

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



April 26, 2012
Vol. 177, No. 17

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

INSIDE

LOOKING BACK
on April 27, 2011

Alabama still recovering from 2nd deadliest tornado outbreak in US history — Where are we now? What have we learned?

◆ Pages 5–12



Controversial Comments

Richard Land offers 2 apologies; ERLC initiates investigation

Richard Land's recent controversial and allegedly plagiarized comments about the Trayvon Martin case have landed him in the pit of public scrutiny. They also resulted in the long-time leader of Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) issuing two official apologies and being the target of an official investigation by ERLC's governing board.

The plagiarism charge came to light when blogger and Baylor University Ph.D. student Aaron Weaver posted a partial transcript from one of Land's shows on his blog, *TheBigDaddyWeave.com*. The unattributed remarks were made on Land's March 31 Richard Land Live! show about media, race and Martin, the unarmed black Florida teenager who was shot and killed by a neighborhood security guard.

Weaver discovered that more than half the material for Land's short segment was quoted nearly verbatim from Jeffrey Kuhner's March 29 *Washington Times* Op-Ed, "Obama foments racial division."

Land said it is his practice to post the articles he uses on his website, and the show for March 31 does include a link to the Kuhner column on the "full show notes" page.

When presented with the charge, Land quickly apologized in the statement for failing to give proper attribution for material he used on his radio show in which he criticized President Obama and black civil rights leaders for exploiting the shooting.

"On occasion I have failed to provide appropriate verbal attributions on my radio broadcast ... and for that I sincerely apologize," he wrote. "I

regret if anyone feels they were deceived or misled. That was not my intent nor has it ever been."

Land also issued an official apology for his controversial remarks.

On his radio show, Land described activists Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton as "racial ambulance chasers" who, along with fringe groups like the Black Panthers, are fomenting a "mob mentality" in the Martin case that is akin to what the Ku Klux Klan used to do to blacks in the South.



LAND

"This situation is getting out of hand," Land said on the show. "When there is violence it's going to be Jesse Jackson's fault. It's going to be Al Sharpton's fault. It's going to be Louis Farrakhan's fault, and to a certain degree it's going to be President Obama's fault."

Following a conversation with Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Bryant Wright in which Wright related how offended many African Americans and fellow Christians were over his comments, Land issued a formal apology. He wrote, in part, "I am writing to express my deep regret for any hurt or misunderstanding" (See 'Land's apology,' page 3)

Young 'millennials' losing faith at record pace

A growing tide of young Americans is drifting away from the religions of their childhood — and most of them are ending up in no religion at all.

One in four young adults choose "unaffiliated" when asked about their religion, according to a new report from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) and Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs.

But most within this unaffiliated group — 55 percent — identified with a religious group when they were younger.

"These younger unaffiliated adults are very nonreligious," said Daniel Cox, PRRI's research director. "They

Alabama Baptists' primary channel of missions giving



Guanabo, Cuba

April ... Cooperative Program month



Cincinnati, Ohio

Headland, Ala.

Graphic by Lauren C. Grim

demonstrate much lower levels of religiosity than we see in the general population," including participation in religious rituals or worship services.

Some of them will return to their faiths as they age, "but there's not a lot of evidence that most will come back," added Cox, who said the trend away from organized religion dates back to the early 1990s.

The study of 2,013 Americans ages 18–24 focused on the younger end of the cohort commonly known as the "Millennials" or "Generation Y," which generally includes young adults as old as 29. Interviews were conducted between March 7 and 20.

Across denominations, the net loss-

es were uneven, with Catholics losing the highest proportion of childhood adherents — nearly 8 percent — followed by white mainline Protestant traditions, which lost 5 percent.

Among Catholics, whites were twice as likely as Hispanics to say they are no longer affiliated with the church.

White evangelical and black denominations fared better, with a net loss of about 1 percent. Non-Christian groups posted a modest 1 percent net increase in followers.

But the only group that saw significant growth between childhood and young adulthood was the unaffiliated — a jump from 11 percent to 25 percent. (RNS)

COMMENT

The Church at Its Best

Observers frequently say the church is at its best when people are in need. They point to the way church members respond when someone dies or when illness strikes or some other special need bursts on the scene.

Church members almost always respond to such situations with love and compassion. They are there to comfort the grieving, to care for hurting and to help the needy. They bring food. They care for family members. They provide transportation. They clean houses. They sit in hospital rooms or with those waiting the outcome of some surgery.

Pretense falls away in times of need. Who we are as Christians, who we are becoming under the leadership of God's Holy Spirit, comes pouring out. That is why observers conclude the church is at its best in times of need. That is when the Spirit of God can most clearly be seen in God's people.

It was like that on April 27, 2011, and the days that immediately followed. Sixty-two tornadoes had left disaster in their wakes across two-thirds of the state — 42 of Alabama's 67 counties were declared official disaster areas. More than 250 people were dead or dying from tornado-related injuries — 272 became the reported final death count. Property damage was in the billions of dollars.

Alabama Baptists did not blink. They simply went to work and in the days and weeks and months since then, Alabama Baptists have not stopped comforting the grieving, caring for the hurting and helping the needy. It has been a time when Alabama Baptists have been at their best.

Beginning on page 5 of this issue is a recap of some of the highlights of what happened April 27, 2011, and the days following and how God continues to work through Alabama Baptists. It is good to reflect on all that has occurred in the past year.

It is also good to remember why Alabama Baptists responded with such an outpouring of care.

Alabama Baptists did not respond out of human instinct. Too often human instinct is brutish and beastly. People stand on corners and watch others being mugged or maimed, all the time doing nothing. People look at destroyed homes, damaged communities, broken bodies and injured spirits and shrug their shoulders and go their own way.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Compassion that causes one to act comes from God. It models what He has done for us. Through Jesus Christ, God reached out to humanity just because He chose to love us. He provided a way for the undeserving to escape the death-hold of sin. Theologians call this grace — God's unmerited favor. And once one has been touched by God's grace, one is never the same.

Lifelong relationship with God

God's grace does not come by ascent to a theological proposition. God's grace comes from a relationship with the living Lord. Every time someone asked Jesus about salvation, He responded with an answer that pointed the person toward a lifelong relationship with Himself. To the rich young ruler of Luke 18, for example, Jesus told him to change his priorities and "follow me."

Only by opening himself to a lifelong relationship with Jesus could he experience God's grace. That is what theologians call discipleship.

Even the invitation to those who would later be called apostles began with a call to follow Jesus.

Following Jesus is more than intellectual agreement with the statement that Jesus died for one's sin. Following Jesus is a life-altering commitment. The rich young ruler could not change his priorities so he turned away. Peter, Andrew, James, John and others left their nets and followed Jesus. For them, changed priorities were the first step of a lifelong journey. It was the first step toward God's grace.

These and others who have followed the example of Jesus' first followers opened themselves

to God through faith in Jesus Christ. God's Spirit filled them to overflowing and others were blessed as God's Spirit flowed through them.

Isn't that what happened following the tornadoes? God's grace overflowed through chain saw crews and through chaplains. God's grace overflowed through people clearing lots of debris and those stacking shelves with supplies. God's grace overflowed through gifts donated for victims and through the construction skills used in rebuilding.

Numerous people asked Alabama Baptist volunteers why they volunteered to help total strangers, why they worked for free. Every time the answer was the same — the grace of God. God has freely given to us through His Son, Jesus of Nazareth. Now, because God lives inside the believer, the believer allows God's Spirit to overflow from him or her and touch those in need. It is all an act of grace that begins with God. It is all a demonstration of the Church at its best.

The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "We have this treasure (the grace of God) in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." In the same way, Alabama Baptists provided untold hours of service in a myriad of ways. But what they really offered was the grace of God so that to Him people might offer praise and thanksgiving and to God those still held in sin's death grip might turn through faith in Jesus Christ.

Discipleship without decision is impossible. There must be a time when one decides to change priorities and follow Jesus. But decision is not discipleship. Decision is a step. Discipleship is a lifelong journey. Discipleship is being filled with the "all-surpassing power of God" and letting that power, that grace overflow into the lives of others.

Thank God for those Alabama Baptists who are on the discipleship journey and who allowed God's Spirit to overflow through them in grace-filled deeds following April 27, 2011. That really did demonstrate the Church at its best.

Letters to the Editor

MARTIN ARTICLE SLANTED

The article in the April 5 issue on Trayvon Martin seemed very inappropriate and slanted for a Christian newspaper. While I agree it was a tragic event, it is my opinion that no one knows all the facts other than the police department where it happened, and they have not arrested Mr. Zimmerman. It has already been admitted by NBC they edited and spliced together the 911 tapes that made him sound racist. In my opin-

ion, the mainstream media has purposefully made this case into an even larger tragedy. They do not need any assistance from our Christian newspapers to further write things that are not facts or insinuate racism, when [we] in fact do not know any such thing occurred. It seems to me that a Christian newspaper should help aid in diffusing a bad situation, not add fuel to the fire.

Fred Lurwig
Marion Junction, Ala.

EDITOR'S NOTE — The article appearing in the April 5 issue was written before it was known about the editing of the 911 tapes.

We appreciate the readers who have written to make sure we were aware and have published a couple of the letters as representation of what is being said.

This will be the last letter published on this particular issue because of the similarities.



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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

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

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

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

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

NAMB's new strategy causes concern among state convention leaders nationwide

The North American Mission Board's (NAMB) strategy to focus on church planting by redeploying missionaries and shifting budget emphases continues to draw concern from many state leaders across the nation.

In January, leaders of the California Southern Baptist Convention (CSBC) distributed a report detailing how changes at NAMB will impact their work.

The CSBC report noted concern that NAMB's decision to move more resources to church planting will adversely impact many effective ministries in the state, primarily by eliminating ministry positions.

On April 12, Fermín A. Whittaker, CSBC executive director, said, "California Southern Baptists don't necessarily believe church starting is the only way to reach Californians for Christ."

He explained that the 12 evangelism missionaries eliminated in 2011 reported 9,032 professions of faith and confirmed 1,637 baptisms through their efforts. Also important, Whittaker added, the missionaries were instrumental in engaging almost 16,000 volunteers from CSBC congregations in ministry.

"If we really want to reach California and North America, we will never do it solely through church planting and need these types of ministries to mobilize church members to get outside the walls of our church buildings and tell others about Jesus while ministering in His name," Whittaker said.

Relating to partners

Emil Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, expressed concern about the way NAMB is relating to its partners.

"Of greater concern to me than the impact on Arkansas is the impact on our partners that have to reach the pioneer areas," Turner said. "[NAMB] strategy undermines the strength of the churches they plant as they defund associational work and church support."

Bob Mills, executive director of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, noted

NAMB's shift toward a key emphasis on church planting. "Kansas-Nebraska, other state conventions and local associations do not have the luxury of being so single focused," he said.

In Ohio, messengers to the state convention last fall passed a resolution requesting NAMB trustees to "continue their financial support of their missionaries in Ohio," defining missionaries as associational directors of missions, Baptist Collegiate Ministry directors, employees of Ohio's eight mission centers as well as church planters.

Jack Kwok, executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, said at the time his state qualifies as an "under-reached and underserved mission field," using terminology included in the Great Commission Task Force report approved by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2010.

Leaders in at least three state conventions have supported NAMB's strategy change. Garvon Golden, executive director of Dakota Baptist Convention, said the convention will focus on strengthening churches and planting evangelistic churches.

Dakota supports change

The Dakota convention is facing financial challenges stemming from changes at NAMB, but Golden said the convention will take more financial responsibility for its work and will operate with a smaller staff.

Kirk Baker, president of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention, said changes at NAMB are spurring his convention to a necessary restructuring that has been put off for years.

At their annual meeting last fall, leaders of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists approved a reorganization plan that reflects NAMB's new priorities, Terry Harper, the state convention's executive director, said.

"Affected were 10 missionaries, our collegiate workers and our worker in resort missions. As painful as that has been, I think we're going to see church planting like we've never seen before in West Virginia." (BP, CSBC)

"We're going to get to the point [where] we depend more on God and what He provides, and less on other people, and that has to make us stronger."

Garvon Golden
Dakota Baptist Convention

'Nondiscrimination policy'

Baptist group plans to remain on Vanderbilt's campus

Nashville-based Vanderbilt University's push for religious groups to allow any interested student — no matter his or her beliefs — to serve in leadership positions continues to fuel concern.

The university's decision has led to Vanderbilt Catholic's departure, an inundation of the opposition message and a stand by Baptists to stick it out.

