

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Feb. 23, 2012
Vol. 177, No. 8

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

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'Living water'

Southern Baptists help provide clean water, share Christ's love in Central Asia

In remote areas of Central Asia, access to clean water is a matter of life and death, especially for children. One humanitarian project supported by Southern Baptists in that region is making steady progress against the deadly scourge of impure water.

Worldwide, an estimated 4,500 children die each day — about one every 20 seconds — from illnesses related to impure water, primarily diarrhea, diphtheria, hepatitis and cholera, according to the United Nations.

Those who survive suffer from poor health and missed opportunities for education.

In the 2012 portion of an ongoing project, as many as 15,000 people will be protected from water-borne diseases in a Baptist-sponsored demonstration of God's love as 30 new water wells are installed and several broken pumps are repaired on existing wells.

"Only about 12 percent of the people in this area have access to a clean water source," said Francis Horton, who with his wife, Angie, directs work in Central and South Asia for Baptist Global Response (BGR), an international relief and development organization.

'Basic needs'

"If a family can't afford a deep well, they are dependent on community wells or water systems, which may not work or may be salty. Water is one of the basic needs for life, and the majority of people in this country do not have access to clean water."

The humanitarian group partnering with BGR in that area of Central Asia has good experience in these commu-



BP photo

'LIFE-SAVING GIFTS' — A child in Central Asia draws pure water from a well provided by a humanitarian project supported by Southern Baptists.

nities and is working with the local government and other humanitarian organizations that have drilled wells in the area, Horton said.

Communities receiving wells contribute by hosting the drilling crews and preparing the well site.

Each community also takes responsibility for the ongoing maintenance and repair of the well and pump.

While the cost of installing or repairing the wells comes to about \$10 per person, the long-term benefits of the resulting relationships cannot be calculated, Horton said.

"In one community where a new

well began providing clean water, community development workers were able to start an animal husbandry project. In another community, the well project was followed with a latrine project," Horton noted.

"Workers have been able to drink many cups of tea and share meals in the homes of community leaders. We were able to help with a medical need, a young boy who had eye problems. Relationships of trust are being built and through these relationships, transformation of communities can come.

"Well drilling is messy work, and as our partners labor alongside their crew members, community residents have an opportunity to see their character and understand this well is a demonstration of Christ's love for them," Horton added.

"We do this because God is, in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, 'the fountain of living water' and we want people to experience the river of living water Jesus offers to

everyone."

Community residents respond to the demonstration of Jesus' love

with praise that God had answered their prayers for clean water and affirmations the Lord had been gracious in sending the drilling teams, Horton said.

"We are able to present life-saving gifts like this to these communities because Southern Baptists are a people who care about people in need," Horton said.

"When these families celebrate the pure water pouring from a new pump, Southern Baptists can celebrate, too, because their gifts will make a life-changing difference for generations." (BP)

"When these families celebrate the pure water pouring from a new pump, Southern Baptists can celebrate, too."

Francis Horton
Baptist Global Response

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering totals on the rise

Southern Baptist churches gave 3 percent more to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in 2011 than they did in 2010.

For the year ending Dec. 31, 2011, the offering totaled \$56,040,868.

The offering directly pays for missionary salaries and provides field resources for missionaries serving in North America. Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), shared the offering total at the Feb. 8 meeting of NAMB's board of trustees in Miami.

"I want to thank Southern Baptists for their generosity and for continuing to make North America a priority," he said. "I also want to promise that we place a high value on stewardship and that your offering dollars are being spent carefully and wisely."

Funds given to Annie Armstrong go directly to missionaries serving on the missions field. They are not spent on salaries for staff serving at NAMB's Alpharetta, Ga., building and they are not used for administrative costs.

NAMB promotes Annie Armstrong in partnership with national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). Ezell thanked WMU leaders and members for their "tireless efforts on behalf of our missionaries and on behalf of this offering."

"Wanda Lee (national WMU executive director) and WMU are champions for our missionaries and they are the best partners we could ask for when it comes to encouraging Southern Baptists to support this offering," he said.

Lee noted, "It is both exciting and encouraging to see the 2011 offering total up from last year. ... We are grateful for our strong partnership with (NAMB), the committed missionaries who serve all across North America to make Him known and share His love, and Southern Baptists who give sacrificially each year so that their work might not only continue but flourish." (BP)

COMMENT

Constitutional Right vs. Religious Liberty

During a panel discussion about President Obama's mandate that employers, including religious ministries, provide insurance coverage for contraceptives, one panelist declared, "This is a test between a constitutional right (health care) and religious liberty."

The panelist is a well-informed personality regularly featured on talk shows, so the comment was not from some ill-informed individual. That is what made the observation so onerous. The speaker claimed a constitutional right for a proposed government policy and placed religious liberty as something beyond the pale of constitutional protection.

That is exactly opposite of what the U.S. Constitution provides. Religious liberty is a core constitutional concept. The Constitution's framers understood that it was an inalienable right granted by God. It had its genesis at creation when God made man in His image. Man has a dignity unlike any other creation. That dignity requires that no power — secular or sacred — attempt to come between a human being and the Creator.

The writer of the Declaration of Independence declared men were "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." That concept was carried forward in the Constitution in the First Amendment's first two clauses. In the first (the establishment clause), government is prohibited from doing anything to advance religion. In the second (the free exercise clause), government is prohibited from doing anything to prevent free and uninhibited worship.

Thus, from the beginning, religious liberty has been considered an inalienable right codified in the nation's laws. It is recognized as a "human right" in today's terms.

Not so with health care. Free and uninhibited access to health care may be a government policy. It may even be a good government policy, but it is not a constitutional right. Some want to call health care a "human right" and equate it with religious liberty. For example, some public spokesmen appeal to a sense of community and argue that the nation's shared morality justifies free and uninhibited access to health care as a human right.

But if the nation's shared morality can justify free and uninhibited access to health care, then that access can be taken away when the nation's morality changes or the sense of community ceases to exist. Human rights do not have their origin in government. They have their origin in God. He is certainly concerned that His children have access to health care. All God's children should be concerned. But access to health care is not on the same plane as religious liberty.

In society, no liberty is unlimited, not even religious liberty. When personal liberty begins to impact the general welfare, it is often curtailed. One of the clearest examples is that individuals are free to handle snakes as part of their religious worship.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

But when snake handling is done in the presence of others, the general welfare is endangered and personal liberty (the right to handle snakes in worship) is restricted.

In 1993, Congress passed and the president signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. This law stipulates that government must evidence a "compelling interest" whenever it limits a person's religious freedom. If government can demonstrate a "compelling interest," then it can limit religious freedom but only in the "least restrictive manner."

An inalienable right

The laws of the United States make clear that religious freedom is an inalienable right that can be limited only under the most pressing circumstances and then only in the most unobtrusive ways.

That is why President Obama's policy requiring religious ministries such as hospitals, colleges, etc. to pay for insurance coverage that provides free contraceptives elicited such a protest. Catholic bishops said they are being required to pay for something they consider sinful. The Roman Catholic Church's official position is that contraception is sinful.

Baptists from the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) to the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC) cried foul, saying the Obama administration had overstepped its bounds. The policy violates the religious liberty of a large segment of citizens. The proposed government policy makes no attempt to accommodate these citizens' religious convictions and imposes a system that is invasive to the inner workings of the various faith groups.

At every point, the administration failed to protect the nation's commitment to religious liberty in its pursuit of free and uninhibited access to health care including free access to contraceptives.

Responding to the cries about religious liberty, President Obama backtracked, saying religious groups would not have to pay for free access to contraceptives. Instead insurance companies would be required to provide the services free of charge. Administration spokesmen said it would be less expensive in the long run for insurance companies to provide contracep-

tives free of charge than not to provide them.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops initially called President Obama's move "a good first step." But soon the bishops announced they would oppose the new policy with the same vigor as they had the former using judicial and legislative channels. They concluded that even if religious employers do not have to pay for the contraceptives, it is still bad public policy.

Richard Land of the ERLC called the change an "accounting trick" that ends up with religious employers continuing to pay for the contraceptives. He called on Southern Baptists to continue opposing the proposal on religious freedom grounds. Some said the real issue is "infanticide" because babies are killed by some drugs available as contraceptives.

That is one reason the Catholic bishops labeled the proposal "vile and despicable."

Absent from the bishops' news release announcing continued opposition was the claim that religious liberty was being violated by the proposal. The BJC opined that by backtracking on forcing religious employers to pay for contraception, the religious liberty concerns have been satisfied.

The argument over President Obama's policy of free and uninhibited access to contraceptives is far from over. Legal challenges have been filed. Proposed legislative challenges have been announced. But the framework of the debate has been significantly altered. Protests to the initial policy announcement were heard, and steps were taken to address this clear violation of religious liberty. Whether it is enough remains to be seen.

Baptists must always be on guard against those who would deny or take away religious liberty entirely in pursuit of some government policy based on the moral standards of the day. Religious liberty is a gift from God for all times. It must stand even when social policies change.

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
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is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. **Web site:** www.thealabamabaptist.org **E-mail:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and other locations.

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

NEWS SERVICES: Baptist Press (BP), Associated Baptist Press (ABP), Religion News Service (RNS), Compass Direct News (CDN), Evangelical Press (EP), Forum 18 (F18).
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.
ADDRESS CHANGE: Send old and new addresses, and name of church to Circulation Department, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Allow two weeks.

Evangelism Conference marking 65 years of inspiring

By Carrie B. McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

This year marks the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference's 65th anniversary, and planners say this year's conference — set for Feb. 27–28 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery — will continue the event's long tradition of inspiring leaders to share the good news.

"The State Evangelism Conference has always been geared around meeting the needs of

Alabama pastors and lay people. This year, we will recognize that we stand on the shoulders of giants," said Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), which sponsors the annual conference.

Gilbreath said the anniversary will be noted during the first session on Monday evening. He plans a brief presentation highlighting milestones from the conference's history, including Alabama's leadership in bringing prominent African-American evangelists to the state.

"We want to remind the men and women at the conference of the legendary names that have preached at this event through the years," Gilbreath said.

In recognition of the SBOM office of evangelism's past leadership, former Director Harper Shannon will close the Monday evening session with prayer, Gilbreath said.

Jeff Crook, senior pastor of Blackshear Place Baptist Church, Flowery Branch, Ga., and Mac Brunson, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., will speak that evening.

While the Monday evening start is one change to this year's schedule, another change is that there will be no breakout or teaching sessions. Gilbreath said this is in response to requests to focus on the shared time of fellowship and worship, a change he was happy to make.

"Each year, we try to provide what the pastors and the lay people need, so the conference takes on a different shape

each year," Gilbreath said.

This year's schedule also emphasizes the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) national evangelism effort, GPS (God's Plan for Sharing). Two of Tuesday's featured speakers are from the North American Mission Board: Larry Wynn, vice president of evangelism, and Thomas Hammond, GPS team leader. Other speakers on Tuesday include Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee; Phil Hoskins, senior pastor of Higher Ground Baptist Church, Kingsport, Tenn.; and Adam Dooley, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile.

The closing session on Tuesday night features Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, who Gilbreath said will provide an exciting and motivational close to the event.

Evans said he plans to address the relationship of evangelism to discipleship in effecting transformation in society.

"My message will challenge the church to a more comprehensive approach for maximizing its impact in the world," he said.

Gilbreath said participants can expect great music throughout both days' sessions from praise and worship leader Roy McNeil, as well as special music by Daniel Crews and other soloists and choirs. While he expects great attendance at the event, Gilbreath said the most important aspect is the opportunity for fellowship and worship, especially for Alabama Baptist pastors.

'Be fed'

"Week after week, our pastors pour their hearts into their sermons and their churches, so this is a time when they can come and just be fed," he said.

All conference sessions are free, except the banquet on Monday afternoon, featuring pastor and author Greg Saliccioli. The cost for the banquet includes a copy of Saliccioli's book, "Enemies of Excellence."

For reservations or more information, call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 245.



My message will challenge the church to a more comprehensive approach for maximizing its impact in the world."

*Pastor Tony Evans
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*



NAMB photo

SPECIFIC MISSION — Joshua Lenon preaches at Red Door Church, a 1-year-old church plant that operates out of The Underground, a state-of-the-art club concert venue in Cincinnati.

