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Photo by Morris Abernathy

'WIN-WIN' RECOMMENDATION — Jimmy Draper (at podium), chair of the SBC name change task force, and SBC President Bryant Wright (standing behind Draper) present the task force's recommendation to the Executive Committee Feb. 20 in Nashville with a large group of guests in attendance to hear the report.

'Great Commission Baptists'

SBC name to remain but messengers to vote on common descriptive phrase

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Bryant Wright didn't achieve what he set out to do, but he believes the end result is better. It seems to be achieving what he prayed for all along — unity.

In a surprise move in September 2011, Wright appointed a task force to study changing the convention's name. His announcement sparked nationwide debate and attempts by some SBC Executive Committee (EC) members to block his move.

Within just a few months, the task force completed its work and delivered another surprise in the form of its recommendation to the EC on Feb. 20.

It did not recommend changing the convention's official name but adopting an informal, nonlegal phrase — Great Commission Baptists — to be used by those preferring an alternative to the SBC. With only six dissenting votes, the EC approved the recommendation Feb. 21 and sent it to convention messengers for a vote in June.

While interested in pursuing an official name change in the beginning, Wright said he is "not disappointed in the way [things] turned out."

He and task force chairman Jimmy Draper explained the recommendation demonstrates a compromise of sorts.

Though the large majority of people who attend the SBC annual meeting are from the South and would likely not favor a name change, there is a growing number of people in other regions, of varying ethnic groups and of a younger generation who do desire a name change, Draper noted.

'Voluntary'

The groups who desire an alternative name — whether it be because of regional confusion, potential reminders of past racial concerns or other reasons — "just need an OK to change the name," he said.

Any one of them can already do it without any action by the convention because Baptists are autonomous, Draper added. "There is no connectionism in Southern Baptist life, no hierarchy to dictate to the many facets. ... Our commitment together is always voluntary."

But the preference is to have a common descriptive phrase that still ties Southern Baptists together, whether the church, association, state convention, entity or other group uses the words "Southern Baptist," he noted.

"We deeply believe that if the phrase Great Commission Baptists is regularly used ... that it would provide an identification that not only tells who we are but what our mission as Southern Baptists is — the fulfillment of the Great Commission," Draper said.

It's the same idea as All State customers being "in good hands," he

said. "We all think of All State when we hear that phrase."

Adopting an unofficial phrase is really the only option, Draper added, noting the potential risks and tremendous costs involved in an official, legal name change. "The equity we have in the Southern Baptist name is enormous today," he said. "Changing the name of the convention would require a great cost in dollars and in energy and would present huge challenges legally that create a multitude of issues. The value of a name change does not justify the risks involved."

The SBC brand also has worldwide recognition and speaks to our theology, morality and ethics, compassion, ministry and mission, Draper said,

adding that Southern Baptists gained positive national notoriety following Sept. 11, 2001.

For Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, the new phrase will be old hat if it passes. Having led Alabama Baptists to use a Great Commission motto for years, Lance said the recommendation "is the best possible outcome."

"We as Southern Baptists are identified by the Great Commission. I would envision an effort to offer our legal name and the identifier in one statement — Southern Baptists, A Great Commission People. That represents us well," he said. "To identify (See 'SBC,' page 5)



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

CHECKING SIGNALS — Steve Loggins, SBC Executive Committee member from Alabama, reviews the name change recommendation with EC administrative subcommittee chair Darrell Orman, of Florida.

COMMENT

How Do You Get Your News?

On what flat screen do you read your paper?" the speaker asked. His point was that the front page of a newspaper is about as flat as a computer screen, touch-screen tablet or smartphone. All are ways people get their newspaper today. While people may choose different delivery systems, most still turn to the same source when they really want to know what is going on with an issue.

Alabama Baptists still turn to their state Baptist paper when they want to know the facts about an issue. Most Alabama Baptists still use the printed page. But a growing number read computer screens as they access the online edition of the paper, which is enhanced with videos and other electronic pluses. The paper also can be accessed from some popular tablets and smartphones. Even greater access from these devices is in the works.

But it is not the mode of delivery that keeps people coming back to *The Alabama Baptist*. It is the fact that the state Baptist paper continues to be a vital part of readers' spiritual lives. Readers count on the paper to keep them informed about important events and issues. For example, the Feb. 13 issue of *Newsweek* Magazine contained an article about the suffering of Christians in the Muslim world.

Persecution of Christians was a new story for *Newsweek*. But readers of *The Alabama Baptist* have been reading about the suffering of Christians for years. From Pakistan to Saudi Arabia to Sudan to Nigeria, this publication has shared the gruesome details of efforts that seem bent on killing and banishing Christians from Muslim dominated areas.

Closer to home, writers have doggedly reported gambling barons' efforts to spread their vice across the state. Many winked at the reports until the problem became too big to ignore. Then secular media began following the story and printing information this publication had released months earlier.

A few years ago when tensions marked the relationship between the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) and one of its colleges, the state Baptist paper delved into financial concerns and relationship issues to provide reliable information on which Alabama Baptists could make decisions. Some protested the stories but subsequent events proved them accurate.

Over a history dating back almost 170 years, the paper has earned the respect of Alabamians and Baptists around the world. *The Alabama Baptist*



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

draws from a variety of news sources, including contacts in nations around the world, to provide readers reliable reports about events, issues and people impacting the kingdom of God.

Correspondents spread across the state provide news and feature stories about every Alabama Baptist association on a regular basis, and the paper documents major events in the lives of cooperating churches.

Telling the missions story

The state Baptist paper tells the missions story like no other. Each week, the paper highlights ways Baptists work together to share the good news of Jesus. With heart-warming details, the stories tell of church starts in North America, witnessing opportunities in a rural village of some distant land or ministry opportunities that demonstrate God's love through human touch.

Readers can be alerted to breaking news through the paper's Facebook page and Twitter messages, which direct them to the breaking news section of the paper's website. But the website is not a reproduction of the paper. It is a resource center where stories dating back to 2000 are archived by subject. Here readers have a valuable tool to follow stories about a topic printed over a period of years.

Through news stories, features, Bible studies, editorials, photos and more, *The Alabama Baptist* teaches what Baptists believe and how Baptists work together. Each week, the paper celebrates what God is doing among and through Baptists and inspires readers to faithful service.

Readers pick up an issue of their state Baptist paper with confidence the publication is concerned about advancing the kingdom of God. A board of directors elected by the ABSC sets the policies and

oversees the work of the paper. Directors keep it focused on the cause of Christ, the Bible as the Word of God, the work of the churches and the general welfare of the convention. There is no room for private agendas, rabble rousing or muckraking.

The Alabama Baptist avoids the sensational and flamboyant in order to maintain relationships with readers across the years. That is why the paper remains a trusted voice and a welcome friend for more than 200,000 readers.

Alabama Baptists know their state Baptist paper provides high quality journalism with integrity earned through years of experience. In the past decade, writers have garnered more than 100 national awards for news stories, in-depth coverage, best evangelism article, feature writing, editorial courage and more.

For three of the last four years, Associated Church Press, the nation's oldest religious press organization, has named *The Alabama Baptist* the best regional Christian newspaper in the country.

Writing staff members also stand with Alabama Baptists as believers in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and are active in Alabama Baptist churches. All of that contributes to the value of Alabama's state Baptist paper.

So whether your flat screen is a sheet of newsprint, a computer screen, a tablet or a smartphone, *The Alabama Baptist* is still the place to turn when you want to know what God is doing among and through Baptists at home and around the world. The state Baptist paper is still an essential ingredient for spiritual growth.

That is why studies show that regular readers of the paper participate more in Baptist life, provide more pocketbook support for Baptist causes and pray more specifically for needs of Baptists around the world than Baptists who don't read the paper.

This week, spend time with *The Alabama Baptist*.

Letters to the Editor

BURDENED TO PRAY

There are three specific topics I feel led to pray about and feel that mighty things can happen in these areas if they were covered in a continual prayer pledge.

First, each time I read the stories of persecution of Christians by Muslim

extremists in foreign lands, I am so burdened and overwhelmed. I pray for these brothers and sisters in Christ, but I feel very inadequate facing such a big concern. I cannot imagine being killed for being a Christian.

This leads me to my second topic: to pray for the United States and its vul-

nerability to the Muslim extremists. The stories we read about abroad are just a precursor for us if we as Christians do not take a stand against this murderous group.

Third I feel we desperately need revival to take place in the heart of all (See 'Letters,' page 12)



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).

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Someone You Should Know

By Julie Payne, Correspondent, TAB

Martha Jones

Ebenezer Baptist Church, Stanton
Chilton Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES: Romans 8:28 and Philippians 4:13

FAVORITE HYMNS: "Because" and "Living for Jesus"

HOBBIES: Reading, baking and selling cakes, exercising and serving as president of Extension Homemakers (the local chapter in Maplesville)

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 48 years of marriage to Lloyd; three children, Pat, Judy and Jack; four grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren

For many years, Martha Jones has served as the Woman's Missionary Union missions director at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Stanton. She also occasionally helps with nursery. Jones was a Girls in Action leader for 17 years and taught Sunday School classes for both children and adults. She also served alongside her husband who was pastor of five churches.

Q: When did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was 12 years old, and I joined the church on Easter Sunday at Highland Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery.

Q: How did you become involved in ministry?

A: I was 18 years old [when I married] ... so I've been a minister's wife all my life.

Q: What are some of the most rewarding aspects of ministry?

A: It's very joyful and I get a lot of happiness out of it. And I enjoy being with people.

Q: How do your family members support you?

A: They support me in many ways. My daughter Judy and my son-in-law take me to every [church service] — I don't drive. My oldest daughter and my son always pray for me and visit me.

Q: What difference has Christ made in your life?

A: The Lord is my guide and my strength every day. He gives me happiness, peace and joy.

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

What does the Bible say?

Ministry leaders, students gather to discuss immigration issues

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

While Alabama legislators continue to address the issue of immigration and tweak the new law, some ministry leaders in the state are lobbying to deal with the issue from a biblical perspective.

On Feb. 23, both groups made progress toward their goals.

The latest move in the state Legislature would allow military identification cards to be presented as proof of citizenship or legal residency to conduct business with local or state government. The Alabama House of Representatives passed this potential first change to the state's immigration law 92-0. It now goes to the Senate.

The same day, ministry leaders, concerned citizens and students gathered in Birmingham to discuss issues resulting from the new law as well as how Christians should respond to the overall issue of immigration.

The nearly 200 people attending the G92 Immigration Conference South at Samford University focused on the 92 references to immigration or "the stranger" in the Old Testament. Stranger is GER in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, thus the G92 conference title.

The conference was the second of its kind. The first one took place last October at Cedarville University in Ohio.

Noel Castellanos, who writes about social justice issues and serves as CEO of Christian Community Development Association in Chicago, helped with both conferences.

"Right after the new (immigration) law was passed (in Alabama in 2011), there was a lawsuit brought right away ... but we were not hearing much from evangelical leaders," he said. "We (evangelicals) are the ones who want to talk about being biblical and having a passion for folks, so that is one of the reasons for this conference, to bring as many evangelical leaders around the table as possible."

"There were not a lot of dissenting voices (at the Birmingham conference)," he said. "There were a lot of people on board but who had not met each other. It was good for them to see other folks who are strong Christians who care about this and to hear from ... theologians, pastors and others."

"I think there will be a lot more that comes out of this," Castellanos added.

April Robinson, minister to students focused on community and campus involvement at Samford, agreed.



Photo by Kristen Bruce

PANELIST OF PASTORS — Michael Wesley Sr. (podium), pastor of Greater Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, Birmingham, responds to the remarks on immigration made by Richard Land (second from right) of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

"I think what happened was really positive. It created space for students to have some personal interaction with individuals who are deeply involved and impacted by immigration," she said.

Robinson also hopes the conference experience encouraged participants — students and adults — to take some type of action.

"It created [an opportunity] to listen and learn ... to continue thinking, praying, talking and researching and to realize as followers of Christ, this is our problem. It's not their problem," she said. "We want to assign it to someone else, but we have to take ownership of it as a community."

"We are called to pay attention to our brothers and sisters and help with whatever hardships and difficulties they are bearing ... to try to lighten their load and be hospitable," she noted.

Senior Samford student Amanda Cherry said she enjoyed the conference.

"It is good to hear about the ones on the front lines and to hear perspectives that are different than mine," she said. "I [attended the conference] because immigration is some-

thing I'm passionate about ... and (I) want to engage with people working on the issues."

Cherry said she realized at the conference that while she has been "pro-immigrant," she still needed to confess her sin in not always being outspoken on the issue.

Shawn Duncan, associate minister at Northlake Church of Christ in Tucker, Ga., traveled the two-plus hours to the conference because the immigration issue is a growing concern for him and his wife.