The newly adopted, controversial policy requires any campus-recognized group — including religious groups — to apply the university's nondiscrimination policy, which forbids discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. For Christian groups, that means they cannot require their group leader to be a Christian.

A coalition of 11 Christian student groups — known as Vanderbilt Solidarity — are insisting their leaders should be chosen based on shared faith.

"Until recently, Vanderbilt explicitly protected the freedom of all student organizations to select members and leaders who shared and supported the group's purpose, including — for religious groups — its faith," the Solidarity groups said in a statement April 9.

On April 18, the support broadened when a group of Vanderbilt students, faculty and alumni released a six-minute video explaining why they believe the policy defies common sense and discriminates against Christian groups.

The video was posted on the Internet the same day students who oppose the policy handed out 4,000 MP4 players loaded with the video on campus.

"I don't think this is over. I think Vanderbilt alums and other people will continue to speak out and speak up," Bill Campbell, who is identi-



BP photo

DEBATE — Vanderbilt University's new policy requires any campus-recognized group to apply the university's nondiscrimination policy.

fied as the former head of admissions, said in the video.

One student on the video, junior Pieter Valk, asked, rhetorically, "If we can't ask our leaders to be religious, what's the point of our group?"

Alumnus Thomas Singleton said he fears the policy will devolve to the point that "if a non-Christian isn't elected" to lead a Christian group, "it is going to be assumed that there was discrimination."

Solidarity groups

The Solidarity groups — Asian American Christian Fellowship, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Cru, Medical Christian Fellowship, Navigators, Graduate Christian Fellowship, Bridges International, Lutheran Student Fellowship, Every Nation Ministries, Beta Upsilon Chi, Christian Legal Society and (until it left the campus because of the policy) Vanderbilt Catholic — claims the policy violates "the central tenets of our faith."

The remaining 10 groups applied for registered status on campus, but

included their own constitutions containing faith-based requirements for leadership positions. If the school does not recognize the constitutions, the groups would be considered unregistered next year.

The Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) is not a member of the Solidarity, but it is determined to remain.

"We have been assured by the university that we can select leaders committed to the organization's mission," said Thom Thornton, Vanderbilt's BCM director.

Bill Choate, collegiate ministries coordinator for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, affirmed BCM's decision. "We intend to do what we have always done on campus (since the early 1920s) until the university denies us that privilege," he said.

"Baptist Collegiate Ministry is not going away."

Beth Fortune, vice chancellor for public affairs, said, "All registered student groups at Vanderbilt must be open to all students. This debate is about nondiscrimination, not religious freedom, and we stand behind our policy." (BP, RNS)

Land's apology not enough, McKissic says

(continued from page 1)
ing my comments ... have generated. It grieves me to hear that any comments of mine have to any degree set back the cause of racial reconciliation in Southern Baptist or American life. ... Clearly I overestimated the progress that has been made in slaying the ugly racist ghosts of the past in our history. I also clearly underestimated the extent to which we must go out of our way not to be misunderstood when we speak to issues where race is a factor."

Luter accepts apology

In response, a prominent African-American pastor — Fred Luter Jr., of New Orleans — issued a statement accepting Land's apology. Luter is the SBC's first vice president who will be nominated for SBC president during the June annual meeting in New Orleans.

Luter said, "I commend Richard Land for his letter of apology pertaining to his comments about the Trayvon Martin case. His comments certainly were a concern for many of us across the (SBC).

"Our convention has made a lot of progress in the area of racial reconciliation and we want to continue this effort," Luter continued. "Land's letter of apology will hopefully keep us on track."

But Land's comment fell short for one prominent black pastor. Dwight McKissic, of Texas, charged that Land apologized for the response to his words and not the comments themselves.

McKissic called for Land's remarks to be repudiated by the SBC or for Land to be removed.

Responding to the turmoil, ERLC's executive committee issued a statement acknowledging that

Land's comments "have angered many and opened wounds from the past." The statement said the executive committee regrets "any harm that may have been done to race relations with the SBC" by Land's remarks.

The statement also announced that an ad hoc committee had been appointed to "investigate the allegations of plagiarism and recommend appropriate action."

"We expect Dr. Land and ERLC to embody the highest moral and ethical standards," the statement said. "Though the source citation standards prevailing among talk radio shows are different from those applicable to journalistic work or to scholarly work in the academic setting, we nevertheless agree with Dr. Land that he could, and should, do a better job in this area." (Compiled from wire services)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► **Fairfield Highlands Church, Midfield**, will hold fifth Sunday April 29, 10 a.m. Randy Harwell will lead the music. T.A. (Buck) Duke will speak at 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. For information call 205-780-6621 or visit www.fairfieldhighlandsbaptist.org. Ed Cruce is pastor. ► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing May 4, 7:30 p.m., with The Scrap Iron Quartet. For information call 205-425-4991. Scott Bush is pastor.

BETHEL

► **Pine Hill Church** will hold a southern gospel concert April 28, 7 p.m., with Tribute Quartet, of Hendersonville, Tenn. The church will open for seating at 6 p.m. For information call 334-963-4412. Chris Kynard is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Birmingham Association** will hold senior adult fun day May 17 at Lakeside Church, Birmingham. It will be a day of revival. Lunch will be at 11:30 a.m. in the family life center. The program will follow in the worship center. The gospel group The McKameys will sing, and Evangelist Junior Hill will speak. For reservations call 205-599-3245 or email sharonw@bbaonline.org. Breck Ladd is pastor of Lakeside. Mike McLemore is executive director of Birmingham Association. ► **Hillview Church, Forestdale**, will hold a choir showcase April 29, 6 p.m. Neighboring churches will participate. The church also will host The Melody Boys Quartet in concert May 20, 10:30 a.m. For information call Martha McDonald at 205-798-0340. Mark Barber is pastor. ► **Pioneer**

Church, Birmingham, will celebrate its 25th homecoming May 6. Sunday School will be at 9:15 a.m. and worship at 10:30 a.m. A potluck lunch will follow. The Royal Masters Quartet will sing at 12:45 p.m. For information call 205-856-9784. Darrell Castleberry is pastor. ► **Westwood Ballet**, a ministry of **Westwood Church, Birmingham**, will present its spring ballet performance called "Carpenter's Village" May 19, 6 p.m. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. For information call 205-798-0900. Stephen D. Potts is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **Mark Walker** is the new associate pastor of students for **Golden Springs Church, Anniston**. He comes from Rockdale Church, Conyers, Ga. He holds a master's degree in Christian education with youth emphasis from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Walker and his wife, Julie, have two children. Roland P. Brown is pastor.



WALKER

COFFEE

► **Westview Church, Enterprise**, will celebrate homecoming May 6, 11 a.m. Mack King will speak. Lunch will follow the service. The church also will hold revival May 6-9 with Josh Wilson, pastor of Bethany Church, Andalusia. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. Tim Willis, minister of music and worship for Ridgecrest Church, Dothan, will lead the mu-

sic. For information call 334-504-4488. Randy Kelley is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **County Line Church, Camp Hill**, will celebrate its 177th anniversary with homecoming May 6, 10:45 a.m. Former Pastor Joe B. Lawley will speak. Lunch will follow. For information call Pastor Wayne Barrett at 334-864-0281.

ELMORE

► **Tallaweka Church, Tallassee**, will hold a National Day of Prayer event May 3, noon. There will be lunch and a prayer service. Isaac Kervin is pastor.

MADISON

► **Murphy Hill Church, Toney**, will hold a fifth Sunday night singing April 29, 6 p.m., with alverson-boyd. Mike McFarlen is pastor.

MOBILE

► **First Church, Theodore**, will hold a women's conference May 5, 8:15 a.m.-4 p.m., with Drexel Gilbert. Dianne Greer and Kathy Boone will provide music. The theme will be "Matthew 17:20." There will be health and beauty tips, inspirational tips, door prizes and a gift bag. To register call 251-653-8695. David Gill is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Hunter Station Church, Montgomery**, will hold a gospel concert May 5, 6 p.m., featuring Bobby Ellis and The Country Gospel Band, of Phenix City. Calvary's Call, of Prattville, also will sing. Food and fellowship will follow. For information call Billy Evans at 334-398-3650. Donald W. Goble is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Lebanon Church, Falkville**, will hold revival April 29, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., with Donnell Brown, director of missions for Morgan Association. Randy Ashley is pastor. ► **Southwest Church, Hartselle**, will host the singing group New Ground April 29, 5 p.m. Dewitt Crowe is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Riverside Church, Helena**, will host the Going Beyond live simulcast event May 4-5 with Priscilla Shirer. There will be refreshments and door prizes. Saturday lunch will be included. For tickets call 205-426-1910. For information visit www.lifeway.com/gbsimulcast. J.J. Stanbridge is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Spring Valley Church, Springville**, will hold May Day Celebration on May 6, 4-8 p.m. There will be hotdogs, hamburgers and games for children. The gospel bluegrass band The Clay Boys will sing. Barry Britt is pastor.

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders



Larry Coates

Coosada senior adult pastor dies at 72

Senior adult pastor for Coosada Baptist Church and retired director of missions (DOM) for Tallapoosa Baptist Association died April 14. He was 72.

Coates graduated from the University of Mobile and the Bible Baptist Institute in Graceville, Fla., (now The Baptist College of Florida).



COATES

He served on staff at Baptist churches in Florida and was pastor of several Alabama Baptist churches including Zion Chapel Baptist Church, Elba; Lee Street Baptist Church, Enterprise; and First Baptist Church, Chatom.

Coates served 10 years as DOM for Tallapoosa Association and retired from that position in 2005.

He later assumed the role of senior adult pastor at Coosada Baptist in February 2007, where he was serving at the time of his death.

"He ... loved the Lord and he loved serving the Lord, and he loved God's people," said Coosada Baptist Senior Pastor Jim Graham.

Coates is survived by his wife of 49 years, Carolyn; two daughters; and three grandchildren.

Herbert A. Palmer

Retired director of missions dies at 91

Herbert A. Palmer, retired pastor and director of missions (DOM), died April 15. He was 91.

Palmer, who was born in Hartselle, served as Russell Baptist Association's DOM for 25 years (1961-1986). Prior to his role in Russell Association, he served as Tennessee River Baptist Association's DOM from 1953 to 1961 and as a pastor of an Alabama Baptist church in the early 1950s.

Palmer served in the Air Force from 1942 to 1945 and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal.

He was a member of Central Baptist Church, Phenix City, at the time of his death.

Palmer is preceded in death by his wife of 57 years, Laura, and his daughter, Shelia. He is survived by one son and one daughter; three grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.



PALMER

Special commemorative issue

— One-year anniversary of the April 27, 2011, tornadoes —

The Alabama Baptist staff recently produced a 56-page, full-color special commemorative issue of the paper marking the one-year anniversary of the April 27, 2011, tornadoes using initial coverage as well as new information that has surfaced since last year.

While not every church and association could be featured due to limited space, the issue provides a comprehensive look at what took place in the state on that historically tragic day and what ef-

orts have continued since then. Thanks to Samford University, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, 84 Lumber, All-State and UBS, the issues were distributed to Alabama Baptist families through all 3,200-plus Alabama Baptist churches free of charge. If you would like additional copies or didn't receive

a copy through a church, there are copies available for a small, cost-recovery fee while supplies last. For more information, call 1-800-803-5201. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Centreville Baptist Church

CENTREVILLE ORGANIST RETIRES AFTER 47 YEARS

Earle Cottingham (right) recently retired after 47 years of faithful service as organist for Centreville Baptist Church. Pastor Ken Fuller presented her with a plaque.

Looking back on April 27, 2011

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
and Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama still recovering from 2nd deadliest tornado outbreak in US history — Where are we now? What have we learned?



Tuscaloosa residents gathered their salvageable belongings and carried them in a grocery cart that doubled as a stroller.

Photo by Joni B. Hannigan

History marks those days. December 7, 1941. September 11, 2001. When those days are mentioned, our minds instantly go back to where we were, whom we were with, how we felt in those moments, those hours that followed the inconceivable.

Alabama history now includes one of those

days: April 27, 2011. That day, the first storms hit before daylight, while we slept, while we got ready for work, while we drove our children to school. But those storms were only an omen of the destruction to come. As the day went on, massive tornadoes reached down from the sky and plowed across the state in what would later be considered the second deadliest tornado outbreak in U.S. history.

The National Weather Service estimated that 62 tornadoes touched down on what it called a “tragically historic” day in Alabama. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency called

the storms “one of the worst natural disasters in state history.”

