in the academic pursuit of truth informed by the Light and love of Christ.

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Churches, volunteers provide meals, supplies, debris removal

(continued from page 1)
said. "We've been out there doing what we can to help people get through this crisis."

From Jan. 23–Feb. 1, more than 12,000 meals were served by the Birmingham Association feeding unit stationed at First Baptist Church, Center Point. Following the lead of the American Red Cross and in coordination with local emergency management teams, the last meal was served Feb. 2.

More than two dozen chaplains were deployed, along with 34 additional chaplain teams assigned to canvas targeted areas. The chaplain teams provided crisis care ministry to 407 households or individuals.

"The intent of the additional chaplain teams was to provide care for those not being served by the chaplains assigned to the feeding unit or chain saw teams," Johnson noted.

In addition to the army of trained disaster relief volunteers, local churches and individuals rushed to help storm victims. By daybreak Jan. 23, members of Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay, in Birmingham Association had jumped into action, removing debris in the Clay, Trussville and Center Point areas.

Clayridge Baptist members worked side by side with members of nearby Spring Valley Baptist Church, Springville, in St. Clair Baptist Association. The churches immediately began distributing meals and relief supplies to victims. "As of Feb. 1, 7,500 meals had been distributed to residents and relief workers in the affected communities," Clayridge Pastor Ron Hudgens said.

Much of the food was provided by local restaurants, stores, church

members and community organizations.

A call went out to Birmingham Association churches for volunteers to help clean up debris Jan. 28 and Feb. 4. More than 600 volunteers showed up to serve in the McDonald Chapel and Pleasant Grove areas Jan. 28.

Butch Henderson, the association's associate executive director for church development, said, "We have been connecting tornado-damaged homeowners with local churches."

Four Birmingham Association churches also offered their facilities as places for disaster relief volunteers to sleep during the roughly two weeks of cleanup: First, Center Point; Clearview Baptist Church, Pinson; and NorthPark Baptist Church and Deerfoot Baptist Church, both in

Trussville.

Deerfoot church secretary Paula Hall assisted volunteers from 16 associations who stayed overnight at the church. "We fed them breakfast in the morning and then sent them off to their work sites," Hall said.

Mike McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Association, said he appreciated all the work done by Alabama Baptist churches and individuals. He plans to continue finding ways to better organize and assimilate volunteers in Birmingham Association and encourages churches to partner with him.

Working through the association for disaster relief has several advantages, he noted. Two of those deal with liability issues and expenses.

Churches working on their own often don't understand the risks involved should bodily harm or property damage occur during storm cleanup efforts involving chain-

saws or other potentially hazardous equipment, McLemore said.

"If you take it on yourself to send untrained volunteers out uninsured, you as the local church are liable for that group," he said. "When you work with the association, you come under our protection."

The Birmingham Association maintains liability insurance that covers groups and individuals working through its disaster relief program, he explained.

"You assume a great liability on your congregation if you send out untrained volunteers," he said. "We can cover those issues for you."

Working through an association can also help churches provide shelter for people who suddenly find themselves homeless or unable to stay in their homes following a natural disaster.

The official shelters set up through the association following the recent tornadoes were set up in partnership with the Red Cross, meaning the expenses of operating those shelters belong to the Red Cross, McLemore said.

"If you set up a shelter on your own, the expenses are going to be your own," he said. "It's better if you go through us and work with the Red Cross. That allows us to use our money to help those families."

For information on what types of disaster relief help is still needed following the recent tornadoes or about training opportunities, visit www.sbd.org.

(June Mathews contributed)

"We've been out there doing what we can to help people get through this crisis."

John Hayes
Disaster relief coordinator
for District 11

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

'Courageous' No. 1 in nationwide DVD sales

HOLLYWOOD — The church-made film "Courageous" is once again surprising the pundits thanks to strong DVD sales that have made it the No. 1-selling DVD nationwide.

Made by Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., "Courageous" was the top-selling DVD for the week ending Jan. 22, according to Nielsen. With a budget of only \$1 million — pennies by Hollywood standards — "Courageous" bested several movies with much larger budgets: No. 2 "Ides of March" (\$37 million budget), No. 3 "Abduction" (\$35 million) and No. 4 "Moneyball" (\$50 million).

The "Courageous" DVD, released Jan. 17, includes more than two hours of special features, including deleted scenes, a "making of Courageous" segment and "Courageous" bloopers. It also was released on Blu-ray.