"We have a level of compassion and frustration not matched with knowledge about how to handle it," he said. "Our interest is first and foremost the kingdom of God. How does that inform what we do?"

Conference speakers included various local, state and national leaders such as Carlos Gomez, pastor of the Hispanic congregation of First Baptist Church, Center Point; John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church and first vice president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention; and Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. (Julie Payne contributed)

Jerusalem Baptist Church endures fourth attack

Targeting a Baptist church in Jerusalem, vandals scrawled anti-Christian graffiti on its exterior, spray-painted three cars in the church compound and slashed their tires on Feb. 20.

Al Nucciarone, pastor of Jerusalem Baptist Church, was preaching the day before from the Sermon on the Mount about building on a solid foundation to withstand the storms of life.

"Little did I know the next day on Monday I would get a text message that the Baptist church was attacked," Nucciarone said.

The vandalism is the latest attack on the Baptist House, which houses the Jerusalem Baptist Church as well as a nondenominational church and a Russian-speaking con-

gregation. Not only has the Baptist House previously been defaced by graffiti, but it was burned to the ground in a 1982 attack attributed to Jewish extremists. After being rebuilt, it was the target of a 2007 arson attack that caused minor damage.

'Price Tag'

In the Feb. 20 attack, in addition to blasphemy about Jesus and phrases like "Death to Christianity," the term "Price Tag" was written on the church exterior. Media reports say the phrase is used by Jewish extremists to indicate the "price" they will exact in response to the government curbing settlement efforts as part of the peace process with Palestinians.

Local Christians, who have lived through Palestinian terrorism and attacks by Jewish extremists, are accustomed to opposition, Nucciarone said.

"We suffer, and then Palestinian Christians suffer as well," he said. "That's a fact of life here. We're a minority. People, just like they attacked Jesus, they'll attack us."

Nucciarone asks Southern Baptists to pray for the Lord to give local believers boldness and unity in their faith in the days ahead. He also requests prayer for the congregation's Jewish and Palestinian friends and — even though he says his congregation loves and forgives the attackers — that justice will be done.

(BP)

2,500 Christians sign letter opposing 'contraceptive mandate'

Evangelical opposition to the Obama administration's failure to protect conscience rights in its "contraceptive mandate" continues to mount.

The Family Research Council (FRC) released Feb. 20 a letter signed by more than 2,500 Christians, including pastors, urging President Obama to reverse course. They called for him to revise the demand on employers in health insurance plans by providing sufficient protection for "the conscience rights of those who have biblically-based opposition to funding or providing contraceptives and abortifacients."

Speaking at a news conference at which the letter was released, Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land said, "This is about conscience, not contraception. And it's about religious freedom."

"The Obama administration is trying to run roughshod over the consciences" of Roman Catholics, evangelicals and others, said Land, president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Joining together

Southern Baptist leaders have joined the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, other Protestant bodies and some Jewish organizations in expressing opposition to the rule since the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced Jan. 20 that health plans must cover contraceptives and sterilizations as preventive services for employees.

The mandate requires coverage of contraceptives, as defined by the Food and Drug Administration, that can cause abortions, such as "ella;" emergency contraception, such as Plan B; and the intrauterine device (IUD). Those methods all have

mechanisms that can prevent tiny embryos from implanting in the uterine wall. In the case of "ella," it also can block production of the hormone progesterone, destroying the placenta that provides nutrition to the embryo and causing the unborn child's death after implantation.

Opponents of the rule especially have protested its failure to provide an adequate religious or conscience exemption.

The refusal to provide an adequate religious exemption for the "contraceptive mandate" demonstrates a trend of the Obama administration, Land said.

"This is part of an attempt to atrophy, to nullify, to confine and constrain, and to emasculate and neuter religious freedom down to freedom of worship," Land told reporters. "The president and his administration consistently talk about freedom of worship. ... Freedom of worship is confined to the space between your ears and the space between your shoulders at home and church or home and synagogue or home and temple or home and mosque."

"What our forefathers protected is freedom of conscience, freedom of religion. That is — the freedom to propagate our faith, to take our faith outside the walls of our home, outside the walls of our church and to have Catholic and Baptist charities, and Catholic and Baptist hospitals, and Catholic and Baptist schools that seek to educate within a worldview that is Catholic or Baptist or Lutheran or whatever," he said. "And we are not going to sit by and allow our God-given rights — which are acknowledged, recognized and protected by the Constitution — to be atrophied and to be neutered and to be confined and restrict-

ed by the Obama administration."

The FRC-sponsored letter said, "The ability of a religious person to follow their conscience without fearing government intervention has long been a protected right for Americans. It is unfathomable to picture a country that would deny religious freedoms."

Growing resistance

Public resistance — especially by religious adherents — is growing on various fronts:

► Louisiana College, which is affiliated with the Louisiana Baptist Convention, filed a federal lawsuit Feb. 18 challenging the mandate. Geneva College, a Reformed Presbyterian Church school in western Pennsylvania, is expected to file a suit Feb. 21. The Alliance Defense Fund is representing both schools. Two other schools — Belmont Abbey College, a Roman Catholic school in North Carolina, and Colorado Christian University, a non-denominational school — previously have sued the administration.

► All 181 bishops who lead Roman Catholic dioceses in the United States have voiced public opposition to the mandate, Thomas Peters reported Feb. 18 at the American Papist blog.

The HHS rule includes an exception for employers who oppose paying for such coverage on religious grounds, but it is narrowly drawn. It will protect many churches and other houses of worship, but it apparently will not cover churches that primarily serve people outside their faith. The exemption also will not extend to such faith-based organizations as schools, hospitals and social service programs.

Obama announced a change Feb. 10 in response to widespread protests, saying religious organizations would not have to pay for or provide contraceptives if they object on religious grounds. Instead, he said, their insurance companies would be required to pay for such services.

Southern Baptist leaders and other opponents said Obama's solution did not address the religious liberty and conscience problems. Some described it as an "accounting gimmick" that would still require religious organizations to be complicit in paying for employees' abortion-causing contraceptives through their insurance companies.

To add to opponents' dissatisfaction with the president's revision, HHS did not actually change the rule to reflect Obama's announced language. The Heritage Foundation reported the final regulation published Feb. 15 in the Federal Register did not include the language described by Obama. The FRC-sponsored letter may be accessed online at <http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=PT12B02&f=AL12B04>. It also can be signed at that link.

(BP)

First-century fragment of Mark's Gospel found?

Much of the biblical scholarly world has been buzzing since Feb. 1, when a New Testament professor made a claim during a debate that was news to most everyone who heard it — a first-century fragment of Mark's Gospel may have been found.

It would be the earliest-known fragment of the New Testament, placing it in the very century of Christ and the apostles.

The claim by Dallas Theological Seminary's Daniel B. Wallace took place during a debate with University of North Carolina professor Bart Ehrman, an author whose popular books claim the New Testament cannot be trusted because the original manuscripts aren't in existence.

The Mark fragment has yet to be made public, but Wallace provided a few more details on his website, saying information about the fragment would be published in the form of a book in "about a year." "It was dated by one of the world's leading paleographers," Wallace wrote. "He said he was 'certain' that it was from the first century." But if it is true that a first-century fragment has been found, it would be big news both in the scholarly world and in the larger Christian world.

The significance

Baptist Press asked Andreas Kostenberger, senior professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., to explain the significance of a possible first-century Mark fragment. Kostenberger attended the Wallace-Ehrman debate.

Q: If there is a first-century fragment of the Gospel of Mark, what is the significance?

A: Currently, the earliest known available Gospel fragment is p52 (the John Rylands papyrus), which contains portions of John 18 and dates to around A.D. 125. So any find that gets us a quarter-century or so closer to the time the original Gospels were written would be highly significant, even sensational. Of course, in part the significance of the discovery depends on the size of the fragment, not to mention the verification of the date. There have been previous reports of discoveries of early Mark or other Gospel manuscripts that did not check out at closer scrutiny, so it

is certainly appropriate to maintain scholarly caution until the full data are known and available to public scrutiny. For example, some scholars got burned when they prematurely accepted so-called "Secret Mark," which turned out to be a forgery (see Stephen Carlson's "The Gospel Hoax").

Q: Any guess as to why an announcement is being held back? Why the secrecy?

A: Apparently, the publisher is E.J. Brill, one of the world's leading publishers of high-quality academic

work. Presumably, the volume, when it appears approximately one year from now, will contain not only the first-century fragment of Mark but several other early manuscripts that have been found

(though not dating to the first century). The Brill volume will no doubt contain all the technical details as to verification of the date, circumstances of the find, and an assessment of its significance. It makes sense for the details of the find to be withheld until the publication of the volume so that this data can be fully vetted by the scholarly community at that time. Doubtless there will be skeptics who, recognizing the potential significance of the discovery, will attempt to challenge the authenticity and/or date of the fragment.

Q: Some readers may be wondering: If we don't have the original copy of Mark's Gospel, how can we trust that what we have is what Mark wrote?

A: The fact is that the earliest manuscripts of all or parts of Mark that we do have show remarkable consistency and stability. And none of the minor variations between different manuscripts affect any major doctrine of Christianity at all. Of course, there is no way to prove positively one way or another what might have happened during the period between the original writing of Mark and the first available copies. Knowing what we do know about the care with which ancient Jews as well as early Christians took to preserve the original wording of what they believed to be authoritative and sacred writings — in fact, the very words of God — inspires a high degree of confidence. First the apostles, and then those after them carefully guarded the reliability of the eyewitness testimony to Jesus contained in the four canonical Gospels. (BP)

"It is certainly appropriate to maintain scholarly caution."

Andreas Kostenberger
Southeastern Baptist
Theological Seminary



Photo courtesy of Bay Springs Baptist Church

DOTHAN'S BAY SPRINGS HOLDS BIRTHDAY BUGGY BASH
Bay Springs Baptist Church, Dothan, filled two grocery baggies with nonperishable food items for the local Columbia Baptist Association ministry center in honor of Pastor Scott and Rochelle Wyatt's birthdays. The promotion was called Birthday Buggy Bash. Dollar General allowed the church to borrow the buggies and donated the plastic bags.

'A Time to Remember'

Alabama Baptist churches urged to observe one-year anniversary of April 2011 tornadoes

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Anyone who has faced a significant loss or disaster knows that the one-year mark of that crisis brings back painful memories and emotional stress.

Soon Alabamians will face the first anniversary of the April 2011 tornadoes. And the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) is asking Alabama Baptist churches to set aside April 22 as a day of remembrance with worship and a disaster relief offering.

"The one-year anniversary date of the April 2011 tornadoes is critical because it will bring back emotional trauma for congregations and individuals who went through these damaging storms," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the SBOM. "A Time to Remember: 2011 Tornadoes is a way our churches can help people move beyond this tragedy by showing them the hope we have in Christ and by praying for them."

Numerous resources are being made available to churches to assist them in the observance. A booklet, "A Time to Remember: 2011 Tornadoes," has been mailed to pastors and directors of missions. The booklet includes church and associational planning guides, sample wor-

ship services and sermon suggestions.

Bulletin inserts, in color or black and white, can be downloaded from www.sbd.org. On the Resources tab, click on the "a time to remember" link.

Churches may consider downloading the family disaster preparedness plan from the website and making it available to families. The plan shows what to do in an emergency and how to assemble a family disaster supply kit and gives several suggestions on how to cope during an emergency.

Churches and associations can select from several disaster relief videos that can be shown during the remembrance worship service or at other times. Videos can be downloaded from www.alsbom.tv beginning March 1.

Envelopes for the disaster relief offering churches are asked to receive on the day of remembrance can be ordered by calling the SBOM disaster relief office at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 273. The offering will be used to purchase equipment for associations to use



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

'A TIME OF REFLECTION' — Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, was one of about 10 Alabama Baptist churches destroyed by the April 27 tornadoes.

in their disaster relief ministries. Churches are asked to set an offering goal of \$1 per member.

John Brock, senior pastor of Highland Baptist Church, Florence, plans to lead his church to observe the day of remembrance.

"Our church was very involved

in ministry at Phil Campbell and Hackleburg in April 2011. I think the day of remembrance is a great thing for our church to do because we have seen firsthand what disaster relief volunteers do," he said.

Churches that cannot participate in the day of remembrance April 22

are encouraged to select another date.

Autauga Baptist Association is planning a service April 15 because tornadoes hit Autauga County and Boones Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, on that date last year.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, noted that April 2011 might have been the most challenging time the people of Alabama have ever faced.

"On Sunday, April 22, we commemorate the first anniversary of what we can call 4/27," he said. "This will be a time of reflection and dedication for us as a people of faith."

