

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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Celebrating what we do together in missions



By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Organized events bring missionaries up close, personal

Finding new, exciting ways to introduce and connect Christians to God's work around the world has long been a passion for many Alabama Baptist leaders. It is this mindset that sparked missions celebrations across the state years ago. Over time, an increasing number of churches and associations began organizing these sometimes weeklong events by bringing local, national and international missionaries to people who might never have access to them otherwise. Although some leaders have found it necessary to adjust the way they organize these celebrations, the desire to lead the church in reaching the world for Christ remains at the forefront of their plans.

For years, Baldwin Baptist Association divided the total number of participating missionaries into three groups and held three different mis-

sions celebrations around the county. But this February, the association leadership placed all 60 participating missionaries under one roof.

"It was super," said Susan Bartholomew, Woman's Missionary Union director for the association and member of Pleasant View Baptist Church, Foley. "We had well over 350 folks that came to that missions fair."

In addition to adjusting its plans and hosting a much larger event, Bartholomew said the association has had to institute stricter safeguards to protect participating missionaries and their families who serve in more secured areas across the globe.

"There is a level of secrecy that has not been there in the past," she said. "We would use their first name and have an area where they (attendees) would not be able to take pictures. ... We've had to say, 'There will be no Facebooking of pictures.' Social networking is so quickly moving us into communication levels that we don't even anticipate."

Still, Bartholomew said the changes are not affecting the effectiveness of the association's missions celebrations.

"There is more of a hunger for 'how can I tie in with what you are doing?'" she said. "People are making

connections that, 15 to 20 years ago, people felt could not be made. Being in a more mobile society, people see that they can send a group of five people over (to a foreign country). ... Churches of less than 100 are sending teams now. Whereas 20 years ago, they wouldn't have thought of it."

Linda Adams, administrative assistant and celebration coordinator for Salem-Troy Baptist Association, said Salem-Troy Association has made changes to its on-mission

celebration during the last 30 years to save money and spend more wisely. For example, the event, which is held every five years, has been shortened from one week to one weekend and missionaries stay in homes instead of hotels.

"These celebrations are very costly with travel expenses and housing expenses," Adams said. "We did not have as much money to put money in our on-mission celebration this year as we have had in the past. So we had to look at cutting corners, while maintaining the quality of the event, and this was a great option."

Instead of diminishing the event's (See 'Missions,' page 13)

"Having these missionaries in our houses ... makes them a real-life person."



Photo courtesy of St. Clair Baptist Association

Left and right photos courtesy of St. Clair Baptist Association, center photos by Jody Bailey of Baldwin Baptist Association

COMMENT

Good Morning, God. I love You.

Shortly after waking this morning and before getting out of bed I began praying about the day and its challenges. Most of my prayer was composed of requests for God to act — solve problems, guide in decisions, open doors, provide strength and guidance. In the midst of the prayer I was overcome with the selfishness of the moment. I realized how different that was from the way I greet my wife Pat each morning. The first thing I do when we both awake is to tell Pat I love her, but the first thing I did with God was to tell Him what I wanted Him to do.

The realization was clear. I needed to begin the day telling God how much I loved Him. That is more important than what God might do anyway. Relationships are always more important than actions. Of course, we can love God only because He first loved us. God gives us opportunity to return His love and build a loving relationship based on love offered and love returned.

That is a lot like life. Love can be offered, but no enduring relationship results until love is accepted and returned. Just accepting love is a selfish act. It is to take and never give. Some relationships are like that. They are based on what someone can do for us. They are one-way relationships that are destined to fail because love that is not returned becomes love that dies.

Perhaps that is why God calls us to love Him with heart and soul, mind and strength. God desires relationships with us where His love is accepted and returned. Again we are told to love God with our “whole hearts.” That makes for a life-long relationship, a relationship that changes who we are and how we live.

In the years that Pat and I have been married I have begun learning what she is like. Sometimes I can accurately predict how she will react to certain circumstances. I’ve learned some of her favorite sayings and her likes and dislikes. Learning these lessons was not always easy, but each was certainly worthwhile. Because I love her, it is important to me to do things that she likes.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

In a similar manner, the longer one walks with God, the better one knows God. Through communication with God, one learns what God likes and dislikes. Through the basic disciplines of the Christian faith — regular Bible study, prayer, worship, hearing God’s voice through other believers, service and more — one learns His character and sees His heart.

‘God-like eyes’

There is nothing new about these activities. They are the hard work of building a relationship with God. In the process, one begins to learn what God is like. One begins to see with God-like eyes, to hear with God-like ears, to feel with God-like compassion.

This result is more than an intellectual learning experience. In the years Pat and I have been married, for example, I have learned to like Mexican food. That is a change in me produced by a relationship. As one lives in relationship with God, one learns to love what God loves and to dislike what displeases Him. It is the experience of “growing in grace” or growing in the image of our Savior and Lord, Jesus, the Christ who lived perfectly before the Heavenly Father.

Knowing Pat’s taste in food provides direction when we choose a restaurant. If that is true in human relationships, how much more does knowing what God likes and dislikes direct our choices

about life? Choices reflect the importance of a relationship and whether that relationship reflects love for another or simple selfishness.

Relationships also provide identity. Every married couple is known as a couple, not as two separate and unconnected individuals. If you have ever worked closely with someone whose spouse died, you probably heard him or her say, “I don’t know who I am anymore.” That is because one’s individual identity is subordinated to the identity of the spousal relationship. When the spouse dies, part of the survivor dies and a new identity must be forged.

In the same way, a relationship with God provides identity. The term “Christian” is not a meaningless word. It implies that one believes in Jesus Christ as one’s personal Lord and Savior, that one has a relationship with Jesus and that one is part of the family of God. One’s identity is not as an individual. It is as a child of God.

Identity is important because discipline grows from identity. Again the family analogy gives understanding. A married person has an identity based on a relationship. One is married. One has the responsibility and privilege of caring as no one else has. One has the responsibility and privilege of providing and enabling as no one else has. What joy there is to see the way love lived out in discipline helps another become as God intended.

There are also limits. A family relationship makes demands for loyalty, priority and participation. One is not free to indulge every whim because of the importance of the married relationship.

A relationship with God also requires discipline. Christians have the responsibility and the privilege to represent their Heavenly Father as a kingdom of priests. They are commissioned to act and to speak in His name. Christians are to be God’s very presence wherever they are. Representing God to others is one of the meanings of priesthood. It is an expression of love lived out.

And there are limits. Scripture affirms that believers “are not your own. You have been bought with a price” — the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary’s tree. Believers turn away from temptation because they are disciplined by the identity of being in a loving relationship with God.

Being loved by my wife gives me joy every day. It gives me strength and encouragement as well as identity and discipline. How much more joy does one experience knowing that God loved us so much that He was willing for Jesus to pay our sin debt so we might have an eternal relationship with Him? How much strength and encouragement for each day comes by remembering God loves us?

God wants us to bring Him all our concerns and challenges just like I did as this day began. But before laying these at His feet, God gives us opportunity to tell Him how much we love Him, and that is new every morning.

Letters to the Editor

SENDING TWO MESSAGES

As I continue to ponder why our young adults are not called to service and leadership in Baptist churches like our generation was, I come back to the same conclusion — “We are sending two different messages to them” and the wrong and minority message is the loudest.

Some of our Southern Baptist Convention executives and some of our Baptist pastors have succumbed to the devil’s lie that God should only talk directly to them, and then they should state His message to the people and the people should then follow them blindly with little or no accountability. That lie

of Satan always leads to our sticking our imperfect foot in our mouths and making bad decisions. The congregations who are asked to follow a man instead of having an active quiet time and prayer life with God and then coming together to find God’s collective will become disenchanted with their imperfect CEO leader and look for something else.

This method may appear to draw a crowd for a while, but in the long term it will fail because the individuals are not growing to be more and more like Jesus.

Thank God that the majority of our Baptist pastors, while not getting the publicity that the CEO types are currently getting, are servant leaders who

desire to see their congregation grow as individual followers of Christ. When pastors lead their congregation in finding and working within their own combination of spiritual gifts, passions, talents and experiences ... to develop a personal relationship with our living Lord, the back door of our churches will be closed and the front door will have to be widened to accommodate the new members.

Ron Travis Sr.
Birmingham, Ala.

WORSHIP PREFERENCES

Thank you very much for publishing (see ‘Letters,’ page 13)



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

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Reading around *the clock*

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama communities participate in Bible Reading Marathons

For 90 hours each spring, Christians in three Alabama communities gather to publicly read God's Word. Wilma Hart, director of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) for Dale Baptist Association, started the Bible Reading Marathon in Ozark nine years ago, and one of her favorite things about the event is how it pulls together believers from all denominations.

"It's not just Baptists. We include everybody," said Hart, a member of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Ozark. "Our associational office puts it in the newsletter, our secretary sends postcards to every local church of every denomination. We encourage anyone to participate."

Hart learned about the event via Bible Pathway Ministries, which has been hosting a Bible Reading Marathon in the Washington area for more than 20 years. The resources provided by Bible Pathway Ministries helped Hart know how to plan for a similar event in her town.

At the marathon, volunteers read portions of the Bible during their allotted time slots. Sometimes individuals read and in other cases families or groups share a time slot. The late night and early morning hours tend to be the most difficult times to find volunteers, Hart noted.

The Ozark event — which is held on the lawn of the town's courthouse — served



Photo courtesy of Wilma Hart

Tommy West and son take part in the Ozark Bible Reading Marathon event.

as the inspiration for a similar marathon in Troy, which is now in its sixth year. The Troy event is held in the square in the middle of downtown Troy.

"We were at a WMU meeting about seven years ago and our WMU director heard Wilma Hart from Ozark present about the Bible Reading Marathon," said Linda Adams, who helps with the Troy event. "The program is coming along well and growing."

'Word has spread'

A third Alabama location — Birmingham — is a newcomer to the Bible Reading Marathon. This was the second year for the event in the Magic City.

"We hold our event on Southside Baptist Church's front steps," said Ninfa Austin, a member of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. "It's been very successful — even more this year than last, because word has spread since then."

Though still a young event, Austin said there was immediate affinity for hosting a marathon in Birmingham.

"This is something that needs to take place on a yearly basis to help Birmingham join the network of people who do this internationally each year," she said.

Regardless of location, the Bible Reading Marathons kick off at 3 p.m. on the Sunday afternoon prior to the first Thursday in May, which is the National Day of Prayer.

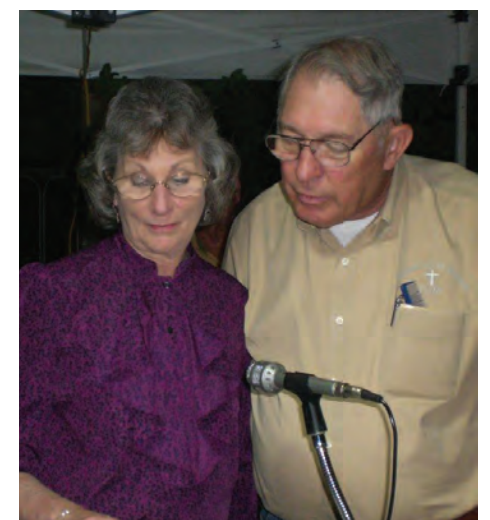


Photo courtesy of Wilma Hart

Bill and Wilma Hart participate in the Ozark Bible Reading Marathon event.

The marathons culminate at noon on the first Thursday in May for a celebration of the National Day of Prayer. The celebration typically includes a brief sermon from a local minister as well as a time of worship through song.

"The beauty of this event is that it takes all of us working together," Hart said.

"I could never do it by myself. It's a great representation of peace and love." ☮

National Day of Prayer events held in every state

Americans observed the National Day of Prayer (NDP) by gathering at thousands of locations across the country in what was expected to be the largest such observance in its six-decade history.

The number of events for the May 3 observance was estimated at more than 40,000 events in all 50 states, with more than 300 in Texas alone, according to Religion News Service.

NDP has been observed each year since Congress approved a resolution in 1952 calling on the president to establish it as an annual event.

President Truman inaugurated the observance the same year, and presidents since then have recognized it with proclamations.

In 1988, Congress amended the law to set the first Thursday of May for the observance.

In this year's NDP proclamation, President Obama invited Americans to join him "in giving thanks for the many blessings we enjoy, and I call upon individuals of all faiths to pray for guidance, grace and protection for our great Nation as we address the challenges of our time."