Several tornadoes took long, wide tracks through the state, killing and injuring hundreds of people and destroying millions of dollars in property. Other tornadoes stayed on the ground for shorter distances but caused death and destruction just the same.

By the end of that day, a reported 272 people were dead in Alabama. All told, the April 25–28 tornado outbreak killed 321 people in six Southern states. Whole Alabama neighborhoods were
(continued on page 6)



Photo by Tori Farris



Photo by Joni B. Hannigan

reduced to rubble. Thousands of homes and nearly 50 Alabama Baptist churches in 42 of the state's 67 counties were damaged or destroyed.

The damage to churches ranged from minor roof issues to the entire facility being blown away (see pages 8–9 for updates on some of the most heavily damaged churches).

The damage also included property and landscaping.

Seventh Street Baptist Church, Cullman, was one of those. It lost 11 majestic oak trees that once towered over the church.

"The whole skyline has changed," said Debi Brannan, secretary for Seventh Street Baptist, a couple of weeks following the storms. She echoed the sentiment of countless Alabama Baptists across the state who made their way to their damaged church facilities.

And like so many, Seventh Street Baptist received roof damage. It's damage was primarily on the sanctuary and the gymnasium, according to Pastor Kerry Cleghorn. Some of the sanctuary's stained-glass windows also were cracked, and the outdoor playground was heavily damaged and littered by storm debris.

Cleghorn said since the trees all fell northward, they did not harm the building. The obliteration of the beautiful oaks on campus was a loss to the congregation and touched many, including

Minister of Music Jethro Harbison, who penned a remembrance, "Good Bye, Mighty Oaks, Gifts of God."

But Harbison was not alone in expressing his emotions through writing. Others across the state wrote songs, poems, blogs, stories, etc. *The Alabama Baptist* has been collecting the various works shared with the staff and is posting those on the paper's blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com and website at www.thealabamabaptist.org. Search for "tornado stories" to find this section. Individuals may also submit items to be considered for the section to news@thealabamabaptist.org or share it on *The Alabama Baptist's* Facebook page.

'Moved to tears'

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), recently wrote on his blog:

"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."

Sadness, shock and numbness floated through two-thirds of the state and stilled the air for days following the devastating experience.

"We are shell-shocked," Amy Rollins, a member of First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, said April 29, 2011.

The dazed, robotic movements of those sifting through piles and piles of debris proved her point.

That same day Sammy Taylor, pastor of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, said

When the tornado crossed Interstate 65 (in Jefferson County), National Weather Service meteorologists estimated it was 1.5 miles wide and packing 190-mph winds.

A look back

the reality of what had happened had not truly sunk in yet.

Taylor's wife, Judy, said, "I cry a lot."

And she wasn't alone. Few people could speak of the horrific event days later without wiping away tears.

The smell of blood in the air continued to haunt Tim Haney, pastor of First, Phil Campbell, and the heaviness of all that had happened and all that was to come showed in the weariness of the pastors' faces.

"This is so massive," Haney said that day. "In the matter of four minutes life as we know it changed."

What Haney didn't realize at that moment was just how true his statement was for all Alabama Baptists.

But despite the temptation to curl up in a corner and process what had just happened, Alabama Baptists in every county headed out their doors to help. Neighbors helped neighbors, and once strangers became neighbors as they helped each other.

Driven by compassion

In fact, most of the hundreds of volunteers streaming out from churches with chain saws, gloves and bottles of water were untrained in the sense of disaster relief credentials, but they were

driven by their compassion to help their neighbor.

"There are a lot of passionate people across Alabama who really have a heart for other people and who are doing what they can to help," Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of SBOM, said in an early assessment of the massive relief effort following the tornadoes. Alabama Baptists "do what they are called upon to do" after disaster strikes, he said.

As weather warnings were issued, many churches opened their facilities as emergency shelters. After the tornadoes passed, other churches, including Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Hueytown; Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville; and First Baptist Church,

Russellville, worked with Red Cross officials to become official sites providing temporary shelter and other basic necessities for displaced residents.

And in Pleasant Grove, Cottage Hill Baptist Church ran a free shuttle service for people who had to walk from police checkpoints to check on their homes and relatives. The church also provided beds, meals, water, clothing and electrical outlets for people to charge their cellphones in order to contact loved ones.

Scores of Alabama Baptist churches of all

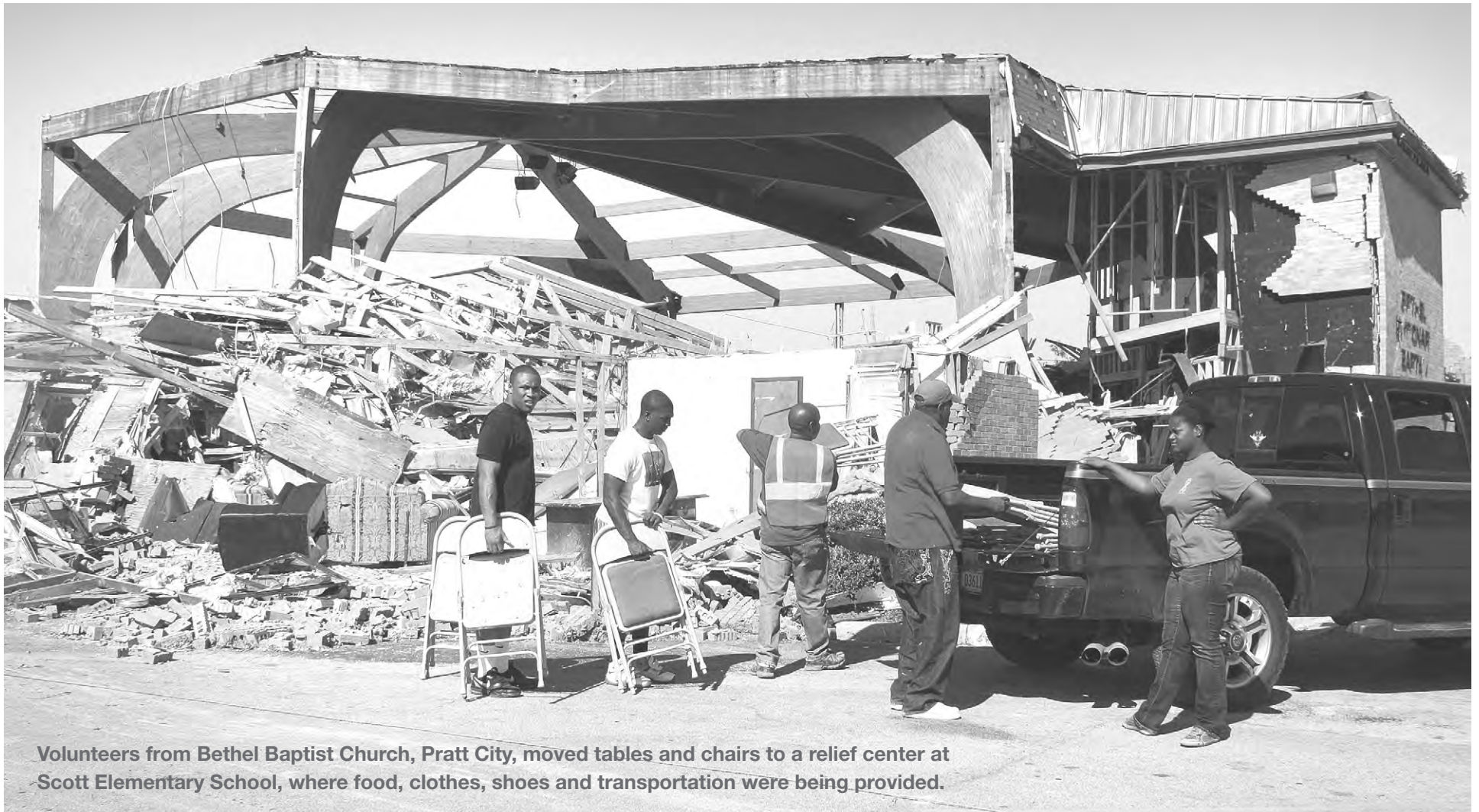
1 day
62 tornadoes
42 counties devastated
272 people dead
An entire state changed forever



Photo by Lindsey Robinson

Coded information was spray painted on homes to help keep accurate records.

sizes opened their doors and informed their communities they would be accepting items for storm victims. Fellowship halls and lobbies looked like supply warehouses as donations poured in, volunteers organized items and deliveries were made to individuals and areas in need. ■



Volunteers from Bethel Baptist Church, Pratt City, moved tables and chairs to a relief center at Scott Elementary School, where food, clothes, shoes and transportation were being provided.

Photo by Lindsey Robinson

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

On April 27, 2011, nearly 50 Alabama Baptist churches were damaged or destroyed. The next two pages represent 15 of the most heavily damaged churches and where they are now.

**Boone's Chapel Baptist and Faith Chapel Baptist were hit April 15, 2011.*

Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg



Photo courtesy of Emmanuel Baptist Church

An EF5 tornado wiped away most of Emmanuel Baptist's building, leaving only the front steps behind.

The church property was bulldozed March 18 and its foundation for a new 5,000-square-foot building was to be poured in April in preparation for Carpenters for Christ to arrive June 5. Builders for Christ plan to arrive mid-June to frame the building.

Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa



Photo courtesy of Alberta Baptist Church

Alberta Baptist's facilities were mostly destroyed by an EF4 tornado, leaving the congregation without a sanctuary, fellowship hall, kitchen and preschool ministry facility.

Alberta plans to rebuild but will try to salvage its Christian Life Center with hopes of completing the work in two to three years.

Faith Chapel Baptist Church, Marion*

Faith Chapel had been planning to construct a fellowship hall and additional classrooms when a tornado damaged the church.

Members had been setting aside funds for the new structure.

After the storms, members continued to meet in the damaged building and to repair their church, they used some of the money that had

been designated for the fellowship hall and a donation from a church in south Alabama. Repairing the roof cost about \$16,000. But "[the damage] could have been a lot worse," Pastor Lloyd Stockman said.

Within about a month, the repairs had been completed.

Now members are back to planning for the new fellowship hall.

Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville*



Photo by Charles Blankenship

On April 15, an EF3 tornado destroyed the original sanctuary and children's education space at Boone's Chapel. The tornado also damaged the church's multipurpose building and pastorium.

The church broke ground Jan. 8 for its new 17,000-square-foot facility, which will house classrooms, a worship area and administrative offices.

First Baptist Church, Cullman



Photo by Neisha Fuson

The roof was lifted from one-third of the sanctuary at First, Cullman. Three large stained glass windows in the sanctuary were destroyed. The gymnasium roof was damaged and the tower for WCQT Channel 27 was destroyed.

The church now has a new roof, ceilings, walls and stained-glass windows and is rebuilding its steeple.

Concord Highland Baptist Church, Concord



Photo by Neisha Fuson

The tornado removed the entire back side and steeple of Concord Highland's building. All the windows also were blown out.

The congregation is looking forward to breaking ground on its new building this month which will be all on one level with sanctuary seating for 250. Construction is estimated to be completed in one year.

First Baptist Church, Fultondale



Photo by Neisha Fuson

The steeple at First, Fultondale, was thrown 100 feet across the road by a tornado. The roof on the south side of the church was torn off and windows were blown out.

The sanctuary and fellowship hall are now repaired and the current educational space will be replaced with a welcome center, offices and additional Sunday School rooms.

East Side Baptist Church, Cullman



Photo by Neisha Fuson

A temporary sign, "The Journey Continues," represents where East Side Baptist is after an EF4 tornado destroyed its sanctuary and damaged its Sunday School classrooms and gymnasium.

A road-widening project reduced the size of East Side's property so it bought five acres of land nearby and is considering its rebuild options.

First Baptist Church, Wellington



Photo by Lisa Patterson

First, Wellington, suffered severe damage as the church structure was rocked on its foundation, causing the backside of the building to fall off and much of its roof to blow away in the tornado. The Family Life Center was left unharmed.

Construction of a new building was kicked off in late February and is expected to be completed in November.

A look back

Mamre Baptist Church, Wellington



Photo courtesy of Mamre Baptist Church

Construction plans for Mamre Baptist's new building required starting from scratch after an EF4 tornado devastated its 2-year-old building.

The new building is a replica of the former one and Nov. 13, 2011, marked the first service in the building but work is still ongoing. A new church sign was recently installed.

Mountain View Baptist Church, Sylvania



Photo by Nichole Harris

Nothing but rubble was left at Mountain View Baptist after the tornado hit, so the congregation met in a nearby church until its new building was finished.