A TIME TO REMEMBER: 2011 TORNADOES April 22, 2012

For resources, visit www.sbd.org
or call the SBOM disaster relief office
at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 273.



one-year
anniversary
April 27, 2011
special commemorative
issue

The Alabama Baptist is producing a special commemorative issue of the paper marking the one-year anniversary of the April 27, 2011, tornadoes. Initial plans call for up to 300,000 newspapers being distributed through the 3,200 Alabama Baptist churches.

For information on sponsorship opportunities, contact Bill Gilmore at 205-870-4720, Ext. 107 or bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

SBC name change recommendation 'the best possible outcome'

(continued from page 1)

us, in this technological age, with an identifying description may be a very positive step. It will remind us who we are as a people of faith and, therefore, help us stay on mission with the Great Commission."

Alabama Baptist director of missions and EC member Steve Loggins is also pleased with the recommendation. "I'm always looking for a win-win situation, and this is the best we could have come up with," he said. "Compromising isn't necessarily a bad thing. There's a biblical [precedent] for it (Acts 15)."

"No one has to do anything unless they want to," Loggins explained. "It will help in the pioneer areas, and it won't hurt the churches in the South."

But another EC member from Alabama, Pastor Ron Madison, was a little less eager to embrace the recommendation and registered his concern with a no vote.

While not necessarily opposed to the recommendation, Madison is concerned the issue has not been thoroughly fleshed out.

"This is light years better than what it could have been, but I'm not ready to say it is the best either," he said, noting he would have preferred the opportunity for all sides to be heard during the discussion. "I have deep respect for Dr. Draper and the others ... but I do not think there was a complete airing out of perspectives," Madison said. "Any [worthy] position should be able to stand up to close scrutiny in the context of open discussion."

And while every EC member had the opportunity to share concerns and ask questions if desired, Madison said the environment made it difficult to express concerns. The presentation of the information could "inadvertently suggest that people who hold positions different than yours haven't heard from God."

Madison and Loggins both serve on the EC administrative subcommittee, which first considered the recommendation and approved recommending it to the full EC for a vote.

Several EC members and President and CEO Frank Page said they anticipate dealing with questions from Southern Baptists be-

tween now and June. But Draper and Wright want the questions to come. They are encouraging the dialogue and want Southern Baptists to be thoroughly informed before coming to New Orleans for the annual meeting.

"I believe we can put this name change issue to bed," Draper said, noting the numerous attempts to change the name in the past 50 years as well as the three extensive studies done in the same time frame.

He and Wright also acknowledged their hopes that the process in which this recommendation played out will rebuild trust among Southern Baptists who might distrust a presidential task force.

"I hope that God has so clearly led the task force to unity that there will be an ongoing, growing trust when a president is led to set up a task force," Wright said.

"In the course of seeking God's will and in working together as a task force, it was such a clear leading to go this way," he said. "To officially change the name was so complex and divisive. It was not the best way to go."

'BUBBA' rejected

As the SBC name change task force recently weighed changing its name, denominational leaders were bombarded with suggestions. Hundreds of them.

Most suggestions avoided the word "Southern" but one hinted at the denomination's regional flavor: Baptist Ultimate Bible Believing Alliance, or BUBBA.

Just for fun, *The Alabama Baptist* would like to hear your creative suggestions for names for the SBC. Post these on our Facebook page or email them to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

The staff will compile these along with other names rejected by the task force and post them on our website in a few weeks.

(RNS)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Valley Creek Church, Hueytown**, will celebrate the beginning of renovation on its student center and construction of its new children's building March 11. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. as the church dedicates the new building and renovations. There will be a ground breaking and prayer following the service. The facilities include a new 8,800-square-foot children's building and renovation of a 4,300-square-foot student center. The children's building will include space for nursery and preschool complete with an indoor play area. The elementary age children will enjoy two large worship rooms and several class rooms. Our new student center will feature a state-of-the-art worship area that will seat 175 youth. There also will be a recreation area, café/snack bar, student lounge and class rooms. For information visit www.vcbchurch.com. Kevin Blackwell is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of **First Church, Birmingham**, will host national WMU executive director Wanda Lee March 6, 10:30 a.m., in the fellowship hall. For luncheon reservations call 205-870-3888. Stan Lewis is pastor. ► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will host the gospel group New Ground March 4, 6 p.m. Dale M. Creel is pastor. ► **Shades Crest Church, Bluff Park**, will hold its 11th annual High Country 5K/Walk April 7. Pre-registration packet pick up will be April 6, 4-8 p.m., in the fellowship hall. Late registration and packet pick up will be April 7, 6:30-7:45 a.m., in the family life center. The 5K run will begin at 8 a.m. The kids' fun run will begin at 9 a.m. There will be an elementary school team challenge for area schools. Jeff Speegle, sports anchor for ABC 33/40, will be the emcee. There will be a pre-race pasta dinner April 6, 6 p.m., in the fellowship hall and a post-race pancake breakfast during the awards ceremony for runners and families. To register visit www.ra-ccit.com. Deadline to pre-register is March 23. T-shirts will be guaranteed for the first 300 registrants. For information call 205-822-1750 or visit www.shadescrest.org.

COFFEE

► **First Church, Elba**, will host the women's ensemble of The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville in concert March 14, 6:15 p.m. For information call 334-897-2246. Michael Woodham is pastor. ► **Lee Street Church, Enterprise**, will hold four days of spiritual renewal March 11-14 with Ken Chancellor, pastor of Lakeside Church, Albany, Ga. Ser-

vices will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. For information call 334-347-4981. Larry Doster is pastor. ► **First Church, New Brockton**, will hold revival March 11-14 with Chad Hixson. Craig Springfield will lead the music. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. A nursery will be provided. For information call 334-894-6220. Nathan Sims is pastor. ► **Newbia Church, Elba**, will hold Four Fabulous Mondays during March at 7 p.m. Dale Huff will speak March 5, W. Wiley Richards March 12, Kenneth W. Hale March 19 and Wallace Russell Jr. March 26. Keith Bell will lead the music. For information call 334-897-5367. Hillary Stewart is pastor.

DEKALB

► **Trey Kincer** is the new youth pastor for **Moon Lake Church, Mentone**. He has worked with the youth for about two years. Kincer was called to preach in 2009 and was licensed by Moon Lake. Terry Turner is pastor.

GENEVA

► The 39er's C.L.U.B. of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold a luncheon meeting March 13, 11 a.m., with Kay Chandler. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by March 6. Mike Shirah is pastor.

LAMAR

► **Lamar Association** will hold Missions Madness 6 on March 10 at First Church, Vernon. The event is for children in grades K-sixth and their leaders. The theme will be "A Cup of Water in Jesus' Name" with a special emphasis on disaster relief. The Scripture verse will be Matthew 10:42. Registration will be from 8:45-9:10 a.m. The event will be from 9:10-2 p.m. Speakers will be Doug Foster of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries; Steve and Judy Anderson, an International Mission Board family serving in the Southeast Asia region; Becky Luther of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union's temporary emergency child care unit; Gary Rogers of Pickens Association's chain saw unit; Greg Moore of Birmingham Association's feeding unit; and David Honeycutt, a missions volunteer in Guatemala. There will be a Skype session with Jim Marcus, a North American Mission Board missionary in Michigan. There will be a hands-on missions project and letter writing to missionaries. An offering will go to the Lamar Association disaster relief fund and given in memory of Virginia Weeks. Clyde Stevens is pastor of First, Vernon. Scott Stokes is director of missions for Lamar Association.

RUSSELL

► **Ladonia Church, Phenix City**, will host Another Day Closer

to Heaven Ministry's first Saturday night of the month gospel sing March 3, 6 p.m. EST. Alabama Country Gospel Music Association's male entertainer of the year for 2011 singer/songwriter Denny Grimes will be the host and emcee. Gospel trio Trinity, of Reynolds, Ga., and Megan Fowler, entertainer of the year in new country at the Georgia Country Gospel Music Association annual awards ceremony in 2010, of Rupert, Ga., will sing. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. EST. There will be giveaways from local businesses and eateries. David Howle is pastor.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Pelham**, will host Charles Billingsley (former lead singer of NewSong) and his band in concert March 29, 7 p.m. Billingsley is celebrating his 20th anniversary in music ministry by debuting his 25th album, "Never Forsaken." First, Pelham's Celebration Choir will provide backup on some songs. For information call 205-664-0237. Mike Shaw is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► F.A.I.T.H. Riders motorcycle ministry of **Cedar Grove Church, Leeds**, will hold a benefit ride March 24. Proceeds will go to Ride for Lyla Fund. Registration will begin at 7:30 a.m. All bikes will be out by 9:15 a.m. The ride will be a marble run beginning at Cedar Grove and will consist of gathering marbles at several churches in Jefferson, St. Clair, Talladega and Shelby counties and ending back at Cedar Grove. There will be lunch and door prizes. Pre-registration is available. For information call Ronny at 205-229-2136. Billy Abrams is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Hilltop Church, Northport**, will hold revival called Manna Mondays every Monday during March at 7 p.m. Rick Lance, executive director for the State Board of Missions, will speak March 5; Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Church March 12; Gil McKee, pastor of First Church, Tuscaloosa, March 19; and Bill Richards, pastor of Englewood Church, Tuscaloosa, March 26. Billy Reeves is pastor.

WALKER

► **Walker Association** will sponsor Evangelism Now! Across Walker County March 4, 6 p.m., at First Church, Jasper. Evangelist Junior Hill will speak, and Bob Smith will lead the music during the event. The Edgil Grove Five will provide pre-service music. Dennis Culbreth is pastor of First, Jasper. Lucky Teague is director of missions for Walker Association. 📖



Johntown Baptist celebrates 100th anniversary

It was "just an all-day celebration," Rachel Jones said of the recent festivities surrounding the 100th anniversary of Johntown Baptist Church, West Blocton.

Former pastors spoke at a special church service, and some former members shared their testimonies and sang.

Bill Mathews from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the Bibb Baptist Association church with a plaque recognizing its 100 years.

A booklet titled "A Celebration of 100 Years" was passed out to those in attendance. It featured a picture of the church on its front cover and was dedicated to the longest-attending member and pianist, Rozelle Fountain.

A picture of the church also was included on the hand fans that attendees were given as keepsakes.

After the service, attendees feasted on an "old-fashioned" lunch in the fellowship hall that included chicken and dumplings, butter beans and turnip greens.

Jones, wife of Pastor Ray Jones, said 80 people — a mix of current and former members — were in attendance.

"Everybody was just greeting everybody and remembering the good old days. ... It was a good celebration," she said.

Ray Jones agreed. "You just couldn't have asked for much of a better day there," he said.

A third generation Johntown Baptist member and the first known member raised in the church to become its pastor, Ray Jones said he has high hopes for its future. "We're hoping to make plans for another [100 years]," he said.

Brookwood's Liberty Baptist marks 175 years

"Liberty Baptist Church (Brookwood) was full of smiling, welcoming faces on the morning ... they celebrated their 175th anniversary," said Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. "(They are) very sweet people who love the Lord and love to worship."

In fact, people — specifically the charter and current members — were the focus of the recent anniversary celebration, which was primarily organized by Theresa Bell, wife of Pastor Mike Bell.

C.T. Ethridge was recognized for serving as associate pastor of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Association church since 1964.

Mike Bell delivered the day's sermon, and Director of Missions Dan Wiggins read the history of the church and offered some words of appreciation and encouragement.

The music was led by Ethridge's wife, Joan, and special music was provided by Called Out.

Berg presented the church with a framed certificate commemorating the special occasion.

Following a break in the service, the 97 attendees enjoyed lunch in the fellowship hall.

Each person received a booklet with photos and highlights of the church's history as well as a keepsake bookmark with former pastors' names listed.

Former Alabama Crenshaw, Butler associations DOM Wallace dies

Porter King Wallace Jr., former director of missions (DOM) for Alabama Crenshaw and Butler Baptist associations, died Feb. 10. He was 85.

A Stockton native, Wallace graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He was a World War II Navy veteran and was ordained in 1947 at Huffman Baptist Church.

Wallace was pastor of eight

churches in Georgia, Louisiana and Alabama before serving as DOM from 1976 until 1991.

After his retirement, he served as pastor or interim pastor of several churches. He was a member of First Baptist Church, Bay Minette, at the time of his death.

Wallace is survived by his wife of 62 years, Barbara; one daughter; one son; and two grandchildren. He was preceded in death by daughter Barbara Caroline.

(TAB)

What is the definition of today's evangelicals?

Evangelicals have been in the news a lot lately, from the Denver Broncos' Tim Tebow and his take-a-knee prayers to the Texas pastor and his wife who spent 24 hours in bed preaching the virtues of sex in Christian marriages.