Prayer for the suffering

The president urged citizens to "be humble in our convictions, and courageous in our virtue. Let us pray for those who are suffering around the world, and let us be open to opportunities to ease that suffering."

He also called for Americans to honor the members of the Armed Forces and pray for them and their family members.

The lead observance of the NDP again was held at an event on Capitol Hill in

Washington, with NDP Task Force chairman Shirley Dobson and honorary chairman David Jeremiah, senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, Calif., among the speakers.

This year's theme, established by the task force, was "One Nation Under God," which was based on Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

The NDP Task Force is a privately funded group that says the observance is for people of all faiths to participate in but the events it organizes are fulfilled "in accordance with its Judeo-Christian beliefs."

Obama's National Day of Prayer proclamation may be accessed online at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/01/presidential-proclamation-national-day-prayer-2012. (BP)

'Helping children see JESUS'

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Children's Homes president, CEO reflects on new role

Rod Marshall, president and CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), paused to examine the painting on his office wall. The richly colorful picture, with the arms of Jesus stretching out to a small crowd of smiling, joyous children, almost seemed to come to life.

"I want to be reminded of why we do what we do, and I came across that painting and felt like it would be a good visual reminder for me," Marshall shared.

"So of all the paintings I saw of Jesus and the children, that's the one that best served to remind me why I get to come to this office every day. ... When I'm writing thank you letters or approving budgets ... that stuff is important, but what's really important is helping children to see Jesus. And many of the children we serve are the Matthew 25 'least of these,' so it's especially important that they know that God loves them."

Since taking over the ABCH president/CEO role Feb. 1 from now retired Paul Miller, Marshall has carried on the ministry's mission to "protect, nurture and restore children and families in need."

He has displayed other visual reminders of this mission in the building as well, like the enlarged canvas photographs in the conference room of the ABCH Camp of Champions

event. This camp at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega is one close to Marshall's heart, partly because it is the only time each year the statewide ABCH ministry network converges in one place.

"Camp of Champions is a wonderful event that we have once a year, usually in June," he explained. "Last year we had about 500 campers — that is all the kids in our care, all of our foster parents and all of our group home parents." Marshall shared that Camp of Champions feels like a "family reunion" and it provides a time for the children to have a summer camp experience complete with Bible studies and recreational time.

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries Sunday is May 13.

Since assuming the president/CEO office, Marshall said there have not been any sweeping changes at ABCH, mostly due to the former leadership of Miller. "Paul Miller ... did a real good job of leaving the house in order upon his departure," Marshall said, adding his plan for his first year of leadership entails a "listening" role.

"I've met with employees all across the state. I've met with pastors. I've met with Baptist leaders. I've met with some of our trustees. And [I] really want to be a good listener and then be very intentional when we begin to implement changes and implement long range planning ... beginning in 2013," he noted.

Regarding the current state of ABCH, Marshall's report is positive. "We've experienced growth both in our foster care and our counseling program in recent months," he said. "Our Family Care programs for homeless mothers with dependent children are in great demand. We continue to have strong and steady referrals for our group homes and our campuses. It's really been a great blessing to follow an effective leader and carry on a tradition of excellence."

Marshall desires to see increased partnerships with congregations to train and support foster families so that ABCH can provide Christian homes to children in need.

One way he hopes to cultivate this partnership is through the concept of "a 1-1-1 congregation." The idea involves three points: one Sunday each year the pastor preaches a sermon focused on ABCH ministries (or invites an ABCH speaker to preach), every congregation has one family involved in foster care (or in larger congregations 1 percent of families) and every Alabama Baptist gives \$1 per month to the ministries of ABCH.

"That would really allow us to meet our current demands for services, expand our programs where the need is great and plan for further growth," Marshall explained. "If we could get more congregations to do those three things, that would radically reshape our future."

He added that with more than 3,200 Alabama Baptist churches — and 6,400 children in need of foster care — the state of care for the fatherless in Alabama



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries president/CEO Rod Marshall (left) demonstrates use of the play therapy room in the Birmingham office.

could be significantly redefined if two foster families were represented in each congregation.

Throughout the last 17 years Marshall has worked with ABCH, 13 of those spent as director of Pathways Professional Counseling. The ministry has set record numbers each year. Even so, his goals reach further than the statistics. "I struggle because I know there are 8,000 children who could use what we have to make their life better ... so in that sense I probably would like to see the numbers grow. But as a ministry, I don't want us to define our success by the numbers."

When Marshall thinks about his "heroes" and those who have made an eternal impact for the ABCH mission, a particular group of people immediately comes to his mind. "Our foster parents and our house parents are my heroes," he remarked. "They are heroes of the faith. The sacrificial love they show to these children is just awe-inspiring. And even those folks ... who send us a check every week — for whatever reason they may not be foster parents or house parents — [they] are dramatically and significantly impacting the life of a child by their consistent, generous support. ... One body, many parts and no part is more important than the other."

"The Children's Home heritage is incredibly rich," Marshall reflected. "I think our best is yet to come. I'm very proud of where we've been and I'm very proud of where we are, and God has used this ministry to touch countless lives. But I'm really excited to see what God has in store for us for the next 20, 30 or 40 years." ■

► **Twenty-six children made decisions for Christ, with three of those decisions made during ABCH's annual Camp of Champions event.**

► **More than 500 children, foster parents, house parents, staff and ambassadors attended Camp of Champions at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.**

► **ABCH served a record 3,769 children and families — 342 were children served in ABCH foster homes, group homes and emergency shelters.**

► **Churches gave \$2,604,856.62, providing 31.56 percent of ABCH's operating income. This allowed enough funding to provide 16 weeks of services.**

► **Pathways Professional Counseling served a record 3,077 children, individuals and families.**

All numbers are related to 2011 (latest numbers available)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Rod Marshall (left) gives a high-five to a child in the play therapy room at the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries Birmingham office.

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Anglican Book of Common Prayer marks 350 years

CANTERBURY, England — “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” “All the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil.” “Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.”

Shakespeare? The King James Bible? Close — the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, the liturgical and literary masterpiece that along with the playwright and the landmark Bible helped shape the English language, marks its 350th anniversary this year.

St. Paul’s Cathedral in London celebrated the occasion May 2 with a special service of evensong, or evening prayer, from the 1662 volume, often shortened to the BCP or Prayer Book. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was there, along with members of Prayer Book societies in Australia, Canada and the U.K. that are dedicated to keeping the work alive.

“I hope and pray that people in Britain and around the English-speaking world realize the importance of this great work,” Prudence Dailey, chairwoman of the Prayer Book Society in the U.K., told ENInews.

The service was the flagship of a nationwide series of events that includes an exhibit at Lambeth Palace Library that also acknowledges the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation, looking at the relationship between the monarchy and the Prayer Book. It includes a copy of the first Prayer Book, published in 1549, and the copy used at Queen Victoria’s wedding.

The anniversary actually refers to the revised edition that still stands as the official doctrinal standard of the Church of England and most other churches in the worldwide Anglican Communion. After Henry VIII’s break with the Roman Catholic Church, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer set out to replace the Latin missal with a book of liturgical services and prayers in English that would also incorporate theological changes, such as less prominence for saints.

The Prayer Book now appears in many variants in the 77 million-member Anglican Communion and has influenced the liturgical texts of other denominations.

Inuktitut Bible translation to be dedicated this spring

TORONTO — The Bible is by far the most translated book in history. Portions of the Old and New Testaments have been translated into more than 2,500 languages. According to United Bible Societies, the complete Bible has been rendered into 469 tongues as of 2010.

Add Inuktitut to that list.

Later this spring, an entire Bible in Inuktitut, the language of Inuit people and the most widely spoken aboriginal tongue in Canada’s Arctic, will be dedicated at an igloo-shaped church in Nunavut, an autonomous region carved out of the Northwest Territories in 1999.

Began in 1978, the massive task marks the first time in Canada that a translation of the whole Bible was accomplished entirely by native speakers of the language rather than by white missionaries.

It was kick-started by the late Eugene Nida, considered the father of modern biblical translation, whose major contribution to the field was the concept of “functional equivalence.” Instead of using literal translations, the idea was to convey meaning by incorporating native culture and idiom into the Bible’s story.

Canada’s last census found some 33,000 speakers of Inuktitut, part of the Eskimo-Aleut family of languages. It is spoken in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and northern Quebec, and almost exclusively north of the tree line.

The full translation follows the completion in 1991 of an Inuktitut New Testament, now in its fifth edition. The Old Testament took so long because translator Canon Jonas Alloo and the project’s translation coordinator, retired Anglican Bishop Benjamin Arreak, worked on it for only one or two months of the year.

Azerbaijani shops still unable to sell religious books

BAKU, Azerbaijan — An official of the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations — which operates Azerbaijan’s harsh religious censorship system — admitted in mid-April that about 100 shops wishing to sell religious books are still waiting for the necessary licenses. Only 16 such licenses have been issued since the system’s introduction in 2009.

Selling religious books without a license risks a maximum punishment for a first offense of two years’ imprisonment. Baku’s Metro, the rapid transit system, banned the sale of religious books in early April. One religious publisher said that after the compulsory licensing system was introduced, several bookshops returned books as they were too afraid to sell them without a license.



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“I love and appreciate my Mother because ...”

Our mother has the most caring and selfless heart of any woman we know. She made it her priority to make sure that her children, students, choir students and the babies in the nursery knew what it meant to have a heart like Christ. She continues this today as our family grows with sons-in-law and grandbabies. Thank you, mama, for being all that you are and for helping us grow into the women we are today. We love you.

Hope Gallant and Brooke Fussell

My mother was consistent in discipline, training, homemaking and laughing. Her sense of humor was contagious even when her mind was impaired. She sought God’s truth with passion as well. I will always miss her.

Lainey Hunnicutt Goen

She loved the Lord and people. She never met a stranger. If you knew Jeannie Crowder, you were immediately her friend.

Anne Lucas

I think my mom’s heart is shaped like the heart of Jesus. She is not perfect, but her compassion for others and willingness to serve — even in the least desirable ways — points me to Christ. My mom is always putting her love for me and others on display. She challenges me, encourages me and reminds me that God is love, He loves us and He calls us to love Him and others.

Chris Mills

I love and appreciate my mother because she instilled in me a love for Jesus and His Word. I miss her greatly. She has been dead for over 2 years but through her testimony, life and death, my wife — at 40 years old — came to know Jesus as her Savior and Lord.

Steven Short

**Celebrate
Mother’s Day
Sunday, May 13.**

I love and appreciate my mother because she has always been a good Christian example for me. As a teenager she would always tell me to pray about things. At the time I resented this response. Now I cherish it. I love you, mom.

Martha Herring



Photo courtesy of Valley Creek Baptist Church

Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown, in Bessemer Baptist Association breaks ground for its new children’s and youth center March 11. The children’s center will be an 8,800-square-foot building complete with large worship rooms for younger and older children, indoor play area and several classrooms. The youth center will have a 175-seat auditorium complete with a café and snack bar, game room and classrooms. The building and renovations are scheduled to be completed in the fall. Kevin Blackwell is pastor.

Across Alabama's Associations

AUTAUGA

► **David Benton** is the new pastor of **Mount Sinai Missionary Church, Prattville**. He previously served Evergreen Missionary Church, Valley. Benton graduated from Rushing Spring Seminary, Sylacauga, and received a double master's degree in theology. He is married to Elizabeth.



BENTON

COOSA RIVER

► **ChristPoint Community Church, Sylacauga**, will host Saddle Up Men's Conference at Sylacauga High School on June 16. Doors will open at 8 a.m. with the first session starting at 9:30 a.m. Lunch will be served and the last session will start at 6:30 p.m. Speakers include Charlie Sanders, Randy Overstreet, Bryan Taunton, Martin Houston, Bobby Jackson, Bobby Bowden and Rick Burgess. Preorder tickets by May 30 at events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=kxn6x5iab&oeidk=a07e51e121j7f09e36b. Bryan Taunton is pastor of ChristPoint.

will hold its annual homecoming May 20. Lunch will be served following the 10:30 a.m. worship service. Total Praise will sing at 1:30 p.m. Fred Chapman is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Eden Westside Church, Pell City**, will hold a monthly cancer support group meeting May 15 at 6 p.m. and May 17 at 2 p.m. in Building C on campus. Jacky Connell is pastor.