Carpenters for Christ and church volunteers helped rebuild Mountain View and the church dedicated the building March 18 with about 340 people in attendance.

Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic



Photo by Doug Rogers

Mount Hebron East was swept away by an EF4 tornado, leaving only the foundation slab from the fellowship hall.

The church is working with an architect to determine the best use of land and is preparing the property for the new building by tearing out old cement steps. Several groups have volunteered their services.

Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Centre



Photo courtesy of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church

Pilgrim Rest's building was largely destroyed by an EF4 tornado as it lifted the building off its foundation and set it down again.

Pastor Steve Tierce also was paralyzed in a car accident July 3.

The church is just beginning the process of tearing down the old building and hopes to have a new one finished by the end of the year.

Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Mountain View's sanctuary, two other buildings and TV ministry were wiped out by an EF5 tornado.

Twelve weeks after the storm, the church was meeting on its property in mobile units and planning to rebuild.

Builders for Christ will construct a new building beginning May 21 with an expected 1,360 volunteers.

Stamp Baptist Church, Valley Head



Photo courtesy of Tyler Pair

The sanctuary and Sunday School classrooms were repaired at Stamp Baptist after the building sustained significant damage from last year's storms.

In mid-February, the new fellowship hall was completed along with additional Sunday School rooms which were incorporated into the fellowship hall.

Safe. Relaxing.

The Ultra Deluxe Walk-in Tub

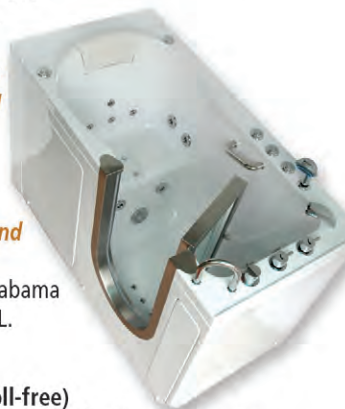


At Alabama Safety Bath our main priority is your safety and security in and around the bathing area. We also believe that your bathing experience should be therapeutic, relaxing and enjoyable. Our new Ultra Deluxe offers all of this and much more at a very affordable price.

- ▶ 22 self-cleaning hydrotherapy jets
- ▶ In-line heater thermostatic control
- ▶ Back and spine hydro massage
- ▶ Hip and thigh hydro massage
- ▶ Foot and calf hydro massage
- ▶ Hand-held extendable shower wand

CALL CHARLIE TODAY and see how Alabama Safety Bath can CHANGE how you FEEL.

ALABAMA SAFETY BATH
334-312-1825 • 1-855-849-5048 (toll-free)
www.alabamasafetybath.com • www.dreambathsalabama.com



Ask about our no money down, no interest 12 months same as cash program*
*Approved credit through Enter Bank Corp.

CALL TODAY!

Before you Buy, Compare our Price to Premier, Safe Step and Safety Tub!

Italy Vacations

Christian Fellowship Tours

Rome, Florence, Assisi, Pisa, Verona, Venice.
Escorted by guides with a tremendous understanding of Bible history, the ancient Roman culture, architecture and history.

a "life changing" experience!

Wonderful packages - year-round for the Evangelical Christian. Excellent value for small groups, large groups, and individuals.

Also, many tours to Israel, Petra, Steps of Paul Tours/Cruises to Greece, Churches of Revelation, Moses & Joseph in Egypt, Germany, Imperial Europe.

www.pilgrimtours.com

Box 268, Main St., Morgantown PA, 19543 800-322-0788

Ask about our "Send Your Pastor Away Program"

A look back

More than 11,000 trained disaster relief volunteers from Alabama, other states respond to April 27 disaster

As tornadoes bulldozed their way through Alabama on April 27, 2011, trained volunteers throughout the state and nation began pulling out their distinctive bright yellow Southern Baptist disaster relief shirts and gearing up to help wherever they were needed.

Southern Baptist disaster relief has gained national attention in recent years for its ability to help in times of crisis.

Nationwide the Southern Baptist Convention has more trained disaster relief volunteers — at least 95,000 — and disaster relief units — at least 1,552 in feeding, communication, chain saw (cleanup/recovery), rebuild, mud-out, showers, laundry, water

purification, child care and chaplaincy — than any other organization.

When a disaster strikes, cleanup/recovery teams are typically in their vehicles headed to the disaster locations in a matter of hours once assessments are made and needs are confirmed. Feeding units begin rolling out by the next day, and other units move just as quickly.

Trained volunteers

Alabama's disaster relief force numbers 5,400 strong. Within hours of the deadly tornado outbreak, trained volunteers fanned out across the state.

Teams from other states soon followed. At least 57 disaster relief units and more than 500 volunteers

were working in Alabama within a week of the storms. Many Alabama Baptist churches and individuals joined the work by serving meals, collecting and distributing goods and housing those displaced by the tornadoes. Within the first 30 days after the storms, more than 11,000 trained volunteers had served in Alabama's disaster relief efforts.

On April 27, staffers at the SBOM immediately began to prepare for the worst.

Lance moved the staff to "all hands on deck" and led the way for Mel Johnson, SBOM disaster relief strategist, to have his incident command center set up at the Baptist Building in Montgomery by midday April 28.

As early damage reports started coming in, SBOM officials began their coordination efforts.

Staff members were reassigned to crisis management and disaster relief roles right away, and ministry assistants were briefed and trained for spe-

cific functions. From the command center, officials worked closely with federal and state emergency management agencies, the American Red Cross and the state's Baptist associations.

The associations, in turn, worked closely with church

volunteers to coordinate efforts to make sure the right kinds of services were available at the right times and in the right places. One major goal was to avoid duplicating efforts and get help to the people who needed it most in the most efficient way possible.



Photo courtesy of Selma Baptist Association

Disaster relief volunteers from Selma Baptist Association help with cleanup following the April 27, 2011, tornadoes.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Duane Moore (left) and Johnnie Williams of Michigan served on a chain saw team removing fallen trees in Emily Spencer's backyard in Harvest. Baptists from Alabama's partner state came to serve tornado victims in their time of need.

A look back

As officials assessed the damage and identified needs, volunteer teams around the state and nation were rounding up volunteers, gassing up equipment, gathering supplies and making preparations to hit the road when the call came.

Command centers were set up at 15 sites around the state to organize workers, gather reports of people in need and dispatch teams to meet those needs in Christ's name. These command centers worked under the direction of the main command center in Montgomery. The on-site command centers were located in Birmingham (two), Huntsville, Tuscaloosa (three), Cullman, Geraldine, Jasper, Russellville, Double Springs, Snead, Capshaw, Henagar and Rainsville.

Of the volunteers serving in Alabama in the weeks following the April 27 tornadoes, many were from the state, but many came from other states as well.

Teams from Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Michigan joined in the disaster relief efforts, and teams continue

Shelby Baptist Association chaplains Al Kuykendall (second from right), associate pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, and B.R. Johnson (right), pastor of Lighthouse Community Church, Harpersville, visited Pastor Luke McKay (left) of Ider Baptist Church and his wife, Lisa, and others in the community to assess damage.



Photo by Doug Rogers

to work in rebuilding efforts.

Johnson expressed his gratitude to all who served.

'Thankful'

"We are thankful for the greater community of faith and other nongovernmental organizations helping in times of need," he said. "But the value of the Southern Baptist Convention has given us this resource of having state missionaries

and statewide resources to help folks in need."

Also making a difference was the more than \$3 million given through the SBOM for relief efforts.

Ninety-five percent of the money given came from Alabama Baptist churches and individuals within the state.

"Our people are always quick to respond when needs arise, and April 27, 2011, presented us with a situation like our state has never seen before," SBOM's Bobby DuBois said. "We are grateful for the response of our people in responding to a very real need that has changed the lives of numerous Alabama families forever."

Of the \$3,145,000 given, more than \$1 million went to immediate ministry needs. (continued on page 12)



Photo by Doug Rogers

Daniel Bowers (left) and Leroy Cole volunteered to wash relief workers' clothes at the Covington Baptist Association laundry unit located in Rainsville.

Disaster relief units provided more than 5,000 showers and washed more than 1,700 loads of laundry in the month following the tornadoes.

Christ of the Ozarks
45th Anniversary

THE NEW GREAT PASSION PLAY
MORE THAN JUST A PLAY

With this coupon
Purchase one adult admission ticket at regular price and receive one **FREE**.

This discount cannot be combined with any other discount or offer. (ALB)

The New Great Passion Play Stage

More than 250 actors and live animals re-create the Passion of Christ in one of the most epic performances you'll experience. The New Great Passion Play is also home to exciting on-site attractions, including the unique Living Bible Tour and the Christian Comedy Dinner Theater.

1-800-882-7529
www.greatpassionplay.com

For group information, contact Brenda Ray. Ask about our special 45th Anniversary group rate.

WE BUY GOLD

**AND SILVER, COINS, CHAINS
BROKEN JEWELRY
& DIAMONDS**

ALABAMA WHOLESALE DIAMONDS
HIGHWAY 11 AT TIN VALLEY CIRCLE - TRUSSVILLE
(ACROSS FROM THE PANTS STORE & 1 BLOCK FROM VELMA'S)

TUES-FRI 10:30am-5:00pm
SATURDAY 10:30am-4:00pm

205 661-1667
alabamawebuygold.com

Disaster relief efforts

Total credentialed personnel deployed: more than 11,000

Volunteer days worked: 10,753

Command centers established: 15

Meals prepared: 256,000

Chain saw jobs completed: 1,490

A look back



FBC Milton, Fla., sent a volunteer team to Calhoun County in mid-March to help rebuild a destroyed home.

Photo courtesy of Etowah Baptist Association

‘We think [Southern Baptists] are some of the most important service providers in the country for disaster response.’ — FEMA official

Another \$800,000 has been allocated for the leasing of 13 mobile chapels to nine of the most severely damaged churches, and the remaining \$1.3 million is being used for long-term recovery, according to DuBois.

Lessons learned

SBOM officials also are using the lessons learned and information gleaned from these various debriefing meetings across the state to refine and improve the disaster relief ministry.

One area in the works is a Strike Force to assist associations in training and deploying spontaneous volunteers — people who want to assist but are not disaster-relief credentialed.

Another strategy being developed is how to involve college students in disaster relief work.

Students typically are passionate about wanting to help in times of disaster but have time and travel limitations that are unique to collegiate life.

A third area being given attention is the ministries of associational disaster relief team leaders.

Fourth is a move from purchasing mobile chapels for damaged churches to leasing them.

A fifth opportunity highlights immediate response opportunities and disaster relief equipment needs.

The new disaster relief offering will be used to allow an immediate response to

churches and victims when disasters occur. It also will be used to purchase needed equipment to be used during a crisis response.

“Disaster relief is probably one of the finest ways to share the gospel,” Johnson said. “When people are in a crisis they are open to the hope Christ offers.”

For more information about disaster relief, call 1-800-264-1225 or visit www.sbdr.org. ■



Photo by Curry Evans

Volunteers with Builders for Christ from FBC Prattville helped rebuild a house damaged by the April 27, 2011, tornadoes in Henagar. The project was coordinated by Sand Mountain Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Summer and Fall Space Available
Contact us to learn about our special May promotions!

Book during the month of May to be eligible for Experience Shocco Promotions

\$50 gas card, Kindle Fire, iPad, \$ discounts and complimentary staff retreats

SHOCCO SPRINGS
BAPTIST CONFERENCE CENTER
256.761.1100 • 1.800.280.1105
www.shocco.org

Promotions apply to overnight visits. www.facebook.com/shocco

BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY
Our Standard is Christ

BEYOND YOUR BEST

Excel beyond your highest goals. At Belhaven University, you will find yourself in a place where top-rated faculty and a nurturing environment converge to bring you to your best... then propel you beyond what you believe is achievable.

Nationally recognized academics. Vibrant campus life. Christ-centered worldview. The faith-affirming support to become more. Aim for excellence from God's perspective. Visit Belhaven University...your place to discover your purpose.

belhaven.edu
Schedule a personal visit to Belhaven University or attend our next Discover Day.

FOCUS on One Mission

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

What is the Cooperative Program?

When I think about the words *Cooperative Program*, I am amazed by what they really describe.

Alabama Baptist churches work together through the Cooperative Program to support a wide array of missions, ministries and education within our communities, in our state, across the nation and around the world.

Great Commission Ministries of the SBOM include: evangelism, volunteers in missions, partnership with missionaries around the world, disaster relief, church planting, collegiate ministries, discipleship, chaplaincy, leadership development, church health, associational missions, LeaderCare, missions support, and much more.

