

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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'My Bible'

Among regular Bible readers, more than a third indicate they read the Bible nearly every day and typically use one primary version.

LifeWay Research polled 2,000 Americans for a study on how American adults read the Bible. The study was conducted through a demographically representative online panel. All qualifying participants indicated they read their Bibles at least monthly — either for personal study or as part of a family activity. People who read the Bible only in a corporate setting, like a worship service, were not included.

In addition to their personal study, 75 percent of regular Bible readers read along with others each month as Scripture is read in church worship services, 49 percent read as part of Christian education or Sunday School classes at a church and 42 percent read as part of a small group Bible study or prayer group.

When asked "About how often do you read the Bible either by yourself or together with family members as part of a private activity?," 37 percent said nearly every day. Twenty-two percent read it three to five times a week, while another 22 percent read it once or twice a week. Approximately one in five is a more sporadic Bible reader: 11 percent read it two or three times a month, and 8 percent read it about once a month.

On average, Bible readers in the United States personally own 3.6 copies of Scripture. Eighty-four percent of readers have more than one Bible.

About three-quarters of Bible readers (74 percent) have one primary Bible that they use most of the time, while the other 26 percent tend to use different Bibles for different situations. Among those who use a variety of Bibles, 75 percent consult varying translations.

Together, these two questions indicate 80 percent of regular Bible readers stick with one translation all or



TAB photos

American adults prefer 1 translation but consult many, survey finds

most of the time and only 20 percent use a variety.

The higher the reader's education and household income, the less likely he or she is to use one primary Bible most of the time, the study revealed.

Seventy-nine percent of readers with an annual household income less than \$30,000 use one primary Bible compared to 68 percent of readers with an income of \$100,000 or more. Eighty-three percent of readers whose highest level of education is high school have one primary Bible compared to 66 percent of readers with a graduate degree.

"When people say 'my Bible,' that has a meaning that includes translation," said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research. "Bible readers usually have multiple Bibles, but three out of four have one physical

Bible that they use most of the time."

When it comes to how a preferred translation is selected, 75 percent of regular Bible readers personally chose the version they use most while 19 percent had it selected for them by someone else. Six percent do not remember how they arrived at their preferred version.

Open to other translations

Yet preferring one translation does not mean they have an exclusive commitment to it. While 26 percent of Bible readers are willing to use only one specific translation, 74 percent identify themselves as "open to using different translations of the Bible."

Nine out of 10 Bible readers are satisfied with the version they use most for personal reading. That includes 56

percent who are completely satisfied and 35 percent who are mostly satisfied. Only 2 percent are mostly dissatisfied with the translation they use, and 4 percent are completely dissatisfied.

The study also revealed regular Bible readers are often involved in other religious activities. In a typical month, 85 percent attend worship, 72 percent read religious books, 53 percent attend Sunday School or Christian education classes, 51 percent attend a small group, 50 percent read religious magazines and 47 percent are volunteer leaders.

Stetzer concluded, "We learn from this study among American Bible readers that owning multiple Bibles is much more prevalent than regularly investing time in reading [them]."

(LifeWay)

State legislators consider bills affecting schools

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It is not uncommon for Alabama students to leave school campuses to pursue educational or vocational opportunities and receive course credits for these activities. At times, they are even released from school to attend religious events or programs. But at least one state representative would like to up the ante with legislation allowing students to receive elective credits for taking classes

off campus at religious institutions.

Rep. Blaine Galliher, R-Gadsden, said he got the idea for House Bill (HB) 133 from a man in his community who "wanted to pursue religious education classes off campus." Galliher hopes this legislation will allow public school students to receive religious education for credit as many private school students do.

According to the bill, "the absence of an ability to award such credits has essentially eliminated the ability of a

school district to accommodate the desires of parents and students to participate in released time programs." HB 133 would authorize school boards to adopt policies for religious instruction.

Allowing elective credits for such classes would be "a wonderful opportunity for parents who want their children to have some religious instruction to be able to do that and still comply with the requirements of (See 'Credit,' page 4)

COMMENT

Will Alabama Baptists Become References in a History Book?

Most Alabama Baptists do not remember, if they ever knew, that Baptists in America got their start in the area known today as New England. The first Baptist church in America was founded in Providence, R.I., in 1639. The second church was started five years later in Newport, R.I. The first Baptist church in Boston began in 1665 and was widely influential, adopting perhaps the first confession of faith by a Baptist group in America.

The first association was located in Philadelphia (1707) though the majority of churches were found in New England.

The pastor of the first Baptist church in the South, First Baptist Church, Charleston, S.C., was credentialed by the Boston church. In fact, the Charleston church came into existence when First Baptist Church, Kittery, Maine, migrated en masse to Charleston and reconstituted in that city in 1696.

The first Baptist mission society was in Massachusetts and dates from 1802. That is one reason the foreign missions efforts of Baptists' first national body, the Triennial Convention organized in 1814, were housed in Boston.

Baptists' first college, now Brown University, was located in Providence. One of its presidents, Francis Wayland, ultimately defeated Richard Furman of South Carolina and W.B. Johnson of South Carolina in the argument over the Triennial Convention's structure. The Baptist stalwarts from the South advocated a convention organization. Wayland argued for a societal organization.

In the early part of the 19th century, New England was strong Baptist territory and provided leadership for most things Baptists did together.

By the middle part of the 20th century, all that had changed. In the 1950s, Baptist work had withered and only a handful of American Baptist churches were the primary remains of the great legacy of Baptist beginnings in America. Southern Baptists entered New England in the late 1950s with a church start in New Hampshire.

Against that backdrop, the question posed by Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) Executive Director Rick Lance is haunting. "What will Alabama Baptists look like a generation or two from now?" he asked SBOM members Feb. 27.

Lance warned that without a comprehensive approach that includes church planting, revitalization of existing churches and holistic evangelism, Ala-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

bama "could look a whole lot different a generation or two from now."

Providing a comprehensive program for Alabama Baptists is becoming more challenging with the push for more and more Cooperative Program (CP) money for the International Mission Board (IMB) and the decision of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to concentrate primarily on church planting as its strategy for reaching America for Christ.

Picturing the future

That is why IMB President Tom Elliff's words should be heard by all Alabama Baptists as well as all Southern Baptists. In response to a proposal to cut CP funding for seminaries and give the money to IMB, Elliff told Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee members, "Should IMB receive a greater and greater percent of CP funds, this would directly impact the effectiveness of our other entities."

He said spiritual vitality would wane and so would sacrificial giving, which is essential to fulfill the Great Commission.

Elliff described a future when seminaries have fewer students, NAMB plants fewer churches and The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission is less "salt and light" on a perverse society. He warned that churches might lose their grasp of the power and effectiveness that comes from trusted and faithful cooperation with others. State conventions might gaze inward in attempts to maintain necessary ministry functions within their states.

"The net impact of the scenario painted above could very well be that all our SBC entities would find themselves attempting to garner more and more out of a convention that was itself becoming less and less," Elliff said.

"IMB believes that we are part of a team called Southern Baptist Convention. What is good for each of us must be good for all of us. Working together ... will amount to more for the Kingdom than a greater percent of a lesser amount."

Elliff added, "The question may be asked as to whether, in light of the great lostness of the world, we should not seek a greater and greater percentage of Cooperative Program funds. Our answer would be that the greatest benefit will come instead by ensuring the health and spiritual vitality of our SBC churches that, in turn, will go, pray and give sacrificially."

To many observers, Alabama Baptists appear to make up a strong Christian body today. Numerically Alabama Baptists are the largest Christian denomination in the state. The state convention sponsors excellent ministries through a number of cooperating entities. Every year, between 20,000 and 25,000 new believers are baptized.

But trend lines raise warning signals. Primary worship attendance is slipping. So are Bible study enrollments, stewardship indicators and missions and ministry participation. National studies find younger generations, sometimes called Gen Xers and Mosaics, disengaging from the church.

To quote Elliff again, it is because "we also have hearts on fire for the nations" that Alabama Baptists need a comprehensive program to reach the lost and revitalize existing churches in Alabama as well as to the ends of the earth.

No other Baptist convention is charged with reaching Alabama for the Lord. If we fail, then what will Alabama's spiritual condition be in a generation or two? Will our story be one of continuing service through healthy and spiritually vital churches, or will Alabama Baptists go the way of this nation's earliest Baptists, who became little more than references in history books?

Letters to the Editor

PARTNER VS. DICTATOR

The frustration and anxieties that I and other lay leaders in Alabama have felt over the past 15 years with the trend of some of our well-meaning pastors manipulating a change in their church polity from congregationalism to CEO

is now being felt with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders changing their role from a servant and partnership role with the state conventions and seminaries to a CEO or dictatorship role for all Southern Baptists.

Southern Baptist growth has been

built around adding Sunday School classes and then planting new local churches with the involvement of other local churches, local associations, state conventions and then the North American Mission Board as needed. The part-

(See 'Letters,' page 17)



"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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Turkey added to list of worst offenders of religious freedom

Turkey stands as a new and controversial addition to an annual list of the worst offenders of religious freedom released March 20 by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

Four of nine commissioners objected to adding Turkey to the list of "Countries of Particular Concern" (CPC) — a who's who of dictatorships and closed societies — and a fifth commissioner is second-guessing his vote to include the NATO ally.

But some Greek Orthodox Americans are pleased with the decision, citing longtime abuses against Orthodox Christians in the historic heartland of Eastern Orthodoxy.

"Turkey hasn't been tolerant," said Alexander Karloutsos, assistant to Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

'We can't educate clergy'

Istanbul — formerly known as Constantinople — is the headquarters of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of the world's 250 million Eastern Orthodox Christians.

"Our seminary remains closed. We can't educate our clergy. We don't have a legal personality in Turkey and neither does the Catholic Church, Protestant churches, the Armenian Church, the Jewish community."

Turkey's ambassador in Washington decried the decision.

"Any unbiased eye will immediately realize that that's not where Turkey belongs in the USCIRF annual report," Ambassador Namik Tan said.

"The categorization of Turkey as a CPC list country not only damages the credibility and relevance of the USCIRF, but also raises serious questions about the political motivation that drives this exercise."

Congress established the independent watchdog panel in 1998 to monitor religious freedom globally. It recommends countries to the State Department for inclusion on its own annual list of worst offenders, which is typically smaller.

This year, the commission's list includes 16 countries, two of which are new: Turkey and Tajikistan.

The others are Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam.

The commission's new report cites Turkey's "systematic limitations on the freedom of religion or belief," particularly in relation to the country's non-Muslim religious minorities, and their rights to train clergy, offer religious education and maintain places of worship.