SULPHUR SPRINGS

► **Andy Frazier** resigned as the association's director of missions in January to pastor a church plant, **Crosstown Community Church, Sumiton**. He previously served Pisgah Church, Jasper. He and his wife, Kristie, have two children.

WASHINGTON

► **Wagarville Church** will host a Catfish Plate Sale May 19 to raise funds for its summer youth camp. Plates will consist of fried catfish, coleslaw, baked beans, bread and cake. The sale begins at 11 a.m. in front of the church. Businesses and churches may reserve plates by calling 251-533-7068. Jim Blair is pastor. ► **Chapel Hill Church, Millry**, will hold its annual homecoming May 20. Music will begin at 10 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. Mike Roberts will be the guest singer and evangelist Johnny Tucker will speak. Ferrell Mills is pastor.

ELMORE

► The Commorados senior adult ministry of **Coosada Church** will host Christian humorist Billy Bob Bohannon May 10 at 11 a.m. Jim Graham is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **MeadowBrook Church, Gadsden**, will hold a church picnic at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega on May 20, 3 p.m. Randy Gunter is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **First Church, Montgomery**, will hold Senior Adult VBS May 14-16, 10 a.m.-noon in the Senior Adult Center. Facilitated by Kenny Hoomes. Jay Wolf is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Westside Church, Warrior**,

BIRMINGHAM

► **Radical.net**, a new resource ministry, was announced April 6 by David Platt, pastor of **The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham**, during a live simulcast of Secret Church. Radical exists to serve the church in accomplishing the mission of Christ and provides multilingual biblical resources through events like Secret Church and the Multiply Conference.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a third Sunday singing with a tribute to songwriter Albert E. Brumley on May 20 at 6 p.m. The program will be presented by the adult choir with congregational singing. For more information, call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Ron Sumners retires after 30 years in ministry

Ron Sumners has worn several "hats" during his 30 years of ministry and April 22 he was honored for those many roles, including the 19 years he spent serving as pastor of Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham.

During the reception, Sumners and his wife, Prissy, were presented with a book signed by the more than 400 attendees. Sumners was also presented with a monetary gift and a new fishing rod with gift cards attached to it.

Originally from Vincent, Sumners graduated from Samford University in Birmingham in 1971 and went on to get his master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in 1974. He received his doctor of ministry degree in 1996 from Southwest Bible College and Seminary in Gainesville, Ga.

Sumners served as pastor of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church (1976-1978); Valley Park Baptist Church, Montgomery (1980-1985); First Baptist Church, Landrum, S.C. (1985-1989); Trinity Baptist Church, Whiteville, N.C. (1989-1992) and Meadow Brook Baptist (1993-2012).

Sumners also served as moderator for Shelby Baptist Association in 2007 and 2008 and volunteered with Shelby Association in 2007 as a hospice chaplain. He may serve in the same role in the future.

"I want to give myself time to do some things I want to do but still do ministry," Sumners said of his retirement plans.

One main lesson Sumners said he has learned during his years of service was to "love people ... and they will respond in kind."

"If you love [people]," Sumners said, "then they will overlook a lot of [issues]. ... As a pastor, the main thing you really have to do is care about your folks."



SUMNERS

FBC Jasper's Culbreth 'stands before Congress'

Dennis Culbreth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jasper, in Walker Baptist Association, recently had a "once in a lifetime opportunity."

He was invited to serve as a guest chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives and opened the March 28 congressional day in prayer.

"To stand before Congress and lead a prayer was a great experience," Culbreth told the *Daily Mountain Eagle*. "I was able to stand where the president stands when he gives the State of the Union address."

Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Haleyville, invited Culbreth to serve as guest chaplain, according to the *Eagle*.

The practice of inviting guest chaplains to the House dates back to the beginnings of Congress, according to the Office of the Chaplain of the United States House of Representatives' website.

Culbreth's prayer — which asked the Lord to provide "guidance and wisdom as these men and women make decisions that affect the lives of every American here at home and across the world" — was broadcast live on C-SPAN.

Dutton Hill's Williams honored for service

Roger Williams, music director of Dutton Hill Baptist Church, Parrish, marks 30 years of music ministry at the Walker Baptist Association church.

Born into a musical family, Williams naturally picked up various musical elements throughout his life. He sang his first solo "At the Cross" at about 8 years old.

Williams answered the call to become the church's music director in May of 1982 and has served tirelessly since that time, according to Pastor Carl Uptain.

The church recognized Williams and wife, Lynn, during the March 11 worship service for their 30 years of continuous service. Lynn Williams has served in several ministry capacities at Dutton Hill including children's Sunday School teacher and Vacation Bible School leader.

The couple was presented a plaque citing the congregation's appreciation for their years of service.

"I'm hoping that God will allow me to keep singing and playing the guitar," Williams said. "He's blessed me the whole way through. And it's been lots of fun."

8th annual Old Howard 100 Bike Ride



Photo by Michael J. Brooks

More than 200 cyclists traveled to Judson College for the 8th annual Old Howard 100 Bike Ride on April 21 despite thunderstorm forecasts. The event, sponsored by the Howard College of Arts and Sciences of Samford University, celebrates the Baptist history of Alabama's Black Belt area and features rides of 30, 45, 75 and 100 miles through Marion, Newbern, Greensboro and Selma. All proceeds from the ride will be donated to the Sowing Seeds of Hope interfaith initiative of Perry County.

'Pivotal test for freedom'

Chen in spotlight after exposing China's abortion policy

The case of Chinese human rights advocate Chen Guangcheng, who recently escaped house arrest, presents a "pivotal test for freedom in China and for U.S. credibility as a defender of freedom," Bob Fu of the ChinaAid Association said.

President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have been careful not to speak in clear support of Chen, who climbed over the back wall of his home April 22 and reportedly sought refuge with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

Chen, a 40-year-old self-trained lawyer who has been blind since childhood, was imprisoned and then placed under house arrest for exposing forced abortions and unwanted sterilizations under China's one-child policy. "We recognize that President Obama and Secretary Clinton are in a delicate situation and the wrong word may cause problems," Fu said in a statement April 30. "Our first priority is to protect Chen and his family, but it would be inspiring to hear an unqualified and spirited defense of freedom instead of dry diplomatic calculation."

Obama "sidestepped" a question about Chen on April 30, ABC News said, refusing

to confirm reports that the United States is protecting him.

In a dramatic testimony by phone to a U.S. House committee May 3, Chen, speaking from a hospital, made clear he wants to come to the United States and that he fears for his family's safety.

Chen reiterated to CNN that he left the U.S. Embassy in order to receive medical care and reunite with his wife and two children at a Beijing hospital.

'I want to come to the U.S.'

Chen had originally expressed a desire to remain in China but later told CNN that his family's only hope for freedom is to leave China.

"I want to come to the U.S. to rest. I have not had a rest in 10 years," Chen said, according to a translation as reported by Reuters. "I'm really scared for my other family members' lives."

Chen expressed frustration to CNN that during his time in the hospital he had been unable to make contact with U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., a longtime supporter.

Smith has been working to secure Chen's safety for years, and the Chinese Embassy has blocked his request for a visa to visit Chen since last October.



BP photo

Human rights advocate Chen Guangcheng is reunited with his wife and children in a Beijing hospital May 2 after escaping house arrest and seeking refuge at the U.S. Embassy.

Smith, chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, held an emergency hearing on Chen on May 3 in Washington. Fu, of the Texas-based ChinaAid Association, and Reggie Littlejohn, of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, were among those that testified.

Littlejohn said in a statement that the United States "should immediately grant asylum" to Chen and his family as well as to He Peirong, the activist who rescued him. Littlejohn also confirmed May 4 that Peirong had been released from detention.

The deal that the United States helped broker with China regarding Chen included his safe relocation to another part of China, said Gary Locke, U.S. ambassador to China.

On May 4 the Chinese government noted that Chen may apply to travel to the United States to study.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said Chen has been offered a

fellowship from an American university "where he can be accompanied by his wife and two children."

USA Today identified New York University as the American institution.

"The Chinese government has indicated that it will accept Mr. Chen's applications for appropriate travel documents," Nuland said.

"The United States government would then give visa requests for him and his immediate family priority attention," Nuland added. "This matter has been handled in the spirit of a cooperative U.S.-China partnership."

Clinton told reporters in Beijing, "I'm pleased that today our ambassador has spoken with him ... our embassy staff and our doctor had a chance to meet with him and he confirms that he and his family now want to go to the United States so he can pursue his studies." (BP, CNN)

SSYK

By Christine Kapurch
Correspondent, TAB

Someone You Should Know

BRUCE FULLER

Pine Flat Baptist Church, Selma
Cahaba Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Philippians 4:8
FAVORITE HYMN: "Sing Hallelulah,
Praise the Lord"
HOBBIES: Turkey hunting, sports,

coaching and horseback riding
FAMILY STATUS: Married to Gina for
24 years; two children, Brexton
and Jessica

Businessman Bruce Fuller follows in his father's footsteps by acting as the deacon of his childhood church. He has also been a Sunday School teacher for more than 20 years and is a member of the choir.

Q: How did you become a Christian?

A: I was baptized at 12. I walked down the aisle on Easter Sunday morning.

Q: What led you to serve in the ministry?

A: I was in the same church my whole life — we are a tight-knit community ... [I] felt this was what the Lord wanted me to do.

Q: Why have you continued serving in the ministry?

A: It's just where I feel like we are supposed to be ... deep roots here.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: There are three services a week ... it's something we put in the schedule and we are going to do.

Q: How do your family members support you?

A: [My] dad and mother were Sunday School teachers. We went to church no matter how late I came home Saturday night. ... Sunday morning you get up and go. I grew up with a lot of encouragement from my parents.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in ministry service in the future?

A: Doing things outside of just our little church but I don't see myself leaving our church.

Mo. association threatens to remove church for calling female pastor

A Southern Baptist church in Missouri is under scrutiny by its local association for replacing a pastor who resigned for health reasons with his daughter.

Melody Pryor, pastor of First Baptist Church, Stanton, Mo., said she first had a notion of being a pastor while in the second grade but "blew it off" as something a girl couldn't do. While taking classes at Oklahoma Baptist University, a professor told her he saw "a pastor in you."

Knowing that Southern Baptists as a denomination do not accept women as pastors, "I thought I would have to change denominations," the retired U.S. Air Force chief master sergeant said.

When her father, Harry Pryor, was sidelined by illness in June, the church didn't have enough time to call someone immediately to fill in. Melody had led January Bible studies at First, Stanton, and her father had allowed her to preach a couple times. So she filled in, believing he would be back in a few weeks.

But under his doctor's advice, Harry Pryor resigned as pastor Aug. 8. The congregation elected a search committee and asked her to continue to fill in until a new minister was hired.

Remembering that her father had been opposed to women pastors, she recalled: "I met with Dad but I was ready to fight. I told him that I think women could be pastors if God calls them. Dad told me his feeling had changed. Mom and Dad have been supportive."

She also knew the church might face difficulties for calling a woman as pastor.

Though there was some opposition, the congregation voted to call her. Some members left the church after the vote, and a few others have moved elsewhere since then.

The church's association, which counts First, Stanton, as a member church, has asked Melody to resign or the congregation to rescind its call to her. Otherwise, the church faces being removed from the association. (ABP)



Photos courtesy of Joe Cotton

Southside Baptist Church, Fayette, Pastor Robert Parrish (right) speaks with boxer Deontay Wilder.

‘Souled Out’

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Student event brings denominations together at Fayette’s Southside

Mention “Souled Out” to someone in the Fayette community, and chances are they’ll know what you’re taking about. The event — which takes place once each semester — is an opportunity to bring together youth from all different Christian denominations within the town. “It’s different denominations coming together for the same purpose,” said Joe Cotton, the youth minister at Southside Baptist Church, Fayette, who has been in charge of Souled Out for the last couple of years.

“No doctrinal issues, just praising the same Lord.”

For each event, Cotton and other organizers find a speaker as well as a musician or musical group to help lead worship. The event used to take place more frequently — as often as four to six times each year — but Cotton decided that limiting Souled Out to once a semester would help the event draw more impactful speakers.

“We’ve been able to have people like Mark Cahill and Siran Stacy come to speak, and it’s turned out to be very successful,” Cotton said.

Successful indeed. Before the first event took

place, Cotton said he and fellow Souled Out planners expected about 20 or 30 youth to show up. He thought they’d be “like BBs in a shoe box” at the community center.