Your church is also a part of the work of Alabama Baptist entities: *The Alabama Baptist*, Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, Alabama Baptist

Retirement Centers, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, Board of Aid to Students in Church-Related Vocations, Christian Life

Commission, Education Commission, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, Judson College, Samford University and the University of Mobile.

More than 3,200 Alabama Baptist churches join hands with approximately 45,000 other

Southern Baptist churches and are together part of the work of the North American Mission Board, six seminaries and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Through our International Mission Board, your church's gifts through the Cooperative Program make it possible for the Gospel to be shared worldwide.

Alabama Baptists make the plan simple. Undesignated dollars received by the State Board of Missions are received and

distributed as Cooperative Program dollars. All other funds are considered designated funds.

When you or your church gives, you are not giving to —

but rather through — the Cooperative Program. The Cooperative Program is not a destination but rather a distribution pipeline that sends support around the globe.

It is through this viaduct that your gifts reach their destinations: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world.

It is through the Cooperative Program that Baptists carry out Christ's Great Commission to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have

commanded you. ..." (Matt. 28:19-20, HCSB)

It is through the Cooperative Program that you annually support more than 5,000 international missionaries in more than 156 countries, support more than 5,000 North American missionaries, baptize 330,000 people, plant more than 1,000 new churches, train new pastors and ministers, and much, much more.

Through the Cooperative Program, your church is a part of helping people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, discipling and training believers, and planting new churches within our communities, our state, our nation and the world.

For more information about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, or (334) 613-2283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org.



By Jim Swedenburg
State Missionary



Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



BY GARY CARDWELL

Having not grown up in a Christian home, my exposure to the Cooperative Program did not materialize until as a young married adult my wife and I were involved in the Dalraida Baptist Church in Montgomery. Pastor Emory Green was well-versed in all aspects of CP and missions, through the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) and the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board).

I quickly began to understand what it truly meant to be a cooperating Southern Baptist. I remember a statement made by Pastor Green that has stayed with me for over 30 years: "This may not be the best way to do missions, but it's far better than anything that comes in second place."

I remember seeing the pie charts in CP pamphlets that reflected how funds were distributed and used to reach souls for Christ.

Little did I know that just a few years later I would sense the call to full-time ministry. Again I sought wise counsel from Pastor Green who had moved to Hartford Baptist Church. I strongly felt God's hand on my life but had no clue as to how to afford the needed educational cost.



Again, because of his knowledge of CP, he assisted me in the process of applying to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. I learned that churches giving through CP made my education possible.

Then in subsequent years serving as a minister and pastor, my relationship with the CP became stronger than ever before. If the church's level of giving was not adequate, I sought to raise awareness as to why we should increase giving.

Since 2005, I became more involved in the Cooperative Program having the distinct privilege to serve as the Associational Missions Director for the Etowah Baptist Association, Gadsden.

I believe there is a mandate to continue to "pass-it-along" with respect to what it means to be informed and actively involved in the Cooperative Program. There are generations coming along who do not necessarily give just because it's the right thing to do.

They too must be led to understand what CP is all about. As I remind my pastors and churches: It's not about what your church receives from its giving through CP (though in essence it does); it's more of what you make available to others.

Yes, I believe in the Cooperative Program and will continue to promote it until I'm ushered into the Savior's presence.

Gary Cardwell is director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association.

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

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 to request a printed version.

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.

FOCUS on One Mission

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.



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 or by contacting Ministry Assistant Gayle Burlingame at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or (334) 613-2227, 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.

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, or (334) 613-2231, chobbs@alsbom.org, or go online to www.alsbom.org/gad.



Get Acquainted Day

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

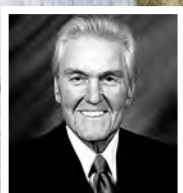
Monday, May 7

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

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

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

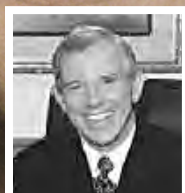
Guest Speakers: Junior Hill, H. Bailey Stone, Charles Roesel
Worship led by: Paid in Full



Junior Hill



H. Bailey Stone



Charles Roesel



Paid in Full

FOCUS on One Mission

YOUTH EVANGELISM CONFERENCE 2012

www.thestudenthub.org/yec



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

youthevangelismconference.com

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 at albama

july 9-13, 2012

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

SUMMER CAMPS FROM WORSHIP LEADERSHIP & CHURCH MUSIC

ReMix • July 9-13, Shocco

A week-long worship arts camp using all of the senses and arts to discover music and our Creator. For 7th-10th graders

Teams: music, new friends, team competitions. ReMix performance Friday morning

Recreation: paintball, night swimming, zany team competitions, mini golf, aqua jump

Worship: praise band, skits, age-appropriate speaker

Free Time: devotions (student-led), snack bar, games, food

Cost: \$265 per person

Registration:

- (1) 1-800-280-1105
- (2) Go online to www.alsbom.org/mixREMIX, and click on "ReMix T-Shirt Order Form."
- (3) Complete and fax form to Cindy Parrish at (334) 288-2693 by deadline

Deadline for t-shirt forms: June 8, 2012.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, cparrish@alsbom.org.

Mix456 • July 9-13, Shocco

A week-long worship arts camp using all of the senses and arts to discover music and our Creator. For 4th-6th graders

Classroom Settings: music learning in a fun way, new friends, games, crafts. Each class performs on Thursday.

Recreation: Bazooka Ball, swimming, field games, mini golf, aqua jump

Worship: band, skits, age-appropriate speaker

Free Time: devotions (student-led), snack bar, games, food

Cost: \$265 per person

Registration:

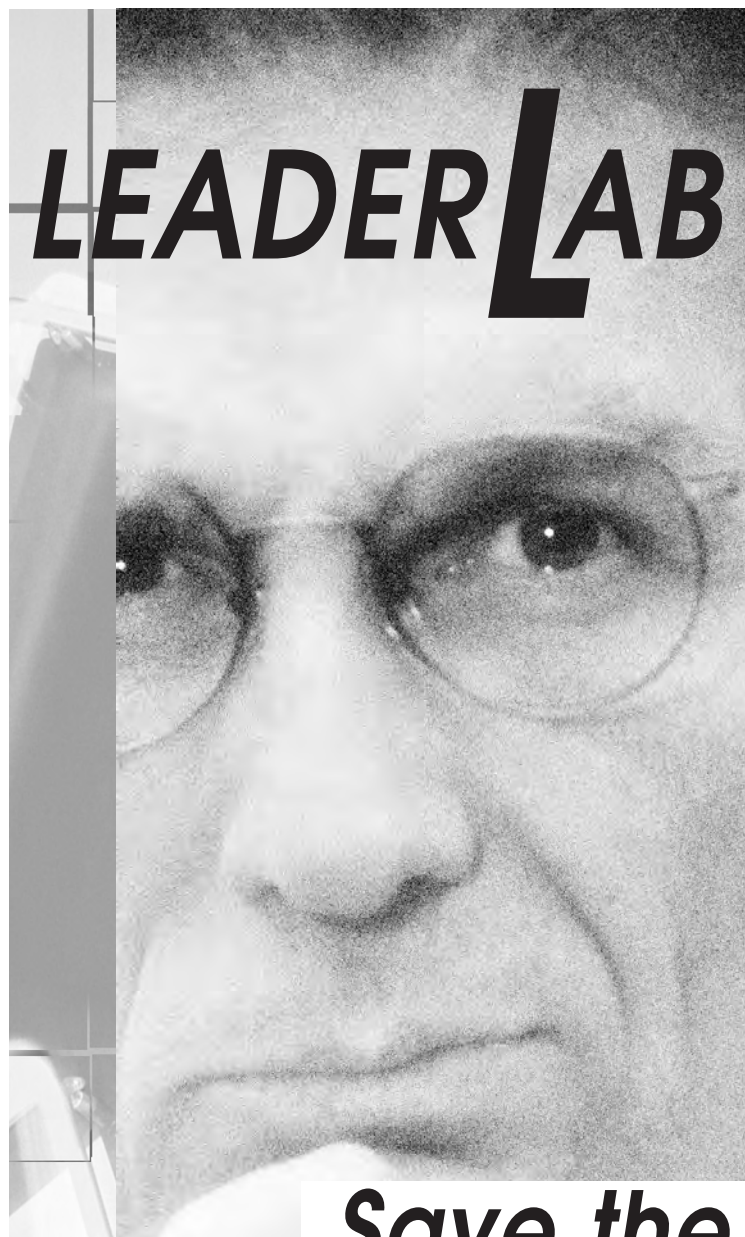
- (1) 1-800-280-1105
- (2) Go online to www.alsbom.org/mixREMIX and click on "Mix456 T-Shirt Order Form."
- (3) Complete and fax form to Cindy Parrish at (334) 288-2693 by deadline

Deadline for t-shirt forms: June 8, 2012.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, cparrish@alsbom.org.



LEADER LAB



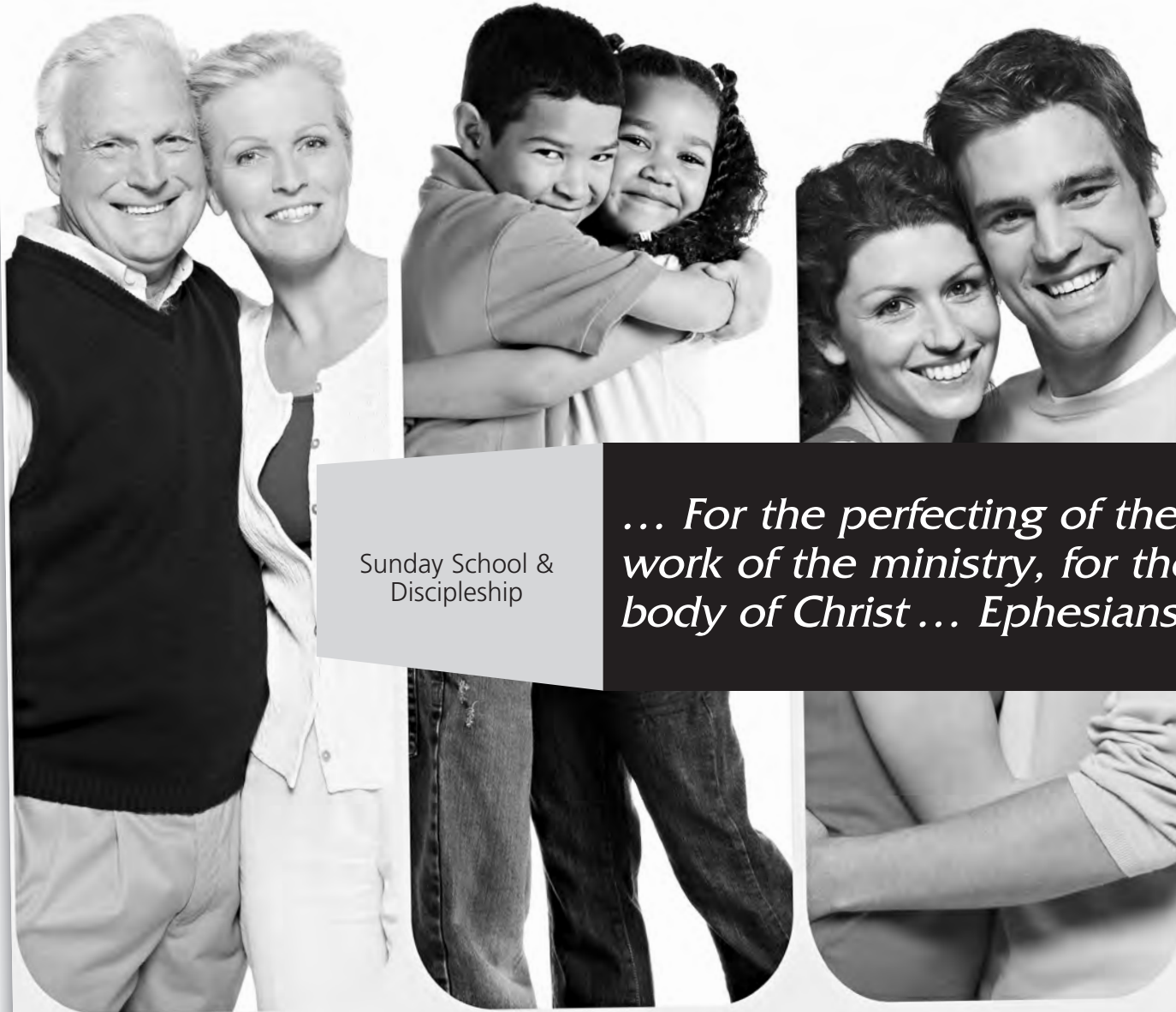
Save the Date!