It was the top-grossing box office new film on its opening weekend and also was No. 1 in per-theater average.

Each film by Sherwood Baptist has grossed more than its predecessor. The church — which gets only a portion of the total gross — also made "Fireproof" (2008) and "Facing the Giants" (2006). "Courageous" grossed \$34.3 million.

The movie follows the story of five men — four of them police officers — as they strive to become better fathers.

Baptist communicator Lloyd Householder dies

NASHVILLE — Lloyd Householder, longtime employee of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (now LifeWay Christian Resources), died Jan. 30.

He was 82.

Householder was named director of the board's office of communication in 1977 and was promoted to assistant vice president for the office of communications in 1987.

He came to the board in 1960 as director of church-related vocational guidance and became manager of the church training department in 1968.

He retired in 1992.

A native of Cleveland, Tenn., Householder earned a B.A. degree from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and M.Div., M.R.E. and D.Ed. degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

He also was active in and served on the board of the Baptist World Alliance for many years.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor John Stone
First Baptist Church, McIntosh

It has been said if you have one really good friend, then you are truly a blessed person. I want to introduce to you my very best friend. His name is Jesus. He is spoken of throughout the Bible, and in Proverbs 18:24, it says, "There is a friend (a lover) who sticks closer than a brother." F.G. Collier in *The Biblical Illustrator* says, "(Jesus) Christ alone has those elements of character which can make Him the clinging friend."

May I suggest some reasons I think you'd enjoy having Jesus as your friend? First He can do so much for you such as enabling you to find purpose for your life that you can never know outside of Him. He also offers you spiritual gifts for use in His body, the church. Jesus offers you victory over the spiritual and even physical giants that trouble you. He warns you of danger and assists you in overcoming it. In short, there is nothing too hard for Him to do, for He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything that exists (see Colossians 1:16-17).

Another reason I'd like you to know Him is because the Bible says your greatest need is to be forgiven and cleansed of guilt because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) and Jesus was "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). The Bible says, "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The Bible also says, "He (God) made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Forgiveness and cleansing become ours as God's gift that we receive by faith.

The Bible also says those who reject Jesus abide under God's condemnation. John 3:18 says, "Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God."

Receive the forgiveness Jesus offers you simply by being willing to turn from your sin and trust Him to forgive and cleanse you of all your sins. He can be depended on to keep His promise to do it. 

Stay connected with those you love

I lost a good friend this past week. She was in a car accident on Sunday, and I was informed of her death on Monday.

We met each other through work actually. We worked together and shared a friendship even though she lived in Texas and I lived in Alabama.

She was a good woman and an excellent colleague.

We actually had a meeting planned a few days prior to the accident, but circumstances did not permit her to come.

We missed her insights and the experience she brought to the discussions.

So several of us spent the week connecting with her through Facebook and texting.

There were some emails. It kept us connected.

It is interesting how connected you can stay to a person now, even when he or she lives far from you. One of the blessings of technology is we can now text instantly, post on Facebook often and even use Skype or FaceTime!

I have heard of grandparents who use Skype with their grandchildren. Missionaries use these

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



technologies often to connect with their families.

I have written several times about the importance of relationships. Of course, it is in times like these that you are reminded of that and you wish you had done more with the person who has died.

Maybe this is just my reflections, but do you ever feel as if life has sped up? I do. I am not sure if it is because of work or my children's ages or what. Maybe it is because someone can email, text, Facebook, call or Skype me at any time that I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the people and tasks in my life.

We are all so accessible now! I admit that there are times I am frustrated with such acces-

sibility through technology.

Then I come to a day like today when I am missing my friend and I would love to text her to tell her that.

Perhaps I need to remember that with the frustration of accessibility also comes the blessing of being able to draw close to those who are far away.

Perhaps I need to be reminded, once again, that our lives are about relationships, regardless of the means used to foster them. Perhaps I need to get busy texting and posting on Facebook so the ones I love know that I love them.

What about you? Is there some-

one who is far away you need to connect with?

To my friend Denise, I say thank you for sharing yourself with me.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Use the means God has given us to foster relationships in faraway places.

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



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BIVOCATIONAL/FULL-TIME PASTOR: Patsburg Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational, full-time pastor. Patsburg Baptist Church is a small country church located about four miles NE of Luverne, Ala. We are searching for a Godly person to help lead our church, visit in the community and that is interested in youth programs. If you are compelled by the Lord, please send resumé to: Patsburg Pulpit Committee Member, 82 S Grove Ave., Luverne, AL 36049, or call 334-335-5576 or 334-429-1624.