But the report also notes some areas in which Turkey has improved, including better protections for the property of non-Muslims — improvements the State Department has also noted in recent months. (RNS)

Humanitarian crisis

ERLC's Duke calls on US government to help stop Sudan's blockade of food, aid

A Southern Baptist ethics leader joined actor George Clooney and others March 16 in calling on Sudan's militant Islamic regime to lift its blockade on humanitarian aid that has put 500,000 people at risk of starvation.

Members of Congress — as well as human rights, civil rights and Jewish leaders — spoke alongside Clooney and Barrett Duke of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) against the Sudan government's actions in a protest outside the Sudanese Embassy in Washington. A crowd estimated by organizers at 400 to 500 protesters gathered with the speakers.

Military and paramilitary forces supported by the Khartoum regime have targeted the Sudanese in the southern states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile based on their religious belief, political affiliation and ethnicity. The attacks that began last summer have included bombings that prevented villagers from planting crops. The forces also carried out executions of Sudanese on a "blacklist," according to a report by a federal commission.

The bombings, which have continued, have produced a serious food shortage in the two states — threatening starvation beginning this month on a massive scale, protest organizers said.

During the March 16 protest jammed with reporters, photographers and cameramen, 20 speakers urged Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to end the blockade of food and medical aid to the people in the southern part of his country, with some accusing him of using food as a weapon of war. Speakers also urged the United States to lead an effort to convince Sudan's government to relent.

"We can be glad that our planet is becoming a much smaller place for dictators and tyrants," said Duke, the ERLC's vice president for public policy and research. "Yet millions still suffer under their heavy boots."

"For the sake of a half-million people in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, I call on the Obama administration and Congress to lead a determined international effort to force the tyrant al-Bashir to relent of his atrocities committed against his own citizens," he told the crowd.

"He must immediately cease all hostile action against them and allow the international community to deliver the life-saving supplies and care these persecuted and decimated people so desperately need."

Clooney told protesters they were at the Sudan Embassy to make two requests.

"Immediately we need humanitarian aid to be allowed into the Sudan before it becomes the worst humanitarian crisis in the world — immediately," Clooney said. "The second thing we are here to ask is a very simple thing — it's for the government in Khartoum to stop randomly killing its own men, women and children. Stop raping them and stop starving them. That's all we ask."

After the brief speeches, Clooney and about 15 of the other speakers blocked access to the embassy in protest and were arrested.

Clooney and John Prendergast, co-found-



BP photo

PROTEST — Barrett Duke of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission speaks outside the Sudanese Embassy in Washington at a protest against the Sudan government's actions to block humanitarian aid.

er of the anti-genocide Enough Project, traveled to the southern part of Sudan earlier in March to investigate the conditions.

U.S. congressmen who spoke at the protest were Democrats Jim McGovern and John Olver, both of Massachusetts; Al Green of Texas and Jim Moran of Virginia. In addition to Prendergast, other speakers included Martin Luther King III, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People president Ben Jealous, activist Dick Gregory, Reform Jewish leader David Saperstein, United to End Genocide president Tom Andrews, Sudanese Anglican Bishop Andudu Adam Elnail and Nick Clooney, a journalist and George's father.

Afterward, Duke told Baptist Press he was "very encouraged by the turnout." The protesters and diverse speakers all had "the same message — that the government of Sudan needs to end its blockade of humanitarian aid to its own citizens and cease all of its military action against its people," he said. "I expect that this will have reverberations throughout Washington, D.C., throughout the international community and especially in Sudan itself."

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reported in December that the Khartoum-backed military actions in the southern region had resulted in the internal displacement of about 230,000 people in

South Kordofan, with many living in mountain caves, and the flight of another 50,000 from the two states to other countries.

The attacks follow a pattern displayed previously in the Darfur region of western Sudan and, before that, in the south.

Darfur has been the scene of ongoing ethnic cleansing for the last eight years. Khartoum military forces and Arab militias supported by the government have committed widespread atrocities against African Muslims in Darfur. The genocide has resulted in the killing of an estimated 300,000 people, as well as rampant torture, rape and kidnapping. Nearly 4 million people have fled their homes because of the attacks.

Independent country

The Republic of South Sudan officially became an independent country in July, the result of an election that came after the 2005 peace agreement ending a north-south civil war based primarily on religion and ethnicity. During the civil war, it is estimated more than 2 million people in the south and central parts of Sudan died at the hands of the Khartoum-supported militia and some 4 million were displaced.

Many residents of South Kordofan and Blue Nile supported the rebel forces in their battle against Khartoum, but those states were not included in the new country.

The U.S. State Department has designated Sudan as one of only eight "countries of particular concern," a category reserved for the world's worst violators of religious liberty.

United to End Genocide sponsored the protest at the Sudanese Embassy. (BP)

"[We need] a determined international effort to force the [president] to relent of his atrocities."

Barrett Duke
Southern Baptist Ethics &
Religious Liberty Commission

VOICE YOUR OPINION

SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible

'Great resource'

Shelby Association helps meet needs with mobile pantry

By Scott Bush
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Last summer, Hugh Richardson, director of missions (DOM) for Shelby Baptist Association, and Keith Brown, director of church community ministries for Shelby Association, drove hundreds of miles delivering donations and supplies to relief workers in Tuscaloosa County still dealing with the aftermath of the April tornadoes. All the while, they knew that the next time such a need arose, their approach would be different.

Months earlier, Brown had placed an order with a custom trailer company for a mobile pantry. Inspired by Baldwin Baptist Association DOM Rick Barnhart, who converted

a semitrailer into a portable distribution point after the 2010 Gulf oil spill, he saw the 20-by-8.5 trailer he ordered as a way to extend his association's food ministry to underserved areas of Shelby County.

"We were looking for a way to assist our churches with food needs in their communities," Brown said. "Our volunteers operate what we call The Daily Bread Shop in Columbiana, but that only covers one corner of the county. With the trailer, we can carry up to four tons of food to any church where members can assist their neighbors locally. We train the teams who operate the mobile pantry to assess needs and to share the gospel with the fami-

lies and individuals that they help."

The trailer is outfitted with a variety of cabinets, racks for 1,300 cans of food, two freezers and a retractable awning used for intake and counseling. Food and money for stocking the mobile pantry are donated by Shelby Association churches, schools, civic groups and area businesses.

"We're pleased with the reception we're getting in our churches,"

Brown said. "One unexpected result has been that church members who are facing tough times are also receiving assistance. We're seeing both outreach and ministry to our church families."

The Jan. 23 tornadoes and severe storms that swept across the state created an opportunity for the mobile pantry to venture down a new path — emergency assistance.

"Days after the storms, Keith called me and offered to bring the trailer to Center Point," recalled Bobby Earls, pastor of First Baptist Church, Center Point, in Birmingham Baptist Association. "I saw it in operation at Clay Ridge Baptist Church on Feb. 20, and we've scheduled to have it at [First, Center Point] on March 13. We've put the word out through our church website and Facebook page and on the Center Point disaster relief page. This is a great resource, and we want to make sure people know about it."

"We're seeing both outreach and ministry to our church families."

Keith Brown
Shelby Baptist Association



Photo courtesy of Shelby Baptist Association

OUTREACH AND MINISTRY — A volunteer works in Shelby Baptist Association's mobile food pantry at FBC Center Point on March 13. The ministry helps with assisting churches with food needs in the community to underserved people.



Photo courtesy of Shelby Baptist Association

FOOD NEEDS — A Shelby Association volunteer works in the mobile food pantry at FBC Center Point.



Photo courtesy of Shelby Baptist Association

A SUCCESS — Shelby Baptist Association purchased this custom trailer for a mobile food pantry. The idea was inspired by Baldwin Baptist Association who purchased a semi trailer after the 2010 Gulf oil spill.

Credit for religious education, bullying bills make way through Legislature

(continued from page 1)

the courts," according to Galliher.

State school Superintendent Thomas Bice disagrees with the idea of awarding elective credits to students for such activities.

"Students are currently released to participate in dual enrollment, early college

enrollment and work-based learning experiences," Bice said.

"In each case, there is a course of study with defined standards followed for awarding credit. I support releasing students to attend religious events or celebrations specific to their individual faiths but could

not support the awarding of credit, as this would cloud the separation of church and state."

While preparing the bill, Galliher said he looked at several states' policies on this matter including South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Idaho and California.

He also considered a U.S. Supreme Court case, which the bill states "upheld the constitutionality of released time programs for religious instruction," and a recent South Carolina court ruling approving elective credits for religious released time instruction.

"The issue is settled," Galliher said. "It has already been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. You can do it. ... There are still some (school) boards that have some trepidation about it. We live in a lawsuit world, so they like the clear, umbrella protection of law. We are trying to make sure they have the protection of statute."

The bill passed from the House Education Policy Committee and is awaiting a third reading.

It is also not uncommon for Alabama

students to deal with bullies, and one state senator would like to rename legislation on the issue in honor of one such student.

Senate Bill 32, sponsored by Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, would change the name of the Student Harassment Prevention Act to the Alex Moore Anti-Bullying Act. Moore was a Jemison High School student who jumped to her death in 2010 after being bullied at school.

Harassment in schools

The bill would require school employees to immediately report reliable information that someone is the target of harassment and calls for a student who has committed harassment for the third time in a school year to "be assigned to an alternative school." It passed from the Senate Judiciary Committee with one amendment and was placed on the calendar for a third reading.

Galliher filed a companion bill, HB 41, in the House but said he would wait until the Senate bill passed and use it instead.

Rep. Kurt Wallace, R-Maplesville, filed a similar bill, HB 10, concerning bullying.

Public hearing on illegal gambling penalty bill postponed

House Bill (HB) 414 isn't quite ready for its debut.

The bill's public hearing at the Statehouse has been postponed so it can be cleaned up and certain terms used in it can be defined.

HB 414, sponsored by Rep. Allen Farley, R-McCalla, would make promoting illegal gambling, conspiring to promote illegal gambling, possessing illegal gambling records and possessing more than

10 slot machines or gambling devices a felony.

Currently the penalty is only a misdemeanor, accompanied by a maximum \$6,000 fee.

The bill would also allow law enforcement to seize and condemn property being used for illegal gambling and then sell it and keep the proceeds.

To contact your representative, call 334-242-7600.

(TAB)

Ala. asks to join suit over ever-changing contraception mandate

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange says the Obama administration's contraception coverage mandate violates federal law and would require state officials to regulate insurance in violation of Alabama law.

So March 22, Strange filed a motion to intervene in a federal lawsuit challenging the mandate.