Premier leadership training offered to pastors, staff members and lay leaders of Alabama Baptist churches.

Tuesday-Thursday, July 17-19
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery

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

REACHING THE MANY FACES OF ALABAMA



Sunday School &
Discipleship

... For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ... Ephesians 4:12

Now there is one event that all your church leaders can attend for training, growth and fellowship with others who serve in similar ministry areas. Pastors, deacons, Sunday School leaders, discipleship leaders and leaders involved in music ministry, men's ministries, evangelism, student ministries, missions leaders and other areas of church leadership will all find support and instruction to help them at The Summit: For Church Leaders.

Did you notice the new name for the new and improved training? The Summit: For Church Leaders.

If you attended Sunday School Leader Training in years past, you know that training was offered on two weekends at Shocco Springs for Sunday School leaders. That same great training has been expanded to serve the training needs of many other church leaders and power-packed into just one weekend, August 3-4. If you've never been to Shocco before, 2012 is a great time to come.

To register, please call 1-800-280-1105. Additional information may be obtained online at www.alsbom.org/summit or by calling Ministry Assistant Ramona Noah at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 312, or (334) 613-2312, rnoah@alsbom.org.

2012

THE SUMMIT: FOR CHURCH LEADERS

WHO? Training for all church leaders for all age groups.
WHERE? Shocco Springs, Talladega
REGISTER: WWW.SHOCCO.ORG | 800.280.1105

**AUGUST 3-4, 2012
ONE WEEKEND ONLY**



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

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

WHO KNEW? *The First Three Weeks of College...*

Transitions
*Helping high school students
 take the next step in their
 faith journey.*



What a student does during their first three weeks of college sets the pattern for his whole college career in the relationships he establishes and the patterns he develops.

Help lay the groundwork for Christlike college experiences by connecting yourself or your students with collegiate ministers by visiting www.sbccampusconnect.net.

Once you go to the web page, enter contact information for yourself or your student. It takes less than three minutes and it will be networked to the campus of your choice!

Collegiate and Student Ministries • 1.800.264.1225, ext. 275 • (334) 613.2275

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries



*In Partnership with Vaughn
 Forest Church, Montgomery*

Leadercast Friday, May 4 2012

WWW.ALSBOM.ORG/CHICKFILALEADERCAST

REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 7 A.M. | TELECAST BEGINS AT 8 A.M. | CONCLUDES AT 3:30 P.M.

The event takes place at Vaughn Forest Church.

Speakers for the day include:

- Soledad O'Brien, anchor and special correspondent for CNN
- 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.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Edwin Jenkins
First Baptist Church, Athens

Every individual realizes quite soon that life is filled with challenges. Those challenges arise from various sources and present themselves in many ways. Some are great, some are small, but each can become quite important. Because challenges arise in the life of every person, we all must face them.

In most cases we are offered choices. We can choose to face the challenge, fight the challenge or fear the challenge.

Ultimately we decide whether we will move toward the challenge, away from the challenge or seek to avoid the challenge.

Some challenges present us with the opportunity to change. Change is difficult in some cases and is readily embraced in others. Because of the nature of life itself we realize that change is truly inevitable.

So why all this talk about challenge, choice and change?

There are some issues in life that challenge us to a degree.

We choose a direction regarding those issues and change if we feel that to be appropriate. In those cases, the issue is not, as we often say, a life-and-death matter.

On the other hand, some issues demand a response. In fact, there is one issue that is not only a life-and-death matter but also an eternity-impacting matter.

What will you do or have you done with Jesus?

Jesus, God's only begotten Son, died on the cross of Calvary. He was buried and He arose from the grave. He did so to pay the price for mankind's sin — man's rebellion against God. All have sinned.

By believing in Jesus, putting our faith in Him and Him alone, we can be reconciled to God. In fact, there is no other way to be made right with God.

Have you ever faced the challenge of admitting your sin and turning from it? Have you ever made the choice to believe in Jesus and what Jesus has done for you? Have you ever allowed Jesus to change you from above, by being born again?

If not, why not consider that challenge, that choice and that change today — right now?

'Worship preferences' better than 'wars'

By Bob Burroughs
Columnist, Associated Baptist Press

I am sick and tired of hearing the term "worship wars." We have about run this one into the ground, don't you think? In addition, the term is offensive, labeling the church choir the "war department" of the church.

The term is about as passé as yesterday's newspaper, the Edsel and bell-bottom trousers. I think we should begin to use the term "worship preferences," for that is what worship style really is to most people — a preference.

You may prefer Coke to Pepsi, basketball to football, mountains to the beach, blue to green or hymns to choruses, but regardless of your preference, it is still a preference.

If my preference in worship style is traditional, contemporary will probably not ever be my preference. If I prefer a contemporary style of worship, traditional will never be my preference.

Yet we continually press our congregations to change their preference of worship style. The church leadership decides, often with little input from the congregation, to change the worship style in one or two weeks, going from traditional to contemporary.

This decision does not fare well with many of those in the congregation. As a result, many leave to seek their worship preference elsewhere. You may hear terms like "good riddance" or "hope they will be happy now" or even "now that thorn in my side is finally gone!"



Bob Burroughs is a composer, former Alabama Baptist and former director of Florida Baptist Convention's church music department.

How very sad, both for those that left and for those making the comments. Basically what happened is this: their worship preference was taken away and communication with and worship of God through their preference was hijacked.

Think about it this way:

1. Worship preference is a very personal experience. If one is a long-time believer, having grown up with a traditional worship preference, changing their worship preference is not something they will take lightly. It is difficult for them to make the switch and change their preference.

At the same time, for new believers having little or no knowledge of hymns and not versed in the "thee" and "thou" words that are not used in language today, the fast-paced worship of the contemporary experience is just right for them. It fits their worship preference, and they prob-

ably won't be switching preferences anytime soon.

2. Worship preferences do not change because the pastor takes off his coat and tie, is very casual and the music is up-tempo and loud. "Loud" does not worship make. Many contemporary worship leaders are totally unaware that sometimes more than half of the congregation is not singing.

Why? Two reasons: (1) the leader and praise team are singing so loud that they cannot even hear anyone but themselves. (2) New songs are introduced without any preparation. Most congregations don't do "new" very well — with little forewarning.

3. If a church family — note the word "family" here — decides that the worship preference of the church is to be changed, then preparation and planning need to be done, slowly and gently, making sure all are on board for this great and mighty change.

It may not seem "great and mighty" but it is. They may not ever say anything about it, but their worship preference has been changed big-time and they will not forget it and most will not forgive it.

So let's drop "worship wars" and begin to think "worship preferences." Let's begin to think of the congregation's background and begin to take careful baby steps in desiring to change the worship preferences of the people. We will all be better off. (ABP)

MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR EMAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Vacancy for a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Forest Avenue Baptist Church, Search Committee, P.O. Box 611, Jackson, AL 36545, or email: fabc7637@att.net.

SENIOR PASTOR: Church prayerfully seeking God's leadership in search for senior pastor. Please mail resumé to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church of Rogersville, 222 College Street, Rogersville, AL 35652.

MUSIC MINISTER: Pineville Park Baptist Church in Pineville, La., is seeking a full-time music minister. If interested, email resumé to: Pastor Steve McAllister at steve@pinevillepark.org.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Fulton Baptist Church, Clarke Association, is seeking a bivocational minister of music. Please send resumé to: Fulton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 409, Fulton, AL 36446 or call 334-636-5305.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Central Baptist Church in Gardendale is searching for a part-time minister of music who is devoted to God. We are a small church with blended worship (more modern upbeat music than traditional). Resumés can be emailed to: lawanna@cbcgardendale.com or Central Baptist, 4650 Newfound Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117. Call 205-381-0766 for details.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP PASTOR: Concord Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational worship pastor. Please send resumé to: concordbaptist@bham.rr.com. You may also visit our website concordfamily.org.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTER: First Baptist Church of Trussville, Ala., is seeking a full-time middle school minister to lead students in grades 7th and 8th. College undergraduate degree required. Previous student ministry experience preferred. Please submit resumé via email to: resumes@fbctrussville.org or mail to: Middle School Minister Search Team, ATTN: Allison Stanley, 128 N. Chalkville Road, Trussville, AL 35173.

org or mail to: Middle School Minister Search Team, ATTN: Allison Stanley, 128 N. Chalkville Road, Trussville, AL 35173.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR RECREATION & STUDENT MINISTRIES: First Baptist, Harrison, Ark., is accepting resumé for associate pastor for recreation and student ministries. Must have at least college degree and 3-5 years full-time experience in similar field or seminary degree with part-time experience. Send to: Rob Davis (robdd@fbcharrison.org).

OTHER POSITIONS

CHURCH PIANIST: Heritage Baptist Church of Southside, Ala., near Gadsden is looking for a church pianist for Sunday morning and two Sunday nights per month. If interested, please contact Jeff Thompson at 256-312-0746 or John Herron at 256-312-1063.

PART-TIME PIANIST: Robinwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala. Primarily Sunday morning and choir rehearsal responsibilities. Salary is negotiable. Email resumé to: godhope@bellsouth.net.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Suwannee Baptist Association, an association of 39 churches in Suwannee and Hamilton counties in Florida, seeks a director of missions. A job description is available on the website: suwanneebaptassoc.net. A description is available upon request from smbsearch@gmx.com and where resumé should also be directed.

BUSINESS

BAILEY BROTHERS MUSIC COMPANY: Serving Alabama for 25 years. Audio, video and lighting integration systems installed, serviced and repaired. Insured and bonded contractor. We provide solutions for small or large houses of worship. Call Montgomery at 334-262-7827 or Birmingham 205-271-7827.

CHRISTIAN VALUES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY: Christian Values Green Technology Company seeks mature

business professionals for high-income opportunity. Home-based office. Hands-on support and apprenticeship-style training. For complete information, call Paul at 888-710-6994.

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIRLIFTS: Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

CHURCH SIGNS: Reliable Signs offers design, fabrication, installation and service. All types of signs from electronic messaging to traditional. Statewide coverage. Christian-owned. Many church references available. www.reliablesigns.com. 800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS: Let Webb Builders help your church expand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders, Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

TRAVEL/VACATION

GULF SHORES CONDO: Gulf-front, Island Sunrise, 2 BRs, 2 BAs, king, queen and queen sleeper sofa. Great view from 4th floor balcony. Call 256-403-1068 or 256-453-2162 to see pictures, (www.vrbo.com) #114876.

MOUNTAIN COTTAGE: Hayesville, Western N.C. Lovely, almost new mountain cottage for rent, April-November. 2 BRs, 2 BAs. All conveniences. Weekly/monthly. On beautiful Hiwassee River. Low price \$550 plus tax weekly. Sleeps five. Children welcome. No pets. 828-389-3302.

GEORGIA MOUNTAIN CABIN: 2 BRs, 2 BAs, furnished cabin. Wheelchair accessible. \$125/night with 3-night minimum. 6 nights at \$125/night with 1 night free. Located in mountains of Blue Ridge, Ga. Call 941-755-3655.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS: Gulf Shores and Orange

Beach, Ala. Rent direct — Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Call 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231 or 251-752-2366. www.gulfshorescondos.com.

LOG CABIN: Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log onto www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

FOR RENT

HOME APARTMENT: Small unfurnished in Christian home with private entry. Appliances, utilities, cable furnished. No illegal drugs, smoking, pets. Reliable person with references, steady income. \$550/month. Hoover location. 205-987-0226, 205-807-1104.

BASEMENT APARTMENT IN HOOVER: Won't last long. All utilities and appliances furnished, including washer and dryer. Private entrance. Great neighborhood. \$645 a month. Call 205-283-3272 or email twilkinson0110@bellsouth.net.

FOR SALE

PEWS & BRASS CHANDELIERS: The First Baptist Church of Bremen, Ga., would like to sell the pews and brass chandeliers from their former sanctuary. For more information, contact the church at 770-537-2371.

PATRIOTIC SINGING FLAG: Six-tier lighted patriotic singing flag (Elizabethtown, Ky.). Used for choir cantatas. Manufacturer's construction/lighting instructions included. Photos available. POC: John Rice, john@severnsvalley.org or 270-765-7822.