They were wrong — 300 students showed up, packing the room.

These days, as many as 500 students tend to show up for each event, which is held at the local community college, Bevill State.

“At first, they were meeting in the civic center, which held about 350 people, and then they outgrew it and moved to the community college auditorium,” said Larry Barnes, director of missions for Fayette Baptist Association. “That’s pretty good for a town of 5,000. They’ve had a good track record.”

Cotton and others have been impressed with the way both the local youth and their parents have embraced this event. They’ve seen participation from almost all churches in the area, and Souled Out continues to grow.

“It’s been good for our community to see our students coming together, setting aside denominational things we all deal with and worshipping together,” said Robert Parrish, pastor of Southside Baptist.

“It speaks well of our students and parents as well, not to hold back or not go because another denomination is there.”

Now that Souled Out is an established Fayette tradition, most advertising happens by way of word of mouth, although Cotton said the group does run ads in the local paper the week or two leading up to each event.

“As Souled Out continues to grow, we just hope that we can keep reaching students,” Parrish said. “Joe and I have a heart for students, and in a small town you see the students that walk a different walk. We want to gather them up, see them saved and help them grow in Christ. Evangelism and discipleship are the main emphases, and that’s what we want to focus on with Souled Out.”



‘It’s different denominations coming together for the same purpose.’

Joe Cotton
Southside Baptist
Church, Fayette

Tell us about your church’s student ministry. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org or post it on our Facebook page.

Bible Drill

Below are the winners of the State Speakers Tournament, High School Bible Drill and Youth Bible Drill held at First Baptist Church, Prattville, on April 28.



Photo by Doug Rogers

SPEAKERS TOURNAMENT WINNERS

(L to r) 3rd place — Jaime Weller of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery; 1st place — Gary Hamner of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville; and 2nd place — Tad Borowski of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile



Photo by Doug Rogers

HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE DRILL WINNERS

(L to r) 2nd place — Rachel Last of Harmony Baptist Church, Moulton, and 1st place — Sienna Borowski of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile



Photo by Doug Rogers

YOUTH BIBLE DRILL WINNERS

(L to r) 3rd place — Donovan Cleckley of West End Baptist Church, Clanton; 1st place — Davis Whitfield of Lighthouse Community Church, Sterrett; and 2nd place — Paul Last of Harmony Baptist Church, Moulton

Smoky Mountain

getaways

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Smokies — popular destination for youth groups, church retreats, families

Imagine starting the day with an exciting white-water rafting trip on the Pigeon River, followed by a hike along a peaceful forest trail to a scenic waterfall. Take a little time in the late afternoon to clean up and rest before you enjoy dinner, a show and maybe even a little go-cart racing to finish your day.

Or maybe you prefer a slower pace, beginning your day with a leisurely breakfast, followed by a stroll through shops filled with mountain crafts. After an afternoon

musical revue, you might end your day by viewing the sunset from a scenic mountain overlook, watching the mist fall into the valleys below.

These are just a few of the many activities visitors enjoy in the area many people simply call the “Smokies,” a popular year-round destination for youth groups, church retreats and families looking for a family-friendly getaway.

Stacey Boutwell, executive pastor at Grace Baptist Church, Oxford, in Calhoun Baptist Association, said Grace Baptist has taken many groups to Gatlinburg through

the years, including a student trip to the area last November.

Boutwell said one of the good things about the area is its proximity to Alabama.

“The kids know they’ve been out of town, but it’s still within a day’s driving distance,” he said. “We also have lots of families who go to Gatlinburg several times a year, so it’s a natural draw.”

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, located in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina, draws an estimated 10 million visitors each year. That number makes the Smoky Mountains America’s most visited national park. The park itself encompasses more than 500,000 acres within its boundaries, but visitors to the region will find an abundance of activities to enjoy both inside and outside the park.

Most visitors come to the Smoky Mountains to enjoy the scenery, said Bob Miller, spokesman at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

“The views are our number one attraction,” he said.

Visitors tour the park in their cars, winding their way slowly along curving mountain roads lined with various species of deciduous

and ever-green trees. Miller said the fall color season is especially popular because of the diverse tree species in the park.

“We have a lot of different trees turning a lot of different colors,” he said.

In the spring and summer, wildflowers put on a colorful show. The park contains more than 1,600 species of flowering plants, and every month is different, Miller said.

Wildlife viewing is another popular activity, with bears being

number one on most visitors’ list.

“After ‘Where is the restroom?’ the next most popular question is ‘Where can I see a bear?’” Miller said.

The park is home to about

1,600 black bears, two per square mile, which makes for the highest bear density in the south-east. As a result, visitors often see bears along the roadways

and hiking trails from April to November, Miller said.

Most roads within the park are bus-accessible, and the “unmatched resource” of lodging in the local area, including hotels, cabins and chalets, makes the region a great destination for families and groups, Miller said.

Steve Bentley, organist at Beulah Baptist Church, Muscadine, in Cleburne Baptist Association, visits the mountains every year in December with his extended family.

“We love going back each year (See ‘Natural,’ page 11)

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Perfect synchrony

By Linda Holloway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Unique fireflies lightshow draws tourists, locals to Great Smoky Mountains National Park annually

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park hosts about 7,000 tourists each June for what is now known as "The Lightshow." For a few hours on a summer night, no one will think about a computer or cell phone because this show is one of the most mesmerizing silent natural wonders anywhere. The stars of the show — synchronous fireflies (*Photinus carolinus*) and they are always on cue.

Synchronous fireflies are one of at least 19 species of fireflies that live in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They are the only species in America that can synchronize their flashing light patterns individually. This phenomenon happens in early June for almost two weeks as a mating ritual. Only a few places on earth — Southeast Asia being one — can boast this species. The Elkmont area of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the Western Hemisphere's largest population of these fireflies.

Most admire the Great Smoky Mountains for the diverse activities available during the daylight hours, but those who have witnessed the firefly event will tell you when the last finger of light has disappeared, you are in for a treat.

"Watching these thousands of fireflies start flashing — randomly at first but gradually becoming organized into

waves or simultaneous on-off cycles is an amazing sight to see," said Bob Miller, management assistant of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This species of firefly is not the same as most of us chased at dusk in Alabama. They wait until there is complete darkness to begin their ritual. "It's hard to believe that these primitive little creatures have been imprinted with the information to display this coordination, and we can see this same display every year at about the same time."

'Seeing is believing'

The rhythmic, bright displays are performed by the fireflies flashing on and off. They exhibit six seconds of darkness; then in perfect synchrony, thousands light up six rapid times in a three-second period before all going dark for six more seconds.

Tourists as well as locals welcome the sight.

Gina Davis, a special education teacher at Sevier County High School, Tennessee, attends the event each year.

"My family tries to take in the fireflies at least one evening every year," she said. "Ideally, we try to book a campsite at Elkmont, but those usually go very fast. It's really a unique experience and hard to imagine, but seeing is believing. Everybody who has seen the fireflies becomes a believer."

Visitors usually bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit on the ground in the midst of throngs of fireflies. The experience

offers magic to a new generation of night explorers in the Smoky Mountains. To protect the fireflies and their habitat, park officials ask guests to not catch them and to cover flashlights with red or blue cellophane. Because flashlights disrupt the fireflies, you should only use them when walking to your viewing spot. When the display ends, visitors come away with an environmental awareness to pass on to the next generation.

The popularity of the firefly event has increased significantly over the past several years, prompting Great Smoky Mountains National Park to put in place a new reservation system. Previously visitors rode the mandatory shuttle system from the Sugarlands Visitor Center parking area to Elkmont to view the fireflies on a first-come basis. The shuttle service is the sole transportation mode for visitor access during this period, except for registered campers staying at the Elkmont Campground. For this year's viewing event, which runs June 2–10, a new online ticketing system will provide visitors with parking passes to park at the Visitor Center, but without the inconvenience of having to arrive hours in advance. The passes have sold out for 2012, except for 25 passes per day to accommodate individuals who did not learn of the new pre-purchase tickets. Those last 25 passes will go on sale online at 10 a.m. the day before the event and will be available until 3:30 p.m. on the day of the event. The shuttle trolleys, which are provided in partnership with the City of Gatlinburg, will begin picking up passengers from the Visitor Center parking area at 7 p.m. If you miss the show this year, try again next April when the passes will be available for June 2013.

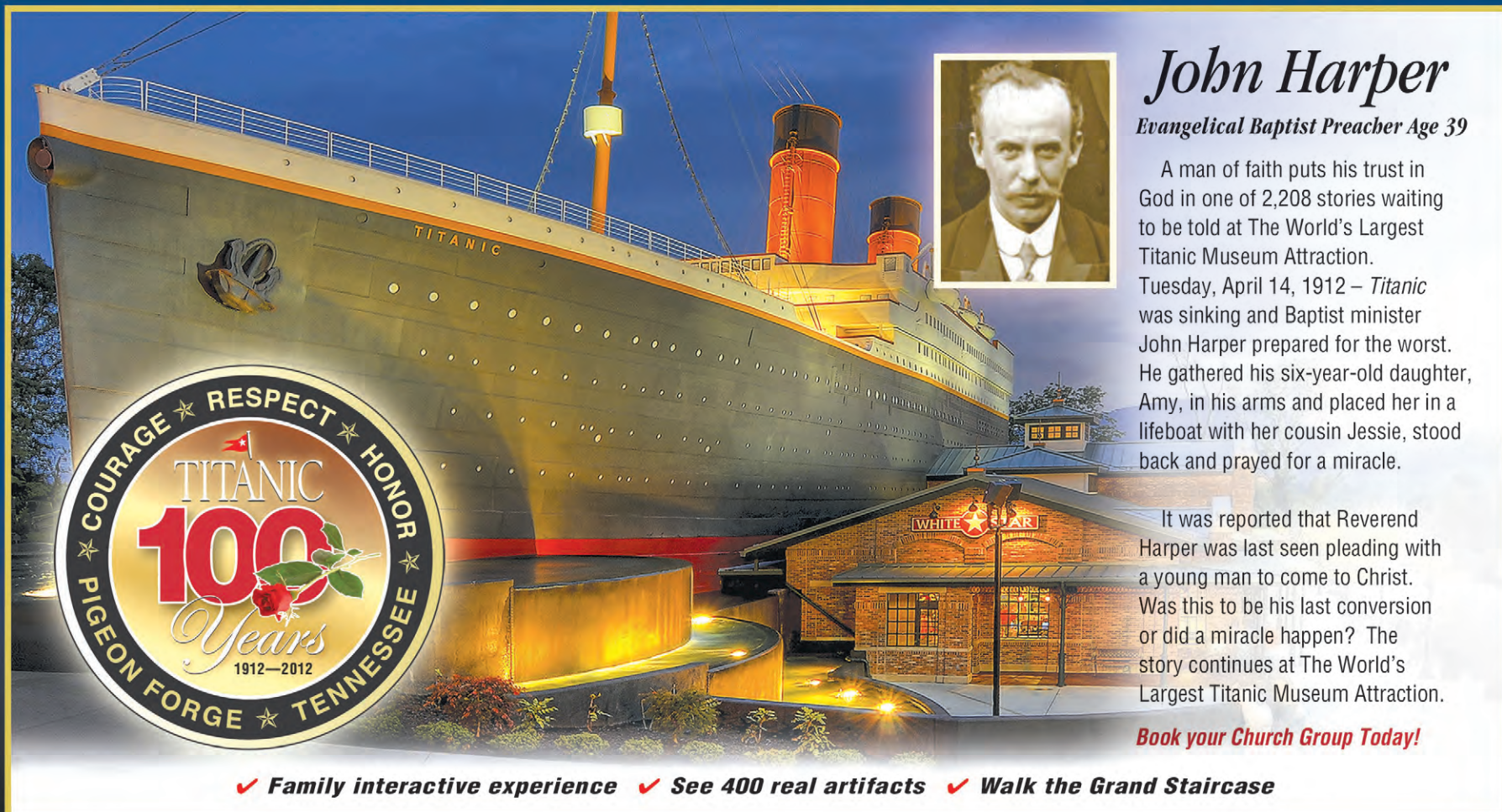
Be sure to check with Gatlinburg hotels for discounts for the event.