'Hitting the reset button'

Cincinnati church planter 'paints a picture' of heaven

It's just about dusk at Heritage Glen apartments in the Cincinnati suburb of Fairfield. As the sun drops from sight, the lower light begins to mask some of the harsher realities of this low-income apartment complex. A handful of volunteers from Red Door Church, a Southern Baptist church plant in Cincinnati, eagerly play with, laugh with and generally corral neighborhood kids.

The apartment complex is only about 25 miles from the posh community of Indian Hill, where Cincinnati's elite live. Yet Heritage Glen seems a thousand miles away.

But more to the point for church planter Joshua Lenon, it's even farther away from heaven. For the past two years, Red Door, started by Lenon in 2010, has pointed people in the apartment complex to Jesus by trying to close that distance.

"We can provide just a glimpse of heaven on earth," Lenon said. "We can paint a picture of God's future for these people."

Today that means throwing a block party for neighborhood families. In the past, it has meant everything from redoing the complex's playground to providing Thanksgiving meals for its residents.

And much of that ministry is thanks to the faithful gifts of Southern Baptists. "Flat out, we wouldn't be able to do what we're doing without the support of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the North American Mission Board," Lenon said.

The church's passionate commitment to bringing heaven to earth is borne out of a deeply held conviction about the Bible's most famous prayer: the Lord's

Prayer, found in Matthew 6. Lenon came to this realization in the midst of a particularly tough time in his life. Discouraged and saddened by a bad experience on staff at a large church, 30-year-old Lenon and his wife, Tiffany, left the ministry and began a time of deep soul-searching.

"The Lord's Prayer became really significant for me," he said. "I prayed it repeatedly. I thought about it constantly. For me, it was hitting the reset button. I knew this was going to be a critically important thing for me — to wrap my mind around this prayer."

Late one night he came across a life-altering realization — the Christian life isn't just about getting people into heaven; it is also about bringing heaven to earth.

Realizing this was the kind of truth that should incubate in community, he called up some friends near Cincinnati, where he is from, to see if anyone would want to study the truth together. To his surprise, many did. Thirty-five people showed up for a whiteboard session to discuss what it would be like if they spent their lives bringing heaven to earth.

Even after the group started meeting monthly, Lenon wasn't ready to call what was forming a "church." But God soon made the word unavoidable. Lenon and his wife moved back to Cincinnati with

no money, no jobs and the conviction that God wanted them to spend their lives "bringing heaven to earth."

For the next year, Lenon and the others who were joining him (his core team) made plans to start a church in suburban Cincinnati. He named the new church Red Door, which had a creative double meaning. In cultures around the world,

red doors represent places of refuge and safety. Lenon said the tradition goes all the way back to the Exodus, when the Israelites painted the doors of their homes with the blood of an unblemished lamb.

Now, a year and a half after the church officially launched in September 2010, worship attendance is starting to climb past 100 on Sunday mornings. Five people have been baptized in the past year.

The help of other Southern Baptists has been crucial to what God has done through Red Door. A strong partnership with a local Southern Baptist association and nearby Lakota Hills Baptist Church, West Chester Township, has provided a breath of fresh air for the church.

"In five years, we'd like to have two churches," he said. "Not a satellite but another pastor leading a community of people like the Red Door, sharing resources and sharing a vision." (NAMB)

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



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

Bible Basics

series

PART 8 OF 8 ON SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY



Revelation provides a clear vision of hope for the future

By Ken Roxburgh

Special to The Alabama Baptist

The Book of Revelation often lies in the dusty corners of the preaching program of many churches. It has become the playground of the cults, and many Christians have left it unread, turned off by the many bizarre flights of fancy found in many writers' extravagant interpretations. For many others, it is a frightening book that seems to portray a very different type of God from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we call "Abba." Many Christians feel like Swiss theologian Karl Barth, who said, "If only I knew what to do with Revelation."

Yet it is a book with a message containing both a word of comfort and challenge for Christians living in Birmingham, Montgomery and Mobile, instilling confidence in our hearts as well as challenging our commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.

The book enables us to see behind the human events of history with all the perplexity and pain we see around us. It is a visual portrayal of the outworking of God's plans and purposes for this world. It enables us to see the One controlling human history is Jesus Christ — the One who will ultimately triumph over all the forces of evil and bring in His eternal kingdom of righteousness. We are presented with a succession of scenes in which the unfolding drama of history reaches its climax when the whole of creation will declare, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God almighty reigns!"

One major mistake Christians make in reading Revelation is failing to understand the nature of the literature it represents: apocalyptic. It is a type of literature 21st century readers do not appreciate and with which very few are familiar. Yet apocalyptic ideas played a significant role in the development of Judaism and early Christianity and are of tremendous value in understanding Revelation. Without some insight into the genre of literature we are reading, we miss the writer's point.

The books of Daniel from the Old Testament and 4 Ezra from the Jewish Apocrypha are two examples of apocalyptic literature with which people of the time would have been familiar. They arose during periods of crisis in Israel's history, and by the time Christians began to listen to the Book of Revelation's message, this type of literature had become established over a period of several centuries.

Apocalyptic literature grappled with issues of faith and hope in the midst of oppression and persecution for God's people. The word "apocalypse" means an uncovering or a revealing of something that would otherwise have been hidden to human perception. Apocalyptic books disclose hidden details about the events surrounding the end of human history. In the midst of crisis and

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."



despair, they convey a sense of confidence that a coming judgment will vindicate God's people, triumph over evil powers and establish God's kingdom on earth.

Apocalyptic literature expressed the idea that this world offers no hope for improvement but history will end with a cosmic catastrophe at which time the apparently victorious wicked will be punished and the downtrodden righteous rewarded. Biblical apocalyptic literature speaks of the powers that oppose God — Satan, elemental spirits, principalities, thrones, the dragon, the beast and the Antichrist. The message of apocalyptic works declares that in and through all the darkness of the world, God will emerge as the triumphant victor over the forces of evil.

Biblical scholar E.F. Scott described this book as a "trumpet call to faith." John, the author of Revelation, knew from experience that living the Christian life could be difficult, dangerous and discouraging. This book was written to strengthen the faith and courage of believers, calm them as they faced an uncertain future and encourage them to continue to commit their lives to Jesus Christ, knowing He is Lord of heaven and earth.

Different interpretations

Revelation has been variously understood. Some have seen it as referring to the past events of John's day, in the last few years of the first century, and that its purpose was to bring encouragement to the harassed church of that time without any future application in terms of prophecy. This is a view known as the preterist interpretation, from the Latin word for past.

Another view, known as the historicist interpretation, sees the bulk of the book as a kind of panoramic view of world history. It views Revelation as history written in advance, usually interpreted as the history of Western Europe. At best, this is a narrow

view of the world, and at worst is patronizing to Christians of other cultures.

Perhaps the most common interpretation for many years among current evangelicals who have adopted the "Left Behind" perspective is the futurist interpretation, which views the majority of Revelation as referring to future events near the end of human history. Through the years, different interpreters have managed at different times of history to see fulfillment of different parts of the book.

One thing we need to remember is prophets were not so much predictors of historical events of the distant future but rather inspired interpreters of historical events through which their hearers were living.

Premillennial eschatology, the viewpoint that the Lord Jesus will return prior to a literal 1,000-year reign, had immense influence on people such as Evangelist Dwight L. Moody and Cyrus I. Scofield. The Scofield Reference Bible first appeared in 1909 and was revised in 1917. It introduced a chain cross-referencing system that tied together related verses of Scripture and allowed the reader to follow biblical themes. It taught the interpretative school of dispensationalism, which divided God's dealings with human beings into different time periods of human history. The Scofield Reference Bible was the chief vehicle by which premillennial dispensationalism became highly influential in the United States. Scofield's extensive notes on Revelation are a major source of the various timetables, judgments and plagues predicted by proponents of this view concerning the end times.

Premillennial dispensationalism has influenced many Southern Baptists' thinking, but the various editions of the Baptist Faith and Message have remained noncommittal about any one interpretation of eschatology. Southern Baptists continue to include within their theological perspectives a variety of views on eschatology, although it would not be surprising to discover that the majority understanding within many pulpits and pews throughout the country would be that espoused in the "Left Behind" series.

The crucial thing to remember about Revelation is that through its images, a timeless message from God is being communicated concerning Christ's ultimate victory over the forces of evil that were threatening to overwhelm the church at the end of the first century and every generation since that time. The particular perspective from which our writer begins, and returns to over and over again throughout the book,

is Christ's conquest over sin and evil at the cross of Calvary. This victory will ultimately be brought to its conclusion when Christ comes again at the end of human history.

Thus John was given a glimpse behind the scenes of human history from a heavenly perspective so he could see what was really going on in the events of his time and place. He also was transported in a vision to the final future of the world so he could see the present from the perspective of what its final outcome must be in God's ultimate plans and purposes. As we live in the 21st century, we need to re-appropriate language and images that match the realities of our contemporary context and culture. This will enable God's people to experience comfort and be challenged to live by faith in His promises. In this way, the church will display boldness in its worship and witness to God's gracious purposes of love for a lost and lonely world.

Authentic future

Revelation provides our contemporary culture with a clear vision of hope for the future. This is vitally important, because our society appears to lack a promising image of an authentic future. The fear of death troubles people all around us. Despite the progress that has been made in medical science, lowering the mortality rates among children and young adults, we are aware that death defines our personal future as well as our universe's future. Predictions that the universe will end with a cosmic freeze or burnout suggest to some cosmologists that the whole thing is pointless. Without a message of Christian hope, life appears meaningless. Revelation demonstrates that Christian hope is at the heart of our faith.

The book reminds us that the Christian life is concerned with not only spiritual life but also physical life. God is the God of creation, Incarnation and resurrection. The physical dimension of hope is linked to individual and corporate life, for animate and inanimate creation. God's activity always finds its fulfillment in embodiment — a new heaven and a new earth.

Christian hope also includes the concept of judgment. Yet, in Scripture, judgment is not a negative concept but a positive intervention by God to restore righteousness and set the community right. American theologian Jonathan Edwards spoke of how there are many "causes and controversies that must be decided by the Supreme Judge" before the human community can be righteous; some are individuals' violation of

"In a beautiful way, Revelation paints a positive picture of the eternal home ... of God's people."

Ken Roxburgh
Samford University

community life in society, some are “causes between one nation and another” and some are between one generation and another. Thus part of the last judgment involves setting to right all the accumulated injustices of history, when unrighteousness is eradicated and a new community established in which God’s will is done perfectly on earth as it is in heaven.

In a beautiful way, Revelation paints a positive picture of the eternal home and hope of God’s people. There will be no tears, death, sorrow or pain. Everything that robs human experience of being a fulfilled, joyful and vibrant life will be absent forevermore. There will be no barbed wire, bullets or bombs in heaven. Concentration camps and refugees will not exist. The weapons of sin and suffering will be no more: “God will wipe away all tears from all eyes” (Rev. 21:4). The tears of the widow and the orphan will be dried. The tears of the abandoned lover, the bitter tears of the unemployed, the tears of the black child snubbed in a white neighborhood, the tears we cry in secret and the tears we cry in our hearts will all be wiped away.

A new order of creation

There will be a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1) in which righteousness will dwell. Notice that John tells us that the heavenly city comes down to earth. Heaven is not pictured by John as being somewhere “up there ... way beyond the blue” but rather in terms of God bringing into being a new order of creation where heaven comes down to a renewed earth and God dwells with His people for all eternity. Our ultimate destiny is not a disembodied heavenly state of souls floating about in spiritual space but a re-created earth, resurrected bodies, a new community of the family of God knowing the presence of the risen Lord in its midst. Thus the eternal state is pictured as a city, a community, for a city speaks of interdependence — not so much of streets and buildings — but of people.

The eternal state is a place called the New Jerusalem, a place where God reigns supreme and uncontested as Lord and is worshiped by those who love Him. Within the New Jerusalem, there is the “water of life” and the “tree of life” to satisfy and enrich the experience and enjoyment of God’s people. There is no frustration but only fulfillment in living and serving the living God. The city has no need of a special temple because God’s presence fills the whole of the community.