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.alabamahomeschoolexpo.com.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 29

Explore the Bible By Cecil Taylor Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

CHRISTIANITY 105: MANAGE MONEY WELL Luke 16:13-15, 19-31

Background to the Example Story (13-15)

"You cannot serve God and money" made a decisive point. Wealth must never displace God in a believer's affections.

The Pharisees, who loved money, sneered at Jesus. He responded, "That which is prized among men is abhorrent to God!" The story of the rich man, sometimes called Dives (DYE-veez) from the Latin word for "rich," and the poor man Lazarus illustrates. This is not a parable. No parable ever names one of its characters. This is an example story. The story comes in two parts.

Part One: Reversal of Fortunes in the Life to Come (19-26)

In eternity the rich man and Lazarus traded fortunes. Popular Jewish theology held that wealth was a sign of God's favor, while poverty and disease were signs of God's curse. A glimpse of the afterlife shows how wrong that theology was. It was the poor and diseased person who was really right with God while the rich man wound up in torment.

Dives' outer garments were dyed with costly royal purple and his undergarments were of fine linen, the most delicate and expensive fabric known to the ancient world. When he died, he "was buried." To the end, no misfortune fell on the rich man that might smack of divine judgment. His life of ease and luxury was followed by honorable burial. But his future destiny was horrid.

Lazarus' utter wretchedness is clear. The rabbis said, "There are three whose life is no life: he who depends on the table of another (for food), he who is ruled by his wife and he whose body is burdened with sufferings." But at his death, angels escorted Lazarus to paradise. "Into Abraham's bosom" may indicate the place next to Abraham at the heavenly banquet (John 13:22) or it may describe close and intimate fellowship (John 1:18) with the patriarch. Either way "Abraham's bosom" was a place of peculiar honor. The picture is

that of a child lying on his father's chest or sitting in his lap.

Part Two: Problem of Disbelief in the Life to Come (27-31)

To his dismay, the rich man discovered there was life beyond and its nature was retribution. On the other side of death Dives found himself in torment.

Rich Jews were more likely to be Sadducees, so Dives probably belonged to that sect. If so, all his life the rich man had been taught the old Jewish view that death ended all meaningful life. Dives discovered he had been horribly misinformed. Death does not end it all. There is life after. And for Dives that life was in a place of torment. In Jewish thought, springs of water were part of the landscape of Paradise while thirst that could not be slaked was one of the torments of the damned. Abraham could not grant the man's request to send Lazarus with a drop of water to ease Dives' thirst. A great gulf "has been, and remains, fixed" (v. 26) between the two parts of the realm of the dead.

Since Abraham could not send Lazarus to help him, Dives begged Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers that there was life beyond the grave. Abraham replied that there was sufficient warning in the law and the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. Lazarus could not speak the truth more compellingly than Scripture. Dives objected. "Scripture is not enough. They need compelling signs." The patriarch's last word, however, was that those who reject God's revelation in Scripture would not be convinced even if one rose from the dead. He was right. Not many weeks later Jesus Himself came back from the dead but these very Jews remained stubbornly unconvinced.

Why was the rich man condemned? The only hint given stands in Luke 16:30. The man's words suggest he knew his problem was that he never "repented" toward God in his lifetime. All his life Dives believed he had only one life to live so he spent both his life and his money on himself and wasted no time or money on God or others.

Bible Studies for Life By James R. Barnette Associate professor of religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN Matthew 24:9-14, 39b-44; Revelation 7:9; 22:12-14

See the End Game (Rev. 22:12-14)

Here Jesus Christ speaks words of assurance to John and to us. Christ will come again soon as judge. He will bring "reward" with Him, literally "wages." It is impossible for us to discern just how "soon" Christ's return will be. God's time is eternal, and the word "eternity" itself means literally "timelessness." When Paul describes Christ's return as being "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52), such eschatological language is not captive to the measurement frame of the solar system. Rather than obsess over when the Consummation will occur, we must focus on our present ministries of bringing the gospel to others.

Verse 14 constitutes the last of seven beatitudes to be found in Revelation (see 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7). This final beatitude pronounces blessing on those whose purity is rewarded by admission to eternal life. Their robes are white and pure because of the cleansing power of Christ (Rev. 7:14). The verse stresses their active part in this process: they "wash their robes," that is, they have kept their witness in spite of persecution.

See that You Are Ready (Matt. 24:39b-44)

These verses emphasize the necessity for watchfulness in view of the unexpectedness of the coming of the Son of Man. We need to be prepared. There will be a division coming, for "one will be taken and the other left." The thrust of this section is to insure our being ready for His return.

This section concludes with the mini-parable of the burglar. This is one of five parables addressing the Second Coming of Christ. The other four are the parable of the 10 virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), the parable of the porter (Mark 13:34-37), the parable of the servants (Matt. 24:45-51) and the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). The comparison of an unexpected event with a thief breaking in is

found in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10, and Revelation 3:3, 16:15.

See that You Are Faithful (Matt. 24:9-14; Rev. 7:9)

In the future, secular catastrophes will come, but they do not announce the end of history. Such will involve the world's persecution of the church, the pressures which cause brother to betray brother, defection from the church, false prophets deceiving many and lawlessness which undermines the freedom of true love for God. Yet Jesus' words of encouragement are that "he who endures to the end will be saved." This reference corresponds with the statements to the churches of Asia Minor, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne" (Rev. 3:21).

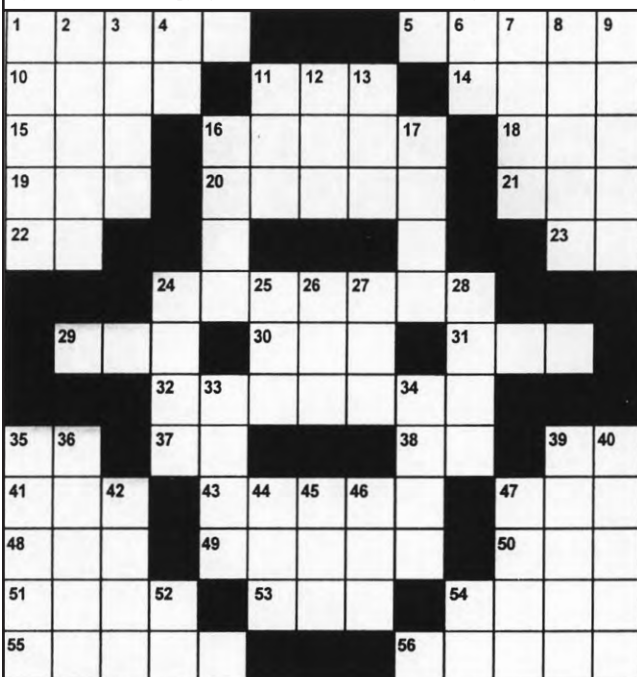
The end of the age will not come, as Jesus stated explicitly, until the gospel of the Kingdom has been preached as a witness of the nations. This is a reference to worldwide evangelism, the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles and to all nations of the world. Significantly, all four Gospel writers affirm that Jesus spoke of this worldwide mission. It is consistent with His redemptive ministry to have picked up their last question concerning the end of the age and answer it first.

In John's Revelation, a "great multitude" embraces the gospel and at the Consummation they stand before the throne "in front of the Lamb." Every "nation, tribe, people and language" is represented at this glorious moment. The multitude is clothed in white (3:14, 4:4, 6:11). They hold palm branches in their hands, as if celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles (see Lev. 23), and are like the crowd who welcomed Jesus the humble King into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. In ancient Israel the palm branch was a symbol of victory. These victors carry palm branches not so much to celebrate their own victory as the complete victory of the Lamb. This vision of John is a preview of the final heavenly state of Christians that is described in Revelation 21 and 22.

This is a repeat of what ran last week, but it is the correct lesson for April 29. It was incorrectly published out of order last week.

Christian Crossword

By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Am I in God's ____? (Gen. 30:2)
- They say he has a _____. (Matt. 11:18 NIV)
- Consumes.
- By a mighty hand, and by a stretched out _____. (Deut. 4:34)
- Lion's headdress.
- By way of.
- Alaskan native.
- Department of Economic Affairs. (abbr.)
- Building addition.
- I will ____ him up at the last day. (John 6:40)
- People that do ____ in their heart. (Ps. 95:10)
- They follow "M"s.
- Naval vessel designation.
- Goes up.
- Alternate spelling of Baal.
- Sanballat invited Nehemiah to the plain of _____. (Neh. 6:2)
- Thickness or layer.

- ____ my statutes, and do them. (Ezek. 37:24)
- And ____ shall judge the world. (Ps. 9:8)
- Add ____ your faith virtue. (2 Pet. 1:5)
- Commercial message.
- News agency.
- Spanish cheer.
- I will make thee a ____ nation. (Gen. 12:2)
- Much ____ About Nothing.
- Cleaning tool.
- Classifieds.
- Gay Pa ____.
- Long, exciting adventure tale.
- They compassed me about like ____ (s). (Ps. 118:12)
- An atlas is a book of ____.
- There remaineth a ____ (plural). (Heb. 4:9)
- ____ p ____ Dumpty sat on a wall.

Down

- John to the ____ churches ... in Asia. (Rev. 1:4)
- His ____ (s) drew the third part of the stars. (Rev. 12:4)
- And others. (Latin)
- Like.
- Printer's measure.
- Thou hast ____ him a little lower than the angels. (Ps. 8:5)
- Dollar bills.
- Approaches.
- In this manner.
- Real estate investment. (abbr.)
- He heard ____ ick and dancing. (Luke 15:25)
- ____ (s) of the Covenant.
- Began the golf game.
- Great amount. (2 words)
- Type of lettuce.
- Compass direction.
- Neither/ ____.
- Went rapidly.

- Mires.
- Large tubs.
- Ancient author.
- Run away to wed.
- Able, skillful.
- The art of poetry.
- American Anglican church: ____ copal.
- Will a man ____ God? (Mal. 3:8)
- Before (poetic).
- Did eat.
- Kemuel the father of _____. (Gen. 22:21)
- Court. (abbr.)
- Invent to themselves instruments of ____ sick. (Amos 6:5)



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Baptist, Orthodox leaders meet to discuss moral values

MOSCOW — From March 28 to 31, the president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), Pastor John Upton from Virginia, and the president of the European Baptist Federation, Pastor Hans Guderian from Berlin, took part in the annual conference of the Euro-Asiatic Federation of the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists in Moscow. There also was a meeting with the Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church on March 29.

Participating in that meeting in the Moscow residence of the Patriarch were Upton and Guderian along with Aleksey Smirnov, the president of the Baptist Unions of Russia, Vyacheslav Nesteruk from Ukraine and Victor Krutko from Belarus. Those participating from the side of the Russian Orthodox Church were Kirill, Abbot Filaret and Archpriest Dimitry Sizonenko.

In his opening words, the patriarch spoke of his concern regarding the questioning of fundamental moral values in the life of the individual and society regarding marriage and the family. Whereas secularization originally had the goal of liberation from oppression and the struggle for religious freedom and human rights, today there is a serious questioning of all values and an extensive total relativism which will not accept any kind of normative truth.

In his response, Upton thanked the patriarch for his firm position on the unalterable truth of the gospel. He noted in addition that in a world in which fundamental principles are subjected to erosion to the extent that even absolute truths become relative, the trusted biblical witness of good and evil, of Christian hope and of marriage and family must be affirmed in order to resist the proliferation of abortion and various social afflictions.

Upton and Guderian expressed their hope that the conversation between Baptist and Orthodox believers in Russia might be continued.

Georgia Baptist Health Care withdraws women's clinic grant

ROME, Ga. — The Georgia Baptist Health Care Ministry Foundation withdrew a \$42,000 grant from a women's health clinic after learning that it dispenses morning-after birth control pills.

According to the *Rome News-Tribune*, the grant was for cervical cancer screening at Women of W.O.R.T.H, the only nonprofit women's health-care clinic in Rome, Ga. Clinic officials said it would also increase hours to provide gynecological care for women who cannot afford it.

W.O.R.T.H. stands for Women's Organization for Reproductive and Total Health care. Marilyn Ringstaff, executive director, told the *Rome News-Tribune* that during the application process in 2011 a representative of the ministry called to ask if the facility is an abortion clinic and a volunteer answered, "No."

After reading about the grant in a newspaper story that appeared April 9, Ringstaff said an unidentified pastor called the clinic and accused them of providing abortions. Will Bacon, vice president for development for Georgia Baptist Health Care Ministry Foundation, sent Ringstaff a letter dated April 10 asking that the grant money be returned.