Victor McLean, owner of The Lodge at Buckberry Creek said, "We offer special packages for our guests with dinner options, and we provide a 'private viewing' of the fireflies. Children and adults also enjoy our after-viewing activities on our outside dining deck."

For information and parking passes, visit www.Recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777.

For area tourist information, visit www.gatlinburg.com or call 1-800-588-1817. ☼

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John Harper
Evangelical Baptist Preacher Age 39

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It was reported that Reverend Harper was last seen pleading with a young man to come to Christ. Was this to be his last conversion or did a miracle happen? The story continues at The World's Largest Titanic Museum Attraction.

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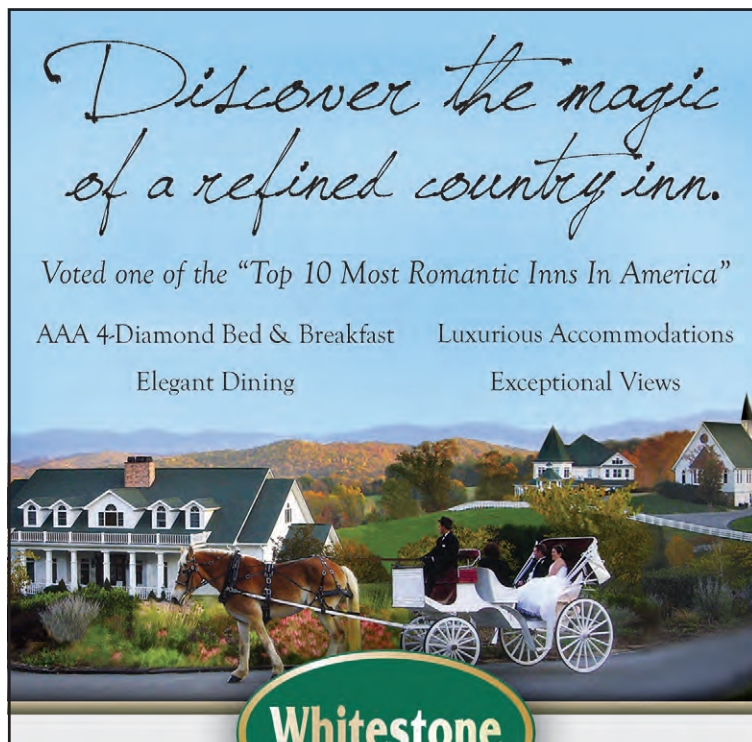
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Tenn. bill targets Vanderbilt policy

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam said he plans to veto legislation aimed at forcing Vanderbilt University to abandon its nondiscrimination policy.

The bill, passed on April 30, would revoke about \$24 million in state funding if the school refuses to back away from a policy requiring all official campus organizations to open leadership positions to all students.

The policy requires any campus-recognized group — including religious groups — to apply, across the board, the university's nondiscrimination policy, which forbids discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. For Christian groups, that means they technically cannot require their group leader to be a Christian. At least 13 religious groups have refused to comply.

Tennessee legislators wanted to protect the Christian groups' free-

dom to operate, but in doing so, they overstepped their bounds, Haslam said in a statement May 2.

"Although I disagree with Vanderbilt's policy, as someone who strongly believes in limited government, I think it is inappropriate for government to mandate the policies of a private institution," he said.

'All-comers' policy

Because Vanderbilt is a private school, it is allowed to set policies that might violate constitutional protections for religious liberty at state schools. The original version of the legislation applied only to state schools, preventing them from following Vanderbilt's lead in establishing an "all-comers" policy.

In vetoing the final version of the bill, Haslam will strike down the rules for state schools as well. Sen. Mae Beavers, who sponsored the legislation, said she plans to reintroduce rules for state schools next

year. No public universities in Tennessee currently have policies that restrict leadership requirements for religious organizations.

Haslam, who described Vanderbilt's policy as "counter-intuitive," said, "I believe it is appropriate for state government to be involved in policies of public colleges and universities."

Despite ongoing pressure from donors, alumni and the student groups who oppose the policy, Vanderbilt administrators have so far refused to back down.

Administrators maintain the policy does not violate religious freedom. Chancellor Nicholas Zeppos applauded Haslam's announcement, saying in a statement, "While we respect the governor's position on Vanderbilt's policy, we are gratified by his rejection of government intrusion into private institutions and their ability to govern and set policies themselves," he said. (BP)

Natural setting of Smokies great for reflection, reconnection

(continued from page 9)
for the Christmas parade and the Christmas lights and browsing through all the shops in downtown Gatlinburg and in Pigeon Forge," he said.

Winter is an especially good time to visit the area, said Chris Spurlin, minister of youth and associate pastor at Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford, in Calhoun Baptist Association. Spurlin has been leading groups to the Smokies for nearly 20 years and said the mountains offer an affordable and enjoyable winter destination.

Each year, Spurlin takes a group to WA-Floy Mountain Village Retreat, a Christian conference center in Gatlinburg, at New Year's. He plans the schedule, focusing especially on the spiritual celebration of the new year.

"Our youth praise band leads worship, we have Bible study and worship, and we pray in the new year," Spurlin said.

Nathan White, youth pastor at First Baptist Church of Austinville, Decatur, in Morgan Baptist Association, also has coordinated several church trips to the Smoky Mountains.

Last December, White took a group of students to Connect, a student conference hosted by Phil Waldrep Ministries, just one of the many conference opportunities for people of all ages that are available

in the area throughout the year. White said that in his experience, conferences offer a nice balance of planned events and free time.

"I'm not one who is just about entertaining students," White said. "There needs to be spiritual substance, as well as activities that build unity within the group."

Whether attending a conference, a retreat or a family getaway, the abundance of affordable attractions and accommodations makes the region an attractive destination any time of the year, Boutwell said. In the end, however, he believes it is the natural beauty of the area that brings Christian groups back to the area year after year.

"Ultimately, the natural setting is conducive to reflection and re-connecting with your relationship with God," Boutwell said. ☞

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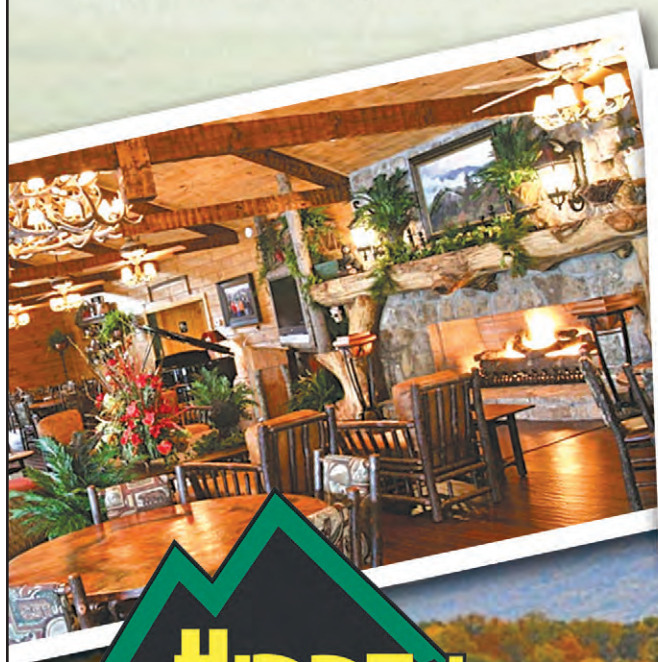
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Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Karen Baptist school, founder's house destroyed by fire

HTEE K'HAW, Thailand — Fire destroyed the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College in the Mae La refugee camp on the border between Thailand and Burma (Myanmar) on April 28.

The school was founded by Saw Simon, the recipient of the Baptist World Alliance Human Rights Award in 2000, and offers general education to refugees and training to church leaders.

The fire also destroyed Simon's dwelling.

Simon and his family fled across the Thai border after the school, originally located in Rangoon (Yangon), the former capital of Burma, was destroyed.

Mae La houses an estimated 50,000 people and is one of the largest of several refugee camps for displaced people from Burma who fled conflicts in the South Asian country. The school restarted with 32 students and has since grown in enrollment to more than 300.

According to *Karen News*, camp residents managed to put out the fire in about an hour.

"The Bible school has a long history and has been instrumental in so many ways as a ministry to the refugees along the Thailand/Myanmar border," Stan Murray, area director for Southeast Asia and Japan for International Ministries of American Baptist Churches USA, said. "The school trained young people who then serve in ministry both in the refugee camps and in the countries where many of the refugees are settling, including in the U.S."

There is uncertainty as to the start of school for the next term, which begins in June.

Year-to-date CP contributions ahead of last year

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are \$5,628,995.10, or 5.19 percent above the year-to-date budgeted goal, and are 0.22 percent behind contributions received during the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank S. Page.

The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2011-12 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget.

As of April 30, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$114,128,995.10 or 105.19 percent of the \$108,500,000 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The total is \$249,064.39 less than the \$114,378,059.49 received through the end of April 2011.

Designated giving of \$130,851,935.53 for the same year-to-date period is 0.09 percent, or \$121,764.37, below gifts of \$130,973,699.90 received at this point last year.

April's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$16,364,404.42. Designated gifts received amounted to \$13,989,216.23.

Missions celebrations provide learning opportunities for all ages

(continued from page 1)
success, Adams believes the changes made it more effective.

"It helped develop more relationships and friendships than it has been in the past," she said. "Having these missionaries in our houses, it's not just someone we read about in a periodical or in a prayer request. It makes them a real-life person. ... We already have two missions trips (planned) with some of our missionaries that came in — one in Helen, Ga., and one in Argentina."

Although many missions celebrations are geared toward adults, Lamar Baptist Association hosts an annual event for children.

Janet Estis established the first celebration and has coordinated every one since then.

"I grew up in the association in Lamar as a little girl, and I remembered my love for missions started through that association," said Estis, who now is a member of Mineral Springs Baptist Church, McShan, in Pickens Baptist Association. "They did children's missions events when I was a kid. ... I wanted the children growing up there now to have the same opportunity."

The celebration is similar to most others across the state, except it allows the children to meet local, national and international

missionaries, do hands-on ministry projects and raise funds for missions work.

This year and last year, the children were able to Skype a missionary, Estis said.

"We had a great day," Estis said. "It's just exciting for me to see children get excited about missions just like I did at their age. ... I think it is important to begin learning at a young age, not just when you are an adult. I think God speaks to children's hearts just as much as He does adults. We just need to give them the venue where they can hear Him speaking."

Ben Chandler, director of mis-

sions for St. Clair Baptist Association, echoed the sentiments. It is his hope that the association's missions celebration will inspire children, teens and adults to pursue a life of missions.

In fact, as a result of a previous celebration, a pastor surrendered to missions, Chandler said.

The association holds the missions fest every five years. The event was to begin in late April 2011. However, on April 27, devastating tornadoes struck much of the state — St. Clair County included — causing the event to be postponed until 2012.

This year's celebration featured 30 state, North American and international missionaries.

They spoke in 30 churches during the five-day event, that began on a Saturday with a missions fair and rally.

By meeting missionaries and hearing their life stories, individuals gain a better understanding of what missionaries do, what the Cooperative Program is and how those funds are used, Chandler said. Also the missions event helps churches to see they are all linked together in the common goal of supporting missionaries around the world.

"Missionaries are special people to be able to go and do what they do," Chandler said. (Leigh Pritchett contributed)



Photo by Jody Bailey

Letters

(continued from page 2)
the article "Worship preferences better than wars" on April 26. I can see that the author, Bob Burroughs, is right on target. The independence of Southern Baptist churches makes it easy for churches to repeat past mistakes that were made at other churches. *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper is a good way to help ed-

ucate churches about pitfalls. Keep up the good work!

Gary Briscoe
Hoover, Ala.

RICHARD LAND DEBATE

The request for Richard Land to apologize for telling the truth is a disgrace to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and all Southern Baptist church members. He did not take sides in the Trayvon Martin case — neither did he show any

racial bias in his remarks. He only pointed out a truth about individuals that use situations like this to further their cause. I think the SBC and The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) owe Dr. Land an apology.

Political correctness is not God's will and is contributing to the loss of freedom that God has given our country.

Clint Durden
Talladega, Ala.

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Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes is seeking houseparent couples for the Baptist Home in Monticello, Ark., Boys Ranch in Harrison, Ark., and the Emergency Receiving Home in Judsonia, Ark.  Full-time positions with salary, medical and life insurance, paid leave. For information: Children's Home, Randy Luper 870.367.5358 or rluper@abchomes.org; Boys Ranch, Bill VonderMehden 870.741.5784 or bvondermehden@abchomes.org; Judsonia Emergency shelter, Sean Culpepper 501.455.8554 or sculpepper@abchomes.org.