WORSHIP ARTS TEAM: Paramount Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, is seeking to fill leadership positions on its worship arts team. Candidates should have the creative skills to lead both contemporary and traditional styles of worship. Please send resumé to: dave@paramount.org or Paramount Baptist Church, 3801 S. Western St., Amarillo, TX 79109.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Seeking bivocational minister of music to work with choir and small congregation that desires to grow. Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay, Ala. Contact Ron Hudgens, ronhudgens@JCDH.org,

205-913-9480.

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 resumé to: 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.

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

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

FULL-TIME STUDENT MINISTER: Hepzibah Baptist Church is seeking someone for our youth, middle school and children's ministry department. Please send resumé to: Hepzibah Baptist Church, 20512 Hepzibah Church Road, McCalla, AL 35111 or larrysumrall@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME STUDENT PASTOR: Grace Baptist Church is seeking a part-time student pastor. Send resumé and references to the attention of W. Stacey Boutwell. Email: stacey@graceoxford.

com. Mail: 2018 Hinton Drive, Oxford, AL 36203. Email is preferred.

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

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

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 12

Explore the Bible

By Dale Younce

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

BE HONEST AND FAIR

Deuteronomy 16:18–20; 19:14–20; 25:13–16

Most adults would agree that people ought to treat one another honestly and fairly. However, treating another person as one wants to be treated can be difficult at times. For example, treating another person honestly and fairly may come at a price to oneself. Or the feeling may arise that the other person would not appreciate honest and fair treatment or act similarly if the situation were reversed. Such possibilities can evoke the temptation to look out for oneself and take advantage of others. God expects His people to always treat others with honesty and fairness, regardless of the circumstances.

Expect Justice for All From All

(16:18–20)

At Mount Sinai, Moses had appointed leaders to assist him with the administration of the people (Deut. 1:13–14). Here, on the plains of Moab, he directed that this important duty continue in each city. “Judges” were those who adjudicated cases by applying the law, while “officers” were subordinates who kept official records, advised the judges and carried out the judges’ decisions.

Most importantly, the judges and officers were to be men of character. Their verdicts were to conform to the righteous standards set forth by God’s word. They were not to twist the law and so to pervert justice. They were to treat each person as if they had no prior knowledge of the individual. Accepting a bribe would blind and twist their ability to act in fairness to the parties in litigation.

The Israelites were instructed to appoint judicial officials who would always pursue justice and decide cases rightly without showing favoritism to anyone. Christians can work to help create a just society by installing and supporting godly community leaders who will treat all citizens justly.

Respect Your Neighbor’s Stuff

(19:14)

“Boundary markers” were used to designate the limit of one’s property. Usually they

were stones bearing inscriptions identifying the property’s owner. Moving a neighbor’s boundary stone was equivalent to stealing his property. Christians can demonstrate their personal commitment to honesty and fairness by always respecting others’ possessions.

Tell the Whole Truth and Nothing but

(19:15–20)

Every system of justice depends on knowing and speaking the truth. To give false witness is to break God’s commandment (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20). To prevent false testimony, God gave the principle that two or three witnesses were required to convict a person of a crime. This principle was a safeguard against anyone bringing an untruthful charge against someone because of a quarrel or some other impure motive.

In cases where there was only one witness, both the accused and the witness would go to a central tribunal of priests and judges for trial. If investigation found the witness false, then he would receive the same punishment the accused would have received if he were guilty. This law would serve as a deterrent against giving false testimony in court. Christians are to embody truthfulness in all their relationships and, when called upon to testify about others, never to lie or intentionally hide the truth.

Do Business With Integrity (25:13–16)

In the ancient Middle Eastern world, commerce was conducted by the use of weights and measures. Honest weights and measures were essential to the public good.

Dishonest weights and measures were used in buying and selling. When buying, a dishonest merchant would use a heavy weight so he would receive more than he should. When selling, he would use a light weight, marked the same as a heavy weight, so that he gave less than he should. Moses declared that those who disobeyed this law would not live long in the promised land. Today Christians help build a stable community when they set the standard in always conducting their business transactions with biblical integrity.