Eternity also is pictured as a people, not just the residence of the faithful few, because this city’s dimensions are vast — some 12,000 furlongs (1,500 miles cubed). The dimensions are not to be taken literally but symbolically of an immense measurement: an infinite multiple of 12. It is to be the home of “all nations” who will stream to it, for the fulfillment of God’s kingdom is global in scope. In this way, God’s promises to Abraham come to their ultimate fulfillment as “all nations are blessed.” Thus men and women from all peoples, tribes, tongues and nations find a home in New Jerusalem, which is given for the “healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2).

The New Jerusalem is also an experience of God’s presence. In the words of David, “in your presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11). So God gives the water of life, which flows from His throne, and the fruit of the tree of life, which satisfies all our needs. His presence also takes away all our fears. Ultimately the future hope of the Christian church is that God will be glorified: glorified in His people, His creation and His own being.



Photo by Doug Rogers

IN PRAYER — Students and leaders gather in prayer at CEC 2012 held at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Missions field

CEC 2012 challenges Alabama college students

More than 500 college students and leaders from across the state gathered at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, for the seventh biennial Collegiate Evangelism Conference (CEC) on Feb. 10–11.

The Office of Collegiate and Student Ministries at the State Board of Missions created an environment where students who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministries or church college groups “are challenged to be bold in their faith and to recognize that they’re on a campus where people from all over the world are (attending),” said Chris Mills, an associate in the collegiate office.

“I believe college students have one of the most unique missions fields of all Alabama



Photo by Doug Rogers

WORSHIP TOGETHER — Shane & Shane led worship at CEC 2012 on Feb. 10–11.

Baptists,” Mills said. And that’s just what the CEC aims to expose to the students.

This year’s conference theme — One Message: The Gospel — was played out in worship led by Shane & Shane; messages from Mike Satterfield, of Field of Grace Ministries; speaker Michael Kelley, director of discipleship at LifeWay Resources and about 15 break-out sessions with topics ranging from apologetics to social media and

the gospel to evangelism for the introvert.

At CEC’s close, students filled out commitment cards to pursue holiness, pray, care and share the gospel with those around them and placed the cards on the altar.

Mills said he heard several positive remarks about the conference with most students saying, “Thank you. CEC really opened my eyes to a particular opportunity in my life to share the gospel.” (TAB)

Children’s honor choir to perform in north Alabama



SBOM photo

The Alabama Baptist All-State Honor Choir will be performing in the Athens/Decatur/Huntsville areas, March 3–4.

The 160-voice auditioned choir is composed of fourth- through sixth-grade boys and girls from across the state. Their repertoire of music is enhanced by a variety of instruments, sign language and movement, said Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

The choir is directed by Karen Gosselin, children’s choir specialist and associate in the SBOM office of worship leadership and church music (the office that sponsors the choir), and accompanied by music specialist Deb Anderson, of Selma.

The concert schedule is:
 March 3, 1:30 p.m., Decatur Mall
 March 3, 7 p.m., Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville
 March 4, 10:30 a.m., First Baptist Church, Athens (morning worship service)
 For more information, call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 318 or 230. (SBOM)

Decision in Jefferson Co. 'bingo' case; jury still out in federal vote-buying re-trial

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Once again, the Alabama court system has given gambling opponents a clear victory in the fight against so-called electronic bingo machines. This time, Jefferson County Circuit Judge Scott Vowell declared the gambling devices seized in "five consolidated civil forfeiture cases" to be slot machines and said "they do not play 'bingo.'"

Attorney General Luther Strange called the Feb. 10 ruling a "decisive court victory."

"The decision from Judge Vowell in Jefferson County Circuit Court marks a good day for the rule of law," he said in a press release. "The court in a detailed analysis held that machines masquerading as electronic bingo are, in fact, illegal slot machines. Bingo operators have tried to create confusion in the law, but this ruling ends the nonsense. Only the traditional game commonly known as bingo is authorized by the Jefferson County bingo amendment, and slot machines cannot be used to play bingo."

Strange added that "the fundamental legal principles" underlying the ruling "apply not only to Jefferson County but [to] all counties subject to local bingo amendments." He hoped the opinion would "serve as a warning" for current or would-be casino operators statewide.

While Jefferson County has a clear ruling in its gambling cases, it may be some time before the defendants in the federal vote-buying

Another lottery bill?

The one gambling expansion bill that has been filed at the Alabama Statehouse, as of press time, deals with legalizing a state lottery.

House Bill 282, sponsored by Rep. John Rogers, D-Birmingham, and co-sponsored by Reps. Mary Moore, D-Birmingham and Juandalynn Givan, D-Birmingham, would amend the constitution and "establish an Alabama Lottery to fund education and General Fund programs." The bill, which was assigned to the Ways and Means Education Committee, also

seeks to "establish the Lottery Trust Fund."

Two years ago, Rogers filed a similar bill to authorize a state lottery. It was assigned to the tourism and travel committee but never made it to the House floor.

Alabama Citizen's Action Program Executive Director Joe Godfrey said this bill is just like the one proposed in the 1990s.

Rep. Craig Ford, D-Gadsden, told television station WBRC that he also planned to file a lottery bill to fund education and assist the state with its financial woes. (TAB)

case know their fate. At press time, the re-trial was still in full swing with witnesses taking the stand to testify about their involvement in the plot to pass a massive gambling expansion bill in 2010.

Most recently, Houston County casino developer Ronnie Gilley testified that "electronic bingo machines were a 'license to print money,'" according to *The Birmingham News*.

The News also reported that Gilley said he and VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor "discussed the need to work together" to get gambling legislation passed. McGregor is a defendant in the re-trial along with Sen. Harri Anne Smith, I-Slocomb; former Sen. Jim Preuitt, R-Talladega; former Sen.

Larry Means, D-Attalla; lobbyist Tom Coker; and Country Crossing spokesman Jay Walker.

In related news, former Bamaco Bingo employees filed a lawsuit last year claiming they received no pay in the weeks leading up to the Fairfield bingo hall shutting down in summer 2011. The former workers then caused the hall to enter into involuntary bankruptcy in November 2011 in order to collect their wages.

On Feb. 2, a judge ruled in favor of the former employees. The unpaid wages case ruling calls for Bamaco Bingo to pay a group of the former workers \$14,000. A neutral trustee will be appointed to find money or other assets to pay off the debt. (Neisha Fuson contributed)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Southerest Church, Bessemer**, will host The Duncan Family and 4-Given in concert March 2, 7:30 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► The women's ministry of **First Church, Trussville**, will host Brenda Ladun March 5, 6 p.m. Chocolate Biscuit will prepare the meal. Mama Lois will share about Grace House Ministry for Girls. Kristen Sharp will sing. For tickets call Debbie Arrington at 205-228-1006. Buddy Champion is pastor.

CLARKE

► The men's ministry of **Thomassville Church** will hold its annual beast feast Feb. 24, 6:30 p.m. Joe Kines, former defensive coordinator for the University of Alabama, will speak about how his confidence was challenged after his only daughter's tragic death in an automobile accident in 2010. Kines will share his heart and his inspirational story. The Master's Men Quartet, of Milton,

Fla., will sing. For information call 334-636-4409. Ty Parten is pastor.

COFFEE

► **First Church, Enterprise**, will hold a Power Lunch Feb. 28, noon. Linda Dunn, of Birmingham, will share about "Simply Hope." She also will feature her art work. All women in the community are invited. For child care and meal reservations call 334-393-5683 by Feb. 24. Sonny Moore is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **Daniel Welborn** is the new pastor of **South Side Church, Russellville**.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Lee Walton** is the new music minister for **Central Church, Gardendale**. He is a professor of philosophy and religion at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville. He previously served as pastor of Ryan Church, Joppa. Walton is a graduate of The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville and New Or-

leans Seminary. He has two children. Harold McClendon is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **F.A.I.T.H. Riders** motorcycle ministry of **Cedar Grove Church, Leeds**, will hold Thunder at the Grove, the second Thursday of every month beginning March 8, 6-8:30 p.m. There will be food, fellowship and gospel music. Come share riding experiences and photos of your travels. Billy Abrams is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Kenneth Henson** was recently named pastor emeritus of **Spring Hill Church, Millry**. He retired at the end of 2011 after serving as pastor of the church for 12 years. Henson also has served as pastor in other Alabama and Mississippi churches for 62 years. He and his wife, Loriene Bailey, have three children, three grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

LifeWay stores will continue selling NIV Bible

NASHVILLE — Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources voted to continue selling the new New International Version (NIV) Bible in LifeWay stores.

Meeting Feb. 13-14 at LifeWay offices in downtown Nashville, trustees heard a report from a special task force appointed to follow up on a nonbinding resolution approved by the 2011 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) that requested LifeWay consider not selling the NIV 2011 Bible in their stores. Committee chairman Adam Greenway, a member of First Baptist Church, Mount Washington, Ky., told the board "vast amounts of scholarly research and other relevant information was gathered and studied ... and a number of subject matter experts addressed the task force."

Greenway, who serves as senior associate dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., told trustees, "Messengers to the 2011 SBC annual meeting were encouraged to vote for the resolution based on incorrect information." As an example, Greenway said the 2011 NIV contains no gender-neutral wording for the names of God. The 2011 NIV "follows translation methodologies that are embraced by the overwhelming majority of Bible translators in the world," he said. "We do not believe the 2011 NIV rises to the level to where it should be pulled or censored or not carried in our retail chain."

CP dollars exceed goal two months in a row

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are 5.02 percent above the year-to-date budgeted goal and are less than 1 percent (0.82 percent) behind contributions received during the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank S. Page. The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2011-12 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget.

As of Jan. 31, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$65,113,287.64, or 105.02 percent of the \$62,000,000 year-to-date amount budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The total is \$539,172.53 less than the \$65,652,460.17 received through the end of January 2011.

January's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$20,844,083.87. This is the second successive month that contributions exceeded monthly budget projections. During the last fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2010-Sept. 30, 2011), CP receipts for the year were up 0.06 percent — the first increase since 2007.

Ky. church leaves association due to blog post

LEXINGTON, Ky. — A Baptist church in Kentucky has severed ties with its local association of churches.

Central Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky., voted unanimously in December to end its nearly 60-year membership in Elkhorn Baptist Association, according to a news release dated Feb. 10. The vote reportedly stemmed from a letter from a sister-church pastor to the association's membership committee questioning a blog post by Central Pastor Mark Johnson. The blog featured an Indianapolis church's marketing campaign that asked "Who Stole Jesus?" which included the sentence: "The real Jesus celebrated diversity in God's creation, including gay and transgender people."

The complaining pastor affirmed Central Baptist's right to follow its conscience but questioned "whether or not they should do so as a cooperating member of the Elkhorn Baptist Association." The congregation opted to leave the association rather than fight.

The church left the Southern Baptist Convention and Kentucky Baptist Convention a decade ago.

GuideStone releases 2012 ministers tax guide

DALLAS — The 2012 edition of GuideStone's annual Tax Return Preparation and Federal Reporting Guide is now available.

The guide provides active and retired ministers step-by-step help in understanding the latest tax laws, along with sample tax forms to assist them in preparing their 2011 federal tax returns.

The tax guide, which also includes a special section detailing federal reporting requirements for churches, can be obtained in PDF format at www.GuideStone.org/TaxGuide. GuideStone participants can order a free printed copy by calling 1-888-984-8433 between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. CST Monday-Friday.

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



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

A Time to Remember: Calling All Churches

April 27, 2011, will long be remembered as a day of hardships and heartaches resulting from Alabama's largest and most costly disaster in recorded history. Though time and effort have combined to ease the struggle, rebuild and recovery continues as churches respond to provide healing and hope.

Years of experience of providing crisis care through the ministries of disaster relief have taught us that the one-year mark of a major disaster often brings back emotional stress to the survivors and their families. It can be as strong as the trauma experienced by many during the days following the original event. Though not every county received physical damage, every community was impacted as the lives of friends and families were

altered in an instant.

It was during this difficult time in 2011 that Alabama Baptists rose to the occasion and offered support for those in need. The Sunday prior to the one-year anniversary date, April 22, 2012, will be another such occasion for

our churches to unite in a day of worship, prayer and outreach as, once again, the Alabama Baptist family chooses to make a difference.