Ringstaff said the "morning after pill" is not an abortion pill, but rather a contraceptive that can be given to a woman after sex to diminish her chances of getting pregnant. She said it is available over the counter without a prescription and has a 10 percent rate of failure.

"It's not RU-486, but they still believe it is," Ringstaff said, referring to the controversial abortion pill that will disrupt an already established pregnancy.

GuideStone garners top award for mutual fund group

DALLAS — More than 160,000 pastors, church staff members, hospital employees and others have their retirement dollars with GuideStone Financial Resources. The majority of those dollars are invested in GuideStone Funds, the nation's largest Christian-based, socially screened, registered mutual fund company.

Launched in 2001, the fund family was recently recognized by industry-ranking firm Lipper as the 2012 Best Overall Small Fund Group in the United States, an award that honors one mutual fund company that has up to \$40 billion in assets. As the first Christian-based mutual fund group to win Lipper's top trophy, GuideStone was ranked No. 1 out of 182 eligible companies.

"The Lipper trophy recognizes a standard of excellence that we pursue each day as we seek to honor the Lord and enable our faithful participants to invest according to their biblical principles," said O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources. Hawkins was among four GuideStone senior staff members who accepted the Lipper trophy at a March 8 dinner in New York City sponsored by *The Wall Street Journal*, Thomson Reuters and Investment News. ■

CAMPUS News



SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford To Hold Preview Day:** Samford University will host a Preview Day for high school juniors April 28. Students and their parents are invited to attend the program.

Registration check-in will begin at 8 a.m. in Wright Center. The morning schedule will include sessions with admission counselors, panel discussions led by current Samford students and tours of the campus and residence halls.

Academic open houses in the afternoon will offer information about majors in Samford's Howard College of Arts and Sciences and schools of the arts, business, education and professional studies, nursing and pharmacy.

The program will conclude at 2:30 p.m. To register or obtain more information, visit admission.samford.edu, email visits@samford.edu or call 205-726-3673 or 1-800-888-7218.

► **Samford Dedicates Funderburg Operating Room:** The space that provides critical training for nurse anesthesia students at Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing is now officially the Dr. and Mrs. Lonnie W. Funderburg Operating Room.

The room was dedicated April 17, to celebrate the legacy of the longtime Birmingham anesthesiologist and his wife, Mary.

Dr. Funderburg, who died in 2009, laid the foundation for the nursing school's nurse anesthesia program.

Samford president Andrew Westmoreland said the enhanced operating room underscores a "very proud tradition of nursing care and nurse education at Samford." The nursing school is celebrating the 90th year of its founding during 2012.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile Students Prep For National Competition:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) team is heading to national competition after being named a regional champion at the SIFE USA Regional Competition held April 4 in Atlanta.

The UMobile team now advances to the 2012 SIFE USA National Exposition in Kansas City, Mo., which will be held May 22-24.

UMobile SIFE sponsor is Amy Gatlin Taylor, assistant professor of business and economics in the UMobile School of Business. For more information, contact Taylor at 251-442-2409 or email ataylor@umobile.edu.

► **Students Awarded Washington Internships:** University of Mobile (UMobile) students Jessica Catlin and Alexis Barnard will spend part of their summer in the

nation's capital. Catlin will work in the U.S. Senate for Sen. Jeff Sessions while Barnard will work at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

Catlin, a junior political science major from Sylvan Springs, serves in the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Bunker Hill Society. Barnard, a junior history/elementary education major from Santa Maria, Calif., is finishing a term as SGA vice president.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Unveils Portrait:** Descendants of Gen. Edwin Davis King met on the campus of Judson College on April 4 to witness the unveiling of the college's newly restored portrait of King, who was one of three primary founders of Judson.

The painting was made by King's daughter, Margaret Eliza, and was finished in 1876, 14 years after King's death.

King became a Marion businessman, plantation owner and trustee at the University of Alabama.

King also assisted in the 1841 founding of Howard College in Marion (now Samford University in Birmingham).

He loaned his office for the printing and distribution of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper that was published in Marion from 1843 to 1852. ■



By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Someone You Should Know

BILLY RICE

Union Hill Baptist Church, Bessemer



RICE

FAVORITE VERSE: Philippians 4:11

FAVORITE HYMN: "Victory in Jesus"

HOBBIES: Golf

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Eva for 55

years; two daughters, Cindy and Pam; one deceased son, David; seven grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren

Billy Rice, a member of Union Hill Baptist Church for 56 years, serves the church as a deacon, elder and Sunday School teacher. He has taught Sunday School since age 19. He began by teaching juniors and also has taught married men and a couples class. For the past 13 years, Rice has taught the senior adult men's class at Union Hill Baptist.

Q: How did you come to know the Lord?

A: When I was 12 years old, we had a revival at our church at First Baptist Church, West Blocton. My mom and dad got saved [and] both my sisters [and me], and we were

all baptized at one time. That was in 1948.

Q: What led you to teach Sunday School?

A: When I was about 19, they needed a teacher for junior boys at First, West Blocton. They got me to teach the class. I [taught] it for about a year, then I moved. Most of my other teaching has been at Union Hill.

Q: What other ministries have you been involved in?

A: Over the years, four different times I've taught Baptist doctrine, which would last six to seven months.

Q: How have your family members supported your ministry?

A: I guess no man could be more lucky to have a Christian family like I have. My daughter works with underprivileged kids ... and my younger daughter is married to a preacher in Bibb County. And they've just always been very supportive and very uplifting.

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

A: All the difference in the world. I guess the older I get ... the closer I get to Him. ... I've thoroughly enjoyed teaching Sunday School and getting into the Word. ■



Photo courtesy of Savvy Media Solutions

A JOURNEY — Ginny Owens, who lost her vision when she was two years old, shares about what God has done in her life through music.

In spite of the struggles and obstacles that singer/songwriter Ginny Owens has endured as a result of a degenerative eye condition that caused her to completely lose her vision when she was just two years old, she shares a powerful message with audiences about keeping their eyes focused on God.

After graduating from Belmont University in 1997 with a degree in music education, Owens had hoped to pursue a teaching career. However, when that plan didn't work out, she began performing concerts across the country and each night, she reminded audiences of God's unique plan and purpose for their lives.

Almost 15 years later and with multiple awards along the way, Owens has never wavered in her commitment to sharing the gospel through songs. Last year, she had a unique opportunity to perform at the 60th annual observance of the National Day of Prayer in Washington.

"I've been on a journey and have had different experiences that probably a lot people don't know about, so at my concerts I really want to share the story of what God

has done in my life," Owens said. "Hopefully, it encourages others to also place their trust in Him."

Owens says the title of her latest album, "Get in, I'm Driving," serves as a reminder of her daily life — being on a great adventure with God leading the way.

"Since I lost my eyesight at a very young age, driving is probably not something you want me to do — unless you have an incredible amount of faith," Owens said. "The foundation of truth behind this title is that I'm not really driving at all. All through the day, God is the One at the wheel," Owens said.

'Be ready for the ride'

"Every day is a new adventure with God leading, and He's telling me to get in the passenger seat because I need to be ready for the ride.

"I hope that these songs encourage people with the good news of who Jesus is. I really want people to know that there is hope in this life because of Him and that the same God who created the universe also loves His children unconditionally. Ultimately, I want to communicate that there is so much to be excited about and grateful for in our lives."

Through the years, Owens has received numerous messages about

Focused on God

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Christian artist shares about her faith without sight



how her music has inspired people and has led them to Christ as their source of strength.

"I received an email recently from a young girl who had been struggling with self-esteem issues, and she said that listening to my music gave her the courage to keep going," Owens said. "It's hard to go through difficult times, and I think what we all need during those times is someone who comes along and says, 'I love you and God loves you. Remember, God has never left your side and He will never leave you.'

"One of the most important lessons I've learned about going through trials is the importance of putting one foot in front of the other with faith leading the way, focusing on God and what it's like to know Him," Owens said.

"If we keep our eyes on Him through the different trials of life, then that's how we grow in our faith." ❧

Anti-gay 'Get over it!' advertising campaign axed

London's mayor has axed an ad campaign spearheaded by two conservative Christian groups because their ads suggest homosexuality is a disease that can be cured through prayer. The groups, Core Issues Trust and Anglican Mainstream, made posters reading "Not gay! Ex-gay, post-gay and proud. Get over it!" and had planned to plaster them on the sides of Lon-

don's iconic double-decker red buses.

The slogan mimicked a recent drive by the gay rights group Stonewall, which used the line, "Some people are gay. Get over it."

The Christian groups' campaign had been scheduled to cover the sides of buses for two weeks starting April 16.

But the British capital's mayor,

Boris Johnson, stepped in to ban it.

"It is clearly offensive to suggest being gay is an illness someone recovers from," the mayor said.

"And I am not prepared to have that suggestion driven around London on our buses." Core Issues and Anglican Mainstream both fund "reparative therapy" for gay men and lesbians to "cure" them of homosexuality. (RNS)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

NYC pastor's tweets remove XXX promotion

NEW YORK — When pastor Freddy T. Wyatt arrives at his New York City church plant and sits down in his office every day, he looks out the window. There, on the side of the Broadway Plaza Hotel, is a four-story billboard that is home to ads for products like Coca-Cola and vitaminwater. The Gallery Church has been at the corner of 27th and Broadway for nearly three years and, every few weeks when the advertisement changes, members of the congregation can't help but notice.

When Wyatt sat down at his desk and let his eyes drift to the billboard in early April, he was shocked at what he saw — a new ad for vitaminwater, a brand of Coca-Cola, featuring a half-naked woman with the phrase "xxx you're up" covering her chest, promoting a flavor of the drink called XXX.

"The billboard took the breath out of me, not in a good way," Wyatt recounted. "I had begun to look forward to the different ads each month, but this one stopped me in my tracks. It broke my heart."

Wyatt thought of the men and women in Gallery Church who would see this ad every Sunday as they returned home. "How can they stay focused on the Truth just presented to them in church when they walk outside to face a four-story distraction?"

He thought of his children, two young sons and a daughter. What message was this going to send them?

With this in mind, Wyatt took to Twitter.

He reached out to both Coca-Cola and vitaminwater with his thoughts about the billboard, calling on them to take action and remove it. His messages simply read:

"@cocacola @vitaminwater I'm a pastor in NYC & u just put this larger than life garbage across from @GalleryChurch."

"@cocacola @vitaminwater On behalf of the families in NYC that are seeking to raise respectable & wholesome families, take it down."

To Wyatt's surprise, less than 24 hours later, on April 4, a rep from vitaminwater Tweeted him back.

"We'd love to discuss your concerns, Freddy," the rep's Tweet said. "Can we call you @GalleryChurch or can you send us your contact information?"

Impressed by the prompt and courteous response, Wyatt attempted to get in touch with the company representative. They spent the day playing phone tag, unfortunately missing one another and never getting the chance to talk.

The next day, Wyatt arrived at the Gallery Church, sat down in his office and looked out the window. There, where the explicit ad had stood four stories high, was an empty billboard. After four tweets and a couple of voicemails, vitaminwater had removed the ad.

Though Wyatt and his team are gratified by the removal of the billboard, they recognize that this is just one small victory in the battle to reclaim culture with the truth of Christ.

"If you walk just four blocks south past the Gallery Church, that same image from the billboard is posted much smaller on the outside of a bus stop shelter. But our hope is that this billboard incident will spur a conversation at places like vitaminwater that will ultimately result in the removal of images that disrespect and degrade men and women from advertising."

Judge rules 'curse' prayers to harm someone legal

DALLAS — Is it okay to ask God to do harm to another person? The theology of such "imprecatory prayer" may be a matter of debate, but a Dallas judge has ruled it is legal, at least as long as no one is actually threatened or harmed.

District Court Judge Martin Hoffman on April 2 dismissed a lawsuit brought by Mikey Weinstein against a former Navy chaplain who he said used "curse" prayers like those in Psalm 109 to incite others to harm the atheist and founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) and his family.

Hoffman said there was no evidence that the prayers by Gordon Klingenschmitt, who had been endorsed for the Navy chaplaincy by the Dallas-based Chaplaincy of Full Gospel Churches, were connected to threats made against Weinstein and his family or damage done to his property.

According to the lawsuit, Klingenschmitt posted a prayer on his website urging followers to pray for the downfall of MRFF.

Hoffman's ruling did not actually turn on constitutional questions as much as it did on Weinstein's claims that the prayers incited the threats and vandalism. ❧