Bible Studies for Life

By Joseph F. Scrivner

Assistant Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

CENTER OF MY CHURCH

Colossians 1:24–2:7

Obviously being a Christian means believing in and following Jesus Christ. Yet Christians differ greatly on what this discipleship entails, in terms of specific beliefs, worship practices, congregational organization, congregational relationships and leadership qualifications, just to name a few. Even among Baptists in Alabama, significant variety exists. Nevertheless each believer, minister and congregation must thoroughly examine whether particular approaches consistently point believers and unbelievers to Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord.

What Is Our Message? (1:24–27)

In other letters, Paul often refers to his suffering as a benefit for the church (1 Cor. 4:8–13; 2 Cor. 1:3–11; 6:3–10). Likewise, as he writes to the Colossians from prison (Col. 4:3), his incarceration is suffering that will complete in his flesh “what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for His body, that is, the church.” Paul apparently means that his suffering participates in completing the time of tribulation before God brings this age to its appointed end (Mark 13:1–36). Indeed Luke quotes Paul and Barnabas saying, “It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Similarly Paul tells another church that it was appointed for persecution (1 Thess. 3:3–4; see also Rom. 8:18–30).

Paul’s suffering is part of his mission as an apostle to the Gentiles. While the Old Testament foresaw a day when Gentiles would worship Israel’s God (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 56:3), it was unforeseen that He would accept Gentiles as Gentiles through faith in Christ. As Paul says in Ephesians, “This was not made known to people in other generations as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: The Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body and partners of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:5–6).

Do our contemporary churches continue to demonstrate “the glorious wealth of this

mystery”? Does such demonstration require ethnic diversity to be consistent with Paul’s emphasis on Jews and Gentiles together in the church? Diversity of worship styles? How do our congregations demonstrate that God’s kingdom is at hand? What is our message?

Are We Growing Spiritually?

(1:28–2:3)

Paul reminds his audience that his constant focus is the mystery of Christ among the Gentiles (28). Moreover he exerts himself to make sure these believers are maturing in Christ (29). It is important that they understand this and it encourages their faith (1–2). Paul’s labor for them should also inspire them to listen to him as he reminds them that Christ is the source of “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (3). In sum, Paul is reminding them of his status as an apostle, his suffering for them and how that should lead them to listen closely to his admonition. It is for the sake of their spiritual growth.

Are We Walking the Walk? (2:4–7)

Paul is attempting to persuade his audience that his counsel should be taken more seriously than what others may be saying, especially those who teach a different view of Christ and knowledge. Indeed it appears others are offering additional aspects to faith in Christ (Col. 2:16–23). Paul exhorts these believers to resist this teaching. Rather they should maintain the strength of their faith in Christ. This includes remembering that they began as an extension of Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. Though he is absent in body, he is with them in spirit. Thus these believers should continue to grow in the faith they first received.

Paul’s exhortation requires repeated self-examination. Is Christ the center of our ministry and service? Do we see Christ as the source of our maturity and growth? Or are we tempted to follow those who commend additional rules and motivations? May God enable us to listen closely to Paul’s warning: “Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces of the world, and not based on Christ” (Col. 2:8).

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. He laid each ____ one against another. (Gen. 15:10)

4. ____ for the multitude of Egypt. (Ezek. 32:18)

8. ____ are of God. (1 John 4:6)

10. Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)

11. And the Jews' ____ was at hand. (John 2:13)

13. ____, when camest thou hither? (John 6:25)

16. Right. (abbr.)

17. They fled before the men of _____. (Josh. 7:4)

18. Neither ____ there salvation in any other. (Acts 4:12)

19. Left Tackle. (abbr.)

21. Bring him ____ unto Felix. (Acts 23:24)

23. The number of the army of the ____ were. (Rev. 9:16)

27. The hour cometh, and ____ is. (John 4:23)

28. Jesus began to be ____ amazed and heavy. (Mark 14:33)

29. ____ in their hands. (Rev. 7:9)

31. Why ____ ye that which is not lawful to do? (Luke 6:2)

32. 400 in Roman numerals.

33. The swallow hath found ... a ____ for herself. (Ps. 84:3)

34. Why make ye this ____, and weep? (Mark 5:39)

36. ____ doth he yet find fault? (Rom. 9:19)

37. Let it be ____ with the dew of heaven. (Dan. 4:15)

38. Unknown author. (abbr.)

40. Let us ____ with patience the race before us. (Heb. 12:1)

41. To satisfy hunger or thirst.

44. He went before, ascending up to _____. (Luke 19:28)

47. Enemies and my ____ came upon me. (Ps. 27:2)

48. 2 in Roman numerals.