In the spirit of togetherness that characterizes Alabama Baptists, our churches and associations can

seize this unique opportunity to reach out to those communities and individuals across the state on April 22, in a day of remembrance

for the 2011 tornado outbreak.

This day will also serve as a focal point to accept a special offering intended to strengthen our state disaster

By Mel Johnson
*State Missionary
Disaster Relief Strategist*

relief resources. This special annual disaster relief offering was introduced and approved by the messengers of the 2011 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, which was held in Mobile.

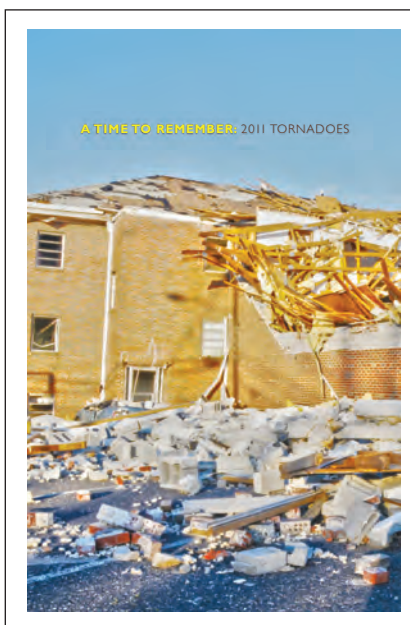
One hundred percent of the proceeds will be used to better equip our state to meet the needs of communities in disaster. Your support will help us help others. Special offering envelopes can be ordered, at no charge, from the State Board of Missions. Instructions for ordering are found on the state disaster relief website at www.sbdr.org or you may

contact Ministry Assistant Mondene Coker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 273, or (334) 613-6273, mcoker@alsbom.org.

Your State Board of Missions staff is praying for you and those impacted by the storms as we approach the one-year mark of Alabama's largest disaster. Let us make

sure the message of hope is clearly heard and seen during A Time to Remember: 2011 Tornadoes.

State Missionary Mel Johnson may be reached at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 389, or (334) 613-2389, mjohnson@alsbom.org.



Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



BY JIM JACKSON

“Hold On, Partner!” Country singer Clint Black along with my hero, the late Roy Rogers, rode wooden horses for a music video and sang the following words: “It’s a big race and we’re all in it, you’re falling behind but you can still win it. ... Hold on, Partner! Good things are coming to you. So many people and things can get you down, but it only takes one man to turn it around. ... Hold on, Partner! Good things are coming to you.”

To me, that song describes the foundation and operation of our Cooperative Program.

While the challenge of change in our world and in our churches may make us feel like we’re “falling behind,” our holding on to God’s Word, to God’s mission for us and to each other can only mean that good things are ahead.

The God-inspired genius of the Cooperative Program is the importance of partnership—with God and with each other in His work in His world. William Barclay says the very fellowship (*koinonia*) we share as believers means we are companions, partners and joint-owners. “The Christian looks on all fellow-Christians as partners in a great work.” Barclay, *NT Words* (Westminster Press, 1964)

The apostle Paul modeled a pattern of partnership in his ministry to the churches and in his call for churches to support each other. Paul was sent out by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). He felt responsibility to the churches doctrinally (Jerusalem conference, Acts 15). He encouraged



partnership among the churches (collection for churches in need, 2 Cor. 8:1-7).

As a PK (preacher’s kid) growing up in Baptist churches and as a pastor working with faithful, mission-minded church members, I have been spiritually nurtured, fed and encouraged by the partnership of Southern Baptists. Southern Baptist and Alabama Baptist schools and institutions have inspired me in my Christian journey to seek to be like Jesus and to answer His call to go with Him into His world. State and SBC missionaries have played a vital part in my growth in Christ and in ministry.

As director of missions of Elmore Baptist Association, I have witnessed firsthand the importance of the Cooperative Program and its strong partnership dimension. New churches and one church which lost its building in the April 11, 2011, storm have received mobile chapels and units.

Volunteers from our churches have been trained, encouraged and deployed in disaster relief efforts by our state convention. Our State Board of Missions in partnership with the North American Mission Board has provided invaluable assistance in church planting efforts through training, assessment, financial help, counsel and encouragement.

As Alabama and Southern Baptists, let us “Hold on, partner!” to God and His Word, to His call to His world and to each other. “Good things are coming!”

Jim Jackson is director of missions for Elmore Baptist Association.

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



HORSE WHISPERER EVENTS

IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT TAMING HORSES

The purpose of Horse Whisperer is to clearly present the Gospel and God’s plan for our lives through the unique relationship of a trainer to an unbroken colt. As the trainer develops the trust of the colt, the colt is then brought into submission. Within 90 minutes, a young animal that begins with no value is transformed into a submissive and useful or productive creature.

Free admission, no registration

DATE	SPONSOR	LOCATION
Monday, March 26	Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association	Longhorn Arena, 2125 Three Mile Ln., Tuscumbia
Tuesday, March 27	Tennessee River Baptist Association	Veterans Drive, Scottsboro
Wednesday, March 28	Lookout Mountain Baptist Association	Cherokee County Livestock Arena, Sand Rock High School, 1950 Sand Rock Ave., Sand Rock
Thursday, March 29	Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association	Cowboy Church of Lee County, 7600 US Highway 280 W., Auburn
Friday, March 30	East Liberty Baptist Association	Chambers County Ag Park, 1077 Highway 77 N., Lafayette
Saturday, March 31	Baldwin Baptist Association	Baldwin County Coliseum, 19501 Fairground Rd., Robertsdale
Friday, April 13	Bigbee Baptist Association	University of West Alabama Rodeo Arena, 100 U.S. Highway 11, Livingston
Friday, May 14	Grant’s Creek Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa	4R Arena, 14945 Sipsey Valley Rd. S., Ralph

For more information, please contact State Missionary Phil Winningham, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 260, 334-613-2260, pwinningham@alsbom.org.

SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 9 – 11, 2012
Shocco Springs

Speakers include:

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

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

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

WORSHIP & MUSIC EVENTS



**CHILDREN'S CHOIR SUMMIT
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

Shocco Springs,
July 6-7, 2012

"Hidden Treasures"

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



Cost:

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

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: Music Specialist Karen Gosselin, ext. 318, or 334-613-2318, kgosselin@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Susan Corley, ext. 279, or 334-613-2279, scorley@alsbom.org.

**ALABAMA BAPTIST
CHILDREN'S HONOR
CHOIR TOUR**

March 2-4, 2012

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

March 3, 3:45 p.m., afternoon concert, location TBA

March 3, 7 p.m., Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville

March 4, 10:30 a.m., First Baptist Church, Athens, morning worship service

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: Music Specialist Karen Gosselin, ext. 318, or 334-613-2318, kgosselin@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish, ext. 230, or 334-613-2230, cparrish@alsbom.org.

ONEVOICE TOUR

April 20-22, 2012

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

**DEADLINE FOR AUDITION FORMS
AND CDS:**

Monday, March 12!

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Keith Hibbs, ext. 217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Susan Corley, ext. 279, or 334-613-2279, scorley@alsbom.org.

**MIX456/REMIX: Worship Arts
Camp**

Shocco Springs, Monday–Friday, July 9-13, 2012

Cost: \$265 per person

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



65th Anniversary

2012 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

Monday and Tuesday, February 27-28
 Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery

FREE ADMISSION

NEW SCHEDULE
 Begins Monday at 6 p.m.

Tuesday evening features **Tony Evans**, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas, Texas
www.tonyevans.org



Other speakers during the two days include Jeff Crook, Mac Brunson, Larry Wynn, Thomas Hammond, Frank Page, Adam Dooley and Phil Hoskins, with praise and worship led by Roy McNiel and special music by Danny Crews.

For more information call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 245, or 334-613-2245, or email Stephanie McClelland at smcclelland@alsbom.org.

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




Alabama Baptist Convention
 State Board of Missions
 This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

ROYAL AMBASSADOR CONGRESS

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

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

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

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

Congress Events: Campouts, missionaries, conferences, more than 20 field events, pinewood derby, missions fair, soapbox derby, outstanding Royal Ambassadors.

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Gayle Burlingame at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or 334-613-2227, gburlingame@alsbom.org.







FOCUS on One Mission



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

Sharing
Christ in Crisis



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



The
Cry Heard

www.SBDR.org
Your Connection to
Disaster Relief



Response
Assured



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

"Involving Southern Baptists in Disaster Relief" (ISBIDR) is a prerequisite class for all specialized Disaster Relief Training. ISBIDR class will begin at 1 p.m. Friday.

CONFERENCES: Feeding Unit, Cleanup/Recovery/Mudout/Chainsaw, Shower Unit, Administration, Communications: ham radio license required, Child Care, Disaster Relief Chaplaincy (3-day event/April 12-14)

Re-credential courses will be offered for those only needing to renew badges in the areas of Feeding Unit, Chainsaw and Shower Unit.

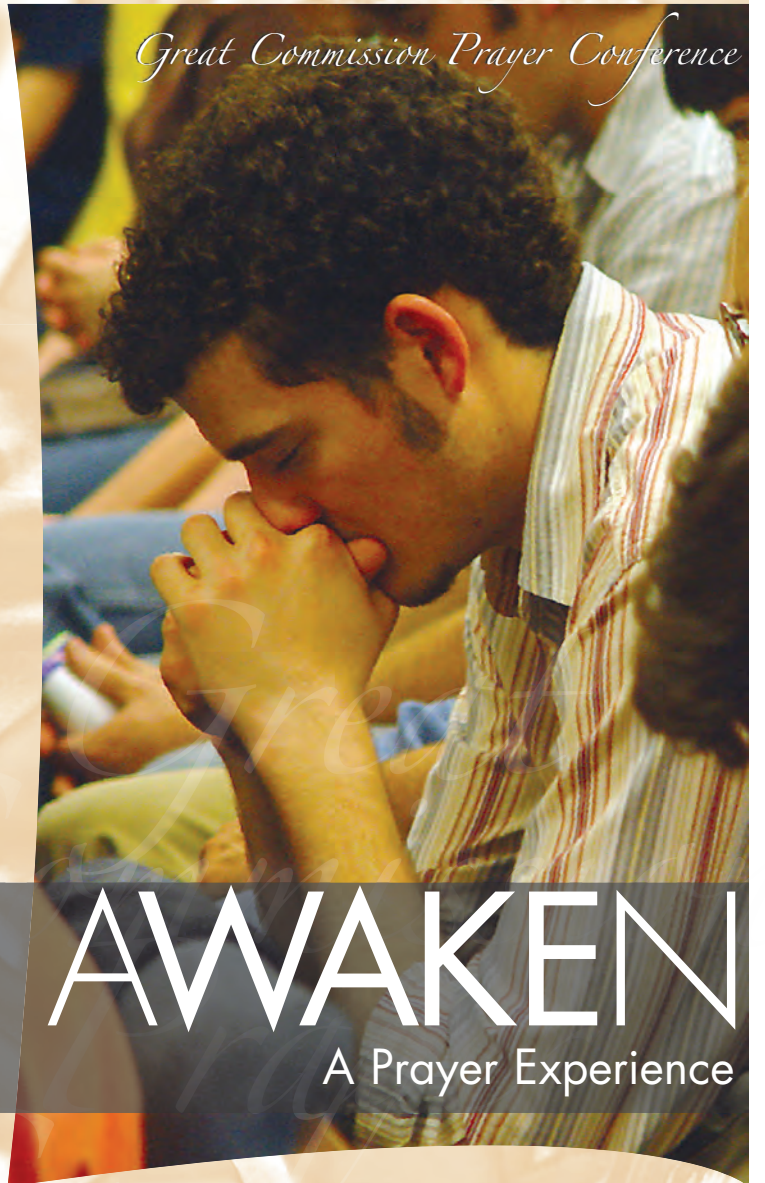
COST: \$78 per person (includes lodging, meals, program fee, double-occupancy)

REGISTRATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL CLASSES:

1. Each conferee must register online to reserve training space and materials. Go online to www.sbdr.org and complete the online registration form.
2. Reservations for full lodging and meals OR commuters must also be completed. Call Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105. (Cost for the full conference is paid directly to Shocco Springs.)