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Be faithful to listen, grow, develop

Have you ever been astounded by how much you don't know?

I remember a time when I thought I knew a lot. To be honest, I remember a time when I thought I knew everything, but that was a long time ago.

Now I sometimes wonder if I know anything. It is true what they say. The more you know, the more you become aware of how much you do not know.

The world is changing so fast. Information is available everywhere. New ideas. New discoveries. New ways of accomplishing old tasks.

While the world is changing quickly and new discoveries are made every day, I sometimes struggle to take care of my family, do my job and grow in my faith. We live busy lives. If we are not careful, we stand still in the midst of a growing and developing world.

One of my professors once said if she came to visit our offices once we were out of school and the only

A Thought
for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



books on our shelves were old textbooks, then she would know she failed as a teacher.

I love the image Paul uses to describe the Christian life. We start as babies, but as we grow and learn, we move on to more solid food. That image demonstrates for us the growth process we all enter into in our faith. What about the verse in Philippians that says God will be faithful to complete the process He began in us? Again, here is this idea of continued growth and development regardless of our age.

But this image not only speaks to our life in Christ. It also speaks to us in the circumstances of our

lives. We are given a lifetime, some longer than others, to learn and to grow as people. We grow in our relationships and we grow in our knowledge.

Proverbs 1:5 says, "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance ..."

As leaders in our home, our church and our workplace, we have to be faithful to this idea of growing and developing. We have to learn the new things and expand our understanding of the world. Only then can we lead and guide others into greater understanding.

To stand still, distracted by the tasks of our day, is to be unfaithful to the calling God has put on us and the roles in which He has put us. Instead, let us embrace our lack

of knowledge and be dedicated to learning.

When was the last time you read a book in your field? When was the last time you attended a conference? When was the last time you sought a mentor or sought to mentor someone who could also teach you?

A Takeaway Value ...

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning ..."

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

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Shiloh Baptist Church of Hartford, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. 5+ years experience as pastor of a Southern Baptist church preferred. Please submit resumes by mail to: Pastor Search Committee, Shiloh Baptist Church, 873 N. Shiloh Road, Hartford, AL 36344.

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: West Highland Baptist Church in the Bessemer/Hueytown area is seeking a bivocational pastor. You may email resumes to: thobson.whbc@hotmail.com or mail to: WHBC, ATTN: Pastoral Search Committee, 4839 W. Highland Church Road, Bessemer, AL 35023.

WORSHIP LEADER: Point Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla., is looking for a full-time worship leader to lead band-driven blended worship. Must have a team concept of ministry and a servant's heart. Send resume to: timcoleman72.tc@gmail.com

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: FBC Killen, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music. Please send resumes to the Music Search Committee at: F.B.C.K., P.O. Box 236, Killen, AL 35645. or email to: David@firstbaptistkillen.org.

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

FULL-TIME MUSIC/YOUTH MINISTER: Westside Baptist Church. Resumes may be mailed to: Stan Wicker, c/o Westside Baptist Church, 1026 Caroline Street, Elba, AL 36323, or emailed to: stanwicker@aol.com.

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

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR: Emmanuel Baptist Church, Athens, Ala., is seeking a bivocational youth pastor. College undergraduate degree and previous youth ministry experience preferred. Resumes can be emailed to: debm@pcinet.net, or mailed to: Youth Pastor Search Team, c/o Emmanuel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 145, Athens, AL 35612.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Cedar Grove Baptist, Leeds, Ala. Part-time children's minister. 15 hours, 1st-5th grades. Great volunteer group in place to work with. For questions and resumes contact 205-699-4806, steven@cedargroveleeds.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

MARKETING STRATEGIST: National WMU in Birmingham is looking for a candidate with direct response marketing and circulation experience. For more information, visit www.wmu.com and open "about" and then "employment."

DIRECTOR/TEACHER: God's Kids — First Baptist Church, Springville, has the position, director/teacher open. Applications are available in the church office. Deadline to apply is June 1.

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.

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 resumes should also be directed.

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Want to know God?

By Mike McMorris
Alabama Baptist minister

What is most important and makes the difference in our lives is that we know Jesus Christ personally. Would you say you have come to know Christ personally or are you still in the process? If you know Christ, then would you cut this out and pass it on to someone who doesn't? If you are still in the process, then please read on.

The Bible teaches us that there is a holy God who created everything we see and cannot see and He loves us. It also tells us that our sin has separated us from God and His love.

Sin is living life our own way. In our sin, we are left under God's wrath, and if we remain that way, then we will live eternally without Him.

The good news is God, because He loves us, did something amazing for us. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth, born as we were.

He lived a sinless life doing God's will. He did it so He could make a sacrifice for us on a cross.

He took our sin and God's wrath due to us on Himself to the cross, paying for your sin and mine.

He died, was buried and three days later rose from the dead victorious over sin and death.

By doing that, Jesus provided the only lifeline for us to get to God.

Is knowing these facts enough for us to reach God? No. We repent, or turn, from everything we think of what it means to reach God. We change our minds about trusting in our good works, our morals and even church-going if we think doing it will get us to God. We trust in Jesus and Him alone as our Savior.

Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

We then follow Jesus as our Lord.

We read His Word, connect with His church and allow Him to have authority in our lives.

Jesus called and still calls people to follow Him, and as they do, their lives are changed immediately and progressively.

Legacy

ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

MAY 2012

BROKEN promises

By Bob Dewhurst, ABCH VP, Ministry Development

Eight-year-old Eddie embraced his foster mom and cried violently. The tears soaked her blouse as she tried to offer comfort to this broken-hearted little boy. With swollen eyes and quivering lips he cried out, "Why?" "Why won't she come and see me?"

Once again, his mother had failed to show up to visit him. Just hours before, the woman who had brought him into this world had promised that she would be there. The appointment had been scheduled for weeks. He had waited for this day with great expectation. After all, he hadn't seen his mother in two long months. With excitement he had told his friends at school, "I'm going to see my mom today!" He wanted to share about the exciting time he had during Christmas. He wanted to show her the good grades on his report card. He wanted her to see the photo of him playing basketball.

But his hopes were shattered again. She didn't show up. Now he clings to his foster mother for love, encouragement and hope for a better tomorrow. Eddie is just one example of the hundreds of children in our Christian foster homes and group homes that have experienced rejection and hurt in their lives.

Broken promises. How many times have you experienced a broken promise? The emotions that fill us when someone fails to do what

he or she says they're going to do are many. Anger, sadness, frustration, bitterness, hurt and regret, are just some of the emotions we feel. Like little Eddie, most of the children in our homes have faced many broken promises, but, because of you, promises are being fulfilled. While we wish all children could have loving parents committed to their well-being, the reality is so many children do not.

As we press forward in 2012, we hope that you will join with us so we can be there for little Eddie and so many others like him. While others may not keep their promises, we are committed to protecting, nurturing and restoring children and families through Christ-centered services. We hope that in 2012 you will support our efforts. We look forward to hearing from you. We promise to be there for Eddie and others like him. We hope that you will be there, too.

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(Memorialized person's name is bolded.)

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Vernell Davis, Stanton: Steve & Jenni Davis
Thomas Ivey Dorough, Bay Minette: Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette
Glenn Estess, Sr., Birmingham: Marjorie Kay Nix
Eugenia Ford, Prattville: Velma House, Ginny Waldrop
Mrs. Dean Foster: Centreville BC
Nell Moore Fowler, Troy: Hazel Moore & Nelda Moore Bell
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Patsy Greene, Faunsdale: County Line BC of Arlington
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Coffee County Jail volunteers get serious

Chaplains hold revival, see 51 professions of faith, 27 baptisms, 90 worship participants

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ministry volunteers at the Coffee County Jail are serious about Jesus' directive to visit those in prison, and the response to a revival held at the jail April 19-21 encourages them that their efforts are making a difference.

According to jail administrator Richard Moss, pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church, Elba, in Coffee Baptist Association, the three-day revival at the New Brockton facility saw 51 professions of faith and 27 baptisms.

Worship participation

More than 90 inmates voluntarily participated in the worship services, a major portion of the jail population, Moss said.

Services were held on Thursday and Friday evening under a tent set

up in a secure area of the facility.

On Saturday, the inmates were offered sack lunches, and the service was held after lunch.

Each service featured praise and worship music, followed by the testimony of individuals who are recovering from drug or alcohol dependency.

Rob West, pastor of First United Methodist Church, Enterprise, and Moss shared pastoral duties during the revival.

This is the second time the jail has hosted a revival meeting, Moss said. The first was a one-day event in April 2009 that resulted in 75-80 decisions and 56 baptisms.

Since then, an interdenominational ministry effort has been underway for male and female inmates at the jail, including three discipleship classes and a class on overcoming addictions, Moss said.

According to Moss, 38 volunteer chaplains serve in the jail monthly, representing several churches in Coffee County.

"The ultimate goal of the discipleship programs is to direct men and women to make choices that parallel a walk with Christ," Moss said.

"We want to give the inmates an opportunity to express themselves spiritually."

"The ultimate goal ... is to direct men and women to make choices that parallel a walk with Christ."
Richard Moss
Mount Olive Church, Elba

community of the needs of inmates and their families, as well as the need for inmates to have a support system in place once they are released from prison.

'Ready to embrace'

"We have many people in this situation, and we want to make sure that when a man or woman leaves the jail, there is a church out there ready to embrace them and nurture them consistent with Scripture," Moss said.

Granger said that while the jail ministry is still a work in progress, the ministry volunteers and the churches who support them have a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in the lives of inmates.

"So many people come through our jail these days, and anything we can do to help them while they are there or once they get out is a good thing," Granger said.

Iranian pastor's attorney headed to prison

Iranian pastor Yousef Nadarkhani's attorney — called by many a hero for his representation of religious minorities — has been convicted and could begin serving a nine-year sentence soon in a development that will leave Nadarkhani without a lawyer.

Like Nadarkhani's conviction, the case of attorney Mohammad Ali Dadkhah also is controversial. Dadkhah said he was convicted of acting against national security,

spreading propaganda and keeping banned books at home, according to the *Guardian* newspaper in the U.K.

Dadkhah has represented Nadarkhani, who was sentenced to death in 2010 for converting from Islam to Christianity, in a case that began in 2009.

It's possible that no attorney will step up and represent Nadarkhani. Dadkhah previously told the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLU) that if he himself was

placed in jail, "no attorney would be willing" to take Nadarkhani's case out of fear of "being imprisoned or disbarred" for representing the Christian pastor. Dadkhah represented 12 Christians in Iran in April who had been charged with several crimes, including apostasy — that is, leaving Islam.

Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the ACLU, called Dadkhah a "world-renowned Muslim human rights attorney." (BP)

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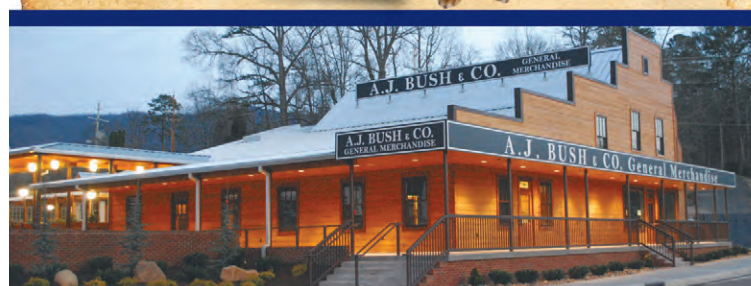


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BP photo

A replica of Aaron's rod sits with a replica of the stone tablets kept in the Ark of the Covenant in the days of the Israelites. The replicas are part of the tabernacle experience in Eilat, Israel.

Walk-through tabernacle replica in Israel reflects atonement

As the little girl stepped forward to pull back the ornate curtain, her eyes widened. "Are we going to die?" she asked.

She and hundreds of other Jewish children take it seriously when they enter the Holy of Holies at the tabernacle in Eilat, Israel's southernmost city.

"Children in Israel study the tabernacle in school," said Josh, who helps with the full-size replica along with his wife Sarah. "They bring their tape measures here with them so that they can make sure this one is the size it's supposed to be."

And it is.