49. I have many things to ____ to judge of you. (John 8:26)

50. They went their ways, one to his _____. (Matt. 22:5)

51. There shall not be left one ____ upon another. (Matt. 24:2)

52. His enemy ... sowed ____ among the wheat. (Matt. 13:25)

Down

1. Lord, save us, we _____. (Matt. 8:25)

2. A type of tide.

3. Many different wires make up a ____.

4. The beast ... shall make ____ against them. (Rev. 11:7)

5. Fall-blooming flower.

6. There ____ not one of them left. (2 Sam. 13:30)

7. A lad here which hath five barley _____. (John 6:9)

8. Why could not ____ cast him out? (Mark 9:28)

9. Unit of work.

12. 6 in Roman numerals.

14. ____ did what was right. (1 Kings 15:11)

15. Hold ____!

20. Goodness and _____. (Ps. 23:6)

22. On our solemn ____ day. (Ps. 81:3)

23. What the people yelled to the son of David. (Matt. 21:9)

24. Expression of pain.

25. Missouri. (abbr.)

26. Nickname for Edward.

27. New Mexico. (abbr.)

29. Pet ____.

30. Left Tackle. (abbr.)

31. Animal that is called an ass in the Bible.

33. Compass direction.

35. Learn to ____ well. (Isa. 1:17)

36. There ____ a great earthquake. (Matt. 28:2)

38. Australia. (abbr.)

39. Any among you ____ (singular verb form) to be religious. (Jam. 1:26)

40. They were the ____ of him. (2 Chron. 28:23)

42. Having seen the promises ____ off. (Heb. 11:13)

43. He ____ his hair out.

44. Jesse. (abbr.)

45. City in Brazil.

46. Lay not thine hand upon the _____. (Gen. 22:12)

50. Name of a musical note.

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PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

Islamic extremists bomb church, home; kill 7

BAUCHI, Nigeria — Early morning attacks Jan. 22 in Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi state left at least seven Christians dead and a church building destroyed. The attack on the Evangelical Church Winning All Church 2, residents of Tafawa Balewa said, was carried out by area Islamic extremists alongside members of the Boko Haram sect, with the church building and surrounding houses bombed.

Yunnana Yusufu, pastor of the Church of Christ in Nigeria in Tafawa Balewa, said the assailants arrived in the early morning hours and began shooting at Christians in the town.

"I saw seven dead bodies of some of the Christians killed," Yusufu said. "The situation is terrible, and I am about to go out to other parts of the town, to see the extent of the damage caused by the attackers." Yusufu said that many other Christians were injured. Bauchi Police Commissioner Ikechukwu Aduba reportedly confirmed the attack on Tafawa Balewa, saying two soldiers and a policeman, as well as eight civilians, were later killed in a gunfight. He added that six suspects had been arrested.

Police also reported that bombs were thrown at a Catholic church building and an evangelical church building in Bauchi city, causing little damage and no deaths or injuries. Two weeks prior, gunmen believed to be Muslim Fulani herdsmen attacked three Christian farmers on their farms in Pyakman village, near Tafawa Balewa, killing the three.

Former Muslim extremist flees after death threats

NAIROBI, Kenya — A former member of a Muslim extremist group in Uganda who converted to Christianity is in hiding in Kenya, his movements severely restricted following threats to kill him. Hassan Sharif Lubenga, 54, was a sheikh and member of Buk Haram, a violent group of Islamists whose name suggests that the Bible is corrupt and therefore forbidden.

Originally from Chengera, close to Kampala, the husband to four wives began his conversion process four years ago; in June 2011, he said, after dreams and visions in which Jesus appeared to him, he made a full commitment to follow Christ. In 2009, he said, a message from Jesus came to him in a vision: "Do not hide your Christian faith."

Within a few months, a threatening letter arrived: "If you do not join Islamic jihad, then we shall kill you." His father, Morshid Kabide, came to his house in July 2010 to establish the truth of the rumors he had heard, Lubenga said. When he affirmed his faith in Jesus, his father was crestfallen; he later committed suicide, leaving a letter that read, "I have decided to kill myself because my son became a Christian" and urged all family members to curse him.

"But I kept my faith in Jesus," he said. "I sold some of my belongings to build the church structure at Chengera." As a result of this act, threats on his life grew more shrill, and he fled to Kenya.