The mandate requires employers and insurance companies to provide coverage for all Food and Drug Administration-approved contraceptive methods and sterilization procedures. Among these is the "morning-after pill," which pro-life advocates point out can cause an abortion as it can block implantation of the early embryo in the uterine wall.

The only religious exemption applies primarily to churches and other houses of worship. Religious nonprofits, schools, universities and other entities do not qualify for the exemption.

But the Obama administration has offered to expand the definition of faith-based groups that can be exempt and proposed that third-party companies administer coverage for self-insured faith-based groups at no cost.

At its heart, the newest offering

from the White House would allow religious groups — dioceses, denominations and others — to decide which affiliated institutions are "religious" and, therefore, exempt from the requirement that employers offer free contraception coverage as part of employee insurance plans.

President Barack Obama has been sharply criticized by faith groups for not providing a sufficiently broad exemption for religious groups. On Feb. 10, he outlined an "accommodation" that tried to circumvent most of the problems by having insurance companies — rather than religious employers — provide the birth control coverage through a separate rider and at no cost to the employer.

While that move appeased some concerns, Catholic bishops and others argued that the religious exemption was still too narrow and could set a dangerous precedent by appearing to allow the government to determine what groups within a faith should be considered religious.

Others said many religious groups self-insure in order to save money, and so having the insurer pay for contraception coverage rather than the employer made no difference because insurer and

employer are one and the same.

The 32-page proposal, published March 16 in the *Federal Register*, goes out of its way to state that "this religious exemption is intended solely for purposes of the contraceptive coverage requirement" and does not "set a precedent for any other purpose."

"Whether an employer is designated as 'religious' for these purposes is not intended as a judgment about the mission, sincerity or commitment of the employer, and the use of such designation is limited to defining the class that qualifies for this specific exemption," the proposed rule states.

The other main innovation in the proposal is to have a "third-party administrator of the group health plan or some other independent entity" assume responsibility for the contraception coverage for self-insured organizations, with various proposals for ensuring that self-insured groups with religious objections would not directly or indirectly pay for the birth control policy.

Student health plans

In addition to fears about having to provide coverage for morally objectionable services and procedures for employees, religious colleges and universities have grappled with health coverage for students. The proposal includes a final rule governing student health plans that seeks to allay their fears.

According to a news release from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in the same way

that religious colleges and universities will not have to pay, arrange or refer for contraceptive coverage for their employees, they will not have to do so for their students who will get such coverage directly and separately from their insurer.

While that is positive news, University of Mobile President Mark Foley said he is deeply concerned that the administration continues to infringe upon First Amendment protections. The constitutional rights of independent employers of faith and conscience continue to be ignored, he said.

Andrew Westmoreland, president of Samford University in Birmingham, shares Foley's concern and wants to see the administration do more than just "respect religious liberty."

"Ultimately I hope that the administration moves beyond grudging respect for our liberty to enthusiastic endorsement of our rights under the Constitution," Westmoreland said.

In addition to religious liberty, David Potts, president of Judson College in Marion, said he worries about the potential erosion of Christian colleges' "ability to deliver Christ-centered educational opportunities."

In a news release, Strange noted that religious freedom is "our 'first freedom' under the United States Constitution."

"The people of Alabama have recognized the importance of this freedom and have enshrined it in their Constitution as well," he said. "Alabama law does not allow anyone to be forced to offer a product that is against his or her religious beliefs or conscience."

'The issue is simple'

That's why Strange is seeking to join a lawsuit filed by Eternal Word Television Network, a global Catholic television, radio and news network based in Birmingham, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama on Feb. 9.

He filed a motion to intervene in the lawsuit on the grounds that the mandate requires Alabama to

regulate its health insurance market in a way that violates the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the Alabama Religious Freedom Amendment and other laws.

"The issue is simple: Either Alabamians and Americans around the country will be allowed to exercise their religious freedom to say 'no' to something they disagree with or they won't," Strange said. "We hope the Obama administration will listen and adopt a position that supports our first freedom rather than undermines it." (RNS, TAB)

"Alabama law does not allow anyone to be forced to offer a product that is against his or her religious beliefs."

Luther Strange
Alabama attorney general

"I hope that the administration moves beyond grudging respect for our liberty to ... endorsement of our rights."

Andrew Westmoreland
Samford University



Someone You Should Know

By Julie Payne
Correspondent, TAB

WILLIE JEAN VANN

McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham
Birmingham Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMNS: "How Great Thou Art" and "The Old Rugged Cross"

HOBBIES: Painting and creating art using seashells

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 62 years of marriage to Braxton; three children, Rose Ann, Carol Jean and Jerry; nine grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren



VANN

Willie Jean Vann celebrated her 91st birthday March 14. As part of McElwain Baptist Church's Loving Touch ministry, Vann creates artistic gifts for shut-ins. She also taught Sunday School for many years at various churches and sang in the choir. In 1973, Vann published a book about her father, Alabama pastor and church planter W.H. Falkner — "The Kindest Man I Ever Met."

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: I was 7 years old and ... the preacher at this church was preaching the plan of salvation. He gave an altar call, and I felt Jesus tugging at my heart, so I just decided

to go. He let my daddy baptize me.

Q: How did you get involved in teaching at church?

A: They just needed a teacher and I was available. I loved to get to teach. I taught intermediates and juniors. I (also) taught adults at different churches. My Sunday School teacher at McElwain — this was about 10 (or so) years ago — if he had to go somewhere, I would fill in and help teach.

Q: Could you share more about your parents and some of the churches your father started?

A: My mother loved missions. Father was a minister in different places. He got his high school di-

ploma and went four years [at] Howard College (now Samford University) and got his degree from there (and) never went to seminary. He was a church planter [for] East Side Baptist Church in Cullman. (He also) started three (churches) in Selma: Water Avenue Baptist Church, Northside Baptist Church and West End Baptist Church. He helped start [Oak Grove Baptist Church], too — that was the first church he started.

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

A: All the difference in the world. He becomes dearer and dearer, and He's answered so many of my prayers.

Coming soon to your church ...



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

205-870-4720, Ext. 107
bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org



Primary sponsor
of the commemorative issue



Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

► **Glynwood Church, Prattville**, will present the Easter musical drama "The Sacrifice" April 6-8, 7 p.m. Mike Denning is associate pastor, minister of music. Bruce Hose is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will have a special emphasis during the month of April called "Not a Fan." The book "Not a Fan" by Kyle Idleman also is the book of the month. Morgan Bailey is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Green Valley Church, Hoover**, will present "Journey to the Cross" April 4-5, beginning at 6 p.m. Groups will run every seven minutes. The walk-through journey will revisit the scenes of the passion of the Lord. At each station, visitors will hear an eyewitness account, which will remind them of the sacrifice and personal nature of the gospel as well as a clip from the movie "The Passion of the Christ." Reservations are recommended by calling 205-822-2173 or visiting www.gvbc.org. Jeff James is pastor. ► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will hold Sunday Night Revival April 1, 6 p.m., with Jimmy Ray. The theme will be "Do You Know Where You Will Spend Eternity?" Dale Creel is pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE

► **CrossRoads Church, Rogersville**, will hold a Here's Hope crusade with Evangelist Ed Lacy, of Mobile, April 1-4. Services will be Sunday at 10:15 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 6:30. For information visit www.crbcschoals.org. David O. Cofield is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► The adult choir of **Bay Springs Church, Dothan**, will present the Easter musical "Near the Cross" April 1, 6 p.m. The

church will hold a family movie night April 8, 5 p.m. The movie "Courageous" will be shown. A nursery will be provided for all services. Scott E. Wyatt is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Etowah Association** will hold a church library workshop April 21, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., at the associational building with Eva Nell Hunter of Central Church, Decatur. To register call Cheryl at 256-547-1691.

LIMESTONE

► **Mays Memorial Church, Toney**, will have new service times. Beginning April 1, Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. and worship at 10:30. Anthony Perry is pastor.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Reno Church, McCalla**, will hold its spring Senior Saints singing April 16, 10 a.m.-noon. Lunch will follow. Roasco Komegay is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **Russell Association** will hold a Vacation Bible School (VBS) clinic April 10, 7-8:30 p.m., at Summerville Church, Phenix City. Pastors, VBS directors and teams are invited. Robb Goodman is pastor of Summerville. Wayne Burns is director of missions for Russell Association.

SHELBY

► **Les Hughes** resigned as pastor of **Westwood Church, Alabaster**, to become the new pastor of Highview Church, Louisville, Ky. There will be a reception for the Hughes family April 1, 5 p.m., at the Alabaster campus.

ST. CLAIR

► **Chuck Lackey** is the new pastor of Calvary Church, Odenville. ► **Billy Wakefield** is the new pastor of **Bethany Church, Ashville**. ► **St. Clair**

Association will hold On Mission Celebration April 28-May 2. There will be a missions fair April 28, 5:30 p.m., and a rally at 7:15 p.m. at First Church Moody. Child care will be provided during the rally for birth through 5 years. Missionaries will be speaking in participating churches April 29-May 2. Brad Moseley is pastor of First, Moody. Ben Chandler is director of missions for St. Clair Association. ► **Cropwell Church, Pell City**, will hold a 5K/ fun run April 21, 8 a.m., at Lake-side Park to support its upcoming missions trip to Haiti. For information call 205-338-7995. For a registration form email sdaniel@cropwellbaptist.org. Phillip Burden is pastor.

TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Darren McCloud** is the new pastor of **Larkinsville Church, Scottsboro**. He comes from First Church, Bridgeport. ► **Joe Beddingfield** is the new pastor of **Mount Pleasant Church, Woodville**. He comes from Woodville Church. ► **Josh Posey** is the new pastor of **First Church, Stevenson**. He holds a master of divinity from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. ► **Tony Floyd** is the new pastor of **Ridgedale Church, Scottsboro**. He comes from New Home Church, Pisgah. ► **Manscell Crawford** is the new pastor of **Trenton Church**.

OTHER

► **Union Hill Church, Bessemer**, will hold a spring carnival March 31, 2-6 p.m. There will be rides, games, food and entertainment. The church also will hold a special Good Friday service April 6, 6:30 p.m., with David Smith, pastor of New Home Church, Pisgah. For information call 205-491-1103. Mickey Bell is pastor. ☞

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

British, European Baptists call for action in Syria

LONDON — Leaders of three British religious bodies issued a joint statement March 15 calling on the United Nations Security Council to condemn Syria's violent suppression of a yearlong uprising that has left more than 8,000 dead.

Jonathan Edwards, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, joined Methodist and United Reformed Church heads urging the U.N. to "unequivocally condemn Syria's state-sanctioned attacks on its own people."