Mitt Romney is struggling to gain evangelical support for his presidential bid, and Rick Santorum — a Catholic — won the blessing of more than 100 evangelical pastors gathered at a Texas ranch.

So who are these Christians? What do they have in common, and how are they different from other believers? Even famed preacher Billy Graham wasn't sure of the answer.

"Actually, that's a question, I'd like to ask somebody, too," Graham told religion reporter Terry Mattingly in a 1987 interview. "The lines (have) become blurred. ... You go all the way from the extreme fundamentalists to the extreme liberals and, somewhere in between, there are the evangelicals."

So here's a primer about these religious types, their history, faith and politics:

Who is an evangelical?

Technically, all Christians are, according to the Religion News-writers Association's Religion Stylebook. The word comes from the Greek "evangelion," which means "good news" or "gospel." And all who claim to follow Jesus Christ feel obligated to share His gospel.

But the term "evangelical" has come to refer mostly to a type of Protestant, explains Pastor Corey

Hodges of New Pilgrim Baptist Church in Kearns, Utah: Evangelicals believe in the Trinity; that the Bible alone is the inerrant and infallible word of God; that salvation is by grace alone through faith and not accomplished by human effort or achievement; and that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, and His death and resurrection were the payment for human sin.

Notre Dame historian Mark Noll, author of "Protestantism: A Very Short Introduction," recommends a wider description, one penned by British historian David Bebbington. Bebbington identified an emphasis on the "new birth"

as a life-changing experience of God and a concern for sharing the faith.

The trouble, Noll notes, is that "these evangelical traits have never by themselves yielded cohesive, institutionally compact, or clearly demarcated groups of Christians, but (rather) ... identify a large family of churches and religious enterprises."

'A movement'

In other words, "evangelical" is not the name of a single church.

Indeed, says John Morehead, director of the Western Institute for Intercultural Studies in Salt Lake City, "evangelicalism is a movement that encompasses a variety of denominations and independent traditions."

Mattingly, director of the Washington Journalism Center at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, expands the definition further, saying "evangelicals

have always been a cultural niche/commercial product kind of thing. No set doctrines."

What sets evangelicals apart from fundamentalists?

Noll: The serious answer is the 'eye of the beholder.' I believe in the Virgin Birth of Christ, which makes me a fundamentalist in the eyes of some people, but I take an occasional glass of wine and don't worry about evolution, which means that, for many people, I can't be a fundamentalist.

Hodges: Fundamentalists generally believe that culture is evil and corrosive. Their views usually result in isolation from the culture and/or bigotry. Evangelicals believe the culture is redeemable and can and should be impacted by Christians.

Who came first, evangelicals or fundamentalists?

The 1910 Presbyterian General Assembly declared that all ministerial candidates had to subscribe "to five fundamental doctrines," according to a recent article in *Christian History* magazine, "the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the Virgin Birth of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ and the historicity of the biblical miracles."

For the next decades, the magazine said, a battle ensued in nearly every mainline Protestant body between fundamentalists and "those who wanted to remain 'tolerant' and 'open-minded' in response to modern learning."

Fundamentalists lost.

Eventually, a new group emerged, calling themselves "the New Evangelicals," the article said, hoping "to distance themselves from the anti-intellectual, militant, culture-shunning traits that had begun to characterize much of fundamentalism."

How are evangelicals dif-

ferent from Pentecostals?

Pentecostals are a particular subgroup of evangelicals, who believe in the same basic doctrines but emphasize "the work of the Holy Spirit," including healing, speaking in tongues and prophecy.

Hodges: They tend to focus more on existential and experiential faith. Pentecostal theology generally emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, while other evangelicals focus more on the work of Christ.

Why don't some evangelicals think Mormons are Christian?

Hodges: It stems, mainly, from the Mormon view of God and Jesus and the Mormon belief in extra scriptures, which are essentially the same objections that Catholic, Orthodox and liberal Protestants have.

Evangelicals and traditional Christians believe in the Trinity — that God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one substance. Mormons believe God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are separate beings.

Evangelicals also heed the Bible as the sole word of God, while Latter-day Saints believe in the Bible and other scriptures, including the faith's signature Book of Mormon.

Noll: I'm not sure all evangelicals would say categorically that all Mormons are not Christians. But the prominence given to revelation through Joseph Smith (and not just the Bible), doctrines like the materiality of God, rites that seem strange and unbiblical (temple rites and early day polygamy), and (sociologically speaking) the

separated nature of Mormon religious life are all issues for evangelicals.

Morehead: Mormons and evangelicals approach the definition of Christian very differently. Evangelicals, with their emphasis on correct doctrine as developed within the history of the church and its various creeds, see Mormonism as presenting something quite different, and at odds, with the historic creedal statements of Christendom.

Can Catholics be evangelicals?

Hodges: No. The Protestant and, ultimately, the evangelical movement arose from frustration with the Catholic Church's theology. Some Catholic theology runs contrary to that of evangelicals. For instance, confession of sins to the priest runs contrary to the evangel-

ical belief of the priesthood of all believers.

Mattingly: Using the word accurately, no. It is a Protestant term. Catholics can, of course, be evangelists.

Morehead: Typically Catholics are not evangelical in that they not only accept the authority of the Bible, but also give a promi-

nent place to the authority of the church, the pope, and church tradition.

Noll: Yes, maybe. Fifty years ago, 'evangelical Protestant' and 'Roman Catholic' were mutually exclusive, but now there is considerably more overlap. Many traditional evangelicals would continue to insist that a Catholic simply cannot be an evangelical. But there are others, even quite conservative, who would say otherwise. (RNS)

"Somewhere in between (the extreme fundamentalists and the extreme liberals), there are the evangelicals."

Evangelist Billy Graham

"Evangelicals have always been a cultural niche/commercial product kind of thing."

*Terry Mattingly
Washington Journalism Center*

Nonprofit groups oppose Obama's change in charitable deductions

For the fourth year in a row, President Obama is proposing lower tax deductions for the wealthy on donations to churches and other nonprofit organizations. And for the fourth year in a row, nonprofit groups say the change would lead to a dramatic drop in charitable giving.

Under the Obama proposal, the tax break for charitable donations would fall from 35 percent to 28 percent for the top 2 percent of taxpayers, those earning more than \$250,000.

In real terms, that would mean a wealthy taxpayer who donates \$10,000 to a charity would be able to only claim

a \$2,800 deduction on his taxes, rather than the current \$3,500.

When it analyzed a similar proposal in Obama's 2012 budget, the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University said it would boost federal revenue by billions of dollars and have a "modest negative effect" on charitable giving.

'Not fair'

Obama has argued in the past that it is not fair that the wealthy receive a larger tax break for the same donations to charity when a middle class taxpayer can only claim a deduction of 15 percent. He has also said charities would "do just fine" under the change.

On Feb. 16, the White House said the change wouldn't affect

the 80 percent of overall contributions that come from individuals and foundations, and is "unlikely to have a substantial impact on donations."

The last time the charitable deduction rules were changed, in 2002-2003 under President George W. Bush, the top rate was lowered from 38.6 percent to 35 percent.

Based on 2009 data, 74 percent of Americans' charitable donations went to churches and religious organizations, said Sylvia Ronswalle, executive vice president of the Illinois-based Empty Tomb research organization, which tracks charitable giving. (RNS)

Embark Ministries to hold Amazing Race for couples

As divorce rates in America near the 50 percent range, Embark Ministries began to feel the need to expand its youth-focused ministry to a "ministry for all."

This year, instead of just having The Amazing Race: Extreme Faith Edition for youth, the ministry will host its first race for couples.

Modeled after the TV show "The Amazing Race," engaged or married couples will race across a 125-mile area April 28-29 completing "extreme tasks." Tasks could include anything from repelling to an outdoor obstacle course.

The race will be followed by a couples conference with worship by Chris Walker of Cross Creek Community Church, Hokes Bluff. The conference speaker is Vista McDuffie, director of Embark.

McDuffie said he hopes the race and conference will challenge and strengthen couples who attend.

The winning married couple will win a five-day, four-night cruise to the Bahamas.

To register, visit www.embarkministries.com. There are only 25 slots available. Couples will be selected and notified by April 1.

(TAB)

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Photo by Neisha Fuson

JORDAN RIVER — The baptistry at FBC Townley, built and painted in 1934, depicts the Jordan River. 'It's supposed to look like you're coming out into the Jordan to be baptized,' Pastor Andrew Dickerson says.

Artistic cornucopia

FBC Townley preserves unique 1934 baptistry, mural

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The sanctuary of First Baptist Church, Townley, constructed in 1920, contains many artistic points of interest.

Light darts in through windows made of imported Florentine glass teeming with soft purple, yellow and blue-green hues.

The sanctuary's dark wood molding and woodwork, original pews and elaborate tile ceiling speak of the church's history in the community and a congregation that has lovingly tended to its care for almost a century.

Aside from all these distinct elements is another gem that catches the eye's attention.

Stretched across the majority of the front wall is a mural of the Jordan River. The scene is pastoral, with a shepherd tending his flock shown prominently on the left of the painting. A warm golden glow envelops rolling green hills. Trees reflect in the river, and distant small buildings and villages dot the landscape.

In the center of the mural, a cavelike, three-dimensional area protrudes out where the baptistry is enclosed.

The baptistry exists in such synergy within the larger context of the painting that one may have to look twice before realizing it is there.

"It's supposed to look like you're coming out into the Jordan to be baptized," Pastor Andrew Dickerson said.

Details about the history of this work of art and its creators are hard to come by, but church member Norman Patton is a good resource. His great-great-uncle, William Patton was the founding pastor of First, Townley, when it began in the 1890s.

Historical details

According to Norman Patton, who has studied the church's history, some historical details about the artwork have been lost but general parts are known.

As the story goes, the pastor at the time wanted a unique item for the sanctuary. One day in 1934, a man named Fullerton got off a train and appeared at the church looking for a meal. Once he saw the church, he offered to paint a mural on the sanctuary wall. Two men were hired as assistants for the duration of the

project, and Patton thinks it took them only a couple of weeks to complete.

The men put up a large tarp to cover their work in progress.

"When they got it finished, they had a big gathering," Patton said. "[The church was] packed to full capacity."

When the mural and baptistry were unveiled, people were in awe.

"They could just not believe that was what they were looking at," Patton said.

Upon close inspection of the painting, the name "Fullerton" and the date "1934" can be found in the bottom right corner. In the bottom left corner are the names "Harless" and "Codner" and the word "assist," indicating the two assistant artists' names.

Closer examination reveals that a combination of time and the sanctuary's natural light has begun to slowly erode certain areas.

A chicken wire and papier-mâché combination was used to sculpt the three-dimensional trees and base area surrounding the baptistry. Words from newspaper pages used for the papier-mâché peek through the wire at some lower points of the base.

Dickerson pointed.

"It's cracking some at the top," he said as he craned his neck upward to inspect the mural.

He then directed his gaze to a painted dove. "They tell me [the paint] used to be a lot brighter than that," said Dickerson, who came to First, Townley, in 2010.

To his knowledge, no restoration work has ever been done. But that doesn't mean the artwork is not well looked after.

"We almost go out of our way to make sure that we keep this as intact as possible," Dickerson said.

Lucky Teague, director of missions for Walker Baptist Association, is one person who was struck by the baptistry's uniqueness.

"When I saw it, I was just amazed," he shared. "I've never seen anything like it."

Teague is not aware of any other sanctuary like it in the area, and he called it "a treasure for Walker County."



Photo by Neisha Fuson

PAST AND PRESENT — FBC Townley built in 1920 houses original pews, elaborate tile ceilings, dark wood molding and woodwork and Florentine glass windows.

State executives form NAMB study committee

Alabama Baptists' Rick Lance is among state convention executive directors appointed to a special committee to evaluate relations with the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

The action came during the Fellowship of State Executive Directors annual meeting Feb. 13-16 in Scottsdale, Ariz. State executive directors meet each year for fellowship and to discuss issues related to Baptist state convention work.

The name of the state executives' special committee is A Study Committee on Implementation of NAMB Initiatives with State Conventions.

Emil Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and president of the fellowship for 2011-12, said the committee was established "to evaluate how state conventions and NAMB can maximize cooperation during the transition process of implementing the new NAMB initiatives."

Announced in 2011, NAMB's Send North America strategy focuses heavily on church planting and shifting funds to the field for church planting.

Members of the committee are Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions; David Hankins, chairman, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention; Anthony Jordan, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma; Cecil Seagle, executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana; Mark Edlund, executive director of the Colorado Baptist General Convention; and Bob Mills, executive director of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.