The walk-through model of the tabernacle — which gets about 15,000 visitors a year — is made to the stipulations listed in Scripture, Josh said.

It wows the kids, but it's not just for children, nor just for Jews, said Herb, a Southern Baptist representative living in Israel.

History of faith

"When people read the Bible, they often get to the details of the tabernacle and think, 'Boring!' For many people, it's the driest part to read," Herb said. "But it really is exciting when you get into the details. It lays the foundation for our history of faith."

That's why he and others decided to bring the tabernacle replica to



About 15,000 adults and children come to Eilat, Israel, each year to walk through a tabernacle replica made to the stipulations listed in Scripture. The display has been in place since 2000.

BP photo

Eilat, Israel, from Germany in 2000.

The tabernacle screams out the message of atonement, Sarah said.

"The sacrifices that happened at the tabernacle were the first way God gave His people for atonement," she said.

The tabernacle replica is a picture of reconciliation in more ways than one, said Yohannus Vogel of the Bible Center, a Bible school in Breckerfeld, Germany.

The school chose to build the model to show Israel honor on the occasion of the school's 30th an-

niversary in 1986, Vogel said. Built on the school's campus, the tabernacle had 15,000 visitors in its first two months. Thirty of them decided to follow Jesus Christ as Savior.

Students manned the model and gave tours seven days a week, and some time later the school decided to send it on tour around Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

"It had 500,000 visitors in all, but afterward it ended up in storage," Vogel said.

And that's when he got a call from Herb asking if he could rent the replica and put it in Israel. The same week, Vogel got a call from someone who had space for it in southern Israel, near where the Israelites passed through with the tabernacle on their way to the Promised Land.

"In one week, two people with

the same burden of their heart called me in Germany about the same tabernacle," Vogel said. "One had the money to move it but not the land, and the other had the land and not the money."

It was a divine appointment, he said, and in 2000 the tabernacle found its home in Eilat.

As you walk through the details of the tabernacle and see it come to life, the message of redemption becomes vibrant, Sarah said.

"When people ask questions, we say, 'Go back and read the Bible for yourselves,'" Sarah said. "If they go home and even open their Bible, that's a huge step."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Workers at the site have asked that only their first names be used in this article. (BP)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 13

Explore the Bible

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

HE VOLUNTARILY SUFFERED: BE GRATEFUL
Luke 22:14–22, 39–46, 63–65

Last Supper (14–22)

At the house where His disciples had prepared the Passover, Jesus indicated His driving desire to hold this meal before He suffered, i.e. the cross. He would not, He said, eat the Passover again until He celebrated it in the final kingdom of God. While Jesus preached that the kingdom of God had come when He came and was present in a real but limited form, He also taught that in its final and full form the kingdom of God was yet to come.

A normal Passover meal included four cups of wine, each recalling a phrase from Exodus 6:6–7a. Generally the meal ran as follows.

- Blessing of the first cup of wine, i.e. thanking God for it, ritual washing of hands and a prayer.
- Eating bitter herbs dipped in charosheth (apple sauce seasoned with spices).
- Serving the meal: unleavened bread, bitter herbs, greens, stewed fruit and roast lamb, each symbolizing details of the first Passover.
- Drinking the first cup of wine, “I will bring you out” (Ex. 6:6a).
- Retelling the story of Passover by the head of the group in response to the question by the youngest son: “Why is this night different from all other nights?”
- Drinking the second cup of wine, “I will free you from being slaves to them” (Ex. 6:6b).
- Chanting Psalm 113–114, known as “the little hallel” or “the little praise.”
- Offering a blessing, followed by eating the meal.
- Ending with a prayer of thanks.
- Drinking the third cup of wine, “I will redeem you” (Ex. 6:6c).
- Drinking the fourth cup of wine, “I will take you to me for a people” (Ex. 6:7a).
- Chanting Psalm 115–118, “the great hallel,” or “the great praise,” to conclude.

Luke mentioned two cups of wine, one on either side of the bread. Jesus probably in-

stituted the Lord’s Supper between the third and fourth cups at the end of the Passover meal just before the final song. At the end, He promised He would not drink again of the “fruit of the vine” until the arrival of full Kingdom glory.

“This is my body” surely means “This represents my body.” When Jesus spoke these words and gave the bread, His body was still whole. The language must be symbolic. Disciples eat bread at the Lord’s Supper to remember Jesus’ body “given for” them.

In His death, Jesus established “the new covenant.” Moses took the blood of sacrifice and threw half of it on the altar and half on the people to seal God’s old covenant with them (Ex. 24:8). But that covenant did not mention the forgiveness of sins the “new covenant” (Jer. 31:34) offered. “My blood” means “my death.” Forgiveness comes only through Jesus’ sacrificial death. The cup of the Lord’s Supper does not contain the literal blood of Jesus but its contents stand for the sacrificial death of Jesus that sealed God’s new agreement with mankind through Christ.

Gethsemane Prayer (39–46)

Kneeling a few yards from His disciples Jesus prayed. The “cup” was not just suffering but the cup of God’s wrath on sin that Jesus had to drain on behalf of sinners (cf. Isa. 51:22, the “chalice of his anger,” NASB). Nonetheless, Jesus wanted the will of God more than He wanted to escape suffering and death.

Jesus did not sweat blood. The text says no more than that Jesus was under such intense emotional stress that He dripped sweat “like great drops of blood” from a wound.

Prelude to the Cross (63–65)

Once the authorities took Jesus they subjected Him to three religious trials (before Annas, before Caiaphas and some of his cronies and before a quorum of the Sanhedrin) and then to three Roman trials (before Pilate, before Herod Antipas and then before Pilate again). Luke did not mention the first religious trials but noted the abuse His captors heaped on Jesus.

Bible Studies for Life

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

A LEGACY OF HOPE
1 Samuel 12:23–24; 1:10–20; 1:27–2:1

The Rest of the Story (12:23–24)

Throughout his life, Samuel had been a prophet like Moses. So it was appropriate he should follow Moses’ call as intercessor for the nation’s welfare. The statement in verse 23 opened the way for Samuel’s successors in the prophetic office. It also shows Samuel to be mediator of the covenant. Samuel is keenly aware of his responsibilities as prophet. The phrase “may it never happen to me” is an echo of words found in 1 Samuel 2:30 and 20:2, 9. Intercession (“pray”) and instruction (“teach”) are his two major roles as the prophet of the Lord, even after the inauguration of kingship.

Since the Lord has made Israel the special chosen people for His great name’s sake, it will be His special witness to “what great things he has done for it.”

In verse 24, Samuel commands Israel to “serve the Lord faithfully with all your heart.” Paul echoes this injunction in Colossians 3:17: “whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Both Samuel and Paul are admonishing us to do this wholeheartedly and with perseverance.

Flashback: A Prayer of Desperation (1:10–20)

Hannah made a special plea to God for a son, which involved a vow that he would be dedicated to God from his earliest years. The passage makes clear that Samuel was the special provision of God, not only for Hannah but also for Israel as a whole. The action in this passage consists of three speeches.

First, Hannah makes her vow that the son of her womb will be preserved for obedience only to the Lord. At the beginning we have a clue about how and why Samuel became such a champion of the faith. He was destined by his mother to be such a champion.

The second speech of Hannah is one of self-vindication. She is not a drunken wom-

an, as Eli supposes. Her desperation leads to an act of authentic faith, voicing her grief directly to the Lord.

The third speech is a response of Eli, an assurance and a benediction. The priest assures her that “the God of Israel will hear and answer.” As recorded in Luke, she had no doubt that “there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Luke 1:45). As a result, the grief and despair expressed in verse 8 is transformed. She is a restored woman with a new chance in life. Her faith in God’s assurance through Eli was rewarded.

A Promise Fulfilled (1:27–2:1)

Hannah comes to Shiloh to see Eli the priest. She is there to pay her vow. In offering her thanksgiving, Hannah is aware of the miracle that took her from being barren to birthing Samuel. The child whom she had asked for is now given back. Her gratitude is couched in words of submission and praise. Hers is an act of glad worship and a trusting yieldedness, which is Israel’s proper posture for the new story of monarchy about to begin. Hannah’s “so now” indicates the climax of the story and the resolution of the problem.

Samuel’s very name represents a wordplay that combines Hebrew terms meaning “asking from” and “given over.” More than this, his name is a testament to Hannah’s strong faith. Hannah asked from God, and God gave. Now, in gratitude, Hannah is completing the story of providence by giving back her son.

Hannah’s last recorded words and longest quotation begin in 2:1. Her prayer of thanksgiving begins on a very personal note, using four first-person references that express uninhibited delight in the Lord. Even as Peninnah had taunted Hannah (1:6–7), so now Hannah “boasts” over her enemies because of God’s “deliverance.” The word for “boast” means literally “my mouth is enlarged” (see also Ps. 35:21 and Isa. 57:4). The object of Hannah’s delight is not herself, nor is it her son, but rather her Lord Who brought her to this place of resolution and peace.

James Barnette is the teaching pastor of Brookwood Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Rather give ____ (s). (Luke 11:41)

4. Crustacean.

8. Like a ____ planted by the rivers. (Ps. 1:3)

12. Roman numeral 52.

13. Samuel answered, ____ am I. (1 Sam. 3:4)

14. Saul came after the _____. (1 Sam. 11:5)

15. Who will have all ____ to be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4)

16. Grain.

17. How ____ (ble) are thy tabernacles. (Ps. 84:1)

18. He shall give his ____ charge over thee. (Ps. 91:11)

20. Meekness, ____ance. (Gal. 5:23)

22. New. (prefix)

23. Mouths.

24. A cave.

27. The flesh of the child waxed _____. (2 Kings 4:34; comparative)

31. ____ not two sparrows sold. (Matt. 10:29)

32. Eggs. (Latin)

33. But seek not _____. (Amos 5:5)

37. The vision of ____

the son of Amoz. (Isa. 1:1)

40. Before. (poetic)

41. And ____ brought forth her firstborn son. (Luke 2:7)

42. Of ____ many books there is no end. (Eccles. 12:12)

45. Sons of ____; Joseph and Benjamin. (Gen. 35:24)

49. Belonging to Hezekiah's mother. (2 Kings 18:1, 2)

50. Kemuel the father of _____. (Gen. 22:21)

52. Short for Abraham.

53. Is not. (slang)

54. To be prolific.

55. The 23rd letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

56. Loiters behind.

57. Good woman's name.

58. The sons of ____ were sons of Belial. (1 Sam. 2:12)

Down

1. ____ Mater.

2. Property right.

3. Chinese dynasty.

4. He was moved with ____ against him. (Dan. 8:7)

5. Let us ____ together. (Isa. 1:18)

6. Nathan said to David, thou ____ the man. (2 Sam. 12:7)

7. Though I ____ all my goods to feed the poor. (1 Cor. 13:3)

8. Absalom had a fair sister whose name was _____. (2 Sam. 13:1; alt. spelling)

9. Star of your god ____han. (Acts 7:43)

10. Great Lake.

11. Southward were Kabzeel, and _____. (Josh. 15:21; alt. spelling)

19. Compass direction.

21. Historical period.

24. The fourth part of a ____ of dove's dung. (2 Kings 6:25)

25. Form of to be.

26. Former serviceman.

28. Me. (French)

29. Madame Peron.

30. Stadium cheer.

34. Robberies. (slang)

35. Sea eagle.

36. Ambassador.

37. Hear, O _____. (Deut. 6:4)

38. Bezer, and Hod, and _____. (1 Chron. 7:37)

39. Atomic Energy Commission. (abbr.)

42. Out to the south side to ____eh. (Josh. 15:3)

43. Solomon thrust out ____ thar. (1 Kings 2:27)

44. ____ of kings. (Rev. 17:14)

46. They that ____ the righteous. (Ps. 34:21)

47. I command you this day in mount _____. (Deut. 27:4)

48. Jacob's third son by Leah. (Gen. 29:34)

51. Peleg ... begat _____. (Gen. 11:18)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Religious websites most targeted by hackers, report says

MOUNTAIN VIEW, California — Online religion may be good for your soul but dangerous for your computer, according to a new report.

A report by Symantec, a company that sells computer-security software, rates websites devoted to religion or other ideologies the ones most targeted by malicious hackers.

Infected religious websites averaged 115 threats, most commonly fake anti-virus software, Symantec said. That was three times the rate of hosting and personal hosted websites and four-and-one-half times that of pornographic sites.