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Mondene Coker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 273, or (334) 613-2273, mcoker@alsbom.org.

Great Commission Prayer Conference



AWAKEN

A Prayer Experience

Northwest Alabama Prayer Event:
A Time of Prayer & Spiritual Awakening
Friday and Saturday, March 9-10, 2012

Woodward Avenue Baptist Church,
Muscle Shoals

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

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

Featured Speaker: Henry Blackaby

Cost: \$10

To register or for more info,
please contact Debbie Dickey,
1-800-264-1225, ext. 218,
334-613-2218 or
ddickey@alsbom.org.



Henry Blackaby

Wednesday – Saturday,
April 25 – 28

National Peanut Festival
Fairgrounds, Dothan

Alabama Spring Rally Campers On Mission



What is Campers on Mission? Campers on Mission (COM) is a national fellowship of Christian campers who share their faith while they camp. Though sponsored by Southern Baptists, membership is open to Christian campers of all denominations.

The Alabama Chapter of COM sponsors a Fall and Spring Rally and more than 20 mission projects a year. Visitors who are interested in possible membership are welcome to attend the rally. Friday at 6:30 p.m. is a time of project reports. This would be an ideal time to visit.

What do Campers on Mission do? Some of the projects have included state fairs, motor speedways, sewing, nursing home ministry, puppets, prayer walks, Seaman Center, association camps, disaster relief and lots of church construction.

Who can join Campers on Mission? Any adult, single or family, young or older. COM is family-friendly and provides a great way to experience the relaxation of vacation with the satisfaction of a mission project. It is a great pathway to become an on-mission family.

How do I become a member or find other information? Download an enrollment form and visit online at www.alabamacom.org.

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries



Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

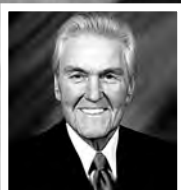
Monday, May 7

First Baptist Church, Pelham
9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Lunch on your own.
FREE ADMISSION.
No registration required.

Guest Speakers: Junior Hill, H. Bailey Stone, Charles Roesel
Worship led by: Paid in Full

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Amy Nelson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 258, or (334) 613-2258, anelson@alsbom.org.



Junior Hill



H. Bailey Stone



Charles Roesel



Paid in Full

IGNORANCE... REALLY ISN'T BLISS

APRIL 26, BAPTIST BUILDING, 2001 E. SOUTH BLVD., MONTGOMERY, 9 A.M.—3 P.M.

PROTECTING YOUR STUDENTS AND YOUR STUDENT MINISTRY

Who? Youth ministers/leaders, pastors, other church staff/volunteers

Presentations will include discussion of safety issues and providing an appropriate level of care in the student ministry of the local church.

Some topics to be addressed:

- Sexual Misconduct
- Transportation and Trips
- Counseling
- Copyright Laws
- Medical Release/Permission
- Background Checks

Guest Presenter: Allen Jackson, professor of youth education, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Cost: \$10 per person (includes lunch)

For registration and other information, go online to www.thestudenthub.org or please contact Ministry Assistant Angelle Marlow at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 275, (334) 613-2275, amarlow@alsbom.org.

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

Summer of 2012, June 20 - July 28

ROYAL AMBASSADOR CAMP STAFF NEEDED

Characteristics and qualifications of an RA camp counselor:

- Male
- Spiritual maturity
- Love for the out-of-doors
- Missions-minded
- Desire to work with boys in grades 4-6 or grades 7-12

Training:

Everything you need to know about campcraft, the ropes

course, and camp activities (archery, air rifles, cooking on an open fire, etc.) will be taught in pre-camp orientation.

Other:

A paid position with all meals and lodging furnished.

For an application, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens, RA Camp Director, at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.



Alabama Bible Drills

2012 DISTRICT BIBLE DRILL LOCATIONS

Thursday, April 19

District 1: Huntsville FBC
600 Governors Dr. S.W., Huntsville

District 2: Union Hill Baptist Church
2919 County Hwy. 39, Oneonta

District 8: Selma FBC
P.O. Box 1186, Selma

Sunday, April 22

District 11-A: Lakeside Baptist Church
2865 Old Rocky Ridge Rd., Birmingham

District 12-A: Eastmont Baptist Church
4505 Atlanta Hwy., Montgomery

Monday, April 23

District 5: Southside Baptist Church
902 S. Highway 123, Ozark

District 11-B: Pelham FBC
2867 Pelham Pkwy., Pelham

District 12-B: Coosada Baptist Church
5687 Coosada Rd., Coosada

Tuesday, April 24

District 3: Meadowbrook Baptist Church
1125 Meadowbrook Ct., Oxford

District 7: Government Street Baptist Church
3401 Government Blvd., Mobile

Tuesday, April 24

District 10: Russellville FBC
213 Jackson Ave. N., Russellville

Thursday, April 26

District 4: Tuskegee Lee Association
2110 Gateway Dr., Opelika

District 6: Evergreen Baptist Church
107 Park St., Evergreen

District 9: Tuscaloosa FBC
721 Greensboro Ave., Tuscaloosa

STATE BIBLE DRILL

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50TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Romans 8:28

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Go write

Aspiring, published authors learn to minister through their craft

By **Sondra Washington**
 Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Have you ever considered publishing a book but did not know where to begin? Aspiring and published Christian writers from Alabama and beyond gathered Jan. 21 at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham to learn how from well-known Christian authors Denise George and Carolyn Tomlin.

Boot Camp for Christian Writers was the 20th such writing seminar George and Tomlin have conducted in three years.

"Once we saw the huge interest and response to our first couple of boot camps, we went into it 'full force,'" George said, adding they held them by themselves at first. "Then Beeson Divinity School asked us to become part of their Lay Academy of Theology program, and they have helped us tremendously over the past year."

George taught sessions on self-publishing electronic and paperback books while Tomlin presented information on how to successfully write grants. Beeson Dean Timothy George made presentations to boot campers with newly published works:

▶ Ben Chandler, director of missions for St. Clair Baptist Association, wrote "55 Glimpses: Mark's Record of the Life and Ministry of Jesus."

▶ Robert Wilkerson, a pastor and evangelist for more than 50 years and now a member of Midway Baptist Church, Trussville, wrote

"Characters of the Crucifixion."

▶ Lottie Jacks, a Sunday School teacher at Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, wrote "Applegreen."

▶ Scott Moore, a full-time minister for 30 years and member of CrossRoads Baptist Church, Rogersville, wrote two books, "Supernatural Strategy: Discovering the Lost Key to Effective Evangelism" and "Uganda's Messianic Muslim: The Story of How Jesus Christ Is Transforming the Life and Ministry of Nassan Ibrahim."

▶ Shirley Ferguson, a member of Hepzibah Baptist Church, Talladega, wrote "Birth Cry: A Personal Story of the Life of Hannah D. Mitchell, Nurse Midwife."

▶ Beulah Coyne, research associate to Timothy George, wrote "Treading Water on Ripple Creek Farm: Lily."

▶ Becky Carlisle, a member of Glenloch Baptist Church, Franklin, Ga., wrote a story called "Through the Eyes of a Child" in

"What the Bible Means to Me."

▶ Nancy Dorman-Hickson co-wrote "Diplomacy and Diamonds: My Wars From the Ballroom to the Battlefield" with Joanne King Herring.

▶ Diane Bailey wrote "String of Pearls."

"We have at least five more boot campers who are working with publishers and finishing up books," Denise George told *The Alabama Baptist*. "We will present those books to them next January."

Tomlin called the boot camp a family since many attendees have been to several conferences.

"We care for each other," she said.

At the next boot camp March 3, Tomlin and Denise George will teach "Secrets to Getting Published — Again and Again and Again!"

For more information on the upcoming boot camp, call Beeson at 1-800-888-8266 or visit www.beesondivinity.com/bootcamp-forchristianwriters.

Bethel Pastor Mack Sporman dies at 80

Mack Sporman, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Glenwood, died Jan. 31. He was 80.

Sporman attended Troy University, Auburn University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Before he became a pastor, Sporman was a lay speaker for churches and filled in for various pastors.

After serving as pastor of Bethel Baptist for eight years, he served other churches in Alabama, includ-

ing Dozier Baptist Church; Joquin Baptist Church, Goshen; and Rutledge Baptist Church. Sporman returned to Bethel two years ago.

"Brother Mack was one of those pillars at our church," Bethel deacon Ricky Grant said. "[He] was a mentor to younger pastors coming into the ministry."

Sporman is survived by his wife of 61 years, Jean; two sons; and three grandchildren. (TAB)

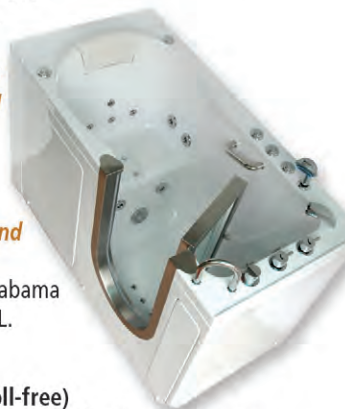
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Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

February 1962 50 Years Ago

New Cottage to Be Built at Children's Homes: James D. Samford, of Auburn, has contributed \$50,000 to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH), which will be used to build a new cottage on the main campus. Samford made his contribution in the name of his late mother, Kate Park Samford, a devout Baptist who was born and reared in Troy and at one time served as state president of Woman's Missionary Union. Hobson Shirey, superintendent of ABCH, said the new cottage will bear the name Kate Park Samford and will accommodate approximately 14 girls and their houseparents.

February 1972 40 Years Ago

Association Changes Name:

Mineral Springs Baptist Association has changed its name to North Jefferson Baptist Association. This was done by action of the association in its recent annual session. The name change will definitely be of help because it will locate the association geographically. The 34 affiliated churches are all located in the northern part of Jefferson County. James K. Burke is the director of missions in the association.

February 1982 30 Years Ago

Church Constituted: Taylor Baptist Church, Dothan, in Columbia Baptist Association was constituted as a church Jan. 19, 1982. The celebration of this event marked the progress of a congregation that started as a mission Sept. 1, 1980, when six men from Cloverdale Baptist Church, Dothan, met to initiate

the work. The first worship service was held Oct. 5, 1980, with 33 people present. Cloverdale Baptist sponsored the work of the mission until the time of its constitution with the cooperation of the closest neighboring Baptist church, Mount Gilead. At the time of the constitution, Taylor Baptist had 37 members with 60 enrolled in Sunday School and 36 in Church Training.

February 1992 20 Years Ago

New DOM Named: Former international missionary Gary K. Swafford is the new director of missions for Butler Baptist Association. Swafford and his wife, the former Carolyn Hatchett, served as missionaries in Malawi from 1968 to 1991. His most recent assignment was administrator of the Baptist mission.

February 2002 10 Years Ago

Trust Fund Established: A trust fund created by Ruhama Baptist Church, Birmingham, will be used to benefit local ministries of Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA), even though Ruhama has ceased to exist as a congregation. Ruhama merged with First Baptist Church, Irondale, in December 2001. Ricky Creech, director of missions for BBA, said the Ruhama Baptist Church Ministry Development Trust was opened Feb. 11, when the first installment of \$24,000 was presented to the association by Homer Lloyd, chairman of the Ruhama Baptist Church Transition Team. The money will be used for some 40 local ministries supported by BBA, including Caring Hands, World Changers, Sav-A-Life, The Salvation Army and M-POWER.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

FULL-TIME SENIOR PASTOR: First Baptist Church, Highlands, N.C., is searching for a full-time senior pastor. Highlands is a resort and retirement community. Located on the main street of Highlands, our church building and grounds are debt-free and well-maintained. Our congregation is mainly senior adults, but we have a desire to reach young families and youth. We are traditional in worship but are beginning to use some contemporary music. We are a friendly, unified and Biblically-based congregation. We are completing an intentional interim ministry. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 625, Highlands, NC 28741, or email them to: Carrie Coen, CR1108@aol.com.