'Strategic partnerships'

Some state convention leaders have expressed concerns about what their relationships with NAMB will look like as historic "cooperative agreements" are replaced with new "strategic partnerships" with state conventions. The Southern Baptist entity has used cooperative agreements with states to support and define its work and to assist in the furtherance of domestic missions work.

Turner said the study committee is important to evaluating and understanding the future work of state conventions with NAMB.

"I think this study committee can help get beyond anecdotal reports about difficulties that new work conventions face and arrive at quantifiable conclusions," Turner said.

It is the desire of the state executive directors' group that NAMB trustees be involved in discussions as well, Turner said.

"The focus of our concern is the cooperation of NAMB and state conventions," Turner said. "I believe this will be a good thing and expect it to proceed in a friendly and collaborative manner."

(BP)

Reproducing from a healthy mother church

New Mexico youth pastor turned church planter follows God's call 'to be fruitful'

Derek Osburn never set out to be a poster child for missionary church staff members. He was minding his own business as a youth minister at Central Baptist Church, Clovis, N.M., when God broadened his horizons.

The pivotal decision point for Osburn came at a New Mexico state evangelism conference during which Ed Stetzer challenged the audience. Stetzer, vice president of research and ministry development for LifeWay Christian Resources, is a longtime church planter and church-planting advocate.

"He said, 'You will not change your circumstances until the discomfort of staying outweighs the discomfort of leaving,'" Osburn shared. "That was the turning point for me. I knew it was time to go."

And by go Osburn thought he and his family would have to leave their home in Clovis and start a church elsewhere. The last thing he wanted to do was hurt his church. Turns out Central Baptist had another idea.

In 2005, Osburn began wrestling with the concept of planting a church that would reach the unchurched. But from the beginning, his concern was for the health and welfare of Central. He went so far as

to resign from Central and explored the possibility of planting a church in Oklahoma. A call from Central Senior Pastor Alan McAlister changed his plans.

McAlister suggested Osburn try exactly what he was planning but do it at Central as associate pastor. In three years, a core group was ready to plant The Vine Community Church.

"Why would we want to start another church?" McAlister asked. "Well over 80 percent of the population of this county is lost. If you sense that God is leading you to start a new work, the best thing you can do is do that, in spite of what logic might tell you. We're a testimony that He truly blesses."

The Vine now averages 210 in worship and pulls approximately 65 percent of its members from Cannon Air Force Base. It has a leased building that seats 300.

"Because of Central doing this, they've gained 100 new members in a year and the Vine has gained 200," Osburn said. "It proved to be the most biblical, godly thing they could do for the Kingdom. And so it was good in God's eyes. It was good spiritually. It was good for our community. It is a success."

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



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



NAMB photo

COMMUNITY — Derek Osburn (right), pastor of The Vine Community Church, Clovis, N.M., preaches during a recent service. The church draws attendees from nearby Cannon Air Force Base.

That multiplication, coming from a position of health and maturity, makes Osburn and Central a model for how church staff and churches can approach church planting.

"Church planting is done best when healthy churches do what healthy living things do — reproduce," Stetzer said.

The North American Mission Board is committed to helping churches prepare for partnership in church planting, wherever those churches find themselves, through Send North America. Clearing the hurdles for the healthy is important, but healing the hurting, and even dysfunctional, only helps the overall effectiveness of church-planting efforts.

"I was working at Central Baptist Church and spiritually searching for the next step that God wanted me to take," Osburn said. "I had this sense that we're not going to reach everybody in our world at our church. Of

course, that's the whole point of our Christian life — to be fruitful.

"The journey was cohesive and friendly working with Central. They were a great mother church. We worked well with the Baptist Convention of New Mexico and the North American Mission Board."

'God has blessed us'

"God has blessed us enormously," Osburn's wife, Sharla, said. "I was skeptical in the beginning, but this has been better than I ever imagined. When we stepped out, it was a whole different experience from anything I had encountered in church before. It is a blessing to see so many people from different groups come together."

Having the flexibility to attend her daughters' events, Bible studies with new members and different small groups allows her to be involved at a depth that supports the vision of the Vine.

"It has been neat to see our girls be a part of this," she said of daughters Aspyr, 11; Makaidyn, 8; and Pacyn, 4. "They have a heart for missions and missions is fun. When their birthdays were coming up ... they wanted to use their (birthday) money to purchase items for orphans."

"We had a combined birthday party for them where the gifts were things the orphans could use, like clothing and backpacks. Then we took our girls with another family and their daughter to deliver the presents to an orphanage in Belize."

The Vine launched in September 2009 and constituted in September 2011.

"Until recently, we did not even have a sign," Osburn said. "We do not advertise. We don't print bulletins, do mailings or use any paper. We do all our outreach by personal invitation. People bring people they know to church. People are much more likely to trust someone they know. Anyone will visit your church but will they come back? When people bring their friends to church, those friends are much more likely to return."

Osburn told of one member who was unchurched and a step away from ending his marriage. Osburn became involved when the family sought help.

"At first, we just talked or I just listened," Osburn said. "He was not ready to hear what he needed to do. Over time, he came to understand what God expected of him and how He wanted a relationship with him. Now he is involved in weekly Bible study and is exactly where God wants him to be, in life, in his marriage." (NAMB)

A Reverse Mortgage Testimony

By Bro. Max and Carolyn Youngblood, retired pastor and wife

After more than 50 wonderful years in the ministry in Alabama, Carolyn and I found ourselves with a mortgage with more than 20 years left to pay. (Part of the reason for this comes from living in a pastorate for most of those years. Those years resulted in not having any equity in a home. Churches, if you are not already doing so, please consider giving your staff a housing allowance.)

I had heard of Reverse Mortgages but did not think we would qualify since we had less than 50 percent equity in our home. After I saw Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist* I decided to give him a call. Jimmy came to our home and we had a great time of fellowship and gained a great deal of information on the subject. We were still skeptical but

we completed an application.

To shorten a long story, that was a little over one month ago and the other day we closed on

the reverse mortgage, and we never left our home for any part of the process. We also received enough cash to do the things we need to do.

Carolyn and I highly recommend this to anyone 62 or over that could use this kind of help. It has been an answer to prayer for us.

For a free brochure or more information, call Jimmy Dixon direct at 205-451-0676, or toll-free at 1-866-879-7775. Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director, a FAITH team leader, deacon and Upwards coach at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.



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Famine threatens 11 million in Africa's Sahel

Aid groups worldwide are rallying to head off an emerging hunger crisis that threatens as many as 11 million people in Africa's Sahel region.

"Even in good years, hunger is a chronic problem in the Sahel," said Mark Hatfield, who with his wife, Susan, directs work in Sub-Saharan Africa for Baptist Global Response (BGR). "In 2011, the rains came late or not at all over much of the region, and harvests have been very limited. One country estimates agricultural production may be down as much as 75 percent. Families will run out of food quickly, food prices will skyrocket and malnutrition will reach emergency levels, especially among infants and children."

At a Feb. 15 emergency meeting in Dakar, Senegal, government and relief group leaders called for a "rapid and robust response" to avoid a widespread famine, according to Reuters news service. "We are having an emergency meeting to avoid a full blown emergency," Josette Sheeran, head of the U.N. World Food Program, said at a news conference.

UNICEF estimates more than 1 million children under age 5 will need treatment for severe acute malnutrition, according to Reuters.

Southern Baptists are being called to action to help save lives, said Jeff Palmer, BGR executive director.

"Families in Sub-Saharan Africa suffer constantly from malnutrition, and the possibility of famine is never more than a few months away," Palmer said. "We saw millions of people in danger of starving this past fall in the Horn of Africa, and tens of thousands died. This crisis could be worse if steps are not taken now to head off the crisis."

"Because Southern Baptists cared enough to respond to the Horn of Africa famine, lives were spared," Palmer added. "We know God's Spirit will be moving in the hearts of people who care to reach out to endangered souls in the Sahel."

The Sahel is a 3,400-mile expanse

that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, between the Sahara desert to the north and the savanna to the south. Its name derives from an Arabic word that means "shore" — the Sahel appears to run as a coastline along the southern edge of the Sahara's ocean of sand. The Sahel covers parts of Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Cameroon and Eritrea.

The United States, Britain, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg and the European Union already have made cash donations to stave off the crisis, Reuters reported. International relief initiatives in the Sahel will include such measures as market gardens, seed distribution, well and irrigation projects, food for work, livestock vaccinations, community education and ready-to-use food therapies. (BP)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Presently searching for bivocational pastor at Heritage Baptist church in Pell City, Ala. Send resumé to: Henry Grogan, 921 Hill Top Street, Pell City, AL 35125.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC/FULL-TIME MUSIC EDUCATION OR MUSIC & MISSIONS/OUTREACH: Rainsville First Baptist Church is searching for either a bivocational minister of music or a full-time combination of music and education or music and missions/outreach. We enjoy blended worship with approximately 80 percent praise and worship accompanied by a 7 to 9 piece praise band. Resumés can be emailed to: jmann2270@gmail.com, or mailed to: RFBC, P.O. Box 585, Rainsville, AL 35986. For more information call 256-638-3141.

PASTOR FOR PRAISE MINISTRIES: First Baptist Tillman's Corner in Mobile is seeking a full-time pastor to direct its praise ministries, including a 40-member orchestra and 120-member choir. Average worship is 950. The worship is blended and praise-oriented. Looking for a worship leader with a pastor's heart. Submit resumés to: Dr. Greg Pouncey, 5660 Three Notch Road, Mobile, AL 36619.

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 MU-

SIC: Seeking bivocational minister of music to work with choir and small congregation that desires to grow. Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay, Ala. Contact Ron Huddgens, ronhuddgens@JCDH.org, 205-913-9480.

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

PART-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH: Nazareth Baptist Church of Rainsville, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of youth. Please mail resumés 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.fpbcsylacauga.org.

PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN'S MINISTER: \$300 week (negotiable) hours (negotiable) Sardis Springs Baptist Church, Athens, Ala. Send questions and resumés to: sardis1@live.com or call 256-232-2056.

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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.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

Good is not always good enough

Sure, the only connection our news staff had with him was business-related. We didn't know his family. We didn't spend time with him outside of office hours. And we didn't know him prior to forming the business partnership.

But we considered him a friend, someone true to his word and as committed to us as we were to him and his company. We even explained how we selected his business because of the personal touch he provided. A lot of businesses could deliver the product, but none was interested in working with us as if it was an extension of our staff.

So when our friend stopped returning our calls, failed to communicate important information and basically became nonexistent to us after a few years, it hurt. We were frustrated and disappointed. The company no longer gave us the confidence it did before and we felt abandoned.

There were lots of elements to the situation, and everything has since worked itself out, but it wasn't until I could see all the layers that I realized our friend had not actually abandoned us. He had just overcommitted for so long that it finally caught up with him.

The company did and does deliver good work, but its success at rising above the crowd in the beginning came from our friend's personality. He attracted new business and gave new clients a personal advocate they could trust beyond signing a contract. He truly was a friend, and I believe he was sincere in what he claimed he would deliver.

The problem was there was only one of him. As long as the company was

small, he could juggle his pool of client-friends but the company grew. He delivered more and more new clients — all expecting the same level of attention and service. No one else in the company was required or desired to deliver this extra service, so he was alone in caring for all his clients at the level he had promised.

Once I realized what had happened, I could relate. I've found myself in similar situations with organizations in my community and new ministries at my church. If I see a need, then I want to fill it, and many times, I have found myself overcommitted. While I'm sincere in wanting to offer a personal touch that takes the responsibility level beyond what anyone ever anticipates, it always seems to move from a bonus to an expectation. And as the volume of needs increases, the less I can deliver the extra elements that were promised early on in the process.

I've watched others in these situations just walk away, leaving everyone else to pick up the pieces and regroup. But I can't do that. I feel an obligation to finish what I start, and if I've told you I'll do something, then I'll do it — no matter what it costs me.

Several people in my life continuously caution me about overcommitting, but it was one of my former ministers who finally made it click with me. He reminded me to be careful to pursue only those things God directs and not deplete my energy on self-motivated projects and ministries, no matter how good they might be.

It seems simple. The concept certainly is not foreign to me and is so much a part of my life. But at the same time, I struggle with turning down the good projects that might not be what's actually best for me to do. I always think I can do them all.

Being on the other side this time made me realize that not only does forcing something like this cause stress, guilt and frustration but it also prevents someone else from experiencing the blessing of serving in that role because I am in the way.



Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Living and leading confidently

By Jerry Rankin

Retired president of the International Mission Board

Posted Jan. 27, 2012
<http://therankinfile.com/2012/01/living-and-leading-confidently/>

"Is not your fear of God your confidence and the integrity of your ways your hope?"