"We are concerned that, should diplomatic initiatives fail and the opposition groups achieve success in securing support for arms, the violence could escalate still further," the leaders said. "Our prayers are for a halt to the bloodshed and for diplomacy and mediation to offer a way forward for the Syrian people."

The religious leaders voiced particular concern that Syria's minority Christian population "can live in security and peace under the law."

The European Baptist Federation (EBF) issued a similar statement March 6, voicing "grave concern" about the deteriorating situation in Syria. Observers say protests demanding removal of President Bashar Assad could escalate into civil war.

EBF member the Syrian Baptist Convention has 13 churches with 600 members. The largest Baptist church is in the city of Homs, where some of the worst fighting has taken place. The EBF said there are concerns about religious freedom however the struggle turns, noting that in other areas of conflict in the Middle East, such as Iraq, Christians have been leaving in large numbers.

"The EBF urges prayer for the whole situation in Syria, for an end to the fighting, and that a peaceful outcome may be found to the conflict," said the March 6 statement. "We pray for our Baptists and other Christian churches that in this situation they may be able to continue their witness to Christ, the Prince of Peace."

Kentucky Convention encourages early retirement

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The Kentucky Baptist Convention is offering incentives for employees to take early retirement or resign voluntarily as part of a "strategic realignment" of staff.

Announcing the offer March 8, Executive Director Paul Chitwood said over the last decade the average percentage of undesignated offerings that churches give to the Cooperative Program unified budget has been reduced by one third.

Chitwood said the current offer is voluntary and that no one is being terminated at this time. Future staff cuts will depend on the number of employees who take the incentive and the outcome of reorganization.

All full-time employees who are age 60 by year's end are eligible for full retirement benefits and a cash incentive based on their years of service. Full-time employees younger than 60 who decide to leave voluntarily were offered 90 days of full salary and specified benefits after their departure.

"I believe these current offers are the best opportunity that will come for anyone who is considering either retirement or other ministry or work opportunities," Chitwood said.

Last year the convention eliminated five full-time and 19 part-time jobs and froze salaries of the remaining employees. The current budget has been reduced twice already this year.

In 2010 Kentucky Baptists approved a "Great Commission" task force report calling for increasing the percentage of funds budgeted for national and international ministries from 38 percent to 50 percent within 10 years.

Carver appointed NAMB chaplain services director

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — Maj. Gen. Douglas L. Carver, retired U.S. Army chief of chaplains, has been appointed executive director of chaplain services for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Ga., with the goal of taking Southern Baptist chaplaincy to a "new level."

In the newly created position, Carver, 60, will lead NAMB's chaplaincy team by casting its vision and future strategy. Carver will continue to reside near Charlotte, N.C.

"It is not every day that God brings the opportunity to add a retired, two-star general to your team," said Kevin Ezell, NAMB's president.

The day-to-day operations and management of NAMB's chaplaincy group will continue under team leader Keith Travis, who will report directly to Carver. Although Carver's experience is specifically with military chaplaincy, he will bring leadership and support to all Southern Baptist chaplains endorsed by NAMB. ☞

Mexico quake damages homes, spares lives

Mexican authorities say the magnitude-7.4 earthquake that sent panicked residents running into the streets March 20 has damaged or destroyed hundreds of homes but spared life and limb, with first responders reporting few injuries and not a single death.

The earthquake was centered near the municipality of Ometepe in southern Mexico's Guerrero state, about 100 miles from Acapulco and 200 miles from Mexico City. Baptist representative Orpha Ortega was in her home in Mexico City when the quake struck.

"I was trying to get out of the house, and instead of going out ... it was moving me toward the opposite way, like if someone was

pulling me somewhere," Ortega said. "Then I got out and I was so dizzy that I could barely handle it."

Baptist Global Response (BGR), a Southern Baptist international relief and development organization, classified the earthquake as a "Level One" disaster that did not require outside assistance, said David Brown, who with his wife, Jo, directs BGR work in the Americas.

The earthquake is the biggest to hit Mexico since 1985 when an 8.0 quake left more than 10,000 dead. Officials say more earthquake-resistant construction and building regulations likely helped limit severe damage.

In addition to the destruction,

residents are dealing with widespread power outages while aftershocks continue.

As Ortega answered the phone for this interview, she said they were in the midst of another aftershock.

"If I stand up, I feel like I'm going to fall," she said. "I'm here holding on to a sofa."

For prayer:

► Pray for those who've lost homes in the earthquake.

► Ask God to provide opportunities for Southern Baptist workers to minister to those who have been affected.

► Pray for safety for the Mexican people as aftershocks continue. (BP)

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



ONE MISSION

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

A Time to Remember

Some experiences in life you really want to forget, because the pain is too much to bear. That is quite understandable.

All of us could cite a chapter and verse about such episodes of failure and sadness. On the other hand, there are experiences, even the most

anguishing and painful ones, which demand our personal reflection and remembrance. Let's think about one very close to home for all of us.

For the people of Alabama, we have one of those sad but memorable moments ahead of us. On April 27, we will mark the first anniversary of the worst weather-related tragedy in the history of our beloved state. You remember this horrific day. It was when 62 tornadoes, five of them F5s, came roaring through Alabama, and other states, with a fierce force of power unforeseen by almost all of us.

Forty-two of our 67 counties were impacted, some of them catastrophically, by this unprecedented outbreak of tornadoes. Those of us who witnessed the scenes of destruction in the early hours after the incidents were moved to tears and almost speechless as we viewed the indescribable debris and rubble caused by these tornadoes. Those memories are deeply etched in our minds.

I vividly recall being interviewed by a Birmingham television station reporter who said to me, "I do not know what to ask you. I am going to let you just look at me and at the

camera, and talk to the audience." Never before has a reporter said anything resembling that comment to



me. The camera light came on and, with adrenaline flowing from a body tired from travel and interacting with those severely impacted by this disaster, I began

to thank Alabama Baptists and other disaster relief workers. I shared my raw emotions of what I had seen and felt during these early hours of response.

Now, a painful anniversary is approaching! The individuals and families of those impacted by the tornadoes will remember their painful experiences as if they had just happened. They will mourn afresh the loss of lives and the damage to homes and other property. They will recall the sounds of unspeakable terror that only tornadoes can make. They will recall the calm aftermath of these storms, which seemed so surreal, given the major destruction around them.

How can we all best take time to remember this first anniversary of the unprecedented outbreak of tornadoes? First, I believe a time of worship is the best response. On the Sunday before the actual date, the 22nd, I pray we will gather to worship the living Lord with a renewed sense of commitment to Him. There is no better response, in good or bad times, than that of God's people gathering to worship Him! You'll find resources to help you plan a time of remembrance at www.sbd.org.

Second, a special time of remembrance of all affected by the tornadoes, most especially the families of the victims, would be an appreciated response on this day of reflection. Some of us know these families and for them this first anniversary will be excruciatingly painful. This is an opportunity to love on them and let them know that the Lord loves them! This is personifying His love in ways that cannot be measured in the here and now.

Third, as Alabama Baptists, we have chosen this day for a special

and tornadoes in Alabama and beyond. Your gifts given for disaster relief will make a huge difference in these challenging times of need.

Perhaps a good way to measure a goal for your church is to seek to give one dollar per resident member. Many churches can and will give more than this amount, but any contribution will be appreciated and allocated for disaster relief responses in times of tragic events. Regrettably, we have not

seen our last tornado or hurricane. We are a coastal state, and some say we are past due for another hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico. That is a solemn but certain prediction.

All gifts need to be over and above Cooperative Program contributions. Giving

through the Cooperative Program provides us with the personnel so we can do the ministry in the impacted areas. One hundred percent of the disaster relief funds will be used to help in responding to the churches and the people as needs arise. Please give prayerful consideration to this important request. Let me thank you in advance for all you give to this general Disaster Relief Offering and for what you do in the name of Christ when the disasters come our way yet again.

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

By Rick Lance
State Missionary
Executive Director



offering for general disaster relief. When tragic weather events happen, we at the State Board of Missions are called upon very quickly to respond to the situations and meet the needs of people. We have tornadoes frequently and, thankfully, they are not of the April 27, 2011, magnitude. However, every one of these storms demands some kind of response from us and we seek to do what we can where we can for those in need following such disaster-related events.

This offering for general disaster relief will help us be prepared for these occasions. The funds will be used for first response kind of approaches to the catastrophic occurrences. Our disaster relief workers will be called out to do all kinds of ministries following hurricanes

Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



BY MIKE McLEMORE

My generation of pastors has been accused of worshipping the Cooperative Program by some of the younger generation of pastors that are upcoming. Of course, my answer to that remark is simply that I only worship Jesus Christ, but I do have great respect for the Cooperative Program of giving among Southern Baptists.

I believe in the Cooperative Program of giving for several reasons:

1. It has proven to be an effective giving plan for more than 85 years. Those who criticize supporting it have not understood how this plan of giving has financially supported all the ministries of Southern Baptists globally. I have yet to hear of a better plan!

2. It is a biblical plan of giving. In Acts 2, the early church was encouraged to pool their collective resources together and bring those resources to the body so that ministry needs could be met. This is exactly what every local church does each Sunday when you collect the tithes and offerings from the congregation. The monies are used to support the entire ministry budget of the church. This is what our associations, state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention do through the Cooperative Program. It is the ministry lifeline of our work together around the world!

3. It is a simple plan that allows all size churches to participate. Every Southern Baptist church has been encouraged through the years to



give 10 percent of their undesignated offerings through the Cooperative Program plan of giving. Why 10 percent? It is the amount of the tithe in Scripture! Churches can tithe too. I find it ironic that pastors stand to teach the tithing principle to their congregations and yet do not practice the principle when it comes to the giving of their church to the Kingdom.

Some of them want to decide on the percentage (and most of the time it is not 10%) and they want to designate what their church gives too. What if every tither in the local church designated the Lord's tithe to their own special ministry project in the local church? What would happen to the budget? Who would pay the pastor? I can almost guarantee you that most designated monies would not go to salaries and benefit packages. (You may want to really think about this approach!) Also, only a few ministries in the church

would be supported if this method of giving was followed.

4. It is the cooperative way. Through the Cooperative Program plan of giving, local churches, associations, state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention voluntarily work together to help support our mission causes at home and abroad. It is the most effective plan. It is a biblical plan. It is a simple plan. It is a cooperative plan. This is why I believe in it, why I have always supported it and why I continue to defend it!

It is my prayer that Southern Baptists will continue to support this effective, biblical, simple and cooperative plan of giving until Jesus comes again!