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.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: East Side Baptist Church in Mountain Home, Ark., is seeking a full-time minister of music. Qualifications include the ability to primarily lead a blended worship service but will also include leading a traditional service and working with a choir. Prior experience is preferred. Please email your resumé to: stephanie@esbcmh.com or mail to: East Side Baptist Church, 718 East 9th Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653.

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 MUSIC MINISTER: New Hope Baptist, Athens, Ala., is seeking a bivocational music minister to lead congregation and choir in a blended-style of worship. Please contact Bryan at devbryan@gmail.com.

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.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF WORSHIP: Clearview Baptist Church in Clay/Pinson, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of worship. Candidate needs to have experience in leading a choir, worship team and band. Please send resumé to: Clearview Baptist Church, Music Search Committee, 5271 Old Springville Road, Pinson, AL 35126 or connie@clearviewbaptist.com.

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.

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 larysumrall@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH: Nazareth Baptist Church of Rainsville, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of youth. Please mail resumé to: Search Committee, Nazareth Baptist Church, P.O. Box 541, Rainsville, AL 35896.

PART-TIME STUDENT MINISTER: Grades 7-12. Five Points Baptist Church, 267 Odens Mill Road, Sylacauga, AL 35150. Contact Pastor Tommy Strickland. fpbcpastor@bellsouth.net, www.fpbcysylacauga.org.

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.

OTHER POSITIONS

CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER: The North American Mission Board (NAMB),

SBC is seeking to fill the position of chief advancement officer. The ideal chief advancement officer will be known as a warm and engaging servant leader with a commitment to the Southern Baptist Convention through active local church service. Interested Southern Baptists may visit www.namb.net to review the general expectations and guidelines on the employment page under "About NAMB."

MARKETING STRATEGIST: Two marketing positions are available at National WMU in Birmingham. For information about each and how to apply, visit www.wmu.com and open "about" and then "employment."

MINISTRY CONSULTANT: This position on the staff of National WMU in Birmingham will serve as a specialist in curriculum and program development geared toward children ages 6-12. It will also lead in the nurture and development of leaders of missions organizations. For more information, visit www.wmu.com and open "about" and then "employment."

PIANIST: Cahaba View Baptist Church, Leeds, is seeking a pianist to accompany congregation and choir. Please send resumé to: nbruce88@att.net or call the church office at 205-956-9114.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Darryl Wood
First Baptist Church, Vincent

Two feet protruded from under an older model sedan resting on blocks in the front yard. I drove into the yard to meet the family whose children attended a church event. As I exited my vehicle, a rifle barrel joined the feet on the ground nearby. A voice from underneath the car growled, "Who's that?"

I lost my voice momentarily but eventually introduced myself as a pastor. I figured my name might not save me, but I hoped "pastor" might earn me a break.

Slowly the man slid out from under his work in progress and eyed me suspiciously. "Preacher, huh?" he grunted. "Ain't nobody home but me. Know anything about cars?"

"Why?" I sputtered. "As long as you're holding that rifle, I'll tell you whatever you want to hear."

"Never mind that," he smiled. "Can't afford no bullets."

The man introduced himself as Frank. He turned out to be quite talkative. He stood and leaned against the disabled vehicle. I took the cue and leaned on mine.

"Preacher," Frank said, "You probably want to see my family and not me. I'm not a very good person. In fact, the only thing I'm good at is fixin' up old cars."

"Really?" I responded. "Sounds like you and God have a lot in common."

"Me and God?" Frank laughed.

"Yeah," I insisted. "You like to fix broken cars. God likes to fix broken people. The Bible says, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new'" (2 Cor. 5:17).

I explained to Frank that people are not good because they make bad choices. That's how folks get broken.

God, however, loves people so much that He found a way to fix them. He gave His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross to prove His love.

"Wait a minute, preacher," Frank interrupted. "I know all about Jesus. Momma sent me to Bible school every summer."

I told him that not only could he know "about" Jesus but he also could "know" Jesus personally. Later Frank confessed his sin and asked the Lord to forgive him. He committed to follow God's purpose for his life.

'A lot like middle-class America'

IT professionals in India share faith through social media, technology

The blue Skype icon bounces on the bottom of the computer screen in front of Lekha Katti, an information technology (IT) professional in Bangalore, India. When her Bible verse of the day arrives via an instant message, she copies it to her Facebook profile. Katti also hopes her co-workers will notice the Scripture on her desktop when they pass her cubicle so she can share her new favorite Bible story: Daniel and the lions.

This young believer who works for a major IT company has a heart for sharing the gospel with her tech industry peers.

Caste culture

In India, where castes define social, financial and religious status, Katti's co-workers are well-educated, high-caste Hindus. Katti's peers work for top international IT companies like Hewlett-Packard, Siemens and Infosys. Many grew up speaking English and have worked abroad in the United States or United Kingdom.

While at work, women in the IT sector dress like Westerners in jeans and T-shirts. Outside these insular IT neighborhoods, however, the women forsake their jeans for saris. "It's like they are living in between two worlds," said Margot Gladding, an International Mission Board (IMB) representative in Bangalore.

"[These people] are a third culture and they're a changing culture," Gladding said.

IT companies in India employ 2 million workers, with millions more employed in other IT jobs, Britain's *New Statesman* reports. Katti's demographic is therefore an important group of people for Christians to understand and address. That's why Margot Gladding and her husband, Carver, share the story of Daniel and the lions' den.

The ministry of the Gladdings, native Texans, focuses on storytelling and on equipping other IMB representatives to share Bible stories with the people of South Asia.

Gladding meets weekly with Katti and several other Hindu-background believers who work in the IT field to teach them a set of Bible stories she and Carver are developing specifically for IT professionals.

What these professionals often lack is a sense of purpose. Many are questioning whether their long work shifts and material goods really give them a sense of fulfillment. Choosing Christianity, however, could further alienate them from their co-workers and neighbors. It's a lot like middle-class America, Gladding said.

Gladding addresses their concerns by sharing stories about men and women in the Bible who found purpose and fulfillment. Daniel is one of Katti's favorite characters because of the way he used his position and influence for God's glory. Katti is the only believer in her family and work network.

"She's looking at Daniel's life and being in exile in a pagan coun-



BP photo

REACHING OUT — A man hunting for a job in India's IT industry answers his phone in one of the Bangalore area's largest technology industry parks, Electronics City.

try and being so alone and isolated, and yet at the same time, having huge influence over the government because of his position," Gladding said.

Katti shared Daniel's story with her unbelieving parents, who have started to consider following God. She also shares the Bible stories in her workplace, via Skype, Facebook and her desktop.

Many Indian IT workers are afraid to share their faith, not because of physical persecution, but for fear of ostracism and inter-office gossip.

"[Katti] has really been inspired to take even a stronger stand for Jesus in her workplace and in her family," Gladding said. "She really felt the urgency to share her faith and not worry so much about what people are going to be thinking about her."

Meeting their neighbors

Gladding and her husband currently live in a community largely of IT professionals. Instead of only meeting people through Facebook, Gladding makes friends in her neighborhood the old-fashioned way: with cookies.

"Hi, I'm your new neighbor," Gladding said to a neighbor, of-

fering an egg-less cookie — most high-caste Hindus are vegetarian.

In addition to making friends face-to-face, Gladding also ministers using technology. She sends mp3 files of Bible stories to Katti and other believers' cell phones using Bluetooth. Katti and other IT professionals often listen to the stories and podcasts on the bus to work.

The increasing ease of digital file-sharing means that a growing number of Katti's co-workers also now listen to Gladding's stories on their commute — and share with their friends in turn.

With every Skype chat and Facebook wall post, Katti is seeing that she can make a difference in her nation just as Daniel did in his.

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

Someone You Should Know

NINNA GAMBLE

*Reno Baptist Church, McCalla
Pleasant Grove Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: 1 John 4:4

FAVORITE HYMN: "It Is Well With My Soul"

HOBBY: Tennis

FAMILY STATUS: Married 40 years to Kenneth; two sons, Stephen and Aaron; and three grandchildren

GAMBLE

Ninna Gamble, a member of Reno Baptist Church, McCalla, for more than 40 years, is the church pianist and coordinates all the special music for Sunday morning and evening services. She has taught children's Sunday School classes. Gamble is active in Woman's Missionary Union and serves on church committees. She sang for the Reno Trio group for 25 years.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?
A: When I was 14, I spent a summer with my [older] sister and her husband in Columbia, S.C. I went to church with them while I was there. On [a] Sunday night, the

pastor preached about knowing for sure you were saved. ... When I came home, I went into my sister's bedroom and told her I had never been saved. It was July 3, 1967.

Q: What led you to serve in church?
A: My daddy was a deacon, and my mother played the piano at their church for 45 years. We were taught to be faithful and to serve. It's just something that was put into me. ... I wanted to serve.

Q: What has serving in church required of you?
A: Commitment. To me, that's so important. I just think you ought

to be committed if you want to do something.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in ministry in the future?
A: As long as I can go, I will. I started a new ministry [named] The Nursing Home Quartet. It's called that because that's primarily what we do. We minister to nursing homes. I hope that's going to be going on for a while.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?
A: All the difference in the world. I don't know what I would do without Him. He is everything to me.

Redan Baptist Church Pastor Andrew L. Chambers dies at 65

Andrew L. Chambers, pastor of Redan Baptist Church, Holly Pond, died Feb. 2. He was 65.

Chambers served as a deacon before he was called to preach in 1990.

He was pastor of Plainview Baptist Church, Cullman, for six years and had been at Redan Baptist since 2005.

He also served as interim pastor of Edison Chapel in Baileyton.

He was active in East Cullman Baptist Association and served on its evangelism committee. For several years, he was also the association's parliamentarian.

"Pastor Andrew Chambers was a man of passion," said Randy Makemson, director of missions for East Cullman Association. "His demonstration of passion was clearly seen by the reciprocating act of his church family, family and friends of all ages at his viewing and funeral service. [He] was a great role model for all of us to set as a standard for our ministry. He will be greatly missed in the [association]."

Chambers is survived by his wife of 47 years, Delby Page; one son; one daughter; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. (TAB)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 26

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce Professor of Christian Studies, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

BE POSITIVE

Deuteronomy 33:1-5; 34:1-12

Many adults live for the moment and give little thought to what kind of legacy they will leave for future generations. Other adults, however, seem obsessed with making a name for themselves and doing things they hope will draw attention to their self-judged importance. Neither extreme is wise. What pleases God and can most benefit future generations is when His people build a positive, godly legacy through faithfully living for Him.

Keep Bragging on God to the End (33:1-5)

Near the end of his life, Moses composed two important pieces of Hebrew poetry: the Song of Moses (Deut. 31:30-32:47) and the Blessing of Moses (Deut. 33:1-29). Both prepared the Israelites for his impending death. The song is a lesson in theology, history and personal obedience with several stern warnings included. The blessing is filled with expressions of grace and mercy, as Moses named each tribe (except Simeon, later absorbed into Judah — Joshua 19:1-9) and pronounced a blessing from the Lord upon each one. He stated that God loves His people; the Law of Moses was given in kindness and love to provide both temporal and eternal blessings to those with a heart to obey God. A feature of Moses' godly legacy is the phrase "the man of God;" this phrase, occurring 70 times in the Old Testament referring to God's human messengers, places Moses in the category of prophet.

Before his death, Moses formally blessed the Israelite tribes, introducing the blessing by declaring how the Lord had appeared to His people and how much He loved them. We today contribute to building a godly legacy by taking every opportunity possible throughout our lives to point others to God's goodness and love.

Keep Focusing on God's Purposes (34:1-4)

Moses went up on Mount Nebo just as the Lord had directed him (3:27; 32:48-50). The top of Pisgah probably refers to a mountain

ridge with Mount Nebo as the highest point. From this vantage point, Moses was allowed to see the panorama of the land the Lord had promised to give to the patriarchs and their descendants (Gen. 12:7). His sweeping vista began in the north and moved southward in a counterclockwise direction, passing over the Mediterranean Sea and ending at Zoar at the southern end of the Dead Sea. God allowing Moses to view the land was a commendation of his leadership and not merely a reminder of his failure (Num. 20:12). Those who seek to build a godly legacy consistently put God's purposes ahead of everything in their lives, including their own desires or plans.