In preparation for a couple of events at which I have been invited to speak on leadership, my thinking reverted to this verse in Job 4:6. It became an anchor for me in stormy times and a foundational truth to keep priorities focused. One in leadership is subjected to perceptions of others that often lead to criticism and personal attacks. Decisions can be misunderstood and disagreements are inevitable.

Becoming defensive and counter-attacking is seldom an advisable solution, and it simply engenders further conflict. Ignoring detractors can cover the spectrum from aloofness and arrogance to being perceived as indifferent and insensitive. The greater the responsibility the greater the vulnerability to blame and having motives questioned. How can one continue to lead confidently and do what is right even if others do not agree?

These two aspects of advice have sustained me through many difficult issues and strained relationships. Our confidence is in the Lord, not in men. We are not to

be afraid of God as a judgmental, punitive sovereign, but we are to have a sense of awe and reverence toward Him. Knowing that He is aware of our behavior and even the motives for what we do and that we are accountable to Him is a deterrent to sinful actions or self-serving decisions. If our fear and respect of God characterizes our relationships and lifestyle, we can be pretty confident of doing what is right.

Likewise, when one is firmly committed to integrity, there is nothing that can divert a person from being truthful and transparent. If one is committed to honesty and truth, it is unlikely one will be lured to indulge in the baser pleasures of life, communicate half-truths for the sake of preserving one's reputation or to be self-serving in any way.

These are not only principles for leaders but are valuable precepts for anyone. We all go through times of trial, strained relationships and are subjected to misunderstanding. The hope that sustains us is knowing that we have been truthful and honest. We have not misrepresented a situation in order to cover our mistakes. The hope that everything will ultimately be all right and we will come out on top is to walk in integrity.

Fearing the Lord and practicing integrity will keep anyone on the right track and give confidence to encounter whatever life may bring.

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

By Dr. Scott Morris

Church Health Center of Memphis
www.churchhealthcenter.org

► Make sure you know what your blood pressure is. Ask your doctor or check it on a blood pressure machine at a drug-store.

► Make a list of all your medications and vitamins, and keep it readily available in case of an emergency. Make sure someone else knows where the list is also.

► Some medications can have side effects, both physical and emotional. Alert your doctor to any side effects such as depression, anxiety or hyperactivity.

► Be sure to tell your doctor which vitamins and supplements you take. Ask which ones might be good for improving health if you don't take any.

From the Twitterverse ...

Jan. 27, 2012

The Daniel Plan @TheDanielPlan
Get your sleep! 7-8 hours will help your body lose weight, reduce stress, and help balance your hormones!

Jan. 27, 2012

Rick Warren @RickWarren
Never ruin an apology with an excuse. Just own up & humbly ask for forgiveness.

Rashional Thoughts is something I look forward to! Super job and refreshing read!

By the way, congratulations on your fitness success. I started following it when you first began and you seemed frustrated. I know how that is. However, when I read your progress and all the pain that sometimes goes with it, I could so relate to that.

Your column encouraged me to start again, as it not only helps the body but also is good for the mind.

I hope that you will keep readers up on your continuing goals. You go, girl!

Vicki Foster
Cropwell, Ala.

UPCOMING TOPICS

include giving the best of ourselves. Send us your experiences with this topic. Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com.

One church cleans up after vandals strike; thieves clean out another's storage unit

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Imagine your church property being defaced or snatched. Two Alabama Baptist churches don't have to.

Center Hill Baptist Church, Hanceville, was vandalized, and Valley View Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, was robbed.

According to Center Hill Baptist Pastor Johnny Crumpton, a couple of people who assist with church work entered the building Feb. 3 and quickly discovered that it had been broken into and areas had been ransacked. They immediately left the building and called 911.

Crumpton, a bivocational pastor who also has worked as a firefighter for more than 20 years, was in a training class when the discovery was made.

He said the damage, which authorities believe occurred sometime in the early morning hours, was most severe in the sanctuary and pastor's office.

In the sanctuary, a Christian flag was burned. Because the flag was comprised of mostly synthetic materials, Crumpton said it melted into the floor, damaging an area of carpet in the process.

A Bible was torn up and thrown face down. The pulpit was pushed over on the Communion table, and a

floral arrangement was hurled down the center aisle.

Satanic messages were written on and carved into church property. A 4-foot cross was ripped off the sanctuary wall and turned upside down.

Crumpton said another disturbing discovery was the bullet hole in one of the sanctuary's stained glass windows. It was the window depicting Christ's resurrection.

But the East Cullman Baptist Association congregation wasted no time fixing what had been broken or vandalized.

"The church just rallied around [each other]," Crumpton said. "I was really impressed with our people."

While the damage was discovered on a Friday, church members organized a workday for the next day, and by Saturday evening, everything except the carpet had been repaired for the Sunday morning service.

According to Crumpton, the 10 square feet of damaged red carpet will be difficult to match because of dye issues and the carpet may have to be entirely replaced, which will be a costly repair. In all, the vandalism caused about \$16,000 in damages. However, the congregation responded not with resentment but "overwhelmingly with a very positive attitude," Crumpton said.

In Valley View Baptist's case, it wasn't just church members who re-

sponded positively to a bad situation but community members as well.

A few weeks ago, church members discovered approximately 3,000 pairs of shoes, purses and other items the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association congregation had been collecting for needy people in Honduras missing from a storage unit.

According to Family Pastor Mark Seagle, the items are collected and shipped to the Central American country each March so that they are waiting to be distributed by a church missions team when it arrives to work with Baptist Medical & Dental Mission International.

"We go into the most remote parts of Honduras," Seagle said, adding this year's trip is slated for July.

According to him, after the theft was discovered, an announcement was made to the congregation. Word spread about the situation, and people outside the church stepped up to help. The police officer who wrote up the report on the theft gave the first donation. Valley View proceeded to raise \$2,400, and a connection was made with a business to purchase almost 3,000 pairs of shoes for 50 cents each.

First Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa donated 432 pairs of shoes, and Maxwell Elementary School in Duncannonville donated 1,000 pairs of shoes.

"We've really seen God truly turn this into incredible good," Seagle said, referencing Ephesians 3:20.

As of press time, authorities had not apprehended the perpetrators in either case.

**"We've really seen
God truly turn this
into incredible good."
Family Pastor Mark Seagle
Valley View Baptist Church,
Tuscaloosa**

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Christians and for those who are not believers. We cannot sit idly by while God continues to disappear in this country at the hands of those who want to remove Him.

My hope is that churches in Alabama will sign up to pray for one month about these topics until a complete year or years were pledged out; then the process could re-loop when it needed to. Each church could set aside their own specific times or days to pray, praise and confess the word of God over these situations.

Andrea Camper
Hoover, Ala.

LEFT-WING THINKING

I am writing in regards to your editorial in the Feb. 9 issue. Once

again, your social gospel beliefs have surfaced with your eagerness to embrace left-wing thinking by espousing opinions of the most radical "religionist" in the United States, Jim Wallis, who is a socialist at best and only tries to shake his Marxist past when it is expedient for him to do so. He basically is against all that is good in America. Nevermind the cloak of righteousness that he wears. Your putting Jim Wallis on the same level of Al Mohler should cause righteous indignation in all Alabama Baptist churches.

You should take early retirement if possible or resign as you are out of step with most Alabama Baptists.

Gerald J. House
Tuscaloosa, Ala.



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Family Matters

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Luke 6:38

When you give to the Children's Homes, you know you're helping to protect, nurture and restore children and families. But you may not always hear the individual stories of those who were helped.

Our Annual Emphasis for 2012 is Because You Gave. In the materials, you will read about and see the stories of those who have been helped through the generosity of individuals and churches who gave through their direct gifts and through the Annual Children's Homes Offering. The materials packet includes inserts that can be handed out or placed in a bulletin, and a DVD showcasing the stories made possible because you gave.

If you'd like to order these materials for your church or group meeting, contact Kay Taylor by MARCH 10 by calling 1-888-720-8805 or emailing ktaylor@abchome.org. Please include your name, contact phone number and email, shipping address (no P.O. Boxes please), your church and association, number of inserts needed and date you either plan to hold the offering or have your meeting.

ALABAMA BAPTIST
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& FAMILY MINISTRIES

BECAUSE
You
GAVE

Highlights

26

In 2011, the number of children in our care who are Christians grew, as 26 made decisions to follow Christ.

3,769

A record 3,769 children and families benefitted from one of our Christ-centered services: Foster homes, group homes, family care homes for homeless mothers and their children, or Pathways Professional Counseling.

342

342 children were protected, nurtured and restored in our foster homes, group homes and emergency crisis homes.

35

35 Pathways Professional Counseling sites across Alabama served a record 3,077 children, families and individuals. Many of these sites are made possible through partnerships between Alabama Baptist Churches and Associations and the Children's Homes



Shaquina was an abused teenager with no hope, and is now a college student with a full scholarship running track, and aspirations of becoming a social worker to serve others.



Adam was a scared little boy when he arrived in his foster home with his brother. Now a high school senior, he has achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and hopes to serve on the mission field one day.

16

16 weeks of protecting, nurturing and restoring children and families were made possible in 2011 because of the direct gifts of churches through the Annual Children's Homes Offering, budget gifts or other fundraisers.

500

More than 500 children, foster parents, house parents, staff and Volunteer Associational Ambassadors were trained, encouraged and enjoyed fellowship while at Camp of Champions at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center.

New Pathways Counseling Leaders

Welcome to our new leaders of Pathways Professional Counseling! Ross Hickman is our new Program Director, and Lisa Edwards Keane is our new Clinical Director. This fulfills the vacancy left when Rod Marshall left his role as VP of Counseling to serve as ABCH President/CEO.

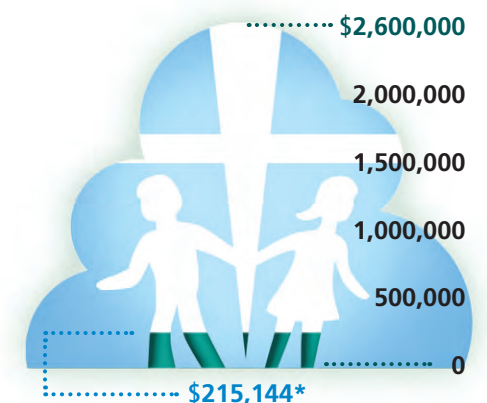
Kristin Lowrey is now the Intake Coordinator. If you or someone you know is seeking counseling, they may contact Kristin at 1-866-991-6864 or pathways@abchome.org.

Learn more about Ross, Lisa, Kristin and our other counselors at www.PathwaysProfessional.org/CounselingStaff.en.html. Or you can scan the QR code to the left.



[PathwaysProfessional.org/CounselingStaff.en.html](http://www.PathwaysProfessional.org/CounselingStaff.en.html). Or you can scan the QR code to the left.

2012 ANNUAL OFFERING



The 2012 goal for the Annual Children's Homes Offering is \$2.6 million. Please encourage your church to give.

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



Alabama Baptist
Children's Homes
& Family Ministries

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P.O. Box 361767
Birmingham, AL 35236-1767
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www.pathwaysprofessional.com

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 4

Explore the Bible

By Cecil Taylor
Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

A SPECIAL BABY: REJOICE

Luke 1:26-55

Jesus' Birth Foretold to Mary (26-38)

Six months after Gabriel announced the coming birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:8-20), God sent the angel to Mary with an announcement. This young virgin from the village of Nazareth in Galilee was "betrothed" to a man named Joseph. The original language word order makes "descendant of David" connect to Joseph instead of Mary. Betrothal was a formal legal contract that could be ended only by divorce.

Gabriel's greeting, "O favored one," indicated Mary had received God's favor, not that she was able to give it. Gabriel commanded her, "Stop fearing!" The original language shows Mary was already fearing. Gabriel insisted that she stop because she had "found favor with God." The latter expression indicated God had chosen to act in blessing on her behalf. Namely Mary would conceive and give birth to a son. She should name him "Jesus," the Greek form of the Hebrew "Joshua," which means "Jehovah saves." Gabriel further defined Jesus as "great," "the Son of the Highest" (i.e., God), the One who will occupy David's throne and rule "Jacob" (i.e., Israel) eternally. So fearful were Jews of taking the Lord's name in vain that they refused to take it at all. One way they talked about God without saying "Jehovah" was to use expressions such as "the Highest."

Jewish women for hundreds of years had longed and prayed to give birth to the promised Messiah. Now God had chosen Mary.

Immediately Mary objected because of a simple fact — "How can this be since I have not known a man?" "Know" is a roundabout way to express sexual relations, as in Genesis (4:1, 17). Gabriel reassured her. She would become pregnant by the power of God expressed through the work of the Holy Spirit. Normally God uses a human father to conceive a baby. But, as C.S. Lewis has written, once in history, the Great Creator stripped off the glove of nature and, with His naked finger, touched Mary's womb and produced a child. Gabriel

was explicit: Her son would be "holy," i.e., free from sin, specifically "the Son of God." Indeed Elizabeth's pregnancy in old age was proof that with God, "nothing is impossible."