Mike McLemore is executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association.

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

Layman's Salary Study

Complete the 2012/13 SBC Compensation Survey today!

The Layman's Salary Study is sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, GuideStone Financial Resources and LifeWay Christian Resources.

The survey for 2012-2013 is online at: www.guidestone.org/compensationsurvey

Please log on and complete the survey so the report will be as accurate as possible. The survey needs to be completed by May 31, 2012.

If you do not have access to a computer, please call Ministry Assistant Nancy Cornett at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 208, or (334) 613-2208.

The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Your individual results are kept anonymous. Results are reported at the state or national level for churches of similar size and budget.

For more than a decade, the SBC Compensation Survey's results have been used by church finance and personnel committees to establish competitive compensation for ministers and support staff. Your maintenance/custodial staff are encouraged to participate. Financial secretaries or treasurers may also complete the survey for all employees.

For questions or to obtain additional copies of the survey, please contact Nancy Cornett at the phone numbers shown above. For more information about minister compensation, retirement, insurance, etc., please contact State Missionary Lee Wright at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 241, (334) 613-2241 or lwright@alsbom.org.

www.guidestone.org/compensationsurvey

This resource is made possible by gifts from Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

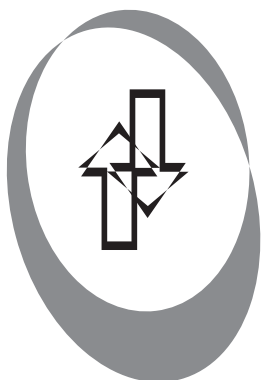
Building Powerful Ministry Teams – How to Engage People in Ministry

Tuesday, April 10, 2012
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Baptist Building, 2001 E.
South Blvd., Montgomery

Cost: \$20 per person.
Special Rate: \$15 per person when two or more people from a church register together.

Leader: Bill Hulse, pastor, Putnam City Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Okla., and regional director, Next Level Leadership

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, jallen@alsbom.org.



LEADERconnect
FORUM

WORSHIP & MUSIC EVENTS

CHILDREN'S CHOIR SUMMIT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Shocco Springs,
July 6-7, 2012

"Hidden Treasures"

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



Cost:

- Until June 1, \$88 per person (based on 3 or more per room)
- After June 1: \$98 per person

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

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## ALABAMA BAPTIST BOYS CAMPS 2012

**A BOY DOES NOT HAVE TO BE IN RAs TO ATTEND**

### Northwest Alabama

Earle Trent Assembly Baptist Camp, Florence  
**July 16-19**, 4th-7th grade boys  
Contact: (256) 383-7021 for more info

**July 19-21**, 1st-6th grade Lad & Dad  
**Cost:** \$140/pair

### Northeast Alabama

Marshall Retreat Center, Guntersville  
**July 9-12**, 4th-12th grade boys  
**Cost:** \$150

**July 12-14**, 1st-6th grade Lad & Dad  
**Cost:** \$160/pair

### North Central Alabama

Stoney Creek Christian Camp, Cullman  
**June 23-26**, 4th-12th grade boys  
**Cost:** \$150

**June 26-28**, 1st-6th grade boys and Dad or Mom  
**Cost:** \$160/pair

### Southeast Alabama

The Vineyard Christian Retreat Center, Ariton  
**June 25-28**, 4th-12th grade boys camp  
**Cost:** \$150

**July 28-30**, 1st-6th grade Lad & Dad or Mom  
**Cost:** \$160/pair

**ONE NIGHT:** RA Campouts at the Vineyard  
**April 27-28 & November 2-3**  
Contact: (334) 762-2256

### Southwest Alabama RA Camp

Baldwin Baptist Camp, Foley  
**May 28-June 1**, 1st-6th grade boys  
Contact: (251) 945-5112 for more info

*Registration information for camps may be obtained at [www.alsbom.org/ra](http://www.alsbom.org/ra) or by contacting Ministry Assistant Gayle Burlingame at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or (334) 613-2227, [gburlingame@alsbom.org](mailto:gburlingame@alsbom.org) The State RA Camp staff includes a college age counselor for every 5 to 7 boys. Church chaperones are not required at these camps, but they are welcome.*

# YOUTH EVANGELISM CONFERENCE 2012



youth evangelism conference



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

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

**JULY 27-28**  
**VAUGHN FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**MONTGOMERY, AL**  
**\$20 PER PERSON**



**Brett Rutledge**  
Worship Leader



**Allen Jackson**  
Camp Pastor

**Youth Leadership Camp**  
**super summer alabama**  
**july 9-13, 2012**

[www.supersummeralabama.com](http://www.supersummeralabama.com)

## WHO SHOULD COME...

Any student in the state of Alabama who has completed the 8th-12th grade and exemplifies solid spiritual leadership in his or her church. Each student must adhere to a high standard of Christian maturity and meet certain requirements in order to participate.

**\$225 per student**



**Samford University**



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

Office of Collegiate &  
Student Ministries

# FOCUS on One Mission



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

Sharing  
Christ in Crisis

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

The  
Cry Heard

**www.SBDR.org**  
Your Connection to  
Disaster Relief

Response  
Assured



Disaster relief training is made  
possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists  
through the **Cooperative Program**.



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

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

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

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

## REGISTRATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL CLASSES:

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

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

# SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

*April 9 – 11, 2012*  
*Shocco Springs*

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

This conference will begin with lunch on Monday  
and end with lunch on Wednesday. Special  
features will include:

- Monday: Ashley Swift, a new recording artist
- Tuesday: Amazing Grays, Senior Adult Choir  
of Tillman's Corner First Baptist Church

## Speakers include:

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

Eloise M. Crossley from First Baptist Church  
of Jacksonville, Ala., attended the Spring  
Senior Adult Retreat in April 2011, and she  
plans to come again. Eloise wrote, "*Senior  
Retreat allows seniors to get away from  
weekday responsibilities and spend time  
with God through worship, singing praises  
and fellowship with God's people.*"

For more information, please contact State  
Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225,  
ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221,  
[emitchell@alsbom.org](mailto:emitchell@alsbom.org).

Wednesday – Saturday,  
April 25 – 28

National Peanut Festival  
Fairgrounds, Dothan

# Alabama Spring Rally Campers On Mission

## What is Campers on Mission?

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

## The Alabama Chapter of COM sponsors a Fall and Spring Rally and more

than 20 mission projects a year. Visitors who are interested in possible membership are welcome to attend the rally. Friday at 6:30 p.m. is a time of project reports. This would be an ideal time to visit.



## What do Campers on Mission do?

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

## Who can join Campers on Mission?

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

## How do I become a member or find other information?

Download an enrollment form and visit online at [www.alabamacom.org](http://www.alabamacom.org).

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

# Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

Monday, May 7

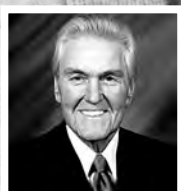
First Baptist Church, Pelham  
9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

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

## Guest Speakers:

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

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



Junior Hill



H. Bailey Stone



Charles Roesel



Paid in Full

# IGNORANCE... REALLY ISN'T BLISS

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

## PROTECTING YOUR STUDENTS AND YOUR STUDENT MINISTRY

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

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

Some topics to be addressed:

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

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

Cost: \$10 per person (includes lunch)

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

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# Alabama Bible Drills

## 2012 DISTRICT BIBLE DRILL LOCATIONS

### Thursday, April 19

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

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

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

### Sunday, April 22

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

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

### Monday, April 23

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

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

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

### Tuesday, April 24

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

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

### Tuesday, April 24

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

### Thursday, April 26

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

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

District 9: Tuscaloosa FBC  
721 Greensboro Ave., Tuscaloosa

## STATE BIBLE DRILL

### Saturday, April 28

FBC Prattville  
138 S. Washington St., Prattville



For more information, please contact State Missionary Sonya Tucker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 271, or (334) 613-2271, [stucker@alsbom.org](mailto:stucker@alsbom.org).

**At the Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd. in Montgomery**

**Tuesday, May 1, 10 am - 3:30 pm**  
**9:30 - 10 - Check-in and refreshments**

Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, [chobbs@alsbom.org](mailto:chobbs@alsbom.org),  
or go online to [www.alsbom.org/gad](http://www.alsbom.org/gad).



# Get Acquainted Day



*In Partnership with Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery*

# Leadercast 2012 Friday, May 4

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**TELECAST BEGINS AT 8 A.M.**  
**CONCLUDES AT 3:30 P.M.**

The event takes place at Vaughn Forest Church.

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- Tim Tebow, NFL quarterback, Heisman Trophy winner and best-selling author
- Patrick Lencioni, best-selling author and president of The Table Group
- Marcus Buckingham, strength strategist, best-selling author and researcher
- John Maxwell, leadership expert and best-selling author of *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*
- Angela Ahrendts, chief executive officer, Burberry
- Roland Fryer, professor of economics at Harvard and chief executive officer of the Education Innovation Laboratory
- Urban Meyer, head football coach for Ohio State University Buckeyes
- Andy Stanley, best-selling leadership author and communicator
- Sheena Iyengar, author of *The Art of Choosing* and world-renowned expert on choice

To purchase tickets at a reduced price from the retail value or for other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, [jallen@alsbom.org](mailto:jallen@alsbom.org).

## Want to know God?

By Pastor Roger White  
Liberty Baptist Church, Crossville

Several years ago, I was talking with a woman about her faith, and she implied that she had no faith at all. Being puzzled by her statement, I questioned her more on the issue and she began telling of her life, the many disappointments she had and the disappointment she was for those she loved. I asked her if she was a Christian. She said, "No, there is no way that God would save me because of all that I have done in my life."

Friend, I want you to know that God loves you and has proven His unquestionable love for you by sending His only Son, Jesus, as payment for all the sin in your life.

The Philippian jailer knew that he was responsible for the prisoners and would have to pay for their escape with his own life. Yet when the dust cleared after an earthquake, Paul announced to him that they were all there and his first response was "what must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30).

Maybe you are that way. Your world has been shaken by a storm or earthquake, and you feel your life slipping away. Regardless of your past — or present — I assure you that all you have to do to be saved is ask God to forgive you of your sins and believe upon Jesus as your Savior and you will, indeed, be saved (Rom. 10:13).

Would you call upon the Lord today? He "will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer. 33:3).



**S**ing to the Lord!  
Give praise to the Lord!  
He rescues the life of the  
needy from the hands of  
the wicked.

Jeremiah 20:13

# Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

## March 1962 50 Years Ago

First Building: Plans have been approved for the first building of a proposed 17-building campus development by the trustees of Mobile College. The cost of the building with furnishings will be more than \$1 million, William K. Weaver Jr., college president, said in releasing the architect's drawing. The building will be a combined administration-classroom building housing all facilities necessary for a two-year college for 600 to 700 students. A.B. Benson is president of Mobile-based Platt Roberts and Co., which designed the building.