Keep Preparing and Encouraging New Leaders (34:5-9)

Moses died "according to the word of the Lord," and that should be every believer's goal. He recognized the importance of installing new leadership before his death. Earlier he had formally, by laying his hands on Joshua, installed Joshua as his successor (31:14, 23). Consequently Joshua received the confirmation of the military and administrative ability needed for the task of leading God's people as well as the spiritual wisdom to trust the Lord. Moses prepared and encouraged Joshua, in a public manner, to take the leadership role at his death. We can strengthen our godly legacy by mentoring and encouraging the next generation of believers.

Keep Growing in Your Relationship With God (34:10-12)

Moses' imminent death is a repeated theme throughout the Book of Deuteronomy's closing chapters (31:1-2; 32:48-52; 33:1). It seems obvious that this concluding chapter was written by someone other than Moses (probably Joshua) as a bridge between the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. Whoever wrote them, they display the fact that part of Moses' legacy was his reputation for being unequalled in his relationship with and service to the Lord. We can ensure that our legacy is a godly one by continuing to grow in our relationship with God and boldly obeying His will all our lives.

Bible Studies for Life By Joseph F. Scrivner Assistant Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

CENTER OF MY LIFE

Colossians 3:5-10, 14-15, 17-21; 4:5-6

Last month, we saw Paul's order of indicative and imperative in Ephesians. He began by reminding his readers of their position in Christ. When warning against false teaching in his letter to the Colossians, he follows the same pattern. The first two chapters explain the pre-eminence of Christ and the corresponding fullness believers possess in Him. In the third and fourth chapters, he moves to admonitions about a lifestyle that should follow from this fullness.

Cultivate a Christ-centered Character (3:5-10, 14-15, 17)

Paul calls on the Colossians to adopt an attitude corresponding to their status in Christ. If they have been raised with Christ, then they should focus on heavenly things (Col. 3:1-2). This is in contrast to an undue focus on ritual and rules mentioned at the end of Chapter 2 (Col. 2:16-23).

Likewise, since they have died with Christ (Col. 3:3-4), the Colossians should put to death "sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry" (5). Indeed these things once characterized their lives, but now they have a new identity in Christ (6-7). Just as this new existence in Christ should avoid sexual impurity, it also should put away inappropriate communication with fellow believers. These unsuitable actions include anger, wrath, malice, slander, filthy language and lies.

Those chosen in Christ should put on "heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Col. 3:12). Again this behavior is required as a proper response to what one has received in Christ. In short, "put on love — the bond of unity" (14). This is reinforced by sincere, Christ-centered worship, personal and corporate (Col. 3:16). These spiritual virtues enable the believer to live in a way that honors the Lord Jesus' name (17).

Have a Christ-centered Home (3:18-21)

Of course, these spiritual virtues must begin with the believer's most intimate relation-

ships: spouse and children. Unfortunately this is an area where Christians are often not much better than others. Believers naturally learn bad habits as children and easily reproduce them as adults. Further it is often difficult to confess these problems and find helpful, encouraging counsel in the church. Perhaps churches need to invest more time and resources in this area. In addition, perhaps larger churches can consider ways to make affordable counseling available to their members, members of other churches and possibly even unbelievers. This may be one important way to demonstrate a commitment to "family values."

Be a Christ-centered Witness (4:5-6)

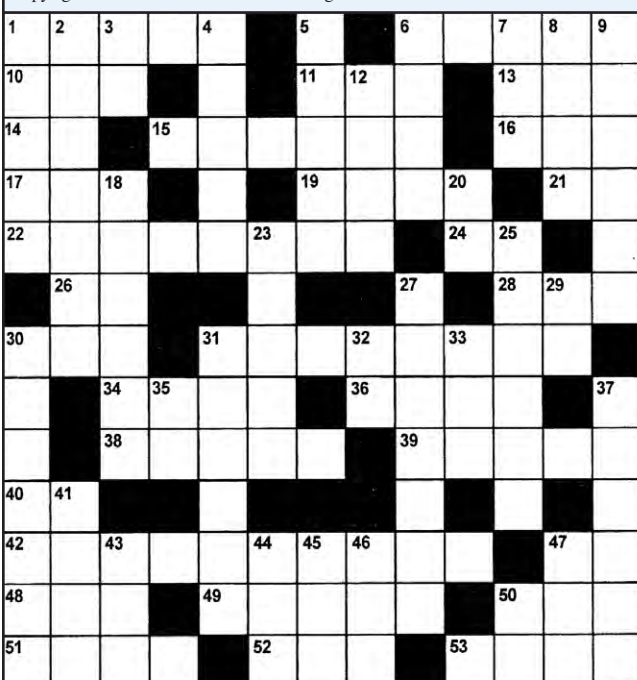
Considering concrete ways in which believers can overcome destructive habits in their families can be an important avenue for Christian witness. Indeed few things may be more important than a demonstrable commitment to family health and restoration through professional spiritual counseling services. Further offering such services to those outside the church without pressure to convert or join could be an invaluable testimony to Christ's love for people. Further it may indicate Christian concern for people as whole human beings, not just disembodied souls destined for an afterlife.

Of course, a person's eternal destiny is an ultimate concern. Yet believers may "win more souls" by giving more resources and time to helping people in their very earthly situations. Doing so without attaching religious strings may be one sure way to show unconditional love. Then believers will serve Christ and unbelievers will be attracted to Christ for all the right reasons.

Consideration of such ministry may be one way to obey Paul's command: "Pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message" (Col. 4:3). Perhaps it is one way believers can "walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the time." As we meditate on how to be wise witnesses for Christ, may we all consistently strive to make sure our speech is "always gracious, seasoned with salt." For Christ's sake, amen.

Christian Crossword

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Across

- The name of the second river is _____. (Gen. 2:13)
- If it please the king ... send me unto _____. (Neh. 2:5)
- Registered Nurses. (abbr.)
- River, in Spanish.
- Why make ye this ____? (Mark 5:39)
- He that doeth good is ____ God. (3 John 11)
- ____, the abomination of the children ... (1 Kings 11:7)
- A sorcerer ... whose name was ____-Jesus. (Acts 13:6)
- Eithers/_____.
- Captains over _____. (Deut. 1:15)
- I in them, and thou in _____. (John 17:23)
- The ____ became David's servants. (2 Sam. 8:2)
- God ____ my strength and power. (2 Sam. 22:33)
- New Mexico. (abbr.)
- Immigration and Naturalization Service. (abbr.)

- A boy named Stuart is probably called ____.
- Jonah rose up to flee unto _____. (Jonah 1:3)
- Town in central England with a famous school.
- ____ not ten cleansed? (Luke 17:17)
- Rebekah's brother. (Gen. 24:29)
- Used for sending greetings on holidays.
- Geber ... in the country of _____. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Do unto them as unto the ____; as to Sisera. (Ps. 83:9)
- To ____ or not to be.
- Eggs. (Latin)
- ____ king of Tyre. (2 Sam. 5:11)
- The way of an eagle in the _____. (Prov. 30:19)
- Moab shall howl over _____. (Isa. 15:2)
- To forbid something is to ____ it.
- A slight coloration.

Down

- He that hath the bride is

- the bride _____. (John 3:29)
- The porch that was ____ the ____ of the house. (2 Chron. 3:4; 2 words)
- High School. (abbr.)
- Elimelech's wife was _____. (Ruth 1:2)
- Left I thee in _____. (Titus 1:5)
- Mary the mother of _____. (Acts 12:12)
- A little ____ will do you.
- ____ gave names to all cattle and ... fowl of the air. (Gen. 2:20)
- Belonging to a certain mountain. (Ex. 3:1)
- Decorates a cake.
- Hannah ... called his name _____. (1 Sam. 1:20)
- Yes, in Spanish.
- Widow cast in _____. all. (Luke 21:3; 2 words)
- The captain of Jabin's host was _____. (Judg. 4:2)
- Jacob came to Shalem, a city of _____. (Gen. 33:18)
- New Hampshire. (abbr.)
- ____ built the house and finished. (1 Kings 6:14)
- Sanballat ... and ... ____

- heard. (Neh. 2:10)
- Compass direction.
- Irish Republican Army. (abbr.)
- ____-ta.
- To state something with confidence.
- Such as I have ____ I thee. (Acts 3:6)
- A small amount.
- Part of a pen.
- Individual Retirement Account. (abbr.)
- To cure a skin.
- Place for storing grain or other small items.
- ____ is spoiled. (Jer. 49:3)





Saudis pressed to release Ethiopian Christians

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, America's congressionally approved watchdog for global religious liberty, has called on Saudi Arabia to release 35 Ethiopian Christians arrested during a prayer meeting and imprisoned for nearly two months.

Saudi police raided a private home in Jeddah on Dec. 15 and arrested the 29 women and six men gathered to pray, according to International Christian Concern (ICC).

There have been reports that the Christians — some who have lived in Saudi Arabia for as many as 16 years — will be deported to Ethiopia. In a Feb. 7 phone interview, some of the prisoners told ICC they had not been informed they would be released, according to the organization, which aids persecuted Christians overseas.

Saudi authorities have charged the Ethiopians with "mixing with the opposite sex," Christian leaders told ICC. Saudi Arabian law prohibits males and females who are not members of the same family from being in the same room, ICC reported.

"The Saudi officials are accusing the Christians of committing the crime of mixing of sexes because if they charge them with meeting for practicing Christianity, they will come under pressure from the international human rights organizations as well as Western countries," a Saudi Christian leader told ICC. "In fact, when an employer of one of the detainees asked for the reason for their employee's arrest, the Saudi official told him that it was for practicing Christianity."

Saudi officials strip-searched the women, including searches of their body cavities, and physically abused the men, some of the Ethiopians told ICC in a phone conversation from prison.

Baptist man fined for violating religious laws

EKIBASTUZ, Kazakhstan — In Kazakhstan's first known use of expanded and increased punishments for exercising freedom of religion or belief, a Baptist in eastern Kazakhstan has been fined what local people estimate to be a year-and-a-half's average local wages for leading an unregistered religious organization.

Shoe repairer and father of 10 Aleksei Asetov was fined \$3,273 U.S. dollars for leading the small congregation that meets in his home in Ekibastuz, under a provision introduced in new amendments to the religion laws, local Baptists said.

The judge also banned the congregation. Elsewhere, a Pentecostal church in Petropavl in north Kazakhstan has twice been raided by the police Department for the Fight against Extremism, Separatism and Terrorism and a local official of the Agency of Religious Affairs. They confiscated New Testaments, other books and DVDs for censorship, and want the church punished for leaving the books on a table about 10 yards from the entrance to a hall they rent for worship.

Other fines for exercising religious freedom without state permission continue, one Baptist having been fined for unregistered worship meetings following a police operation called "Operation Legal Order."

Tensions intensifying in Sudan following split

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Two Catholic priests abducted at gunpoint in Rabak, Sudan, in January have been released amid a wave of forcible conscriptions into rebel southern militias. Their captors — South Sudanese militiamen loyal to (north) Sudan's Islamic government — accused priests Joseph Makwey and Sylvester Mogga of ties to the South Sudan military. South Sudan, which seceded from Sudan on July 9, 2011, has been in military conflict with (north) Sudan over border areas while staving off southern rebel militias.

The two priests were kidnapped from the compound of St. Josephine Bakhita Catholic Church on Jan. 15 and were released two weeks later, they said, noting the kidnappers had demanded \$185,530. Press reports indicated no ransom was paid and that they were released after pressure from influential groups including the government in Khartoum.

Christians in Sudan have complained of a spike in threats against them by South Sudanese militias rebelling against the new South Sudan government. The South Sudanese rebels go house-to-house in Khartoum and other towns in the north abducting mainly Christian men, Christian sources said.

"Christians in Khartoum live in fear," one church leader said.

HEART OF MISSIONS...

Ed Glasscock, who attends First Baptist Church, Pell City, spent Jan. 6–20 in Budapest, Hungary, teaching from Matthew at the Word of Life Hungary Bible Institute.

Glasscock taught 57 students from 12 countries during the day and met with students and families in the evenings. He also shared a sermon Jan. 15 at a small rural church in Tóalmás, a village about 35 miles from Budapest.