Mary submitted to God's will: "Let this happen to me according to your word." Doing God's will may mean risking life. Mary could be stoned for adultery when it became clear she was pregnant. Doing God's will may mean ruining reputation. Mary bore the stigma of "unwed motherhood" her whole life. Despite the risks, Mary chose God's will, which makes her a worthy example.

The New Testament never tries to prove the virgin birth. It is telling, however, that Luke, a doctor (Col. 4:14), reported the birth of Jesus to a virgin as if he believed the report. Say what you will about how primitive medicine was in the first century; it is unarguable that people then knew how babies were made. And Luke, a doctor, testified that Jesus did not come that way.

Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (39-55)

Perhaps it was Gabriel's news about Elizabeth (Luke 1:36) that prompted Mary to visit her in a "town in the hill country of Judea." She would spend about three months with Elizabeth before returning home (Luke 1:56).

When the two met, Elizabeth's baby moved in the womb. Movement of a baby in the sixth month is not unusual, but the Holy Spirit helped Elizabeth realize what had happened to Mary. "Blessed among women are you" acknowledged that it was Mary's privilege to birth a unique baby. Indeed Elizabeth recognized Mary as "the mother of my Lord!" Thus the mother of the one destined to prepare the way for the Lord joined her unborn child in honoring the one chosen by God to become the mother of the Lord.

The theme of Mary's song is that fulfillment of God's promise of redemption will bring sharp reversals of fortunes — the lifting up of the lowly but the fall of the powerful. The first half of it is in the form of personal thankfulness for the favor God had shown her (46-49); the second half is in the form of national thanksgiving for the birth of the Messiah, Israel's Deliverer (50-55).

Bible Studies for Life

By James R. Barnette
Associate Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

I LONG FOR YOU

Psalms 42:1-11; 43:1-5

Thirsting for God (42:1-5)

The opening verse magnifies the psalmist's need for God by employing the image of thirst. His soul "thirsts for God" (see also Psalm 63:1; 143:6). Thirst is not just a desire, because the human body cannot live without water. This "stricken deer" is no camel, desert-dwelling and self-sufficient; he is utterly dependent on the presence of God, who can alleviate his thirst. Verse 2 begins to suggest that this writer is exiled or, at the very least, prevented from making a pilgrimage to the Temple to "meet with God." He desires a communion with God that is currently unavailable. His inward emptiness is worsened by the jeers of unbelievers, who taunt him: "Where is your God?" Hence, although the psalmist thirsts for God, his tears are all that he tastes.

Unable to visit the Temple, all the psalmist can do is "remember" past visits. In days gone by, this singer had led worshipers in procession to the house of God. The poignancy of the scene is depicted by the expression "pour out my soul," as it continues the thirst imagery. God's absence means that there is no water to be poured out to quench the psalmist's thirst; therefore he must "pour out" his soul by praying.

Despairing for God (42:6-11)

The psalmist turns from past celebration to present tribulation. He is far away from his physical home as well as his spiritual home, the Temple. He is somewhere in the far north of the Holy Land, where the Jordan has its source near Mount Hermon. The psalmist feels acute alienation. He is in an area where the waterfalls sound on both sides of a deep valley. These roaring waters only remind him of the difficulties that seemed to swallow him. His footing is gone and wave after wave is submerging him. This is the very language that Jonah takes up in the depths (compare verse 7 with Jonah 2:3).

Yet in the midst of it all, this singer captures glimpses of God's loyal covenant love. Here

we see him moving in the direction of blessed assurance. He realizes that he can move from "downcast" to placing hope in his Savior.

Confidence in God (43:1-5)

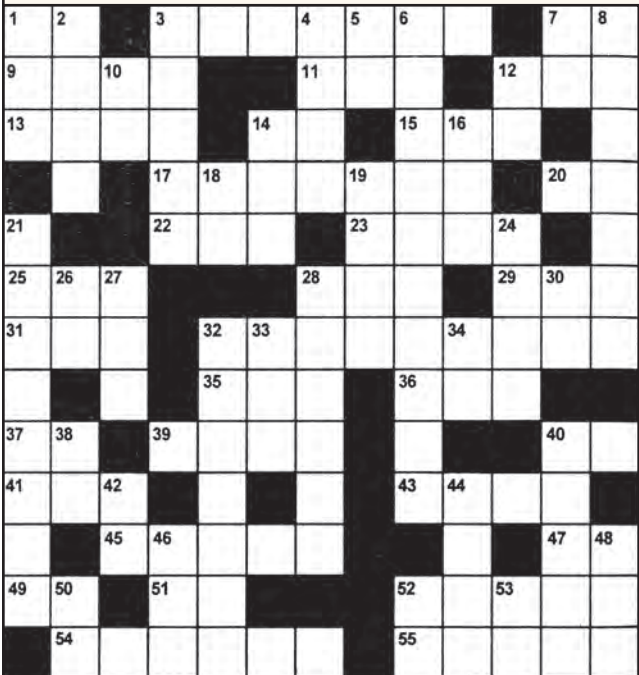
This final section moves from complaint to petition. The whole mood changes when the psalmist says, "Vindicate. . . Rescue. . . Send forth your light and your truth" (43:1, 3). As he begins speaking to God rather than himself, the outlook changes. The psalmist had been talking to God behind His back. Now he turns in positive petition to God. He calls for God's active intervention. With this move in his Lord's direction, things begin to change.

While the psalmist still has struggles, he is clearly moving toward a more hopeful conclusion as the visit to the Temple is envisioned. The singer anticipates being led to the "holy hill" by God's "light" and "faithfulness." Verse 4 articulates the joy of arriving at the Temple, where he will respond with praises on the harp. The word "praise" in verse 4 serves to emphasize the hopeful aspect of the refrain: "I shall again praise." The psalmist promises to go to God's altar and expects joy and delight when he arrives there. What made the difference? He stopped talking to himself and began talking to God. Further the psalmist expected that God was already in the process of lifting him up and out.

The "thirsting spirit" of Psalms 42-43 pervades the opening paragraph of Augustine's "Confessions": "The thought of God stirs the person so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you." These Psalms' images were used by early Christians as symbols for baptism. The deer represented thirsting souls who, when immersed in the cool waters of the baptism, "drank" deeply of the fountain of eternal life. All baptized believers can identify with the words and pictures depicted in these passages. Even as we thirst for God amid the trials and traumas of this world, we can still find contentment in the living God and His Son. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," Jesus said, "for they will be filled."

Christian Crossword

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Across

- angel of the Lord. (Judg. 6:11)
- He _____ the number of the stars. (Ps. 147:4)
- This is the way, walk ye in _____. (Isa. 30:21)
- What have I _____ anymore with idols? (Hos. 14:8; 2 words)
- Eli . . . sat up _____ seat. (1 Sam. 1:9; 2 words)
- It is _____ of the twelve. (Mark 14:20)
- Prefix meaning "within."
- Each. (abbr.)
- Gold is often formed into a _____.
- Paul . . . _____ God, and took courage. (Acts 28:15)
- Filled them _____ to the brim. (John 2:7)
- When the sun waxed _____. (Ex. 16:21)
- They took him, and brought him unto _____ pagus. (Acts 17:19)
- To hurry somewhere.
- Woman's name.
- Plural of Pi.
- _____ wine is better. (Luke 5:39)

Down

- The mediator of the new _____. (Heb. 9:15)
- The Cat in the _____.
- _____ two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)
- Yes in Spanish.
- Bind the _____ of thine head up on thee. (Ezek. 24:17)
- _____ panteth my soul. (Ps. 42:1)
- Poisonous snake. (Deut. 32:33)
- Exacted . . . of _____ man fifty shekels. (2 Kings 15:20)
- A manifest _____ of the righteous judgment. (2 Thess. 1:5)
- God _____ high.
- Learn to _____ well. (Isa. 1:17)
- Regarding.
- In her mouth was an _____ leaf. (Gen. 8:11)
- A crown of _____. (Matt. 27:29)
- Sin which doth so easily _____ us. (Heb. 12:1)
- bread. (Dan. 10:3)
- There is _____ like unto thee, O Lord. (Jer. 10:6)
- Trouble is like a broken _____. (Prov. 25:19)
- For the _____ which is lent to the Lord. (1 Sam. 2:20)
- Printer's measure.
- Will build again the _____ of David. (Acts 15:16)
- That I am _____ the Father. (John 14:10)
- Ye are not come unto . . . darkness and _____. (Heb. 12:18)
- Doctor of Divinity. (abbr.)
- One _____ the other.
- _____ such things as are set before you. (Luke 10:8)
- A summer fruit drink.
- _____, ho, ho.
- German philosopher.
- Satan . . . bound . . . a _____ years. (Rev. 20:2)
- I will _____ my mouth in parables. (Matt. 13:35)
- Prefix meaning "not."
- Asner, Wynne, Bradley.
- To the back of the ship.
- Hosanna _____ the highest. (Matt. 21:9)
- My little finger shall be _____.

- (1 Kings 12:10)
- Cut off his right _____. (Luke 22:50)
- Mom.
- It _____ his angel. (Acts 12:15)
- To push and _____. (abbr.)
- Physical Therapy. (abbr.)
- He is _____ also to save. (Heb. 7:25)
- Gold in Spanish.
- Drew the _____ to land. (John 21:11)
- Old Testament. (abbr.)
- Obstetrician. (abbr.)
- How good _____ it! (Prov. 15:23)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

Two churches targeted in bomb attack in Nigeria

SULEJA, Nigeria — Suspected Islamic extremists detonated a bomb outside a church building in Suleja on Feb. 19, two months after Boko Haram Islamists killed 44 Christians and blinded seven in a church bombing in nearby Madalla.

The blast in Suleja, in front of Christ Embassy Church during morning worship, injured five people, one seriously, sources said. The bomb, planted in a parked car, was left by suspected members of Boko Haram, which seeks to impose Shariah throughout Nigeria, and authorities arrested some members of the sect the same day. Triumphant Ministries International Church is also near the site of the explosion.

Peter Osema, a search-and-rescue worker with Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency, said the bomb was likely meant to affect both churches, and indeed at least one of those injured belongs to the Triumph Ministries church. At St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla, where the casualty figure has varied the past few months as victims were sought and identified at various hospitals, Pastor Isaac Achi said Feb. 20 that 44 church members were killed in the Christmas Day blast. "Of the 127 victims, we lost 44 and of the injured, seven lost their sight," he said.



CDN photo

Court halts case of pastor accused of conversion

JAMMU, India — A court has ordered the Jammu and Kashmir state government to temporarily halt criminal proceedings against a pastor accused of bribing Muslim youths to convert to Christianity. The state's High Court on Feb. 11 halted proceedings in the police complaint of "promotion of religious enmity by conversions" against Pastor Chander Mani Khanna of the Church of North India denomination.

Responding to a petition by the pastor to quash the complaint, the court issued notices to top officials of the state's police department and interior ministry because investigators have not been able to formulate charges even though the case was registered last Oct. 29, Khanna said. The pastor, who remained in jail for more than 40 days until he was released on bail last Dec. 1, added that the court asked the government to file its response by March 14 and then it will set the date for the next hearing. The pastor, who retired in January, said that real victory will be achieved when he is allowed to return to Kashmir, in the Muslim-majority region of the state.

Kashmir's Shariah (Islamic law) court, which has no legal authority in India, in December found Khanna, Pastor Jim Borst, a Dutch Catholic missionary and Gayoor Messah, a Christian worker, guilty of "luring the valley Muslims to Christianity" and ordered them to leave the state. The court, headed by Kashmir Grand Mufti Bashirud-Din Ahmad, also "directed" the state government to take over the management of all Christian schools in the region.

Hindu extremist threatens pastor's family in India

PHULBANI, India — A Hindu extremist in Adigar, Phulbani, Kandhamal district attacked a pastor's hut and harassed his family Jan. 25, according to the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC). Jaleswar Pradhan threw stones at the home of Pastor Patiba Mohan Kota while he was away, verbally abused his wife and pushed his daughters, shouting, "You Christians must not live here. It is not your land. The last time your houses were only damaged; this time all of you will be buried here," the GCIC reported.

Though damage to the house was minimal, the pastor and his family were anguishing in fear as Hindu extremists have previously tortured him physically, causing partial loss of eyesight and hearing, reported the GCIC. The pastor was among those whose houses were destroyed during anti-Christian violence in 2008. Pradhan was booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, reported the GCIC.