## March 1972 40 Years Ago

New Members: Five Alabama ministers of music have been selected to become members of The CenturyMen, an all-male choir composed of 100 ministers of music from across the Southern Baptist Convention. All members of The CenturyMen are qualified conductors in their own right and have most impressive credits as career vocalists. The new members from Alabama are Raymond A. Ball, Berney Points Baptist Church, Birmingham; S. Harry Cooper, Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery; James E. Kent, Highland Av-

enue Baptist Church, Montgomery; Ken D. Kirkley, Northside Baptist Church, Jasper; and John A. Leland Jr., South Roebuck Baptist Church, Birmingham.

## March 1982 30 Years Ago

WMU Annual Session: Focusing on praying, giving and growing, Alabama Woman's Missionary Union met in its 87th annual session at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. Highlights of the session included messages by William R. O'Brien, executive vice president of the Foreign Mission Board, and George Bagley, executive secretary-treasurer of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

## March 1992 20 Years Ago

'Ideal Choice': While it's been 13 years since Tommy Lea had a full-time pastorate, the consulting editors for "The New American Commentary" selected the 53-year-old seminary professor as the writer for

a portion of the volume on the pastoral epistles. General Editor David Dockery, a native of Alabama, said Lea "was an ideal choice to write the volume because of his years of pastoral experience." Lea, professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, served as pastor of Birmingham's Hunter Street Baptist Church from 1972 until 1979.

## March 2002 10 Years Ago

Missions Emphasis: Twenty Friendship Baptist Association churches conducted 100 revival-related missions activities March 2-3. Director of Missions Ernie Carroll said more than 7,000 people attended events related to the revival, with approximately \$14,000 collected in love offerings. Twenty missionaries from the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board spoke at events. Representatives from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions also shared about the work they do.

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

**PASTOR:** First Baptist Church of Mt. Olive, Mt. Olive, Ala., is seeking full-time pastor. Master of divinity preferred; 5-10 years experience as pastor at a Southern Baptist church. Please submit resumes by mail to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church of Mt. Olive, 3200 Mt. Olive Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117, or email resumes to: sheila@fbcmo.org.

**SENIOR PASTOR:** First Baptist Church of Murfreesboro, Tenn. (fbcmboro.org), a progressive downtown church with an active membership of over 400, is seeking a gifted preacher and spiritual leader. Our mission is to build an authentic community of diverse individuals by serving Jesus Christ, providing relevant Bible study and worship (both traditional and contemporary) and engaging in hands-on ministry locally, nationally and internationally. FBC Murfreesboro partners with both CBF and SBC. A seminary degree and pastoral experience is required. Women and men are encouraged to apply. Send resumes and a cover letter stating your vision for church life by April 30 to: Pastor Search Committee, 200 E. Main St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130 or fbcmboropastorsearch@gmail.com.

**MINISTER OF EDUCATION/ADMINISTRATION:** Lakeland Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of education/administration. Lakeland is located in the heart of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Those considered will be passionate about Sunday School and have a strong, successful background in finance, leadership, property management and staff relations. Seminary or comparable degree is preferred. Please email resume to: Dr. Ron Osborne, rosborne@lakelandbaptist.org.

**WORSHIP PASTOR:** Large church in Knoxville area searching for a worship pastor. Blended worship style (choir, praise team, band). Must have conservative theology and experience with productions. Experience with sound, lighting and video a plus. Great compensation package. Email a resume and family photo to: grow4life@aol.com.

**PASTOR OF WORSHIP & MUSIC:** First Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, a traditional, downtown church, is seeking a full-time pastor of worship and music. The salary range is

around \$38,000 plus benefits. Please mail resumes to: Personnel Search Committee, 529 Convention Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, or email: search@fbcbr.com.

**BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Seeking a bivocational minister of music to lead congregation and choir in traditional and praise music. Please mail resumes to: Music Search Committee, Coldwater Baptist Church, 4400 Airport Road, Oxford, AL 36203. Contact number, 256-375-0279.

**FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH:** Dwight Baptist in Gadsden, Ala., is seeking God's man to lead our music and youth ministry. Resumes may be submitted to: 520 N. 29th St., Gadsden, AL 35904, ATTN: Jay Stewart or e-mail: jaystewart@comcast.net.

**BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Seeking bivocational minister of music to work with choir and small congregation that desires to grow. Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay, Ala. Contact Ron Hudgens, ronhugens@JCDH.org, 205-913-9480.

**FULL-TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS:** Clearview Baptist Church in Pinson, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister to students working with students in the 6-12 grades. Please send resumes or inquiries to: Clearview Baptist Church, Student Minister Search Committee, 5271 Old Springville Road, Pinson, AL 34126 or connie@clearviewbaptist.com.

**YOUTH PASTOR & CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR:** Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time youth pastor to work with our 7th-12th grade students. Also, seeking a part-time children's director to work with our 1st-6th grade students. Please mail resumes to: UBC, 4480 Highway 22, Montevallo AL 35115.

**PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR:** Shiloh Baptist Church, Somerville, Ala. (Morgan County) Please email resumes to: DrCharlesOwens@aol.com, or send to: Dr. Charles Owens, Shiloh Baptist Church, 3941 Hwy 36 E, Somerville, AL 35670.

### OTHER POSITIONS

**PIANIST:** FBC Oneonta is now searching for a church pianist for choirs and worship. Church music experience preferable. If inter-

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### MISCELLANEOUS

**HOMESCHOOL EXPO — MONTGOMERY:** June 28-30, 2012 — Montgomery Convention Center. Learning and fun for whole family. Exhibitors and workshops. Learn to homeschool, Worldview Teen Track, KidsZone. 1-888-264-7763, www.alabamahomeschool-expo.com.

# Social media connects former lingerie model with ministry committed to redefining beauty

When Alex Eklund updated his Facebook status on Nov. 30, he had no idea it would make him a social media star.

Eklund was studying in the Baylor University library when he noticed a theme among his friends' status updates. During the airing of the annual Victoria's Secret fashion show on CBS, girls posted updates like "I'm going to have to hit the gym after this" and "I'm going to starve myself for a week." Although Eklund assumed his friends didn't mean the statements seriously, they still made him uneasy.

"There was an underlying sense of insecurity which I sensed throughout the entire thing," he said.

On a whim, Eklund posted in response, "I'd rather have a Proverbs 31 woman than a Victoria's Secret model."

Almost instantly, Eklund's post went viral. Both negative and positive comments piled up on his wall as friends, friends of friends and total strangers reposted his comment. During the next few days, Eklund discovered the power of social media to capture an audience, cultivate a following and spread a message.

## Timely trend

Some people, like Eklund, stumble on the social networks' ability to create overnight celebrities and scramble to make use of their instant audience. Others, like former Victoria's Secret model Kylie Bisutti, leverage their social media presence to help strengthen their brand. And sometimes, the two strategies overlap.

Markus Pfeiffer, a digital media professor at Regent University, believes Eklund's message generated such a strong response because his post reflected a timely trend: "An unknown person or ministry can reach a very wide audience and get discovered, because of the viral capabilities — because they are watching trends. A lot of stories are born within these tools."

Less than 24 hours after posting his comment, Eklund realized he had struck a nerve. Leveraging the opportunity to capture so much attention, he and his friends produced a video to clarify and expand on his Facebook post. Within three days, the video had more than 120,000 hits on YouTube. "When so many people started looking at the page and talking about it, and different people reposted it as their status, it just kind of became a movement," Eklund said in the video.

Along with four of his guy friends, Eklund founded the Live31 Movement, a group committed to redefining beauty. Just three months later, its Facebook page has more than 14,000 fans, and its Twitter account has more than 1,800 followers.

"It's one of these really typical social media success stories," Pfeiffer said. "One individual had a vision or idea that could be propagated, and it struck a chord."

Social media platforms allow individuals to monitor trends in an organic way, making it easier to offer material that people will respond to, Pfeiffer said: "In this case, [Eklund] understood this was a hot topic, and he was able to turn that into a ministry that got a lot of attention."

Live31 generated so much buzz it soon caught the attention of Bisutti, winner of the 2009 Victoria's Secret Model Search. She had spent several years modeling lingerie for the company, but quit in 2011 because of her Christian faith. On Dec. 21, she tweeted Eklund: "I stopped being a Victoria's Secret Model to become a Proverbs 31 wife!"

During a recent interview with "Good Morning America," Bisutti said the realization that her career choices did not honor God came on gradually: "I just became so convicted about wanting to honor my husband with my body and wanting to be a role model for other women out there who look up to me." She decided to redirect her career to model more modest clothing and says she now chooses her jobs carefully.

Michael Bartlemay, the first person to repost Eklund's original status and a member of Live31, was amazed at how much Bisutti's story meshed with their message. "We thought, 'This person is incredible, and we have to get her on board.'"

Like Eklund, Bisutti wanted to spread a message. In part because of her prolific tweets, she soon found herself making the rounds of morning talk shows and evening news magazines and doing some free promotion for a fledgling ministry started by five college students.

After Live31 reached out to her, Bisutti agreed to write a blog post

for the group's website, detailing her story in her own words. In an interview with *Inspired Women Magazine*, Bisutti said she wanted to tell her story to young girls and show them that true beauty and self-worth comes from Christ. Pairing her message with Live31 helped her reach even more like-minded people. In February, fashion and religious blogs were buzzing about Bisutti, and the former Victoria's Secret model was telling her story on Fox News, "Good Morning America," "The Glenn Beck Program" and "CBS This Morning."

Links to videos of Bisutti's national television interviews poured into Live31's Facebook page, generating even more momentum for Eklund's movement.

The convergence of Bisutti's and Eklund's messages is a good example of social media's ability to level the playing field, giving users the potential to build a platform and allowing freer access between celebrities and individuals, Pfeiffer said: "That is part of the democratization of social media. Individuals have a lot more power and leverage that never really existed before, or that was more difficult. Individuals with the right message can reach a large audience and influence ethical issues."

Bisutti has continued to promote and retweet material for Live31 to her 7,000 followers. "Their message is so biblical and Christ-centered, and it is exactly what I'm striving to be," she said. "I love every bit of their message, and it all resonates with what I believe," she told World on Campus in an email interview.