Christian charged with 'blasphemy' denied bail

LAHORE, Pakistan — A judge has denied bail to a young Christian man charged with desecrating the Quran under Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws despite the lack of evidence against him, sources said. Police in Shahdara, near Lahore, had arrested 23-year-old Khuram Masih on Dec. 5 and charged him with desecrating the Quran after his landlord, Zulfiqar Ali, alleged that he had burned pages of the book in order to prepare tea. Masih has said that he was falsely accused in the case because he had had an argument with Ali, his landlord.

Section 295-B makes willful desecration of the Quran or use of an extract in a derogatory manner punishable with life imprisonment. Masih's previous lawyers, Muhammad Farhad Tirmizi and Liaqat John, on Jan. 3 petitioned for his bail. Additional Sessions Judge Anjum Raza Syed refused to grant bail to Masih on grounds that the case was "very sensitive, and bail to the accused would fan religious sentiments and cause a great mishap." Asif Aqeel, executive director of the Community Development Initiative, said lawyers hired by Masih's relatives should not have petitioned the trial court for Masih's bail so soon in the Muslim-majority country.

"The judges in trial court are under extreme pressure from religious quarters and simply cannot set a blasphemy accused free on bail after just a month of the incident," Aqeel said.

Future of gay 'marriage' in question as states redefine its definition

The effort to redefine marriage nationwide could take a critical turn either way this year, with as many as four more states potentially legalizing gay "marriage" or as many as six states possibly voting to protect the traditional definition of marriage.

Gay activists also could reach one of their biggest goals: a first-ever victory at the ballot box.

All of the states involve legislatures or voter initiatives in what is shaping up to be the busiest year yet in the political battle over marriage's definition — even more so than 2004. During that year, 13 of 13 states voted to amend their constitutions to define traditional marriage during a year that saw a social conservative wave. But no legislature in 2004 was threatening to pass a gay "marriage" bill, as is the case this year.

Washington is one of those states. "Ultimately the people will decide on marriage [in Washington]," said Joseph Backholm, executive director of the conservative Family Policy Institute of Washington, the state currently in the spotlight. "And in 31 out of 31 states, they've voted not to redefine marriage, and we don't expect that Washington will be any different."

Crucial votes

State legislatures in Washington, Maryland and New Jersey are set to consider gay "marriage" bills, while Maine citizens are set to vote on a gay "marriage" referendum in November. If those four states redefine marriage, it would provide gay activists with a milestone: same-sex "marriage" would be legal in 10 states.

But conservatives — who warn that religious liberty will take a hit if those bills pass — also could win in each of those states. Washington and Maryland allow citizens to place recently enacted laws directly on the ballot, and New Jersey's governor has threatened to veto that state's bill while also urging it to be placed before voters. Elsewhere, North Carolina and Minnesota citizens will consider constitutional amendments defining marriage as between a man and a woman. In New Hampshire, the state legislature is poised to vote on a bill that would reverse that state's gay "marriage" law. When including Maine, voters in at least six states could have their say on marriage.

"[It is] already shaping up to be a 'make or break' year for marriage in America," Brian Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage, a traditional group, wrote in an email to supporters.

For the moment, all eyes are on Washington state, where Democratic Gov. Christine Gregoire announced in early January her support for a gay "marriage" bill and where the state House and Senate

apparently have the votes to pass it. Adding to momentum for the bill, some of the nation's top companies based in the Pacific Northwest — Microsoft, Nike and Starbucks — have endorsed it. Unlike its border state of Oregon, Washington does not have a constitutional amendment protecting the traditional definition of marriage.

If a gay marriage bill is signed into law, opponents will have 90 days to gather about 150,000 signatures to put it on the ballot.

Washington is the latest example of gay activists using civil unions or domestic partnerships as a stepping stone to pushing for gay "marriage." That happened in several other states, including Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont. Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, a Democrat, used his January State of the State address to call for the legislature to pass civil unions.

Traditionalists warn the legalization of gay "marriage" would have a widespread negative impact on society, affecting the tax-exempt status of religious organizations, the religious liberty of private businesses and curriculum in elementary schools.

Following is a 2012 state-by-state overview of the marriage political battle:

Maryland: One year after seeing a gay "marriage" bill die in the House of Delegates, Democratic Gov. Martin O'Malley has made a bill one of his priorities this year. A bill passed the Senate in 2011 but did not receive a vote in the House, partially because of opposition from black pastors. Democrats control both chambers. Even if the bill is signed into law this year, Maryland citizens could collect signatures and place the issue on the ballot.