CAMPUS News

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Presents Faculty Awards:** Longtime Samford University faculty members Jim Angel and Elizabeth Wells received top university awards at the school's opening convocation of the spring semester Jan. 31.

Angel, a professor in the Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education and Professional Studies, received the George Macon Memorial Award for outstanding performance as a teacher and counselor who as a friend to students shows the ability to inspire them to greatness.

Wells, special collections librarian and university archivist, received the Jennings Marshall Service Award for significant and sustained service contributions to the university.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson's Tew Publishes Gospel Commentary:** Judson College's former academic dean, W. Mark Tew, has published a commentary on the Gospel of Luke titled "Luke: Gospel to the Nameless and Faceless."

The book was released in December by Wipf & Stock Publishers of Eugene, Ore.

Tew is now provost and chief academic officer at Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas.

According to the publisher, the commentary combines "a detailed examination of the Greek text, a fresh translation of the Gospel and a commitment to presenting the meaning of the Gospel in a fluid

and contemporary fashion" and "presents the advanced student and the casual reader with an inspirational look at the timeless beauty of Luke's Gospel."

► **Supreme Court Justice to Speak:** Alabama Supreme Court Justice Kelli Wise will speak at Judson College chapel March 6. The event will be in the Ramsay-McCrummen Chapel in Jewett Hall at 11 a.m.

Wise is one of six women to have served on the Alabama Supreme Court. She was elected to the court in 2010 when she received the highest vote of any contested statewide candidate.

Committed to helping at-risk children, Wise was appointed by Gov. Bob Riley to serve on the Alabama Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 2003 and was reappointed in 2006.

She currently serves on the Alabama Law Institute Criminal Code committee, tasked with helping to rewrite the Alabama Criminal Code, and the Advisory Committee on Criminal Procedure.

For more information, call 1-800-447-9472.

► **Alumna to be Inducted into Black Belt Hall of Fame:** Judson College distinguished alumna Mary Ward Brown will be inducted into the Black Belt Hall of Fame on March 16 at the University of West Alabama (UWA) in Livingston.

Other inductees are the late agricultural chemist George Washington Carver and blues artist and civil rights pioneer Willie Earl King.

"We are pleased to induct [these] into the Black Belt Hall of Fame," said Valerie Burns, director of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt, a project of UWA. "They have

done amazing work to make life better for the citizens of the Black Belt, and we bestow this honor upon them to celebrate their achievements and all that is possible because of them."

Brown's stories have been published in many magazines, including *McCall's*, *Southern Living* and *The Atlantic*.

Her first story collection, "Tongues of Flame," won an Alabama Authors Award and a PEN/Hemingway Foundation Award in 1987. She published a second collection, "It Wasn't All Dancing," in 2002 and "Fanning the Spark: A Memoir" in 2009.

For more information, visit centerforblackbelt.org or call Burns at 205-652-3829.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile Jazz Band to Present Spring Concert:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Jazz Band will present a spring concert March 1 at 7:30 p.m. in Ram Hall on the university campus.

The concert, with the theme "Sinatra Swings," will feature the music of Frank Sinatra in a coffee-house atmosphere. Kenn Hughes, assistant professor of music, will direct the concert.

Songs will include "Almost Like Being in Love," "Come Fly With Me," "Fly Me to the Moon," "I'm Beginning to See the Light," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "My Way," "Strangers in the Night," "Summer Wind," "The Best Is Yet to Come" and "The Way You Look Tonight."

For more information, call the UMobile Center for Performing Arts at 251-442-2420.

Addison Garner crowned Miss UM

Addison Garner, a sophomore from Opelika majoring in musical theatre, was crowned Miss University of Mobile (UM) on Feb. 4.

Garner, who attends First Baptist Church, Opelika, will go on to compete in the Miss Alabama pageant in June at Samford University in Birmingham.

"I am so proud of all of the contestants and feel so blessed and privileged to get to represent them as well as the University of Mobile," Garner said.

In addition to being crowned the winner, Garner was the recipient of the talent, swimsuit and People's Choice awards. Her main goal as Miss UM is to promote her platform, "The Power of a Mentor."

"I want to bring awareness to the true power and impact that we have on the lives of children and how important it is that we become mentors

in these kids' lives," Garner said.

Garner plans to continue her work with the Music in Action program affiliated with the University of Mobile and its RamKids and Center for Leadership programs. Through Music in Action, Garner and 12 other students teach children in Mobile-area schools how to sing and dance as well as introduce them to a variety of forms of music.

"Being a musical theatre major, I have enjoyed seeing the light in these kids' eyes as we teach them and introduce them to the arts as well as open doors for opportunities that may help them in succeeding in life," Garner said.

Garner strives to live by this quote from Marcia Wieder, founder of Dream University: "Fill your life

with as many experiences of joy and passion as you humanly can. Start with one and build on it."



GARNER

"I have always tried to leave my little corner of the world better than I found it, and that is exactly what I intend to do as I work with these children as well as during my time as Miss UM," she said.

The first runner-up for Miss UM was Kimberly Smith, freshman communication and vocal performance major from Mobile.

The second runner-up was Brooke Sanders, freshman sociology major from Headland.

The recipient of the Miss Congeniality award was Malory Green, junior intercultural studies and English major from Priceville.

(UMobile)

Knicks go 'Linsane'

NBA's Lin gives thanks to God for 'everything'

A lifelong Los Angeles Lakers fan, Daniel Chan faced a dilemma on Feb. 10 with his team playing the hated New York Knicks and their sudden star Jeremy Lin.

"Some people had asked me before the game who I'd be cheering for — Jeremy or the Lakers," said Chan, pastor of student ministries at Redeemer Bible Fellowship, in Mountain View, Calif. "I've never cheered against the Lakers. But Jeremy is a member of our church and a friend, part of our flock — I had to root for him. It was hard, but ..."

Lin has gone from unemployed NBA wannabe to household name and worldwide superstar in only a matter of days. His unexpected emergence as the starting point guard for the Knicks has sparked the struggling team and launched the "Linsanity" that has gripped both the city of New York and the broader sports world.

Lin's is a story of perseverance and persistence, of hard work and humility. But most of all, Lin's is a story of strong faith in Jesus Christ, of devotion to Bible study and prayer and of commitment to spreading the gospel whenever he gets the opportunity.

"I'm just thankful to God for everything," Lin said in a recent post-game interview, as quoted by Religion News Service. "Like the Bible says, 'God works in all things for the good of those who love Him.'"

How good has Lin been since cracking the Knicks' lineup? New York was 8-15 before Lin scored 25 points off the bench Feb. 4. His next six games as a starter were all wins. He set an NBA record for the most points scored in the first five starts of a career.

In that game against the Lakers, Lin scored 38. On Feb. 14 against Toronto, Lin drained a three-pointer with less than a second remaining to give New York a 90-87 win. After struggling against New Orleans in an 89-85 loss on Feb. 17, Lin bounced back to score a team-high 28 points in a Feb. 19 win over Dallas.

The son of Christian Taiwanese immigrants who settled in California, Lin led his high school team to a state championship before playing college basketball for Harvard and helping the Crimson to their best record ever (21-8) in 2009-10.

Lin, who became a Christian as a freshman in high school, matured greatly in his faith during his time at the Ivy League school. He was an active member of the Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Christian Fellowship, one of at least 10



BP photo

SUDDEN STAR — Jeremy Lin, who graduated from Harvard, now plays for the New York Knicks and set an NBA record for the most points scored in the first five starts of a career.

InterVarsity chapters at Harvard. Lin met regularly with Adrian Tam, an InterVarsity campus staff member at the time. The two studied the Bible together and read books together, such as "Too Busy Not to Pray."

"First and foremost, he is a disciple of Christ," Tam said about Lin. "That becomes very evident from the beginning. When you meet him you don't think, 'Oh wow, this must be an important person.' He's very humble. In some ways, you might even think he downplays a lot of these things — his intellect, his ability and all that."

Tam said Lin's goal and quiet ambition was to be "not only the best basketball player he could be, but also to be the best Christ-follower he could be."

Lin didn't get picked in the 2010 NBA draft but signed with his hometown Golden State Warriors in July of that year. He saw little playing time with the team in his first season, however, and the Warriors waived him in December before the 2011-12 NBA season.

The Rockets claimed Lin off waivers, but then waived him again a couple weeks later. On Dec. 27,

the Knicks claimed him to be a backup. Lin soon changed those plans and has become the NBA season's biggest news. According to a *USA Today* story Feb. 17, Lin had the top-selling jersey at NBA store.com from Feb. 4-12, with merchandise being shipped to 22 countries.

In the midst of his sudden fame, Lin's pastor said his desire is to use it to glorify the Lord.

"He wants to be careful with it," said Stephen Chen, pastor of Redeemer Bible Fellowship. "I think he wants to be able to enjoy what he can enjoy in the things that would honor God, and at the same time be cautious about how he lives his life. He wants to be the same person."

In a 2010 interview with Patheos.com, Lin explained how his faith in Christ affects who he is and what he does on the basketball court.

"Not just in basketball, but I think in life, when you're called to be a Christian, you're automatically called to be different from everyone else. In today's world of basketball, it makes you really different, because the things that society values aren't necessarily in line with what God values."

"Much of it comes down to humility," Lin said. "We as Christians are called to be humble. And if we really understand the gospel, we will be humble. We should be humble, and understand that everything that is good comes from God."

(BP)

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

U.S. advises modest dress for visitors to Jerusalem

JERUSALEM — The U.S. State Department is advising visitors to Jerusalem to dress modestly when visiting certain neighborhoods, or to avoid the areas entirely, in hopes of not provoking local sensitivities.

The State Department guidance did not specify which neighborhoods are considered problematic or what, exactly, constitutes "modest" attire.

The Jerusalem advisory, updated Jan. 10, says travelers "should exercise caution at religious sites on holy days, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays" and "dress appropriately" when visiting ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods and the Old City of Jerusalem, where religious Jews, Muslims and Christians live in distinct quarters.

The warning notes that most roads into ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods are blocked off on Friday nights, Saturdays and Jewish holidays, and that "assaults on secular visitors, either for being in cars or for being 'immodestly dressed' have occurred in these neighborhoods."

The advisory was added to the State Department's website for travel to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. It comes in the wake of many recent incidents in which ultra-Orthodox Jewish extremists physically or verbally attacked women they said were dressed immodestly.

Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women cover up everything except their faces, necks and hands.

In Beit Shemesh, a city between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, extremists have attacked religious schoolgirls on their way to school, deeming them not religious enough.

For years, ultra-Orthodox Jews have also stoned cars driving in or near their neighborhoods on the Sabbath or holidays.

Canadian Muslims issue decree against 'honor killings'

CALGARY, Alberta — Muslim clerics in Canada have issued a fatwa against so-called "honor killings" a week after three members of an Afghan family in Montreal were convicted of the murders of four relatives.

The religious decree — only the third of its kind in Canada — also prohibits domestic violence and hatred of women. It was issued in February.

"These crimes are major sins in Islam, punishable by the court of law and almighty Allah," said Imam Syed Soharwardy of Calgary, representing 34 clerics affiliated with the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada.

"There is no justification for honor killings, domestic violence and misogyny in Islam," Soharwardy added.

The fatwa came less than a week after the Jan. 29 conviction of Mohammad Shafia and his wife Tooba Yahya for drowning their three daughters and Shafia's first wife in what they regarded as an honor killing. The couple and their adult son, Hamed Shafia, were found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The four victims were found drowned inside a submerged car that had been pushed into a canal near the eastern Ontario city of Kingston.

Honor killings, while rare, are typically used against family members whose actions have brought shame or ill repute on a family. One Canadian imam, H.Q. Mufti, pointed out there have been a dozen such killings in Canada over the last decade.

Muslims convicted for inciting tension on gays

DERBY, England — In the first case of its kind, a British court has convicted three Muslim men — who claimed they were acting under teachings of their religion — of openly advocating the execution of gays.

Jurors in Derby, England, on Jan. 20 found Ihjaz Ali, Kabir Ahmed and Razwan Javed guilty of trying to stir up hatred by handing out provocative pamphlets calling for homosexuals to be put to death.

They were convicted under new legislation in Britain that imposes penalties for distributing written material designed to incite tensions because of sexual orientation — the first such case since the law went into effect 22 months ago.

During their two-week trial, Ahmed denied the charge, claiming instead that "my intention was to do my duty as a Muslim, to inform people of God's word and to give the message on what God says about homosexuality."

The three were charged with handing out leaflets titled "The Death Penalty?" which showed a mannequin hanging from a noose around its throat.

Conviction carries a maximum prison term of seven years; sentencing was not known at press time.

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"We should ... understand that everything that is good comes from God."

Jeremy Lin
New York Knicks