## Spreading the message

Bisutti, who receives numerous tweets a day from followers thanking her for being their role model, praised social networks for giving her the opportunity to spread her message: "God's telling my story using social media and I'm grateful to be a part of it. I think it's reached a lot more people through this outlet, but nothing is too big for God."

Eklund and his friends are developing a series of videos on the Live31 website and plan to continue leveraging social media to spread their message. "It is our platform at the moment," Bartlemay said. "It's not just on the Baylor campus; it's not just Texas. Our best way to be able to contact people is social media."

Eklund agreed: "Social media is what we are." (BP)

*"I just became so convicted about wanting to honor my husband with my body and wanting to be a role model."*

Kylie Bisutti  
Former Victoria's Secret model

*"It's our platform at the moment. ... Our best way to be able to contact people is social media."*

Michael Bartlemay  
Live31

# LifeWay's webcast for pastors, leaders now weekly program

The Exchange, a free webcast for pastors and church leaders hosted by Ed Stetzer, now airs weekly.

"A weekly program will provide our audience with more information," said Stetzer, vice president of research and ministry development at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and author of numerous books on a range of topics relating to church and culture.

The Exchange now airs every Tuesday at 3 p.m. (EST) at LifeWay.com/TheExchange.

The Exchange, begun two years ago, has broadcast monthly to viewers in all 50 states and more than 24 countries.

Topics have included discipleship, worship, Bible translations, church planting, church revitalization and multi-ethnic ministry.

Stetzer hopes a weekly webcast will broaden the audience and the content, including interviews of guests from around the

world and audience questions via Twitter and chat.

In launching The Exchange, Stetzer said, "My thought was to put together some topic-driven online conversations that could help pastors. So if someone asks, 'How do I help lead my church through revitalization?' we can say, 'We've archived a 30-minute resource on that.'"

## Faithful, effective

"I hope we can help pastors and church leaders be more effective in their mission and ministry endeavors, to grow in leadership and also to think through issues from a theological perspective," Stetzer said. "At the end of the day it is our desire that leaders and churches would be more faithful and effective at what they do so that the name and fame of Jesus would be more widely known."

For more information about The Exchange with Ed Stetzer, visit LifeWay.com/TheExchange or EdStetzer.com. (BP)

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# Women in ministry neither 'divine' nor 'demonic,' pastor says

**A**pioneer among Baptist women in ministry in the South told a mostly female audience at Baylor University what to expect as they enter into ministry roles traditionally held by men.

"There will be voices inside and outside telling you, 'You're divine' or 'You're demonic,'" said Julie Pennington-Russell, lead pastor of

the First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga. "But both are telling you a lie."

Pennington-Russell spoke to nearly 200 people at Sacred Voices, the 2012 Women in Ministry Conference, sponsored by George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University and Texas Baptist churches through the Cooperative Program of the Baptist Gen-

eral Convention of Texas (BGCT).

Pennington-Russell, who graduated from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in 1985 to become pastor of Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco, recalled the note she got at one point early in her ministry: "Everything God is doing right now is because of you," the writer said. "You're the best pas-

tor this church has ever had."

But on the same day, she received an anonymous letter informing her that "you're the worst pastor this church has ever had. ... I pray every day for your hasty departure."

"One of those is harsh; the other leads to pride, which in my mind is the worse of the two," Pennington-Russell said. "God is the only one who tells you the whole truth about yourself."

In 1998 Pennington-Russell became the first female Baptist pastor in Texas when she relocated to Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. She left there in 2007 to become pastor of the historic First Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga. The Georgia Baptist Convention responded by withdrawing fellowship from what was formerly one of its leading congregations, citing a Baptist faith statement claiming the Bible does not permit women to serve as senior pastors.

More than a third of students in Baptist seminaries are women, and the number of women pastors is small but increasing, according to a report by the Atlanta-based Baptist Women in Ministry. Texas now has 23 women pastors — 19

senior pastors and four co-pastors.

Unlike the Southern Baptist Convention, which teaches that "while both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture," the BGCT supports women serving in whatever capacity they feel called.

## Church resource

The BGCT hired Meredith Stone as Women in Ministry Specialist a year ago to be a resource for churches and is exploring other ways to aid.

Many churches "don't know what they're supposed to believe about women in ministry," said Van Christian, chair of the executive board of Texas Baptists.

Debra Bell, a minister, life coach and former staffer at The Church Without Walls in Houston, recalled several years ago, when she was not allowed to stand in a raised pulpit but had to preach from a podium on the floor.

"A great joy is coming to a place in your ministry where you know who you are and what God has called you to be, where you're comfortable, even if you're not always confident," Bell said. (BP)

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## Letters

(continued from page 2)

nership worked because it was not top down or bottom up — it was both. It was a partnership with servant leadership at every level and as many volunteers as possible. No one gets excited about an enterprise, a mission or a church plant unless he or she is involved in the planning.

We are all human and want to be involved in exciting missionary work in which we feel we have a

significant part to play in the work of the Great Commission.

This is only common sense. Dictatorships whether actual, de facto or attempted will always muddy the water and eventually fail. When the various parts of the SBC remember that they are a partnership reporting to the people, who individually report to God, they will return to the greatest entities in history.

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## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Uzbek Christians face raids, confiscation of books

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — On Feb. 5, police and National Security Service secret police officers raided an unregistered, mainly ethnic Korean Baptist church's Sunday worship service near Tashkent. On Feb. 7, the state Religious Affairs Committee ruled that Christian literature confiscated during the raid was allowed only for "internal use" by registered religious organizations.

On Feb. 13, the church's pastor, Vyacheslav Kim — a 65-year-old pensioner — was fined 100 times the minimum monthly wage in his absence. The books and musical instruments seized were ordered to be handed to the state.

Judge Muhammadali Nazarov defended the fine and confiscations, insisting that his decision is "in line with the law." Officials of the Religious Affairs Committee refused to discuss their ruling that the literature was not allowed to unregistered communities or outside registered communities. After a raid on a private home in Samarkand, Protestant Khursheda Telyayeva was fined 20 times the minimum monthly wage. Her confiscated Christian books were ordered to be handed to Samarkand Regional Muslim Board.

### Prayer service in India disrupted by Hindu extremists

BILASPUR, India — Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) disrupted a prayer service organized by Beshbha church Feb. 15 in Pandhi village, near Bilaspur. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that the church had organized a worship event for Feb. 14-16 and had prior police permission. On the first day of the meeting, 15 to 20 RSS members arrived and issued threats, telling pastors Daulat Ram and Sunam Kumar Besra to halt the event; on their way out, they slapped Besra. On the second day, about 50 RSS members told the pastor to stop the meeting and then started tearing down the tent, microphone and speakers.

The mob then dragged the Christians and started assaulting them, resulting in severe injuries. Besra suffered head injuries that required stitches. Later that evening, the extremists came back and attacked Pastor Immanuel Banchor and other church members, beating them badly with their fists and a leather belt. The pastor sustained an injury to his left eye, and another Christian's ear was severely injured.

The extremists also damaged the pastor's motorbike. With great difficulty the Christians managed to take refuge at a Christian's house near the event site. At around 3 a.m. some pastors and church members brought the injured to their houses in Bilaspur. A case has been registered against the extremists, the GCIC reported.

### Hindus deliver 2nd warning to Indian church

MEDCHAL, India — Members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) threatened a church in Sutari Gudem village, near Medchal, during a worship service Feb. 12. The All India Christian Council (AICC) reported that Timothy Paul, a pastor in Sutari Gudem for more than two years, received a warning six months ago from BJP members to stop leading services in his rented home.

Another Christian provided a place for services where about 50 people meet on Sundays, and it was there that the Hindu extremists from the BJP stormed into the church service and had a heated argument with the pastor that nearly led to a physical attack. Pastor Suvarho Rao and a few of the church elders planned to meet with village elders to resolve the issue of church services in the village, according to AICC.

### Indian pastor, children verbally abused for faith

KANHAGAD, India — Hindu extremists in Kanhagad, Kasargod, on Feb. 21 verbally abused a pastor and his children and damaged his car because of his faith in Christ. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that Hindu extremists barged into the house of a convert from Hinduism who had invited Pastor Titus Ignatius Kapan and his family for dinner. The invading extremists tackled the pastor and his children, and then began dropping huge boulders and stones on his car, according to the GCIC. The assailants fled after learning Kapan had called police, who arrived about an hour later. Officers filed a charge sheet, but no arrests had been made at press time.

## CAMPUS News



### UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **15th Annual UMobile Classic to Be Held:** The 15th annual University of Mobile (UMobile) Classic golf tournament, presented by Catfish Junction, will be held May 3 at Lakewood Golf Club in Point Clear.

Registration will begin at 7 a.m. with a shotgun start at 8 a.m. followed by dinner and prizes at 12:30 p.m.

All proceeds benefit scholarships provided by the UMobile annual fund.

To register or become a sponsor, visit [www.umobile.edu/Alumni/GolfTournament.aspx](http://www.umobile.edu/Alumni/GolfTournament.aspx) or contact Tonya Gomien at 251-442-2917 or [tgomien@umobile.edu](mailto:tgomien@umobile.edu).

► **UMobile Jazz Band to Present 'Strike Up the Band!':** The University of Mobile Jazz Band will present "Strike Up the Band!," featuring the music of Sammy Nestico, on April 26 at 7:30 p.m. in Ram Hall on the university campus.

The band will present many of Nestico's songs including "Alright, Okay, You Win;" "Basie Straight Ahead;" "Sweet Georgia Brown;" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street."

Kenn Hughes, director of instrumental studies, RamCorps and the jazz band, will direct.

For more information, call 251-442-2553 or visit [www.umobile.edu](http://www.umobile.edu).

### JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Student Named Miss SLE Rodeo Queen:** Judson College equine student Katie Beeman, of Hurley, Miss., was named the 2012 Miss SLE Rodeo Queen on March 9.

The rodeo was part of the Southeastern Livestock Exposition (SLE) and Rodeo in Montgomery March 7-9.

Contestants were judged on appearance, personality and horsemanship.

According to Judson equine coach Jennifer Hoggle, Beeman will be an ambassador to support and promote the Alabama beef cattle industry and the SLE rodeo.

► **Judson Ensemble to Perform in Tallassee, Dadeville:** The Judson College ensemble FAITH will perform April 1 at Westside Independent Baptist Church in Tallassee and First Baptist Church, Dadeville. Both events are return engagements.

According to director Judy Ransom, the group will sing gospel,

religious and sacred music, hymn arrangements and a cappella and accompanied pieces.

The concert at Westside will be at 11 a.m., and the concert at First, Dadeville, will be at 6 p.m.

For more information, call the Judson music department at 334-683-5149.