Hungary's population is 2 percent born-again Christian, Glasscock said, so he went to Budapest to "minister to the body of Christ and encourage the Christians there."

But he said he was inspired by the believers in Hungary.

"[Christianity] isn't a cool thing

to do in Budapest," Glasscock said. "At the church (and the institute), you could feel the sincerity and intensity of what they were doing."

He said he wants to teach another course at the institute in the future.

Berry Terry, who directs the missions efforts of Southside Baptist Church, Decatur, led a team of 13 to Belmopan, Belize, Jan. 21–29.

The team was composed of 11 current and former members of the Morgan Baptist Association church and two members of Safe Haven Church in Tuscaloosa.

It led a spiritual emphasis week at Belize Vo-Tech, a Christian boarding school for boys ages 14–

17. Each day consisted of 16 Bible lessons, recreation and a revival service. Two men also worked on small construction projects like plumbing and electrical repairs and installing a water heater at the school.

This was Southside Baptist's sixth missions trip to the school, and Terry said the last two trips were the best because of the involvement with the boys. The previous four trips were strictly construction trips.

During this trip, eight boys made decisions for Christ, which is "what it's all about," Terry said. "It can't get any better than that."

Southside plans to return next year to encourage the new believers and continue to share the gospel.

FBC Brewton events see 25 decisions

For the last 20 years at First Baptist Church, Brewton, the first weekend in February has always meant one thing: the annual Wild Game Supper.

The event — which attracts about 600 community members — is hosted by the Escambia Baptist Association church and always includes a dynamic speaker (often an athlete).

This year, the church had the opportunity to reach even more people as three area schools hosted three members of The Strength Team on Friday before they spoke at the supper on Saturday.

The team is composed of football players, body builders, power lifters, bull riders and other professional athletes who are also Christians called to share their testimonies with school and

church groups around the world.

"When they go to the schools, they can't talk about religious things, but they talk about making the right choice. They have a program about bullying. They talk about drug abuse and alcohol and things like that," said John Finklea, associate pastor of First, Brewton.

"These guys don't just come in and speak; they do great physical feats like break cinder blocks with their hands or heads. They bend steel and horseshoes. They have amazing feats of strength that grab people's attention."

On Friday night, the church held a rally as a way for team members to share their testimonies with students.

Of course, the supper was the main event for the weekend. And

like the rally, it had more than 1,200 in attendance.

"It was great to see God's house packed both nights," Pastor Jack Fitts said.

"I was thrilled to see the church doors open and welcoming all different ages, stages and races throughout our community."

About 40 church members were trained to act as counselors for attendees who wanted to learn more about Christianity. They saw 25 decisions for Christ and received numerous prayer requests.

"It's one of the most amazing events for unchurched people," Fitts said of the supper. "I like to say, 'Find out what God is doing and get in on it,' and I feel like this event helps our church do just that." (TAB)

Alabama Men's Hall of Fame seeks 2012 nominations

The Alabama Men's Hall of Fame is seeking nominations for its 2012 induction class. The deadline for nominations is March 15.

The Hall of Fame recognizes men who are native to or identified closely with the state of Alabama and have made significant contributions on a state, national or international scale. Nominees must have been deceased for at least two years.

Established by the state of Alabama in 1987, the Hall of Fame is housed in Harwell G. Davis Library at Samford University in Birmingham.

To date, 67 men have been honored with induction into the Hall of Fame. Honorees include Winton M. "Red" Blount, George Washington Carver, William Crawford

Gorgas, Martin Luther King, Raphael Semmes, Joseph Wheeler and Tom Bevill. Former U.S. Sen. Howell Heflin was inducted in 2011.

A nomination form and a list of all current members are available on the Hall of Fame website, www.samford.edu/groups/amhf.

Nominations will be reviewed by a selection committee designated by the Hall of Fame board. The committee's recommenda-

tions and a list of all nominees will be submitted to the full board for a final vote in April. The induction ceremony and luncheon will be in Birmingham in September.

Nominations must be post-marked by March 15 and mailed to Alabama Men's Hall of Fame, P.O. Box 292307, Samford University, Birmingham, AL 35229.

For more information, contact Hall of Fame staff member Annette Green at 205-879-3935. (SU)



'Turbo' focus

Hornets center aims to 'show others who Christ is'

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As one of the tallest players in the NBA, 7-foot Chris Kaman courts questions usually tossed to meteorologists.

"What's the weather like up there?" is typical.

Kaman once had a growth spurt of 6 inches — shooting from 6 foot 2 inches to 6 foot 8 inches between his freshman and sophomore years of high school.

A center for the New Orleans Hornets, Kaman continues to grow in his faith. "I am stronger in my faith. I try to focus on that fact and not worry about everything else and let Him take care of it. There are a lot of obstacles, but you have to keep focused."

Through prayer, Bible study, devotions and encouragement from his wife, Emilie, Kaman tries to "stay persistent" in his walk with Christ.

He and Emilie have been reading Gary Chapman's book "The 5 Love Languages."

"We try to learn about each other. Doing this devotional is valuable. I am the (spiritual) leader of the house. There are a lot of things that I am held accountable for. I have to make sure that I am doing those things the right way."

Kaman has learned something about himself.

"I am selfish. I really am. It's hard for me to admit that. It's the truth. I have to think about her first, then about family and friends. It's not about me. It's about them. It's about showing other people who Christ is. That is our goal on this earth. All this other stuff can fade away at the end, but what have you done for Christ? The most important thing is trying to lead people in the right direction."

Kaman changed directions right before the 2011-12 season, going from the city LA to the state LA.

An all-star with the Los Angeles Clippers in 2010, he was traded to New Orleans in a deal that sent Hornets star Chris Paul to the Clippers.

Adjustment

Averaging 9.6 points and 7.1 rebounds this season, Kaman has had to adjust. "I'm trying to figure out what is going on and how everything works. It's been interesting. That is the word I am going to use," he said.

This is the final season of his contract, and Kaman doesn't know where he will be for the 2012-13 season.

Injuries during two seasons proved distracting, but he didn't dwell on the frustrations.

"I let Him take care of it and try not to think about it. It's not always easy."

Attending Tri-Unity Christian School in Wyoming, Mich., Kaman was shocked he said when he first



NBA photo

ADVANTAGEOUS HEIGHT — Chris Kaman (right) plays for the New Orleans Hornets in a game against the Memphis Grizzlies.

went to Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant and began to learn about the real world. The NBA is "more extreme" in learning about "all life has to offer. Each step, you learn more about the world and what is out there. You try to grow closer in your faith."

Team chaplains with Central Michigan and Los Angeles helped him spiritually.

Kaman became a Christian when he was young, he said. His parents, LeRoy and Pam Kaman — who have been married 34 years, took him to church regularly.

Kaman, 29, was the 2003 Mid-American Conference Player of the Year. His .608 field goal percentage was the school's all-time best. After earning honorable mention All-America in 2003, he declared for the NBA draft and was picked sixth overall by the Clippers.

During the 2009-10 season, he averaged a career-high 18.5 points. Kaman's career best in rebounding was 12.7 in 2007-08.

"You've definitely got to score in the post and rebound, block shots and be able to make your teammates better. You've got to be able to do a little pick and pop action and lead the team. You've got to be competitive."

New Orleans forward/center Jason Smith called Kaman a "monster player. He is one of a kind. ... He can play inside, he can play outside. He scores 20 points. He's getting 10 boards. He is that type of player."

New Orleans teammates have given him the nickname "Turbo."

"He's always talking, always doing something. He makes you smile because you are like, 'Does this guy ever slow down?'" Smith said.

Another NBA big man, 7-foot-1-inch center Marc Gasol of the Memphis Grizzlies, said Kaman is a "great player with a lot of talent. If you are in this league, it's for a reason."

Off-season

With his grandparents living in Germany, Kaman has dual citizenship. He played for the German national team in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. In five games, he averaged 10.4 points and 6 rebounds.

During the off-season, he practices on a court he built near his parents' Michigan home and not far from where he had an embarrassing moment.

Climbing a tree when he was a child, Kaman got stuck at the top, and firemen had to use a ladder to get him down.

One of his goals is to display his Christianity by being a good example.

"It's a difficult job (playing in the NBA) and to be a Christian and live the way you are supposed to," Kaman said. "You have to say it by your actions and the examples you set for other people. You don't always do the best job at that, but you move in that direction."

While admitting it is difficult to do, Kaman wants to "let everything go and let Him handle it. That is one of my prayers, to give everything to Him."

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Ga. court strikes assisted suicide advertising law

ATLANTA — Georgia's Supreme Court has unanimously ruled that a law banning advertising for assisted-suicide services is unconstitutional. The law that was struck down Feb. 6 was enacted in 1994 in reaction to Dr. Jack Kevorkian's assisted suicides of the 1990s. The statute that the Georgia Supreme Court deemed unconstitutional reads: "Any person who publicly advertises, offers or holds himself or herself out as offering that he or she will intentionally and actively assist another person in the commission of suicide and commits any overt act to further that purpose is guilty of felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than five years."

In February 2009, four members of Final Exit Network, an assisted-suicide advocacy group, were arrested for allegedly assisting 58-year-old John Celmer of Cumming, Ga., in killing himself two years after being diagnosed with throat and mouth cancer. Interestingly, court documents quoted his doctor as saying he had made a "remarkable recovery" and was cancer-free at the time of the suicide.

In April 2010, the Final Exit Network defendants pleaded not guilty to charges of assisted suicide. The defendants later moved to dismiss the indictment on grounds that the Georgia statute on assisted suicide is unconstitutional under the First Amendment. The law violated the right to free speech, they argued, because Georgia law does not prohibit all assisted suicides, only those in which assistance had been publicly advertised or promoted.

The state Supreme Court, in ruling 7-0 for the defendants, noted that the state could have declared assisted suicide a criminal offense, as most other states have done. Had it done so, the law likely would have been upheld.

Illinois priest loses job after improvising prayers

MOUNT CARMEL, Ill. — For 18 years, Pastor William Rowe has done a little improvising while celebrating Mass on Sunday mornings at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Mount Carmel, Ill.

Now those deviations have led to his resignation in an incident that may be tied to global changes to the Catholic liturgy.

On Jan. 29, instead of saying "Lord our God that we may honor you with all our mind and love everyone in truth of heart," during the opening prayer, he altered the phrasing to better reflect the day's gospel message, in which Jesus heals a man with a troubled spirit.

"We thank you, God, for giving us Jesus who helped us to be healed in mind and heart and proclaim His love to others," the 72-year-old priest prayed instead. Three days later, Rowe received a letter from Bishop Edward Braxton of Belleville, Ill., accepting his resignation.

"The problem is that when I pray at Mass, I tend to change the words that are written in the book to match what I was talking about, or what a song is about," Rowe said in an interview. The book in question is the Roman Missal, a book of prayers, chants and responses used during the Mass. Rowe has been saying some of those prayers in his own words for years. Last summer, Rowe said, the bishop made it clear to his priests that "no priest may deviate from any wording in the official missal." In October, two months ahead of the introduction of the new missal translation, Braxton said he couldn't permit Rowe to continue improvising, according to Rowe. The priest offered his resignation but didn't receive a response. On Jan. 30, Braxton wrote Rowe a letter informing him that he'd accepted his resignation.

Air Force removes Latin word for 'God' from logo

WASHINGTON — Dozens of members of Congress are upset that the Air Force has removed the Latin word for "God" from the logo of an Air Force acquisitions office. Led by Rep. J. Randy Forbes, co-chairman of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, 36 lawmakers Feb. 6 sent a letter to Air Force Secretary Michael Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz objecting to the removal of "God" from the logo of the Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office (RCO). The logo was recently removed, according to Forbes, after objections by the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers.

Jason Torpy, president of the association, said the word "God" had no place in the logo because not all members of the military are religious. "We just hope [the Air Force] can provide more equal opportunities for atheists and humanists in the military."

According to the lawmakers, all members of the bipartisan prayer caucus, the RCO patch logo previously included the motto "Opus Dei Cum Pecunia Alienum Efficemus" (Doing God's Work with Other People's Money), an inside joke among RCO members. Caucus members say it was changed to "Miraculi Cum Pecunia Alienum Efficemus" (Doing Miracles with Other People's Money).