The safest places for web surfing are sites about sports (average 13 threats per infected site), automotive (11) and shopping (nine).

Symantec said it blocked over 5.5 billion malware attacks in 2011, an 81 percent increase over 2010. An average of 82 targeted attacks takes place each day, and you are more likely to be infected by malware placed on a legitimate website than one created by a hacker, the report said.

Macs are not immune from attack, and spammers are starting to use Quick Response, or QR, codes to trick users into installing Trojans — benign programs that also conceal another malicious program — onto their Android phones.

The report advises computer users to use up-to-date security programs and become educated about hacker tricks like getting them to believe their computer is infected and can be fixed with an automatic download or offering “free” or “pirated” versions of computer programs.

Symantec recommends passwords that are a mix of letters and numbers and to change them often. Never open an email attachment unless you expect it or trust the sender, and be cautious when clicking on links in e-mails or on social media.

UMC votes to end guaranteed clergy appointments

TAMPA, Florida — In a move that will give bishops more flexibility to remove ineffective pastors, the United Methodist Church (UMC) voted May 1 to end guaranteed clergy appointments.

Clergy appointments have been guaranteed since the 1950s, when they were instituted to protect ministers from discrimination or arbitrary abuse, supporters say. But critics say those original goals have helped mediocre clergy retain their posts.

We Chang, a Belmont, Mass., pastor, argued unsuccessfully for the UMC to reconsider the issue, United Methodist News Service reported.

“We have just done away with the security of appointment that allowed us to have much gender and racial justice in terms of our appointments,” he said.

But Ken Carter, a district superintendent from North Carolina, thought the vote should stand and the focus should not be on providing guaranteed appointments.

The Study of Mission Commission recommended the change in policy, as the UMC searches for ways to stanch a decades-long decline in U.S. membership.

“We acknowledge the difficulties associated with this vision such as uncertainty, loss of security, caring for those in employment transitions and concern about episcopal authority,” the commission wrote in its report to the General Conference. “We feel strongly, however, that this vision is critical for the fulfillment of the church’s mission.”

MAF dedicates missionary plane for service in Haiti

NAMPA, Idaho — Amid a crowd of several hundred supporters, staff and local residents, Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) dedicated a Cessna Caravan aircraft in an April 28 ceremony at the ministry’s headquarters in Nampa, Idaho.

MAF is a faith-based, nonprofit ministry that serves missions and isolated people around the world with aviation, communications and learning technologies.

Funded by gifts from supporters, the new plane will depart in May for Haiti, where it will support the work of churches, medical teams and relief workers laboring to rebuild the island nation still suffering two years after the devastating earthquake. MAF has served in Haiti for 25 years and has a permanent base at the Port-au-Prince airport.

“One of the principal tasks of this plane will be to carry work teams from the U.S. for one or two weeks to build schools, orphanages and medical clinics, to provide clean drinking water, or to build churches,” said David Rask, director of aviation resources at MAF. “In times of great needs, such as earthquakes and floods, this plane will carry food, water and shelter.”

CAMPUS News

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile Adds Apartment-style Living for Upperclassmen:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) is adding a new residence hall with apartment-style living for upperclassmen.

Construction is underway on the UMobile apartments, which will add 24 apartments totaling 94 beds to the Christian college campus. The three-story building is located across from Karlene Farmer Faulkner Hall.

The interior will feature 24 apartments, plus a central lobby and laundry rooms at each end of each hall.

The 39,918-square-foot building is expected to cost about \$6.2 million including furnishings. Like Faulkner, the residence hall will have central lobby areas and could house men on one side and women on the other, if needed.

The left side of the building is on schedule to be completed by Aug. 8 in time for the start of Fall semester 2012, while the right side should be finished by November or sooner.

► **‘Pray Gulf Coast’ Unites Individuals, Churches, Ministries in Prayer for Community:** More than 40 churches and ministries and almost 500 individuals have united to pray daily for Mobile and Baldwin counties through Pray Gulf Coast, a 50-day prayer initiative launched by the University of Mobile Center for Leadership.

The initiative, which lasts from Easter to Pentecost, calls for residents of the areas to unite in daily prayer for specific needs in the churches, schools, businesses, families, government and individuals of the community.

The Center for Leadership distributes daily prayer guides via email and a Facebook page. Participating churches have adopted their own day to pray, resulting in 50 days of perpetual prayer for Mobile and Baldwin counties.

Prayer topics include reductions

in the divorce rate, crime rate, single parent families and domestic violence, among others.

For more information about Pray Gulf Coast, visit www.twelve23.org or contact the Center for Leadership at 251-442-2555.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Honors Carnley with Commemorative Plaque and Carnley Room:** Coffee County District Judge Samuel Fleetwood Carnley, of Elba, was elected chairman of trustees at Judson College in 1969. After the college president’s departure that year, Carnley became acting president of the college.

Current Judson President David Potts spoke of Carnley’s work March 28.

“Two trustee chairs stepped in as interim presidents. These were difficult times and both men kept Judson College during a vacuum in leadership,” Potts said.

Carnley served as a trustee from 1961 until 2002. After his election as chair in 1969 he continued in that position until 1976. The college honored Carnley with the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award in 1970 and named him a life trustee in 1989. He died in 2002 at age 83.

Members of the Carnley family traveled to Judson on March 28 to view the commemorative plaque and the Carnley Room in the James I. Harrison Academic Center in Jewett Hall.

Carnley earned his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Alabama.

Carnley was a deacon and Sunday School teacher at First Baptist Church, Elba, and served a term as

moderator of Coffee Baptist Association.

Carnley and his wife, Mary, a former math teacher, moved to Madison, Miss., in their senior years.

► **Shumaker Receives Judson College Alumnae Loyalty Award:** Anne Williamson Shumaker of Centre received the 2012 Alumnae Loyalty Award at Judson College’s annual alumnae weekend, known as “J-Day,” April 13–14.

Shumaker has been an ardent supporter of Judson College since her graduation in 1966. She served on the alumnae executive board in various roles and on the college board of trustees since 1990.

Shumaker majored in biology and Spanish and earned her A.B. degree and later earned her master’s degree in education and biology from Jacksonville State University.

Shumaker is active in the Cherokee County Republican Executive Committee and has served on the Alabama Republican Executive Committee.

She is a member of First Baptist Church, Centre, where she has served in many roles over the years.



SHUMAKER

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Upcoming Samford University Commencement Activities:** Samford University’s commencement activities include a May 18 graduation prayer breakfast in the main dining room of Beeson University Center at 7:30 a.m. and a May 19 graduating senior art exhibit reception following commencement in the Samford Art Gallery.

IMB VP nominee would lead business leaders

Long before he became International Mission Board (IMB) president, Tom Elliff dreamed of a new kind of missionary — Southern Baptist business leaders who leverage their resources, global connections and growth strategies to help fulfill the Great Commission.

That dream, which Elliff calls “global strategic mobilization,” or GSM, is a step closer to reality with his nomination of Scott Holste as vice president of the IMB’s newly created GSM office.

“It simply means that we would be partnering with SBC (Southern Baptist Convention)-led ministries

and business professionals who are already traveling around the world and deeply desire to be involved in Great Commission ministries,” Elliff said.

Holste has served in the IMB’s global strategy office since 2009, where he oversees affinity group leaders who direct the work of the IMB’s nearly 5,000 field personnel. Holste also oversees the IMB’s global research department, hunger and relief ministries and orality strategies.

If approved by trustees, Holste not only will mobilize, train and strategically involve SBC business

leaders to fulfill the Great Commission but will supervise human needs strategies and serve as a member of the IMB’s executive leadership team.

“My dream is that through the work of this new initiative, we will match our [nearly] 5,000 field personnel with 5,000 — or more — passionate, trained and strategically positioned and connected marketplace professionals working in concert together and alongside national Baptist partners and other evangelicals to ensure the sustained, effective engagement of every people group,” Holste said. (BP)



Bethani Thomas

BP photo

Learning through TRIALS

Brief kidnapping prompts teen's attentiveness to hurting people

Bethani Thomas opened the gate so her mom could pull their car into the guesthouse driveway. Suddenly, she realized that a gun was pointed at her head. Her mom, Southern Baptist representative Karen Thomas, screamed from the driver's seat as she scuffled with another assailant trying to steal the car.

Bethani, then 13, bolted toward the vehicle to try to help. "Mom, it's gonna be OK. God is with us," Bethani said as she scrambled into the vehicle with the gunman in pursuit.

As Karen tried to fight off the carjacker, he shoved her out the door. With Bethani inside, the thugs peeled away as Karen crumpled onto the concrete.

"They've got my daughter!" Karen screamed.

As the car sped away into the Guatemala City night, two Bible lessons popped into Bethani's head.

"Paul and Job. They had nothing, and yet they were praising God," Bethani recalled. "Those [stories] were real comforts. I started praying and singing."

Bethani listened closely to the carjackers' conversation. They were cousins. The driver was nervous. The other cousin had been roped into the crime while visiting from New York. He wanted to keep things from escalating.

Struggling to stay calm, Bethani insisted the New Yorker stop cussing, even lecturing him about his involvement in the carjacking.

Meanwhile, Karen and her husband Jeff remembered the phone in Karen's purse in the car. Jeff called the number; the driver answered.

Jeff asked to speak with Bethani. The carjacker refused but briefly held the phone toward her face.

"Dad, I love you!" Bethani called out.

The realization gripped Jeff: "These might be the last words I hear from her."

Jeff eventually convinced the driver to release Bethani. Within the hour, the cousins dropped her off, unharmed, on the side of a busy thoroughfare. She crossed several lanes of traffic and walked toward a fast food restaurant.

But her nightmare wasn't over.

"They just took my car! I was kidnapped!" she told a guard at the restaurant entrance.

The guard didn't believe her and refused to let her use the phone to call her parents.

Diners inside the restaurant looked askance at her.

"Does anyone even care?" she thought. "Does anyone see what's going on — this huge thing that's happened in my life?"

Bethani noticed a man nearby talking on the phone. He ended his call with "God bless you."

The man saw her and asked if she was all right. Bethani told him what happened.

"What can I do?" he asked.

The man, a pastor, helped Bethani call her dad. "Dad, this is a good man," Bethani began by saying.

Later when she was reunited with her family, "the first thing I saw was my dad trying to run to me," which was

especially poignant since her father has muscular dystrophy and has difficulty walking — let alone running.

Bethani was touched, too, when she arrived back at the guesthouse where her family was staying while visiting Guatemala City. Almost all the Southern Baptist representatives in the city had gathered there.

That night "the mission family became my family," Bethani said.

Bethani didn't suffer nightmares or become fearful following the ordeal. Instead, she began to worry about the safety of strangers. The trauma of being held hostage in public with no one "seeing" her sparked a hyper-vigilance for people she passed on the street.

A gift from God

At intersections, Bethani looked inside other cars, trying to discern passengers' safety. "Is she in trouble? ... Can I help her?" she wondered.

Over time, that vigilance blossomed into a gift. Today, Bethani has a remarkable capacity to "see" other people and then intervene in their lives, according to her family and friends.

For example, after Bethani read a story about sex trafficking, she studied the problem while doing a school paper. She

discovered a brothel in the Guatemalan town where her family lives and ministers to a Mayan people group, the Pokomchi, in the nearby highlands.

Wanting to reach out to the prostitutes, Bethani convinced a friend and her friend's mother to help. They took care packages to the girls and were able to talk with them when their supervisors were away. They even invited the girls to lunch.

Bethani carefully observed the prostitutes and discovered, "They were almost like peers. They were just girls. We're the same; we just lead different lives."

Bethani doesn't call the outreach a ministry. "We've got prostitute friends," she said simply.

It's been six years since the kidnapping, and Bethani remains keenly aware of what God has taught her through that trial. A freshman at Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., she continues to use the Bible lessons her parents instilled in her since early childhood.

Rather than settling into a clique, she looks for lonely people to befriend, especially international students on campus.

"I'm a very observant person. It's something from God," Bethani said. She constantly asks herself, "Is there someone around here who needs help in some way?" (BP)



BP photo

Bethani Thomas, 18, (fourth from left) enjoys a visit from her family at Mississippi College in Clinton where she is a freshman. Pictured with her are (l to r) Bethani's brother, Caleb, 16; dad, Jeff; brother, Daniel, 12; Bethani; mom, Karen; and brother, Andrew, 20. Karen and Jeff Thomas serve in Guatemala.