► **Judson Students, Graduate to Serve As Summer Camp Staffers:** Judson College junior Jessica Douthat, of Fort Payne, will return to Camp Skyline this summer as a fifth-time staffer.

Skyline is a Christian camp for girls in Mentone.

Junior Rebecca O'Neal, of Chatom, will be spending the summer at Camp Orkila in Eastsound, Wash. Orkila is a YMCA camp located on the Pacific island of Orcas, northwest of the Washington state mainland.

O'Neal will be a horse master counselor and a craft instructor for campers.

Recent graduate Samantha Marcella, of Cullman, will serve as summer camp unit leader and horseback instructor at Camp Trico in Guntersville, which is affiliated with the Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama.

► **Bessemer Pastor Speaks at Judson Chapel:** Judson College junior Staci Chesser had the opportunity to introduce her father, Tommy Chesser, at weekly chapel Feb. 28.

Tommy Chesser, pastor of Raimund Heights Baptist Church, Bessemer, spoke on "Hearing the Voice of God."

### SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Writers Noll, Nystrom Chosen for Beeson's Pollock Award:** Biographers Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom will be honored by Samford University's Beeson Divinity School as winners of the 2012 John Pollock Award for Christian Biography for their book "Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices From Asia and Africa."

They will receive the award April 3 at 11 a.m. in Samford's Hodges Chapel. Noll will speak at the service in conjunction with Beeson's World Christianity Focus Week.

The book, published by IVP Books, tells the life stories of 17 Christian leaders from Asia and Africa. Subjects include Ugandan martyr Janani Luwum, Indian mystic Sundar Singh and Ignatius Cardinal Kung of China.

Noll is Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame.

Nystrom, author of more than 75 books, is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

This marks the first time since it was established in 2001 that the Pollock Award has recognized a book that is about more than one person or was written by more than one person.

The award honors Christian biographer John C. Pollock, a British writer whose more than 30 books on religion include "The Billy Graham Story."



Photo by Steve Bentley

### BEULAH BAPTIST HONORS SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

Albert Arnold (right) was recognized March 4 for more than 30 years of service as Sunday School superintendent at Beulah Baptist Church, Muscadine, in Cleburne Baptist Association. Pastor Bill Brown presented Arnold with a plaque, and he was named Sunday School superintendent emeritus.

# 'We are never alone'

## Young singer finds strength, identity in Christ

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Jamie-Grace Harper's Grammy Award-nominated contemporary Christian song, "Hold Me," grows from her own experience of God's sustaining grace as she has struggled with Tourette syndrome.

At age 11, Harper was diagnosed with the neurological disorder characterized by uncontrollable sounds or movements.

"Symptoms started showing up when I was 9, and it was two years later that I received the official diagnosis," Harper said. "It was really frustrating and stressful because I started making these weird movements and sounds that I couldn't control, and I dealt with a lot of bullying and torment from kids at school. When I got the diagnosis, in one way it was a relief to know what was going on. But it also left me with more questions and heart-break because there wasn't a cure or a medicine to fix it."

"Before being diagnosed with Tourette's, I was this outgoing kid who was passionate about her faith. After receiving the diagnosis, I spent almost two years in a slump. I never doubted that God was there but I thought He didn't love me as much. I thought that my parents and sister must have loved the Lord more than I did, and in return, God must have loved them more than He loved me because they didn't have this problem. I had a lot of doubts and insecurities with my relationship with Christ and also with my self-image."

However, an unexpected gift from her grandfather sparked a renewed joy and also helped relieve some of her symptoms.

"When I was 13 or 14, my grandfather gave my sister and me a drum set and guitar," Harper said. "Looking back, I think he was trying to bring us some hope and joy during



Photos courtesy of The Media Collective

**COMFORT** — Jamie-Grace Harper's Grammy Award-nominated Christian song, 'Hold Me,' grows from her own experience of God's sustaining grace as she has struggled with Tourette syndrome.

this time. I don't think he had any idea that he was stirring up this passion in me to play music. I had been singing my whole life, but when I started playing these instruments, it took music to another level for me and also started helping my symptoms. During that same time, I was really impacted by Psalm 30:5, 'Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.'

"Between that verse and being involved with music, I was able to start coming out of my slump and began to understand that God still had a plan and purpose for my life. I realized that He wasn't going to let go of me — even though I was confused, stressed out and depressed. When I realized that He was still there and was still taking care of me, my outlook on life completely changed."

At age 19, Harper, known as Jamie Grace, performs concerts across the country on the Revolve Tour, where she shares a message with teenage girls about finding strength and identity in Christ. She has estab-

lished a nonprofit organization for teenagers with Tourette syndrome. As she describes her personal struggles, she desires to provide comfort and hope for others who are suffering from similar issues or illnesses. Harper has also created the Grace Talk conference, designed for local churches and focusing on topics relevant to teenage girls such as purity, relationships, parents and school.

A few months ago, she released her debut album, "One Song at a Time." While maintaining a busy speaking and performance schedule, Harper is majoring in child and youth development at Point University, formerly Atlanta Christian College.

Whether she is singing, speaking or working with young families, Harper desires to make an impact on lives with messages of hope and encouragement while sharing the gospel.

"I want to do everything I can to help other teenagers and to tell everyone I can about the joy of the Lord," Harper said. "I want to do whatever I can to share the love of God and to share that we all go through difficult things, but we are never alone. God is right there with us and is never going to leave His children."

with a heavenly message," Jackie Patillo, executive director of the Gospel Music Association, said of the Dove Awards.

Following is a list of nominees for some of the top awards:

Song of the year: "Hold Me" (Jamie Grace), "Alive" (Natalie Grant), "Blessings" (Laura Story), "Celebrate Me Home" (Perrys), "Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)" (Casting Crowns), "I Smile" (Kirk Franklin), "I've Been Here Before" (Ernie Haase & Signature Sound), "Please Forgive Me" (Gaither Vocal Band), "Who Am I" (Jason Crabb), "Your Great Name" (Natalie Grant).

Male vocalist of the year: Chris August, Chris Tomlin, Jason Crabb, Kirk Franklin, Steven Curtis Chapman.

Female vocalist of the year: Francesca Battistelli, Kari Jobe, Laura Story, Mandisa, Natalie Grant.

Group of the year: Casting Crowns, David Crowder Band, Gaither Vocal Band, NEEDTOBREATHE, The Isaacs.

Artist of the year: Jason Crabb, Laura Story, LeCrae, The Isaacs.

New artist of the year: Jamie Grace, Beyond The Ashes, Dara Maclean, Royal Tailor, The City Harmonic. (BP)



## Jamie Grace receives Dove Award nomination for new artist

Nineteen-year-old Grammy nominee Jamie Grace became one to watch at the upcoming 43rd annual Dove Awards.

Winners of this year's awards will be announced April 19 at Atlanta's Fox Theater.

In the Feb. 22 announcement of nominees, Grace was listed for new artist of the year, song of the year for "Hold Me" and pop/contemporary album of the year for "One Step at a Time."

"This is an event that has a history of bringing together people who are not only giving us a new favorite song to sing but who are anointed

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Church bowling alleys rapidly becoming extinct

ARLINGTON, Texas — Church bowling alleys are disappearing fast. There are probably fewer than 200 left, said Neil Stremmel, of the U.S. Bowling Congress.

Doug Schmidt, author of the 2007 book "They Came to Bowl: How Milwaukee Became America's Tenpin Capital," said that city once had at least 13 church bowling alleys.

"They came with German immigrants in the 1860s," Schmidt said. "Most closed in the 1980s or '90s."

Milwaukee's St. Martini Lutheran Church built its eight-lane alley in 1954, said church secretary Trudi Groth. In 2004, four lanes were dismantled to make space for a lunchroom. Two years ago, the final four lanes were replaced by classrooms.

The last time Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Haven, Conn., organized a bowling night at the four lanes in its basement, nobody showed up.

"I don't know if it's the times, the location," parish administrator Pat Sundermann said.

It's particularly sad, she said, because the bowling alley was refurbished a few years ago in memory of Eddie Vanacore, who grew up in the church and died in the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

The space is used mostly for meetings now, Sundermann said. She isn't certain when the bowling alley was built, but by the 1950s it was hopping, she said.

"Everybody wants to go down and look and smile and joke, but nobody wants to bowl," Sundermann said.

### Va. enacts law mandating ultrasound before abortion

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia has enacted a law that requires a woman seeking an abortion to undergo an ultrasound and to have the opportunity to view the image of her baby at least 24 hours before the procedure.

Gov. Bob McDonnell, a Republican, signed the bill into law March 7 after a firestorm of protests from abortion rights advocates. The criticisms prompted McDonnell to urge the Virginia Legislature to amend the bill to require an abdominal ultrasound but make clear an ultrasound performed with a vaginal probe is not required. Both houses approved the amended version of the legislation.

Critics of the proposal attacked the original measure for requiring a vaginal ultrasound — which it did not — and decried the method as "rape." During the controversy, however, it was revealed that many abortion clinics use the vaginal ultrasound to determine gestational age before performing the procedure.

A 2003 study published in the journal *Contraception* showed 83 percent of Planned Parenthood clinics "always" did a vaginal ultrasound before performing an early surgical abortion, according to LifeSiteNews.com.

Virginia became the 24th state to enact an ultrasound law. Typically, the laws mandate that a woman seeking an abortion be given the opportunity to view the ultrasound image of her child.

### Utah passes bill extending abortion waiting period

SALT LAKE CITY — The Utah Legislature has approved a bill that would lengthen the waiting period for a woman seeking an abortion from 24 to 72 hours.

The state Senate voted 22-6 for the bill March 8, two days after the House of Representatives approved it in a 59-11 vote.

"An abortion cannot be undone. ... Why would we not want to afford a woman facing a life-changing decision 72 hours to consider ramifications that could last a lifetime?" Rep. Steve Eliason, the bill's Republican sponsor, said before the House vote, *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported.

If enacted, the legislation would tie Utah with South Dakota for the longest waiting period in the country. A federal judge has blocked South Dakota's 72-hour wait from taking effect.

### Okla. may require right to hear heartbeat of unborn

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma Senate passed in a 34-8 vote March 6 legislation that would require a physician to inform a woman that she has the right to hear her unborn child's heartbeat before an abortion.

The House of Representatives is expected to approve the Heartbeat Informed Consent Act as well.

Sen. Dan Newberry, a Republican from Tulsa and the bill's sponsor, said a heartbeat is the only way for an unborn baby to communicate his desire to live. "It can't say, 'Please don't kill me;' it can't say, 'I want to live.' It can't say anything," Newberry said.