New Jersey: Leaders in the Democratic-controlled legislature have made a gay "marriage" bill one of their top priorities, even though Republican Gov. Chris Christie

has vowed a veto. Christie says he wants the issue to be placed on the ballot.

Maine: Three years after Maine voters rejected a gay "marriage" law, 53-47 percent, gay activists in the state are set to place the issue back on the ballot. They've collected enough signatures to put a referendum on the ballot and are hopeful they can make the state the first where voters embrace gay "marriage."

"[It is] already shaping up to be a 'make or break' year for marriage in America."

Brian Brown
National Organization for Marriage

erendum on the ballot and are hopeful they can make the state the first where voters embrace gay "marriage."

New Hampshire: The Republican-controlled House and Senate have veto-proof margins, and they'll need them in order to get a bill overturning the state's gay "marriage" law past Democratic Gov.

John Lynch. Lynch signed that bill in 2009 when Democrats were in charge, but Republicans took back control during the 2010 election. The compromise bill would reverse the law but allow existing "marriages" to remain intact while putting civil unions back in place. Lynch is certain to veto it.

Minnesota: Voters in November will consider a constitutional amendment that says "only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota." Conservatives say the amendment is needed: a lawsuit that would legalize gay "marriage" is making its way through state court. A majority of states — 29 — already have similar amendments.

Defining marriage

North Carolina: Voters in the Tar Heel State will get a chance May 8 to define marriage as between a man and a woman. All four states that border North Carolina already have constitutional marriage amendments. The amendment states that "marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State." The amendment also would prohibit New Jersey-style civil unions that grant all the legal benefits of marriage, without the name. (BP)

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announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.





BP photo

PROVIDING NECESSITIES — Volunteers with California Baptists' 'Feeding Those Who Feed Us' ministry fill backpacks to be distributed to migrant children.

Worthwhile ministry

Migrant worker outreach marks 10 years

Nearly 200 pairs of boys' jeans for \$4 each.

Nine hundred backpacks for \$4.20 each.

Nearly 900 patients receiving free medical and dental checks.

And, the most significant number of all from California Baptists' "Feeding Those Who Feed Us" (FTWU) ministry last summer: 1,165 professions of faith.

The shoes and backpacks are among many items that Tom Stringfellow, who works year-round with the FTWU ministry, collects during the off-season when they can be purchased at deep discounts. The items are held at a storage facility then made available for churches and associations to distribute to migrant children during the summer.

In its 10th year, the ministry was born out of First Baptist Church, Beverly Hills, Calif., where Stringfellow was pastor before becoming director of missions for Sierra Butte Baptist Association. The initiative continues to grow, particularly in the current baleful economy — and particularly in seasons like last summer in which the harvest was delayed by an unusually cool and late spring.

Weather impact

"The weather made crops not mature enough to pick, and the delay had a real impact on workers," Stringfellow said. "We went to lots of places where men were sitting around the home when they should've been out working. And sometimes the schedule we work off of put us in places before workers had even arrived. In Yuba City,

for instance, the migrant center was only half full."

FTWU, which involved more than 130 churches in 2011, is conducted primarily at California's state-operated migrant centers — an unlikely alliance at first glance.

Stringfellow explained that the first year, "I went to five locations before I found one that would let me on the gated property. We were giving away new shoes, shirts and pants to every child, putting food in the house and holding a Vacation Bible School. Finally, one center invited me back to a meeting ... and had me present what we were going to do. They said if the migrants approve it, it's okay with the state of California.

"Well, without hesitation, with a standing ovation, they approved it," Stringfellow said. "State officials said it was okay so long as no one was forced."

Only legal migrant workers with families are allowed to live in these centers, removing one potential complication involved with migrant ministry. Most centers host around 90 households, the majority of them in two-bedroom units with five to six people per unit. Most families have two or three children under the age of 12 who must change public school every time their parents relocate, following the seasonal crops — from peaches in California to apples in Washington.

FTWU retains its original elements from the first year — a new pair of shoes, two shirts, a pair of pants and a backpack for each child, food for the family and a Vacation Bible School with an evangelistic emphasis — yet has expanded

over the years to include, in many places, free medical and dental clinics, block parties, sports camps and more.

"From the churches that participate, we try to get \$3,500 per migrant center," Stringfellow noted. "Last year when I spoke at the 'Tsunami' student conference [sponsored by the state convention], the youth there raised just short of \$7,000 for the project, and some went back and got their churches on board. That was really neat.

Generous giving

"And the California Mission Offering has now put us in, with a little bit left over from this year, and a couple of churches have been very generous. We buy collectively with that money. Otherwise you couldn't afford to do it.

"It's a year-round job for me and Oscar!" Stringfellow added, referring to Oscar Sanchez, California Southern Baptist Convention migrant ministries field specialist.

Sanchez was at the Merced migrant center with the California convention's Mobile Medical Clinic in late June. "While we were at the clinic," he said, "someone from the center came running to tell us there was an emergency. An older woman from the center had just fainted from heat exhaustion.

"Dr. Michael, a volunteer doctor, immediately went over to attend to this lady's situation. He was able to help her, and her family was very grateful to the doctor.

"Situations like this — helping people with no medical insurance — make this ministry worthwhile," Sanchez said. (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Court sides with Christian counseling grad student

CINCINNATI — A federal appeals court has delivered at least a temporary victory for religious freedom and free speech in the confrontation between Christian counseling students and university programs that affirm homosexuality.

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Jan. 27 in favor of an Eastern Michigan University (EMU) graduate student who declined to affirm the "sexual orientation" of homosexual clients because of her religious beliefs. As a result of her refusal, the university expelled Julea Ward from the counseling program in 2009.

A three-judge panel of the Sixth Circuit unanimously overturned a federal court's summary judgment in favor of the school.

"Public universities shouldn't force students to violate their religious beliefs to get a degree. The court rightly understood this and ruled appropriately," said Jeremy Tedesco, legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund, who argued for Ward before the court. A school official said Ward violated sections of the American Counseling Association code of ethics, including "discrimination based on ... sexual orientation." Ward said she was not opposed to counseling homosexual clients if she was not required to affirm their "sexual orientation."

"Surely, for example, the ban on discrimination against clients based on their religion (1) does not require a Muslim counselor to tell a Jewish client that his religious beliefs are correct if the conversation takes a turn in that direction and (2) does not require an atheist counselor to tell a person of faith that there is a God if the client is wrestling with faith-based issues," the opinion from the panel said. "Tolerance is a two-way street. Otherwise, the rule mandates orthodoxy, not anti-discrimination."

No need for parallel courts of Islamic law, study shows

WASHINGTON — North American Muslims are more than satisfied with the secular legal system and do not want a set of parallel courts for Islamic law, according to a new study of U.S. and Canadian Muslims by a Washington-based think tank.

The study, by University of Windsor law professor Judy Macfarlane for the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding indicates that Muslims are just as unwilling to accept Islamic law as non-Muslims.

Macfarlane interviewed 212 Muslim Americans, including 41 imams and 70 community leaders who used aspects of Shariah in their daily lives. The other 101 interviewees were divorced Muslim men and women.

When asked whether they thought American courts should apply Shariah to non-Muslims in the legal system, all of the respondents answered no. Just three of the 41 imams said they wanted parallel Shariah tribunals where Muslims could handle civil issues like marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

Macfarlane began her research after a Muslim group in Ontario petitioned the provincial government in 2003 to establish a separate Islamic family tribunal where Muslims could get binding legal decisions on family law issues. The Ontario government denied the request and abolished similar tribunals for Catholic and Jewish citizens that had been allowed in 1991.

States focus on legalizing online gambling as revenue

NEW YORK — As budget deficits continue to increase, several states are getting more serious about legalizing online gambling as a potential revenue source.

Nevada, Iowa, New Jersey, California and the District of Columbia are among those whose leaders are taking steps to allow citizens to play poker online, *The New York Times* reported Jan. 17.

The American Gaming Association says legalizing online poker could generate as much as \$2 billion per year in tax revenue, *The Times* said.

Some states won't stop at poker, *The Times* said. The District of Columbia is considering blackjack and bingo, and New Jersey already attempted to legalize all sorts of casino gambling online.

A report commissioned in Iowa found, "Given the ease, convenience and constant availability of online gambling, it is speculated that legal Internet gambling could exacerbate problems for an unknown number of Iowans with, or at risk of developing, gambling problems."

The U.S. Department of Justice in December cleared the way for states to generate revenue through online gambling, including lotteries, poker and other games that do not involve sports by reversing a longstanding position that all forms of online gambling were illegal in the United States.